

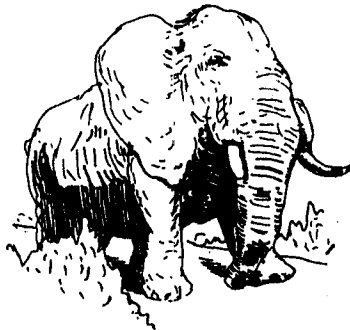


OBSERVER

Scientology Pals Kicked In \$50,000 Toward U.N.'s Big Elephant Statue

BY JULIE LIPPER

Was the real story lurking behind the two-foot-long bronze penis? If you haven't heard about the two-foot-long bronze penis, you were perhaps out of town just before Thanksgiving, when there were some tabloid guffaws over the erect male sex organ protruding from a 30-ton bronze elephant, unveiled Nov. 18 on the grassy lawn of the United Nations. The elephant, which was cast from a live, sleeping pachyderm in Kenya by Bulgarian sculptor Mihail, was a gift from Kenya, Namibia and Nepal. But while the 100-odd onlookers listened politely to Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and shot glances at the rough beast and its evident arousal, some in the crowd found something more provocative when they turned over their lavish pro-



SLEEPING ELEPHANT

gram booklets and found, in large gold letters, a quote from L. Ron Hubbard, the late founder of the Church of Scientology. It read, "Man has reached the potential capacity to destroy the planet. He must be pushed on up to the capability and actions of saving it. It is, after all, what we're standing on."

Ever mindful of bad publicity, the United Nations promptly planted shrubs to obscure the elephant's offending appendage. But the puzzle of why the Friends of L. Ron Hubbard, a private group that operates out of the New York offices of the Church of Scientology at 349 West 48th Street, received such prominence in a United Nations event, may take more than a few well-placed bushes to solve.

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JOE DORE

The priapic pachyderm, on the grounds of the United Nations.

Scientology Pals Fund Elephant

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At a time when the Church of Scientology, which the U.S. Government recognized as a tax-exempt religious organization in 1993, is fighting for recognition and respect around the world, it is no surprise that the Friends of L. Ron Hubbard would want to be associated with the United Nations. As to how Hubbard's quote ended up on the program, the answer is simple if somewhat startling: The Friends of L. Ron Hubbard wrote and printed the program themselves, at a cost of around \$4,000, according to Dennis Dubin, a partner at the Stoltz Brothers Ltd. property management company in Bala Cynwyd, Pa., who helped raise money for the elephant. Indeed, according to Hans Janitschek, chairman of the Cast the Sleeping Elephant Trust, the Friends contributed about \$50,000 toward the more than \$500,000 cost of the entire project. Other money came from Swissair, the Lama Gangchen Peace Foundation and Hans Baron von Ludwigstorff, an Austrian businessman. The United Nations has a policy of accepting gifts only from member nations—thus the three gift-giving countries, while they supplied resources to capture, sedate and mold the elephant, acted more as legitimizers of the gift rather than as financial backers. When contacted by *The Observer*, the U.N. representatives of Kenya, Namibia and Nepal declined to comment.

The involvement of the Friends of L. Ron Hubbard came as a surprise to officials at the United Nations, who did not see the program until the day of the ceremony.

"We did not even know about this link to the L. Ron Hubbard organization until we saw the program," said Fred Eckhard, spokesman for Secretary General Annan. "But even if we had known, it would not be for us to question the Governments' sources of financing." He added that, if there was anything controversial about a particular contribution, "the embarrassment should accrue to the Governments rather than to the U.N."

One who disagrees is Charles Lichenstein, who was U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations from 1981 to 1984 and co-chair of the Congressionally mandated Commission on Improving the Effectiveness of the United Nations, and who is currently a fellow at the Heritage Foundation. "That should not ever be permitted," he told *The Observer*, of the Friends being allowed to write and print the program. "Not in return for \$4 million should anyone have control over substantive content. The U.N. should have taken responsibility. They shouldn't have let that happen... There is always someone who has to be looking at it hard enough to preclude an embarrassment. They should have someone vetting them, but nothing about the U.N. surprises me."

Mr. Lichenstein questioned the motives of the Friends. "They'll probably advertise the fact that among all their marvelous services to humanity, they're also giving precious gifts to the U.N., and it will appear in literature and pitches to top prospective members," he said.

FRIENDLESS IN NEBRASKA

Who are the Friends of L. Ron Hubbard? "We've never been that official," said Bill Runyon, a Friends member who said he was "coordinator of individuals from the eastern United States." "Ron has had many friends throughout the years from many walks of life, and when there's a project, we contact those people interested in supporting the community and making it better." Among the Friends' endeavors is continuing Hubbard's tradition of setting up a 60-foot-tall Christmas tree adjacent to the Scientology building on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles. The tree goes up every year and thousands of kids come to see it.

