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Silvia Flores / The Press-Enterprise

The Church of Scientology's new Scottish-style film studio with looking pond is on Highway 79 in Gilman Hot Springs.

Bitter partings

Some former Scientologists say life at the church's Gilman Hot Springs complex resembles a slave labor camp. Church officials say its enemies are out to destroy the organization.

By Susan Thurston
The Press-Enterprise

GILMAN HOT SPRINGS

Getting a job at the Church of Scientology's movie-making complex in Gilman Hot Springs is no easy feat. The church says it takes years of hard work and dedication, and even then, only the most talented church members receive the call.

Scientologists say the sprawling rural complex offers the ideal setting for professional and spiritual growth. Employees can focus on furthering the goals of Scientology, miles from the distractions of big-city life but not too far from the church's headquarters in Los Angeles.

Employees at the complex crank out training and promotional films aimed at appealing to the masses in the same way that blockbuster hits from church members John Travolta and Tom Cruise do.

All sign billion-year oaths of service to the church, which believes that everyone has lived several lives, dating back millions of years.

But church critics, including some who have left the church after working at Gilman Hot Springs, say life there is not what it's cracked up to be. In court documents and interviews, they paint images of a slave labor camp where employees work grueling hours for a pittance and have no life outside the church.

Some say they believe the tranquil San Jacinto Valley location is really the world headquarters of the group that has been under attack in several countries for suspected civil-rights abuses and tax evasion.

Others claim that a former church leader is being held captive at the church's Castile Canyon School a few miles from the main
Please see CHURCH, A-2



A church and its foes

First of two parts
on Scientology



Kurt Miller / The Press-Enterprise

Children at the church's Castile Canyon School do callsthenics.

SCIENTOLOGY: A church and its foes

CHURCH

Continued from A-1
complex, although Riverside County investigators say they have found nothing illegal.

Scientologists deny the charges, contending that their critics are conspiring to destroy the organization. "All of the people who have stories, there's money connected to them," said Ken Hoden, general manager of the church's Golden Era Productions, known as Gold, at Gilman Hot Springs.

He said former members often take aim at the church in the hopes of collecting hefty court settlements.

The rehabilitation project

Both the church and its critics agree that working at Gilman Hot Springs isn't for everyone. It requires devotion and sacrifice for the good of the organization.

Messing up can have severe repercussions for employees, according to former members like Jesse Prince, who held various jobs at Gilman Hot Springs for 10 years. At the pinnacle of his career he served as director on the board of the Religious Technology Center, which preserves the church's orthodoxy.

Prince and several ex-Scientologists claim they were mentally and physically abused while assigned to the Rehabilitation Project Force at the movie-making complex and nearby school, known by critics as Happy Valley.

Scientology's founder, the late L. Ron Hubbard, created the Rehabilitation Project Force, or RPF, in the 1970s as a way to spiritually and professionally redeem high-ranking employees who made mistakes. Employees are removed from their regular jobs to do less stressful tasks, such as landscaping or carpentry.

Rehabilitation typically lasts for a year.

