GOING CLEAR

Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief

LAWRENCE WRIGHT

PULITZER PRIZE–WINNING AUTHOR OF *THE LOOMING TOWER*

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THIS IS A BORZOI BOOK

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To my colleagues

at

The New Yorker

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Introduction

Scientology plays an outsize role in the cast of new religions that have arisen in the twentieth century and survived into the twenty-first. The church won't release official membership figures, but informally it claims 8 million members worldwide, a figure that is based on the number of people who have donated to the church. A recent ad claims that the church welcomes 4.4 million new people every year. And yet, according to a former spokesperson for the church, the International Association of Scientologists, an organization that church members are forcefully encouraged to join, has only about 30,000 members. The largest concentration, about 5,000, is in Los Angeles. A survey of American religious affiliations compiled in the Statistical Abstract of the United States estimates that only 25,000 Americans actually call themselves Scientologists. That's less than half the number identifying themselves as Rastafarians.

Despite decades of declining membership and intermittent scandals that might have sunk other faiths, Scientology remains afloat, more than a quarter century after the death of its chimerical leader, L. Ron Hubbard. In part, its survival is due to colossal financial resources—about $1 billion in liquid assets, according to knowledgeable former members. Strictly in terms of cash reserves, that figure eclipses the holdings of most major world religions. Scientology's wealth testifies to the avidity of its membership, relentless fund-raising, and the legacy of Hubbard's copyrights to the thousand books and articles he published.

The church also claims about 12 million square feet of property around the world. Hollywood is the center of Scientology's real-

estate empire, with twenty-six properties valued at $400 million. The most recent addition to the church's Hollywood portfolio is a television studio on Sunset Boulevard formerly owned by KCET, acquired in order to open a Scientology broadcasting center. In Clearwater, Florida, where Scientology maintains its spiritual headquarters, the church owns sixty-eight largely tax-exempt parcels of land, valued at $168 million. They include apartment buildings, hotels and motels, warehouses, schools, office buildings, a bank, and tracts of vacant land. The church often acquires landmark buildings near key locations, such as Music Row in Nashville, Dupont Circle in Washington, DC, and Times Square in New York City. A similar strategy governs the placement of Scientology's holdings in other countries. Typically, these buildings are magnificently restored architectural treasures, lavishly appointed, even if the membership is negligible. The church owns a five-hundred-acre compound in Southern California and a cruise ship, the Freewinds, which is based in the Caribbean. The Church of Spiritual Technology, the branch of Scientology that owns the trademarks and copyrights to all church materials, including Hubbard's immense body of popular fiction, maintains secret bases in several remote locations in at least three American states, where the founder's works are stored in titanium canisters in nuclear-blast-resistant caverns. One of the vault locations, in Trementina, New Mexico, has an airstrip and two giant interlocking circles carved into the desert floor—a landmark for UFOs, some believe, or for Hubbard's reincarnated spirit, when he chooses to return.

There are really three tiers of Scientologists. Public Scientologists constitute the majority of the membership. Many of them have their first exposure to the religion at a subway station or a shopping mall where they might take a free "stress test" or a personality inventory called "The Oxford Capacity Analysis" (there is no actual connection to Oxford University). On those occasions,

potential recruits are likely to be told that they have problems that Scientology can resolve, and they are steered to a local church or mission for courses or therapy, which the church terms “auditing.” That’s as far as most new members go, but others begin a lengthy and expensive climb up the church’s spiritual ladder.

The mystique that surrounds the religion is owed mainly to the second tier of membership: a small number of Hollywood actors and other celebrities. To promote the idea that Scientology is a unique refuge for spiritually hungry movie stars, as well as a kind of factory for stardom, the church operates Celebrity Centres in Hollywood and several other entertainment hubs. Any Scientologist can take courses at Celebrity Centres; it’s part of the lure, that an ordinary member can envision being in classes with notable actors or musicians. In practice, the real celebrities have their own private entry and course rooms, and they rarely mix with the public—except for major contributors who are accorded the same heightened status. The total number of celebrities in the church is impossible to calculate, both because the term itself is so elastic and because some well-known personalities who have taken courses or auditing don’t wish to have their association known.

An ordinary public Scientologist can be inconspicuous. No one really needs to know his beliefs. Public members who quit the church seldom make a scene; they just quietly remove themselves and the community closes the circle behind them (although they are likely to be pursued by mail and phone solicitations for the rest of their lives). Celebrity members, on the other hand, are constantly being pressed to add their names to petitions, being showcased at workshops and galas, or having their photos posted over the logo “I’m a Scientologist.” Their fame greatly magnifies the influence of the church. They are deployed to advance the social agendas of the organization, including attacks on psychiatry and the pharmaceutical industry, and the promotion of Hubbard’s

contested theories of education and drug rehabilitation. They become tied to Scientology's banner, which makes it more difficult to break away if they should become disillusioned.

Neither the public nor the celebrity tiers of Scientology could exist without the third level of membership—the church's clergy, called the Sea Organization, or Sea Org, in Scientology jargon. It is an artifact of the private navy that Hubbard commanded during a decade when he was running the church while on the high seas. The church has said on various occasions that the Sea Org has 5,000, 6,000, or 10,000 members worldwide. Former Sea Org members estimate the actual size of the clergy to be between 3,000 and 5,000, concentrated mainly in Clearwater, Florida, and Los Angeles. Many of them joined the Sea Org as children. They have sacrificed their education and are impoverished by their service. As a symbol of their unswerving dedication to the promotion of Hubbard's principles, they have signed contracts for a billion years of service—only a brief moment in the eternal scheme, as seen by Scientology, which postulates that the universe is four quadrillion years old.

The church disputes the testimony of many of the sources I've spoken to for this book, especially those former members of the Sea Org who have now left the organization, calling them "apostates" and "defectors." It is certainly true that a number of them no longer accept the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard; but many still consider themselves fervent Scientologists, saying that it was the church itself that has strayed from his example. They include some of the highest officials who have ever served in the organization.

Scientology is certainly among the most stigmatized religions in the world, owing to its eccentric cosmology, its vindictive behavior toward critics and defectors, and the damage it has inflicted on families that have been broken apart by the church's policy of

“disconnection”—the imposed isolation of church members from people who stand in the way of their longed-for spiritual progress. In the United States, constitutional guarantees of religious liberty protect the church from actions that might otherwise be considered abusive or in violation of laws in human trafficking or labor standards. Many of these practices are well known to the public.

And yet curious recruits continue to be attracted to the religion, though not in the numbers that Scientology claims; celebrities still find their way to the church’s VIP lounge; and young people sign away the next billion years of their existence to an organization that promises to work them mercilessly for practically no pay. Obviously, there is an enduring appeal that survives the widespread assumption that Scientology is a cult and a fraud.

I have spent much of my career examining the effects of religious beliefs on people’s lives—historically, a far more profound influence on society and individuals than politics, which is the substance of so much journalism. I was drawn to write this book by the questions that many people have about Scientology: What is it that makes the religion alluring? What do its adherents get out of it? How can seemingly rational people subscribe to beliefs that others find incomprehensible? Why do popular personalities associate themselves with a faith that is likely to create a kind of public relations martyrdom? These questions are not unique to Scientology, but they certainly underscore the conversation. In attempting to answer them in this book, I hope we can learn something about what might be called the process of belief. Few Scientologists have had a conversion experience—a sudden, radical reorientation of one’s life; more common is a gradual, wholehearted acceptance of propositions that might have been regarded as unacceptable or absurd at the outset, as well as the incremental surrender of will on the part of people who have been promised enhanced power and authority. One can see by this

example the motor that propels all great social movements, for good or ill.

LAWRENCE WRIGHT

Austin, Texas

Part I

SCIENTOLOGY

1

The Convert

London, Ontario, is a middling manufacturing town halfway between Toronto and Detroit, once known for its cigars and breweries. In a tribute to its famous namesake, London has its own Covent Garden, Piccadilly Street, and even a Thames River that forks around the modest, economically stressed downtown. The city, which sits in a humid basin, is remarked upon for its unpleasant weather. Summers are unusually hot, winters brutally cold, the springs and falls fine but fleeting. The most notable native son was the bandleader Guy Lombardo, who was honored in a local museum, until it closed for lack of visitors. London was a difficult place for an artist looking to find himself.

Paul Haggis was twenty-one years old in 1975. He was walking toward a record store in downtown London when he encountered a fast-talking, long-haired young man with piercing eyes standing on the corner of Dundas and Waterloo Streets. There was something keen and strangely adamant in his manner. His name was Jim Logan. He pressed a book into Haggis's hands. "You have a mind," Logan said. "This is the owner's manual." Then he demanded, "Give me two dollars."

The book was Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health, by L. Ron Hubbard, which was published in 1950. By the time Logan pushed it on Haggis, the book had sold more than two million copies throughout the world. Haggis opened the book and saw a page stamped with the words "Church of Scientology."

"Take me there," he said to Logan.

At the time, there were only a handful of Scientologists in the entire province of Ontario. By coincidence, Haggis had heard about the organization a couple of months earlier, from a friend who had called it a cult. That interested Haggis; he considered the possibility of doing a documentary film about it. When he arrived at the church's quarters in London, it certainly didn't look like a cult—two young men occupying a hole-in-the-wall office above Woolworth's five-and-dime.

As an atheist, Haggis was wary of being dragged into a formal belief system. In response to his skepticism, Logan showed him a passage by Hubbard that read: "What is true is what is true for you. No one has any right to force data on you and command you to believe it or else. If it is not true for you, it isn't true. Think your own way through things, accept what is true for you, discard the rest. There is nothing unhappier than one who tries to live in a chaos of lies." These words resonated with Haggis.

Although he didn't realize it, Haggis was being drawn into the church through a classic, four-step "dissemination drill" that recruiters are carefully trained to follow. The first step is to make contact, as Jim Logan did with Haggis in 1975. The second step is to disarm any antagonism the individual may display toward Scientology. Once that's done, the task is to "find the ruin"—that is, the problem most on the mind of the potential recruit. For Paul, it was a turbulent romance. The fourth step is to convince the subject that Scientology has the answer. "Once the person is aware of the ruin, you bring about an understanding that Scientology can handle the condition," Hubbard writes. "It's at the right moment on this step that one … directs him to the service that will best handle what he needs handled." At that point, the potential recruit has officially been transformed into a Scientologist.

Paul responded to every step in an almost ideal manner. He and his girlfriend took a course together and, shortly thereafter,

became Hubbard Qualified Scientologists, one of the first levels in what the church calls the Bridge to Total Freedom.

HAGGIS WAS BORN in 1953, the oldest of three children. His father, Ted, ran a construction company specializing in roadwork—mostly laying asphalt and pouring sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. He called his company Global, because he was serving both London and Paris—another Ontario community fifty miles to the east. As Ted was getting his business started, the family lived in a small house in the predominantly white town. The Haggises were one of the few Catholic families in a Protestant neighborhood, which led to occasional confrontations, including a schoolyard fistfight that left Paul with a broken nose. Although he didn't really think of himself as religious, he identified with being a minority; however, his mother, Mary insisted on sending Paul and his two younger sisters, Kathy and Jo, to Mass every Sunday. One day, she spotted their priest driving an expensive car. "God wants me to have a Cadillac," the priest explained. Mary responded, "Then God doesn't want us in your church anymore." Paul admired his mother's stand; he knew how much her religion meant to her. After that, the family stopped going to Mass, but the children continued in Catholic schools.

Ted's construction business prospered to the point that he was able to buy a much larger house on eighteen acres of rolling land outside of town. There were a couple of horses in the stable, a Chrysler station wagon in the garage, and giant construction vehicles parked in the yard, like grazing dinosaurs. Paul spent a lot of time alone. He could walk the mile to catch the school bus and not see anyone along the way. His chores were to clean the horse stalls and the dog runs (Ted raised spaniels for field trials). At home, Paul made himself the center of attention—"the apple of his

mother's eye," his father recalled—but he was mischievous and full of pranks. "He got the strap when he was five years old," Ted said.

When Paul was about thirteen, he was taken to say farewell to his grandfather on his deathbed. The old man had been a janitor in a bowling alley, having fled England because of some mysterious scandal. He seemed to recognize a similar dangerous quality in Paul. His parting words to him were, "I've wasted my life. Don't waste yours."

In high school, Paul began steering toward trouble. His worried parents sent him to Ridley College, a boarding school in St. Catharines, Ontario, near Niagara Falls, where he was required to be a part of the cadet corps of the Royal Canadian Army. He despised marching or any regulated behavior, and soon began skipping the compulsory drills. He would sit in his room reading Ramparts, the radical magazine that chronicled the social revolutions then unfolding in America, where he longed to be. He was constantly getting punished for his infractions, until he taught himself to pick locks; then he could sneak into the prefect's office and mark off his demerits. The experience sharpened an incipient talent for subversion.

After a year of this, his parents transferred him to a progressive boys' school, called Muskoka Lakes College, in northern Ontario, where there was very little system to subvert. Although it was called a college, it was basically a preparatory school. Students were encouraged to study whatever they wanted. Paul discovered a mentor in his art teacher, Max Allen, who was gay and politically radical. Allen produced a show for the Canadian Broadcasting Company called As It Happens. In 1973, while the Watergate hearings were going on in Washington, DC, Allen let Paul sit beside him in his cubicle at CBC while he edited John Dean's testimony for broadcast. Later, Allen opened a small theater in Toronto to show movies that had been banned under Ontario's draconian

censorship laws, and Paul volunteered at the box office. They showed Ken Russell's The Devils and Bernardo Bertolucci's Last Tango in Paris. In Ted's mind, his son was working in a porno theater. "I just shut my eyes," Ted said.

Paul left school after he was caught forging a check. He attended art school briefly, and took some film classes at a community college, but he dropped out of that as well. He grew his curly blond hair to his shoulders. He began working in construction full-time for Ted, but he was drifting toward a precipice. In the 1970s, London acquired the nickname "Speed City," because of the methamphetamine labs that sprang up to serve its blossoming underworld. Hard drugs were easy to obtain. Two of Haggis's friends died from overdoses, and he had a gun pointed in his face a couple of times. "I was a bad kid," he admitted. "I didn't kill anybody. Not that I didn't try."

He also acted as a stage manager in the ninety-nine-seat theater his father created in an abandoned church for one of his stagestruck daughters. On Saturday nights, Paul would strike the set of whatever show was under way and put up a movie screen. In that way he introduced himself and the small community of film buffs in London to the works of Bergman, Hitchcock, and the French New Wave. He was so affected by Michelangelo Antonioni's Blow-Up that in 1974 he decided to become a fashion photographer in England, like the hero of that movie. That lasted less than a year, but when he returned he still carried a Leica over his shoulder.

Back in London, Ontario, he fell in love with a nursing student named Diane Gettas. They began sharing a one-bedroom apartment filled with Paul's books on film. He thought of himself then as "a loner and an artist and an iconoclast." His grades were too poor to get into college. He could see that he was going nowhere. He was ready to change, but he wasn't sure how.

Such was Paul Haggis's state of mind when he joined the Church

of Scientology.

LIKE EVERY SCIENTOLOGIST, when Haggis entered the church, he took his first steps into the mind of L. Ron Hubbard. He read about Hubbard's adventurous life: how he wandered the world, led dangerous expeditions, and healed himself of crippling war injuries through the techniques that he developed into Dianetics. He was not a prophet, like Mohammed, or divine, like Jesus. He had not been visited by an angel bearing tablets of revelation, like Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. Scientologists believe that Hubbard discovered the existential truths that form their doctrine through extensive research—in that way, it is "science." The apparent rationalism appealed to Haggis. He had long since walked away from the religion of his upbringing, but he was still looking for a way to express his idealism. It was important to him that Scientology didn't demand belief in a god. But the figure of L. Ron Hubbard did hover over the religion in suggestive ways. He wasn't worshipped, exactly, but his visage and name were everywhere, like the absolute ruler of a small kingdom.

L. Ron Hubbard in the 1960s

There seemed to be two Hubbards within the church: the godlike authority whose every word was regarded as scripture, and the avuncular figure that Haggis saw on the training videos, who came across as wry and self-deprecating. Those were qualities that Haggis shared to a marked degree, and they inspired trust in the man he had come to accept as his spiritual guide. Still, Haggis felt a little stranded by the lack of irony among his fellow Scientologists. Their inability to laugh at themselves seemed at odds with the character of Hubbard himself. He didn't seem self-important or pious; he was like the dashing, wisecracking hero of a B movie who had seen everything and somehow had it all figured out. When Haggis experienced doubts about the religion, he reflected on the 16 mm films of Hubbard's lectures from the 1950s and 1960s, which were part of the church's indoctrination process. Hubbard

was always chuckling to himself, marveling over some random observation that had just occurred to him, with a little wink to the audience suggesting that they not take him too seriously. He would just open his mouth and a mob of new thoughts would burst forth, elbowing each other in the race to make themselves known to the world. They were often trivial and disjointed but also full of obscure, learned references and charged with a sense of originality and purpose. "You walked in one day and you said, 'I'm a seneschal,' " Hubbard observed in a characteristic aside,

> and this knight with eight-inch spurs, standing there—humph—and say, "I'm supposed to open the doors to this castle, I've been doing this for a long time, and I'm a very trusted retainer."…He's insisting he's the seneschal but nobody will pay him his wages, and so forth.… He was somebody before he became the seneschal. Now, as a seneschal, he became nobody—until he finally went out and got a begging pan on the highway and began to hold it out for fish and chips as people came along, you know.… Now he says, "I am something, I am a beggar," but that's still something. Then the New York state police come along, or somebody, and they say to him—I'm a little mixed up in my periods here, but they say to him—"Do you realize you cannot beg upon the public road without license Number 603-F?"…So he starves to death and kicks the bucket and there he lies.… Now he's somebody, he's a corpse, but he's not dead, he's merely a corpse.… Got the idea? But he goes through sequences of becoming nobody, somebody, nobody, somebody, nobody, somebody, nobody, not necessarily on a dwindling spiral. Some people get up to the point of being a happy man. You know the old story of a happy man—I won't tell it—he didn't have a shirt. …

Just as this fuzzy parable begins to ramble into incoherence, Hubbard comes to the point, which is that a being is not his occupation or even the body he presently inhabits. The central insight of Scientology is that the being is eternal, what Hubbard terms a "thetan." "This chap, in other words, was somebody until

he began to identify his beingness with a thing.… None of these beingnesses are the person. The person is the thetan."

"He had this amazing buoyancy," Haggis recalled. "He had a deadpan sense of humor and this sense of himself that seemed to say, 'Yes, I am fully aware that I might be mad, but I also might be on to something.' "

The zealotry that empowered so many members of the church came from the belief that they were the vanguard of the struggle to save humanity. "A civilization without insanity, without criminals and without war, where the able can prosper and honest beings can have rights, and where Man is free to rise to greater heights, are the aims of Scientology," Hubbard writes. Those breathless aims drew young idealists, like Haggis, to the church's banner.

To advance such lofty goals, Hubbard developed a "technology" to attain spiritual freedom and discover oneself as an immortal being. "Scientology works 100 percent of the time when it is properly applied to a person who sincerely desires to improve his life," a church publication declares. This guarantee rests on the assumption that through rigorous research, Hubbard had uncovered a perfect understanding of human nature. One must not stray from the path he has laid down or question his methods. Scientology is exact. Scientology is certain. Step by step one can ascend toward clarity and power, becoming more oneself—but, paradoxically, also more like Hubbard. Scientology is the geography of his mind. Perhaps no individual in history has taken such copious internal soundings and described with so much logic and minute detail the inner workings of his own mentality. The method Hubbard put forward created a road map toward his own ideal self. Hubbard's habits, his imagination, his goals and wishes—his character, in other words—became both the basis and the destination of Scientology.

Secretly, Haggis didn't really respect Hubbard as a writer. He

hadn't been able to get through Dianetics, for instance. He read about thirty pages, then put it down. Much of the Scientology coursework, however, gave him a feeling of accomplishment. In 1976, he traveled to Los Angeles, the center of the Scientology universe, checking in at the old Château Élysée, on Franklin Avenue. Clark Gable and Katharine Hepburn had once stayed there, along with many other stars, but when Haggis arrived it was a run-down church retreat called the Manor Hotel.[1] He had a little apartment with a kitchen where he could write.

There were about 30,000 Scientologists in America at the time. Most of them were white, urban, and middle class; they were predominantly in their twenties, and many of them, especially in Los Angeles, were involved in graphic or performing arts. In other words, they were a lot like Paul Haggis. He immediately became a part of a community in a city that can otherwise be quite isolating. For the first time in his life, he experienced a feeling of kinship and camaraderie with people who had a lot in common—"all these atheists looking for something to believe in, and all these wanderers looking for a club to join."

In 1977, Haggis returned to Canada to continue working for his father, who could see that his son was struggling. Ted Haggis asked him what he wanted to do with his life. Haggis said he wanted to be a writer. His father said, "Well, there are only two places to do that, New York and Los Angeles. Pick one, and I'll keep you on the payroll for a year." Paul chose LA because it was the heart of the film world. Soon after this conversation with his father, Haggis and Diane Gettas got married. Two months later, they loaded up his brown Camaro and drove to Los Angeles, moving into an apartment with Diane's brother, Gregg, and three other people. Paul got a job moving furniture. On the weekends he took photographs for yearbooks. At night he wrote scripts on spec at a secondhand drafting table. The following year, Diane gave birth to

their first child, Alissa.

SCIENTOLOGY HAD a giddy and playful air in the mid-seventies, when Haggis arrived in Los Angeles. It was seen as a cool, boutique religion, aimed especially toward the needs of artists and entertainers. The counterculture was still thriving in the seventies, and Scientology both was a part of it and stood apart from it. There was a saying, “After drugs, there’s Scientology,” and it was true that many who were drawn to the religion had taken hallucinogens and were open to alternative realities. Recruits had a sense of boundless possibility. Mystical powers were forecast; out-of-body experiences were to be expected; fundamental secrets of the universe were to be revealed.

Haggis became friends with other Scientologists who also hoped to make it in Hollywood. One of them was Skip Press, a writer and musician on the staff of the Celebrity Centre, which was the church’s main foothold in the entertainment industry. Like many young recruits, Press believed that Scientology had given him superhuman powers; for instance, he believed that when he got into the right mental state, he could change traffic lights to green. He and Haggis formed a casual self-help group with other aspiring writers. They met at a Scientology hangout across from the Celebrity Centre called Two Dollar Bill’s, where they would criticize each other’s work and scheme about how to get ahead.

Paul Haggis on vacation in Antigua in 1975, the year he joined the Church of Scientology

Eventually, this informal writers club came to the attention of Yvonne Gillham, the charismatic founder of the Celebrity Centre. Naturally warm and energetic, Gillham was an ideal candidate to woo the kinds of artists and opinion leaders that Hubbard sought to front his religion. The former kindergarten director staged parties, poetry readings, workshops, and dances. Chick Corea and other musicians associated with the church often played there. Gillham persuaded Haggis and his circle to hold their meetings at the Celebrity Centre, and they were folded into her web.

Haggis and a friend from the writers club eventually got a job scripting cartoons for Ruby-Spears Productions, beginning with a short-lived series called Dingbat and the Creeps, then Heathcliff.

After that, Haggis went on to write Richie Rich and Scooby-Doo for Hanna-Barbera. He bought a used IBM Selectric typewriter. His career began to creep forward.

One day, a well-off strawberry farmer from Vancouver introduced himself to Haggis and Skip Press at the Celebrity Centre, saying he wanted to produce a life story of L. Ron Hubbard. He was offering fifteen thousand dollars for a script. Press declined, but Haggis accepted the money. His memory is that it was a horror script that he hoped to interest the strawberry farmer in. He never actually wrote a script about Hubbard, and eventually returned the entire sum, but in Press's opinion, that was when Haggis's career began to accelerate. "The money enabled Paul to cruise a bit and develop his career. Next thing I knew, Paul was getting an agent." His Scientology connections were paying off.

HAGGIS SPENT much of his time and money taking advanced courses and being "audited," a kind of Scientology psychotherapy that involves the use of an electropsychometer, or E-Meter. The device measures bodily changes in electrical resistance that occur when a person answers questions posed by an auditor. Hubbard compared it to a lie detector. The E-Meter bolstered the church's claim to being a scientific path to spiritual discovery. "It gives Man his first keen look into the heads and hearts of his fellows," Hubbard claimed, adding that Scientology boosted some people's IQ one point for every hour of auditing. "Our most spectacular feat was raising a boy from 83 IQ to 212," he once boasted to the Saturday Evening Post.

The theory of auditing is that it locates and discharges mental "masses" that are blocking the free flow of energy. Ideas and fantasies are not immaterial; they have weight and solidity. They can root themselves in the mind as phobias and obsessions.

Auditing breaks up the masses that occupy what Hubbard terms the "reactive mind," which is where the fears and phobias reside. The E-Meter is presumed to measure changes in those masses. If the needle on the meter moves to the right, resistance is rising; to the left, it is falling. The auditor asks systematic questions aimed at detecting sources of "spiritual distress"—problems at work or in a relationship, for instance. Whenever the client, or "preclear," gives an answer that prompts the meter needle to jump, that subject becomes an area of concentration until the auditor is satisfied that emotional consequences of the troubling experience have drained away. Certain patterns of needle movement, such as sudden jumps or darts, long versus short falls, et cetera, have meaning as well. The auditor tries to guide the preclear to a "cognition" about the subject under examination, which leads to a "floating" needle. That doesn't necessarily mean that the needle is frozen. "The needle just idles around and yawns at your questions," Hubbard explains. The individual should experience a corresponding feeling of release. Eventually, the reactive mind is cleansed of its obsessions, fears, and irrational urges, and the preclear becomes Clear.[2]

Haggis found the E-Meter impressively responsive. He would grasp a cylindrical electrode in each hand. (When he first joined Scientology, the electrodes were empty Campbell's soup cans with the labels stripped off.) An imperceptible electrical charge would run from the meter through his body. The meter seemed able to gauge the kinds of thoughts he was having—whether they were scary or happy, or when he was hiding something. It was a little spooky. The auditor often probed for what Scientologists call "earlier similars." If Paul was having another fight with Diane, for instance, the auditor would ask him, "Can you remember an earlier time when something like this happened?" Each new memory led further and further back in time. The goal was to uncover and neutralize the emotional memories that were plaguing Paul's

behavior.

Often, the process led participants to recall past lives. Although that never happened to Haggis, he envied others who professed to have vivid recollections of ancient times or distant civilizations. Wouldn't it be cool if you had many lifetimes before? he thought. Wouldn't it be easier to face death?

Scientology is not just a matter of belief, the recruits were constantly told; it is a step-by-step scientific process that will help you overcome your limitations and realize your full potential for greatness. Only Scientology can awaken individuals to the joyful truth of their immortal state. Only Scientology can rescue humanity from its inevitable doom. The recruits were infused with a sense of mystery, purpose, and intrigue. Life inside Scientology was just so much more compelling than life outside.

Preclears sometimes experience mystical states characterized by feelings of bliss or a sense of blending into the universe. They come to expect such phenomena, and they yearn for them if they don't occur. "Exteriorization"—the sense that one has actually left his physical being behind—is a commonly reported occurrence for Scientologists. If one's consciousness can actually uproot itself from the physical body and move about at will—what does that say about mortality? We must be something more than, something other than, a mere physical incarnation; we actually are thetans, to use Hubbard's term, immortal spiritual beings that are incarnated in innumerable lifetimes. Hubbard said that exteriorization could be accomplished in about half the preclears by having the auditor simply command, "Be three feet back of your head." Free of the limitations of his body, the thetan can roam the universe, circling stars, strolling on Mars, or even creating entirely new universes. Reality expands far beyond what the individual had originally perceived it to be. The ultimate goal of auditing is not just to liberate a person from destructive mental phenomena; it is to

emancipate him from the laws of matter, energy, space, and time—or MEST, as Hubbard termed them. These are just artifacts of the thetan's imagination, in any case. Bored thetans had created MEST universes where they could frolic and play games; eventually, they became so absorbed in their distractions they forgot their true immortal natures. They identified with the bodies that they were temporarily inhabiting, in a universe they had invented for their own amusement. The goal of Scientology is to recall to the thetan his immortality and help him relinquish his self-imposed limitations.

Once, Haggis had what he thought was an out-of-body experience. He was lying on a couch, and then he found himself across the room, observing himself lying there. The experience of being out of his body wasn't that grand, and later he wondered if he had simply been visualizing the scene. He didn't have the certainty his colleagues reported when they talked about seeing objects behind them or in distant places and times.

In 1976, at the Manor Hotel, Haggis went "Clear." It is the base camp for those who hope to ascend to the upper peaks of Scientology. The concept comes from Dianetics. A person who becomes Clear is "adaptable to and able to change his environment," Hubbard writes. "His ethical and moral standards are high, his ability to seek and experience pleasure is great. His personality is heightened and he is creative and constructive." Among other qualities, the Clear has a flawless memory and the capacity to perform mental tasks at unprecedented rates of speed; he is less susceptible to disease; and he is free of neuroses, compulsions, repressions, and psychosomatic illnesses. Hubbard sums up: "The dianetic clear is to a current normal individual as the current normal is to the severely insane."

Haggis was Clear #5925. "It was not life-changing," he admits. "It wasn't like, 'Oh my God, I can fly!' " At every level of

advancement, he was encouraged to write a "success story" saying how effective his training had been. He had read many such stories by other Scientologists, and they felt overly effusive, geared toward getting through the gatekeepers so that the students could move on to the next level.

THE BRIDGE TO TOTAL FREEDOM is a journey that goes on and on (although confoundingly, in the Scientology metaphor, one moves "higher and higher"—up the Bridge rather than across it). Haggis quickly advanced through the upper levels. He was becoming an "Operating Thetan," which the church defines as one who "can handle things and exist without physical support and assistance." An editorial in a 1958 issue of the Scientology magazine Ability notes that "neither Buddha nor Jesus Christ were OTs according to the evidence. They were just a shade above Clear."