Sharyn Runyon, Mr. Runyon's wife and public relations director for the Friends, told *The Observer* that the elephant project was in keeping with the altruism of the Friends. "It's a very normal thing for us to be involved with," said Ms. Runyon, who said she chose the quote for the program and gave money toward the project. "We're dealing with safeguarding animals and taking responsibility for the environment and heightening awareness of that... Scientologists around the world have taken responsibility for the environment in various clean-up efforts. Everything from park clean-ups to beach clean-ups to environmental tree plantings and recycling programs."

But not everyone has welcomed the Friends. A few years ago, the Friends pledged \$800,000 to build a park in Tilden, Neb., Hubbard's birthplace, but residents protested so loudly when they learned the park was to be named after Hubbard that the donation was withdrawn.

Ms. Runyon said the Friends were not identical with the Church of Scientology. "It's an organization made up of people who agree with L. Ron Hubbard's philosophy," she said, "of whatever religion. There are many members who are non-Scientologists and who support his goals and basically consider him a friend. It includes writers that knew him and military personnel that worked with him. I don't think that everyone is a Scientologist as far as I know." When asked to specify names of Friends, she mentioned author Kevin J. Anderson, who has written novels based on the *X-Files* television series and *Star Wars* films.

John Carmichael, president of New York's Church of Scientology, said the Friends of L. Ron Hubbard were distinct from his church. "Well, L. Ron Hubbard was the founder of the Church of Scientology, so he's got a lot of friends in the Church of Scientology, that's for sure," he said. "But it is a separate organization."

Scientology Pals Fund Elephant



The priapic pachyderm, on the grounds of the United Nations.

NINE MORE ELEPHANTS

The plan to cast a live sleeping elephant was hatched in 1976. Since 1989, the chairman of the Cast the Sleeping Elephant Trust, which raises funds for the project, has been Mr. Janitschek, a former senior adviser to three U.N. Secretary Generals, most recently Boutros-Boutros Ghali. Asked by *The Observer* if he had any qualms about accepting money from a controversial organization such as the Friends, Mr. Janitschek said, "You don't get anywhere without taking a risk. I took a risk with the penis and the donors, and the elephant will be there in 1,000 years ... I followed my instincts ... [I]f it were the Mafia, or a racist, fascist, communist, extremist, group, that would have caused problems at the U.N."

"There are other countries like Germany where Scientologists are viewed with suspicion," he said, "and are being subject to certain limitations and discrimination.... But if somebody here is a Scientologist, like Tom Cruise or John Travolta, it's not held against them."

Mr. Janitschek added that the United Nations never requested any information from him about fund-raising sources for the elephant, and that, as concerns the Friends, "The project would not have been completed without them."

But the United Nations did have some say: A senior U.N. official told *The Observer* that the donors had wanted to make "a huge event out of the unveiling with dancers, singers and celebrities," but the United Nations said No. "It was inappropriate," said the official. Which may be why Isaac Hayes, the R&B singer and Scientologist, did not make a speech, although he was listed on the program as a speaker.

The sculptor, Mihail, said he had no concerns about the Friends' involvement with his elephant. "I have no interest in who is Buddhist, Hindu, Catholics," he told *The Observer*.

It was in 1978 that Mihail met Mr. Janitschek, who was then special assistant for public information to Secretary General Kurt Waldheim. The two men agreed that the perfect location for the planned elephant would be at U.N. headquarters in Manhattan. There, they reasoned, the elephant could stand as a symbol for global wildlife preservation. Knowing that only member states are entitled to give gifts to the United Nations, Mr. Janitschek had to find one or several nations to receive the elephant from

Mihail and then donate it to the United Nations. "We couldn't have presented it to the U.N. even if it was made of gold or diamonds," Mr. Janitschek said. Kenya, Namibia and Nepal accepted Mr. Janitschek's offer. "There were no rules or exceptions for how the money was to be raised," he said.

So Mr. Janitschek started raising money. But, last year, he found he was short and he called his acquaintance, Dennis Dubin. "One of my contacts, Hans Janitschek, had some problems raising money, so he called me," said Mr. Dubin. "He asked me to step in and see what I could do because I thought it was a valuable project. I got a whole bunch of people to put in \$2,000 to \$5,000."

