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TIMES ■ SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1991 11A

SCIENTOLOGY'S CHILDREN

Saving the world

Scientists believe they are freeing the world from insanity, war and crime.

"Saving the world is an understatement," said former member Kenneth Wasserman. "Saving the universe" is more like it, he said. This intense sense of purpose explains why some Scientists are willing to work 12-hour days for \$30 a week. Others pay up to \$800 for an hour of counseling, and one couple

bought a \$35,000 counseling package.

Critics say this sense of mission has another consequence: Next to saving the world, caring for children may not seem so important. "Scientology comes first and everything else is off-purpose," said former Scientist Vicki Aznaran, who is suing the organization. "Parents who want to spend time with their children are looked down on. It's

not socially acceptable."

In fact, former members say Scientists view children as "adults in small bodies," who don't need much attention.

Scientology spokesman Richard Haworth denies that the "adults in small bodies" concept exists.

He said the children who live in Scientology-owned staff apartments have a healthy environment. "It is a joy for me to

see (staff) families together," Haworth said. Scientists who aren't on the staff receive counseling and training that "enhances their family relationships," he added.

Given the church's penchant for secrecy, and the strong opinions on both sides, the truth is hard to pin down.

According to the critics, here's the truth: Devotion to Scientology sometimes means . . .

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Little time for children . . .

Eva Kleinberg moved from Germany to Clearwater with her 9-year-old son, Mark, in 1986. She had joined a group of Scientology staff members called the "Sea Org."

Eva was told she would have two hours a day for family time. But with travel time from work, she said she actually had only one hour with her son. Because of the 12-hour workdays, she couldn't always stay awake for the full hour.

"I would compromise with my son," she said. After eating, she and her son would divide the remaining half-hour of their family time. "I would play a game with him for 15 minutes, and I would get to lay down for 15 minutes and sleep."

While Eva worked, Mark cleaned up around the motel or played with friends.

About a year later, Eva and Mark left the church.

Asked what he thinks of Scientology, Mark, now 14, said, "I don't think it's too good 'cause the people . . . they don't get to spend any time with their family and it's real expensive."

Church spokesman Richard Haworth said staff Scientologists actually spend three or four hours a day with their children, which he said is more than the average family.

■ Adeline Dodd-Bova also left Scientology. She said she got disillusioned after working at Los Angeles schools that catered to Scientology children:

"I started seeing just really blatant neglect . . . terrible cases of children that were not getting any food, they were being sent to school with no food for the entire day."

She was surprised at how strictly people followed the notion that children are adults in small bodies, capable of caring for themselves:

"What they ultimately sometimes end up creating are these children that turn out to be absolute, arrogant spoiled brats because no one can tell them what to do with their body under any circumstances because that's what they have been led to believe — they're totally responsible. So by the time they're 9 or 10, they don't want anyone to tell them what to do."



DODD-BOVA

Parents leave children . . .

■ Ken Rose was in the midst of a Scientology counseling session in the mid-1980s when he realized: "I could never be fully free unless I abandoned my kids, divorced my wife and joined the Sea Org (a group of staff Scientologists)."

Rose said he did divorce his wife and sign the standard billion-year contract to join the Sea Org.

Rose eventually moved from Los Angeles to a Scientology complex at Gilman Hot Springs, Calif., and was allowed to drive back to Los Angeles once a week to visit his two sons. Then he was told regular family leaves would be canceled, he said. So he quit the church.

"In the end, it was the children who brought me to my senses," he said. "Had it not been for the vulnerability of these two kids, I don't know if I would have been brave enough to get myself out."

■ When Bobby Horne was about 7, he went to visit his father and noticed something strange.

His father wasn't there.

Bobby's parents had divorced years before, and he lived with his mother near Atlanta. He normally visited his father every other weekend. But more and more often, Bobby went to his father for a visit and found himself with a babysitter.

Bobby's father had started spending his time at a Scientology center. He became interested after attending a seminar for dentists, sponsored by a consultant with ties to Scientology. Eventually, he sold his practice and joined the Sea Org in Clearwater. As a result, he would see Bobby once or twice a year, instead of every two weeks.

"When his father left, he looked at me one day in tears and he said, 'Mom, how could a dad leave a son like me?'" said his mother, Suzi Horne McPherson.