When Haggis joined the church, there were seven levels of Operating Thetans. According to church documents that have been leaked online, Hubbard's handwritten instructions for Operating Thetan Level One list thirteen mental exercises that attune practitioners to their relationship with others. The directives for OT I are so open-ended it could be difficult to know whether they have been satisfactorily accomplished. "Note several large and several small male bodies until you have a cognition," for instance. Or, "Seat yourself unobtrusively where you can observe a number of people. Spot things and people you are not. Do to cognition." The point is to familiarize oneself with one's environment from the perspective of being Clear.

In the second level, OT II, Scientologists attempt to delete past-life "implants" that hinder progress in one's current existence. This is accomplished through exercises and visualizations that explore oppositional forces: "Laughter comes from the rear half and calm

from the front half simultaneously. Then they reverse. It gives one a sensation of total disagreement. The trick is to conceive of both at the same time. This tends to knock one out."

Each new level of achievement marked the entrance to a more select spiritual fraternity. Haggis didn't have a strong reaction to the material, but then, he wasn't expecting anything too profound. Everyone knew that the big revelations resided in OT III.

Hubbard called this level the Wall of Fire.

"The material involved in this sector is so vicious, that it is carefully arranged to kill anyone if he discovers the exact truth of it," he wrote in 1967. "So in January and February of this year I became very ill, almost lost this body, and somehow or another brought it off, and obtained the material, and was able to live through it. I am very sure that I was the first one that ever did live through any attempt to attain that material."

In the late seventies, the OT mysteries were still unknown, except to the elect. There was no Internet, and Scientology's confidential scriptures had never been published or produced in court. Scientologists looked toward the moment of initiation into OT III with extreme curiosity and excitement. The candidate had to be invited into this next level—Scientologists were cautioned that the material could cause harm or even death to those who were unprepared to receive it. The enforced secrecy added to the mystique and the giddy air of adventure.

One could look back at this crucial moment and examine the pros and cons of Haggis's decision to stay in Scientology. The fact that people often sneered at the church didn't deter him; on the contrary, he reveled in being a member of a stigmatized minority—it made him feel at one with other marginalized groups. The main drawback to belief was his own skeptical nature; he was a proud contrarian, and it would never have occurred to him to join the Baptist church, for instance, or to return to Catholicism; he simply

wasn't interested. Intellectually, faith didn't call to him. Scientology, on the other hand, was exotic and tantalizing. The weirdness of some of the doctrines was hard to fathom, but there was no doubt in Haggis's mind that he had gained some practical benefits from his several years of auditing and that his communication skills had improved through some of the coursework. None of that had required him to "believe" in Scientology, but the religion had proved itself in certain ways that mattered to him. The process of induction was so gradual that things that might have shocked him earlier were more acceptable by the time he came upon them. Whenever he ran into something on the Bridge to Total Freedom that he couldn't fathom, he convinced himself that the next level would make everything understandable.

Scientology was a part of his community; it had taken root in Hollywood, just as Haggis had. His first writing jobs had come through Scientology connections. His wife was deeply involved in the church, as was his sister Kathy. His circle of friends was centered in the church. Haggis was deep enough into the process by now to understand implicitly that those relationships would be jeopardized if he chose to leave the church. Moreover, he had invested a considerable part of his income in the program. The incentive to believe was high.

He was also looking forward to having the enhanced abilities that his fellow adherents on the Bridge were constantly talking about. Although Hubbard had explicitly told Operating Thetans not to use their powers for "parlor tricks," there was a section of Advance!, a magazine for upper-level Scientologists, titled "OT Phenomena," where members could report clairvoyant or paranormal experiences. Parking spaces magically made themselves available and waiters immediately noticed you. "I saw that my goldfish was all red and lumpy," one Scientologist writes in

Advance! “My husband, Rick, said that he’s had goldfish like that before and they don’t recover.” The correspondent relates that she used her abilities to “flow energy” into the fish “until a big burst of matter blew. I ended off. When I went home that night the fish was completely healed.” She concludes, “It was a big win for me, and the fish. It couldn’t have been done without the technology of L. Ron Hubbard.” Even if such effects were random and difficult to replicate, for those who experienced them life was suddenly full of unseen possibilities. There was a sense of having entered a sphere of transcendence, where minds communicate with each other across great distances, where wishes and intentions affect material objects or cause people to unconsciously obey telepathic orders, and where spirits from other ages or even other worlds make themselves known.

“A theta being is capable of emitting a considerable electronic flow,” Hubbard notes, “enough to give somebody a very bad shock, to put out his eyes or cut him in half.” Even ordinary actions pose unexpected dilemmas for the OT, Hubbard warns. “How do you answer the phone as an OT?” he asks in one of his lectures. “Supposing you get mad at somebody on the other end of the telephone. You go crunch! And that’s so much Bakelite. The thing either goes into a fog of dust in the middle of the air or drips over the floor.” To avoid crushing telephones with his unfathomable strength, the OT sets up an automatic action so he doesn’t have to pick the receiver up himself. “Telephone rings, it springs into the air, and he talks. In other words, through involuntary intention the telephone stands there in mid-air.” The promise of employing such powers was incredibly tantalizing.

Carrying an empty briefcase, Haggis went to the Advanced Organization building in Los Angeles, where the OT III material was held. A supervisor handed him a manila envelope. Haggis locked it in the briefcase, which was lashed to his arm. Then he

entered a secure study room and bolted the door behind him. At last, he was able to examine the religion's highest mysteries, revealed in a couple of pages of Hubbard's handwritten scrawl. After a few minutes, Haggis returned to the supervisor.

"I don't understand," Haggis said.

"Do you know the words?"

"I know the words, I just don't understand."

"Go back and read it again," the supervisor suggested.

Haggis did so. In a moment, he returned. "Is this a metaphor?" he asked.

"No," the supervisor responded. "It is what it is. Do the actions that are required."

Maybe it's an insanity test, Haggis thought—if you believe it, you're automatically kicked out. He considered that possibility. But when he read it again, he decided, "This is madness."

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[1] It has since been spectacularly renovated and turned into Scientology's premier Celebrity Centre.

[2] Hubbard sometimes disparaged the term "lie detector" in connection with E-Meters. "In the first place they do not detect lies and in the second place the police have known too little about the human mind to know that their instrument was actually accurate to an amazing perfection. These instruments should be called 'emotion detectors' " (Hubbard, "Electropsychometric Auditing Operator's Manual," 1952). According to David S. Touretsky, a research professor in computer science at Carnegie Mellon University (and a prominent Scientology critic), what are called "thoughts" are actually "fleeting patterns of chemical and electrical activity in our brains" that have no actual mass. "The meter is really more of a prop or talisman than a measuring instrument. Interpreting needle movements is like reading tea leaves. A good fortune teller picks up on lots of subliminal cues that let them 'read' their subject, while the tea leaves give the subject something to fixate on. And the subject is heavily invested in believing that the auditor and the meter

are effective, so it's a mutually reinforcing system." The E-Meter measures skin resistance, like a lie detector. "Strong emotional reactions do cause changes in muscle tension or micro-tremors of the fingers will also cause changes in the current flowing to the meter, so it's not purely measuring the physiological changes associated with skin resistance like a real lie detector would. (And real lie detectors also look at other variables, such as pulse and respiration rates.)" (David Touretsky, personal correspondence.)

2

Source

The many discrepancies between Hubbard's legend and his life have overshadowed the fact that he genuinely was a fascinating man: an explorer, a best-selling author, and the founder of a worldwide religious movement. The tug-of-war between Scientologists and anti-Scientologists over Hubbard's biography has created two swollen archetypes: the most important person who ever lived and the world's greatest con man. Hubbard himself seemed to revolve on this same axis, constantly inflating his actual accomplishments in a manner that was rather easy for his critics to puncture. But to label him a pure fraud is to ignore the complex, charming, delusional, and visionary features of his character that made him so compelling to the many thousands who followed him and the millions who read his work. One would also have to ignore his life's labor in creating the intricately detailed epistemology that has pulled so many into its net—including, most prominently, Hubbard himself.

Lafayette Ronald Hubbard was born in Tilden, Nebraska, in 1911, a striking, happy child with gray eyes and wispy carrot-colored hair. His father, Harry Ross "Hub" Hubbard, was in the Navy when he met Ledora May Waterbury, who was studying to be a teacher in Omaha. They married in 1909. By the time their only child came along two years later, Hub was out of the service and working in the advertising department of the local Omaha newspaper. May returned to her hometown of Tilden for the birth.

When Ron was two, the family moved to Helena, Montana, a

gold town that was famous all over the West for its millionaires and its prostitutes. It was also the capital of the frontier state. Hub managed the Family Theater, which, despite its name, shared a building downtown with two bordellos. Even as a young child, Ron loved to watch the vaudeville acts that passed through, but the enterprise shut its doors when a larger theater opened nearby.

Ron's maternal grandparents lived nearby. Lafayette Waterbury was a veterinarian and a well-regarded horseman who doted on his redheaded grandson. "I was riding broncs at 3½ years," Hubbard later boasted. He supposedly began reading at the same precocious age, and according to the church he was "soon devouring shelves of classics, including much of Western philosophy, the pillars of English literature, and, of note, the essays of Sigmund Freud."

When the United States entered the First World War in 1917, Hubbard's father decided to re-enlist in the Navy. Ledora got a job with the State of Montana, and she and six-year-old Ron moved in with her parents, who had relocated to Helena. When the war ended, Hub decided to make a career in the Navy, and the Hubbard family was launched into the itinerant military life.

Hubbard's family was Methodist. He once remarked, "Many members of my family that I was raised with were devout Christians, and my grandfather was a devout atheist." Ron took his own eccentric path. Throughout his youth, he was fascinated by shamans and magicians. As a boy in Montana, he says, he was made a blood brother to the Blackfoot Indians by an elderly medicine man named Old Tom Madfeathers. Hubbard claims that Old Tom would put on displays of magic by leaping fifteen feet high from a seated position and perching on the top of his teepee. Hubbard observes, "I learned long ago that man has his standards for credulity, and when reality clashes with these, he feels challenged."

A signal moment in Hubbard's narrative is the seven-thousand-

mile voyage he took in 1923 from Seattle through the Panama Canal to Washington, DC, where his father was being posted. One of his fellow passengers was Commander Joseph C. "Snake" Thompson of the US Navy Medical Corps. A neurosurgeon, a naturalist, and a former spy, Thompson made a vivid impression on the boy. "He was a very careless man," Hubbard later recalled. "He used to go to sleep reading a book and when he woke up, why, he got up and never bothered to press and change his uniform, you know. And he was usually in very bad odor with the Navy Department.... But he was a personal friend of Sigmund Freud's.... When he saw me—a defenseless character—and there was nothing to do on a big transport on a very long cruise, he started to work me over."

No doubt Thompson entertained the young Hubbard with tales of his adventures as a spy in the Far East. Raised in Japan by his father, a missionary, Thompson spoke fluent Japanese. He had spent much of his early military career roaming through Asia posing as a herpetologist looking for rare snakes while covertly gathering intelligence and charting possible routes of invasion.

"What impressed me," Hubbard later remarked, "he had a cat by the name of Psycho. This cat had a crooked tail, which is enough to impress any young man. And the cat would do tricks. And the first thing he did was teach me how to train cats. But it takes so long, and it requires such tremendous patience, that to this day I have never trained a cat. You have to wait, evidently, for the cat to do something, then you applaud it. But waiting for a cat to do something whose name is Psycho ..."

One of Thompson's maxims was "If it's not true for you, it's not true." He told young Hubbard that the statement had come from Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha. It made an impression on Hubbard. "If there's anybody in the world that's calculated to believe what he wants to believe and to reject what he doesn't

want to believe, it is I."

Thompson had just returned from Vienna, where he had been sent by the Navy to study under Freud. "I was just a kid and Commander Thompson didn't have any boy of his own and he and I just got along fine," Hubbard recalls in one of his lectures. "Why he took it into his head to start beating Freud into my head, I don't know, but he did. And I wanted very much to follow out this work—wanted very much to. I didn't get a chance. My father … said, 'Son, you're going to be an engineer.' "

THOMPSON WAS ABOUT to publish a review of psychoanalytic literature in the United States Naval Medical Bulletin; indeed, he may have been working on it as he traveled to Washington, and no doubt he drew upon the thinking reflected in his article when he tutored Hubbard in the basics of Freudian theory. "Man has two fundamental instincts—one for self-preservation and the other for race propagation," Thompson writes in his review. "The most important emotion of the self-preservation urge is hunger. The sole emotion of the race-propagation urge is libido." Psychoanalysis, Thompson explains, is the "technic" of discovering unconscious motivations that harm the health or happiness of the individual. Once the patient understands the motives behind his neurotic behavior, his symptoms automatically disappear. "This uncovering of the hidden motive does not consist in the mere explaining to the patient the mechanism of his plight. The understanding alone comes from the analytic technic of free association and subsequent rational synthesis." Many of these thoughts are deeply embedded in the principles of Dianetics, the foundation of Hubbard's philosophy of human nature, which predated the establishment of Scientology.

In 1927, Hubbard's father was posted to Guam, and Ledora went

along, abandoning Ron to the care of her parents. For a man as garrulous as L. Ron Hubbard turned out to be, reflections on his parents are rare, almost to the point of writing them out of his biography. His story of himself reads like that of an orphan who has invented his own way in the world. One of his lovers later said that he told her that his mother was a whore and a lesbian, and that he had found her in bed with another woman. His mistress also admitted, "I never knew what to believe."

Hubbard made two voyages to visit his parents in Guam. One trip included a detour to China, where he supposedly began his study of Eastern religions after encountering magicians and holy men. According to the church's narrative, "He braved typhoons aboard a working schooner to finally land on the China coast.... He then made his way inland to finally venture deep into forbidden Buddhist lamaseries." He watched monks meditating "for weeks on end." Everywhere he went, the narrative goes, the teenage Hubbard was preoccupied with a central question: " 'Why?' Why so much human suffering and misery? Why was man, with all his ancient wisdom and knowledge accumulated in learned texts and temples, unable to solve such basic problems as war, insanity and unhappiness?"

In fact, Hubbard's contemporary journals don't really engage such philosophical points. His trip to China, which was organized by the YMCA, lasted only ten days. His parents accompanied him, although they are not mentioned in his journals. He did encounter monks, whom he described as croaking like bullfrogs. The journals reflect the mind of a budding young imperialist, who summons an unearned authority over an exotic and unfamiliar culture. "The very nature of the Chinaman holds him back," Hubbard observes on the ship back to Guam. "The trouble with China is, there are too many chinks here."

The journals provide a portrait of an adolescent writer trying on

his future craft by cataloguing plot ideas, such as, “A young American in India with an organized army for rent to the various rajahs. Usual plot complications.” Another idea: “Love story. Goes to France. Meets swell broad in Marseilles.” He is trying uncertainly to find his voice:

> Rex Fraser mounted the knoll and setting his hat more securely against the wind squinted at the huddle of unpainted shacks below him.
>
> “So this,” he said to his horse, “is Montana City.”

Hubbard entered the School of Engineering at George Washington University in the fall of 1930. He was a poor student—failing German and calculus—but he excelled in extracurricular activities. He began writing for the school newspaper. A new literary magazine at GWU provided a venue for his first published works of fiction. He became director of the gliding club, a thrilling new pastime that was just catching on (Hubbard’s gliding license was #385). The actual study of engineering was a secondary pursuit, as his failing grades reflected.

In September 1931, Hubbard and his friend Philip “Flip” Browning took a few weeks off to barnstorm through the Midwest in an Arrow Sport biplane. “We carefully wrapped our ‘baggage,’ threw the fire extinguisher out to save half a horsepower, patched a hole in the upper wing, and started off to skim over four or five states with the wind as our only compass,” Hubbard writes. By now, he had taken to calling himself “Flash.”

Hubbard’s account of this adventure, “Tailwind Willies,” was his first commercially published story, appearing in The Sportsman Pilot in January 1932. It was the launch of an unprecedented career. (He would go on to publish more books than any other author, according to the 2006 Guinness World Records, with 1,084 titles.)

In the spring of 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, Hubbard undertook a venture that displayed many of the hallmarks of his future exploits. He posted a notice on several university campuses: “Restless young men with wanderlust wanted for the Caribbean Motion Picture Expedition. Cost to applicant $250 payable at the dock in Baltimore before sailing. Must be healthy, dependable, resourceful, imaginative, and adventurous. No tea-hounds or tourist material need apply.” The goals of the expedition were grand and various—primarily, to make newsreels for Fox Movietone and Pathé News, while exploring the pirate haunts of the Caribbean and voodoo rites in Haiti. There were also vague plans to “collect whatever one collects for exhibits in museums.”

“It’s difficult at any age to recognize a messiah in the making,” wrote one of the young men, James S. Free, a journalist who signed on to the expedition. He was twenty-three years old, two years older than Hubbard. They were going to be partners in the adventure, along with Hubbard’s old flying buddy, Phil Browning. “I cannot claim prescient awareness that my soon-to-be business partner possessed the ego and talents that would later develop his own private religion,” Free wrote in a notebook he titled “Preview of a Messiah.”

Hubbard was living with his parents in Washington, DC, when Free arrived. “Ron introduced me to his mother, whose long light brown hair seemed dark beside the reddish glow of her son’s hair and face,” Free wrote, in one of the few records of the actual relationship between Hubbard and his mother. “I recall little else about her except that like her husband, Navy lieutenant Henry Ross Hubbard, she plainly adored young Ron and considered him a budding genius.”

Hubbard filled Free in on new developments. Phil Browning, the other partner, had dropped out at the last minute, but he had managed to get the loan of some laboratory equipment from the

University of Michigan; meantime, Hubbard was negotiating with a professional cameraman for the anticipated films of the voodoo rites "and that sort of salable material." Thanks to Free's efforts to sign up more than twenty new members of the expedition, Hubbard said, "We have enough cash to go ahead."

The trip was a calamity from the start. A number of the "buccaneers" who signed up bailed out at the last minute, but fifty-six green collegians with no idea what they were doing clambered aboard the antiquated, four-masted schooner Doris Hamlin. The adventure began with the Doris Hamlin having to be towed out of Baltimore harbor because of lack of wind. That was almost the end of the expedition, since the tug was pulling toward the sea while the ship was still tied to the dock. Once in the Atlantic, the ship was either becalmed in glassy seas or roiling in high chop. The mainsails blew out in a squall as the expedition steered toward St. Thomas. Seasickness was rampant. At every port, more of the disgusted crew deserted. The only film that was shot was a desultory cockfight in Martinique.

It soon became evident that the expedition was broke. There was no meat or fruit, and the crew was soon reduced to buying their own food in port. Hubbard didn't have enough money to pay the only professional sailors on the ship—the captain, the first mate, and the cook—so he offered to sell shares in the venture to his crewmates and borrowed money from others. He raised seven or eight hundred dollars that way, and was able to set sail from Bermuda, only to become mired in the Sargasso Sea for four days.

After a meager supper one night, George Blakeslee, who had been brought along as a photographer, had had enough. "I tied a hangman's noose in a rope and everybody got the same idea," he wrote in his journal. "So we made an effigy of Hubbard and strung it up in the shrouds. Put a piece of red cloth on the head and a sign on it. 'Our red-headed ___!' " Hubbard stayed in his cabin after

that.

The furious captain wired for money, then steered the ship back to Baltimore, pronouncing the expedition "the worst and most unpleasant I ever made." Hubbard was not aboard as the "jinx ship," as it was called in the local press, crept back into its home port. He was last seen in Puerto Rico, slipping off with a suitcase in each hand.

In some respects, Hubbard discovered himself on that unlucky voyage, which he termed a "glorious adventure." His infatuation with motion pictures first became evident on this trip, although no movies were actually made. Despite the defections, Hubbard demonstrated an impressive capacity to summon others to join him on what was clearly a shaky enterprise. Throughout his life he would enlist people—especially young people—in romantic, ill-conceived projects, often at sea, where he was out of reach of process servers. He was beginning to invent himself as a charismatic leader. The grandeur of his project was not yet evident, even to him, but in the Caribbean Motion Picture Expedition he clearly defined himself as an explorer, sailor, filmmaker, and leader of men, even though he failed spectacularly in each of those categories. He had an incorrigible ability to float above the evidence and to extract from his experiences lessons that others would say were irrational and even bizarre. Habitually, and perhaps unconsciously, Hubbard would fill this gap—between reality and his interpretation of it—with mythology. This was the source of what some call his genius, and others call his insanity.

WHEN HE WAS TWENTY-THREE, Hubbard married Margaret Louise Grubb, an aspiring aviator four years his senior, whom he called Polly. Amelia Earhart had just become the first female to fly solo across the Atlantic, inspiring many daring young women who

wanted to follow her example. Although Polly never gained a pilot's license, it wasn't surprising that she would respond to Ron's swashbuckling personality and his tales of far-flung adventures. They settled in a small town in Maryland, near her family farm. Ron was trying to make it as a professional magazine writer, but by that point—at the end of 1933—he had only half a dozen articles in print. Soon, Polly was pregnant, and Ron had to find a way to make a living quickly.

Pulp fiction derives its name from the cheap paper stock used in printing the garish magazines—Weird Tales, Black Mask, Argosy, Magic Carpet—that became popular in Depression-era America. The pay for contributors was miserable—the standard rate was a penny a word. To fill the usual 128 pages, each pulp magazine required 65,000 words, so that the yearly quota to fill the 150 pulp weeklies, biweeklies, and monthlies that crowded the newsstands in 1934 amounted to about 195,000,000 words. Many well-known writers began their careers by feeding this gigantic maw, including Dashiell Hammett, H. P. Lovecraft, Erle Stanley Gardner, Raymond Chandler, Ray Bradbury, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The pulps nurtured genres that were perhaps not new but until then had never been so blatantly and abundantly expressed.

Hubbard's actual life experiences seemed wonderfully suited for such literature. His first pulp story, "The Green God," published in Thrilling Adventures in 1934, is about a naval intelligence officer (possibly based on Snake Thompson) who is tortured and buried alive in China. "Maybe Because—!," published in Cowboy Stories, was the first of Hubbard's forty-seven westerns, which must have drawn upon his childhood in Montana. Soon, however, there were stories about submarines and zombies, tales set in Russia or Morocco. Plot was all that really mattered, and Hubbard's amazing capacity for invention readily colored the canvas. Success in the pulps depended on speed and imagination, and Hubbard had both

in abundance. The church estimates that between 1934 and 1936, he was turning out a hundred thousand words of fiction a month. He was writing so fast that he began typing on a roll of butcher paper to save time. When a story was finished, he would tear off the sheet using a T-square and mail it to the publisher. Because the magazines didn't want an author to appear more than once in the same issue, Hubbard adopted pen names—Mr. Spectator, Capt. Humbert Reynolds, Rene Lafayette, Winchester Remington Colt, et cetera—accumulating about twenty aliases over the years. He said that when he was writing stories he would simply "roll the pictures" in his mind and write down what he saw as quickly as possible. It was a physical act: he would actually perspire when he wrote. His philosophy was "First draft, last draft, get it out the door."

Ron and Polly's son, L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., was born prematurely on May 7, 1934, in Encinitas, California, where the couple had gone to vacation. The baby, whom they called Nibs, weighed little more than two pounds at birth. Ron fashioned an incubator out of a cupboard drawer, using a lightbulb to keep it warm, while Polly fed Nibs with an eyedropper. Two years later, in New York City, Polly gave birth to a daughter, Katherine May Hubbard, whom they called Kay.

In 1936, the family moved to Bremerton, Washington, near where Ron's parents were then living, as well as his mother's family, the Waterburys. They warmly accepted Polly and the kids. Ron was doing well enough to buy a small farm in nearby Port Orchard with a house, five bungalows, a thousand feet of waterfront, and a view of Mount Rainier—"the prettiest place I ever saw in my life," he wrote to his best friend, Russell Hays, a fellow author of pulps who lived in Kansas. Ron spent much of his time in New York, however, cultivating his professional contacts, and leaving his wife and children for long periods of time.

Hubbard pined for Hollywood, in what would be a long-term, unrequited romance. Despite his overtures, he received only "vague offers" from studios for short-term contracts. "I have discarded Hollywood," he complained to Hays. "I haven't got enough charm." But in the spring of 1937, Columbia Pictures finally optioned one of Hubbard's stories to be folded into a serial, titled The Secret of Treasure Island. Hubbard quickly moved to Hollywood, hoping to finally make it in the movie business. (He later claimed to have worked on a number of films during this time—including the classic films Stagecoach, with John Wayne, and The Plainsman, with Gary Cooper—but he never actually received any film credits other than The Secret of Treasure Island.) By midsummer he had fled back to the farm in Washington, blaming the long hours, tension, and "dumb Jew producers."

Once again, he threw himself into writing the pulps with a fury, but also with a new note of cynicism. "Never write about a character type you cannot find in the magazine for which the story is intended," he advised Hays. "Never write about an unusual character." Realism was no asset in this kind of writing, he complained, remarking on "my utter inability to sell a story which has any connection with my own background.… Reality seems to be a very detested quantity."

Then, on New Year's Day, 1938, Hubbard had a revelation that would change his life—and eventually, the lives of many others. During a dental operation, he received a gas anesthetic. "While under the influence of it my heart must have stopped beating," he relates. "It was like sliding helter-skelter down into a vortex of scarlet and it was knowing that one was dying and that the process of dying was far from pleasant." In those brief, hallucinatory moments, Hubbard believed that the secrets of existence were accidentally revealed to him. Forrest Ackerman, who later became his literary agent, said that Hubbard told him that he had risen

from the dental chair in spirit form, glanced back at his former body, and wondered, “Where do we go from here?” Hubbard’s disembodied spirit then noticed a huge ornate gate in the distance, which he floated through. On the other side, Ackerman relates, Hubbard discovered “an intellectual smorgasbord of everything that had ever puzzled the mind of man—you know, how did it all begin, where do we go from here, are there past lives—and like a sponge he was just absorbing all this esoteric information. And all of a sudden, there was a kind of swishing in the air and he heard a voice, ‘No, not yet! He’s not ready!’ And like a long umbilical cord, he felt himself being pulled back, back, back. And he lay down in his body, and he opened his eyes, and he said to the nurse, ‘I was dead, wasn’t I?’ ” The nurse looked startled, and the doctor gave her a dirty look for letting Hubbard know what had happened.

In Hubbard’s own written account of the event, he remembers voices crying out as he is being restored to life, “Don’t let him know!” When he came to, he was “still in contact with something.” The intimation that he had briefly been given access to the divine mystery lingered for several days, but he couldn’t call it back. “And then one morning, just as I awoke, it came to me.”

In a fever, he dashed off a small book he titled Excalibur. “Once upon a time, according to a writer in The Arabian Nights, there lived a very wise old man,” the book begins, in the brief portion that the church has published of the fragments it says it has in its possession. The old man, goes the story, wrote a long and learned book, but he became concerned that he had written too much. So he sat himself down for ten years more and reduced the original volume to one tenth its size. Even then, he was dissatisfied, and he constrained the work even further, to a single line, “which contained everything there was to be known.” He hid the sacred line in a niche in his wall. But still he wondered, Could all human knowledge be distilled even further?

> Suppose all the wisdom of the world were reduced to just one line—suppose that one line were to be written today and given to you. With it you could understand the basis of all life and endeavor.… There is one line, conjured up out of a morass of facts and made available as an integrated unit to explain such things. This line is the philosophy of philosophy, thereby carrying the entire subject back into the simple and humble truth.
>
> All life is directed by one command and one command only—SURVIVE.

Hubbard sent excited telegrams to publishers in New York, inviting them to meet him at Penn Station, where he would auction off a manuscript that would change the world. He wrote Polly, "I have high hopes of smashing my name into history so violently that it will take a legendary form even if all the books are destroyed."

But Excalibur was never published, leading some to doubt that it was ever written. The stories Hubbard later told about the book added to the sense that it was more mythical than real. He said that when the Russians learned of the book's contents, they offered him money and laboratory facilities to complete his work. When he turned them down, they purloined a copy of his manuscript from his hotel room in Miami. Hubbard explained to his agent that he ultimately decided to withdraw the book from publication because the first six people who read it were so shattered by the revelations that they had lost their minds. The last time he showed Excalibur to a publisher, he said, the reader brought the manuscript into the room, set it on the publisher's desk, then jumped out the window of the skyscraper.

Hubbard despondently returned to the pulps. Five years of torrential output had left him exhausted and bitter. His work was "worthless," he admitted. "I have learned enough of my trade, have developed a certain technique," he wrote to Hays. "But curbed by editorial fear of reality and hindered by my own revolt I have never dared loose the pent flame, so far only releasing the

smoke."

That same year Hubbard received an offer to write for a magazine called Astounding Science-Fiction. The editor, John W. Campbell, Jr., twenty-seven years old at the time, was to preside over what Hubbard and others would mark as the Golden Age of Science Fiction. One of the many brilliant young writers who would be pulled into Campbell's orbit, Isaac Asimov, described Campbell as "a tall, large man with light hair, a beaky nose, a wide face with thin lips, and with a cigarette holder forever clamped between his teeth." Campbell was an overbearing champion of extreme right-wing ideas and crackpot science—especially psychic phenomena—and he would hold forth in nonstop monologues, often adopting perverse views, such as supporting slavery, then defending such propositions to the point of exhausting everyone in the room. "A deviant figure of marked ferocity," as the British writer Kingsley Amis observed. On the other hand, Campbell was also a caring and resourceful editor who groomed inexperienced writers, such as Robert A. Heinlein—first published in Astounding—and turned them into cultural icons.

