

# Twin Cities Reader

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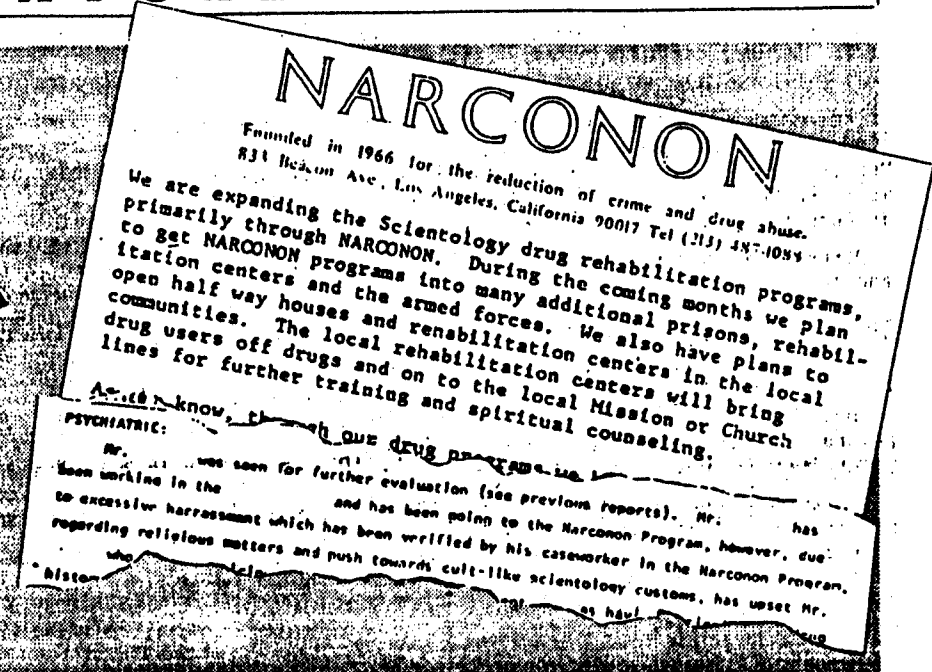
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## URBAN DISPATCHES

### The Narconon Sting:

#### SCIENTOLOGY'S MINNESOTA DRUG SCAM.

BY PAUL FISHMAN MACCABEE



"Narconon is the ONLY successful drug rehabilitation program on the planet."

**L. Ron Hubbard,**  
Founder of Church of Scientology

"Narconon was definitely a con. It was bullshit. Those guys were forcing guys into Scientology."

**Narconon graduate**  
St. Cloud Prison, Minnesota

**A**S WITH MOTHER NATURE AND THE I.R.S., it's not nice to fool around with Narconon. Mike Rezendez of Boston's *Community News* learned that in 1978, as a cool-headed reporter with a hot tip. He'd heard of a novel drug rehabilitation clinic called Narconon, which boasted a miraculous 85 percent cure rate for heroin addicts.

But Rezendez also heard that Narconon was hiding links to Scientology, a religious cult whose devotees include John Travolta and pianist Chick Corea. Intrigued, Rezendez scheduled a meeting with Narconon publicity officer Dan Barber.

There, according to Rezendez, the Narconon official warned the newsman, he was "a small fish in a big sea with a lot of f-cking sharks" and that he was dealing with "an inter-

planetary organization." Barber allegedly promised to come after Rezendez with "hob-nailed boots," and said "I will kick your ass up into your throat if I ever catch you f-cking around with Narconon."

Now, a surprise raid on Narconon-Minnesota's \$30,000 drug program in the St. Cloud Reformatory has ignited shockwaves reaching from Narconon's California headquarters to their operations in Minneapolis, and from the Hollywood studios of NBC-TV to, incredibly, the office of U.S. Senator Rudy Buschwitz of Minnesota — who unwittingly provided Scientology with seed money for Narconon.