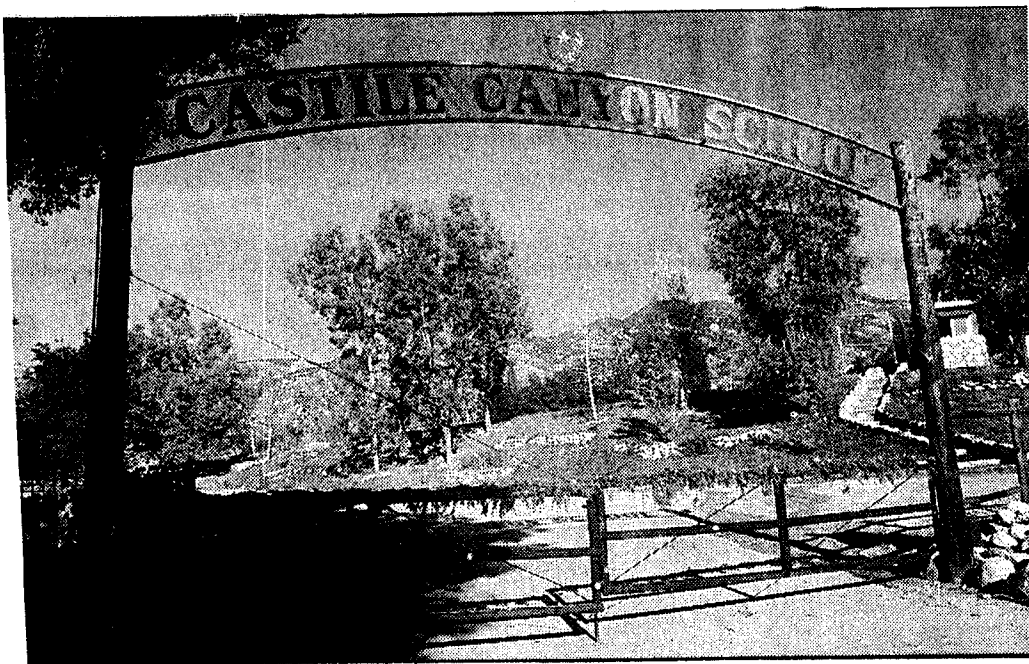
Church officials compare the program to religious practices for monks, priests or nuns. They say participation is voluntary.

"(It) is an opportunity where, rather than get fired, you get yourself fixed," said Aron Mason, director of public affairs for the Church of Scientology International.

The prescribed daily schedule includes about eight hours of labor and/or exercise, five hours of studying or counseling, seven hours of sleep, 30 minutes for each meal and 30 minutes for personal hygiene, church officials said.

Mason said the program is therapeutic, based on his experience in the RPF after he made some mistakes that cost the church a lot of money. The majority of people like it, he said.

Opponents of Scientology say the organization uses the rehabilitation program to get employees to accept its beliefs through strenuous labor, forced confessions, food and sleep deprivation and intense study.



The church's Castile Canyon School is in a remote setting behind the Soboba Indian Reservation.

"If the RPF accounts are true, then Scientologists have been abusing some of their committed members for about a quarter-century. No mainstream religions in a long time have done anything this abusive," said Stephen Kent, a sociology professor at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The Canadian scholar did a study on the RPF released in December 1997.

Roots of the religion

Scientology took off in the 1950s with the publication of Hubbard's "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health." It seeks to help followers overcome emotional traumas and live happier lives through intensive counseling known as auditing that can cost thousands of dollars.

Scientology is practiced in 125 countries. It boasts 8 million to 10 million members worldwide, including movie stars Travolta and Cruise, who occasionally visit the Gilman Hot Springs complex to advise on films. Critics estimate church membership anywhere between 50,000 and 200,000.

The organization says it has about 25,000 employees, including 5,000 members of the Sea Organization. The Sea Org, as it's called, is an elite fraternal order of Scientologists who pledge to serve the church for eternity.

All of the 750 employees at the Gilman Hot Springs complex are Sea Org members. They receive housing and meals, money for clothing, medical care and weekly allowance of \$50, church officials said. They work at least eight hours a day, six days a week with Sundays off. They also spend three hours a day studying Hubbard materials.

Sea Org members are provided basic household necessities, including furniture. Critics, like Prince, contend employees must sell all of their belongings and spend the proceeds on counseling sessions.

Church officials say Sea Org members are not forced to sell their possessions, but rather can put them in storage or bring them along. Mason, who said he sold a lot of his furniture when he signed up, said worldly possessions play a fairly insignificant role to members of the Sea Org.

Castile Canyon School

In the early 1980s, the Church of Scientology bought the Castile Canyon School adjacent to the Soboba Indian Reservation east of San Jacinto. It was opened as a boarding school in 1992 for children whose parents work at the Gilman Hot Springs complex.

The school is hidden from the public eye and not easily accessible. Motorists must drive through the reservation and take a long road owned by the church to get to the campus, which has a gate in front.

The campus houses 71 students from kindergarten through 12th grade who see their parents on weekends and special occasions, church officials said. The students live in dormitories on the 500-acre site, which is mostly mountainous.