Campbell considered science fiction to be something far more than cheap literary diversion; for him, it amounted to prophecy. His conviction of the importance of the genre added a mystical allure that other forms of pulp fiction never aspired to. Fanzines and sci-fi clubs, composed largely of adolescent boys who were drawn to the romanticized image of science, formed in many cities around the country; some of those fans went on to become important scientists, and their work was animated by ideas that had first spilled out of the minds of writers such as Heinlein, Asimov, and Hubbard. "Science fiction, particularly in its Golden Age, had a mission," Hubbard writes. "To get man to the stars." He saw himself as well qualified for the field: "I had, myself, somewhat of a science background, had done some pioneer work in

rockets and liquid gases."

Hubbard discovered his greatest talents as a writer in the field of science fiction, a more commodious genre and far more intellectually engaging than westerns or adventure yarns. Science fiction invites the writer to grandly explore alternative worlds and pose questions about meaning and destiny. Inventing plausible new realities is what the genre is all about. One starts from a hypothesis and then builds out the logic, adding detail and incident to give substance to imaginary structures. In that respect, science fiction and theology have much in common. Some of the most closely guarded secrets of Scientology were originally published in other guises in Hubbard's science fiction.

Certainly, the same mind that roamed so freely through imaginary universes might be inclined to look at the everyday world and suspect that there was something more behind the surface reality. The broad canvas of science fiction allowed Hubbard to think in large-scale terms about the human condition. He was bold. He was fanciful. He could easily invent an elaborate, plausible universe. But it is one thing to make that universe believable, and another to believe it. That is the difference between art and religion.

HUBBARD NOW LIVED two lives: one on the farm in Port Orchard, surrounded by his parents and Polly and the kids; the other in New York, where he rented an apartment on the Upper West Side. The city rewarded him with the recognition he craved. He enjoyed frequent lunches at the Knickerbocker Hotel with his colleagues in the American Fiction Guild, where he could swap tales and schmooze with editors. He also became a member of the prestigious Explorers Club, which added credibility to his frequently told stories of adventure.

“In his late twenties, Hubbard was a tall, well-built man with bright red hair, a pale complexion, and a long-nosed face that gave him the look of a reincarnated Pan,” a fellow science-fiction writer, L. Sprague de Camp, later recalled. “He arranged in his New York apartment a curtained inclosure the size of a telephone booth, lit by a blue light bulb, in which he could work fast without distraction.”

The fact that Hubbard was a continent away from his wife offered him the opportunity to court other women, which he did so openly that he became an object of wonder among his writer colleagues. Ron blamed Polly for his philandering. “Because of her coldness physically, the falsity of her pretensions, I believed myself a near eunuch,” he wrote in a private memoir (which the church disputes) some years later. “When I found I was attractive to other women, I had many affairs. But my failure to please Polly made me always pay so much attention to my momentary mate that I derived small pleasure myself. This was an anxiety neurosis which cut down my natural powers.”

One of those momentary mates was named Helen. “I loved her and she me,” Hubbard recorded. “The affair would have lasted had not Polly found out.” Polly had discovered two letters to different women that Hubbard left in the mailbox when he was back in Port Orchard; she took the letters, read them, then vengefully switched the envelopes, and put them back in the mail. For a while, Ron and Polly didn’t speak.

They were apparently reconciled in 1940, when the two of them cruised to Alaska on their thirty-foot ketch, the Magician, which they called Maggie. They left their children with other family members for the several months they were gone. Hubbard called the trip the Alaskan Radio-Experimental Expedition, which entitled him to fly the Explorers Club flag. The stated goal was to rewrite the navigation guide of the Alaskan coast using new radio

techniques; however, when the engine broke down in Ketchikan, he told a local newspaper that the purpose was "two-fold, one to win a bet and another to gather material for a novel of Alaskan salmon fishing." Some of Hubbard's friends, he related, had wagered that his boat was too small for such a journey, and he was determined to prove them wrong.

While he was stranded in Ketchikan, waiting for a new crankshaft, Hubbard spent several weeks regaling listeners of the local KGBU radio about his adventures, which included tracking down a German agent who had been planted in Alaska with orders to cut off communications in the case of war, and lassoing a brown bear on a fishing trip, which proceeded to crawl into the boat with him.

When the crankshaft finally arrived, Ron and Polly headed home, arriving a few days after Christmas, 1940, nearly six months after they set out. Little had been accomplished. "Throughout all this, however," the church narrative goes, "Mr. Hubbard was continuing in his quest to answer the riddles of man."

THE COMPETING NARRATIVES of Hubbard's life arrive at a crucial point in the quarrel over his record in the US Navy during the Second World War and the injuries he allegedly received. He certainly longed for a military career, but he failed the entrance examination for the US Naval Academy and was further disqualified because of his poor eyesight. He lied—unnecessarily—about his age when he signed up for the US Marine Corps Reserve in 1930, backdating his birth by two years; this stratagem may have helped him get promoted over his contemporaries to first sergeant. His official record notes that he was "inactive, except for a period of active duty for training." He requested to be discharged the following year because "I do not have the time to devote to the welfare of

the Regiment."

Months before Pearl Harbor, however, Hubbard was once again angling to get a commission in the Navy. He gathered a number of recommendations, including one from his congressman, Warren G. Magnuson, who wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt, praising "Captain" Hubbard, "a well-known writer" and "a respected explorer," who has "marine masters papers for more types of vessels than any other man in the United States.... In writing organizations he is a key figure, making him politically potent nationally." The congressman concluded: "An interesting trait is his distaste for personal publicity." Senator Robert M. Ford of Washington signed his name to another letter of recommendation that Hubbard actually wrote for him: "This will introduce one of the most brilliant men I have ever known: Captain L. Ron Hubbard."

In April 1941, his poor eyesight caused him to fail his physical once again. But with German U-boats attacking American shipping in the North Atlantic—and even in American coastal waters—President Roosevelt declared a national emergency, and Hubbard's physical shortcomings were suddenly overlooked. He received his commission in the Naval Reserve, as a lieutenant (junior grade), in July 1941.

According to Hubbard, he got into the action right away. He said he was aboard the destroyer USS Edsall, which was sunk off the north coast of Java. All hands were lost, except for Hubbard, who managed to get to shore and disappear into the jungles. That is where he says he was when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. (Actually, the Edsall was not sunk until March 1942.) Hubbard said that he survived being machine-gunned by a Japanese patrol while he was hiding in the area, then escaped by sailing a raft to Australia. Elsewhere, Hubbard claimed that he had been posted to the Philippines at the outbreak of the war with

Japan, then was flown home on the Secretary of the Navy's private plane in the spring of 1942 as the "first U.S. returned casualty from the Far East."

According to Navy records, however, Hubbard was training as an intelligence officer in New York when the war broke out. He was indeed supposed to have been posted to the Philippines, but his ship was diverted to Australia because of the overwhelming Japanese advance in the Pacific. There he awaited other transport to Manila, but he immediately got on the wrong side of the American naval attaché. "By assuming unauthorized authority and attempting to perform duties for which he has no qualification he became the source of much trouble," the attaché complained. "This officer is not satisfactory for independent duty assignment. He is garrulous and tries to give impressions of his importance." He sent Hubbard back to the United States for further assignment.

Hubbard found himself back in New York, working in the Office of the Cable Censor. He agitated for a shipboard posting, and was given the opportunity to command a trawler that was being converted into a gunboat, the USS YP-422, designed for coastal patrol. "Upon entering the Boston Navy Yard, Ron found himself facing a hundred or so enlisted men, fresh from the Portsmouth Naval Prison in New Hampshire," the church narrative goes. "A murderous looking lot, was Ron's initial impression, 'their braid dirty and their hammocks black with grime.' While on further investigation, he discovered not one among them had stepped aboard except to save himself a prison term." Hubbard allegedly spent six weeks drilling this convict crew, turning them into a splendid fighting unit, "with some seventy depth charge runs to their credit and not a single casualty." But according to naval records, he was relieved of command before the ship was even launched, by the commandant of the Boston Navy Yard, who declared him "not temperamentally fitted for independent

command." There is no record that Hubbard saw action in the Atlantic at any time.

The Navy then sent Hubbard to the Submarine Chaser Training Center in Miami. He arrived wearing dark glasses, probably because of conjunctivitis, which plagued him throughout the war and after, but he explained to another young officer, Thomas Moulton, that he had been standing too close to a large-caliber gun while serving as the gunnery officer on a destroyer in the Pacific, and the muzzle flash had damaged his eyes. Hubbard's classmates at the sub-chaser school looked upon him as a great authority because of his wartime adventures. That he seemed so reticent to boast about them only enhanced his standing.

While he was in Miami, Hubbard contracted gonorrhea from a woman named Ginger. "She was a very loose person," he confides in his disputed secret memoir. "I was terrified by it, the consequences of being discovered by my wife, the navy, my friends.… I took to dosing myself with sulfa in such quantities that I was afraid I had affected my brain."

Wartime sexual diseases were a common affliction, and servicemen were constantly being cautioned about the dangers of casual romance. Although American sexual relations were freer in practice than the popular culture admitted at the time, divorce was still sharply stigmatized; and yet, as a young man Hubbard seemed to be constantly driven toward reckless liaisons and courtships that would destroy his marriages and alienate his children (he would eventually father seven children by three wives). He admitted in his disputed memoir that he suffered from bouts of impotence, which he apparently treated with testosterone. He also wrote of his concerns about masturbation, which at the time was considered a sign of moral weakness that could also lead to many physical ailments, such as weak eyesight, impotence, and insanity.

HUBBARD WAS FINALLY given another ship of his own, the USS PC-815, and he requested Moulton to join him as his executive officer. The ship was being constructed in Portland, Oregon, and when it was finally commissioned, in April 1943, the local paper wrote about it, describing Hubbard as a "Lieutenant Commander" (he was actually not yet a full lieutenant), who was "a veteran sub-hunter of the battles of the Pacific and the Atlantic." There is a photo of Hubbard and Moulton standing in front of the small ship, which was suited mainly for harbor patrol. Hubbard is wearing his glasses and holding a pipe in his hands, with the collar of his pea jacket turned up and a determined look on his face. "These little sweethearts are tough," he says of the ship. "They could lick the pants off anything Nelson or Farragut ever sailed. They put up a sizzling fight and are the only answer to the submarine menace. I state emphatically that the future of America rests with just such escort vessels."

It is worth lingering a moment over this overblown statement. The scripted language might as well have been lifted from one of Hubbard's pulp-fiction heroes. Hubbard must have longed to be such a figure in reality, only to be thwarted by his repeated quarrels with higher authority. Each detail Hubbard offers—comparing himself advantageously with history's greatest naval heroes, asserting that he holds the future of his nation in his hands—testifies to his need for grandeur and heroism, or at least to be seen as grand and heroic. He would soon be given an opportunity.

The PC-815 was equipped with depth charges and sonar to detect enemy submarines. Sonar sends out pinging sounds, which, in clear water, go unanswered, but obstacles, such as enemy submarines—or fish, or debris, or even schools of shrimp—generate echoes. The art of reading such responses is a tricky one, and although Hubbard had trained on the device in sub-chaser school, he had been near the bottom of his class.

He cast off from Astoria, Oregon, for his shakedown cruise on

May 18, bound for San Diego to pick up radar equipment. At 3:40 a.m., only five hours out of port, the sonar picked up an echo ten miles off Cape Lookout in a heavily traveled shipping lane. Hubbard and Moulton immediately put on headsets, trying to determine what the object was. In particular, they were listening for the giveaway sound of a propeller. The craft made no recognition signals that would have indicated it was an American vessel. “It made noises like a submarine and it was behaving like a submarine,” Moulton later testified. “So we proceeded to attack.”

“The target was moving left and away,” Hubbard wrote in his subsequent Action Report. “The night was moonlit and the sea was flat calm.” The professional writer in him warmed to the narrative: “The ship, sleepy and sceptical, had come to their guns swiftly and without error. No one, including the Commanding Officer, could readily credit the existence of an enemy submarine here on the steamer track.”

It wasn’t crazy to think that enemy ships might be in the area. A Japanese submarine had bombarded an oil facility near Santa Barbara the year before. Another Japanese submarine, the intrepid I-25, had shelled Fort Stevens, at the mouth of the Columbia River, not far from where Hubbard and his crew were now. The I-25 had also smuggled a disassembled seaplane to the Oregon coast in September 1942, where it was put back together and used to drop incendiary bombs in the forest near Mount Emily.

Shortly after the first echo, “with dawn breaking over a glassy sea,” an object appeared on the surface. Hubbard ordered the guns to open fire. It turned out to be a log. Hours passed. Convinced that the submarine was still out there, Hubbard ordered depth charges dropped on the elusive craft. “Great air boils were seen and the sound of blowing tanks was reported by the soundman,” Hubbard wrote. “All guns were now manned with great attention as it was supposed that the sub was trying to surface.” Incredibly, a

second submarine was suddenly detected, only four hundred yards away. Hubbard radioed for assistance and additional explosives. Other naval ships soon arrived, but they were reluctant to drop their charges on a target they couldn't seem to locate. Hubbard was furious and blamed their "inexperience or unwillingness" for their failure to follow his lead.

Hubbard continued the attacks all day and into the next morning. At seven a.m., he reported, "a boil of orange colored oil, very thick, came to the surface immediately on our port bow.... Every man ... then saw the periscope, moving from right to left." His gunners let loose. "The periscope vanished in an explosion of 20mm bullets."

After sixty-eight hours of action, Hubbard's ship was ordered to return to port. Hubbard and Moulton claimed that they had succeeded in sinking at least one, possibly two, enemy subs. An official investigation of the incident concluded, "There was no submarine in the area." A well-known magnetic deposit nearby most likely caused the echoes that were picked up on the sonar. The only evidence of a submarine was "one bubble of air," which might well have been the result of the turbulence caused by the heavy explosions. Japanese records after the war showed that no submarines had been present off the Oregon coast at the time.[1]

Hubbard continued to San Diego on his shakedown cruise. In June, the PC-815 participated in an exercise off the coast of the Mexican state of Baja. Afterward, he ordered additional gunnery and small-arms fire, shelling South Coronados Island, a dry atoll that he apparently failed to realize was a part of Mexico. He was admonished for firing on an ally and relieved of his command. He felt unjustly treated but also remorseful about the compromised situation he had placed his shipmates in. "This on top of having sunk two Jap subs without credit, the way my crew lied for me at the Court of Inquiry, the insults of the High Command, all

combined to put me in the hospital with ulcers," Hubbard noted in his disputed secret memoir. He spent the next three months in a naval hospital in San Diego. In a letter to his family he explained that he had been injured when he had picked up an unexploded enemy shell that had landed on deck and had blown up in midair when he tried to throw it overboard.

In October, he got another assignment, this time as the navigation officer on the cargo ship the USS Algol. The US Navy and Marines had begun their final island-hopping campaign before the expected invasion of Japan itself—Operation Downfall. Millions of Allied casualties were forecast. For a man who wanted to be a hero, there would be a genuine opportunity. Instead, Hubbard requested a transfer to the School of Military Government at Princeton. "Once conversant with the following languages, but require review: Japanese, Spanish, Chamorro, Tagalog, Peking Pidgin and Shanghai Pidgin," Hubbard wrote in his application, adding, "Experienced in handling natives, all classes, in various parts of world." Through all the carnage, the end of the war was lurching into view, and the likely occupation of Japan was on the horizon. A polyglot such as Hubbard claimed to be would certainly find a place in the future administration.

When he arrived in Princeton, in September 1944, Hubbard fell in with a group of science-fiction writers who had been organized into an informal military think tank by his friend Robert Heinlein. The Navy was looking for ways to counter the kamikaze suicide attacks on Allied ships, which had begun that fall as desperation took hold of the Japanese military planners. Hubbard would spend weekends in Philadelphia at the Heinleins' apartment, along with some other of his former colleagues, including his former editor, John Campbell, gaming different scenarios for the Navy. (Some of their suggestions were actually tested in combat, but none proved useful.) Heinlein was extremely solicitous of his old friend,

remarking, “Ron had had a busy war—sunk four times and wounded again and again.” The fact that Hubbard had an affair with Heinlein’s wife didn’t seem to affect his deep regard. “He almost forced me to sleep with his wife,” Hubbard later marveled.

There was another lissome young woman hanging around with the science-fiction crowd: Vida Jameson, whose father, Malcolm, was a part of the Campbell group of Astounding writers. “Quiet, shy little greymouse,” one of the crowd described Vida, “with great soulful black eyes and a habit of listening.” She was twenty-eight, and already selling stories to the Saturday Evening Post, a more respectable literary endeavor than the pulps. Hubbard proposed to her. She knew he was married and refused his offer; still, she was captivated by him and continued her relationship with him until after the war.

Hubbard graduated from the School of Military Government in January 1945, and was ordered to proceed to Monterey, California, to join a civil affairs team, which would soon follow the invading forces. The Battle of Okinawa, in southern Japan, got under way that spring, creating the highest number of casualties in the Pacific Theater. Kamikaze attacks were at their peak. American troops suffered more than 60,000 casualties in less than three months. Japanese forces were fighting to the death. The savagery and scale of the combat has rarely been equaled.

Once again, Hubbard stood on the treacherous precipice, where the prospect of heroic action awaited him—or else indignity, or a death that would be obscured by the deaths of tens of thousands of others. One month after the invasion of Okinawa, Hubbard was admitted to the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California, complaining of stomach pains.

This is a key moment in the narrative of Dianetics and Scientology. “Blinded with injured optic nerves and lame with physical injuries to hip and back at the end of World War II, I faced

an almost nonexistent future," Hubbard writes of himself during this period. "I was abandoned by my family and friends as a supposedly hopeless cripple." Hubbard says he healed himself of his traumatic injuries, using techniques that would become the foundation of Dianetics and Scientology. "I had no one to help me; what I had to know I had to find out," he recalled. "And it's quite a trick studying when you cannot see."

Doctors at Oak Knoll were never sure exactly what was wrong with him, except for a recurrence of his ulcer. In records of Hubbard's many physical examinations and X-rays, the doctors make no note of scars or evidence of wounds, nor do his military records show that he was ever injured during the war.

In the hospital, Hubbard says, he was also given a psychiatric examination. To his alarm, the doctor wrote two pages of notes. "And I was watching this, you know, saying, 'Well, have I gone nuts, after all?' " He conspired to take a look at the records to see what the doctor had written. "I got to the end and it said, 'In short, this officer has no neurotic or psychotic tendencies of any kind whatsoever.' " (There is no psychiatric evaluation contained in Hubbard's medical records.)

POLLY AND THE TWO CHILDREN had spent the war waiting for Ron on their plot in Port Orchard, but there was no joyous homecoming. "My wife left me while I was in a hospital with ulcers," Hubbard noted. "It was a terrible blow when she left me for I was ill and without prospects."

Soon after leaving the hospital, Hubbard towed a house trailer behind an old Packard to Southern California, where so many ambitious and rootless members of his generation were seeking their destiny. There was a proliferation of exotic new religions in America and many other countries, caused by the tumult of war

and disruptions of progress that older denominations weren't prepared to solve. Southern California was filled with migrants who weren't tied to old creeds and were ready to experiment with new ways of thinking. The region was swarming with Theosophists, Rosicrucians, Zoroastrians, and Vedantists. Swamis, mystics, and gurus of many different faiths pulled acolytes into their orbits.

The most brilliant member of this galaxy of occultists was John Whiteside Parsons, known as Jack, a rocket scientist working at what would later become the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Technical Institute. (Parsons, who has a crater on the Moon named after him, developed solid rocket fuel.) Darkly handsome and brawny, later called by some scholars the "James Dean of the occult," Parsons was a science-fiction fan and an outspoken advocate of free love. He acquired a three-story Craftsman-style mansion, with a twelve-car garage, at 1003 South Orange Grove Avenue in Pasadena—a sedate, palm-lined street known as Millionaires Row. The house had once belonged to Arthur H. Fleming, a logging tycoon and philanthropist, who had hosted former president Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir, and Albert Einstein in its oval dining room. The street had also been home to William Wrigley, of the chewing-gum fortune, and the beer baron Adolph Busch, whose widow still lived next door.

She must have been appalled to watch as Parsons divided the historic home and the coach house behind it into nineteen apartments, then advertised for renters. He sought artists, anarchists, and musicians—the more Bohemian the better. "Must not believe in God," the ad stated. Among those passing through the "Parsonage" were an aging actress from the silent movie era, an opera singer, several astrologers, an ex-convict, and the chief engineer for the development of the atomic bomb. A number of children from various alliances constantly raced through the house. Parsons threw parties that featured "women in diaphanous gowns,"

as one visitor observed, who "would dance around a pot of fire, surrounded by coffins topped with candles." Parsons turned the mansion into the headquarters of the Agapé Lodge, a branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis, a secret fraternal organization dedicated to witchcraft and sexual "magick," based on the writings of the notorious British writer and provocateur Aleister Crowley, whose glowering countenance was captured in a portrait hanging in the stairwell.

Despite the bizarre atmosphere that he cultivated, Parsons took his involvement in the OTO seriously, making brazen ethical claims for his movement—claims that would sound familiar when Scientology arose only a few years later. "The breakup of the home and family, the confusion in problems of morals and behavior, the frustration of the individual need for love, self-expression and freedom, and the immanence of the total destruction of western civilization all indicate the need for a basic reexamination and alteration of individual and social values," Parsons writes in a brief manifesto. "Mature investigation on the part of philosophers and social scientists have [sic] indicated the existence of only one force of sufficient power to solve these problems and effect the necessary changes, and that is the force of a new religion."

TWENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD SARA ELIZABETH "BETTY" NORTHRUP, Parsons's feisty mistress, was the younger sister of his wife, who had run off with another man. Sara was tall, blond, buxom, and wild, often claiming to have lost her virginity at the age of ten. "Her chief interest in life is amusement," one of the boarders observed. But she was also quick and intelligent and full of joy, delighting everyone around her. She had become involved with Parsons, who was ten years older, when she was fifteen. Her parents tolerated the relationship; in fact, her indulgent father helped bankroll the

Parsonage, which Sara purchased jointly with Parsons while she was still a teenager. One evening Robert Heinlein appeared at the house, bringing along his friend L. Ron Hubbard, who was wearing dark glasses and carrying a silver-handled cane. “He was not only a writer but he was a captain of a ship that had been downed in the Pacific and he was weeks on a raft and had been blinded by the sun and his back had been broken,” Sara later recalled. “I believed everything he said.”

A few months later, Hubbard moved in. He made an immediate, vivid impression on the other boarders. “He dominated the scene with his wit and inexhaustible fund of anecdotes,” one of the boarders, Alva Rogers, later recalled. “Unfortunately, Ron’s reputation for spinning tall tales (both off and on the printed page) made for a certain degree of skepticism in the minds of his audience. At any rate, he told one hell of a good story.” Like Hubbard, Rogers had red hair, and he was intrigued by Hubbard’s theory that redheads are the living remnant of the Neanderthals.

Hubbard invited one of his paramours from New York, Vida Jameson, to join him at the Parsonage, with the ostensible task of keeping the books. It’s a testimony to his allure that she came all the way across America to be with him, although soon after she arrived, she discovered that she had been displaced.

The other boarders watched in astonishment as Hubbard worked his charms on the available women in the household, before setting his sights on “the most gorgeous, intelligent, sweet, wonderful girl,” as another envious suitor described Sara Northrup. “There he was, living off Parsons’ largesse and making out with his girlfriend right in front of him. Sometimes when the two of them were sitting at the table together, the hostility was almost tangible.” Enlivened, no doubt, by their rivalry over Sara, Parsons and Hubbard quickly developed a highly competitive relationship. They liked to begin their mornings with a bout of fencing in the living room.

Parsons struggled with his feelings of jealousy, which were at war with his philosophy of free love. He could understand Northrup's attraction to the new boarder, describing Hubbard in a letter to Crowley in 1946 as "a gentleman, red hair, green eyes, honest and intelligent.... He moved in with me about two months ago." Then Parsons admits, "Although Betty and I are still friendly, she has transferred her sexual affections to Ron." He went on to admire Hubbard's supernatural abilities. "Although he has no formal training in Magick, he has an extraordinary amount of experience and understanding in the field. From some of his experiences I deduced that he is in direct touch with some higher intelligence, possibly his Guardian Angel. He describes his Angel as a beautiful winged woman with red hair whom he calls the Empress and who has guided him through his life and saved him many times."

The extent to which Scientology was influenced by Hubbard's involvement with the OTO has long been a matter of angry debate. There is little trace in Hubbard's life of organized religion or spiritual philosophy. In the Parsonage, he was drawn into an obscure and stigmatized creed, based on the writings and practice of Crowley—the "Great Beast," as he called himself—who gloried in being one of the most reviled men of his era. The Church of Scientology explicitly rejects any connection between Crowley's thinking and Hubbard's emerging philosophy; yet the two men were similar in striking ways. Like Hubbard, Crowley reveled in a life of constant physical, spiritual, and sexual exploration. He was a daring, even reckless mountaineer, and his exploits included several failed attempts to climb the world's most formidable peaks. He, too, was a prolific writer who authored novels and plays as well as books on magic and mysticism. Boisterous and highly self-regarding, he had been kicked out of an occult society called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn after feuding with some of its

most prominent members, including William Butler Yeats, whom Crowley accused of being envious of his talent as a poet. He may have served as a British spy while living in America during World War I, despite the fact that he was constantly publishing anti-British propaganda. Crowley relied on opiates and hallucinogens to enhance his spiritual pursuits. During an excursion to Cairo in 1904, he discovered his Holy Guardian Angel, a disembodied spirit named Aiwass, who claimed to be a messenger from the Egyptian god Horus. Crowley said that over a period of three days, Aiwass dictated to him an entire cosmology titled The Book of the Law, the main principle of which was, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

Nibs—Hubbard's estranged eldest son and namesake, L. Ron Hubbard, Jr. (he later changed his name to Ronald DeWolf)—claimed that his father had read the book when he was sixteen years old and developed a lifelong allegiance to black magic. "What a lot of people don't realize is that Scientology is black magic just spread out over a long time period," he contended. "Black magic is the inner core of Scientology—and it is probably the only part of Scientology that really works."

One striking parallel between Hubbard and Crowley is the latter's assertion that "spiritual progress did not depend on religious or moral codes, but was like any other science." Crowley argued that by advancing through a graded series of rituals and spiritual teachings, the adept could hope to make it across "The Abyss," which he defined as "the gulf existing between individual and cosmic consciousness." It is an image that Hubbard would evoke in his Bridge to Total Freedom.

Although Hubbard mentions Crowley only glancingly in a lecture—calling him "my very good friend"—they never actually met. Crowley died in 1947 at the age of seventy-two. "That's when Dad decided that he would take over the mantle of the Beast and that is

the seed and the beginning of Dianetics and Scientology," Nibs later said. "It was his goal to be the most powerful being in the universe."

JACK PARSONS EXPERIMENTED with Crowley's rituals, taking them in his own eccentric direction. His personal brand of witchcraft centered on the adoration of female carnality, an interest Hubbard evidently shared. Parsons recorded in his journal that Hubbard had a vision of "a savage and beautiful woman riding naked on a great cat-like beast." That became the inspiration for Parsons's most audacious mystical experiment. He appointed Hubbard to be his "scribe" in a ceremony called the "Babalon Working." It was based on Crowley's notion that the supreme goal of the magician's art was to create a "moonchild"—a creature foretold in one of Crowley's books who becomes the Antichrist. Night after night, Parsons and Hubbard invoked the spirit world in a quest to summon up a "Scarlet Woman," the female companion who would play the role of Parsons's consort. The ceremony, likely aided by narcotics and hallucinogens, required Hubbard to channel the female deity of Babalon as Parsons performed the "invocation of wand with material basis on talisman"—in other words, masturbating on a piece of parchment. He typically invoked twice a night.

Parsons records that during one of these evenings a candle was forcibly knocked out of Hubbard's hand: "We observed a brownish yellow light about seven feet high in the kitchen. I brandished a magical sword and it disappeared. His right arm was paralyzed for the rest of the night." On another occasion, he writes, Hubbard saw the astral projection of one of Parsons's enemies manifest himself in a black robe. "Ron promptly launched an attack and pinned the phantom figure to the door with four throwing knives."

Evidently, the spirits relented. One day, an attractive young

woman named Marjorie Cameron showed up at the Parsonage. Parsons later claimed that a bolt of lightning had struck outside, followed by a knock at the door. A beautiful woman was standing there. She had been in a traffic accident. “I don’t know where I am or where I’ve come from,” she told him. (Cameron’s version is that she had been interested in the stories of the naked women jumping over fires in the garden, and she persuaded a friend who was boarding at the Parsonage to take her for a visit.) “I have my elemental!” Parsons exclaimed in a note to Crowley a few days later. “She has red hair and slant green eyes as specified.… She is an artist, strong minded and determined, with strong masculine characteristics and a fanatical independence.”

The temple was lit with candles, the room suffused with incense, and Rachmaninoff’s “Isle of the Dead” was playing in the background. Dressed in a hooded white robe, and carrying a lamp, Hubbard intoned, “Display thyself to Our Lady; dedicate thy organs to Her, dedicate thy heart to Her, dedicate thy mind to Her, dedicate thy soul to Her, for She shall absorb thee, and thou shalt become living flame before She incarnates.” Whereupon Parsons and Cameron responded, “Glory unto the Scarlet Woman, Babalon, the Mother of Abominations, that rideth upon the Beast.” Then, as Hubbard continued the incantation, Parsons and Cameron consummated the ceremony upon the altar. This same ritual went on for three nights in a row. Afterward, Parsons wrote to Crowley, “Instructions were received direct through Ron, the seer.… I am to act as instructor guardian guide for nine months; then it will be loosed on the world.”