Confidential Scientology memos, released to *TCR* by former church members, suggest that for three years Narconon has deceived major Twin Cities foundations like General Mills and the McKnight Foundation, as well as the Minnesota Dept. of Corrections and dozens of Minneapolis businesses, into funding a covert recruiting arm for the Church of Scientology.

Narconon was founded in 1966 by ex-heroin addict William Benitez. Since then, Narconon surfaced in prisons from Vacaville in California to Meynard Prison in Missouri.

Narconon-Minnesota describes its program as a "purification rundown" process which

involves vitamins, exercise and saunas to "sweat out impurities in the cells." But members readily admit Narconon's bedrock is the philosophy of L. Ron Hubbard, a former science-fiction writer who confessed: "Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man wanted to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start a religion."

Narconon, while Lotte Seidler insists that Narconon, official adapting Hubbard's ideas, is completely separate from the Church.

Minnesota has been kind to Narconon. It profits from two locations — a 1427 Washington Ave., Mpls street clinic and a unit in the St. Cloud Reformatory for Men. From 1978-80, Narconon-St. Cloud received \$6,200 of Minnesota state funds and over \$55,500 in federal funding to support their drug rehabilitation and communication courses.

But Narconon's appealing menu is not entirely kosher.

Narconon claims to get referrals from local hospitals. Yet, curiously, Narconon seem to be an utter mystery to every major drug clinic in the Twin Cities.

Dr. George Mann, director of St. Mary's Hospital Chemical Dependency Unit in Minneapolis, has never heard of Narconon. Nor has Harry Swift, administrator of Hazeldon's Chemical Dependency section. Nor have the

drug abuse units at St. Joseph's Hospital, St. John's, Abbott-Northwestern, Golden Valley Health Center or the Metropolitan Medical Clinic had contact with Narconon.

The mystery deepened when TCR contacted the Minnesota Chemical Dependency Association, which lists the state's 800 certified chemical dependency practitioners. Certification is based on 1,000 hours of experience and completion of a certified chemical dependency program. According to the Assn., virtually none of Narconon-St. Cloud's "counselors" nor the officials at Narconon-Minneapolis are certified.

William Gonnson, vice-president of Narconon, once the executive director of Narconon-St. Cloud and a former sheet-metal worker, is not listed.

Jon Reisdorf, once the Narconon teacher at St. Cloud and a former dry-cleaning manager, is not listed.

Rick Johnson of Minneapolis, a Narconon senior supervisor and a former draftsman, is not listed.

And what of the Narconon organization itself? The Chemical Dependency Programming Office of Minnesota licenses 76 out-patient clinics in Minnesota. Narconon is not among them.

In addition, the Minnesota Dept. of Welfare licenses 47 local out-patient chemical dependency programs. Surprise — Narconon isn't listed there either. Unless Narconon-Minnesota claims one of several exemptions (such as treating fewer than five addicts at one time), State Licensing Consultant Michael Clawson believes "they would have to get a license." Clawson remembers Narconon-Minnesota officials visiting his division in 1980. They didn't bother to apply, perhaps because licensing would require submission of detailed program descriptions.

"Either they're totally ignorant of custom and law," says Clawson of Narconon, "or they're trying to pull something."

If Narconon is not a licensed clinic, and its "counselors" remain unaccredited with the Chemical Dependency Assn., just who is Narconon?

One thing is certain — the Church of Scientology has more control of the Minnesota drug program than they wish to publicly admit.

Narconon-Minnesota's incorporation papers list their first corporate address as the Grand Ave., Mpls apartment of Narconon official Rick Johnson. According to a 1973 issue of the Scientology magazine, *The Auditor*, Johnson is a "Clear" (Church parlance for a Scientologist who has been "freed of his chronic mental and physical difficulties.")

Johnson's partner on the Narconon board was Lottie Seidler of Minneapolis, a former UPI reporter and admitted Scientologist.

Both Narconon-Minnesota vice-president William Gonnson and Narconon-St. Cloud teacher Jon Reisdorf are listed in the June And both Narconon treasurer Ken Turner and his wife, Narconon president Michele Scalzo, are dedicated Scientologists.