Mr. Dubin brought in about \$50,000, much of it from people affiliated with the Friends of L. Ron Hubbard. The Friends also put up \$4,000 for the written materials. "They paid for the brochure," said Mr. Dubin. "They put up some money, \$4,000, so they got to put their name on it."

A lawyer for the Cast the Sleeping Elephant Trust, Peter Oram, a New York taxation and litigation solo practitioner, said he was impressed with how quickly Mr. Dubin was able to raise money. "I know Dennis Dubin and we are pleased with Dennis Dubin," he said. "We love Dennis Dubin. Every check was sent in by overnight mail. There was a sense of urgency ... And he wanted to have a program ... Dennis sees this as a continuing thing, not to stop with the gift to the U.N. We have nine more elephants to sell, the molds are made, and we need more money, to permit us as a group to keep going, and we hope he will help. Dennis went a little further with some of his quotes [referring to the Hubbard statement on the brochure] ... I understand that there is controversy about Scientology in Germany, but it is a recognized, legal organization in this country, and they're entitled to put their quotes on the program since they gave a lot of money."

Igor Novichenko, the senior protocol officer for the United Nations, said the program was a bit fancier than usual for U.N. gift ceremonies. "I would say that it was a little more elaborate," he said, "because this event was to have celebrities and music and a few other things that are not a standard feature of U.N. gift ceremonies. Usually, only permanent nations are involved and they know the U.N. way is more strict and more protocol-oriented."

Meanwhile, Mr. Janitschek has written a letter, on behalf of the "board of the Cast the Sleeping Elephant Trust," to Alvaro de Soto, Under Secretary General of the United Nations, asking that the shrubs be removed, since they represent "the virtual defilement of a work of art and in fact of nature itself—the antithesis of what was intended by the artist."

The Finger

Scientologists have the constitutional right to one-up protesters against them. Get used to it.

The Thetans' Revenge

Now, The Finger's got nothing against the **Church of Scientology**. As churches go, it's no worse than the **Roman Catholic Church**, the **Southern Baptist Church**, or the **Unitarian Church**. For folks inclined to get high, religion has always been a better drug than heroin or crack or **Johnny Walker Black**.

Plus, the Finger attended a Hollywood fund-raiser a couple of years ago and met church member **John Travolta** (scorned by Scientology-bashers). Sorry, but he seemed like a very nice guy, a smart guy, and he's a hell of an actor. Likewise **Tom Cruise**, except for the acting part. It's the show-biz types who get all the publicity, but many Scientology members are just **normal people** with normal jobs who simply choose to believe in **L. Ron Hubbard** instead of, say, **Pope John Paul** and **Jesus Christ**. The Finger believes that whatever portion of their personal funds and property they choose to hand over to their chosen church is their own goddamn business.

That said, let's talk about a protest outside the late L. Ron's March 13 birthday celebration over at the big, blue **Scientology Headquarters** on Sunset in Hollywood. A dozen people—some wearing "**Scientology Kills**" T-shirts—carried signs bearing other not-so-cuddly phrases. Some of the same folks also protested in front of the church's **Celebrity Centre** on Franklin.

OK, the protesters had the usual complaints: Some were upset over the death of **Lisa McPherson** (a Scientologist who died of a pulmonary embolism in Florida in the company of fellow Scientologists at the church's Clearwater facility); some wish the church would pay the multimillion dollar judgment **Lawrence Wollersheim** won in a court case against the church; some contend the church "brainwashes" members into handing over large sums of money; and some are appalled by the church's **Fair Game** campaign, in which it "strikes back" at those who criticize it, which anti-Scientologists say "invades the privacy of ordinary citizens."

On the latter note, some of the protesters complained about the church's **Bigot Pages** on the Internet, which contain photos and commentary about those actively opposed to the church, and about Scientology's alleged flooding of a Scientology-critical Web news-group (**alt.religion.scientology**) with so-called "spam"—thousands of junk postings, some of which bear headings making them look as if they were written by **Mark Bunker**, an anti-Scientologist Web site operator who videotaped the anti-Scientologist birthday picket.

Worthy of note is that the church has its own Web-related complaints against the protesters. The Rev. **Cat Tebar**, a spokeswoman for the L.A. church, claims that individuals associated with the picketers have stolen copyrighted Scientology material and put it on the Web. She says they are complaining that their **First Amendment** rights have been violated by injunctions against them using the material, when in fact they have purloined church property.

Whatever... Could somebody please educate The Finger as to why so many people hate Scientology. Is it any more of a scam than any other religion? Hell, even

if the protesters are right about McPherson, etc., religions have been killing people for centuries. Nobody's picketing the **Worldwide Church of God** headquarters in Pasadena on late founder **Herbert W. Armstrong's** birthday, and he set up a church that's allowing current head honcho **Joseph Tkach Jr.** and a *chosen few* others to sell off \$125 million in church property in California and Texas and do pretty much whatever they please with the money.