Crowley was unimpressed. “Apparently Parsons or Hubbard or somebody is producing a Moonchild,” he complained to another follower. “I get fairly frantic when I contemplate the idiocy of these goats.” Cameron did become pregnant, but got an abortion, with Parsons’s consent, so it’s unclear exactly what this ceremony

was designed to produce. (Parsons and Cameron later married and aborted another pregnancy.) Nonetheless, Parsons asserted that the ritual had been a success. “Babalon is incarnate upon the earth today, awaiting the proper hour for her manifestation,” he wrote after the ceremony. “And in that day my work will be accomplished, and I shall be blown away upon the Breath of the father.”

Until that apocalypse occurred, Hubbard and Parsons decided, they would go into business together. The plan was for Hubbard to purchase yachts in Florida, sail them through the Panama Canal to California, and resell them at a profit. Parsons and Sara sold the Parsonage and handed over the money to Hubbard—more than twenty thousand dollars from Parsons alone. Hubbard and Northrup promptly left for Miami.

While in Florida, Hubbard appealed to the Veterans Administration for an increase in his medical disability. He was already receiving compensation for his ulcers, amounting to $11.50 per month. “I cannot tolerate a general diet—results in my having to abandon my old profession as a ship master and explorer, and seriously hampers me as a writer.” He said his eyesight had been affected by “prolonged exposure to tropical sunlight,” incurred while he was in the service, which caused a chronic case of conjunctivitis. He also complained that he was lame from a bone infection, which he theorized must have occurred by the abrupt change in climate when he was shipped to the East Coast. “My earning power, due to injuries, all service connected, has dropped to nothing,” he summed up. Sara Northrup added a handwritten note of support. “I have know [sic] Lafayette Ronald Hubbard for many years,” she claimed. “I see no chance of his condition improving to a point where he can regain his old standards. He is becoming steadily worse, his health impaired again by economic worries.”

Parsons grew to believe that Hubbard and Sara had other plans for his money, and he flew to Miami to confront them. When he learned that they had just sailed away, he performed a "Banishing Ritual," invoking Bartzabel, a magical figure associated with Mars. According to Parsons, a sudden squall arose, ripping the sails off the ship that Hubbard was captaining, forcing him to limp back to port. Sara's memory was that she and Ron were on their way to California, when they were caught in a hurricane in the Panama Canal. The ship was too damaged to continue the voyage. Parsons gained a judgment against the couple, but declined to press criminal charges, possibly because his sexual relationship with Sara had begun while she was still below the age of consent, and she threatened to retaliate. Hubbard's friends were alarmed, both about his business dealings with Parsons and his romance with Sara. "Keep him at arm's length," Robert Heinlein warned a mutual friend. His wife, Virginia, regarded Ron as "a very sad case of post-war breakdown," and Sara as Hubbard's "latest Man-Eating Tigress."

Sara repeatedly refused Ron's entreaties to marry him, but he threatened to kill himself unless she relented. She still saw him as a broken war hero whom she could mend. Finally, she said, "All right, I'll marry you, if that's going to save you." They awakened a minister in Chestertown, Maryland, on August 10, 1946. The minister's wife and housekeeper served as witnesses to the wedding. The news ricocheted among Hubbard's science-fiction colleagues. "I suppose Polly was tiresome about not giving him his divorce so he could marry six other gals who were all hot & moist over him," one of Hubbard's writer friends, L. Sprague de Camp, wrote to the Heinleins. (In fact, Polly didn't learn of the marriage till the following year, when she read about it in the newspapers.) "How many girls is a man entitled to in one lifetime, anyway?" de Camp fumed. "Maybe he should be reincarnated as a rabbit."

The Church of Scientology admits that Hubbard was involved with Parsons and the OTO, characterizing it, however, as a secret mission for naval intelligence. The church claims that the government had been worried about top American scientists—including some from Los Alamos, where the atom bomb was developed—who made a habit of staying with Parsons when they visited California. Hubbard's mission was to penetrate and subvert the organization.

"Mr. Hubbard accomplished the assignment," the church maintains. "He engineered a business investment that tied up the money Parsons used to fund the group's activities, thus making it unavailable to Parsons for his occult pursuits." Hubbard, the church claims, "broke up black magic in America."

EVEN IF HUBBARD WAS a government spy, as the church claims, the available records show him at what must have been his lowest point in the years just after the war. His physical examination at the Veterans Administration in Los Angeles in September 1946 notes, "No work since discharge. Lives on his savings." (The VA eventually increased his disability to forty percent.) Sara noticed that he was having nightmares. That winter, they moved into a lighthouse on a frozen lake in the Poconos near Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. It was an unsettling time for Sara; they were isolated, and Ron had a .45 pistol that he would fire randomly. Late one night, while she was in bed and Ron was typing, he hit her across the face with the pistol. He told her that she had been smiling in her sleep, so she must have been thinking about someone else. "I got up and left the house in the night and walked on the ice of the lake because I was terrified," Sara said in 1997, in an account she dictated shortly before she died. She was so shocked and humiliated she didn't know how to respond.

Ron had begun beating her in Florida, shortly after her father died. Her grief seemed to provoke Ron—she assumed it was because she wasn't being who he needed her to be. No one had ever struck her before. She recognized now how dangerous their relationship was; on the other hand, Ron's need for her was so stark. He had been blocked for a long time, and Sara had been churning out plots for him, and actually writing some of his stories. Ron worried that he would never write again. He frequently threatened suicide. Sara didn't believe in divorce—it was a terrible stigma at the time—and she still thought she could save Ron. "I kept thinking that he must be suffering or he wouldn't act that way." And so, she went back to him.

Ron took a loan and bought a house trailer, and he and Sara drove across the country to Port Orchard, where his parents and his undivorced first wife and children were living. Sara had no idea why people treated her so strangely, until finally Hubbard's son Nibs told her that his parents were still married. Once again, Sara fled. Ron found her waiting for the ferry that was leaving for California. The engines of the ship grumbled as Ron hastily pleaded his case. He told her that he really was getting a divorce. He claimed that an attorney had assured him that he and Sara actually were legally married. Finally, the ferry left without her.

Soon after that, Ron and Sara set out for Hollywood. They got as far as Ojai, California, where Ron was arrested for failing to make payments on the house trailer they were living in.

In October 1947, Hubbard sent the VA an alarming and revealing plea:

> I am utterly unable to approach anything like my own competence. My last physician informed me that it might be very helpful if I were to be examined and perhaps treated psychiatrically or even by a psychoanalyst.… I avoided out of pride any mental examinations, hoping that time would balance a mind which I had every

reason to suppose was seriously affected.... I cannot, myself, afford such treatment.

Would you please help me?

Nothing came of this request. There is no record that the VA conducted a psychological assessment of Hubbard. Throughout his life, however, questions would arise about his sanity. Russell Miller, a British biographer, tracked down an ex-lover of Hubbard's, who described him as "a manic depressive with paranoid tendencies." The woman, whom Miller called "Barbara Kaye" (her real name was Barbara Klowden), later became a psychologist. She added, "He said he always wanted to found a religion like Moses or Jesus." A man who later worked in the church as Hubbard's medical officer, Jim Dincalci, listed his traits: "Paranoid personality. Delusions of grandeur. Pathological lying." Dr. Stephen Wiseman, a professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of British Columbia, who has been a prominent critic of Scientology, speculated that a possible diagnosis of Hubbard's personality would be "malignant narcissism," which he characterizes as "a highly insecure individual protecting himself with aggressive grandiosity, disavowal of any and every need from others, antisocial orientation, and a heady and toxic mix of rage/anger/aggression/violence and paranoia."

And yet, if Hubbard was paranoid, it was also true that he really was often pursued, first by creditors and later by grand juries and government investigators. He may have had delusions of grandeur, as so many critics say, but he did in fact make an undeniable mark on the world, publishing many best sellers and establishing a religion that endures decades after his death. Grandiosity might well be a feature of a personality that could accomplish such feats.

A fascinating glimpse into Hubbard's state of mind during this time is found in what I am calling his secret memoir. The church claims that the document is a forgery. It was produced by the

former archivist for the Church of Scientology, Gerald Armstrong, in a 1984 suit that the church brought against him. Armstrong read some portions of them into the record over the strong objections of the church attorneys; others later found their way onto the Internet. The church now maintains that Hubbard did not write this document, although when it was entered into evidence, the church's lawyers made no such representation, saying that the papers were intensely private, "constitute a kind of self-therapy," and did not reflect Hubbard's actual condition.

This disputed document has been called the Affirmations, or the Admissions, but it is rather difficult to define. In part, the thirty pages constitute a highly intimate autobiography, dealing with the most painful episodes in Hubbard's life. Many of the references to people and events made in these pages are supported by other documents. It appears that Hubbard is using techniques on himself that he would later develop into Dianetics. He explores memories that pose impediments in his mental and spiritual progress, and he prescribes affirmations or incantations to counter the psychological influence of these events. These statements would certainly be the most revealing and intimate disclosures Hubbard ever made about himself.

There are three sections in this document, each of which seems to have a different purpose.

The first section is called "Course I." This is what I have termed the secret memoir, as it contains reflections on the most embarrassing or troubling features of Hubbard's biography. "The purpose of this experiment is to re-establish the ambition, willpower, desire to survive, the talent and confidence of myself," Hubbard declares straightforwardly at the start. "I was always anxious about people's opinion of me and was afraid I would bore them. This injected anxiety and careless speed into my work. I must be convinced that I can write skillfully and well." Those who

criticize his work are fools, he writes. “I must be convinced I have succeeded in writing and with ease will regain my popularity, which actually was not small.”

“My service record was none too glorious,” he admits. He also confesses his shame about his frequent affairs. But he is intent on succeeding in his relationship with Sara, whom he describes as “young, beautiful, desirable.” Unfortunately, he is handicapped by bouts of impotence. “I want her always. But I am 13 years older than she. She is heavily sexed. My libido is so low I hardly admire her naked.”

Sex preoccupies him. He’s worried about his “very bad masturbatory history,” his sexual diseases, and his impotence, which he had been treating with testosterone supplements. “By eliminating certain fears of hypnosis, curing my rheumatism and laying off hormones, I hope to restore my former libido. I must!”

Through self-hypnosis, he hopes to convince himself of certain prescriptive mantras, including:

I can write.

My mind is still brilliant.

That masturbation was no sin or crime.

That I do not need to have ulcers anymore.

That I am fortunate in losing Polly and my parents, for they never meant well by me.

That I believe in my gods and spiritual things.

That my magical work is powerful and effective.

That the numbers 7, 25, and 16 are not unlucky or evil for me.

That I am not bad to look upon.

That I am not susceptible to colds.

That Sara is always beautiful to me.

That these words and commands are like fire and will sear themselves into every

corner of my being, making me happy and well and confident forever!

The second part of the document, labeled “Course II,” included the statements that have come to be called Affirmations, although Hubbard refers to them as incantations. He had recently gotten a new recorder for dictation, called a SoundScriber. It may be that he recorded this portion and played it back to himself as a means of self-hypnosis. This section begins with the command “You are asleep.”

In this lesson, Hubbard tells himself, he will learn several important things:

You have no urge to talk about your navy life. You do not like to talk of it. You never illustrate your point with bogus stories. It is not necessary for you to lie to be amusing and witty.

You like to have your intimate friends approve of and love you for what you are. This desire to be loved does not amount to a psychosis.

You can sing beautifully.

Nothing can intervene between you and your Guardian. She cannot be displaced because she is too powerful. She does not control you. She advises you.

You will never forget these incantations. They are holy and are now become an integral part of your nature.

Material things are yours for the asking. Men are your slaves.

You are not sleepy or tired ever.… Your Guardian alone can talk to you as you sleep but she may not hypnotize you. Only you can hypnotize yourself.

The desires of other people have no hypnotic effect on you.

Nothing, no one opposes your writing.… You can carry on a wild social life and still write one hundred thousand words a month or more.… Your writing has a deep hypnotic effect on people.

You will make fortunes writing.

Your psychology is advanced and true and wonderful. It hypnotizes people. It predicts

their emotions, for you are their ruler.

You will live to be 200 years old.

You will always look young.

You have no doubts about God.

You are not a coward.

Your eyes are getting progressively better. They became bad when you used them as an excuse to escape the naval academy. You have no reason to keep them bad.

Your stomach trouble you used as an excuse to keep the Navy from punishing you. You are free of the Navy.

Your hip is a pose. You have a sound hip. It never hurts. Your shoulder never hurts.

Your foot was an alibi. The injury is no longer needed.

Testosterone blends easily with your own hormones.... You have no fear of what any woman may think of your bed conduct. You know you are a master. You know they will be thrilled. You can come many times without weariness.... Many women are not capable of pleasure in sex and anything adverse they say or do has no effect whatever upon your pleasure.

You have no fear if they conceive. What if they do? You do not care. Pour it into them and let fate decide.

You can tell all the romantic tales you wish.... But you know which ones were lies.... You have enough real experience to make anecdotes forever. Stick to your true adventures.

Money will flood in upon you.

Self pity and conceit are not wrong. Your mother was in error.

Masturbation does not injure or make insane. Your parents were in error. Everyone masturbates.

The most thrilling thing in your life is your love and consciousness of your Guardian.

She has copper red hair, long braids, a lovely Venusian face, a white gown belted with jade squares. She wears gold slippers.

You can talk with her and audibly hear her voice above all others.

You can do automatic writing whenever you wish. You do not care what comes out on the paper when your Guardian dictates.

The red-haired Guardian Hubbard visualizes so vividly is a kind of ideal mother, who also functions as his muse and is the source of his astoundingly rapid writing. Hubbard loves her but reassures himself that his Guardian does not control him. In all things, he is the controlling force. She seems to be an artifact of the influence of Aleister Crowley. Jack Parsons had said that Hubbard called his Guardian "the Empress."

His fear of hypnotism is quite striking. He was an accomplished stage hypnotist, a skill he displayed at a meeting of a group of sci-fi fans in Los Angeles, when he put nearly everyone in the audience into a trance, and persuaded one of them that he was holding a pair of miniature kangaroos in the palm of his hand. He also once tried to hypnotize Sara's mother, after she had a stroke, to persuade her to leave her money to him. But then he would accuse Sara of hypnotizing him in his sleep.

If one looks behind the Affirmations to the conditions they are meant to correct, one sees a man who is ashamed of his tendency to fabricate personal stories, who is conflicted about his sexual needs, and who worries about his mortality. He has a predatory view of women but at the same time fears their power to humiliate him.

The third and final section of this document is titled "The Book." It contains a checklist of personal goals and compliments he pays to himself, but it is also a portrait of the superman that he wishes to be. He does make mention of an actual book—he calls it One Commandment—that seems to be a reference to Excalibur. "It freed you forever from the fears of the material world and gave you material control over people," he writes.

You are radiant like sunlight.

You can read music.

You are a magnificent writer who has thrilled millions.

Ability to drop into a trance state at will.

Lack of necessity of following a pulp pattern.

You did a fine job in the Navy. No one there is now "out to get you."

You are psychic.

You do not masturbate.

You do not know anger. Your patience is infinite.

Snakes are not dangerous to you. There are no snakes in the bottom of your bed.

You believe implicitly in God. You have no doubts of the All Powerful. You believe your Guardian perfectly.

The judge in the Armstrong suit, where this document was presented as evidence, offered his own amateur diagnosis of Hubbard's personality in a crushing decision against the church:

> The organization is clearly schizophrenic and paranoid, and this bizarre combination seems to be a reflection of its founder LRH. The evidence portrays a man who has been virtually a pathological liar when it comes to his history, background, and achievements. The writings and documents in evidence additionally reflect his egoism, greed, avarice, lust for power, and vindictiveness and aggressiveness against persons perceived by him to be disloyal or hostile. At the same time it appears that he is charismatic and highly capable of motivating, organizing, controlling, manipulating, and inspiring his adherents.... Obviously, he is and has been a very complex person, and that complexity is further reflected in his alter ego, the Church of Scientology.

IN 1948, ten years after his first attempt to establish himself as a screenwriter, Hubbard had returned to Hollywood, setting up shop as a freelance guru. "I went right down in the middle of

Hollywood, I rented an office, got a hold of a nurse, wrapped a towel around my head and became a swami," Hubbard later said. "I used to sit in my penthouse on Sunset Boulevard and write stories for New York and then go to my office in the studio and have my secretary tell everybody I was in conference while I caught up on my sleep," he recalled on another occasion. He painted a far different picture in a letter to the Veterans Administration, which was demanding reimbursement for an overpayment: "I cannot imagine how to repay this $51.00 as I am nearly penniless and have but $28.50 to last me for nearly a month to come," he writes. "My expenditures consist of $27 a month trailer rent and $80 a month food for my wife and self which includes gas, cigarettes and all incidentals. I am very much in debt and have not been able to get a job." Instead of repaying the VA, he boldly asks for a loan.

In Hollywood, Hubbard began perfecting techniques that he first developed in the naval hospital and that later became Dianetics. He boasts to Hays, "Been amusing myself making a monkey out of Freud. I always knew he was nutty but didn't have a firm case." He adds that he has been conducting research on inferiority complexes: "Nightly had people writhing in my Hollywood office, sending guys out twice as tall as superman." For the first time, he floats the idea of a book, which he tentatively titles An Introduction to Traumatic Psychology. He thinks it will require about six weeks to write. "I got to revolutionize this here field because nobody in it, so far as I can tell, knows his anatomy from a gopher hole."

Hubbard was casting around for a new direction in his life. He took up acting at the Geller Theater Workshop, paid for in part by the VA, but that didn't satisfy him. There was a larger plan stirring in his imagination. "I was hiding behind the horrible secret. And that is I was trying to find out what the mind was all about," he recalls. "I couldn't even tell my friends; they didn't understand.

They said, ‘Here’s Hubbard, he’s leading a perfectly wonderful life. He gets to associate with movie actresses. He knows hypnotism and so has no trouble with editors. He has apartments and stuff.’ ”

IT WAS THE LARVAL STAGE of Hubbard’s astonishing transformation—from the depressed, rejected, impoverished, creatively exhausted figure he paints in the Affirmations, to his nearly overnight success as a thinker and founder of an international movement when his book Dianetics was finally published. He wrote his friend Robert Heinlein, “I will soon, I hope give you a book risen from the ashes of the old Excalibur which details in full the mathematics of the human mind, solves all the problems of the ages, and gives six recipes for aphrodisiacs and plays the mouth organ with the left foot.” He writes a little about recovering from the war, then remarks, “The main difficulty these days is getting sane again. I find out that I am making progress. Of course there is always the danger that I will get too sane to write.” He is angling for a Guggenheim grant for his book on psychology. Meantime, he was so pressed financially that he begged Heinlein for a loan of fifty dollars. “Golly, I never was so many places in print with less to show for it,” Hubbard complained. “I couldn’t buy a stage costume for Gypsy Rose Lee.”

Hubbard was writing these letters from Savannah, Georgia, in the waning days of 1948 and the spring of 1949. He said he was volunteering in a psychiatric clinic at St. Joseph’s Medical Center, “getting case histories at the request of the American Psychiatric Assoc.” It is a shadowy period in his life, but it was in Savannah that he began to sketch out the principles that would form the basis of his understanding of the human mind. He claimed to be getting phenomenal results on nearly every malady he addressed. “One week ago I brought in my first asthma cure,” he writes to Heinlein.

“I have an arthritis to finish tomorrow and so it goes.”

It’s unclear whether Hubbard himself was receiving treatment in Savannah. “My hip and stomach and side are well again,” he writes to Heinlein, adding that he is “straightening out the kinks that have held down production on the money machine.”

In his letters, Hubbard continually speculates about the book he hopes to finish soon. “It ain’t agin religion,” he boasts to Heinlein. “It just abolishes it.… It’s science, boy, science.” He makes a vague reference to the research he’s performing on children. “This hellbroth I cooked up works remarkably well on kids,” he remarks. “Took a scared little kid that was supposed to be stupid and was failing everything and worked on him about thirty-five hours just to make sure. That was last month. So now he turns up this afternoon with all A’s and all of a sudden reading Shakespeare.” He was also noting improvement in himself, both in his work and in his recovered sexual powers. “I am cruising on four hours sleep a night. But the most interesting thing is, I’m up to eight comes. In an evening, that is.”

Heinlein was eager for details. Hubbard responded by outlining what he would later call the Tone Scale. It describes the range of human emotional states, from one to four. At bottom, there is Apathy, then Anger. These lower tones were governed by the unconscious, which Hubbard says should be called the “reactive mind.” The third level, which was as yet untitled, is the normal state for most of humanity; and the fourth is a condition of happiness and industriousness. Hubbard’s experimental technique aimed at raising an individual out of the lower tones and into the superior state of the fourth tone. His method, as he described it to Heinlein, was to drain off the painful experiences and associations that an individual has accumulated in his lifetime. Once that’s done, “astonishing results take place.” Asthma, headaches, arthritis, menstrual cramps, astigmatism, and ulcers simply disappear. There

is a huge boost in competence. The reactive mind is eliminated, and the rational mind takes over.

At the end of April 1949, Hubbard sent a note to Heinlein that he was moving to Washington, DC, for an indefinite stay. There was no word about Sara. Three weeks later, the thirty-eight-year-old Hubbard applied for a license in Washington to marry twenty-six-year-old Ann Jensen. The application was canceled the next day at the request of the bride. Perhaps she had learned that Hubbard was already married to his second wife and had previously committed bigamy. In any case, Ann Jensen's name disappears from Hubbard's life story.

He and Sara moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, where John Campbell, Hubbard's editor at Astounding Science-Fiction before the war, resided. Campbell visited Hubbard often and became one of his first and most important converts. "Dammit, the man's got something—and something big," he wrote excitedly to Heinlein.

Campbell underwent the treatment, which employed "deep hypnosis." In that entranced state, Campbell was able to retrieve traumatic memories of his birth. "I was born with a cord wrapped around my neck, strangling me," he recounted to Heinlein. The doctor who delivered him, whom Campbell now remembered had a German accent, had barked at Campbell's mother, saying, "You must stop fighting—you are killing him. Relax!" Later, the doctor put some corrosive medication in the baby's eyes, and said, "You'll forget all about this in a little while." Campbell characterized these instructions as "unshakeable post-hypnotic commands of tremendous force," which governed much of his subsequent behavior. "The neighbor bratlings could tease me unmercifully—and did—because I couldn't fight," he told Heinlein; his mother would often attempt to console him by telling him that he would forget the painful experiences of his childhood soon enough, with the result that many of the most important moments of his life

were lost to him. “Ron’s technique consists of bringing these old memories into view, and then erasing the memory,” Campbell explained. He writes that although he now doesn’t remember his actual birth, he does remember retrieving it and relating it to Hubbard, who then erased the real memory, with its painful associations, leaving Campbell with the experience of knowing what happened to him without actually having the memory continue its sinister influence. Obviously, the line between a real memory and an implanted one, or a confabulation, was very difficult to draw.

This was the most potent medicine ever discovered, Campbell continued, but also the most dangerous weapon imaginable if not properly handled. “With the knowledge I now have, I could turn most ordinary people into homicidal maniacs within one hour.” And yet, as an editor, Campbell recognized the commercial possibilities: “This is the greatest story in the world—far bigger than the atomic bomb.” He added in a postscript that he had also lost twenty pounds in twenty-five days—another commercial bonanza. Campbell was beside himself because Hubbard had yet to actually start writing the book. “The key to world sanity is in Ron Hubbard’s head, and there isn’t even an adequate written record!”

In December, Ron and Sara moved into what Hubbard termed “a little old shack” in Bayhead, New Jersey, with eight bedrooms, near the beach. In March 1950, he sent the Heinleins a handmade miniature book catalogue from “Hubbard House” publishers, proclaiming the spring collection:

Announcing
A New Hubbard Edition
Completely New Material
Not a revision
Co-Authors—Ron & Sara Hubbard

Release Date March 8, ’50—11:50 A.M.
Weight—9 lbs. 2 oz. — Height—21 in.
Alexis Valerie
Has received rave notices from all reviewers!

Alexis was the image of her father, who delighted in her precociousness. “Ron is going at a little less than the speed of light all day and every day,” Sara wrote to the Heinleins, “then, in the middle of the night he goes in and tells Alexis all about it.”

Ron promised to send Heinlein a galley of Dianetics as soon as it was available. He reported that it was 180,000 words, “begun Jan. 12, ’50, finished Feb. 10, off the press by April 25.” When one of his followers asked Hubbard how he had been able to dash it off so quickly, Hubbard said that his guardian spirit, the Empress, had dictated it to him.

Like several other prominent sci-fi writers of the Golden Age, including Heinlein and A. E. van Vogt, Hubbard had been strongly influenced by the writings of Alfred Korzybski, a Polish American philosopher who created the theory of general semantics. In New Jersey, Sara read Korzybski and quoted several passages aloud to Ron, who immediately grasped the ideas as the basis for a system of psychology, if not for a whole religion.

Korzybski pointed out that words are not the things they describe, in the same way that a map is not the territory it represents. Language shapes thinking, creating mental habits, which can stand in the way of sanity by preserving delusions. Korzybski argued that emotional disturbances, learning disorders, and many psychosomatic illnesses—including heart problems, skin diseases, sexual disorders, migraines, alcoholism, arthritis, even dental cavities—could be remedied by semantic training, much as Hubbard would claim for his own work. He cited Korzybski frequently, although he admitted that he could never get through

the texts themselves. “Bob Heinlein sat down one time and talked for ten whole minutes on the subject of Korzybski to me and it was very clever,” he later related. “I know quite a bit about Korzybski’s works.”

From this secondhand knowledge, Hubbard saw the need for creating a special vocabulary, which would allow him to define old thoughts in new ways (the soul becomes a thetan, for instance); or invent new words, such as “enturbulate” (confuse) and “hatting” (training); or use words and phrases in a novel manner, such as turning adjectives or verbs into nouns, or vice versa (“an overt,” “a static,” “alter-isness”); plus a Pentagon-level glut of acronyms—all of which would entrap his followers in a self-referential semantic labyrinth.

Hubbard granted his friend and acolyte John Campbell a scoop by letting him buy a lengthy excerpt of his forthcoming book. Thus the world got its first look at Dianetics in the pages of Astounding Science-Fiction. “This article is not a hoax, joke, or anything but a direct, clear statement of a totally new scientific thesis,” Campbell warns his readers, who might be confused by finding a work of scholarship in a pulp magazine. “I know dianetics is one of, if not the greatest, discovery of all Man’s written and unwritten history,” he wrote to a puzzled contributor. “It produces the sort of stability and sanity men have dreamed about for centuries.” He assured a young writer that Hubbard would win the Nobel Peace Prize for his work.

The book itself, Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health, appeared in May. It was completely unexpected, given Hubbard’s history as a writer. He intended it to stand as a capstone to the “fifty thousand years of thinking men without whose speculations and observations the creation and construction of Dianetics would not have been possible.” In Scientology, Dianetics is known as Book One. “With 18 million copies sold, it is indisputably the most

widely read and influential book on the human mind ever published," the church maintains. Scientology dates its own calendar from 1950, the year Dianetics was published.

Hubbard's theory is that the mind has two parts. The analytical, or conscious, mind is the center of awareness, the storehouse of all past perceptions. Nothing is lost from its data banks. Every smell or pattern or sound attached to one's previous experiences is present and capable of being completely recaptured. This is the mind that observes and thinks and solves problems. It is rational and aware of itself.

The other form of mentality is the reactive mind. It is the single source of nightmares, insecurity, and unreasonable fears. It doesn't think. It is a repository of painful and destructive emotions, which are recorded even while an individual is sleeping, or unconscious, or still in the womb. The recording is not the same as a memory, in the sense of being a mental construct; it is physically a part of the cellular structure and capable of reproducing itself in generations of new cells. "Cells are evidently sentient in some currently inexplicable way," Hubbard speculates. When awakened by some stimulus, the recording—Hubbard calls it an "engram"—turns off the conscious mind and seizes control of an individual's actions or behavior.

Hubbard compares the engram to a posthypnotic suggestion. He describes a man in a trance who has been told that every time the operator touches his tie, the subject will remove his coat. When the subject is awakened, he is not consciously aware of the command. "The operator then touches his tie," Hubbard writes. "The subject may make some remark about its being too warm and so take his coat off." This can be done repeatedly. "At last the subject may become aware, from the expressions on people's faces, that something is wrong. He will not know what is wrong. He will not even know that the touching of the tie is the signal which makes

him take off his coat." The hypnotic command in his unconscious continues to govern his behavior, even when the subject recognizes that it is irrational and perhaps harmful. In the same way, Hubbard suggests, engrams work their sinister influence on everyday actions, undermining one's self-confidence and subverting rational behavior. The individual feels helpless as he engages in behavior he would never consciously consent to. He is "handled like a marionette by his engrams."

Although there were no recorded case histories to prove his claim that hundreds of patients had been cured through his methods, through "many years of exact research and careful testing," Hubbard offered appealing examples of hypothetical behavior. For instance, a woman is beaten and kicked. "She is rendered 'unconscious.' " In that state, she is told she is no good, a faker, and that she is always changing her mind. Meantime, a chair has been knocked over; a faucet is running in the kitchen; a car passes outside. All of these perceptions are parts of the engram. The woman is not aware of it, but whenever she hears running water or a car passing by, the engram is partly restimulated. She feels discomfort if she hears them together. If a chair happens to fall as well, she experiences a shock. She begins to feel like the person she was accused of being while she was unconscious—a fickle, no-good faker. "This is not theory," Hubbard repeatedly asserts. It is an "exact science" that represents "an evolutionary step in the development of Man."

Hubbard proposed that the influence engrams have over one's current behavior can be eliminated by reciting the details of the original incident until it no longer possesses an emotional charge.[4] "Dianetics deletes all the pain from a lifetime," Hubbard writes. "When this pain is erased in the engram bank and refiled as memory and experience in the memory banks, all aberrations and psychosomatic illnesses vanish." The object of Dianetics therapy is

to drain the engrams of their painful, damaging qualities and eliminate the reactive mind entirely, leaving a person "Clear."

