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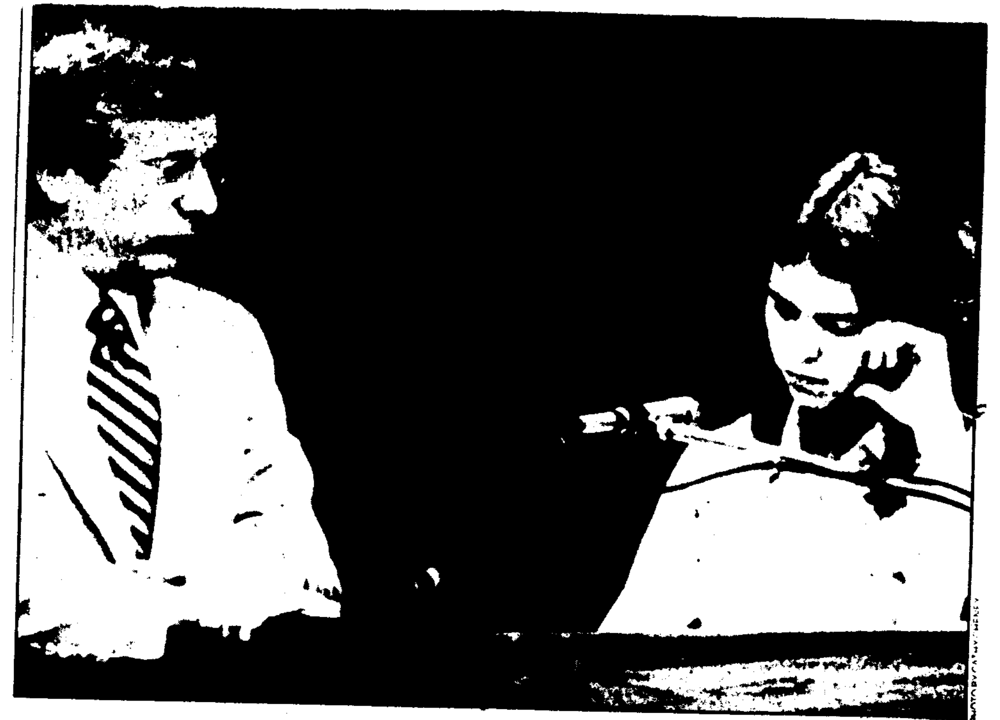
SCIENTOLOGY SECRETS REVEALED IN 2 MILLION DOLLAR CONSUMER FRAUD CASE

How an Oregon woman's suit exposed for the first time the inner workings of Scientology: how it attracts new converts and quickly separates them from their money, friends and families

SCIENTOLOGY ON TRIAL

How a Portland jury got a crash course in one of the oddest "religions" ever created—and awarded the plaintiff more than $2 million



Plaintiff's attorney Garry P. McMurry asks Julie Christofferson to red from the works of L. Ron Hubbard

Note: This summer, a jury in Portland spent a month listening to testimony in a $4 million lawsuit over the practices of the Church of Scientology there. The plaintiff: Julie Christofferson, a young Portland woman who was a follower of Scientology in 1975 and 1976. The defendants: three local Scientology organizations and one of their leaders.

Richard H. Meeker, an editor and reporter for Portland's Willamette Week, attended the entire trial and wrote the following report.

BY RICHARD H. MEEKER

PORTLAND—

The jury's verdict is in on Scientology in Oregon: It's a fraud. In a decision that shocked a packed courtroom last month, a Multnomah County jury of seven women and five men announced its decision that local Scientology organizations and one of their leaders had misrepresented themselves and engaged in acts of outrageous conduct against plaintiff Julie Christofferson.

The jury's decision, coupled with its award of more than $2 million to Christofferson, represents a grave threat to the future of America's largest cult.

If the verdict survives the appeals that are certain to follow, it will mean Christofferson is entitled to approximately two-thirds of the net worth of all the known Scientology holdings in the state of Oregon.