"And I couldn't answer because here is a straight-A, gifted child who had never been in trouble and never done anything but love his father. And when he said that, I broke into tears and I said, 'Son, they have stolen your father's mind.'"

Bobby still loves his father and has visited him in Clearwater and California, Mrs. McPherson said.

Told of her account, Haworth said, "You have been provided with a half-truth in an attempt to falsely portray a situation in a negative light."

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... and children leave parents

■ Former Scientologist Nan Herst Bowers got this letter from her 21-year-old son, Todd, in April:

*Dear Mom:
I am sending you this letter to let you know that I have to disconnect from you. I feel that disconnecting from you is the right thing to do...*

... I can't see you, the babies or Jim until this is all over and handled.

In another letter, she said her 16-year-old son, Ryan, wrote:

...don't call me, I don't want to talk to you until you ... (settle your problems with the church). What had Mrs. Bowers' done?

The Church of Scientology thought she had told a gossip tabloid that actor Tom Cruise was studying Scientology, she said. The church also thought she had spoken to the *Los Angeles Times*.

So Mrs. Bowers was slapped with a harsh punishment.

She was declared a "suppressive person" — in other words, an enemy of Scientology. She would be shunned by other Scientologists. Scientologists think they won't advance spiritually if they continue to associate with "suppressive persons."

To protect their pathway to spiritual achievement and to obey the organization, Scientologists may "disconnect" from suppressive persons — even if that person happens to be their own mother, Mrs. Bowers said.

Ryan, now 17, acknowledged in a Clearwater court hearing in September that he told his mother he wanted nothing to do with her.

Asked about Mrs. Bowers' case, Scientology spokesman Richard Haworth said she used her children to collect information about celebrities and sold it to sensational tabloid newspapers "to line her own pockets with money at their expense." She denies the accusation.

In a letter to the *St. Petersburg Times* signed by Ryan and his father, Ben Kugler, both of Clearwater, Ryan said he tried to improve his relationship with his mother, who lives in California.

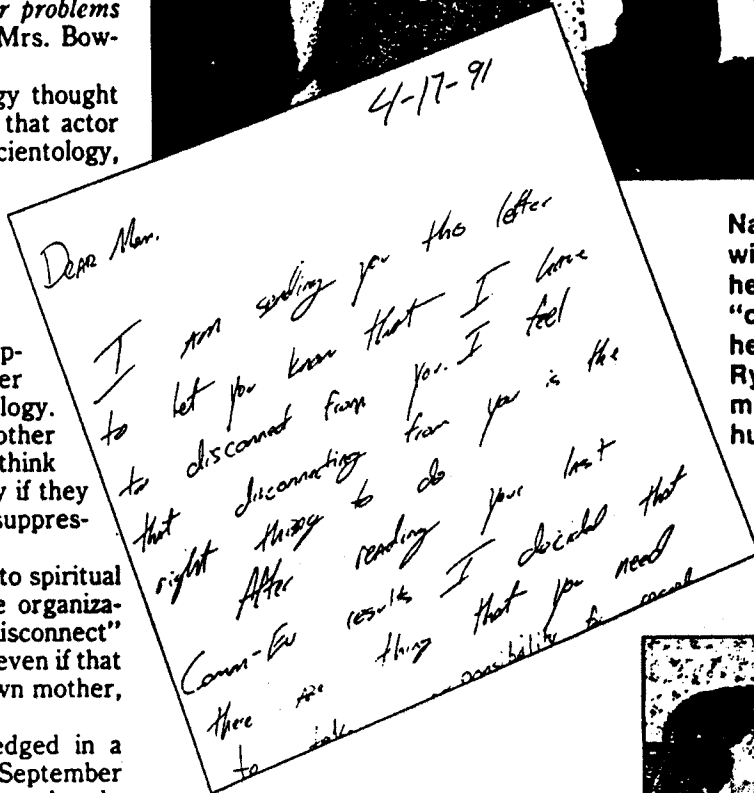
Mrs. Bowers complicated the effort by trying to use "violent criminal deprogrammers" to get him out of Scientology, he wrote.