The reason for Narconon's hiding its Scientology links is explained in an astonishing series of internal Scientology memos released by Lorna Levett, for six years the director of a Canadian Scientology mission. A Nov. 23,

1971 letter from Narconon Director Mark Jones talks of "getting Narconon programs in prisons and working to get them in the armed forces. A little later we will start Narconon drug rehab centers in the local communities and route the people on Org or Center lines when we get them off drugs." Org means Scientology organization, and center is a Scientology mission.

Jones urges Scientologists to "emphasize that Narconon is *not* Scientology."

Levett also received a letter from Narconon supervisor Artie Maren, which claimed: "We are expanding the Scientology drug rehabilitation programs, primarily through Narconon. The local rehabilitation centers will bring drug users off drugs and on to the local Mission or Church lines for further training and spiritual counseling." The Church says the letter is a forgery. Levett says, in a sworn affidavit, it is authentic.

Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard himself, in a August 29, 1972 letter, candidly explains that the Scientology "Guardian's Office has been running the Narconon program all over the world." According to Scientology files seized by the F.B.I. in 1977, it was the Guardian's Office — Hubbard's "dirty tricks" branch — which coordinated a national harassment campaign against critics of the church. That campaign, which included burglaries, forging of bomb threats, and eavesdropping on U.S. government offices, led to the conviction in 1978 of nine top Scientology officials.

The best example of Scientology's use of Narconon as a propaganda tool is a memo sent by Narconon official Nancy Batchelder. Titled "Narconon: A Vanguard for Scientology," the memo urges: "O.K. mock up a map of the U.S. (or look at one) and then one by one mock up a little Narconon symbol appearing in the center of each state representing full state support of Narconon. Did you do that? Good! How does that feel, to totally handle the drug problem in the U.S.?"

"Narconon has no competitors," Batchelder says. "In Narconon, we're sort of like pioneers and scouts clearing the way for Scientology tech in the wildest, darkest wilderness, prisons, criminals, drug addicts... the ruins of society. The success of this program will mean a tremendous amount for the rapid expansion of Scientology tech in the world."

In Minnesota, Narconon's obsession with Scientology's "rapid expansion" in the St. Cloud prison, rather than drug rehabilitation, quickly bubbled to the surface.

In an Oct. 22, 1979 report, St. Cloud official Cliff Posthumus noted "a serious incident this quarter regarding Narconon staff getting into side conversations about Scientology." Internal prison memos indicate a Narconon student was removed from the program when "he became steadily more depressed and confused" over Scientology teachings. A case-worker wrote that the inmate "was not deriving any benefit from the program and in fact I believe he was regressing in his ability to think clearly and in his self-image."

Dr. Patrick Stokes, a St. Paul psychiatrist, confirmed in a memo Narconon's "excessive harassment which has been verified by his caseworker in the Narconon program, regard-

ing religious matters and push towards cult-like Scientology customs." Nor was this an isolated case — a memo to St. Cloud's superintendent says that the chaplain discovered "Narconon students in his bible study class have mentioned similar complaints regarding discussions about reincarnation and Scientology."

Martin Carr [his name has been changed here] is a St. Cloud inmate who graduated from all seven Narconon courses. "Narconon is definitely a con," says Carr. "It's a bunch of bullshit. No way it would keep inmates off drugs. They were hiding from the staff and the institution that they were having people read Scientology books."

Carr says Narconon members obscured the word 'Scientology' in prison texts with white-out fluid, and then typed the word 'Narconon' over it.

While Narconon's Lottie Seidler says the group actually "discourages inmates from joining Scientology," Carr insists they "tell inmates they've got programs when you get out. And they'd mention Scientology freely."

"If I yelled that those guys were forcing people into Scientology, an investigation would have gotten started," says Carr. But for many inmates, Narconon was part of a Mutual Agreement Programming contract with the prison. Leaving Narconon on bad terms could add months to their sentence.