The site previously served as a convent and school for delinquent children. Scientology uses about 40 acres for growing a variety of fruits and vegetables. The school's 10-member staff and students tend the crops, which are served with meals at the Gilman Hot Springs complex.

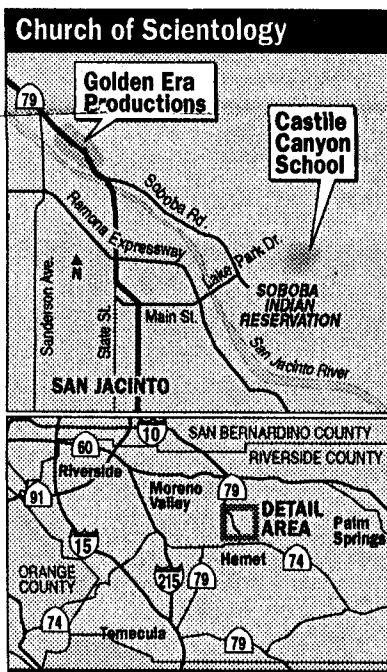
Scientologists say it's the perfect place to educate children, who live, work, study and play as a community.

Church critics say it's the perfect place to imprison members who have misbehaved or gone astray.

Some church opponents in Germany, where Scientology is under intense scrutiny for alleged civil-rights abuses, say they suspect Wiebke Hansen, the former head of the group's church in Hamburg, is being held at the school against her will.

SCIENTOLOGY: A church and its foes

In March, German television journalists Peter Reichelt and Ina Brockmann came to investigate. They were placed under citizen's arrest by Scientology guards after they tried to get onto the property. They, in turn, made a citizen's arrest of the Scientologists, alleging false imprisonment. The cases were forwarded to the Riverside



Amie DeFrain / The Press-Enterprise

County district attorney's office, but no charges were filed.

"This is something we don't need to use the criminal venue to take care of . . . This is better taken care of in civil court," said Assistant District Attorney Randy Tagami.

Deputy DA Alina Freer said she inspected the school and film studios and found no evidence that people were being held against their will. She said Reichelt never mentioned Hansen by name.

"It appeared to be a private school and studio that is fully operational. I asked to see a lot of it. I saw the kids' dorm rooms. There was not a building left unturned," she said.

Reichelt said Scientology officials at the Hamburg mission told him Hansen is being held at the school for rehabilitation. He said Hoden of Golden Era Productions confirmed her whereabouts during the standoff.

Hoden denied that.

"She's not there," he said. "The DA went out there with me and we toured the place. There's nothing funny going on out there. It's a school for kids," he said.

Reichelt, who wrote a book criticizing Scientology, said Hansen was sent to the school in the fall of 1995 when she was removed from her post because her mission's income had plummeted. Her only contact with her family has been through occasional letters, Reichelt says.

Hansen said she did not want to be interviewed.

Hoden, however, said Hansen has worked at Golden Era for several years as an artist, painting sets and backdrops for the studios. He accused Reichelt of fabricating the story in order to further the German government's claim that Scientology is a highly profitable business, not a tax-exempt religion.

Scientology's tax status also was the subject of contentious litigation in the United States until 1993, when the Internal Revenue Service recognized it as a tax-exempt religion.

Prince's story

Prince, a member of the church from 1976 to 1992, said he was sent to the rehabilitation project at the Castle Canyon location in 1987 after Hubbard had died and David Miscavige, chairman of the Religious Technology Center, succeeded him.

"I was removed from my position and put under armed guard at Happy Valley. . . . After a few months, it was decided that I would not escape and I was given various jobs at Gold but kept under watch," he said in an affidavit filed in a Riverside County lawsuit against the church.

Prince said Miscavige was getting rid of anyone aligned with Hubbard's closest aide, Pat Broeker, whom Miscavige considered a rival.

"I was considered one of the bad guys because I didn't want to work for Miscavige. I didn't want to be a pawn," he said in a subsequent interview.

While undergoing rehabilitation, Prince said he dug trenches for hours at a time and pulled weeds under the supervision of armed guards. He said he slept on a wood floor for three weeks and was denied medical treatment when he had a fever.