In particular, the jury decided the Church of Scientology's Mission of Davis, in downtown Portland, must pay Christofferson $1 million in punitive damages. The Delphian Foundation, a Scientologist-run boarding school on the site of a former Jesuit novitiate in Sheridan, owes her $600,000; the Church of Scientology of Portland, also downtown, $300,000; and Martin Samuels, president of both the Mission of Davis and the Delphian Foundation, $14,000. The four defendants together were ordered to pay Christofferson another $153,000.20 in compensatory damages.

This case represents the first time in this country that 12 average citizens have been asked to make a legally binding determination of the central question about Scientology: Is it a bona fide religion, or is it a confidence racket?

The size of the jury's award and the unanimity of the verdict provided a resounding answer. "We felt she had been duped from the start," jury foreman John Kekel said minutes after he had handed the verdict to Circuit Gourt Judge Robert Paul Jones.

ESCHATOLOGY NOW?

Christofferson's stunning Aug. 15 court victory could be the beginning of the end for America's most successful cult group. Scientology has grown steadily since its inception in the 1950s, and has weathered government attacks in this country, England and Australia. The self-styled church claims a membership of three million in America and nearly four million worldwide.

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PHOTO BY CATHY CHENEY

Garry P. McMurry asks Julie Christofferson to read from the works of L. Ron Hubbard during the first week of the trial.

Now, as a result of this $2 million verdict, other former Scientologists across the United States are sure to follow Christofferson's example and file lawsuits of their own. Further, several of the cult's key leaders will go on trial in federal court next month on charges of burgling U.S. government offices in Washington, D.C. They could end up in jail. Finally, the church's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, hasn't been seen publicly for several years, and many anti-Scientologists believe he may be dead.

Put quite simply, Scientology faces a troubled future.

That future, however, was not the concern of the jury during the month-long trial, which began at 2 pm on July 16. Rather, the 12 jurors, only one of whom had ever heard of the cult before the trial, got a crash course in one of the oddest "religions" ever created.

The cult follows the teachings of founder Hubbard as they are stated in some 25 million words of church doctrine. These combine aspects of Eastern mysticism and Western religious thought and psychiatry to form an arcane system of beliefs and practices. Scientology even has its own special language, containing words like "thetan," "engram" and "bullbaiting."

Despite its strangeness, the cult has succeeded in continuing to recruit new members, in getting its members' loyalty as well as their money, and in protecting itself from the acts of deprogrammers and angry parents. By hiding behind a veil of religious protection and by arming itself with an array of well-paid lawyers, Scientology has managed to have more staying power and to maintain its aura of secrecy better than any other contemporary cult.

What the jury heard during the trial was the story of how Scientology works, where the money comes from and where it goes, and how in the past five years a man by the name of Martin Samuels created in Oregon a multimillion-dollar-a-year operation with the assistance of hundreds of people like Julie Christofferson.

While this evidence was presented to the jury in a piecemeal fashion, it is possible to form it into a clear picture of the inner workings of this hitherto unexposed cult.

HOW IT WORKS

The testimony of Christofferson and a series of other former Scientologists offered graphic evidence of the cult's means of attracting new converts and quickly separating them from their money, friends and families.

Though Christofferson visited the downtown headquarters of the church's Mission of Davis on the advice of a friend from high school, most new recruits get their introduction to Scientology on the sidewalks near the mission's offices at Broadway and SW Salmon Street.

People called "public registrars"—sometimes referred to as "field service men"—ask other young people if they'd like to come inside to hear an introductory lecture on Scientology. Several witnesses testified that new recruits are referred to as "raw meat" and are quickly processed through a carefully designed orientation program.

First, there's an introductory lecture, which few Scientologists seem to remember well. As one deprogrammed cult member, Alan Wilson, described the scene, "We were greeted by a lot of smiling faces, shaking hands, a lot of hubbub . . . After that [the unmemorable lecture, attended by 20 or 25 people], I had a conversation with someone about my hangups. I'd just had quite a run-in with my girl. He suggested our problems were related to a communications breakdown.

"I eventually signed up for the Communications Course," Wilson continued. "I started the course that night. I had been approached on the street at 1 pm and I didn't get out until 11 that night. I was there the next day for 11 hours."

