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Scientists got secret files of Times, lawyers

Secret letters and memos from the personal files of *St. Petersburg Times* editors and its attorneys were obtained and analyzed by members of the Church of Scientology shortly after the church moved to Clearwater four years ago.

The letters and memos were used by the church in calculating its response to news media reports revealing its purchase through a front organization of the Fort Harrison Hotel. How the Church of Scientology or its agents got access to the locked filing cabinets in the offices of *Times* executives or the newspaper's lawyers is not certain.

A Scientology "raw data report" was among 48,000 documents in church files seized by the FBI in raids on church headquarters in 1977. Some of those church documents were released to the public after the conviction of nine Scientology leaders two weeks ago on con-

spiracy charges.

The "raw data report" is 13 single-spaced typewritten pages long. Each paragraph is a summary of a *Times* document or a document from a *Times* attorney. These documents were most sensitive and secret and were never released to the public.

Scientology spokeswoman Nancy Reitze was asked Friday how and why the church obtained confidential *St. Petersburg Times* files.

Ms. Reitze called back with a statement that did not respond to the question. The statement accused *The Times*, the late *Times* chairman of the board Nelson Poynter, and reporter Bette Orsini of acting as part of an FBI conspiracy against the church.

St. Petersburg Times Washington correspondent Charles Stafford found the Scientology report Friday and filed this report:

BY CHARLES STAFFORD
St. Petersburg Times Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON — It feels strange digging through the boxes of documents that once occupied file cabinets in Church of Scientology offices in Washington and Los Angeles.

File envelope 417.

You rifle through an inch-high stack of papers. One strikes your eye. Just one of the 48,000 seized by the FBI in raids on church offices in 1977.

Suddenly you feel that you are peering over the shoulder of a fellow reporter, tiptoeing into the big boss' office while he is at dinner and rummaging through his desk.

Tom, a church functionary with the title of Collections Officer Flag, is writing to Joe, AC Info Flag. Copies are marked for 13 other church officers. Flag is the Scientology headquarters in the old Fort Harrison Hotel in Clearwater.

IT'S DATED MARCH 7, 1976, marked secret, and states at the top: "Re: C of S (meaning Church of Scientology) v. Times Publishing. Baynard, McLeod, Lang and Ballard."

It's called a "raw data report." Each paragraph is a summary of a document. Those are no longer attached, but the summary is explicit about what they are.

The report begins: "William Ballard of Baynard, McLeod, Lang and Ballard, the attorney for the *St. Pete Times*, is working off of the following data in their case against us."

Suddenly you know: This information he is describing is information belonging to your employer, *The St. Petersburg Times*, information that once was in *Times*' files or the files of its attorneys. Either way, it was confidential information.

Tom writes: "In an undated memo *St. Pete Times* reporter Bette Orsini sends a copy of *Today's Health* article to Eugene Patterson, Bob Haiman, Andrew Barnes, and Gene Ingle of the *St. Pete Times*. Apparently then Haiman sends a copy of the article to their attorney Bill Ballard. (pg. 6)"

There are 13 single-spaced typewritten pages summarizing *Times* memoranda, correspondence, reporters' notes.

"On 28 Jan. '76," Tom writes, "Paulette Cooper was contacted for an interview." Ms. Cooper was the author of a 1971 book entitled *The Scandal of Scientology*. She was interviewed by reporter Orsini for stories about the church. (She is the "PC" in the Scientology's memos.)

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Scientology from 1-A

TOM CONTINUES: "PC cited 'the Black PR manual which tells Scientologists specifically how to befuddle the press' . . .

"PC mentions the following (here he quotes from Orsini's notes on her interview with Cooper):

"(Ms. Cooper) says Scientologists are believed to be working on press infiltration. Also put people into congressional offices on the staffs where they are supposed to work on robbing documents in the offices of anybody who is against cults."

"Says she had a roommate whom she later discovered to be a Scientologist. Says she found that she was making daily telephone calls from the roof of the building, reading into the phone the information from her legal pads on which she kept her notes."

"She warned me (Orsini) that the Scientologists send anonymous smear letters. She cautioned me to tip my editors off that they would try to get us to hire them in positions in our company."

INCLUDED IN THE raw notes was a summary of correspondence between *Times* President Patterson and Clayton Kirkpatrick of the *Chicago Tribune* regarding the suit *The Times* filed against the Church of Scientology in February 1976 in an effort to stop what *The Times* believed to be church harassment of *Times* reporters.

There was also a summary of an exchange of letters between Ballard and John Bray, a Washington attorney representing *The Times*, about the suit.

"Of course," Tom said at the end of his report, "the investigatory strings contained herein will be hotly pursued."

THE NEXT DAY there was another, shorter letter headed: "Re: Times Publishing Suit — Bette Orsini Notes to Bill Ballard."

On Aug. 3, 1976, the church's Southeast Directorate Secretary, a fellow named Mike, wrote Henning Heldt, Deputy Guardian United States.

"This analysis," he said, "covers how PC (Paulette Cooper) ties into the SPT (St. Petersburg Times) as the source of the SPT idea to sue along 'harassment by litigation' lines."

He cited Chapter 9 of Ms. Cooper's book in which she discussed the church's strategy of suing for libel to discourage the media from reporting on Scientology. He cited reporter Orsini's contacts with Cooper.

THEN HE WROTE:

"In a Feb. 9, 1976, memo attorney John Bray of the LF (law firm) Arent, Plotkin et al wrote to Albert Arent (senior partner) stating that Nelson Poynter and Gene Patterson called him on Friday (Feb. 6) to discuss the possibility of suing the C of S. Told Bray the SPT had run stories on C of S in CW (Clearwater) and had received a five day letter threatening suit. Poynter advised that the C of S had an extreme history of bringing libel suits against newspapers and mentioned the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. Poynter wanted to file a preemptive suit to counter this strategy.

"On Feb. 11 the suit was filed.

"So what apparently happened is that Paulette planted the idea with Orsini regarding C of S harassment of the press through suits, the idea got to Nelson Poynter and Gene Patterson who jumped on it once our five day letter threatening suit arrived with SPT and decided to launch their own suit in advance."

As a "recommendation for handling," Mike suggested they work out a plan for discrediting author Cooper.

PAULETTE COOPER was among those persons digging into the documents Friday in the office of the clerk of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The documents were made public in connection with the recent trial of nine church leaders who were convicted of conspiring to steal government documents and to obstruct justice.

She said she has filed suits for a total of \$55-million in damages against the Church of Scientology in California and New York, charging harassment. She said she was looking for evidence among the documents.

With her was Nan McLean, who was a Scientologist along with other members of her family until they became disenchanted. She provided information to newspapers and television and radio stations for stories about Scientology in Clearwater. She said the church obtained an injunction against her five years ago that prohibits her from speaking out on radio or television.

"I am gathering information for my defense and my offense," she said.