"It's like a complete slave concentration camp. You can't talk and you get very little food and very little sleep. They just work you to death. It's designed to be pure torture," said Prince, 44.

Hoden denied the claims, stressing that no one carries guns. He said employees can leave the program if they don't want to participate.

"It's purely 100 percent voluntary. It always has been. Always. The people who say otherwise fabricate stories for their purpose," he said.

He said Prince is being paid to lie about the church by defendants in a civil lawsuit filed by Scientology against FACTNet Inc. (Fight Against Coercive Tactics Network) in Denver. The defense is being funded mainly through the largess of millionaire Bob Minton, a fervent church critic who has helped Prince with expenses and living arrangements since Prince began talking publicly last year.

Scientologists have threatened to sue Prince for speaking against the church because he signed a vow of silence when he left the organization. Prince, in turn, filed a lawsuit in Riverside County seeking to have the document invalidated. He dropped his suit after a judge in the Denver case ruled said he could testify.

RPF accounts

Mary Tabayoyon, a Scientologist for 23 years who lives in Mesa, Ariz., said she volunteered to go into the rehabilitation program at the school in 1988 so she could get out of her job as a cook at the Gilman Hot Springs complex.

"I was going insane. My mind was not functioning. Deep down

Please see **CHURCH, A-3**

CHURCH

Continued from A-2

About Scientology

The Church of Scientology was founded in Los Angeles in 1954 by author and philosopher L. Ron Hubbard. The church is based on beliefs that people are spiritual beings whose experiences extend beyond a single lifetime and whose capabilities are endless.



■ Scientology's symbol (at left) is an S superimposed over two triangles. The S stands for Scientology and the corners of the triangles represent affinity, reality and communication, and knowledge, responsibility and control.



L. Ron Hubbard

■ The church's theology centers on the application of methodologies designed to help people live happier, more fulfilling lives. Scientology's goal is to "clear" people of negative experiences, known as engrams, through an intricate network of classes.

■ The principal technique is **auditing**, a form of counseling that uses an **E-meter**, or electropsychometer, to measure a person's responses when discussing intimate details of his or her life. It is similar to a lie detector.

■ The church says it has 8 million to 10 million members worldwide, including 3 million in North America. Critics estimate membership is between 50,000 and 200,000.

■ The Internal Revenue Service recognized Scientology as a tax-exempt religion in 1993.

■ **Golden Era Productions** in Gilman Hot Springs produces Scientology's educational and promotional films, audiotapes and graphics. The materials are translated into 24 languages. It employs 750 church members from around the world.

■ Scientology supports **Narcoticon**, an anti-drug and alcohol program, **Crimson**, a rehabilitation program for prisoners, and the **Hollywood Education and Literacy Project**. It also promotes educational methods developed by Hubbard to reduce illiteracy.

The Press-Enterprise

inside I knew that this stuff wasn't working," she said in an interview. "I thought I would be better off."

While in the program, she said she was barred from speaking to anyone unless addressed first and had to run everywhere. She said she typically slept six hours a night on bunk beds stacked three high in a crowded room.

"It was very degrading. There was constant yelling and constant accusations of what you were doing or feeling. There was no kind of rehabilitation for me. It was a nightmare," said Tabayoyon, 48.

Tabayoyon said she and the others in the rehabilitation program were bused daily from the school to the studio complex to do landscaping or other manual labor. Members at risk of escaping were assigned a guard and not allowed to leave, she said.

Employees in the rehabilitation program had to keep a low profile because celebrity members were often present, she said. Tabayoyon said she was let out of the program after a year when actor Cruise inquired about the group during one of his visits to Gilman Hot Springs. His questions prompt-

ed the higher-ups to reassign them to regular posts, she said.

Hoden said members in the program live in comfortable quarters, get adequate rest and eat well.

He said the rehabilitation program has been used at Gilman Hot Springs on an as-needed basis, but not in the last few years. In the past, participants have slept in rooms that have since been turned into offices, he said.