WRITTEN IN a bluff, quirky style, and overrun with patronizing footnotes that do little to substantiate its bold findings, Dianetics nonetheless became a sensation, lodging itself for twenty-eight weeks on the New York Times best-seller list and laying the groundwork for the category of postwar self-help books that would seek to emulate its success. Hundreds of Dianetics groups sprang up around the United States and in other countries in order for its adherents to apply the therapeutic principles Hubbard prescribed. One only needed a partner, called an auditor, who could guide the subject to locate his engrams and bring them into consciousness, where they would be released and rendered harmless. "You will find many reasons why you 'cannot get well,' " Hubbard warns, but he promises, "Dianetics is no solemn adventure. For all that it has to do with suffering and loss, its end is always laughter, so foolish, so misinterpreted were the things which caused the woe."

The book arrived at a moment when the aftershocks of the world war were still being felt. Behind the exhilaration of victory, there was immense trauma. Religious certainties were shaken by the development of bombs so powerful that civilization, if not life itself, became a wager in the Cold War contest. Loss, grief, and despair were cloaked by the stoicism of the age, but patients being treated in mental hospitals were already on the verge of outnumbering those being treated for any other cause. Psychoanalysis was suspiciously viewed in much of America as a European—mainly Jewish—import, which was time-consuming and fantastically expensive. Hubbard promised results "in less than twenty hours of work" that would be "superior to any produced by several years of psycho-analysis."

The profession of psychiatry, meantime, had entered a period of brutal experimentation, characterized by the widespread practice of lobotomies and electroshock therapy. The prospect of consulting a psychiatrist was accompanied by a justified sense of dread. That may have played a role in Hubbard's decision not to follow up on his own request for psychiatric treatment. The appearance of a do-it-yourself manual that claimed to demystify the secrets of the human mind and produce guaranteed results—for free—was bound to attract an audience. "It was sweepingly, catastrophically successful," Hubbard marveled.

The scientific community, stupefied by the book's popularity, reacted with hostility and ridicule. It seemed to them little more than psychological folk art. "This volume probably contains more promises and less evidence per page than has any publication since the invention of printing," the Nobel physicist Isidor Isaac Rabi wrote in his review of Dianetics for Scientific American. "The huge sale of the book to date is distressing evidence of the frustrated ambitions, hopes, ideals, anxieties and worries of the many persons who through it have sought succor." Erich Fromm, one of the predominant thinkers of the psychoanalytic movement, denounced the book as being "expressive of a spirit that is exactly the opposite of Freud's teachings." Hubbard's method, he complains, "has no respect for and no understanding of the complexities of personality." He derisively quotes Hubbard: "In an engineering science like Dianetics we can work on a push-button basis." But, of course, that was part of the theory's immense appeal.

One of the most painful reviews of Dianetics, no doubt, was by Korzybski's most notable intellectual heir (and later, US senator from California), S. I. Hayakawa. He not only dismissed the book, he also criticized what he saw as the spurious craft of writing science fiction. "The art consists in concealing from the reader, for novelistic purposes, the distinctions between established scientific

facts, almost-established scientific hypotheses, scientific conjectures, and imaginative extrapolations far beyond what has even been conjectured," he wrote. The writer who produces "too much of it too fast and too glibly" runs the risk of believing in his own creations. "It appears to me inevitable that anyone writing several million words of fantasy and science-fiction should ultimately begin to internalize the assumptions underlying the verbiage." Dianetics, Hayakawa noted, was neither science nor fiction, but something else: "fictional science."

Not all scientists rejected Hubbard's approach. One of his early supporters was Campbell's brother-in-law Dr. Joseph Winter, a physician who had also written for Astounding Science-Fiction. Searching for a more holistic approach to medicine, Winter traveled to New Jersey to experience Hubbard's method firsthand. "While listening to Hubbard 'running' one of his patients, or while being 'run' myself, I would find myself developing unaccountable pains in various portions of my anatomy, or becoming extremely fatigued and somnolent," he reported. "I had nightmares of being choked, of having my genitalia cut off, and I was convinced that dianetics as a method could produce effects."

Hubbard's method involved placing the patient in a state of "reverie," achieved by giving the command "When I count from one to seven your eyes will close." A tremble of the lashes as the eyelids flutter shut signals that the subject has fallen into a receptive condition. "This is not hypnotism," Hubbard insists. Although a person in a Dianetic reverie may appear to be in a trance, the opposite is the case, he says: "The purpose of therapy is to awaken a person in every period of his life when he has been forced into 'unconsciousness.' Dianetics wakes people up."

Sara watched the effect that Ron was having on his patients. "He would hold hands with them and try to talk them into these phony memories," she recalled. "He would concentrate on them and they

loved it. They were so excited about someone who would just pay this much attention to them."

Dr. Winter tried out Hubbard's techniques on his six-year-old son, who was afraid of the dark because he was terrified of being choked by ghosts. Winter asked him to remember the first time he saw a ghost. "He has on a long white apron, a little white cap on his head and a piece of white cloth on his mouth," the boy said. He even had a name for the ghost—it happened to be the same as that of the obstetrician who delivered him. Winter then asked his son to look at the "ghost" in his mind repeatedly, until the boy began to calm down. "When the maximum relaxation had apparently been obtained after ten or twelve recountings, I told him to open his eyes," Winter reported. "It has been over a year since that short session with my son, and he has not had a recurrence of his fear of the dark in all that time."

The idea that early memories—even prenatal ones—could be recaptured was central to Hubbard's theory. Every engram rooted in the reactive mind has its predecessors; the object of Dianetics therapy is to hunt down the original insult, the "basic-basic," which produced the engram in the first place. Freud had also postulated that childhood traumas would be played out in later life through symptoms of hysteria or neurosis. In his famous Wolf Man case, for instance, Freud traced a childhood neurosis in his patient to the sight of his parents copulating when he was a year and a half old. "Everything goes back to the reproduction of scenes," Freud thought at the time. He recognized that in many cases such childhood memories were clearly invented, but from an analytical perspective, they were still useful, because the emotions and associations attached to the confabulations opened a window onto the patient's subconscious. False childhood memories were often as deeply believed in as real ones, but what made them stand apart from actual memories was that they were almost always the same,

unvarying from patient to patient; they must be somehow universal. Freud's protégé Carl Jung would seize on this fact to construct his theory of the Collective Unconscious. Freud himself came to believe that what was a false memory in a present-day patient's mind had been a reality at some point in prehistory. "It seems to me quite possible that all the things that are told to us today in analysis as phantasy—the seduction of children, the inflaming of sexual excitement by observing parental intercourse, the threat of castration…—were once real occurrences in the primaeval times of the human family, and that children in their phantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth." And yet Freud continued to be troubled by the fact that many of these supposed memories were formed at a suspiciously early age. "The extreme achievement on these lines is a phantasy of observing parental intercourse while one is still an unborn baby in the womb," he noted wryly. That absurdity was one of the reasons he eventually cast aside the seduction theory.

For Hubbard, however, early or even prenatal traumas were literally true. He believed that the fetus not only recorded details of his parents copulating during his pregnancy, but also every word spoken during the act. Such recordings can be restimulated in adult life by hearing similar language, which would then awaken the anxiety that the fetus experienced—during a violent sexual episode, for instance. That could lead to "aberration," which for Hubbard includes all psychoses, neuroses, compulsions and any other deviation from rational behavior. Engrams form chains of similar incidents, Hubbard suggests. He gives the example of seventeen prenatal engrams found in a single individual, who "had passed for 'normal' for thirty-six years of his life." Among them:

> COITUS CHAIN, FATHER. 1st incident zygote. 56 succeeding incidents. Two branches, father drunk and father sober.

COITUS CHAIN, LOVER. 1st incident embryo. 18 succeeding incidents. All painful because of enthusiasm of lover.

FIGHT CHAIN. 1st incident embryo. 38 succeeding incidents. Three falls, loud voices, no beating.

ATTEMPTED ABORTION, SURGICAL. 1st incident embryo. 21 succeeding incidents.

ATTEMPTED ABORTION, DOUCHE. 1st incident fetus. 2 incidents. 1 using paste, 1 using Lysol, very strong.

MASTURBATION CHAIN. 1st incident embryo. 80 succeeding incidents. Mother masturbating with fingers, jolting child and injuring child with orgasm.

And so on, all leading up to:

BIRTH. Instrument. 29 hours labor.

Hubbard's view of women as revealed in this and many other examples is not just contemptuous; it betrays a kind of horror. He goes on to make this amazing statement: "It is a scientific fact that abortion attempts are the most important factor in aberration. The child on whom the abortion is attempted is condemned to live with murderers whom he reactively knows to be murderers through all his weak and helpless youth!" In his opinion, it is very difficult to abort a child, which is why the process so often fails. "Twenty or thirty abortion attempts are not uncommon in the aberree and in every attempt the child could have been pierced through the body or brain," Hubbard writes. "However many billions America spends yearly on institutions for the insane and jails for the criminals are spent primarily because of attempted abortions done by some sex-blocked mother to whom children are a curse, not a blessing of God."

One of the charges that would be lobbed against Hubbard by his disaffected eldest son was that his father had attempted two abortions on his mother. "One I observed when I was around six or

seven," L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., later testified. He recalled seeing his father standing over his mother with a coat hanger in his hand. The other attempted abortion was upon himself. "I was born at six and a half months and weighed two pounds, two ounces. I mean, I wasn't born: this is what came out as a result of their attempt to abort me." Hubbard himself writes in his secret memoir that Polly was terrified of childbirth, "but conceived despite all precautions seven times in five years resulting in five abortions and two children." While he was writing Dianetics, and Sara was pregnant with Alexis, she says, Hubbard kicked her in the stomach several times to attempt to cause a miscarriage. Later, Hubbard told one of his lovers that he himself had been born of an attempted abortion.

While Hubbard was still writing Dianetics, he contacted both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association, representing himself as a colleague who had made fundamental advances in the science. Patients placed in a trance state, he explained, could be guided to remember their own births. In sixteen of what he says were the twenty cases that he examined, psychosomatic illnesses had been caused by pre-birth or birth traumas. "Migraine headache, ulcers, asthma, sinusitis and arthritis were amongst those illnesses relieved," he asserted. In a similar letter to the American Gerontological Society, he also claimed that sixteen of the twenty cases had been made measurably younger. His preliminary title for the work was "Certain Discoveries and Researches Leading to the Removal of Early Traumatic Experiences Including Attempted Abortion, Birth Shock and Infant Accidents and Illnesses with an Examination of Their Effects on the Adult Mind and an Account of Techniques Evolved and Employed." When scientists tested some of Hubbard's claims and found that his techniques produced no measurable improvement, he blamed them for failing to understand his system.

Hubbard's rejection by the mental health establishment, even

before Dianetics was published, was itself a kind of pre-birth trauma. After that, whenever Dianetics or Scientology was attacked in the press or by governments, Hubbard saw the hand of psychiatrists. “The psychiatrist and his front groups operate straight out of the terrorist textbooks,” he wrote bitterly years later. “The Mafia looks like a convention of Sunday school teachers compared to these terrorist groups.” Toward the end of his life he concluded that if psychiatrists “had the power to torture and kill everyone, they would do so.… Recognize them for what they are: psychotic criminals—and handle them accordingly.” Psychiatry was “the sole cause of decline in this universe.”

HUBBARD SET UP schools to train auditors in major cities, which, along with the book sales and his lecture fees, generated a cascade of revenue. “The money was just pouring in,” Sara marveled. Hubbard began carrying huge wads of cash around in his pocket. “I remember going past a Lincoln dealer and admiring one of those big Lincolns they had then,” Sara recalled. “He walked right in there and bought it for me, cash!”

The people who were drawn to Dianetics were young to middle-aged white-collar Protestants who had a pronounced interest in science fiction. Some were motivated by the prospect of employment in this booming new field. Others were truth seekers, often veterans of other movements and cults that were responding to the dislocations of the era. And then there were those who had heard the legend of the heroic Navy officer who had been blinded and crippled by the war, who had healed himself through Dianetic techniques. Like Hubbard, they sought a cure. Society and science had let them down. Through Dianetics, they hoped to be lifted up, enlightened, restored, and made whole.

One of the contradictory features of Dianetics is the fact that

Hubbard continually referred to the powers of Clears, but as yet he had not actually produced a single one for inspection. Among other powers, a Clear "has complete recall of everything which has ever happened to him or anything he has ever studied. He does mental computations such as those of chess, for example, which a normal would do in half an hour, in ten or fifteen seconds." Such claims presumed that there was already a sizable population of Dianetic graduates with exceptional abilities, and Hubbard's readers naturally wondered where they were.

In August 1950, Hubbard presented the "World's First Clear" at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Sonia Bianca, a very nervous physics student from Boston, was brought to the stage. Hubbard claimed that through Dianetics, Bianca had attained "full and perfect recall of every moment of her life." The audience began peppering her with questions, such as what she had had for breakfast eight years before, or what was on this page of Hubbard's book, or even elemental formulas in physics, her area of specialty. She was incapable of responding when someone asked the color of Hubbard's necktie, when he briefly had his back turned to her. It was a very public fiasco. Hubbard would not announce another Clear for sixteen years. One of his disillusioned acolytes later concluded that the concept of clearing was just a gimmick to dramatize the theory of Dianetics. "The fact is that there were never any clears, as he had described them," Helen O'Brien, Hubbard's top executive in the United States, wrote. "There were randomly occurring remissions of psychosomatics."

Meanwhile, his bigamous marriage to Sara was careening toward a spectacular conclusion. A month after the Sonia Bianca debacle, Ron and Sara were living at the Chateau Marmont in Hollywood. He was beating her regularly. "With or without an argument, there'd be an upsurge of violence," Sara recalled. "The veins in his forehead would engorge" and he would strike her, "out of the

blue." One time he broke her eardrum. And yet, she stayed with him, a hostage to his needs. "I felt so guilty about the fact that he was so psychologically damaged," Sara said. "I felt as though he had given so much to our country and I couldn't even bring him peace of mind. I believed thoroughly that he was a man of great honor, had sacrificed his well being to the country.... It just never occurred to me he was a liar." Ron finally explained his dilemma: he didn't want to be married—"I do not want to be an American husband for I can buy my friends whenever I want them"—but divorce would hurt his reputation. The solution: if Sara really loved him, she should kill herself.

Sara took little "Alexi," as she called their daughter, and moved into the Los Angeles Dianetics Research Foundation, in a former governor's mansion near the University of Southern California campus. Soon after that, Sara began an affair with another man, Miles Hollister.

Hubbard furiously told his own lover, Barbara Klowden, that Sara and Miles were plotting to have him committed to a mental institution. Indeed, Sara had consulted a psychiatrist about Hubbard's condition. She told him that Ron had said he would rather kill her than let her leave him. The psychiatrist said that Hubbard probably needed to be institutionalized, and he warned Sara that her life was in danger.

Nonetheless, Sara went directly to Ron and told him what the doctor had said. If he got treatment, she said, she would stay with him; otherwise, she was going to leave. Ron responded by threatening to kill their child. "He didn't want her to be brought up by me because I was in league with the doctors," Sara recalled, in her deathbed tape. "He thought I had thrown in with the psychiatrists, with the devils."

On the night of February 24, 1951, Sara went to the movies and left her baby in the care of a young man named John Sanborne,

who was studying at the foundation. Alexis had become a kind of celebrity, or at least a curiosity. Hubbard had been touting her as the world's first "dianetic baby"—shielded since birth against any engram-forming disruptions or parental conflict. As a result, Hubbard boasted, Alexis talked at three months, crawled at four, and had no phobias. At about ten o'clock, eleven-month-old Alexis began crying in her crib, so Sanborne picked her up to comfort her. Suddenly, the infant said in a hoarse whisper, "Don't sleep." Sanborne was startled. He didn't think a baby could talk like that. "It went through me in a funny way," he later said. "The hair raising on the back of the neck type of feeling."

At eleven p.m. there was a knock on the door. One of Hubbard's aides appeared, wearing a topcoat, with his hand in his pocket. Sanborne believed he was carrying a gun. The man said that Hubbard was here to take his daughter. Hubbard himself then came through the door, also wearing a topcoat, with his hand in his right pocket. They took the child and disappeared.

Later that night Hubbard returned with two other men to abduct Sara. "We have Alexis and you'll never see her alive unless you come with us," Hubbard said. They tied her hands and dragged her out of bed into a waiting Lincoln. She says that Hubbard had her in a chokehold to keep her from screaming. Hubbard's assistant, Richard de Mille (son of the famous movie director and producer Cecil B. DeMille), drove aimlessly, while Hubbard and Sara, who was wearing only a nightgown, sat in back. She warned him that kidnapping was a capital offense.

In San Bernardino, Hubbard ordered de Mille to stop at the county hospital so he could have Sara committed, but it was the middle of the night and no doctor would talk to him. Eventually, Hubbard and Sara negotiated a truce. Hubbard told her where Alexis was hidden—he had hired a nurse in West Los Angeles to watch her—and Sara signed a note saying that she had gone with

Hubbard of her own free will. Hubbard and de Mille went to the Yuma, Arizona, airport and flew to Phoenix, while Sara drove the Lincoln back to Los Angeles in her nightgown to pick up Alexis. When she arrived at the nursing center, however, she was told that a young couple had just left with the baby.

Hubbard and de Mille flew on to Chicago, where Hubbard voluntarily presented himself for a psychological examination in order to counter the accusation that he was a paranoid schizophrenic. The psychologist administered some diagnostic tests, including Rorschach inkblots, and later provided a report that said that Hubbard was a creative individual who was upset by family problems and depressed about his work. Hubbard was extremely pleased; he would often mention that he had been given a clean bill of health by the psychological profession. Sara remembered that he then called her and told her that he had killed Alexis. “He said that he had cut her into little pieces and dropped the pieces in a river and that he had seen little arms and legs floating down the river and it was my fault, I’d done it because I’d left him,” Sara remembered.

Hubbard and de Mille then traveled to Elizabeth, New Jersey, where the Dianetics Foundation had its headquarters. Meantime, the young couple that Hubbard had hired to abduct Alexis from the nursing center drove the infant all the way across the country to deliver her to Hubbard. It was the middle of March and snowing in New Jersey, so Hubbard decided to move on to Florida, where he intended to write his next book. De Mille came along with the baby. After a few days in Tampa, Hubbard still felt edgy and announced that the three of them were flying to Cuba. “He believed that as long as he had the child he could control the situation,” de Mille told one of Hubbard’s biographers.

For six weeks, Sara had searched for Alexis in Southern California, enlisting local police, sheriffs, and the FBI, but the

authorities regarded the abduction as a domestic dispute. Finally, she filed a writ of habeas corpus demanding Alexis's return, setting off a press uproar. On April 23, 1951, Sara added to the sensation by finally filing for divorce in Los Angeles County, revealing that Hubbard was already married when they wed. She accused Hubbard of subjecting her to "systematic torture," including sleep deprivation, beatings, strangulations, and "scientific torture experiments." She said that she had consulted medical professionals, who concluded that Hubbard was "hopelessly insane, and crazy."

Soon afterward, Sara received a surprising letter of support from Polly:

> If I can help in any way, I'd like to—You must get Alexis in your custody—Ron is not normal. I had hoped that you could straighten him out. Your charges probably sound fantastic to the average person—but I've been through it—the beatings, threats on my life, all the sadistic traits you charge—twelve years of it.... Please do believe I do so want to help you get Alexis.

Meantime, in Havana, Hubbard hired a couple of women to take care of the baby. They kept her in a crib with wire over the top. To de Mille, it seemed that Alexis was being held like a monkey in a cage.

Cuba was run by mobsters, who had turned it into a hedonistic paradise, but Hubbard took little advantage of the nightlife; he locked himself in a hotel room, rented an old typewriter with Spanish-language keys, and began to write. According to de Mille, Hubbard wrote all night with a bottle of rum at hand, which was empty in the morning.

The book Hubbard was pounding out in Havana was Science of Survival. He introduced his readers to the Tone Scale, which had evolved since he sketched it out in his letter to Robert Heinlein

two years before. The scale classifies emotional states, starting at zero, Body Death. The lower tones are characterized by psychosis, where hatred and anger give way to perversion, artful lying, cowardice, withdrawal, and apathy. “People below the 2.0 level, no matter their avowed intention, will bring death or injury to persons, things and organizations around them if in the anger bracket, or death to themselves if in the apathy bracket,” Hubbard writes. “Anyone below 2.0 level is a potential suicide.” Their bodies stink, as does their breath. At 2.5, there is a break point between the normal and the neurotic. This stage is characterized by boredom, vagueness, indifference, and pointless conversation. At level 3.0 one enters a stage that Hubbard characterizes as “very high normal,” where one is resistant to infections, tolerant, and reasonable; however, he is also insincere, careless, and untrustworthy.

Clear registers 4.0 on the scale. A person who has attained this level is nearly accident-proof and immune to bacteria. He is exhilarated, eager, strong, able, curious, ethical, creative, courageous, responsible, and impossible to hypnotize. And yet this state is only one-tenth of what Hubbard forecasts in the realm of human potential. His scale goes all the way to 40.0, Serenity of Beingness, but the capabilities of the upper regions are largely unknown.

Given the circumstances that surrounded the creation of this book, it’s interesting to read what Hubbard writes about sexual behavior and attitudes toward children. Not only was he on the run in Cuba with his abducted daughter when he wrote this, he was also being sued for non-support of the two children from his first marriage, whom he hadn’t seen for years. “Sex,” he wrote, “is an excellent index of the position of the preclear on the Tone Scale.” The highest levels are characterized by monogamy, constancy, a pleasurable attitude toward sex, and an intense interest in children,

although the urge to procreate is mitigated by the sublimation of sexual desire into pure creative thought. At 3.0 on the scale, sexual interest is diminished but the urge to procreate remains high. That begins to fall off at 2.5, “not for any reason beyond a general failure to be interested in anything.” Children are tolerated, but there is little interest in their affairs. At 2.0, sex becomes revolting and children provoke anxiety. Rape and child abuse characterize 1.5.

Then Hubbard arrives at a level that preoccupies him, 1.1 on the Tone Scale. “Here is the harlot, the pervert, the unfaithful wife, Free Love, easy marriage and quick divorce and general sexual disaster,” he writes. “A society which reaches this level is on its way out of history.” A mother who is at 1.1 on the Tone Scale will attempt to abort her child. However, once the child is born, “we get general neglect and thoughtlessness about the child and no feeling whatsoever about the child’s future or any effort to build one for it. We get careless familial actions, such as promiscuity, which will tear to pieces the family security upon which this child’s future depends. Along this band, the child is considered a thing, a possession.”

Hubbard finished the book and wrote this dedication:

To
Alexis Valerie Hubbard
For Whose Tomorrow May
Be Hoped a World That
Is Fit To Be Free

Hubbard eventually wrote a note to Sara to explain his whereabouts, saying that he was in a Cuban military hospital, about to be transferred to the States “as a classified scientist immune from interference of all kinds.” He adds, “I will be

hospitalized probably a long time. Alexis is getting excellent care. I see her every day. She is all I have to live for. My wits never gave way under all you did and let them do but my body didn't stand up. My right side is paralyzed.... I hope my heart lasts.... Dianetics will last 10,000 years—for the Army and Navy have it now." He concludes by warning that in the event of his death, Alexis will inherit a fortune, but if Sara gains custody, the child will get nothing.

Hubbard did return to the United States and hunkered down in Wichita, Kansas, where a wealthy supporter, Don Purcell, provided him sanctuary. Hubbard's old friend Russell Hays was there, consulting for the Cessna Aircraft Corporation. Hubbard arrived with "a Cadillac so damn long he couldn't hardly park it anywhere, and two concubines," Hays marveled. When Sara discovered where her husband was, she sought to enjoin his assets. Hubbard retaliated by writing a letter to the US attorney general, explaining the peril he was in. "I am, basically, a scientist in the field of atomic and molecular phenomena," he said by way of introduction. He said that his own investigation showed that Sara was tied to Communists who had infiltrated the Dianetics Foundation. This was at the height of McCarthyism and the Red Scare. "I did not realize my wife was one until this spring," Hubbard wrote. He named several of his disaffected followers, including Gregory Hemingway, son of the famous novelist. "When, when, when will we have a round-up?" he implored.

Meantime, Sara came to Wichita to pursue the divorce and to get Alexis back. Ron blithely suggested that they should take a trip together. "He told me that I was under the influence of this communist cell" run by her husband, Sara recalled. "And that they were dictating to me what to do, and that I was in a state of complete madness. I told him, 'Yep, I think you're right. The only thing I can do is to work through it and do whatever they say.' "

Ron replied that the Communists had hypnotized her. Sara played along, but insisted she would have to go through the divorce; only then would she be able to break free of their power.

"You know, I'm a public figure and you're nobody," Ron said, "so if you have to go through the divorce, I'll accuse you of desertion so it won't look so bad on my public record." As long as she was going to get Alexis back as part of the bargain, Sara agreed.

Sara Northrup Hubbard in April 1951, when she was suing Hubbard for the return of their baby daughter, Alexis

On the day of the divorce, Ron was convinced that the spell the Communists had cast over Sara would be broken, and she would come back to him. When they walked out of the courtroom, Sara told him that she had to get their daughter. Ron took her to the place where Alexis was being held. Sara said that the last thing she had to do was go to the airport. She already had a ticket. Then the enchantment would dissolve and she would be free.

On the day of her scheduled departure, Ron drove Sara and Alexis to the airport. “We got halfway there and he said he wasn’t going to do it,” Sara recalled.

“You’re going to get on that plane and go away, aren’t you?” Ron said.

“Well, I have to follow their dictates,” Sara replied. “I’ll just go to the airplane.”

Ron parked the car. He told her that he couldn’t stand the idea that she would be under the influence of psychiatrists, and that he might never see either of them again. “I’m not going to let you go,” he said.

“I got out of the car, it was on the edge of the airfield,” Sara remembered. “I left all Alexi’s clothes in the car, I left my suitcase, one of her shoes fell off and I had my purse. I just ran across the airfield, across the runways, to the airport and got on the plane. And it was the nineteenth of June and it was the happiest day of my life.”

IN THE SPACE of a year, Hubbard had gone from destitution and obscurity to great wealth and international renown, followed by a crashing descent. The foundation he had created to train auditors plummeted into debt and soon declared bankruptcy. Close supporters, such as John Campbell and Dr. Winter, deserted. Dianetics proved to be a fad that had swept the country,

infatuating tens or even hundreds of thousands of people, but then burned itself out more quickly than the hula hoop.

Once again, Hubbard got a house trailer, and this time he drove it to Lawrence, Kansas, where Russell Hays now lived. Hays instructed Hubbard to park his trailer on some raw land he owned nearby. “That didn’t please him,” Hays said. “I wouldn’t want to have to live with him, he’d get on my nerves.” Hubbard was drinking and had a number of drugs along with him, and he pressed Hays to supply him with marijuana. Hays later dried some horseweed and mailed it to Hubbard, signing the letter, “I. M. Reefer.”

Hays advised the discouraged Hubbard to make use of his extensive mailing list. There were many followers who still believed in the man and his method. Some had had meaningful emotional breakthroughs. Others had experiences—such as leaving their bodies—that conclusively proved to them the validity of Hubbard’s claims. These acolytes provided the bedrock of support that Hubbard needed to regenerate his broken organization, rebuild his finances, and repair the stain on his reputation caused by his personal scandals.

In addition to Hubbard’s relentless self-confidence, several new factors salvaged his movement. He had a new device, the E-Meter, developed by one of his followers, which Hubbard revealed in March 1952. The E-Meter would replace the Dianetic reverie with what appeared to be a more scientific approach, one that didn’t look so much like a hypnotic trance. “It sees all, knows all,” Hubbard declared. “It is never wrong.” And he had a new wife, Mary Sue Whipp, a petite Texan, twenty years his junior, whom he married that same month. She was already pregnant with the first of their four children.

Hubbard also had a new name for his movement. From now on, it was Scientology.

[1] According to the church, “There was something under the water and it was definitely hostile, and after they dropped their charges, there was oil and something sunk.... It definitely happened.”

[2] A conspicuous example of Dianetic processing involved John Brodie, the outstanding quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, who suffered an injury to his throwing arm in 1970 that threatened to end his career. Despite the best medical attention and physical therapy, his elbow remained sore and swollen. Finally, he went to Phil Spickler, a Scientologist and Dianetic auditor, who asked Brodie to tell him about previous incidents that might be keeping his arm from healing. Brodie related that he had been in a severe traffic accident in 1963, in which his arm had been broken. As he explored the incident with Spickler, Brodie seemed to recall one of the ambulance attendants saying, “Well, that poor sonofabitch will never throw a football again.” And yet Brodie was unconscious at the time. How could he have such a memory? Spickler told him this was all part of an engram that was keeping him from getting well. “The ambulance attendant’s prediction had been simmering in my unconscious for seven years, agitating all my deepest fears of declining ability or failure,” Brodie later writes. “It had finally surfaced as this psychosomatic ailment in my throwing arm. Phil made me tell the story again and again and again, until no charge showed on the E-Meter” (John Brodie and James D. Houston, Open Field, p. 166). The swelling on Brodie’s arm diminished. He went on to have one of the greatest seasons of his career, and was voted the National Football League’s most valuable player that year.

3

Going Overboard

Given his biography, it would be easy to dismiss Hubbard as a fraud, but that would fail to explain his total absorption in his project. He would spend the rest of his life elaborating his theory and—even more obsessively—constructing the intricate bureaucracy designed to spread and enshrine his visionary understanding of human behavior. His life narrowed down to his singular mission. Each passageway in his interior expedition led him deeper into his imagination. That journey became Scientology, a totalistic universe in which his every turn was mapped and described.