Wilson, who shortly before this experience had been involved in a car wreck that had mangled one of his hips, had been planning to attend chef's school at Clark Community College in Vancouver, Wash., and was downtown with a friend to buy new clothes for school. Within a few days he had decided not to attend the chef's school and had donated some $7,000 of his insurance settlement from the accident to the Mission of Davis to pay for a series of courses and counseling sessions.

A key ingredient in getting new recruits sold on Scientology seems to be the introductory Communications Course, which costs only $50 and is offered with a money-back guarantee.

As Christofferson and others described it, the course consists of a rigorous, time-consuming series of "training routines." They are geared to get students "to clear their minds of all thoughts"; to be able "to speak in a new unit of time"—that is, unemotionally and without changes of inflection; to sit unflinchingly and unresponsively during hours of bullbaiting—taunting by other students that may involve obscene language and overtly sexual gestures; and to ask and repeatedly answer the questions, "Do birds fly?" and "Do fish swim?" The course lasts several weeks.

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L. RON HUBBARD AND HIS RELIGIOUS "SCIENCE OF THE MIND"

"L. Ron Hubbard's long quest for a route to man's freedom has been successful beyond imagination." —**L. Ron Hubbard**, *Viewpoints*

Before he began writing books on which his "religion" is based, L. Ron Hubbard was a prolific writer of science fiction. His work may or may not have been very good.

Biographical material published by the Church of Scientology has described this man as "genius," "nuclear physicist," "explorer," "philosopher," "prodigious scholar," "meticulous experimenter," "the most prolific writer of his time," "masterly organizer and executive."

In passing, the literature frequently has added that Hubbard graduated from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. and later obtained a Ph.D. elsewhere. The thought of one person doing all this (Scientology pamphlets credit him with many more accomplishments) is enough to make heads spin.

The facts are less dazzling, according to Hubbard's college record, which is part of a federal court file. According to this file, Hubbard did attend George Washington University, but only for two years before he left after having been placed on academic probation. He received one A on his report cards for those two years—in physical education. But he also received four Fs. His sophomore year, he took three physics courses and got grades of E, D, and F in them, the F being in the sole course he took on nuclear physics at George Washington.

This is just one example of the problems that exist with Hubbard's credibility. Still, just because Hubbard has phonied up his background doesn't mean he could not have founded a valid religion or made important discoveries. Nor does it mean that he is an incompetent or untalented person; it takes enormous skill to convert possibly millions of people to a newly created "religion" and then to use that "religion" to separate many of the converts from their families, friends, and money.

Hubbard is quoted in many places, including a 1976 *Time* magazine article, as telling a lecture audience in Newark, N.J., in 1949, just before the publication of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, "Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man really wanted to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion."

Dianetics is based upon what Hubbard calls "*the* major advance of centuries of philosophy"—his "discovery" that the human mind has three parts. These are the "analytical" mind, the "reactive" mind and the "somatic" mind. If you think of the first of these as good, the second as bad, and the third as not very important, you have the gist of Hubbard's "science of the mind." These three parts of the mind work together this way:

- The analytical mind is a perfect computer. Incapable of error, it files every perception a person has during his or her existence in a memory bank. Characteristically, it is programmed so that it can consider problems only from the point of view of survival.
- The reactive mind, however, interferes with the perfect functioning of the analytical mind/computer. The reactive mind is a sort of memory bank filled with items Hubbard calls "engrams." An engram, according to Dianetic theory, is a record of a perception experienced at a moment of unconsciousness which contained physical or emotional pain. It is because the analytical mind was unconscious that the painful experience lodged in the reactive mind instead of the analytical mind and, once there, became a source of problems. The reactive mind, in fact, is "the entire source of aberration." All psychosomatic ills, for example—which Hubbard says comprise over 70 percent of all human ills—are caused by engrams.
- The somatic mind, though it is one-third of Hubbard's so-called great discovery, is hardly mentioned. In *Dianetics* Hubbard defines it as "that mind which, directed by the analytical or reactive mind, places solutions into effect on the physical level." People's problems, then, stem from the fact that, all too often, the reactive mind—instead of the analytical mind—controls the somatic mind.