Church officials said the school also has been used to house members in the RPF. Participants sleep in one of the several structures on the site, they said. The last group went through the program one year ago, said Mason of the legal affairs office.

Tabayoyon and her husband, Andre, got out of the church in 1992, leaving behind their only son, Casavius, who was 18. She said they have made several efforts to get in touch with him at Gilman Hot Springs, but all have failed.

Hoden said the church has been unfairly caught in the middle of a family dispute and chooses not to intervene.

He said Casavius has told church officials that he does not want any contact with his parents because they have been critical of the church. He also does not want to speak with relatives or members of the media because they could be influenced by the Tabayoyons, Hoden said.

Vicki and Richard Aznaran filed a lawsuit against the Church of Scientology in 1988 alleging, in part, that they were abused while assigned to rehabilitation programs in Gilman Hot Springs, the nearby school and Los Angeles.

Vicki Aznaran, who was a Scientologist from 1973 to 1987 and held various high-ranking posts including president of the Religious Technology Center, said in the suit she was ordered to the rehabilitation program at Gilman Hot Springs in 1982 after disagreeing with a plan to restructure the church's finances.

She said she was forced to run around an orange telephone pole from 7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. for about 120 days with 10-minute breaks every half-hour and 30-minute rests for lunch and dinner. She said she was deemed rehabilitated after about seven months.

Aznaran said she was reassigned to the program at Happy Valley in 1987.

She said a guard followed her every move and, at night, furniture was stacked in front of her door to prevent her from escaping. She was forced to wear rags, sleep on the ground, dig ditches and undergo hours of indoctrination, she said.

The Aznarans alleged the ordeal caused physical and mental pain that resulted in some permanent disability. The lawsuit, which sought tens of millions of dollars in damages, was settled in 1992 for an undisclosed amount. In settling, the Aznarans agreed to never discuss the case.

Church officials said the Aznarans' claims were untrue. They said Vicki Aznaran recanted her statements in an affidavit filed in 1994, although the document does not

address the specific allegations concerning the RPF.

A church-commissioned study by Lonnie Kliever, professor of religious studies at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, said stories from disgruntled ex-members lack credibility because they try to blame the church for their actions.

"There is no denying that these dedicated and diehard opponents of the new religions present a distorted view to the public," he said in his 1995 study.

Scientology officials said, if any allegations were true, more members would have quit and the organization would cease to exist. Local authorities have heard the charges as well but, so far, none has triggered prosecution.

"If 1 percent of whatever is said about us is true, we wouldn't be able to do all of the things that we do now," Hoden said. "We're guilty of nothing other than creating the most beautiful setting in the valley."

The series

Today: The sprawling church complex at Gilman Hot Springs may be more than it appears, critics say.

Monday: The church faces new questions in Florida after a woman dies while staying at the Clearwater spiritual center.

Church's roots run deep in the Inland area

► Scientology officials opened a mission in Grand Terrace in the 1960s.

By Susan Thurston
The Press-Enterprise

The Church of Scientology has had a long, sometimes turbulent history in the Inland Empire since the 1960s, when its first mission opened in Grand Terrace.

The church opened a large mission in Riverside in 1974 at University Avenue and Lime Street, the current Life Arts Center.

The mission later became the target of a district attorney's investigation into an alleged scheme to defraud local banks and loan companies of thousands of dollars through false loan applications and financial statements. The charges eventually were dismissed.

The Riverside mission closed in 1982. Its president, Bent Corydon, said at the time that the mission leaders were concerned about the rise of David Miscavige as Hubbard's successor. Miscavige, who is the church's top official, was a former teen-age messenger, or attendant, of Hubbard's.

The church bought the Gilman Hot Springs property that now is the home of its Golden Era Productions in 1978, but did not acknowledge ownership for two years.

Since then, Scientologists have worked hard to build neighborly relations with area residents. They give free tours of the movie-making facilities on Sundays and hold an annual Christmas party for all of the people they do business with. Muriel Dufrense, a spokeswoman for Golden Era, also serves on a San Jacinto committee trying to revitalize Main Street.