Hubbard's own logic was inclining him toward conclusions that he was at first reluctant to draw. By admitting the validity of prenatal memories, he was bound to confront a dilemma: What if the memories didn't stop there? When patients began having "sperm dreams," Hubbard had to accept the idea that prenatal engrams were recorded "as early as shortly before conception." Then, when patients began to remember previous lives, Hubbard resisted the idea; it threatened to tear apart his organization. "The subject of past deaths and past lives is so full of tension that as early as last July 1950, the board of trustees of the [Dianetics] Foundation sought to pass a resolution banning the entire subject," he confided. Still, the implications were intriguing. What if we have lived before? Might there be memories that occasionally leak through into present time? Wouldn't that prove that we are immortal beings, only temporarily residing in our present

incarnations?

Instead of remembering, the patient undergoing Dianetic counseling "returns" to the past-life event. "There is a different feel to another period in time that's so basic it's hard to describe," Hubbard's top US executive, Helen O'Brien, recalled. "If you find yourself in a room, there may be color with unfamiliar tones because of gaslight shining on it. The air has a strange quality. Its particles of dust derive from unmodern constituents. Even human bodies seem to radiate a different kind of warmth when they are covered with the fabrics of another age. Memory, per se, filters out all that. When you return, you find the past intact." Some of the "returnings" were shocking or painful. O'Brien's first past-life experience in an auditing session was that of being a young Irish woman in the early nineteenth century. She could feel the coarse texture of her full-skirted dress as she walked down a narrow country lane, hearing the birds and feeling the warm country air. But when she turned a corner of her house, she saw a British soldier bayoneting her fourteen-year-old son in the yard. "I literally shuddered with grief," O'Brien writes. When the soldier threw her to the ground and tried to rape her, she spit in his face. He crushed her skull with a cobblestone. O'Brien's auditor had her re-experience the scene over and over until she was able to move through the entire bloody tableau unaffected. "By the end of it, I was luxuriously comfortable in every fibre," she writes. "When I walked downstairs … the electric lights dazzled me. The clean modern lines of the house interior, and the furniture, were elegant and strange to me beyond all description. I was freshly there from another age. For the first time in this lifetime, I knew I was beyond the laws of space and time.

"I was never the same again."

With his new acceptance of past-life experiences, Hubbard could now describe the individual as being divisible into three parts. First

there was the spirit, or soul, which Hubbard calls the thetan. The thetan normally lives in or near a body but can also be entirely separate from it. When a person goes exterior, for instance, it is the thetan part of him that travels outside the body or views himself from across the room. The mind, which serves mainly as a storehouse of pictures, functions as a communication and control system for the thetan, helping him operate in his environment. The body is merely the physical composition of the person, existing in space and time.

Anyone who stands in the way of a thetan's spiritual progress is a Suppressive Person (SP). This is a key concept in Scientology. Hubbard uses the term to describe a sociopath. The Suppressive instinctively fights against constructive forces and is driven berserk by those who try to help others. Hubbard estimates that Suppressives constitute about twenty percent of the population, but only about two and a half percent are truly dangerous. "A Suppressive Person will goof up or vilify any effort to help anybody and particularly knife with violence anything calculated to make human beings more powerful or more intelligent," Hubbard writes. "The artist in particular is often found as a magnet for persons with anti-social personalities who see in his art something which must be destroyed."

Naturally, anyone who is close to a Suppressive Person is in great danger of falling under his influence. Hubbard called that person a Potential Trouble Source. If, for instance, a parent opposes a child who wants to join Scientology, that parent is likely to be declared an SP; and as long as the child remains in contact with the parent, he is in danger of being defined as a PTS. He will be denied auditing and training. Eventually, the child will have to make a choice, either to leave the church—which offers him a path to career success, personal improvement, and salvation—or to disconnect from his parent, who is the cause of his failure to

achieve happiness and realize his dreams.

Hubbard had learned some difficult lessons from his experience with Dianetics. He was by nature an autocrat, but his work beckoned to amateurs. The movement inspired by his book had sprung up so quickly there was no real chance to rein it in and exert the kind of authority that might have made it more durable. Although he tried to impose order by creating professional training schools for auditors, in truth he had more or less surrendered control of the movement from the moment of inception by empowering his readers to become practitioners themselves; all they had to do was to follow the formulas sketched in his book. Entrepreneurs grabbed hold of the concept and snatched it out of his hands. They spread the message, but they also diluted it. When the Dianetics movement subsided, Hubbard was unable to restore the momentum that had given it such a rocket-powered launch. Imitators and competitors came onto the field, some even rivaling Hubbard himself. He was determined not to make the same mistakes with Scientology. From now on, he would exercise total control. His word was law. He was not just the founder, he was "Source"—the last word, whose every pronouncement was scripture.

In the evolution of Dianetics to Scientology, however, there was a larger wheel turning inside Hubbard's protean imagination. Until now, religion had played little or no part in his life or his thought—except, perhaps, as it was reflected in the cynical remark he is reported to have made on a number of occasions, "I'd like to start a religion. That's where the money is." One of the problems with Dianetics, from a moneymaking perspective, was the lack of a long-term association on the part of its adherents. Psychotherapy has a theoretical conclusion to it; the patient is "cured" or decides that the procedure doesn't work for him. In either case, the revenue dries up. Religion solves that problem. In addition to tax

advantages, religion supplies a commodity that is always in demand: salvation. Hubbard ingeniously developed Scientology into a series of veiled revelations, each of which promised greater abilities and increased spiritual power. “To keep a person on the Scientology path,” Hubbard once told one of his associates, “feed him a mystery sandwich.”

It may be true that his decision to take his movement in a new direction had more to do with the legal and tax advantages that accrue to religious organizations than it did with actual spiritual inspiration. He was desperate for money. The branches of his Dianetics Foundation were shuttered, one after another. At one point, Hubbard even lost the rights to the name Dianetics. The trend for his movement was toward disaster.

A letter Hubbard wrote to one of his executives in 1953 shows him weighing the advantages of setting up a new organization. “Perhaps we could call it a Spiritual Guidance Center,” he speculates. “And we could put in nice desks and our boys in neat blue with diplomas on the walls and 1. knock psychotherapy into history and 2. make enough money to shine up my operating scope and 3. keep the HAS [Hubbard Association of Scientologists] solvent. It is a problem of practical business.

“I await your reaction on the religion angle.”

In the anti-Scientology narrative, this is one of several clear statements of Hubbard’s calculations and proof that the “church” was nothing more than a moneymaking front. But Hubbard follows this with the observation, “We’re treating present time beingness, psychotherapy treats the past and the brain. And brother, that’s religion, not mental science.” At the end of that year, Hubbard incorporated three different churches: the Church of American Science, the Church of Spiritual Engineering, and the eventual winner in the brand-name contest, the Church of Scientology. The Church of Scientology of California was established on February

18, 1954, quickly followed by another in Washington, DC.

The fields of psychotherapy and religion have bled into each other on many occasions. They have in common the goal of reshaping one's view of the world and letting go of, or actually renouncing, one's previous stance.[1] Hubbard said there were "many, many reasons" to ally Scientology with religion. "To some this seems mere opportunism," he later admitted to a reporter. "To some it would seem that Scientology is simply making itself bulletproof in the eyes of the law."

Among the many other incentives to turn Hubbard's movement into a religion, there is one that might be considered especially in light of the frequent charge that he was insane. Religion is always an irrational enterprise, no matter how ennobling it may be to the human spirit. In many cultures, people who might be considered mentally ill in Western societies are thought of as religious healers, or shamans. Anthropologists have called schizophrenia the "shaman sickness," because part of a shaman's traditional journey requires suffering an illness that cannot be cured except by spiritual means. The shaman uses the powers and insights he gains from his experience to heal his community. This is exactly the history that Hubbard paints as his own: a blind cripple in the Navy hospital, given up for lost, who then heals himself through techniques he refines into Dianetics. This is the gift he humbly offers as a means of healing humanity. "The goal of Dianetics is a sane world—a world without insanity, without criminals and without war," he declares. "It can be stopped only by the insane."

For both the shaman and the schizophrenic, the boundaries between reality and illusion are soft, and consciousness slips easily from one to the other. Hubbard, with his highly imaginative mind, certainly had immediate access to visionary worlds; his science-fiction stories are evidence of that. But it is a different matter to be able to cast the nets of one's imagination into the unconscious and

pull out best-selling books. The schizophrenic is rarely so productive in the material world.

Sometimes in Hubbard's writings, however, he puts forward what appear to be fantasies of a highly schizophrenic personality. In 1952, for instance, he began talking about "injected entities," which can paralyze portions of the anatomy or block information from being audited. These entities can be located in the body, always in the same places. For instance, one of the entities, the "crew chief," is found on the right side of the jaw down to the shoulder. "They are the 'mysterious voices' in the heads of some preclears," Hubbard said. "Paralysis, anxiety stomachs, arthritis and many ills and aberrations have been relieved by auditing them. An E-Meter shows them up and makes them confess their misdeeds. They are probably just compartments of the mind which, cut off, begin to act as though they were persons."

Hubbard says there are actually two separate genetic lines that, in the history of evolution, first came together in the mollusk, but have been contending for dominance ever since, even in human beings. "In the bivalve state, one finds them at war with each other in an effort to attain sole command of the entire bivalve," Hubbard writes. This primordial contest manifests itself in higher forms of life in such things as right- and left-handedness. "Your discussion of these incidents with the uninitiated in Scientology can produce havoc," Hubbard warns. "Should you describe the 'Clam' to someone, you may restimulate him to the point of causing severe jaw hinge pain. One such victim, after hearing about a clam death, could not use his jaws for three days."

HUBBARD'S THIRD WIFE was smart and poised, a decorous partner for him. She was so slight and weightless that it might be easy to overlook her, but her Southern manners and Texas accent

concealed a hard and determined nature. Unlike Sara or Polly, Mary Sue was a true believer, a natural enforcer. One of Hubbard's executives later described her as "pragmatic, cold, cunning, calculating, efficient, and fiercely loyal." She had flinty blue eyes, a sharp, prominent nose, and a rare lopsided smile that would expose her uneven, slightly crossed front teeth.

Mary Sue and Ron with Diana, Quentin, Arthur, and Suzette

Ron and Mary Sue, with their burgeoning family, began a restless search for a new home—for themselves and for the international headquarters of the church. In 1955, they moved to Washington, DC, but they stayed only a few months before moving to London. Less than two years later, they were back in Washington, living in a dignified brownstone near Dupont Circle, across the street from the Academy of Scientology. Hubbard was prospering once again,

with mounting commissions from the sale of E-Meters and training processes, and royalties from sixty books in print. In 1956, his salary from the church was only five hundred dollars a month; but the following year, the church began paying him a percentage of its gross profits, and his income took a gigantic leap.

In Washington, Hubbard set up visiting hours from four to six every afternoon, and made a point of warning the pilgrims who trod the path to his door not to mistake him for a god or a guru, "so knock off the idolizing." And yet he couldn't resist exaggerating his status. Identifying himself as a nuclear physicist, Hubbard published a book in 1957, All About Radiation, in which he promoted a formula he called Dianazene, a mixture of nicotinic acid and vitamins, that was supposed to cure cancer as well as sunburns. "It should be taken daily," he recommended, "with milk and chocolate."

Ron and Mary Sue had four children in six years. Diana, born in 1952, was the eldest and clearly the dominant one. She had her father's red hair and a generous splattering of freckles. Quentin, born two years later, was the only one who was not a radiant redhead; he was small with ash-blond hair, like Mary Sue, and would always be his mother's favorite. Suzette was a year younger; she was a cheerful child, but somewhat overshadowed by her big sister. The baby, Arthur, was born in 1958. Seen together, the Hubbard family made a vivid impression, with their ruddy complexions and their striking hair color.

Although the children had a nanny, they spent much of their time unsupervised. School was an afterthought; it wasn't until Diana demanded to learn how to write her name that the children began their education. Mary Sue was a chilly presence as a mother; she rarely cuddled or even touched her children, but in the early years she would read to them—Mary Poppins, Winnie the Pooh, and Kipling's stories—in her slight Texas twang. As she took on

additional responsibility in Scientology, she became even more removed; but Ron would hug the kids and toss them in the air. The house echoed with his booming laugh. He taught the children how to play “Chopsticks” on the piano and showed them card tricks with his quick hands and perfectly manicured fingernails. He would play records and dance with the children to Beethoven or Ravel or Edvard Grieg’s Peer Gynt Suite—bold, soaring music. He liked to sing, and he would burst into “Farewell and Adieu to You Fair Spanish Ladies,” and “Be Kind to Your Web-Footed Friends,” a children’s song that is sung to the tune of “The Stars and Stripes Forever.” He was fanatical about taking vitamins, and he made sure the children took theirs, as well. Afterward, they would all roar to see who was the strongest.

Hubbard was restless in Washington, and in 1959 he moved his family back to England, to a luxurious estate in Sussex called Saint Hill Manor, which he purchased from the Maharajah of Jaipur. Hubbard employed an extensive household staff, including two butlers, a housekeeper, a nanny, a tutor for the children, a chauffeur, and maintenance workers for the estate. “Dr.” Hubbard presented himself to the curious British press as an experimental horticultural scientist; to prove it, he allowed a photograph to be published of himself staring intently at a tomato that was attached to an E-Meter. The headline in Garden News was “Plants Do Worry and Feel Pain.”

Hubbard using the E-Meter on a tomato in 1968 to test whether it experiences pain

The grand mansion was a terrific playground for the children. It was actually a U-shaped castle with crenelated rooflines, ivy-covered walls, and rumors of ghosts. There were fifty-two rolling acres to play in, with rose gardens, goldfish ponds, and a lake. The house itself had sweeping staircases, elevators, and even secret rooms where the children could hide from the nanny. The children also prowled through their mother's closet. Left to herself, Mary Sue was an indifferent dresser, but Ron brought tailors from London carrying gorgeous bolts of cloth, and racks of clothing brought in from the top department stores, all in Mary Sue's size. Her closet was full of sparkling gowns and shimmering dresses.

Trim and regal by nature, Mary Sue was a wonderful model, but she really only dressed for him.

Hubbard's third-floor research room was the enticing inner sanctum; it was painted royal blue, with a bear rug in front of the fireplace, and a private bathroom that was redolent of the Spanish sandalwood soap he favored. Hubbard would disappear into his office every day for hours and hours, alone with his E-Meter, "mapping out the bank and looking for the next undercut," as he explained, meaning that he was trying to inventory the reactive mind and discover a path through its many snares.

School was, as usual, a secondary consideration. The children would take a taxi to class, when they actually went. Their father didn't really believe in public education, so he didn't pressure them. Sometimes, they had a tutor, but it was Diana who taught Suzette how to read. She didn't want Suzette to suffer the same embarrassment she had when she started school so far behind her peers. By the age of nine, Suzette was reading adult literature. She decided she wanted to be a writer, like her father. Quentin developed an obsession with airplanes, and he would often persuade the nanny or the chauffeur to take him to Gatwick Airport instead of to class, so he could watch the various aircraft taking off and landing. He loved to stand near the runway with the heavy planes lumbering just overhead. He was soon able to close his eyes and identify the make of the plane strictly by its sound.

Hubbard at Saint Hill Manor in 1959 showing an E-Meter to his children, Quentin, Diana, Suzette, and Arthur

In school, other children would ask the older Hubbard kids about their father and what was going on in the castle. They realized that they didn't actually know. One day, Diana, Quentin, and Suzette marched into Hubbard's office and demanded, "What is this 'Scientology'?" Hubbard put them all on a starter Dianetics course.

Scientology was in its formative stage, still unfurling from Hubbard's imaginative mind. This was a volatile moment in Hubbard's life and the development of his movement. The fervent response of so many to his revelations must have added reality and substance to what otherwise might have seemed mere fantasies. Not only was he inventing a new religion, he was also reinventing

himself as a religious leader. He was creating the legend of who he was in the minds of those who believed in him. And inevitably, he became imprisoned by their expectations.

His followers lived in a state of constant anticipation, trading legends among themselves about the marvels they had experienced or heard about, and speculating upon what was to come. Moments of magic and transcendence kept reason at bay. Ken Urquhart, who served as Hubbard's butler and later as his secretary—or "Communicator"—recalls coaching a "little old English lady" on a Scientology training exercise. As he observed her, "I noticed her nice skin, her eyes, eyebrows. I noted that behind the skin on her forehead was the bone of her forehead, and I knew that behind that lay her brain. As I thought that thought, her forehead absolutely disappeared. I was looking directly at her brain. I was first astounded and then quickly horrified. Here I was exposing her brain to germs and the cold. At once her forehead was back in place."

If Scientology really did bestow enhanced powers upon its adherents, Hubbard himself—of all people—should be able to exercise them. Hubbard's frailties were obvious to everyone; among other things, his hands shook from palsy and he was hard of hearing, constantly exclaiming, "What? What?" He sensed the presumptions that surrounded him. "Your friends," he said one day to Urquhart as his bath was being prepared, "might be curious as to why I employ somebody to open the shutters in my room when I can do it myself." He meant that he should be able, by sheer mental power, to project his intention and the shutters would open themselves. "Well, a lot of people would like me to appear in the sky over New York so as to impress the world. But if I were to do that I'd overwhelm a lot of people. I'm not here to overwhelm." Urquhart thought of saying that he was perfectly willing to be overwhelmed in order to see such a demonstration, but he wasn't

altogether sure that Hubbard could actually do it. The failure of Hubbard's followers to challenge him made them complicit in the creation of the mythical figure that he became. They conspired to protect the image of L. Ron Hubbard, the prophet, the revelator, and the friend of mankind.

On the other hand, there were moments when Hubbard seemed to be toying with the limits of possibility. It was rumored that he could move the clouds around in the sky or stir up dust devils in his wake. Urquhart remembers a time when Hubbard was talking to him while sitting in a chair more than an arm's length away. "My attention wandered," he recalled. Suddenly, he felt a finger poking him in the ribs. "I came back. He was talking away, grinning and eyes twinkling. He had not moved his arms or gotten up from the chair." Such ineffable experiences seemed to add up to something, although it was not clear what that might be.

Hubbard's neighbors soon learned more about the new lord of the manor. Scientology's expansion, coupled with the increasingly bold claims that Hubbard made about the health benefits that could be expected, brought the organization under scrutiny by various governments. The first blow was a 1963 raid by US Marshals, acting on a warrant issued by the Food and Drug Administration to seize more than a hundred E-Meters stored in the Washington church. The FDA charged that the labeling for the E-Meter suggested that it was effective in diagnosing and treating "all mental and nervous disorders and illnesses," as well as "psychosomatic ailments of mankind such as arthritis, cancer, stomach ulcers, and radiation burns from atomic bombs, poliomyelitis, the common cold, etc."[2]

The IRS began an audit that would strip the church of its religious tax exemption in 1967. At the same time, an Australian government board of inquiry produced a sweeping report that was passionate in its condemnation. "There are some features of

Scientology which are so ludicrous that there may be a tendency to regard Scientology as silly and its practitioners as harmless cranks. To do so would be gravely to misunderstand the tenor of the Board's conclusions," the report began, then emphatically added: "Scientology is evil, its techniques evil, its practice a serious threat to the community, medically, morally and socially; and its adherents sadly deluded and often mentally ill." The report admitted that there were "transient gains" realized by some of the religion's adherents, but said that the organization plays on those gains in order to produce "a subservience amounting almost to mental enslavement." As for Hubbard himself, the board described him as "a man of restless energy" who is "constantly experimenting and speculating, and equally constantly he confuses the two." "Some of his claims are that … he has been up in the Van Allen Belt, that he has been on the planet Venus where he inspected an implant station, and that he has been to Heaven. He even recommends a protein formula for feeding non-breast fed babies—a mixture of boiled barley and corn syrup—stating that he 'picked it up in Roman days.' " Although Hubbard has "an insensate hostility" to psychiatrists and people in the field of mental health, the report noted, he is himself "mentally abnormal," evincing a "persecution complex" and "an imposing aggregation of symptoms which, in psychiatric circles, are strongly indicative of a condition of paranoid schizophrenia with delusions of grandeur—symptoms common to dictators." The report led to a ban of Scientology in two Australian states,[3] and prompted similar inquiries in New Zealand, Britain, and South Africa. Hubbard believed that the US Food and Drug Administration, along with the FBI and CIA, were feeding slanderous information about the church to various governments.

In the midst of all this upheaval, in February 1966 Hubbard finally declared another "first Clear." This time it was John

McMaster, a dapper, blond South African, in his mid-thirties, who was the director of the Hubbard Guidance Center at the church's Saint Hill headquarters. Charming, ascetic, and well-spoken, McMaster had dropped out of medical school to become an auditor. He immediately proved to be a far more urbane representative of Scientology than Hubbard. His wry manner made him a welcome guest on talk shows and on the lecture circuit, where he portrayed Scientology as a cool and nonthreatening route to self-realization. Suddenly the idea of going Clear began to catch on. McMaster adopted a clerical outfit that befitted his designation as the church's unofficial ambassador to the United Nations. At one point, Hubbard designated him Scientology's first "pope." It was a matter of puzzlement to Hubbard's closest associates, given Hubbard's disparagement of homosexuals in his books, that he would enlist a person to serve as the church's representative who was obviously gay. "He was very pronounced in his affect," one of Hubbard's medical officers remembered. But Hubbard's relationship to homosexuality was apparently more complicated in life than in theory.

CONVINCED THAT the British, American, and Soviet governments were interested in gaining control of Scientology's secrets in order to use them for evil intentions, Hubbard began looking for a safe harbor —ideally, a country that he could rule over. England had taken steps to "curb the growth" of Scientology, and Hubbard took the hint. He also suffered from the damp weather. "I had been ill with pneumonia for the third time in England and on the suggestion of my doctor was seeking a warmer climate for a short while in order to recover," he said, in an unprompted explanation to the CIA. He resigned as Executive Director of the Church of Scientology and sold his interests in the Hubbard Association of Scientologists

International, although he maintained actual control of the organization through his innumerable telexes. He journeyed to Rhodesia, the South African republic that had recently declared its independence from the United Kingdom (it later became Zimbabwe). Isolated, diplomatically spurned, and subject to international sanctions, the Rhodesian government served a clique of white colonists who ruled over an insurgent black majority. To Hubbard, Rhodesia seemed ripe for a takeover. He felt a kinship with the republic's dashing and flamboyant founder, Cecil John Rhodes, who also had red hair and a taste for swashbuckling adventure. Hubbard believed he might have been Rhodes in a previous life, although it's unclear whether he knew that Rhodes was homosexual.

Hubbard had a fantasy that he would be welcomed in Rhodesia, that the black population would embrace him like a brother, and that eventually he would become its leader, issuing passports and his own currency. However, the current prime minister, Ian Smith, was desperately trying to negotiate a settlement with the black nationalist movement that would preserve white-minority rule. Hubbard thoughtfully wrote up a constitution for the government that he claimed would accomplish just that, but he couldn't get anyone to take it seriously.

While Hubbard talked about his big plans for developing the country, the government became increasingly suspicious of his motives and his resources. Ultimately, Hubbard's visa was not renewed. "He told me Ian Smith was going to be shot because he was a 'Suppressive,' " John McMaster said. "The real reason that Hubbard was kicked out of Rhodesia was that his cheques bounced."

Hubbard returned to England with a new scheme. If the world's governments were lining up against him, he would put himself beyond reach. Scientologists were whispering about a clandestine

“sea project” that their leader was planning. He quietly began acquiring a small fleet of oceangoing vessels. Then he disappeared again.

This time, he went to Tangier, the Moroccan city on the Strait of Gibraltar, which was a famous hangout for hipsters and artists. There he began his research on Operating Thetan Level Three (OT III), his “Wall of Fire.” Mary Sue and the children remained in England, but Hubbard wrote to her daily, complaining of a barking dog that was interrupting his work, and various ailments—a bad back, and a lung problem that emerged from a lingering cold. He admitted that he was “drinking lots of rum” and taking drugs —“pinks and grays”—while he was doing his research. He would sign off on the letters, “Your Sugie.” Hubbard stayed only a month in Tangier before moving to Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, where one of his followers found him deeply depressed and surrounded by pills of all kinds. “I want to die,” he said. Alarmed, Mary Sue flew down to take care of him.

In September 1967, Hubbard made a recording for his followers to explain his absence and inform them of important discoveries in his OT III research. “All this recent career has been relatively hard on this poor body,” he relates. “I’ve broken its back, broken its knee, and now I have a broken arm, because of the strenuousness of these particular adventures. One wonders then, well, if he is in such good shape what is he doing breaking up his body? Well, that is the trouble. I have great difficulty getting down to the small power level of a body.”

He also notes that he had directed Mary Sue to find out who was behind the attacks on Scientology that were turning the governments against the organization. Mary Sue had hired “several professional intelligence agents,” who uncovered a conspiracy. “Our enemies on this planet are less than twelve men,” Hubbard discloses. “They own and control newspaper chains and they are

oddly enough directors in all the mental health groups in the world." Their plan was to "use mental health, which is to say psychiatric electric shock and prefrontal lobotomy, to remove from their path any political dissenters." For the first time, he openly talks about the Sea Organization, or Sea Org, an elite group who would form the committed inner core of the religion, Hubbard's disciples, a Scientology clergy.

HANA STRACHAN (now Hana Eltringham Whitfield) was one of the first young recruits admitted into the Sea Org. Her deranged and manipulative mother was a follower of Helena Blavatsky, the nineteenth-century spiritualist who was the founder of the Theosophical Society. When Hana was about fifteen, she learned that Blavatsky had prophesied a new race that would arise in the Americas in the 1950s; Hana was under the impression that it would be led by a man with red hair.

Hana escaped her traumatic family situation to become a nurse in Johannesburg, South Africa. A medical student there gave her a copy of Dianetics. It made immediate sense to her. She went to the local organization and said she wanted to learn more. "There's a course starting tonight," she was told. In the hallway of the office Hana noticed a photograph of Hubbard standing outside the Saint Hill headquarters. She was transfixed by his red hair. This must be the man Blavatsky was talking about, she decided. "That sealed it for me," she said. She moved to Saint Hill and became Clear #60. For three weeks she was in a state of euphoria, feeling slightly detached from her environment and her body. "This is who we were in eons past," she thought. She was convinced that Hubbard was a returned savior who would bring all humanity to an enlightened state.

Slender and stately, Hana was one of the first thirty-five Sea Org

recruits. The mission of the Sea Org, according to the contract she signed, is "to get ETHICS IN on this PLANET AND THE UNIVERSE." She agreed to "subscribe to the discipline, mores and conditions of this group.... THEREFORE, I CONTRACT MYSELF TO THE SEA ORGANIZATION FOR THE NEXT BILLION YEARS."[4]

Hana married another Sea Org member, an American named Guy Eltringham, but they were separated when Hubbard ordered her to Las Palmas, where he was refitting an exhausted fishing trawler called the Avon River. The decks and the hold were coated with decades of fish oil that had to be scraped away. During the two months the Avon River was in dry dock, Hubbard would often linger for dinner with his Sea Org crew, and afterward he would sit on the deck and regale them with stories. Hubbard's depression had lifted and he seemed completely in control—relaxed and confident, even jovial. The crew were mainly drinking Spanish wines, but Hubbard favored rum and Coke—an eighth of a glass of Coke and seven-eighths rum—one after another through the evening. The heavens seemed very close in the dark harbor. Hubbard would point to the sky and say, "That is where the Fifth Invaders came from. They're the bad guys, they're the ones who put us here." He said he could actually spot their spaceships crossing in front of the stars, and he would salute them as they passed overhead, just to let them know that they had been seen.

During a session with her auditor, Hana revealed the story of Madame Blavatsky's prophecy of the red-haired man. Soon afterward, Hubbard came up on deck and gave her an intense look. From that point on, she became his favorite. He appointed her the first female Sea Org lieutenant. That day, she had a photograph made of herself in her Sea Org uniform—white shirt, dark tie and jacket, with a lanyard over one shoulder. She is young and elegant, her blond hair pulled back in a ponytail. After that, she rose

through the Sea Org ranks with astonishing speed, often wondering if the revelation about the red-haired man was responsible for her rapid promotions.

Hubbard would drive over from his villa in Las Palmas to inspect the work on the Avon River. The lower holds of the ship were converted into offices and berthing spaces; new equipment—including radar and a gyrocompass—were installed, the screw replaced, and the hydraulic system completely overhauled. The inexperienced Sea Org members did most of the work, although Spanish laborers did the welding and sandblasting. Whenever Hubbard spotted something wrong, he would be instantly transformed from the jovial and avuncular figure the crew adored into a raging, implacable tyrant. Hana, who was serving as master-at-arms, would dread seeing the "Commodore"—as Hubbard titled himself—arrive, since she felt responsible if anything went wrong. One day, when the Spanish workmen were painting a rust coat on the hull of the ship, she spotted Hubbard walking across the beach with his chief officer and his first mate, smoking and chatting happily. Then he suddenly stopped. His eyes went into slits and he began bellowing, "The rollers! The rollers!" Puzzled, Hana leaned over the side of the ship, then saw what had caught Hubbard's attention: tiny threads poking through the paint, which had been left by the cheap rollers that the workmen were using. "As those threads decomposed, they would leave little apertures for seawater to leak behind the rust coating," she realized. "It destroyed the integrity of the entire rust coating, and that's what Hubbard was screaming about as he lumbered toward the ship. And what amazed me was that he saw it at forty to sixty feet away from the ship. Later on, I walked that distance from the ship to see if I could see those little hairs coming out of the rust coat. There was no way I could see them. That added to my feeling of wonder and mystique about Hubbard."

IN TRUTH, Hubbard had very poor eyesight. Before the war, both the Naval Academy and the Naval Reserve had rejected him because of his vision, and all during the war he wore glasses. In 1951, when he was being evaluated for a medical disability, his vision tested at 20/200 for each eye, correctable to 20/20 with glasses, much the same as it had been before the war. The examiner noted, "Eyes tire easily, has worn all types of glasses but claims he sees just as well without as with glasses." Was that even possible? Eyesight does change over the years, but Hubbard's eyes were astigmatic—meaning they were more football-shaped than round—and not likely to have improved, certainly not dramatically. And yet many of Hubbard's associates testify to his keen eyesight. Without glasses, Hubbard would have been legally blind; perhaps that's what he was referring to when he said he had cured himself of blindness after the war. But, clearly his eye examination showed different results.