Not surprisingly in this neat mental construct, the goal of Dianetics is to "clear" people of their engrams. "It can be proved and has been repeat-

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edly proven," Hubbard writes in his quasi-empirical manner, "that there is no other [source of human aberration], for when that engram bank is discharged, all undesirable symptoms vanish and man begins to work on his optimum pattern."

To do away with the engram bank, Hubbard offered a "therapy" in *Dianetics*: A person called an auditor would listen as the patient "in reverie" went back into the past to describe experiences: "The engram bank is best attacked primarily by discharging its emotional charge anywhere it can be contacted." By having the patient recall and relive the moment of pain, the auditor helps the patient discharge the engram that resulted from that particular experience.

People have hundreds of engrams, but after sufficient auditing they can become "clear" and operate entirely by means of their analytical minds at optimum efficiency.

Hubbard must not have been satisfied that using a state of reverie was scientific enough for Dianetics, for soon he was advocating an electronic device that could be used to aid Dianetics auditors. This was the electro-psychometer, or "E-meter," which apparently was developed by a Californian of Hubbard's acquaintance, Volney G. Mathison, a hypnotist and student of the occult. The E-meter is a compact instrument that is connected to its electrodes and held in the subject's hands.

How, you may wonder, is this instrument used during auditing, when the goal is not to find out whether the subject is telling the truth, but to get the subject to relive painful unconscious experiences and clear them away?

Dennis Patton gave me a "pinch test" at the 333 S.W. Park Ave. offices of the Church of Scientology. I held the tin cans (they were the size and shape of small tomato-paste containers) while Patton adjusted the E-meter to get a "floating needle." That is, the needle was wavering around the middle of its range, pointing at the ceiling. He pinched me hard and the needle slammed to the right. Then, when he'd adjusted the needle back to the middle, he asked me to think about the pinch he'd given me. The needle popped over to the right again. Clearly, the memory of the pinch had gotten the response. Patton reminded me of the pinch several times, with the needle's sweep to the right being less and less pronounced each time, until my response finally faded away.

From the literature I've read, it is evident that engrams are supposed to cause people to react much the way pinches do. An auditor will offer different words and phrases to the person being audited until one of them gets a response. Then the auditor will work over that subject until that engram has been cleared and there's a floating needle again. During this process, the auditor also apparently works in mechanical fashion, working off lists provided by Hubbard—rather than figuring out what areas to delve into.

At first, there was no religion to it, and "clear" was the ultimate goal. But then Hubbard made one of his many "final breakthroughs," and discovered a sort of human spirit or conscious being that inhabited every body. This spirit—he called it a "Thetan"—did not die with its body, and at the event of death simply moved on to inhabit another body.

Thetans, of course, carry their engrams with them. Clearly, if they've lived forever that's a lot of engrams to clear. A *Time* magazine article from last year, for example, offers this: "Hubbard's explanation of why someone might have difficulty crying: he was once a primordial clam whose water ducts had been clogged with sand."

The discovery of the Thetan also meant that Scientology's scale of things had to be re-ordered. Clear was no longer the ultimate goal. Hubbard redefined it to mean a person who had overcome all engrammatic problems, but who had not yet developed to full potential. Such an ideal person would be an "Operating Thetan," or "O.T."

The discovery of the Thetan in all of us gave Scientology at least the semblance of a spiritual foundation. In addition, the church developed other trappings—changing "franchises" to "missions," calling meeting rooms "chapels," calling auditing "pastoral counseling," and calling fees for courses "donations."

This, too, depending on your appreciation of Hubbard, either had the incidental benefit or had the desired result of invoking for Scientology many protections from intervention that the church had not had in its earliest incarnation as a science of mental health. Certain taxes no longer had to be paid, professional organizations of psychologists and psychiatrists were restrained in their attacks on Scientology, and the government's Food and Drug Administration even was prevented from halting the use of the E-meter as a cure-all.