Over the years, the church says it has spent more than \$50 million

upgrading facilities and building new ones. Under construction are a massive film studio that looks like a Scottish castle and dormitory buildings for employees, who now live in apartments in Hemet and are shuttled to work in church buses.

The Golden Era Productions complex on Highway 79 makes all of Scientology's films, audiotapes and graphics. Critics have long contended it is also the secret headquarters of the entire worldwide Scientology operation, a claim that church officials have denied.

"(T)he movie/tape production is nothing but a front to mask, hide and protect the top of Scientology's actual power structure so they cannot be served with subpoenas. (The security system is more befitting of a top secret military installation with its motion detectors, buried sensors, high-speed cameras, night cameras, guards on motorcycles, and barbed wire fences)," former church member Jesse Prince said in an affidavit filed in a Colorado court case.

Records from the Riverside County registrar of voters show that Miscavige and several other Miscaviges are registered to vote in the county and list Gilman Hot Springs as their place of residence. Church officials say Miscavige lives and works out of church offices throughout the world.

Nestled at the base of the San Jacinto Mountains, the 525-acre property includes about 50 movie-making and administrative buildings, a nine-hole public golf course and a full-size replica of a clipper ship that is used as a movie set and site for community events.

Motorists passing along the highway catch glimpses of employees in uniforms and the guards on motorcycles behind the tall wrought-iron fence that surrounds the complex.



A church
and its
foes

First of two parts
on Scientology

Ex-church member fights for right to speak out

Scientology officials deny ordering his wife to have abortion

By Susan Thurston
The Press-Enterprise

Jesse Prince was a member and employee of the Church of Scientology for 16 years, working his way through the ranks and taking pride in his success.

All that changed, he said, when his wife became pregnant while they were working at the church's movie-making complex in Gilman Hot Springs. Prince said she was ordered to have an abortion so they could remain members of the church's elite Sea Organization.

"The order devastated both my wife and me. Our dedication as Sea Org members clashed violently with our intentions as parents and we went through a personal nightmare," he said in an affidavit filed in a court case in Colorado.

Such glimpses of the lives of Scientology executives are rare, largely because the church requires those who leave the church to sign a detailed promise not to disclose secrets.

Six years after leaving the church, Prince, 44, says the document he signed should be thrown out so he can speak freely about his experiences and testify in lawsuits on behalf of critics of Scientology. Church officials see the matter differently.

They argue that the agreement Prince signed is valid and question his motives. Further, they say Prince's wife was never forced to have an abortion, but rather decided on her own.

Church policy says employees cannot work at the Gilman Hot Springs complex if they have children under age 6, said Ken Hoden, general manager of Golden Era Productions at the Gilman Hot Springs complex. The rigorous filming schedules don't allow workers enough time with their

babies, he said. "We don't think it's right for parents to spend time away from their kids," he said.

"Every person that says they have been coerced are saying it for another reason. Nobody is coerced into doing anything in the Church of Scientology. The purpose of Scientology is to increase a person's self-determinism," Hoden said.

Prince said his wife, Monika, was never the same after the abortion and wanted to leave the church. They got out in 1992, but only after he signed a document promising not to criticize Scientology or reveal any of its secrets.

The couple divorced in 1996 after 11 years of marriage, although Prince said they keep in touch. He said she has been living in Minneapolis but recently went to England for several months on business.

Prince worked at the Gilman Hot Springs base from 1982 to 1992, including about a year as a director on the board of the Religious Technology Center, which presides over the church's doctrine as defined by the church's founder, the late L. Ron Hubbard.

During that time, Prince said he oversaw litigation involving Scientology, protection of copyrighted material and trademark registrations. Hoden said Prince was in charge of trouble-shooting for the organization and tracing mistakes. Eventually Prince was demoted because he was "in above his head," Hoden said.

Prince said he was forced to sign the nine-page release when he left the organization. The release barred him from participating in activities against Scientology or helping its opponents. In it he swore that Scientology is a religion

and agreed to pay the church \$10,000 for each breach of the contract.

