

## Scientologists charge *Sun* reporter with bias

By HOWARD FRENCH  
Sun staff writer

Church of Scientology public affairs director Richard Haworth has accused *Clearwater Sun* Managing Editor Samuel E. Fenton and staff writer George-Wayne Shelor of attempting to break into the church's Clearwater headquarters earlier this month, after attending a sect press conference.

As a result of the alleged break-in attempt and other "bizarre actions" on Shelor's part, Haworth said the reporter is banned from church property and is allowed to communicate with him only in

writing.

Shelor has written a series of stories over the past eight months examining the sect's activities.

Friday, Haworth lashed out at Shelor for what he called the reporter's "criminal" connections.

"Basically, George-Wayne Shelor is working for two people," he said, "not just the *Clearwater Sun* but someone else. I don't know who that other person is, but it could very well be Michael Flynn—or some other criminal."

Flynn is a Boston attorney who, as a representative of former Scientologists,

has filed 25 suits against the sect, and assisted Clearwater officials in drafting laws to regulate non-profit organizations, including the sect. Scientologists have accused Flynn of forging a \$2 million check to discredit sect founder L. Ron Hubbard.

Haworth also called Shelor a "high school dropout who has lied to me, invaded the privacy of our parishioners and engaged in other bizarre activities." And, he said, Shelor has "brought all this (criticism) on himself."

Allegations about an attempted break-in, along with several other accusations,

came in an Aug. 22 letter addressed to *Clearwater Sun* Publisher Richard W. Cosgrove. According to Haworth, a sect security guard purportedly noticed the alleged break-in attempt as Fenton and Shelor were leaving an Aug. 15 press conference held in the former Fort Harrison Hotel's Crystal Ballroom.

"After the press conference was concluded, Mr. Shelor and Mr. Fenton left the building ostensibly to return to the *Sun's* offices," the letter states. "They both were spotted a little later trying to gain unauthorized access to the Fort

Harrison by yanking on a locked side door. When approached by one of our security guards and asked if he could help them, Mr. Shelor replied, 'Yes, you can tie my shoe.'"

The letter went on to accuse Shelor of consistently misquoting Haworth and other sect spokesmen, of entering the sect's bookstore without identifying himself as a reporter and of calling a radio talk show to question Scientology International President Heber Jentzsch, also without identifying himself.

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### \* Sect

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In response, Fenton said he and Shelor were startled on the day of the press conference when they were confronted by the sect's security guard on the public sidewalk in front of the former hotel. Fenton said they had ducked out of the wind briefly into the shelter of the doorway to light cigarettes, and made no attempt to regain entry to the building they had emerged from only moments before.

"The allegations are absolutely false," he said. "We were not trying in any way to enter the Fort Harrison Hotel—just trying to light a cigarette on a windy day."

As for Shelor's activities at the bookstore and on the radio program, Fenton said the reporter committed no breach of conduct in either case.

"I have full confidence in Mr. Shelor's reporting abilities," he said, "and he will continue to report news of general interest about the Church of Scientology. And while I find the church's attempts to

muzzle Mr. Shelor a bit childish, we will continue to present a balanced view of all news relating to the Church of Scientology."

Haworth stopped short of saying he intends to file a formal complaint with police over the incident, but said he is turning the matter over to the sect's attorneys.

But sect attorney Paul Johnson minimized the issue, saying he is sure his clients have no intention of pressing charges against the two men.

"I would never recommend such a thing," he said. "My relationship with (Shelor) is very good ... and I've found him to be very fair and to quote me accurately."

Johnson said he could understand how Haworth might "express frustration" over Shelor's "flip response" to the sect's security guard, but added he does not believe the church intends to pursue the matter further.

"Now that everyone has had his say," he said, "I hope to see both sides get along with each other."