

They hope to see clear days forever

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The two-story brick building at N. Ballenger Hwy. and Sloan St. looks as if it should house an insurance agency or doctor's office.

It is a well-built, well-kept structure. Inside, quality furniture and a quiet, professional greeting welcome the visitor.

But this building houses a center related to a church that is under fire from federal agencies. Early this month, the FBI used crowbars and sledgehammers to enter offices of the Church of Scientology in Hollywood and Washington, D.C.

Agents were seeking documents stolen from the Justice Department and the IRS, the FBI says. They confiscated so many documents in Washington alone that 31 legal-sized pages were needed to itemize them.

Church officials say the raids were only the latest of many harassing acts by the government and have filed a suit seeking \$7.9 million in punitive and physical damages resulting from the Los Angeles raid.

The government and the Church of Scientology have been at loggerheads almost since the church was founded 23 years ago. Central issues have been whether it satisfied requirements for tax exemption as a church, whether a

device called an E-meter was being correctly used for medical treatment and whether the government was violating the Freedom of Information Act.

To outsiders, the church is one of the most mystifying in the United States. Founded by L. Ron Hubbard, former science fiction writer, it sounds like science fiction to the uninitiated.

An abridged dictionary issued by the church lists such words as "is-ness," "thetan," "engram" and "time track."

According to the dictionary, Scientology means "an applied religious philosophy dealing with the study of knowledge which, through the ap-

plication of its technology, can bring about desirable changes in the conditions of life."

It is, Scientologists say, a process of making the able more able, not of making well those who are psychologically ill.

Scientologists are described as those who have bought Scientology books, tapes or counseling in their attempt to attain a better way of life.

To many, Scientology seems secretive. Information about finances and about organization of the church is difficult to obtain, for instance. That may be related to the long harassment Scientologists believe they have suffered.

Regardless of what may appear to be its science-fiction aspects and its closed-mouth attitude, adherents say over and over how happy they are. And certainly they appear to be.

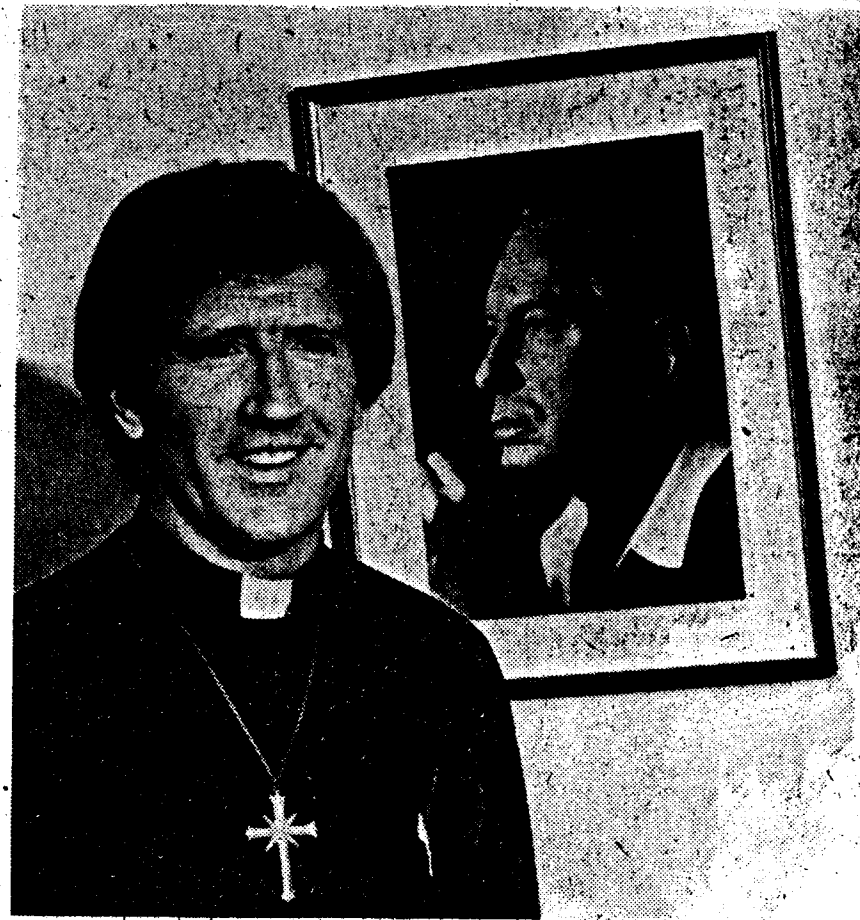
Scientologists have been in Flint at two separate times.

In the early 1970s, a mission was operated in a former pool hall on Joliet St. When that closed, a center for distribution of literature opened on Cedar St. That closed in the summer of 1973.

From those efforts, hundreds of area residents have moved to full-time positions with the church, officials estimate.

Scientology returned about a year ago when the Rev. Robert Duncan Angus, who was raised in Flint, began a Dianetic Counseling Group.

This, he explained, is similar to a franchise in a business, although he was quick to add that it is a church, not a business.



— Journal Photos

A 'CLEAR' — The Rev. Robert Duncan Angus, who leads the Dianetics Counseling Group at the Scientology center here, wears the Scientology cross. He stands before a picture of L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology founder, that hangs in the center here. He is a "clear," the goal of Scientologists.