Hubbard had written in Dianetics that the eyesight of a Clear gradually improves to optimum perception. And yet, he admitted elsewhere that his vision was so bad in the postwar years that he could scarcely see his typewriter to write. He wore glasses and early versions of contact lenses. Through the use of Dianetic processing, he says, his eyes began to change. Many noticed that Hubbard had a habit of squinting, which has the effect of pressing astigmatic eyeballs into a rounder shape, which might momentarily improve his vision. He theorized that "astigmatism, a distortion of image, is only an anxiety to alter the image." One day, for instance, he was reading an American Medical Association report and couldn't make it out at all. He thought he might have to resort to using a magnifying glass. Then he realized that the reason he couldn't read it was that he wasn't willing to confront what it said. "I threw it aside, picked up a novel and the print was perfect."

Hubbard would sometimes chastise members of his crew about

their dependence on eyeglasses, which he said were an admission of "overts"—transgressions against the group. One night as the fleet was sailing in the Caribbean, he looked at the young woman serving him dinner, Tracy Ekstrand, whose glasses were sliding down her nose in the tropical heat. "You're doing yourself an aesthetic disservice," he pronounced. She was mortified and stopped wearing glasses that night. Although she was still able to move from room to room and serve meals, her vision remained quite blurred. Some weeks later, as Hubbard was retiring for the night, he looked at her again. He held up his pack of cigarettes a foot in front of her face and asked if she could read the bold capital letters: "KOOL." Flustered by the personal attention from the Commodore, Ekstrand mumbled the name of the cigarettes. "There's been a shift!" he declared triumphantly, then went to bed. Ekstrand was shaken. "I remained outside his door for some minutes, dumbfounded and unsure how to react," she recalled. "This time there was no question. He was wrong. He was imagining improvement and success with Scientology where there had been none."

All of Hubbard's senses were painfully acute. Each day, every room he inhabited had to be dusted to the point that it would pass a white-glove test. He was fanatically clean but also hypersensitive to soap, so that his clothes had to be rinsed up to fifteen times, and even then he would complain that he could smell the detergent. His chef had to switch from cooking on stainless steel to Corningware because Hubbard complained of the taste of metal in his food. These stories were traded among his disciples as more evidence of his superhuman powers of discernment.

ACCORDING TO SEVERAL Sea Org members, while he was in Las Palmas, Hubbard fell in love with another woman—Yvonne Gillham, the

ship's public relations officer. (She would later go on to start the Celebrity Centre in Hollywood.) She had a wide smile, large hazel eyes, and a short pixie haircut, bearing a resemblance to Julie Andrews in The Sound of Music. Gillham combined a down-to-earth personality with a touch of class that came from growing up in the high society of Queensland, Australia. Inevitably, Hubbard demanded that she accompany him on the high seas. Gillham had three young children at Saint Hill, and she had only joined the Sea Org on Hubbard's pledge that they could stay with her, but Hubbard's desire for her had become a prison, one that she was too loyal to escape.

Yvonne Gillham in a head shot she used during her modeling career, circa 1952

Hubbard was fifty-six years old in the fall of 1967, when he set

sail with his youthful crew. There was no destination or purpose other than to wander. Hubbard was by now portly, ruddy-faced, and jowly; his swept-back, once-red hair had turned strawberry blond. His eyes, which have been described as blue or green by various observers, were actually gray, like seawater, casting an odd flatness over his aspect. Two strong lines transected his face: a deep furrow between his eyebrows, matching the notch below his nose and the cleft in his chin, and his duckbill lips, which were his most prominent feature. Once aboard, he dressed in various naval uniforms befitting his self-appointed station as Commodore of the fleet, with lots of braid and crossed anchors on his cap.

There were three ships in Hubbard's navy. In addition to the Avon River, there was a schooner called the Enchanter, and the 3,200-ton flagship, a flat-bottom cattle ferry originally called the Royal Scotsman, which was renamed the Royal Scotman because of a clerical error in the registration. The smokestack was emblazoned with the initials "LRH."

Hubbard spent most of his time in the air-conditioned captain's cabin on the promenade deck of the Royal Scotman, surrounded by windows to take in the ocean vistas. He rarely drank on the ship, except perhaps to take the chill off on a cold night on the bridge. Drugs were nowhere in evidence. His days were largely solitary, passed in auditing himself and writing policy papers. His office on the top deck was called the Research Room. It was behind a pair of highly polished wooden doors with brass handles. The floor was a bright red linoleum covered with Oriental rugs; there was a massive mahogany desk and a huge mirror above a fireplace. Crew members passing by on the upper deck could see him writing with his usual rapidity on foolscap, using a green pen for policy bulletins and a red one for the "tech"—that is, his vast corpus of coursework and procedures that comprised Scientology's spiritual technology. His restless leg would be jiggling as his hand raced across the page,

faultlessly, in handsome, legible script. For other writing, he turned back to his typewriter. “I think he was doing automatic writing,” said Jim Dincalci, one of his medical officers. “The pages would be flying. When he came out of it, he would blink his eyes, as if coming awake, and he did this thing with his lips, smacking.”

Hubbard and Mary Sue would dine in his office between eight and ten p.m. Sometime after three in the morning, Dincalci would give Hubbard a massage and he would go to sleep. After that, everyone on the ship had to be quiet until Hubbard awakened, sometime before noon, and remain absolutely mute while he was auditing himself on the E-Meter.

In Hubbard’s opinion, the device operated just below the level of conscious awareness; it somehow knew what you were thinking before you did. It was eerily compelling. Anything that registered on the meter was seen as being significant. The trick was divining what the needle was saying. Sometimes the reaction was so violent that the needle would pound back and forth like a berserk windshield wiper—you could hear it snapping against the pins at either end. Hubbard called this a “rock slam.” Anyone who registered such a reaction was deemed psychotic and certain to have committed crimes against Scientology; if that person was in the Sea Org, he would be punished automatically, the crime to be sorted out later.

After initially resisting the concept of past lives, Hubbard became passionately interested in the subject. “We Come Back” was the motto of the Sea Org. Hubbard began recalling many of his own previous existences, which the E-Meter validated. He claimed to have been a contemporary of Machiavelli’s, and he was still upset that the author of The Prince stole his line “The end justifies the means.” He said he had been a marshal to Joan of Arc and Tamburlaine’s wife. He told stories about driving a race car in the alien Marcab civilization millions of years before. He came to

believe that in some of his past lives on this planet, he had buried treasure in various locations, so he launched an expedition to unearth his ancient hoards. He called it the Mission into Time. He selected a small crew to go on the Avon River. Because he wanted to keep the mission secret, he had two long rafts fashioned, which could be rowed ashore under cover of darkness and pulled up on the beach near where he imagined his ancient treasure was buried. When Hana Eltringham saw she wasn't on the list, she wrote Hubbard, pleading to be included, saying she would be willing to perform any duty. To her surprise, Hubbard appointed her chief officer.

One very dark, overcast night in 1968, the Avon River dropped anchor on the western coast of Sicily, in the bay of Castellammare del Golfo, beside a steep promontory topped by an ancient watchtower. Hubbard gave his "missionaires" a treasure map he had drawn up based on his past-life recollections. The crew set out in one of the rafts toward the rocky shoreline, lugging ropes, shovels, and metal detectors. Giggling and tripping over each other, they scrambled up a ten-foot cliff. It was so dark they couldn't see more than a foot in front of their faces. Each had a hand on another's shoulder as they picked their way through stands of cactus along the rocky outcropping. At one point, the leader of the expedition bumped into a cow. The cow started mooing, then a dog barked, and a light went on in a house nearby. Everyone stood dead still until the scene quieted down. Finally, the clouds parted enough for the moon to shine through. The missionaires found some old bricks they thought might have been the ruins of a castle beside the watchtower. The metal detectors found nothing.

Hubbard decided to come along the next day to inspect the site himself. "Yes, yes, this is the place!" he said excitedly. He explained the absence of treasure by saying that it must have been hidden in a portion of the ruined castle that had fallen into the sea.

The expedition moved on to Sardinia, where Hubbard claimed to have had an affair with the priestess in a temple—“liaisons in the moonlight,” he told his enchanted missionaires—when he was a Carthaginian sailor. “We had a lot of good-looking girls in Carthage but they didn’t come up to her.” The Avon River next stopped in Calabria, on the toe of Italy, where Hubbard had buried gold in his days as a tax collector in the Roman Empire. None was found, however.

Near Tunis, where the missionaires hoped to dive on the ruins of an ancient underwater city, Hubbard found fault with the captain of the Avon River, Joe van Staden, and booted him off the ship. Eltringham was sitting at her desk on the ’tween deck when Hubbard called her into his office and told her she was the new captain of the four-hundred-ton trawler, starting in the morning. Eltringham went back to her desk and put her head in her hands. She was twenty-six years old. Everything she knew about sailing she had learned from Hubbard. To his credit, he had been a good teacher. He had taken a dozen members of the original Sea Org crew and taught them the semaphore code, how to navigate using a sextant, and basic laws of the sea. But she knew nothing about running the engine room, or operating the electronics on the bridge, or docking a ship. Half an hour later, Hubbard stuck his head out of his office and beckoned to her. He was holding an E-Meter. Standing in the doorway where everyone could see them, Hubbard handed her the cans. Then he screwed up his eyes and demanded, “Recall a time you were last a captain.” As Eltringham closed her eyes and began to free-associate, Hubbard watched the needle on the E-Meter.

“What’s that?” he asked, when the needle suddenly dropped.

“That was sometime on a ship somewhere and the ship was sinking,” Eltringham responded.

“Okay, go back earlier.” A moment later, he asked her again,

“What’s that?”

“That’s just a lot of confusion. I’m in a cabin with a lot of other people. Something urgent is going on.”

Hubbard asked her to talk more about it. Eltringham began to see the incident more clearly. “We were in some kind of spaceship,” she said. “We were under attack and—oh my God!—I can see a planet down there! And the planet’s on fire! And something is shooting at us and—oh my God!—the spaceship exploded!”

Hubbard asked her to tell the story several more times to destimulate the incident. Then he asked Eltringham how she was feeling.

“I’m fine, sir.”

Hubbard screwed up his eyes again. “Do you have any other thoughts about it?” Eltringham realized that he was looking for a floating needle, but she wasn’t able to give it to him.

“Okay, one more question. Are you a loyal officer?”

“I don’t know what you mean by that,” Eltringham said. “I’m loyal to you, and I’m an officer.”

Hubbard said, “All right, that’s as far as we’ll go this time.”

Eltringham walked up on the deck and tried to take in what Hubbard meant. Suddenly it came to her. Hubbard wasn’t talking about the present. He was referring to the time in her visualization. Some catastrophe must have happened. Eltringham realized that it must have been her planet that was being attacked, and she had been trying to save it.

A few minutes later, Hubbard came up on deck and stood beside her. She turned to him and said, “Yep, you’re right, sir. I was a loyal officer. I am.”

Hubbard beamed.

THE AVON RIVER WAS traveling down the east side of Corsica when Hubbard gathered his crew and read them a new revelation. Nearby, in the north of Corsica, there was an underground space station, he said. He even provided the coordinates. There, a secret doorway would open by a palm print on the lock—but only one person's hand would do the trick. Hubbard smiled suggestively, without saying whose hand that would be. The rock face would slide open, revealing an immense cavern harboring a mother ship and hundreds of smaller craft, all fueled and ready to go.

The space station would remain undiscovered, however. Word arrived that the Royal Scotman had run into trouble with the port authorities in Valencia, where Hubbard had hoped to make a permanent base. He furiously abandoned the expedition and ordered the Avon River to make haste to Valencia before the Royal Scotman was forcibly expelled from the Spanish harbor. The crew was bitterly disappointed that they would miss uncovering the space station. "If there's time, we'll come back," Hubbard promised.

After making amends with the port captain in Valencia, Hubbard threw a party to report on the Mission into Time. He was loud and affected, in what Eltringham privately called his "full pantomime mode." Such moments made her cringe. She hid in the back of the crowd. She genuinely revered Hubbard, but when he was strutting in front of his acolytes, he could become comically self-important, a parody of himself. His eyes rolled, his body language was inappropriate and weird, and his hands flew around meaninglessly in odd directions. Sometimes he spoke with a British accent or a Scottish brogue. In her opinion, his performance was ridiculous, but also disturbing. If the man she regarded as a savior was a "nut case," what did that say about his teachings? What did it say about her, that she idolized him while at the same time harboring these illicit feelings of shame? No one else seemed to share these warring

perceptions. She felt very much alone.

Hubbard regaled the crowd with the story of his romance with the temple priestess in Sardinia when he was a Carthaginian sailor. “The girl would say, ‘Hey, how are YOU?’ and all the other guys didn’t stand a chance for a while. If you’ve got enough war vessels and you’re making enough dough, girls usually say this.”

He said he had recently remembered a secret passageway into the temple. “Missions were sent ashore to survey and map the area to see if they couldn’t discover this old secret entrance to the temple.” If they found it, that would prove the truthfulness of his past-life recollections, what he called the “whole track memory.”

“And now,” he said, “I’m going to call on Hana Eltringham to tell you whether or not it was a positive result.”

Mortified, Eltringham stood in front of her colleagues and ratified Hubbard’s findings. “We did find the tunnel,” she said, mentioning a ditch that the missionaires had found, which had a tile base. “So that was totally proven and accurate.”

THE ANTICIPATION SURROUNDING the release of OT III was intense, so when Hubbard finally made it available to a select group of Sea Org members, in March 1968 aboard the Royal Scotman in Valencia, a thrill radiated through the entire crew. The saga of Hubbard’s research in Tangier and Las Palmas led them to think that this was the breakthrough that would lead to the salvation of the planet. They—the Sea Org—would be the vanguard of this movement, newly empowered by the revelations that Hubbard promised.

In a lecture aboard the ship, Hubbard said that in researching OT III, he had uncovered two “incidents”—which, for him, meant implants—that prevented thetans from being free. Incident One was a kind of Garden of Eden fall from grace that occurred four

quadrillion years ago, which is when Hubbard dates the origin of the universe. Before Incident One, thetans were in a pure, godlike state. Suddenly, there was a loud snap and a flood of light. A chariot appeared, trailed by a trumpeting cherub; then darkness. This incident marked the moment when thetans became separated from their original static condition and created the physical universe of matter, energy, space, and time (MEST). In the process, they lost awareness of their immortality.

Incident Two is central to the OT III saga. This one took place seventy-five million years ago in the Galactic Confederacy, which was composed of seventy-six planets and twenty-six stars. "The world we live in now replicates the civilization of that period," Hubbard said. "People at that particular time and place were walking around in clothes which looked very remarkably like the clothes they wear this very minute.... The cars they drove looked exactly the same, and the trains they ran looked the same, and the boats they had looked the same. Circa nineteen-fifty, nineteen-sixty."

A tyrannical overlord named Xenu ruled the Confederacy. "He was a Suppressive to end all Suppressives," Hubbard told his followers. Xenu had been chosen by a kind of Praetorian guard called the Loyal Officers, but they realized that their leader was wicked and they decided to remove him. Xenu had other plans, Hubbard said. "He took the last moments he had in office to really goof the floof." Xenu and a few evil conspirators—mainly psychiatrists—fed false information to the population to draw them into centers where Xenu's troops could destroy them. "One of the mechanisms they used was to tell them to come in for an income-tax investigation," Hubbard related. "So in they went, and the troops started slaughtering them." The preferred method was to shoot a needle into a lung, paralyzing the thetan with an injection of frozen alcohol and glycol. The frozen bodies were packed into

boxes and loaded onto space planes, which resembled the DC-8 jetliner. “No difference—except the DC-8 had fans—propellers—on it and the space plane didn’t.” In this fashion, billions of thetans were transported to Teegeeack, the planet now called Earth, where they were dropped into volcanoes and then blown up with hydrogen bombs.

Thetans are immortal, however. Freed from their corporeal incarnations, they floated along on the powerful winds created by the explosion. Then they were trapped in an electronic ribbon and placed in front of a “three-D, super colossal motion picture” for thirty-six days, during which time they were subjected to images called R6 implants. “These pictures contain God, the Devil, angels, space opera, theaters, helicopters, a constant spinning, a spinning dancer, trains and various scenes very like modern England. You name it, it’s in this implant.” The implant included all world religions and “a motion picture studio” complete with screenwriters.

Xenu didn’t have much time to gloat over his victory. Some Loyal Officers remained, scattered around the galaxy. There was a civil war, and within a year, the Loyal Officers had captured Xenu and locked him up in an electrified wire cage buried in a mountain. “He is not likely ever to get out,” Hubbard said.

Because Teegeeack was a dumping ground for thetans, it became known as the Prison Planet, “the planet of ill repute.” The Galactic Confederacy abandoned the area, although various invaders have appeared throughout the millennia. But these free-floating thetans remain behind. They are the souls of people who have been dead for seventy-five million years. They attach themselves to living people because they no longer have free will. There can be millions of them clustered inside a single person’s body. Auditing for Scientologists at OT III and above would now focus on eliminating the “body thetans”—or BTs—that stand in the way of spiritual

progress.

More than individual salvation was at stake. Hubbard said that the Prison Planet had been civilized many times in the past, but it always arrived at the same end: utter annihilation. No matter how sophisticated mankind became, there was a trigger implanted in the imprisoned thetans that led them to blow themselves to pieces before they could escape their fate and go on to higher levels of existence. The goal of Scientology was to "clear the planet" and save humanity from its endless cycle of self-destruction.

Hubbard never really explained how he came by these revelations. "We won't go into that," he told the crew, saying only that he was fortunate to have somehow escaped the cataclysm so many eons ago. "You are the chosen," he told them. "You are the Loyal Officers. We made the agreement way back when that we would all get together again. This time no one is going to stop us."

Eltringham and two dozen Sea Org members had the honor of being the very first group to view the OT III materials. They went in one by one to read the documents. When she came to the part about the Loyal Officers, Eltringham immediately understood that this was what Hubbard had been talking about: she instinctively felt that she had been among them. At the same time, the account seemed incredible to her, bizarre and completely unfathomable.

Her task now was to take the materials into her cabin, along with an E-Meter, and audit herself to discover and expel body thetans. Once they were exposed and confronted, Hubbard promised, they would take flight, "lickety-split." She began each day with a session, but she couldn't locate any BTs. At the end of the week she turned in her folder and asked for help. She went through review auditing, but it was no use. She began to worry that she was unauditable, what Hubbard called a Dog Case or a Degraded Being—someone who had committed so many misdeeds as to be beyond help. It was all her fault.

Despite the fact that he was only fourteen, Quentin—LRH's heir apparent—was among the first to be initiated into the OT III mysteries. Everyone on the ship knew what was happening, and people would hover near the cabin where the materials were held to see the expression on the faces of those who had been exposed to it. When Quentin emerged, he was pale, and he threw up violently. After that, he was never as sunny as he used to be.

TO MAKE SURE his orders were carried out, Hubbard created the Commodore's Messengers Organization. In the beginning, the Messengers were four young teenage girls, including Yvonne Gillham's two daughters, Terri and Janis, who were thirteen and eleven years old; Annie Tidman, twelve; and, briefly, Hubbard's youngest daughter, Suzette, who was thirteen at the time. Soon, several more teenage girls joined them, and Suzette went to work on the decks. Two of the girls were always posted outside Hubbard's office, waiting to take his handwritten directives to the mimeograph machine or deliver his orders in person. He instructed them to parrot his exact words and tone of voice when they were delivering one of his directives—to inform the captain what time to set sail, for instance, or to tell a member of the crew he was "a fucking asshole" if he had displeased him. Hubbard allowed them to create their own uniforms, so in warmer climates they attired themselves in white hot pants, halter tops, and platform shoes. When the Commodore moved around the ship, one or more Messengers trailed behind him, carrying his hat and an ashtray, lighting his cigarettes, and quickly moving a chair into place if he started to sit down. People lived in fear of Hubbard's teenage minions. They had to call the Messenger "sir" even if she was a twelve-year-old girl. (That practice has continued in the Sea Org. All senior officials are referred to as "sir," regardless of gender.)

“They held the power of God in their little hands, their little lips,” Eltringham recalled.

The relationship between Hubbard and these girls was intimate but not overtly sexual. They prepared his bath when he retired and would sit outside his room until he awakened and called out, “Messenger!” They would help him out of bed, light his cigarette, run his shower, prepare his toiletries, and help him dress. Some of the children had parents on the ship, others were there alone, but in either case Hubbard was their primary caretaker—and vice versa. When the girls became old enough to start wearing makeup, Hubbard was the one who showed them how to apply it. He also helped them do their hair.

While he was on the ship, Hubbard was working out a code of Scientology ethics. He began with the idea that man is basically good. Even a criminal leaves clues to his crime, because he wishes for someone to stop his unethical behavior, Hubbard theorized. Similarly, a person who has accidentally hurt himself or gotten ill is “putting ethics in on himself” in order to lessen the damage he does to others or to his environment. These were testaments to the basic longing of all people to live decent, worthy lives.

Good and evil actions can be judged only by understanding what Hubbard termed the Eight Dynamics. The First Dynamic is the Self and its urge toward existence. The Second Dynamic is Sex, which includes the sexual act as well as the family unit. The Third Dynamic is the Group—any school, or class, organization, city, or nation. The Fourth Dynamic is Mankind. The Fifth Dynamic is the urge toward existence of all living creatures, including vegetables and grass—“anything directly and intimately motivated by life.” The Sixth Dynamic is the matter, energy, space, and time that compose the reality we live in. The Seventh Dynamic is the Spiritual, which must be obtained before expanding into the Eighth Dynamic, which is called Infinity or God. The Scientology mantra

for judging ethical behavior is “the greatest good for the greatest number of dynamics”—a formula that can excuse quite a number of crimes.

Every individual or group moves through stages, which Hubbard calls Ethics Conditions, that incline toward either survival or collapse. They range from the highest state, Power, to the lowest, Confusion. The way to determine what condition one is in at any given moment is through statistics, compiled each Thursday at two p.m. For a Scientology church, the relevant statistic might be how much money it is bringing in. The “org” that brings in less money week after week is in a condition of Non-Existence, which, plotted on a graph, is represented as a steeply plummeting line. A level or slightly declining line indicates a condition of Emergency. Slightly up is Normal; sharply up is Affluence. Every Scientology organization, and every member of its staff, henceforth would be judged by the implacable weekly statistics. Hubbard warned his charges, “You have to establish an ethics presence hard. Otherwise, you’re just gonna be wrapped around a telegraph pole.”

The years at sea were critical ones for the future of Scientology. Even as Hubbard was inventing the doctrine, each of his decisions and actions would become enshrined in Scientology lore as something to be emulated—his cigarette smoking, for instance, which is still a feature of the church’s culture at the upper levels, as are his 1950s habits of speech, his casual misogyny, his aversion to perfume and scented deodorants, and his love of cars and motorcycles and Rolex watches. More significant is the legacy of his belittling behavior toward subordinates and his paranoia about the government. Such traits stamped the religion as an extremely secretive and sometimes hostile organization that saw enemies on every corner.

Because Hubbard viewed the world that way, he awakened suspicion that there must be something very dangerous about

Scientology. One by one, ports began turning away the fleet. It had begun with Gibraltar in 1967, when the ship was refused assistance during a heavy storm in the strait. England banned foreign Scientologists from entering the country for study in July 1968 and declared Hubbard an undesirable alien. Hubbard took out his frustration on his crew. He assigned Yvonne Gillham a condition of Non-Existence and reduced her to a "swamper," which he defined as "one who cleans up." Her hands became raw and gnarled. "She was like Cinderella," a friend recalled, "always scrubbing."

While the ships were docked in Valencia, a storm arose. Hubbard happened to be aboard the Avon River when he noticed that the Royal Scotman had torn free from one of its mooring lines. He screamed that someone should hoist the anchor and start the engines, but before the crew reacted, the big ship crashed against the dock, damaging its prop. Although the ship was not badly damaged, Hubbard assigned the crew and the Royal Scotman itself to a condition of Liability, which is below Non-Existence on his ethics scale. Hubbard stayed aboard the Avon River and steamed off to Marseilles until the Royal Scotman was returned to favor. Mary Sue was made the captain and ordered to retrain the crew and spruce up the ship to an acceptable state. No one could bathe or change clothes for months. The crew wore dirty gray rags on their left arms, which signaled their degraded status. Even Mary Sue's snappish Corgi, Vixie, had a rag around its collar, and the ship itself wore a bracelet of gray tarpaulins around its funnel. An Ethics Officer walked the decks actually swinging a mace.

Despite the squalid conditions, Mary Sue ran the ship with a minimum of hysteria, earning her the respect and loyalty of many aboard. Without Hubbard, the mood lightened. Mary Sue used to have parties in her cabin with Candy Swanson, the children's tutor, and two men they were sweet on. They danced to Jimi Hendrix records. But when Hubbard returned, the party was over.

A YOUNG MAN with a gift for languages named Belkacem Ferradj joined the Sea Org when the ship docked briefly in Algiers in 1968. Hubbard, surrounded by his Messengers, had made an immediate impression on Ferradj. He was dressed like an admiral, and he spoke with a broad American accent. A golden glow seemed to emanate from his large head. Mary Sue struck Ferradj as "gorgeous," with long, curly hair and piercing eyes, but he thought she was "the most secretive person in the world." When the ship sailed in July, Ferradj was aboard, having signed his billion-year contract with the Sea Org.

Ferradj became close to Hubbard's sixteen-year-old daughter, Diana. She had developed into a glamorous young woman, with flowing red hair and pale skin showered with freckles. She played the grand piano in the family dining room on the ship. Some saw her as imperious, a princess, but Ferradj, who was four years older than Diana, was smitten. When Hubbard found out about the relationship, he summoned Ferradj to the poop deck. Ferradj said Hubbard greeted him with a blow to the jaw. "I hit the bulkhead of the ship and slumped to the deck," he recalled. "I don't know if it was because I was an Arab or what. I left in disgrace."

When Otto Roos, a Sea Org executive from Holland, failed to lash a steel cable to a bollard on the dock during a terrible storm in Tunisia, Hubbard ordered him thrown from the ship's bridge into the sea, a height of about four stories. Hana Eltringham wrote a concerned report to Hubbard that night, explaining that the storm had been so furious that Roos simply couldn't hang on when trying to secure the ship. The report was returned to her with the comment "Never question LRH."[5]

Roos survived his punishment, only to set a dismal precedent. After that, overboardings became routine, but mostly from the lower poop deck. Nearly every morning, when the crew was mustered, there would be a list of those sentenced to go over the

side, even in rough seas. They would be fished out and hauled back onboard through the old cattle doors that led to the hold. The overboardings contributed to the decision of the Greek government to expel the Scientology crew from Corfu in March 1969. That didn't stop the practice. None except Hubbard family members were spared. John McMaster, the second "first Clear," was tossed over the side six times, breaking his shoulder on the last occasion. He left the church not long afterward. Eltringham had to stand with Hubbard and his aides on the deck when the punishments were meted out. If the crewman seemed insufficiently cowed by the prospect, Hubbard would have his hands and feet bound. Whitfield remembered one American woman, Julia Lewis Salmen, sixty years old, a longtime Scientology executive, who was bound and blindfolded before being thrown overboard. "She screamed all the way down," Eltringham said. "When the sound stopped, Hubbard ordered a deck hand to jump in after her. Had he not, I think Julia may have drowned."

Hubbard chose a different punishment for another of the older members of the crew, Charlie Reisdorf. He and two other Sea Org crew were made to race each other around the rough, splintery decks while pushing peanuts with their noses. "They all had raw, bleeding noses, leaving a trail of blood behind them," a senior auditor recalled. The entire crew was ordered to watch the spectacle. "Reisdorf was in his late fifties, probably. His two daughters were Messengers; they were eleven or twelve at the time, and his wife was there also. It was hard to say which was worse to watch: this old guy with a bleeding nose or his wife and kids sobbing and crying and being forced to watch this. Hubbard was standing there, calling the shots, yelling, 'Faster, faster!' "

Hubbard increasingly turned his wrath on children, who were becoming a nuisance on the ship. He thought that they were best raised away from their parents, who were "counter-intention" to

their children. As a result, he became their only—stern as well as neglectful—parent. Children who committed minor infractions, such as laughing inappropriately or failing to remember a Scientology term, would be made to climb to the crow's nest, at the top of the mast, four stories high, and spend the night, or sent to the hold and made to chip rust. A rambunctious four-year-old boy named Derek Greene, an adopted black child, had taken a Rolex watch belonging to a wealthy member of the Sea Org and dropped it overboard. Hubbard ordered him confined in the chain locker, a closed container where the massive anchor chain is stored. It was dark, damp, and cold. There was a danger that the child could be mutilated if the anchor was accidentally lowered or slipped. Although he was fed, he was not given blankets or allowed to go to the bathroom. He stayed sitting on the chain for two days and nights. The crew could hear the boy crying. His mother pleaded with Hubbard to let him out, but Hubbard reminded her of the Scientology axiom that children are actually adults in small bodies, and equally responsible for their behavior. Other young children were sentenced to the locker for infractions—such as chewing up a telex—for as long as three weeks. Hubbard ruled that they were Suppressive Persons. One little girl, a deaf mute, was placed in the locker for a week because Hubbard thought it might cure her deafness.

