

Letter indicates Hubbard came to city to 'save the operation'

By RICHARD LEIBY
Sun Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology, was so concerned with the success of his newly formed Clearwater headquarters that he visited there in late November 1975 to "save the operation."

A letter Hubbard sent one of his top-level "Guardians" shows the founder wanted to make sure "this scene stays cool" while his United Churches of Florida front group established itself in the old Fort Harrison hotel and Bank of Clearwater buildings.

The letter is included in a group of church documents and papers released by a federal judge last week in Washington, D.C.

How long Hubbard stayed in the area is uncertain, although the correspondence dated Nov. 26, 1975, indicates he spent a few days setting up an office in a Dunedin condominium, doing a photo-essay of "beautiful Clearwater" and lecturing Scientology students at the Fort Harrison.

Hubbard was visiting after a Caribbean cruise that included some trouble with the CIA, the nature of which is not specified. He apparently was concerned about reports of United Churches receiving bad publicity in the area and that the top staff members at his new base were not functioning efficiently.

"If I were not on lines (meaning in the area), this U.S. base would go to blazes in a hurry," Hubbard wrote Guardian Henning Heldt. "I save the operation once or twice a day by rounding up bad goofs and make my year's pay two or three times a week. Not an exaggeration.

"I am actually operating also as Assistant Guardian office U.S. base almost single-hand. You do not really have an AG office here, I hate to say . . ."

Expressing concern about the press discussing his visit, Hubbard made a "strenuous effort to be low-profile. My name is not being used in the area."

But he apparently expected to make more visits, writing: "Probably my best layout is to get very well-known in the Clearwater area with a camera in my hand and my Universal News Press card, taking pictures of 'beautiful Clearwater.'

"They (city residents) hate tourists and also retired persons," he noted.

One goal of the visit was to enhance public relations in the area—undercover. Traveling to the Fort Harrison from his office in Dunedin—apparently at King Arthur Courts—"is easy, as I just drive in the garage and enter up the third-floor garage elevator," he wrote. "There will possibly be a personal office at the bank building if they get it clean. This is rougher as one has to step out of a car and walk to the door."

Apparently informed of opposition to United Churches by former Clearwater mayor Gabriel Cazares, Hubbard devised a plan—probably in jest—to take the mayor's picture.

"I think the exact plan will be that I play operations above security, slide in on personal PR as that well-known photographer, very visible with a whole camera crew living in a nearby town. Not push it. Just let it seep in. My

portrait of the mayor will hang in city hall, never fear."

But it appears doubtful the scheme was unsuccessful.

Cazares said Tuesday he has no knowledge of a color photograph of himself ever hanging in city hall.

Explaining his Caribbean cruise—apparently on his own vessel—the letter quotes Hubbard as writing: "In the Caribbean I didn't get tit and actually fronted for the operation and so did Scientology to smash the CIA thing. But the CIA thing won."

Hubbard said that if any problems arose in Clearwater about his presence,

"We count on your (Heldt's Guardian office) to very quickly pre-alert any trouble so I can go fishing while you handle (it)."

He also congratulated Heldt and others because "you guys seem to have the IRS under heavy control." He added in capital letters: "AND WE CAN COUNT ON YOU GUYS TO MOW DOWN IRS AND WIN ACROSS THE BOARDS."

Heldt was convicted here Oct. 26, along with other top Scientology Guardians, in a conspiracy scheme against the federal government that included bugging an IRS meeting

about the sect's tax exemption.

Hubbard said his plans for the Clearwater base—the headquarters of this "Sea Organization"—included "a really fine local Guardian Order office so this scene stays cool and stays off . . . my plate. Love Ron."

Clearwater and Washington Scientology spokesmen will not comment on whether the Guardian organization is still in existence today. These spokesmen also say Hubbard has not been actively involved in Church affairs since he retired as executive director in 1966.