—Richard H. Meeker

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PHOTO BY RICHARD H. MEEKER

L. Ron Hubbard's face adorns the waiting room of The Delphian Foundation in Sheridan, Oregon.

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Throughout the course, Christofferson said she was fed a steady diet of exaggerated but impressive claims about the background and experiences of cult founder Hubbard and the potential of Dianetics, the Hubbard-devised "science of the mind." The list of promises, as set out in Christofferson's complaint against the Scientologists and as stated by witnesses at the trial and in the writings of Hubbard himself, is staggering:

- That the Communications Course would provide Christofferson with more knowledge of the mind than is possessed by any psychologist or psychiatrist;
- That the course would help her with her college work;
- That "auditing"—Scientology's version of the confessional, in which parishioners hold two tin cans attached to a crude galvanometer and answer questions concerning intimate aspects of their lives—can develop creativity; cure neuroses, criminality, insanity, psychosomatic ills, homosexuality and drug dependence; and allow one to control his or her own emotions and the physical universe;
- That Dianetics is scientifically provable and cures asthma, arthritis, rheumatism, ulcers, toothaches, pneumonia, colds and color blindness; and
- That L. Ron Hubbard is an engineer and nuclear physicist who has a degree from Princeton University and is a graduate of George Washington University who revealed Dianetics to mankind as a service to humanity, with no intent to profit therefrom.

During the course of the trial, several Scientology defense witnesses admitted that Hubbard had graduated from neither university and was getting regular payments from the Delphian Foundation. However, they did suggest that the application of Hubbard's discoveries could cure asthma, colds and nearsightedness.

During the communications course, witnesses testified, other mission registrars engage students in lengthy conversations in their offices. They use claims for Scientology like those listed above to get students to take a package of additional courses—"Student Hat" (at $250 in 1975) and Hubbard Standard Dianetics (at $500 in 1975)—as well as auditing on the E-meter in a process known as Life Repair. Auditing presently requires donations to the church of $150 per hour.

The witnesses charged that these internal registrars did more than just encourage continuation in Scientology—that they quickly ascertained the financial resources of their students and regulated their progress in the Communications Course to vary inversely with the amount of money they were willing to part with. These registrars also help new recruits formulate "Battle Plans" to use in raising funds from friends and relatives. If all other resources fail, the Mission of Davis has its own credit union to lend students the money they need "to stay on course."

One of the mission's most successful registrars at the time Christofferson was a member of the church was the Rev. Laird Caruthers. He testified that in a two-year period he had sold courses and counseling worth $500,000.

During her first month with Scientology, in July and August 1975, Christofferson had several talks with Caruthers and readily gave the church several thousand dollars. By the time she left the cult she had "donated" to it a total of $3,000.20.

ETHICS

According to defendant Samuels and his wife, who oversee most of Scientology's operations here, the goal of Scientology is to "clear" the world. That is, Scientologists believe that people are basically good, but that they're unnecessarily unhappy as a result of engrams—bad brain waves that resulted from unpleasant past experiences. The religion's courses and counseling, they say, will clear a person of these difficulties and leave the "parishioner" in control of his or her mind and body, and in a position to attempt an exalted spiritual state known as "operating thetan."

(Thetan is Scientology's word for the human spirit; once a Scientologist becomes clear, he or she then can proceed through the eight levels of Operating Thetans to attain the goal of complete spiritual control. Few, however, have been able to do so.)

As Christofferson and the others said it, though, Scientology's true purpose is to get absolute control of its members and take as much of their money as possible. One of the central techniques used toward this goal is that of paying close attention to parishioners' behavior by means of "ethics officers." What the witnesses said about these church staffers and their orders provided some of the oddest testimony of the entire trial.

Scientologists, for example, pay careful attention to outsiders they label "PTS's." A PTS, according to the writings of Hubbard, is a potential trouble source—someone antagonistic to Scientology.

Cult rules, as laid out in a multitude of "Policy letters" and "Bulletins" require that any practicing Scientologist who knows a PTS must file a "knowledge report" on the person with an ethics officer. The ethics officer then counsels the person making the report on how to "handle" the trouble source.