Finally in mid-August, St. Cloud officials raided the Narconon office and found, say prison sources, "more than they wanted to know about Scientology literature." An investigation began on Aug. 28, 1981, and by Aug. 31 at 1:30 p.m., a prison meeting was held to deal with Narconon's links to Scientology. St. Cloud officials had had enough. Two weeks ago, Narconon-Minnesota's contract with the Minnesota Dept. of Corrections was terminated and the program kicked out of the prison on 30-days notice.

Narconon's defeat in St. Cloud will come as a shock to over 42 Minneapolis/St. Paul businesses who donated funds for the program. Did the Narconon fundraisers mention their ties to Scientology? "If they had," says the manager of Deakne Hardware, "I wouldn't have agreed to contribute."

The owner of Ideal Sandwich shop says, "There was no mention of Scientology. I had the impression that Narconon was similar to Alcoholics Anonymous." And the manager of Campus Travel in Minneapolis seethes. "No mention was made of Scientology. Hey, I'm against things like the Moonies and mind-control. I didn't know Narconon had anything to do with religion."

But Campus Travel was small fish compared to the General Mills Foundation, which awarded Narconon a \$1,500 grant for St. Cloud. The Foundation was never told about Scientology. Nor was the Curt Carlson Foundation (\$200) or the American Lutheran Church Women (\$2,500).

But Narconon's biggest score was the plywood tycoon who contributed their seed money. That donor was U.S. Sen. Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota.

Boschwitz's Senate office confirms he donated \$200 for Narconon in 1976, with an additional \$940 over the next two years. Nar-

conon fund-raiser Lottie Seidler remembers Boschwitz's generosity. "Rudy Boschwitz was my first cash contribution. He sent the check with a note. 'Here's my contribution for Narconon. And here's a list of people you might ask for contributions. You can say I suggested it. If there's anyone on the list you don't have the courage to call,' he wrote, 'call me and I'll ask them for you.'"

Boschwitz, reached at his Washington office, insists that Narconon never told him of their link to Scientology. "It would have affected my decision, yes."

Said Boschwitz legislative aide Tom Mason, "Who was aware of Scientology in 1976? You're not going to get Rudy to back Scientology." Mason notes the Narconon donations were a very small part of Boschwitz's estimated \$56,000 gifts to charity in 1976.

Of course, Sen. Boschwitz has the right to support any charity he pleases, whether it be Muscular Dystrophy or the Sacred Cult of the Divine Grape. But the impact of Boschwitz' donation was far out of proportion to its size.

Narconon mentioned Sen. Boschwitz's donations in their grant requests to both the McKnight Foundation and H. B. Fuller of Minneapolis. Neither company was told of Narconon's link to Scientology. McKnight gave \$3,000. H. B. Fuller gave \$2,500.

Most frighteningly, Boschwitz's donation may have protected the St. Cloud program from criticism. Says one prison official, "the staff of St. Cloud thought they might have potential trouble if they kicked Narconon out of their institution, because they thought Rudy Boschwitz supported it."

As a result, an unaccredited drug program featuring unaccredited chemical dependency counselors operated at St. Cloud prison long after its ties to Scientology surfaced.

Narconon's effectiveness in St. Cloud is difficult to determine. Astonishingly, no records were kept on the use of drugs by Narconon students. And Crime Control Board reports show Narconon-St. Cloud attendance often falling "far below" the contracted goals of the program.

But in Michigan, where Corrections Dept. psychologist John Hand called Narconon "so misleading as to be termed a 'con,'" a 1980

prison study concluded "graduates of the Narconon program do not do as well as our population in general."

Palo Alto, California's 1977 evaluation of Narconon pointed out the program's staff had failed to accompany addicts to hospitals as required, did not collect urinalysis when required by contract, never submitted follow-up reports, "did not provide access to client files," and did not "establish any sort of working relationship" with other drug abuse clinics. The Report said other drug counselors had "serious doubts about the competency of Narconon Palo Alto."

