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## Scientists Converge on Portland for Protest

### Thousands to Assail Award of \$39 Million to Ex-Member in Suit

By JAN KLUNDER,  
*Times Staff Writer*

Several thousand members of the Church of Scientology are planning to converge on Portland, Ore., today and Monday to protest a jury's \$39-million damage award to a former church member, who claimed that she was defrauded out of \$3,253 by the group.

The Rev. Kathleen Gorgon, president of the Church of Scientology of California, said that several hundred members left Saturday from the church's Hollywood headquarters by car, bus, train and plane to join others from around the world in a "crusade for religious freedom."

The United Airlines pilots' strike made it difficult for some Scientologists to fly to Portland. An Amtrak spokesman said the church had requested 700 seats on a morning train from Los Angeles to Portland, but the rail line was only able to accommodate 180. The spokesman said Amtrak was attempting to route others through the San Joaquin Valley.

#### Permit for Vigil Sought

Sgt. Jack Fawcett of the Portland Police Bureau confirmed that the church is seeking city permission to hold a candlelight vigil for several nights, beginning Monday, in the park across the street from the Multnomah County Courthouse. Fawcett said he has been told that the group will number between 10,000 and 500,000, but the permit cannot be issued until City Hall opens Monday morning.

The protest was sparked late Friday, when a Multnomah County jury ordered Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard and the church to pay \$39 million in general and

Please see CHURCH, Page 15



Associated Press

Julie Christofferson Titchbourne after award by jury.

## CHURCH: Scientologists Plan Protest

Continued from Page 1

punitive damages to Julie Christoferson Titchbourne, 27, of Portland, who was a member of the church from July, 1975, to April, 1976.

Titchbourne had alleged that the church cheated her out of \$3,253 in course fees and literature by falsely claiming that Scientology was an exact science that could improve her eyesight, communication skills, intelligence and creativity.

Titchbourne said church officials also falsely maintained that Hubbard, a science-fiction writer, had degrees in engineering and nuclear physics. She said that she was attracted to the group in part because she had planned to study those two subjects in college and that the money she lost represented her "entire college savings."

"I'm really happy about the award," Titchbourne said in a telephone interview Saturday. "It's fulfilled all my expectations in the justice system."

The Rev. Heber Jentzsch, president of Scientology International, said the church will ask the judge who presided over the trial to overturn the jury's decision in the next 10 days. If Judge Donald Londer refuses, Jentzsch said the church will appeal the verdict to the Oregon Court of Appeals or the Oregon Supreme Court on the grounds that Scientology teachings are religious and should be protected by the First Amendment.

Gorgon asserted that the trial was orchestrated by the U.S. government, particularly the Internal Revenue Service, to discredit the

church.

"This is a bizarre plot to destroy the church," Gorgon said. "They (the jurors) decided that religion as practiced by Scientology is not protected by the Constitution.

"Throughout the case, we demonstrated beyond a doubt the government's involvement in a conspiracy against the church. Evidence was presented that showed the plaintiff's witnesses acted as agents for the government."

Titchbourne's attorney, Garry McMurry, said the jury found that the church's statements were made for a "wholly secular purpose" and, therefore, were not protected by the First Amendment. McMurry said during the trial that the secular purpose was "to get people's

money."

Friday's jury award was the latest round in an eight-year legal battle between the church and Titchbourne, who first filed suit in 1977. In 1979, a jury awarded her \$2 million in damages, but the judgment was overturned by the Oregon Court of Appeals, which ordered the second trial.

McMurry praised the award Saturday, saying it would deter other "deceitful" groups that operate under the cover of religious freedom.

"We had six witnesses who had been in the hierarchy of the church who testified about how widespread the rip-off is," he said.

Titchbourne said she became disillusioned with the group in April, 1976, after her parents reached a former member of a religious cult to "deprogram" her.

"He supplied me with a lot of information about Scientology that

I had not been able to read while in the organization—their practices in other countries, how they had grown," Titchbourne said.

Gorgon labled the award a "viciously punitive assault on an established and recognized religion and religious institution." She said Scientology is a religion that seeks to "improve someone's outlook. A person has the right to believe in whatever he wants to."

Gorgon asserted that, when Titchbourne underwent deprogramming, she was "held in a house for four days where the windows were boarded up. When she came out, she no longer liked Scientology."

McMurry said Titchbourne plans to use a part of the award to finance a nonprofit organization that will study "destructive cults."

The Church of Scientology is no stranger to legal battles.

A libel suit filed by the church against Boston attorney Michael J. Flynn was dismissed by a Los Angeles federal judge in April because the reclusive Hubbard, last seen in public in 1980, failed to appear at a court-ordered deposition.

Last September, the U.S. Tax Court in Washington denied tax-exempt status to the California branch of the church and ordered officials to pay \$1.4 million in back taxes and penalties. The court said Scientology had "made a business of selling religion."

In 1983, several members received jail terms after convictions for their roles in a four-year conspiracy to steal documents from the IRS, the Justice Department and the U.S. attorney's office. Church members responded that the federal government was harassing the group.