Asked about the letter, Mrs. Bowers acknowledged that she did hire two people to try to talk to Ryan about the dangers of Scientology. But the meeting never happened. Mrs. Bowers said the men had agreed that Ryan's presence at the meeting was to be purely voluntary — Ryan would be allowed to leave the session at any time.

And Mrs. Bowers denied that the incident was what hurt her relationship with her son. The would-be meeting was



Photo courtesy of Nan Herst Bowers
Nan Herst Bowers posed with her family before her son Todd, far left, "disconnected" from her. The others are Ryan, next to his mother; Brad; and her husband, Jim, right. A photo of L. Ron Hubbard is over Todd's left shoulder. At left is a copy of Todd's letter.



two months after Ryan disconnected.

She said she still has not been able to establish normal relations with her sons.

■ Kenneth Wasserman, a Los Angeles lawyer, often received Scientology counseling in Clearwater. He said he had a close relationship with his daughters, who were raised in the church. But then, in 1989, he told them he was no longer a Scientologist.

Afterward, daughters Jaime and Kelly, then 15 and 13, lived with his ex-wife, visited him only rarely and avoided serious conversation, he said. Wasserman thinks his daughters were told to "disconnect" from him.

He said he hasn't heard from them since February. Father's Day and a birthday passed without even a telephone call. Now, his favorite photo of Jaime and Kelly brings him only pain.

"I'm tired of looking at it because it makes me cry," said Wasserman, who recently settled a lawsuit with the Scientologists about fees he paid to the church.

Haworth called Wasserman's claims "outrageous."



Photo courtesy of Ken Wasserman
Ken Wasserman says this photo of him with daughters Kelly, left, and Jaime, right, makes him cry because they no longer talk to him. Wasserman is holding Lindsey, his daughter from his current marriage.

Children work long hours . . .

Someone at the Church of Scientology called Clearwater police this March to complain about a trespasser. An officer found Carlo D'Aubrey, 15.

Carlo, crying, told the officer he didn't go to school. He had just quit his job as a maintenance worker for Scientology — a job in which he worked from 8:30 in the morning to 10 at night for \$30 a week.

He was having trouble getting his last three paychecks.

Carlo's mother, Beverly D'Aubrey, lived in Clearwater, but not with him. He indicated she worked for the church. His father lived in England and had been accused of a "high crime" within Scientology. Therefore, Mrs. D'Aubrey had to divorce him.

Carlo said his father would have to get permission from Scientology's "international justice chief" before the two could see each other again.

After a call from police, Carlo's mother, who was ill, arranged for a Scientology official to pick up Carlo at the police station.

Asked if the boy's work schedule would violate child labor laws, Scientology spokesman Richard Haworth said, "I would think so, if he actually worked

such hours."

Francisco Rivera, a senior attorney with the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, agrees. State law generally prevents 15-year-olds from working more than four hours a day when school is in session.

Haworth said Carlo has returned to England and that his story is "as far from a true picture of Scientology children in Clearwater as you can get."

■ A Clearwater police officer was surprised to see a 10-year-old boy walking downtown — at nearly midnight.

The boy, Mark Martin, said he had gotten off work about 10:30 p.m.

Mark said he worked six days a week for the Church of Scientology. He was supposed to earn \$12 a week but hadn't gotten paid since starting four weeks earlier.

His mother lived in California and was supposed to be moving to Clearwater soon, he said. In the meantime, Mark lived with two brothers, 13 and 16, in a Scientology-owned motel.

An investigation by state officials into the 1983 incident ended after two months, when Mark apparently returned to California.

. . . and live in crowded quarters

Church staff members, who administer counseling sessions that can cost as much as \$800 an hour, live simply. So do their children.

■ Eva Kleinberg said she lived in a one-bedroom motel unit with her 9-year-old son and another mother and child. She said she knew of a family of seven that lived in a single room. Home was the former Quality Inn, 16432 U.S. 19 N near Largo.

"When I came here (in 1986) it was such a disaster," she said.

Michael Pilkenton said he used to live in a two-bedroom apartment with seven roommates, including a boy of about 10 whose parents were in California.

Pilkenton, 27, is a former staff Scientologist. He lived in Hacienda Gardens, a Scientology-owned apartment complex, in 1989.

Asked about cases of overcrowding, Scientology spokesman Richard Haworth said the organization has complied with fire codes that regulate how many people can live in buildings.