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## Threats, Harassment

# An Author vs. Scientology Church

Washington

In the fall of 1971, author Paulette Cooper came out with a book called "The Scandal of Scientology" and, then, according to her lawyers, friends, family and lawyers, the following things happened to her:

She received repeated telephone calls from anonymous people who threatened to kill her.

Letters were posted on her neighbors' doors telling them she had venereal disease and should be evicted from her apartment.

Her publisher was sued and harassed to the point that he withdrew the book from circulation.

The Church of Scientology sued her in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, England, Scotland, Australia, Ontario and British Columbia, each time alleging that her book had defamed the church.

In New York City, Scientologists claimed they had a bomb threat, and the federal government subsequently indicted her for sending the threat. Then the government charged her with perjury for denying it.

Now, according to informed sources, federal agents have found evidence in seized church records that indicates Scientologists framed Cooper by stealing her stationery and sending themselves the bomb threat.

A church spokesman denied last week that Scientologists were involved in any such scheme. "It's totally ridiculous and typical of outrageous false statements that some people feel they need to pass on regarding the church," Greg Layton, a church spokesman, said.

Cooper was reported to be traveling in Europe and could not be reached for comment. Her attorneys, family and friends, however, painted a picture of a woman locked for years in an almost hopeless struggle against an organization that seemed bent on intimidating her. She was left "severely depressed" and in need of psychiatric treatment, according to these sources.



'We're gonna give you the .44 treatment'

Paulette Cooper

"They (the Church of Scientology) did a lot to destroy this girl's life," said her attorney in Los Angeles, Virgil Roberts.

When Cooper was subpoenaed to appear before a federal grand jury in New York not long after her book was published, "she was excited because she thought she was going to testify against the Scientologists," a member of her family recalled Friday. "When she found out what it was all about, she couldn't believe it."

Federal investigators informed her that the Scientologists had received a bomb threat, apparently on her stationery, with her fingerprint on it.

A family friend who says she has a copy of the note said that the threat is typed, a few lines long, with bad punctuation, bad spelling and includes a comment that "this operation hurts." Cooper had recently had a surgical operation, she said. "It looked like a maniac wrote it," one of her lawyers said.

When Cooper denied writing it, prosecutors accused her of lying and the government charged her with perjury.

She underwent injections of sodium pentathol (truth serum) and was questioned at length, according to family and friends, and prosecu-

tors eventually dropped the charges.

Afterward, according to family and friends, Cooper wondered how some of her stationery might have disappeared from her apartment. She concluded, according to these sources, that the stationery disappeared when a woman came to her door, ostensibly to solicit signatures for a petition in support of a grape boycott, and Cooper invited the woman in. Her stationery was on a table in the living room.

Cooper sued once, in April 1972, accusing the Church of Scientology of "intentional interference" with her constitutional freedom of speech and press. She charged that representatives of the church had intimidated prospective publishers of her books and had subjected her to obscene telephone calls, threats and electronic surveillance. She asked \$15.4 million in damages.

Each time newspapers wrote a story about her court battles, Cooper received anonymous telephone calls threatening her life, one of her lawyers said. The callers said things like, "We're gonna push you under a subway car when we catch you at the station," and "We're gonna give you the .44 treatment," according to Paul D. Rheingold, one of Cooper's New York lawyers.

Cooper, who has a master's degree in psychology, became in-

terested in the Scientologists while a student at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., a member of her family said.

When she went to the New York City Central Library, however, she found that all references to Scientology had been removed with a sharp instrument. She subsequently met Scientologists and began compiling research from other publications, according to the family member.

Except for the New York suit, all others against her have been settled out of court, attorney Roberts said. Cooper received legal fees and signed a pledge not to republish or ever comment on anything in her book, Roberts said. "I am advising her not to talk about Scientology at all," he said.

The \$15.4 million suit in New York City is pending, Rheingold said, and Cooper is eager to move forward on it in light of the new evidence about the bomb threat.

Cooper relied on her family for support during the years following publication of "The Scandal of Scientology," and the family incurred legal debts of around \$25,000 while battling the criminal charges, according to a family member.

"Paulette was an unusual person in that the harassment nearly destroyed her, but rather than stop, it made her fight back with her limited means," Rheingold said. "I would have given up, and I consider myself a strong person."

Harry Shorten, publisher of Tower Publications, Inc., said he had no idea the publication of "The Scandal of Scientology" would bring the response it did.

"They sued us several times," he said. "It hurt us very badly. Every time I turned around, there were letters from Scientology . . ."

Shorten said he guessed he printed about 50,000 of the books, all in paperback, and withdrew them "long before" the normal marketing deadline. He said he could not say, without great research, how many copies did sell.