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Former Scientology Archivist Tells of 'Paranoid' Flight From Church

By MYRNA OLIVER, Times Staff Writer

A former Church of Scientology archivist described for a Los Angeles judge on Friday his "paranoid" leave-taking from the organization after his realization that church founder L. Ron Hubbard was not the heroic scientist he claimed to be.

The church is suing to recover thousands of pages of Hubbard's personal papers that it claims Gerald Armstrong took illegally to use in lawsuits against the group. Armstrong testified for the second day in his own defense in the non-jury trial before Superior Court Judge Paul G. Breckenridge Jr.

With the encouragement of church-hired Hubbard biographer Omar Garrison, Armstrong said he and his wife, Jocelyn, planned to leave the group and began surreptitiously moving personal items out of their room in the Los Angeles Scientology headquarters because they feared church reprisals.

Obtained Documents Later

Armstrong said members who quit routinely were locked up or forced to sign confessions of crimes or statements that they owed the church money.

During his final 10 days with the group in December, 1981, Armstrong said, he copied as many documents as possible and gave them to Garrison for use in the Hubbard biography, which they both realized would not win church approval.

Armstrong denied keeping any documents as he and his wife fled in Garrison's truck to the author's home in Utah and then on to Canada to visit Armstrong's parents.

He later obtained some of the documents, believing he needed them to defend himself against the church's declaration that he was a "suppressed person" because

of theft and rumormongering about Hubbard, Armstrong told the judge.

Over the course of several months, Armstrong said, he and Garrison concluded that the questioned documents showed so many discrepancies in Hubbard's life that, in Garrison's words, the book "would never see the light of print." But he said Garrison continued working on an "honest" biography.

The author has since reached an out-of-court settlement with the church, agreeing not to write the book and to return all documents in his possession.

Describing his disillusionment prompted by documents showing that Hubbard had not achieved the war heroism and scientific achievements he claimed, Armstrong said:

"Previously I had felt, though I knew the organization engaged in lies and frauds, they were excused in my mind because they were done to counter the attack of the enemy.

'There Was an Enemy'

"It was very clear in my mind, in the first eight to nine years, there was an enemy out to destroy mankind, out to destroy civilization, out to get Mr. Hubbard and destroy his reputation.

"After 1981, I began to see the destruction of anyone didn't resolve any problems. In fact there was no enemy. In fact all the lies Mr. Hubbard and the organization had been engaged in were simply to give him wealth and power, and I wanted no part of that."

Armstrong has estimated that the five boxes of documents that are in the court's possession pending outcome of the trial represent only 2% of the Hubbard materials he collected.