

## Ex-Scientologists detail grim lifestyle

By JOHN HARWOOD  
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CLEARWATER — Life at the Church of Scientology's Fort Harrison Hotel was so miserable, Lori Taverna remembered Thursday, that "I felt that I was in . . . an insane asylum."

Casey Kelly recalled being distressed by the hard work and low pay.

"Here I was, working 70 to 80 hours a week, and I was making \$20," Kelly said. "This did not jive."

Eventually both Kelly, 23, and Ms. Taverna, 39, quit Scientology. Thursday they testified before Clearwater city commissioners during the second day of public hearings into activities of the Clearwater-based church. Hearings resume at 9 a.m. today and are scheduled to end May 15.

**THE PROCEEDINGS** also featured more testimony from the former L. Ron Hubbard Jr. (now known as Ron DeWolf), the son and namesake of Scientology's reclusive 71-year-old founder.

"Scientology is a money and power game," charged DeWolf. At another point, he attacked the "scam and the con and the fraud" in his father's religion.

For the second consecutive day, church officials chose not to respond directly to the sweeping charges leveled against it.

"The whole thing has become a farce," said Paul B. Johnson, the church's Tampa lawyer. Johnson did not attend the hearings, but said, "From what I understand, there really has been nothing but vague generalities."

The commission's stated goal in the hearings is to investigate Scientology activities here to determine whether ordinances are needed to regulate the church.

But on Thursday, as on Wednesday, much of the testimony consisted of broadly stated criticism of alleged Scientology abuses outlined by Boston lawyer Michael J.

Flynn in a report to the city last year.

**SOME STATEMENTS**, witnesses admitted, were not based on first-hand knowledge of church operations in

Clearwater.

Ms. Taverna, for example, asserted that "education is discouraged very much in Scientology," and criticized the conditions under which her children were taught in

church-run schools in Los Angeles.

But she conceded that she had no direct knowledge of how the children of Scientologists are educated in Clearwater.

Asked whether children here are being deprived of education here, Ms. Taverna replied, "I positively think so, but I don't know."

After the hearing adjourned at 4:35 p.m., Mayor Charles LeCher acknowledged the vagueness of some of the testimony.

LeCher vowed that, "From now on, we are going to get more specific. We are going to have to prove that these specific things did happen" in Clearwater.

The bulk of Thursday's testimony came from Ms. Taverna and Kelly.

**MS. TAVERNA**, a New York City resident and mother of three, ended 14 years as an active Scientologist when she left Clearwater in December 1979.

Though most Scientologists regard a visit to the Fort Harrison Hotel as "like going to heaven," to Ms. Taverna the experience was hellish, she testified.

She first came to Clearwater — known as "Flag Land Base" in Scientology jargon — in June 1978, she said. The initial shock came as soon as she reached her room at the Fort Harrison.

Inside the room there were 10 beds. Luggage was all over the floor, and there was no walking space, Ms. Taverna said.

During the 1978 visit and another one in 1979, Ms. Taverna described being at once anguished and captivated by her failure to reach spiritual "states" that the church had promised. The promise of "relief" through further Scientology experiences drove her futilely to remain in the church, she said.

Meanwhile, Ms. Taverna joined Scientology's elite corps

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### Times DIGEST

#### Scientology hearings on TV today, tonight

Vision Cable, Channel 18 in Clearwater and Belleair, will present live coverage of the Clearwater City Commission hearings on Scientology beginning at 9 a.m. today. The coverage will be rebroadcast starting at 9 p.m. today. The public may go to City Hall to watch the hearings in person, or they may watch them on TV monitors in the City Hall Annex and the Clearwater Public Library.

# St. Petersburg Times

## clearwater times

EDITION

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## Scientology

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of volunteers known as the Sea Organization. She recalled being pressured by church officials to follow a rigid schedule of counseling other Scientologists in her role as a church "auditor."

DEVIATION FROM the schedule resulted in stern disciplinary measures, Ms. Taverna said.

The stress caused her to become physically ill, she said. After one "grilling" by a church official, "I was throwing up," she said, and her arthritis was aggravated.

"I felt as if I was going insane," Ms. Taverna recalled.

When Ms. Taverna decided that she wanted out, she feared mistreatment if she left. Though no one

directly told her so, she said that, "I felt that I was a prisoner."

Finally, Ms. Taverna testified, "I felt that if I didn't leave at that point I would physically die." She said she took a taxi to Tampa International Airport, cowered in terror while waiting for her plane, then flew to New York.

But her departure was so "terrifying," she said, that she flew back to Clearwater the next day. She was disciplined, she said.

"It got worse and worse and worse ... my physical state, my mental state," she recalled, until she left for good in December 1979.

And even after that, Scientology's hold on her was so strong that she considered herself a Scientologist until two months ago, Ms. Taverna testified.

**KELLY, ON the other hand,**

quit Scientology in October 1980. He had spent three years as a church employee in Clearwater.

The Portland, Ore. native said he was embittered that he worked 70 to 80 hours a week for the church for little pay. At one point, when his only pay beyond room and board was \$8.60 a week, about the only indulgence he could afford was pipe tobacco, he complained.

He complained that food provided employees was often "low quality," and that he was forced to bed down in a large but cramped room containing bunks for 54 men.

Mayor LeCher was struck by the number of people sharing one room.

"It's got to be a health hazard," LeCher said to Kelly.

But Kelly, who since leaving Scientology has joined the Navy, said living conditions at the Fort Harrison

were similar to those he experienced recently on a naval vessel.

Kelly said he decided to quit the church while taking a vacation from Clearwater. His brother and others he talked to asked him why he was working so hard for so little money, he said. He finally realized that it wasn't worth it, he said.

**CURRENTLY ON "liberty"** from his naval duty, Kelly said he was testifying for "the chance to get back at Scientology.

"I feel like I got the short end of the stick for those three years," he said.

Kelly's testimony was punctuated frequently by quips that drew laughter from the audience. After tolerating the humor for a while, LeCher stopped it.

"We don't want to make this a farce," the mayor said. "This is serious."



**CASEY KELLY**

... long hours, low pay.



**LORI TAVERNA**

... "education is discouraged."