

Weather: Tonight, mostly cloudy.
Low 32. Wednesday, clearing.
High 48. **Details on back page.**

THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

** 35¢

Tuesday

November 9, 1993

Talk show host may testify here in Scientology suit

■ **Woman charges Sally Jessy Raphael's airing of a conversation filmed here violated her privacy.**

By CHONG W. PYEN
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

On a warm June Sunday two years ago, Dorothy Jean Dickerson was teaching a Sunday school class when she had a surprise visit from her two grown children.

They walked over to a little park in downtown Ann Arbor and talked about her religious life and how she had been out of touch with her chil-

dren.

The conversation, part of the children's desperate attempt to get their mother out of the Church of Scientology, was secretly videotaped and later broadcast nationally on the Sally Jessy Raphael talk show.

Now, Raphael may have to testify in Washtenaw Circuit Court in a civil suit that pits privacy against free press, sprinkled with all the ingredients of espionage and soap opera, including electronic eavesdropping, cult deprogramming, the threat of kidnapping and a family feud.

Raphael, whose nationally syndicated show is seen on Channel 4 at 3 p.m. weekdays, is one of the defendants in a \$72 million damage suit brought by Dickerson, a member and employee

of the Church of Scientology in Ann Arbor and Oak Park.

Dickerson, 61, claims in her suit that Raphael's airing of the conversation with her children violated her privacy, causing emotional distress, embarrassment and shame, while chilling her relationship with her children and defaming her church.

"The communications with my family have gone downhill," Dickerson said during testimony this morning. "I don't get calls and I get few letters.

"It's not a real family anymore," she testified. "I don't trust people and I'm very cautious because I don't know who knows what. I'm not happy anymore in my classroom (at the Sciento-

logy school)."

The jury trial before Circuit Judge Melinda Morris began last week, with big guns in constitutional issues arguing the right to privacy versus the freedom of press.

In her suit, Dickerson, a former township clerk near Albion, claims her daughter and son-in-law flew from Iowa and, along with Dickerson's son, confronted her over her involvement in Scientology. The conversation took place at a park called "A Little Park for a Little While" at the corner of Main and Ann streets on June 2, 1991. While the daughter taped the conversation on a recorder she had hidden in her purse, a



See RAPHAEL, Back Page

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RAPHAEL, from A1

Defense lawyers say tape revealed no secrets

hired crew of technicians disguised as garbage handlers videotaped the 45-minute encounter. On July 14, 1991, an edited version was broadcast on a Sally Jessy Raphael show that also featured the Cult Awareness Network, based in Chicago.

Two of Dickerson's daughters appeared on the show and said their mother had changed in recent years, obviously a victim of "empty-nest syndrome." They said she uttered "cult lingo" and it was as if someone had "scrambled her mind." On the secretly made videotape, the mother conceded that she was making less than \$5,000 washing dishes for the organization.

The program was intended to "create and foster hatred and fear of the Scientology faith, encouraging viewers to hire deprogrammers," the suit says.

Shortly after the show's broadcast, Dickerson, a mother of eight grown children, was talked by her

children into taking a vacation to Iowa, which, she said, turned out to be an attempt on their part to submit their mother to deprogramming experts. Following her frantic call back to Michigan, a Scientology lawyer intervened and threatened to file kidnapping charges before she was allowed to leave, the suit says.

In addition to Raphael and the Cult Awareness Network, the list of defendants is long, including the show's producers, the Multimedia, Inc., which distributes the show, and the Oak Park firm hired to secretly tape and edit the family conversation at the Ann Arbor park.

Dickerson joined the Scientology church 22 years ago and most recently worked at the Ann Arbor office, 122 S. Main St., the Hubbard Dianetics Foundation, as a teacher and pastoral counselor. The organization is currently housed at 2355

W. Stadium Blvd.

The Scientology movement was started in the United States in the 1950s by L. Ron Hubbard, who introduced Dianetics, a form of psychotherapy, and later incorporated it into Scientology. Dianetics explains every human experience as a recorded **mental images**, some **sub-conscious** which could trigger irrational behavior later through engrams, part of the subconscious mind. An "auditor" helps remove the engrams to ease pain and regain freedom.

Scientology believes the physical world, composed of MEST (matter, energy, space, time) is governed by the *thetan* (soul, life energy). It also believes in reincarnation. In recent years, it has been accused of occult practices, brainwashing, mind control, mistreatment of members, coercive techniques and profiteering behind its religious front. Time

magazine called it "the thriving cult of greed and power" in 1991, which brought a lawsuit from the church.

Robert E. Logeman, an Ypsilanti attorney who represents Dickerson along with law firms frequently representing the Scientology interests, declined to comment on the case in **the middle of the trial**.

Deborah Raphael and Multimedia is the firm of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, one of Michigan's largest. Gregory Curtner, one of the Raphael attorneys, said the suit was "brought by the Scientology using this woman (Dickerson) in order to punish and silence its critics." He said Raphael is on his witness list.

In court files, the defense lawyers argue that the videotape did not invade Dickerson's privacy or amount to eavesdropping, saying the conversation took place in a public park and revealed "no secret or private matters."