If the so-called "PTS handling" does not work, however, and the trouble source remains antagonistic to the cult, the next step, according to many witnesses, is to "disconnect"—sever all ties—from the PTS. This practice, the witnesses suggested, creates serious rifts between Scientologists and their parents and former friends; it also creates in church members stronger ties to Scientology.

There was also testimony about another activity of church ethics officers, also allegedly designed to strengthen Scientology's hold on its members. This is the doctrine of "conditions" in which cult staff members who fail in their work are assigned by ethics officers to what are called "lower conditions"—including "Confusion," "Enemy," "Treason" and "Liability."

For every condition there is a mindless formula that must be repeated in order for the staffer to work his or her way back to "normal."

A graphic example of these "ethics" at work was provided by a Xerox copy of formulas performed by a young woman named Diana Burger. The following words were written on the piece of paper in a large, childish hand:

"Confusion

"Find out where you are.

"I am here in the city of Portland the state of Oregon, located in the United States of America, Planet, Earth, in the glaxy *[sic]* called the Miky *[sic]* Way, which is a small part of the universe. I work on Salmon Street and live on 12th Street."

SCIENTOLOGY ON TRIAL

"Enemy

"Find out who you are

"I am me, Diana Burger, nothing more and nothing less, just me, I am a thetan, I know what i know and i know that i do exist here & now."

Two of the plaintiff's witnesses were psychologist Margaret Singer and psychiatrist and neurologist John Clark. Singer conducted studies of American prisoners of war on their return from Korea and has become an expert in the field of mind control she calls "persuasive technique." The practices of Scientology and other modern religious cults, she testified, "are very similar to what happened in Korea . . . They've been used down through the centuries."

Singer also testified she had interviewed Christofferson on three separate occasions for a total of 10 hours and that she believed the young woman had suffered a form of mental damage that she labeled "stress response syndrome."

Clark, who maintains an affiliation with Harvard University, gave similar testimony about what he called "the destructive cults." Though he had not examined Christofferson personally, he, too, stated that she had suffered mental damage at the hands of Scientology.

JULIE GOES TO DELPHI

Another element of the fraud charged by Christofferson was that Scientologists at the Mission of Davis lied to her to induce her to go to the Delphian Foundation in Sheridan to act as a staff member there. The plaintiff testified that she had arrived in Portland in summer 1975, planning to attend the University of Montana in the fall. Her interests were in architecture and engineering.

While studying Scientology at the Mission of Davis, however, she said she was told she could take college-level courses in the subjects that interested her out at the Delphian Foundation, that the foundation was on the verge of becoming an accredited university, and that it had so impressed government officials with its work on energy-saving devices that it had been offered sizable government grants.

When she got there, however, she was made to do menial farm labor for a few weeks and then was assigned the task of "Nanny Hat"—taking care of three small children of other Scientologists at Delphi. For all this she paid very little, lost several scholarships to the University of Montana, and was unable to take any courses in architecture or engineering.

FAIR GAME

That winter in Sheridan, however, Christofferson told the Delphian Foundation's ethics officer, a woman by the name of Madeline Munoz, that her mother was becoming increasingly antagonistic to Scientology. After Julie failed to "handle" her mother's "PTS-ness" she was ordered to return to Portland and to stop taking courses until she could change her mother's attitudes.

She worked as a waitress at the Heathman Hotel and kept in regular contact with her ethics officer at the mission, one Jim Brooks, but had little success with her mother. Finally, in April 1976, Christofferson's mother, Alma Hall, tricked her daughter into returning home to Eureka, Mont., and had her deprogrammed there. Christofferson subsequently visited with the Ted Patrick organization in San Diego and returned to Portland to participate in the deprogrammings of other Scientologists.

For this activity, she testified, she was expelled from the church and labeled a "suppressive person." That label, Christofferson said she had been led to understand, meant that she was what Scientology considers "Fair Game"—subject to being lied to, cheated, tricked and even "destroyed" by other Scientologists.

Most likely, it was this alleged atmosphere of retribution—coupled with the testimony of Singer and Clark—that caused the jurors to find that the four defendants had engaged in outrageous conduct. ■

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