In August, Prince filed a lawsuit in Riverside Superior Court seeking to have the document invalidated because it was signed under "extreme duress." The suit has since been dropped because a federal judge in Colorado allowed Prince to testify in a pending civil case out of Denver, despite Scientologists' claims that it violates the release.

In the Riverside lawsuit, Prince said he was told that, if he didn't sign the release, he and his wife would lose contact, or become "disconnected," with her father and sister who were members. He also said that embarrassing facts that he had confessed in counseling sessions would be released.

The suit argued that the release was an attempt to stop him from sharing knowledge about the church's criminal activities, including kidnapping, assault and battery, fraud, destruction of evidence, witness tampering and intimidation, tax fraud and perjury. Scientology officials say the allegations are untrue. They said Prince lied because he is out of work and needs money. Prince filed for bankruptcy in 1997.

"He is only existing because he gets paid to say the party line for people who are anti-Scientologists," said Aron Mason, director of public affairs for the Church of Scientology International based in Los Angeles.

Hoden said Prince signed the release voluntarily.

"I shook Jesse's hand as he left. I know him. This is not the way he was when he left. Something has changed," he said.

Hoden said the release went into specifics about Prince's tenure be-

Departure release



Jesse Prince, a member of the Church of Scientology from 1976 to 1992, spent 10 years working at the church's movie-making complex in Gilman Hot Springs. He signed a release when he left the organization. Excerpts from the nine-page document:

■ I have freely participated in a program of study and physical labor known as the Rehabilitation Project Force in order to redeem myself as a productive contributing member. I left the Rehabilitation Project Force on March 31, 1987, prior to my completion of the program. I voluntarily left on my own decision and no attempt was made by any church staff member to physically prevent my departure or force me to return. I came to see, however, that my departure was not in my best interest and decided voluntarily that I should return, which I did. I completed the RPF program and personally experienced spiritual gains and benefits from such voluntary participation.

■ I have not been harmed in any manner or form by any experiences as a religious worker for any Church of Scientology. I have not incurred nor suffered any physical disabilities or emotional distress or harm as a consequence of my participation in Church of Scientology religious services and programs, including training, counseling and my voluntary participation in the Rehabilitation Project Force program.

■ I have never observed any staff member or parishioner to have been required against their will to take any church services or to undergo any church regime or program. Further, I have never known or observed any staff member or parishioner to have been physically or emotionally harmed as a consequence of his or her involvement and participation in any Church of Scientology program.

■ I agree that I will not voluntarily assist or cooperate with any person adverse to the religion of Scientology in any proceeding against the Scientology organization.

■ I agree not to testify or otherwise participate in any judicial, administrative or legislative proceeding adverse to Scientology unless compelled to do so by lawful subpoena or other lawful process.

■ My decision to leave as church staff has come after a long period of reflection during which time several church staff have attempted to aid me in my situation and have sought to help me to work out the difficulties which I have recently experienced.

Source: Exhibit in lawsuit filed in Riverside Superior Court

The Press-Enterprise

cause he had been privy to the inner workings of the church, many of which are confidential and involve other members.

Over the years, hundreds of members have signed releases, Hoden said. Thousands more have left without signing one, he added. The group claims to have 25,000 employees worldwide, including 5,000 members of the Sea Org, who sign billion-year oaths of service.

Prince denied church claims that he is out to help critics get money from the organization. He says his goal is to stop others from getting into the same situation. "I've made sure that this is not a

\$20,000 — and the generosity of his supporters, who have given him places to stay and helped with transportation and other living expenses.

Prince's attorney, Dan Leipold of Santa Ana, who said he has represented about 30 people who have been sued by Scientology, said Prince needs some support to survive.

"People who come out of these groups are scarred for life. You aren't going to get a job with IBM ... but you've got to live and you've got to be protected. Jesse is a gutsy guy. He's not perfect but he's not a liar," he said.

READERS' OPEN FORUM — SCIENTOLOGY

■ Your article about Golden Era Productions — "Bitter Partings" — missed the point.