But let's get back to the issue of constitutional rights. The courts are deciding whether anti-Scientologists are allowed to take Scientology written material off the Web and use it as they see fit. But zealots against the church are *definitely correct* about their inalienable right to stand on a public street outside Scientology Headquarters carrying signs emblazoned with whatever insulting slogan they choose.

So *in the name of Hubbard*, why is it that when the Scientologists turn the tables on them, they get so freakin' outraged?! See (you Scientology-bashing folks with *way* too much time on your hands), church members have the same constitutional right to protest as you. Only, they are willing to hit you where you live. Literally!

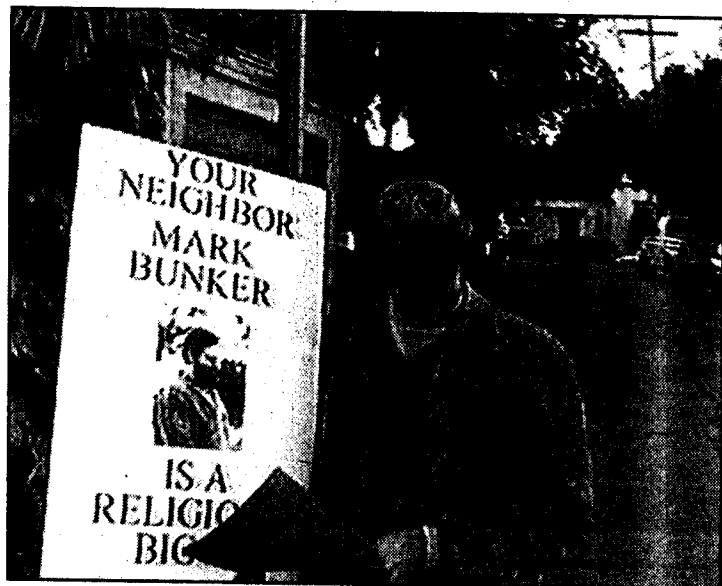
Case in point: The aforementioned Bunker discovered a couple of protesters in his neighborhood after the birthday picket. They carried placards bearing his photo with the caption: "**Religious Bigot.**" Leaflets were also distributed; on them was Bunker's photo again, with the headline: "**Beware Neighbors. This is what a religious bigot looks like! Your neighbor Mark Bunker...is culminating hate against the peaceful members of a religion. He stands outside churches insulting and degrading people for their religious beliefs...His activities put those members and their families at risk.**" The flyers were signed: **Scientology Parishioners Committee**.

About such church members, Tebar says, "There are parishioners who get upset about the bigots picketing our churches. We don't tell our parishioners what to do, contrary to what some people think. They just do what they do. But imagine if you're taking your kids to a religious function and people are yelling at you. It's scary."

As for the two picketers on the street outside Bunker's house, he says, "I grabbed my video camera and went out to talk with them." One of the picketers left, when he began to recite **the legend of Xenu** (an allegedly secret Scientology doctrine, known at **OT3**, which is revealed to parishioners after years of membership): "Seventy-five-billion years ago, the evil galactic overlord Xenu captured rebels and transported them to Earth, then known as Teeagak, dropped them in volcanoes, and exploded them." The other picketer held out for 20 minutes in front of Bunker's camera. Bunker archived this scene and others that day on his Web site

(www.iron.org/factnet/revengo.ram). On the video, Bunker can be seen telling one of the picketers outside his house that he might agree that he's a bigot if "Scientology were indeed a religion."

Others have been similarly targeted by the church, including L.A. attorney **Graham Berry**. "They put flyers under the windshield wipers of every car within a three-block radius of my [Santa Monica] house," says Berry, involved in several lawsuits against the church. One of Berry's clients, **Mike Pattinson**, was hit with a "Religious Bigot" flyer in his Laguna Beach neighborhood following the birthday picketing. Pattinson is suing the



A Scientologist caught on video outside a church critic's home

Church of Scientology International and its head, **David Miscavige**, because he says he was promised by the church that it would **cure his homosexuality**. He says that 24 years and \$500,000 later, he's still gay. Former Scientologist **Dennis Erlich's** home in Glendale was similarly picketed and his neighborhood flyer by Scientologists after the March 13 protests.

The Finger's advice to the anti-Scientology picketers: If you're going to wage public war, don't get all pissy when the enemy one-ups you. It's more than just "Fair Game"—it's the Thetans' legal right.