

Sect info gathered here spurs probes

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Several former high-ranking Church of Scientology officials have provided state, federal and municipal law enforcement investigators with detailed information regarding the Clearwater-based sect's alleged criminal activities in the Tampa Bay area, the *Clearwater Sun* has learned.

Although the same testimony provided to investigators in Clearwater has furthered large-scale criminal investigations in Canada and resulted in court rulings against the sect in California, no similar action has been implemented in the Clearwater area, a seven-month *Sun* inquiry has determined.

And Gerald Armstrong, one of the witnesses who provided local investigators with information regarding possible criminal activity by Scientologists, said Friday a reason for the apparent inactivity by law enforcement agencies is that investigations may have been compromised by the sect.

The *Sun* has learned that the witnesses earlier this year gave sworn testimony to representatives of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the FBI, the Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney's Office, the Clearwater

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Police Department and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

The OPP is presently involved in a massive criminal investigation of the sect in Canada, and only Clearwater police and the state attorney's office would acknowledge an on-going investigation, but neither agency would reveal the scope or specifics of their investigations.

Spokesmen for the FDLE, the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office in Tampa all said they could neither confirm nor deny probes into the sect's activities.

However it appears a January Department of Justice probe into an alleged sect scheme to compromise a Tampa federal judge—detailed in a January 22 *Sun* report—is either inactive or has been abandoned. And to date, investigators have not interviewed some of the Clearwater businessmen who were the target of a related Scientology operation which was acknowledged by sect lawyers in court documents.

Laurel Sullivan, the 34-year-old former personal secretary of Sci-
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entology's reclusive founder L. Ron Hubbard, spent three days in Clearwater in late January, detailing for investigators the alleged illegal financial network the sect developed to funnel millions of dollars from the sect to the personal bank accounts of Hubbard.

"I was there for three-and-a-half days talking with the attorney general's office (actually the state attorney) the Clearwater police and the Ontario Provincial Police's anti-racketeering squad," Miss Sullivan told the *Sun* Friday. "I was granted immunity for my testimony on the fraudulent activities ... on the part of the church and LRH (Hubbard)," she said. Miss Sullivan said the information she gave law enforcement officials in Clearwater paralleled testimony she gave to a California court last month.

"Largely the discussions (in Clearwater) were on banks, bank accounts, the diversion of funds (from the sect to Hubbard) and RRF (Religious Research Foundation, a Scientology corporation which she says was instrumental in the transfer of funds out of the country.)"

Miss Sullivan was with Hubbard in Clearwater "around the clock, seven days a week" when he made the city the sect's international headquarters in 1975.

She said she told local investigators of the sect's infiltration of the city and local agencies, its "dirty tricks" and operations against persons such as then-Mayor Gabe Cazares.

"I was under heavy security while in Clearwater, I was in fear for my life, and I was surrounded by three bodyguards," she recalled of the January meetings. "The Canadians had a list of 181 questions and we covered all of that and other questions (local investigators) had. We covered all aspects (of sect financial organizations and operations.)"

Ironically, Miss Sullivan—who at the time had recently fled the sect and was a secret witness whose life was in danger—was sequestered in the Sheraton Sand Key at the same time lawyers and reporters from throughout Florida were attending a Media-Law convention. She said she has not been contacted by Tampa Bay area authorities since January, although recent court rulings against the Church of Scientology were based, in part, on her testimony.

Armstrong, one of Hubbard's intimates, and Armstrong's wife, Jocelyn, also provided informa-

tion to local investigators, although he was reluctant to talk about the interviews Friday.

"I'm not sure about the agreement I made with the legal bodies involved," he explained. "I don't know what I'm allowed to say or not to say."

However the *Sun* has learned Armstrong and his wife testified about information similar to Miss Sullivan's while staying for several days at a Clearwater hotel under assumed names.

Armstrong was exonerated last month in a California civil trial of taking thousands of Scientology-related documents, recordings and papers which implicate the sect and Hubbard in various misrepresentations and covert operations. Miss Sullivan also testified at Armstrong's six-week trial.

And although Armstrong declined to talk about what he testified to in Clearwater, he did have a theory as to why local investigators have made no charges, no arrests, and no grand jury has been empaneled subsequent to his testimony. He, too, said local investigators have not followed up the earlier interviews with him.

Armstrong—who as Scientology archivist and 11-year intimate of Hubbard was privy to the innermost secrets and operations in the organization—suspects the sect may have been able to quash criminal investigations by compiling "personal and confidential information" on investigators.

"You have to understand one thing right up front about the Church of Scientology," Armstrong said Friday. "The organization has accumulated in its archives, intelligence information on government activities, bureaus, agencies, departments and personnel including the CIA, the FBI, the IRS and the Justice Department. They have accumulated this information over the past 30 years using thousands of operatives and deep-cover 'moles.'

"(The operatives) have compiled information to be used to compromise and blackmail agencies and individuals," Armstrong said. "We know of instances where (the sect) has suppressed (television) network stories, so if they can squash a network story, think what else they are capable of doing."

"At (local investigation) level, there are people who (Scientology) definitely has intelligence on, so they have leverage at that level," Armstrong said. "(The Scientologists) are probably pressuring an individual who should be pressuring them."