I am 52 years old. I have worked at Golden Era Productions for the past 10 years, mainly as a writer. It is a source of personal pride and satisfaction to me to hear from people who have seen our films and TV programs and were helped to come off of drugs, or save a marriage, or put a family back together. That is why I work at Golden Era, and why my fellow staff work here. I have never worked with a group of people that was more professional, more ethical, and more responsible for improving the community, the country and the world.

One of the hallmarks of Scientology is personal freedom, and I have not only enjoyed that while here, I've gained more of it, and in more ways than one. I have frequently traveled across the country and to other countries as part of my job here, and I've also known when I returned that this is the place to be.

The real news is that someone is doing something about the world around us. It's easy to carp, criticize and complain about things. It's harder to roll up your sleeves and do something effective about it.

JEFF HAWKINS
Gilman Hot Springs

■ ... I have been an employee of Golden Era since 1989 and work in the graphics area. Since I wasn't asked what it's like to work at Golden Era, but I know better than most of those you spoke to, I'm going to tell you.

I have 30 years of professional experience in graphics, and I've never seen such dedication and attention to detail and quality amongst so many employees in one place as I have seen here. The actual products that are produced here are a testimony to this and anyone can see this for themselves.

... We also take our role in the community seriously, and I have helped put on scores of events for our local friends and neighbors. I live in Hemet, and while I frequently travel to other cities, this is where I feel at home.

The next time your paper is planning to write an article about what it's like to be at Golden Era Productions, have your writers ask those who are fortunate enough to have made the grade, and are gainfully employed here.

DARRELL SPECTOR
Gilman Hot Springs

■ ... The videos, films, and books we produce here are helping people improve their lives every day. While in Spain recently, I met a family who had gotten their son off of drugs — a seven-year heroin addiction — with the help of one of the books I'd printed five years earlier. So we are making a difference.

That's the reality of working here at Golden Era Productions. I just wish everyone could have a job that was this fulfilling.

LAURA MARLOWE
Gilman Hot Springs

■ I have been a professional sound engineer and musician with Golden Era Productions for 21 years. I saw the recent Press-Enterprise article wherein one Jesse Prince, ex-staff of Golden Era, complained about working conditions here.

I would like to set the record straight. I had the misfortune of working directly with Jesse Prince for three years. He complains about working conditions. Well, the only bad condition I've experienced in the last 21 years was working with him! ...

The fact is, the working conditions at Golden Era Productions are without parallel anywhere. Having worked here for 21 years, I can say with certainty that this is the cleanest, most ethical, most productive and fulfilling working environment in the industry.

... That someone the ilk of Jesse Prince would knock it just confirms what a social and moral failure he truly is.

RICHARD G. CRUZEN
Gilman Hot Springs

■ ... I have always looked at your paper as a fair minded and respected news media outlet. However, you've been duped and you

should be taking a look at those who were pushing you to write this article. Taking Prince as someone who "knows what's going on" about Scientology is akin to having a criminal break into your home, steal your most valuable possessions and then ask his opinion about you and your family and printing it as "the truth."

You should be ashamed. This is not journalism, it is slanted propaganda.

PETER SCHLESS
Hemet

■ ... My wife, Linda Greilich and I have been active in the community for years. We are both musicians and I am also a sound engineer, working on restoring taped lectures given by Mr. Hubbard.

We are honored to work at Golden Era and contribute to our church. Nothing could be better than to do what you want to do and have it be meaningful and positive in society. I know when I've restored one of Mr. Hubbard's lectures and it is heard by someone who needs a hand to get off of drugs or to learn how to study or to get along better in life with their family and friends, that I have helped.

Additionally both my wife and I have greatly enjoyed entertaining thousands of people in this Valley with the music of the Golden Era musicians. ...

Instead of your paper stirring up a bunch of yap, why don't you do something effective? You can start by being honest with yourself and supportive of groups that help society and ignore the bent for sensationalism.

RUSS GREILICH
Gilman Hot Springs

■ Hooray! At long last an expose of the Scientology movement is printed for all to see. Your articles in the Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 issues are very well done and of extreme interest to many concerned residents of our Valley.

I hope you will continue to keep us informed of the worldwide movement of this group. ...

MAXINE FERGUSON
Hemet