

8-10-89

# Ex-Member Defies Gag Order, Speaks Out Against Scientology

**TAMPA, Fla. (AP)** — A former member of the Church of Scientology is defying church lawyers and a federal judge by publicly alleging that the church held her captive and committed fraud by promising to cure her mental illness.

Margery Wakefield, 41, is prohibited under a 1986 federal court settlement from speaking out against the cult, which has its spiritual headquarters in Clearwater.

But she says she is ignoring the gag order so she can expose church practices and warn potential members of what she sees as dangers.

Ms. Wakefield spent 12 years in the church before suing in 1982, charging that Scientologists held her captive, committed fraud, broke their promises to cure her mental illness and practiced medicine without a license. Four years later, Scientology officials paid her \$200,000 in return for her silence.

At the request of church lawyers, U.S. District Judge Elizabeth A. Kovachevich reinforced the settlement in May, but Ms. Wakefield has ignored the ruling and the church has asked the judge to find her in criminal contempt.

Ms. Wakefield contends that Scientology is a dangerous cult, based on occult practices and mind control. It stole 12 years of her life and pulled her away from the psychiatric help she really needed, she said.

"I'm prepared to go to jail," she

told the Orlando Sentinel Tuesday in an interview in Tampa. "In fact, it may not be the worst thing. It would be an act that would get a lot of attention, and my purpose is to raise the awareness of people in this area about this church."

Church spokesman Bill Daugherty dismissed the controversy Ms. Wakefield has raised.

"This one gal," he said, "she's not really any concern. She's an unstable person—she's been in and out of mental hospitals. I don't know what her deal is."

Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard, a writer of science fiction. His 1950 book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health" is the bible of the Church of Scientology. He called Scientology "applied religious philosophy" and said its practice could increase intelligence, improve behavior and unlock the secrets of life.

Ms. Wakefield said she became a church member in 1968, while she was recovering from a nervous breakdown at the University of Michigan.

From the beginning, she said, she was hypnotized and brainwashed by the church. Scientology gained control of her mind and will during hours-long sessions in which she would repeatedly answer questions, stare at an everyday object or repeatedly perform routine tasks.

After years of such treatments,

she suffered intense headaches, paranoia and nightmares. "I started just going down the tubes," she said.

Scientology leaders feared she was a suicide risk, Ms. Wakefield said, and feared she could bring bad publicity. They locked her in a room for two weeks and finally put her on a plane to Madison, Wis., to rejoin her family, she said.

Later, she said, Scientologists tracked her down and held her for three days, forcing her to sign an agreement promising not to sue the church in exchange for a \$16,000 check. She used the money to repay her father, who had loaned her money for many of the church's expensive sessions, she said.

In 1982, she filed her lawsuit, resulting in the gag order.

Since leaving the church, Ms. Wakefield had been in and out of mental institutions 14 times in four years, mainly for depression. She blames the false promises of Scientology for keeping her from the psychiatric care she says she really needed.

She is now working with Cult Awareness Network, a national group which uses her to warn potential Scientologists away from the church.

"My biggest hope," she said, "is that something can be done about Scientology so that other people don't have to go through what I've gone through. It's been a horrible experience."

## Scientologists Continue Expansion In Florida Town

**CLEARWATER, Fla. (AP)** — The City Commission here has approved a site plan for a three-story addition on Clearwater Harbor property owned by the Church of Scientology, now the city's fourth largest property owner.

The preliminary document was sent to city planners late Thursday after a testy public hearing involving proponents and opponents.

Scientologists moved their reli-

gious headquarters to Clearwater in 1975 when they bought the old Fort Harrison Hotel. The group has since bought 11 other Clearwater properties, bringing total property values to \$21.5 million.

Proponents argued that Scientology helps people overcome drug and mental health problems. Opponents said it is a brainwashing cult that is taking over the city.

"It is the most honest and compassionate religion I've ever known," said Steve Luttler, who has been a member for 25 years.

But former Scientologist Lisa Hyatt, 26, spoke of a religion that worked her 22 hours a day and took over her mind.

"I still have nightmares. It's what happens to your brain when they reach that deep into you," she said.