Still, Narconon Palo Alto charged fees called "probably prohibitive," averaging \$50/hour for the 75-125 hours spent on the "purification rundown." Fees reached as high as \$1,495 per addict. Other agencies didn't refer clients to Narconon due to the "relationship between NPA and the Church of Scientology." Citing a "low level of performance," the city terminated Narconon in 1977.

Narconon literature calls their Purification Rundown process, available in Minnesota for approximately \$1,102, "like a cleansing flow of pure spring water." But an evaluation of Narconon's LA. program conducted by Dr. Forest Tennant, PhD. for the California Dept. of Health found otherwise.

Dr. Tennant charged that Narconon's detoxification procedures "are without proper medical supervision and may be dangerous." He called claims for an 86 percent cure rate "misleading" and "simply not true."

Former Narconon students say the rundown involves massive doses of niacin - often as much as 2,000 to 5,000 milligrams per day. Health agencies note the recommended daily allowance of niacin is 17 to 21 milligrams. Dr. Tennant told the Health Dept. that Narconon's megavitamin detoxification of addicts "may be hazardous and, in some cases, lethal."

Yet Narconon's plans for growth in the Twin Cities continue. A recent Narconon-Minnesota newsletter notes "the school year is about to begin again. If you are a parent that would like to see a drug education lecture given, perhaps this is something you would like to bring up at a PTA meeting." The newsletter says Narconon presented a project for

Idaho high-school students. "The probable result will be that Narconon will then be put into the whole public school system at Idaho. Let's try to make Minnesota the next state to do this."

The loss of Narconon's showplace in St. Cloud, and the federal and state funds that went with it, has wounded Scientology and its hopes for a "drug program." But while Narconon may have lost the battle in Minnesota, they're winning the war in Hollywood.

Last month, NBC-TV devoted \$5 million worth of network airtime for the anti-drug campaign, "Get High On Yourself." Filmed by producer Robert Evans, the Campaign featured celebrities like Henry Winkler and Cheryl Tiegs.

But there are disturbing hints that the "Get High" campaign is being exploited - some say controlled - by Scientology for its own ends.

The chairwoman of "Get High" is actress Cathy Lee Crosby, described as the hostess of TV's "That's Incredible." But the Sept. 1979 issue of Scientology's *Auditor* magazine lists Crosby as a Scientology "Clear." Last year, Crosby testified before the U.S. Senate committee on Narcotics Abuse to extol the virtues of a "purification program" she had taken, called Narconon. "I did the program myself and it was so fantastic. I wanted to get it out into the world," says Crosby.

Press queries to NBC-TV are referred to Crosby's agent Kathie Wasserman, described as the executive director of the Get High On Yourself Foundation. But Wasserman has other responsibilities. The June 1977 issue of the *Auditor* lists her as a Scientology student in Los Angeles' Celebrity Center. Scientology critics fear that the estimated \$6 million raised by "Get High" may be nourishing Scientology's power rather than drug programs.

The tragedy of Narconon and "Get High" is that, in the words of Dr. Forest Tennant, "public money is being used for purposes other than drug rehabilitation" while vital medical care for drug abusers "may be gravely delayed or omitted." □

#### NBC - GET HIGH ON YOURSELF

NBC says they were unaware of any connection between Get High on Yourself and Scientology. Rona Barrett on the Today Show commented on the connection and quoted a statement made by Paulette Cooper. That evening NBC "handled it" on That's Entertainment. They, NBC, would never knowingly have given free time to publicize and promote any political, philosophical or religious group. See related article Narconon Sting.

#### READERS DIGEST ARTICLE RESPONSE

The Readers Digest article Sept. 1981, Scientology: The Sickness Spreads has generated about 400 inquiries. Many who write or call are wives of Scientologists. They say their husbands have given money, saved for specific needs, to Scientology for training. The fanatical desire to continue Scientology courses and the alienation, if the partner disapproves, is destroying many marriages.

FROM - Citizens Freedom Fndn.  
newsletter - Nov. 1981

former name of  
Cult Awareness Network.