

Court hears final Scientology tape

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Jurors in the Church of Scientology fraud trial Tuesday listened to the last of five hours of surreptitiously-taped conversations in which a former Scientologist talked about a plan to "transform" church leadership by filing suit to take managerial control.

"I think both of us want the organization to be transformed into something decent," Gerald D. Armstrong told a Scientologist who was involved in the effort to discredit Armstrong as a court witness by making tapes of the conversations without Armstrong's knowledge.

In tapes made late in 1984 and played to a Multnomah County Circuit Court jury last week, Armstrong discussed the possibility of planting false documents in church records and said he had the ability to produce such records.

In the final two recorded meetings, Armstrong made little mention of phony documents and said he "wouldn't touch" an idea posed by his questioner about writing false materi-

als on the letterhead of a private investigator, whom Armstrong believed was pursuing him on behalf of the church. As it turned out, the private investigator was the one making the tapes.

Armstrong said on the tapes that he thought a lawsuit should be filed contesting financial control of the church, which he contended was spending church money on "illegal things."

"Philosophically, I see it has to be transformed," Armstrong said of church leadership. The last three hours of tapes were offered as evidence by attorneys for a woman suing the church to show the full context of the surreptitious tapes involving Armstrong.

Armstrong, who spent two years gathering material for a biography of L. Ron Hubbard, the church's founder, left the church in December 1981 after concluding that many of Hubbard's claims about his educational, military and professional background were false.

He appeared as a witness on behalf of Julie Christofferson Titchbourne, a Portland woman who alleges that she

relied on some of those representations to become involved with Scientology during a nine-month period ending in 1976.

"I put my whole life into that thing," Armstrong said of Scientology during a tape played Tuesday, referring to 13 years he spent with the organization. "I have a higher commitment to truth than I do to some label."

The defense contends that Armstrong left the church after he and others failed to wrest control of it late in 1981 and that he subsequently conspired with others to attempt to depose church leadership.

At the end of his two weeks on the stand Tuesday, Armstrong testified from church documents about a "Gerry Armstrong project" within the church to monitor his activities following his departure. "We still need to know what he's up to," one document said.

In March 1984, he was contacted by his ex-wife, a high-ranking Scientologist, who wrote that she wanted to gain information about his activities.