Scientologists here center their work at this building at 1147 N. Ballenger

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Their hope: Clear days

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This means that Mr. Angus operates independently except that he pays to the Church of Scientology a tithe of the group's earnings and reports to the Detroit church.

He is responsible for the courses that are offered here and for the sale of books, most of them written by Hubbard.

The name of the center — a counseling group — is significant. Services are not held here. In fact, the offices are closed on Sunday.

In addition to Mr. Angus and his wife, the staff includes four part-time people, he said.

Since the center opened here, Mr. Angus said, there has been no advertising. Information has been spread by word of mouth.

But people here have been "very responsive," Mr. Angus said. He estimated that between 12 and 25 people a day enter the center, including two to 10 new people a week.

Here they can take four different courses. The first is concerned with communication and with learning how to study. The communication course costs \$35. Others range in cost up to more than \$700 each.

Another part of the name also is important. That is dianetics. It is defined as man's most advanced school of the mind and as "an exploration into the human mind." Hubbard's book, "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health," was a best seller in 1950 and led to the founding of the church.

The core of Scientology is the counseling, or auditing, as it is called by the church. In this, the E-meter is used.

The counseled grasps two tin cans with electrical wires running to a low-voltage battery and gauge. The E-meter measures resistance to the power flow, Scientologists say. Because stress creates that resistance, stress can be measured, they say.

The auditor (counselor) asks a list of questions intended to make the audited look at the traumas of his life. When the audited faces those traumas, the emotional reaction to them leaves and the audited is clear of tensions in those areas, Scientologists say.

Recent visitors to the Scientology offices here were given a brief demonstration of the E-meter. After an auditor pinched the visitors, the needle on the gauge swung sharply, showing the

tension that resulted.

Auditing costs more than \$35 an hour.

The desire of Scientologists, after completing all the auditing, is to become "clear." That is, they will then be the most outstanding people of all — happy, vivacious, purposeful — Scientologists say. They have the intelligence above the level of genius and no psychosomatic illnesses, adherents claim.

There are eight clears in the Flint area, Mr. Angus said. He and his wife are among them.

No one can become clear here. After the first four courses, a Scientologist can go to Detroit to take courses to become a minister. But to become clear he must go to Los Angeles, England or Denmark. And between \$5,000 and \$10,000 can be spent in taking those courses.

Scientologists say they acknowledge a supreme being, but worshipping a god is not part of church ritual. Followers are free to maintain their membership in traditional churches.

Scientologists do believe that man is a spiritual being — a being that had previous lives. During auditing, they say, they often receive clues to those former lives.

Hubbard retired as director of the church in 1966 but continued to write and guide the thought of Scientologists. For years he lived aboard a yacht in the Mediterranean, although Scientologists could not say exactly where.

Now, said the Rev. Patricia Slack of Detroit, resident director of the Church of Scientology of Michigan, the yacht has been sold and he is writing from his own estate in Ireland.

She said there is no single head of the international church but that a board of directors coordinates efforts of the independently incorporated churches and missions.

The church has grown to 3.5 million members in the United States, Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Rhodesia and South Africa.

In 1976, the Church of Scientology announced that, under cover of the name United Churches of Florida, it had bought the elegant, landmark Fort Harrison Hotel in downtown Clearwater, Fla., for \$2.3 million cash. That is being used as living quarters for Scientologists doing advanced studies.

Church-offices are in another central Clearwater landmark, the former Bank of Clearwater building, a block

from the hotel. The building is half a block long and four stories high.

Hubbard visited the Clearwater center and did some taping in 1976.

Scientology has missions in Ann Arbor, Lansing and Birmingham, Mrs. Slack said.

As Scientology has grown, controversy has grown around it.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) began investigating in the 1950s whether Scientologists were making fraudulent claims that the E-meter could cure physical ailments. At one point, federal deputies raided the church's Washington office and seized dozens of E-meters and thousands of Scientology books and pamphlets.

The church fought the FDA in court for 10 years, arguing that the E-meters were not medical devices but tools of their religion.

U.S. Dist. Judge Gerhard Gesell finally ruled in 1971 that the devices could be used in "bona fide religious counseling" but could not be advertised as treatment for disease.

The other major dispute between the church and the government involves tax-exempt status for Scientology churches. Most have tax-exempt status.

The church has filed numerous suits against the IRS and other government agencies seeking documents under the Freedom of Information Act. It is also seeking \$750 million in damages from the FBI and the CIA for alleged illegal spying and harassment.

"FBI harassment is not new," said Mrs. Slack. "This is just the biggy."

She and other Scientologist officials charge that the raids resulted from the investigation by a church group, the National Commission on Law Enforcement, into Interpol, a private international police agency that says it fights drug trafficking.

The Scientology commission charges, instead, that Interpol officials trafficked in drugs themselves.

The church filed the results of the investigation with the Justice Department a week before the raids, Mrs. Slack said. "We figure this was our answer."

"The FBI had warrants for 156 documents, but took 100,000 in the raids. We have pictures of the agents carrying out cartons of papers and at least one typewriter — and that wasn't on the warrant."

She said the FBI was offered keys to the files, but chose instead to break down doors and destroy property.