Hubbard explained to Hana Eltringham that the punishments were meant to raise the level of "confront" in order to deal with the evil in the universe. One member of Eltringham's crew on the Avon River, Terry Dickinson, a jocular Australian electrician, made the mistake of failing to order a part for the ship-to-shore radio. Hubbard sent a handwritten note to Eltringham ordering her to keep Dickinson awake until the part arrived and the radio was properly installed. If the crewman fell asleep, he would be expelled. Eltringham guiltily carried out the order, but she knew

the hapless Dickinson couldn't make it on his own, so she stayed awake with him for five days and nights, pouring coffee down his throat, walking him up and down the beach, and consoling him as he wept and said he couldn't take it anymore. Eltringham believed she was saving Dickinson's soul, as well as her own, but he left shortly after that incident, "a broken man." Later, Hubbard wrote a note explaining that Dickinson "did not have the confront to see this through."

"You would say to yourself, 'Why didn't you do anything? Why didn't you speak out?' " Eltringham later remarked. "You see, I was a true believer. I believed that Hubbard knew what he was doing. I, unfortunately, believed that he knew what it was going to take to help everyone in the world and that, even though I didn't understand, it was my duty to follow and support what he was doing. None of us spoke out. None of us did anything."

IN THE SHIP'S LOG of December 8, 1968, Hubbard mentions an organization he calls SMERSH, a name taken from James Bond novels. Hubbard describes it as a "hidden government…that aspired to world domination!" Psychiatry is the dominating force behind this sinister institution. "Recently a check showed that we had never seen or heard of an 'insane' person who had not been in their hands," Hubbard writes. "And the question arises, is there any insanity at all? That is not manufactured by them?" He said that SMERSH had made one big mistake, however; it attacked Scientology. He vowed revenge.

Hubbard had been wooing a young Florida woman, Elizabeth Gablehouse, to join the Sea Org. She had come from a prominent family in Tallahassee, Florida, and had studied in Europe. She spoke French, German, and Spanish. She had admirable social skills; moreover, she was a redhead, always a stamp of pre-

eminence in Hubbard's book. Finally, Kit agreed to join the Royal Scotman in 1969, just as the ship was being expelled from Corfu. She was soon appointed to the "Missionaires Elite Unit." Hubbard already had an assignment in mind for her.

Hubbard set a course for Cagliari, on the Italian island of Sardinia. On the way, he personally tutored her in his plan to take over the World Federation for Mental Health, which was headquartered in Geneva. Hubbard had learned that the organization had never bothered to actually incorporate itself in Switzerland. His grand idea was to set up an office in Bern, the capital, posing as an American delegation of the WFMH bent on reforming the organization from within. The true scheme was to establish a presence in the country long enough to incorporate as the WFMH; and then, posing as the actual mental health organization, go to the United Nations with a plan for enforced euthanization of the "useless or unfixable" elements of society. Hubbard predicted that the outcry that would surely follow would turn the world against the WFMH. It would be a powerful strike against his most formidable enemy, SMERSH.

All the way to Sardinia Hubbard drilled Kit in the history of the health organization, its former presidents, and the policies it supported, such as electroshock therapy. Kit didn't need to be persuaded about the dangers of that practice; her own mother had been subjected to electroshock in the 1940s, without her consent, as treatment for postpartum depression. After that, her mother suffered from amnesia and a fear of change and losing control.

By the time the Royal Scotman docked in Cagliari, Kit was well schooled. She and another Sea Org member, Mary Pat Shelley, a trained Shakespearian actress from Cincinnati, traveled to Bern. They set up an office, purchased furniture, and covered the walls with phony certificates. They had business cards and stationery printed. Then they filed papers for incorporation as the World

Federation for Mental Health.

Soon after that, they received a call from the Federal Office of Public Health in Switzerland demanding to know what they were up to. The two women were invited to explain themselves to the director himself.

Kit and Marjorie were both in their early twenties. They dressed in dowdy clothes and put powder in their hair to make themselves appear older. When they arrived at the office, they were shown to a conference room with about ten other people, including the director, a stenographer, and several lawyers. Mary Pat's hands were trembling as Kit brazenly presented their case for taking over the WFMH. She claimed that the organization had long been misrepresenting itself; for instance, was the director aware that the WFMH never even bothered to incorporate in Switzerland? He was not. Nor was he a fan of some of the policies that the women said that WFMH championed, such as euthanasia. By the end of the meeting, the director seemed persuaded. "I like how you Americans work!" he said enthusiastically.

The women emerged from the meeting elated, but the response to their telex to Hubbard surprised them. He ordered them back to the ship, "for your protection." As soon as they returned to Cagliari, Hubbard cast off lines and set a course through the Strait of Gibraltar for open water. He even changed the names of his ships, in order to erase the connections with Scientology. The Enchanter became the Diana, the Avon River became the Athena, and the flagship Royal Scotman turned into the Apollo. All were registered with Panamanian credentials as belonging to the Operation and Transport Corporation. The Apollo was now billed as "the pride of the Panamanian fleet," "a floating school of philosophy," and "the sanest space on the planet."

Hubbard was convinced that the Swiss authorities had laid a trap: they would arrest Kit and Mary Pat and force them to testify

and expose his whole scheme. For months, he was afraid to touch land. The ship drifted aimlessly in the Atlantic; the crew was forced to live on its stores, and soon they were down to half-rations. Near Madeira, they were caught up in a fierce tropical storm, which threatened to swamp the Apollo. Immense waves swept over the funnel and shattered the two-inch-thick windows of the dining room. Water gushed into the engine room, where the seasick officer on watch tied a bucket around his neck. Terrified Messengers hauled themselves along the rails of the wildly pitching deck trying to deliver communications to the bridge; at times the nose of the ship was pointed directly down into the sea. The storm lasted ten days, propelling the ship eight hundred miles north, all the way to the Azores.

Portuguese postcard of the Apollo

Looking for a safe port, Hubbard turned toward Morocco. He thought that an Arab country might be safer and less conspicuous

for the Scientology fleet, which had gained too much unfavorable attention in European ports. In October 1969, he dropped anchor in Safi, near Marrakesh. At last the crew, shaken and hungry, could take on stores. Hubbard began sizing up the country as a possible Scientology homeland. He picked Kit Gablehouse and Richard Wrigley, another redhead, to lead an exploratory mission to the capital, Rabat. The only order they got from Hubbard was to "secure Morocco."

Wrigley and Gablehouse set up in the Hôtel La Tour Hassan, where diplomats typically stayed. Wrigley became friendly with an African envoy and drifted off to the Ivory Coast, leaving Kit to secure Morocco by herself. She established an office titled the American Institute of Human Engineering and Development, and sold a project to develop hydroponic farming to the Moroccan government. That project went nowhere, but it gave her legitimate cover. With her social skills, she soon found herself hobnobbing with the royal palace's inner circles—in particular, she made friends among some high-ranking military officers, including a tall, handsome intelligence officer named Colonel Allam.

As it happened, Colonel Allam and Kit shared a birthday, May 17, so she found herself invited to a soiree at the governor's palace in Marrakesh. In the middle of the party, there was a great stir caused by the arrival of General Mohammed Oufkir, the truculent minister of the interior. General Oufkir cast a long shadow over the nation, which had long been terrorized by the tyrannical rule of King Hassan II. Kit immediately sized him up as a shady figure—tall, hollow-cheeked, his eyes hidden by dark glasses, the blood of so many of his countrymen on his hands.

Her Moroccan friends bluntly warned Kit to keep her distance from the military, but Hubbard was pressing her to do the very opposite. He and Mary Sue rented a villa in Tangier. Mary Sue was thrilled; she hated being cooped up aboard ship. The prospect of

taking over Morocco began to seem not so far-fetched.

For most of the next year, Kit lived in Rabat, reporting to the Apollo every couple of months. In July 1971, Colonel Allam invited her and two other Scientologists to watch a war-games exercise on the occasion of the king's forty-second birthday. The games, which were held at the king's summer palace in Skhirat, were a panoramic fantasia of Berber tribesmen on camels, followed by infantry formations and tank manuevers. The audience sat in tents and nibbled on endless hors d'oeuvres, and the pretty Scientology girls fended off advances from the Moroccan brass. They played poker with the generals to pass the time. Everything went smoothly, but suddenly, in the middle of the airshow portion of the exercise, two fighter aircraft emerged from a cloud and dropped out of formation, flying low over the panicked crowd. They trained their guns on the king's tent, which was next to where Kit and the other Scientologists were sitting. Simultaneously, a thousand military cadets stormed the palace. A hundred people were killed in the coup attempt. The king escaped by hiding in the toilet. Kit and her companions were quickly shuttled back to their hotel. Unnerved, they turned on the television to see what had happened, only to watch the generals they had been sitting with lined up against a wall and shot. The coup attempt quickly fell apart. King Hassan fled to France and left the country in charge of General Oufkir, who was also given the post of minister of defense. There was no one else the king trusted. He was convinced that the CIA was determined to oust him.

Even in this chaotic and dangerous situation, Hubbard saw an opportunity. He proposed the creation of an elite guard to protect the king. He ordered Kit to instruct General Oufkir in the use of E-Meters as lie detectors in order to determine which members of the government had been a part of the rebel forces and root out subversion. She refused; her own sources told her it was far too

dangerous, not only for her, but for everyone involved. Hubbard ordered her back to the ship and put her in charge of the snack bar. He sent another team, and they quickly began to uncover the plotters. Colonel Allam was marched out to the desert and shot, along with dozens of others.

When King Hassan II returned from France, in 1972, a squadron of Moroccan fighter jets accompanied his passenger jet. As soon as they left French airspace, however, one of the escort jets began firing on the king's aircraft. The king, who was also a pilot, immediately grasped what was happening. He raced into the cockpit and seized control. "Stop firing! The tyrant is dead!" he shouted into the radio. Then he flew the jet on to Morocco.

That night, the architect of the coup was revealed: General Oufkir. It was announced that he had committed "suicide," although his body was riddled with bullets.

The shaken king turned his attention to the Scientologists. He had long suspected that Scientology was a CIA front—a rumor that was spreading all over the Mediterranean. There was also gossip that the Apollo was involved in drug trafficking and prostitution, or that it was part of a pornography ring. In December 1972, the Scientologists were expelled from the country, leaving a trail of confusion and recrimination behind them.[6]

PAULETTE COOPER WAS studying comparative religion for a summer at Harvard in the late 1960s when she became interested in Scientology, which was gaining attention. "A friend came to me and said he had joined Scientology and discovered he was Jesus Christ," she recalled. She decided to go undercover to see what the church was about. "I didn't like what I saw," she said. The Scientologists she encountered seemed to be in a kind of trance. When she looked into the claims that the church was making, she

found many of them false or impossible to substantiate. “I lost my parents in Auschwitz,” Cooper said, explaining her motivation in deciding to write about Scientology at a time when there had been very little published and those who criticized the church came under concentrated legal and personal attacks. A slender, soft-spoken woman, Cooper published her first article in Queen, a British magazine, in 1970. “I got death threats,” she said. The church filed suit against her. She refused to be silent. “I thought if, in the nineteen-thirties people had been more outspoken, maybe my parents would have lived.” The following year, Cooper published a book, The Scandal of Scientology, that broadly attacked the teachings of Hubbard, revealing among other things that Hubbard had misrepresented his credentials and that defectors claimed to have been financially ripped off and harassed if they tried to speak out.

Soon after her book came out, Cooper received a visit from Ron and Sara Hubbard’s daughter, Alexis, who was then studying at Smith College. Cooper had demanded that Alexis bring substantial identification to prove who she was, but when she opened the door, she drew a breath. It was as if Hubbard had been reincarnated as a freckled, twenty-two-year-old woman. Alexis asked Cooper whether or not she was legitimate. In her social circle, illegitimacy was a terrible stigma. Cooper was able to show her Ron and Sara’s marriage certificate.

Alexis had been to Hawaii over the Christmas holidays to visit her mother. When she returned to college, she learned that there was a man who had been waiting to see her for four days. He identified himself as an FBI agent and said he had several pages of a letter he was required to read aloud to her. The letter said that Alexis was illegitimate. It was clearly written by Hubbard. “Your mother was with me as a secretary in Savannah in late 1948,” the letter stated. He said he had to fire Sara because she was a “street-

walker" and a Nazi spy. "In July 1949 I was in Elizabeth, New Jersey, writing a movie," the letter continues. "She turned up destitute and pregnant." Out of the goodness of his heart, Hubbard said, he had taken Sara in, to see her "through her trouble." Weirdly, the letter was signed, "Your good friend, J. Edgar Hoover."

After The Scandal of Scientology, Cooper's life turned into a nightmare. She was followed; her phone was tapped; she was sued nineteen times. Her name and telephone number were written on the stalls in public men's rooms. One day, when Cooper was out of town, her cousin, who was staying in her New York apartment, opened the door for a delivery from a florist. The deliveryman took a gun from the bouquet, put it to her temple, and pulled the trigger. When the gun didn't fire, he attempted to strangle her. Cooper's cousin screamed and the assailant fled. Cooper then moved to an apartment building with a doorman, but soon after that her three hundred neighbors received letters saying that she was a prostitute with venereal disease who molested children. A woman impersonating Cooper voiced threats against Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Gerald Ford at a Laundromat, while a Scientologist who happened to be present notified the FBI. Two members from the Guardian's office broke into Cooper's psychiatrist's office and stole her files, then sent copies to her adoptive parents. Cooper was charged with mailing bomb threats to the Church of Scientology. In the courtroom, the prosecutor produced a threatening letter with her fingerprint on it, and Cooper fainted. (Later, she remembered signing a petition, which may have had a blank page underneath it.) In May 1973, Cooper was indicted by the US Attorney's office for mailing the threats and then lying about it before the grand jury.

IF THE RUMORS about Hubbard were true—that he had created a religion only in order to get rich—he had long since accomplished that goal. One of his disaffected lieutenants later claimed that Hubbard had admitted to "an insatiable lust for power and money." He hectored his adherents on this subject. "MAKE MONEY," he demanded in a 1972 policy letter. "MAKE MORE MONEY. MAKE OTHERS PRODUCE SO AS TO MAKE MONEY." In order to siphon money into Hubbard's personal accounts, a number of front organizations were established, including the Religious Research Foundation, which was incorporated in Liberia. In the mid-seventies that single foundation had an account in Switzerland containing more than $300 million. At one point, panicked that Switzerland was going to make a change in its tax laws, Hubbard ordered his medical officer, Kima Douglas, to move those funds from Switzerland to Lichtenstein. She described stacks of cash sitting in the bank vault, mostly hundred-dollar bills, four feet high and three to four feet wide, one pile in Hubbard's name, the other in the church's. "Church's was bigger but his was big too," she told Hubbard's biographer Russell Miller. L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., remembered shoeboxes full of money in his father's closet. He later testified that Hubbard habitually kept "great chunks of cash" within easy reach, "so that if there was any problem he could just take off right out the window."

"Making money, I think, to Hubbard was paramount," Hana Eltringham later speculated. "He wasn't that interested in it for himself. He did have perks, he did have his cars, his motorbikes, his books, his good food, and things like that, and eventually he had his villas and he had his estates and so on, but the money that he wanted predominantly was for power."

For all his wealth, Hubbard spent much of his time in his cabin alone, auditing himself on the E-Meter and developing his spiritual technology. He may have been grandiose and delusional, but the

endless stream of policy letters and training routines that poured from his typewriter hour after hour, day after day, attests to his obsession with the notion of creating a step-by-step pathway to universal salvation. If it was all a con, why would he bother?

Hubbard and Mary Sue slept in separate staterooms. In the opinion of members of their household staff and others, by the time they boarded ship, Hubbard had lost interest in Mary Sue sexually. Yvonne Gillham had managed to get herself posted on another ship, out of range of Hubbard's longing and Mary Sue's wrath. For the most part, the Commodore left his female crew members alone. One exception was a tall, slender woman from Oregon. She approached Hana Eltringham with a big smile on her face and confessed that she was having an affair with Hubbard. Soon after that, Hubbard busted the woman down to deckhand and assigned Eltringham to audit her. The woman would weep through the session. Eltringham would dutifully pass along the auditing files to Hubbard for review. "I could hear him chortling," she recalled.

The situation was much less restrained belowdecks. The Sea Org members were young and vigorous; sexual escapades were routine, and marriages quite fluid. Hubbard seemed to be oblivious, but Mary Sue was increasingly scandalized. When she learned that a crew member, who was nineteen or twenty, had slept with a fifteen-year-old girl on the ship, she got a dagger out of her cabin and held it against his throat and told him he had to be off the ship in two hours or else. In 1971, on New Year's Eve, there was a drunken orgy of historic proportions. "Maybe a hundred Sea Org members were having sex everywhere from the topside boatdecks to the lowest holds of the ship," one of the participants recalled. Mary Sue had had enough. With two attractive teenage daughters of her own on the ship, she started cracking down on premarital sex. Hubbard observed that 1972 was a leap year, and said that any woman on the ship could propose to any man, leading to a sudden

rash of weddings. Hubbard had forbidden babies on board, but so many women were getting pregnant that he began permitting the children to stay, rather than sending their parents to another post. The baby boom eventually prompted Hubbard to order that no one could get pregnant without his permission; according to several Sea Org members, any woman disobeying his command would be "off-loaded" to another Scientology organization or flown to New York for an abortion.[7]

WORD ARRIVED while the Apollo was in dry dock in Portugal that the French government was going to indict the Church of Scientology for fraud, with Hubbard named as a conspirator (he would eventually be convicted in absentia and sentenced to four years in prison). Hubbard flew to New York the very next day. Few crew members knew where he was. Jim Dincalci, his medical officer, and Paul Preston, a former Green Beret who acted as Hubbard's bodyguard, joined him and set up housekeeping in Queens.

It was an odd interlude. Abruptly freed from the daily responsibility of running the ship, training executives, and overseeing the entire Scientology enterprise, Hubbard suddenly had time on his hands. He spent it watching television and reading novels. Dincalci was designated to be the chef, which meant that fish sticks and pasta were on the menu until Dincalci learned how to expand his repertoire. He studied Adelle Davis's popular health food book Let's Get Well. Hubbard began to gain energy and lose weight. He would go for walks around the neighborhood, but always in a clownish disguise—a wig, a hat, and glasses with no prescription. Hubbard thought he was being nondescript, but Dincalci heard the comments the kids were making about how goofy he looked.

Dincalci had long since come to the conclusion that Hubbard was

not an Operating Thetan. He was obese and weird and he failed to exhibit any of the extraordinary powers that are supposed to be a part of the OT arsenal. Moreover, he was under siege by various countries. Why couldn't he simply set things straight? Wasn't he supposed to be in control of his environment? How could he be so persecuted and powerless? What was he doing hiding out in Queens, wearing a wig and watching television when the planet needed salvation? At one point, Hubbard was talking about how pleasant it used to be to sit on a cloud, but now he complained to Dincalci, "I'm PTS to nations." He meant that he was a Potential Trouble Source because entire countries were dysfunctional and suppressive. Dincalci thought, "Oh, that explains it," but then it didn't, really.

During the ten months Hubbard was in hiding in Queens, he began plotting another way to destroy SMERSH. His escapade to take over the World Federation for Mental Health had been foiled, he believed, by those sinister forces. One day, Hubbard surprised Dincalci by asking him for the names of Snow White's Seven Dwarfs. Dincalci dutifully trotted to the library to look them up. He wouldn't learn the real significance of Snow White for some time. Hubbard had set in motion an operation so daring and dangerous that it threatened to destroy Scientology forever.

On April 20, 1973, Hubbard wrote a secret order, "Snow White Program," in which he noted a dangerous trend in the gradual reduction since 1967 of countries available to Scientology. He put the blame on the American and British governments, which he said were spreading false allegations against the church. He proposed to swamp the countries that had turned against the church in a vast campaign of litigation with the aim of expunging defamatory files and leaving Hubbard and the Apollo "free to frequent all western ports and nations without threat."

In Hubbard's absence, Mary Sue exerted increased control over

the church's operations. Hubbard had already appointed her the head of the Guardian's Office, a special unit with a broad mandate to protect the religion. Among its other duties, the GO functioned as an intelligence agency, gathering information on critics and government agencies around the world, generating lawsuits to intimidate opponents, and waging an unremitting campaign against mental health professionals. It was the GO that Hubbard tasked with Snow White. Under Mary Sue's direction, the GO infiltrated government offices around the world, looking for damning files on the church. Within the next few years, as many as five thousand Scientologists were covertly placed in 136 government agencies worldwide. Project Grumpy, for instance, covered Germany, where the Guardian's Office was set up to infiltrate Interpol as well as German police and immigration authorities. In addition, there was a scheme to accuse German critics of the church of committing genocide. Project Sleepy was to clear files in Austria; Happy was for Denmark, Bashful for Belgium, and Dopey for Italy. There were also Projects Mirror, Apple, Reflection, and so on, all drawn from elements of the fairy tale. Projects Witch and Stepmother both targeted the UK, the source of Scientology's immigration problems.

Project Hunter was the United States, where Scientologists penetrated the IRS, the Justice, Treasury, and Labor Departments, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Drug Enforcement Administration, as well as foreign embassies and consulates; private companies and organizations, such as the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the Better Business Bureau; and newspapers—including the St. Petersburg Times, the Clearwater Sun, and the Washington Post—that were critical of the religion. In an evident attempt at blackmail, they stole the Los Angeles IRS intelligence files of celebrities and political figures, including California governor Jerry Brown, Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley, and Frank Sinatra. Nothing in

American history can compare with the scale of the domestic espionage of Operation Snow White.

IN SEPTEMBER 1973, learning that he was not going to be extradited to France after all, Hubbard returned to Lisbon, where the Apollo was in dry dock. He amused himself by going off on photo expeditions in Portugal, with his Messengers acting as porters. Then, in December, the Apollo lifted anchor and headed to the warmer climate of the Canary Islands. One day in Tenerife, Hubbard decided to take his Harley-Davidson motorcycle out for a spin on the twisty mountain roads. Miles away, in the lush volcanic landscape, the Harley hit a patch of oil or mud and crashed. Hubbard broke his arm and several ribs. Somehow he managed to right his bike and make his way back to the ship.

Some members of the Sea Org cite the motorcycle accident as the moment when Scientology changed course and sailed toward a darker horizon. Hubbard was in terrible pain, but he was fearful of doctors and refused to go to the hospital. Dincalci and the ship's other medical officer, Kima Douglas, neither of whom had a medical degree, attempted to treat him. They strapped Hubbard's injured arm to his side and wrapped his broken ribs, then sat him in a velvet reading chair, which he rarely left for the next six weeks, day or night.

The whole ship could hear him cursing and screaming and throwing plates and things against the wall with his one good arm. He was in too much discomfort to sleep for more than a couple of hours at a time, so the ranting and moaning went on almost nonstop. The medical officers had persuaded him to let a local doctor come aboard with a kind of primitive X-ray machine, which confirmed the broken bones. The doctor left Dincalci a prescription for pain pills. The first time Dincalci gave Hubbard the pain pills,

however, Hubbard panicked and said that they had slowed down his heart. “You’re trying to kill me!” he shouted. Dincalci, who looked upon Hubbard as a father, both spiritually and emotionally, was devastated. Hubbard ordered him “beached”—dropped off in Madeira, the distant Portuguese atoll, where he remained for a year.

Other members of the Sea Org were having a hard time coping with the blatant contradiction between Hubbard’s legend and the crabby, disconsolate figure howling in his stateroom. “If he is who he says he is, why does he have so little staying power?” Hana Eltringham wondered. “He has a motorcycle accident, he doesn’t recover quickly, and he doesn’t use Scientology techniques on himself.”

By now, Eltringham had been promoted to Deputy Commodore, the highest post in the Sea Org after Hubbard himself. She had been off the ship for a couple of years, in Los Angeles, running the Advanced Orgs—the divisions responsible for producing Operating Thetans—and setting up a liaison office to supply the Scientology fleet. During that period, she began experiencing crippling headaches. Some days she was unable to work at all. She couldn’t even lie down because the pressure from the pillow was unbearable. The vibration of footsteps in the hall outside her room made the pain excruciating. She thought if she could only discover the body thetans that she must be harboring she could ease her misery. Every day, hour after hour, she audited herself on the E-Meter, probing for some stirring or a sign of recognition. Hubbard himself was her case supervisor, which made her anxiety all the greater. Despite her rank, she, too, worried about being beached or punished. Even worse, according to Hubbard’s dictates, she alone was responsible for her pain. So why was she doing this to herself?

Then, one day in her auditing, she felt something. A kind of “flicker.” Was it a BT? She decided that it must be. An immense

feeling of relief washed over her. Soon after that, she discovered more BTs—eventually, hundreds, thousands. Sometimes there was a feeling of lightness or of floating when the BT was expelled. Other times, Eltringham exteriorized from her body. But the headaches remained. Then something new arrived: quarrelsome voices inside her head. At first the voices were faint, but they grew louder and more insistent. Eltringham worried that she was going insane.

When she returned to the Apollo, she was shocked by the hellish changes that had taken place. In January 1974, Hubbard issued Flag Order 3434RB, creating the Rehabilitation Project Force. The stated goal was to rehabilitate Sea Org members whose statistics were down or who might be harboring subversive thoughts against Hubbard or his technology. Because the RPF provided a second chance for those who might otherwise be fired, Hubbard saw it as an enlightened management technique, the sole purpose of which was "redemption." When Eltringham came aboard, she found dozens of crew members housed in the old cattle hold belowdecks, illuminated by a single lightbulb, sleeping on stained mattresses on the floor. They were dressed in black overalls, called boiler suits, and forbidden to speak to anyone outside their group. They ate using their hands from a bucket of table scraps, shoveling the food into their mouths as if they were starving.

Despite the confusion and the harsh punishment, there were many Sea Org members who experienced their days on the Apollo as a time of incomparable adventure, filled with a sense of mission and an esprit de corps they would never again recapture. Although Hubbard could be terrifying and irrational, and comically pompous, he still held his followers in thrall. Those who were close to him saw a generous and caring leader who used his gigantic personality to keep his ship, his fleet, his organization, and his religion on track. Karen de la Carriere, a young British auditor, remembers

watching Hubbard in his office screaming at one of the crew; when that person left, cowering, Hubbard swiveled in his chair and gave Karen a big wink. “He was in total control,” she realized. “It was all theatrical to create a desired effect.”

Hubbard developed many of the basic Scientology techniques aboard the Apollo. In one instance, de la Carriere was having no luck auditing a wealthy Scientologist with a long drug history, who kept falling asleep during their sessions. Hubbard theorized that the LSD he had taken must still be in his system; perhaps the drugs could be sweated out by putting him to work swabbing the decks. After six weeks, he was a changed man. De la Carriere says that was the beginning of the Scientology drug-treatment program, called the Purification Rundown.

A strapping crewman named Bruce Welch had what other crew members diagnosed as a nervous breakdown or a psychotic episode. In Scientology terms, he had gone “Type III.” He had a crush on one of the ship’s young women, and when he learned she was engaged, he went berserk. According to de la Carriere, Welch got a butcher knife from the pantry and threatened to kill Hubbard and other members of the crew. There were no designated security procedures or personnel trained to handle such a case. It took four crewmen to eventually subdue Welch and wrestle him into a cabin in the forecastle, the storage area above the bow, away from most of the crew, where he screamed continuously. There was a metal bed with a mattress, and a metal cabinet, but Welch managed to tear them apart with his bare hands and shove the pieces through the porthole.

A young Australian named Mike Rinder (who would eventually become the church’s chief spokesperson) had just arrived aboard the Apollo and was given the assignment of guarding Welch’s cabin. He sat on a trunk in the hallway, listening to Welch shouting, “Bring the Commodore here! I want the Commodore right now!”

Then Welch would yank on the door, which was locked and lashed to the bulkhead with sturdy ropes. Several times, Rinder recalled, Welch beat up other members of the crew when he was escorted to the bathroom or given his meals.

Hubbard saw Welch's rampage as an opportunity to experiment with the problem of acute mental breakdown. Total silence was enforced on the forecastle deck so that Welch would have nothing to stimulate him. Three times a day, Hubbard would write Welch a note, asking about his well-being. According to de la Carriere, Welch's response might be, "You're the devil incarnate. I'm going to enjoy plunging the knife in you." Hubbard would respond that he understood, and by the way was there any special food that the chef could prepare for him? In this way, Welch's rage began to subside. He allowed an auditor to visit him each day. After two weeks, the door to Welch's cabin was unlocked and he emerged, serene and apparently cured.

"I have made a technical discovery which possibly ranks with the major discoveries of the twentieth century," Hubbard boasted in one of his bulletins. "It is called the Introspection Rundown." He explained that the psychotic break had long bedeviled psychiatry, which had attempted to treat it with drugs, lobotomies, and shock treatments. The key, Hubbard had discovered in his treatment of Welch, was to learn what had caused the person to "introspect" before his breakdown. "THIS MEANS THE LAST REASON TO HAVE PSYCHIATRY AROUND IS GONE," Hubbard declared. "The psychotic break, the last of the 'unsolvable' conditions that can trap a person, has been solved.… You have in your hands the tool to take over mental therapy in full."

Hubbard's recipe for curing psychosis was to isolate the subject, with the attendants "completely muzzled (no speech)." By discovering the last severe conflict that triggered the episode, and then helping the subject discharge the emotions surrounding it, the

auditor can begin to untangle the mental knots that have thrown the subject into his present state of wrestling with "the mystery of some incorrectly designated error." The subject should be given vitamins, especially Vitamin B, along with calcium and magnesium, in order to restore his physical well-being. He should be examined on the E-Meter for discordant moments in his life, such as someone accusing him of something he hadn't done, or being told he was a Potential Trouble Source when he wasn't, or having his identity questioned. These steps are simple, Hubbard said, but "its results are magical in effectiveness." The goal is to take the highly introverted personality, who is trapped in an endless loop of self-criticism, and bring him out of himself.

The subject should be able to look at the world once again and see it as "quite real and quite bright."

"Do it flawlessly and we will all win," Hubbard promised.

"THIS PLANET IS OURS."

The Apollo crew were in awe of their leader. They had seen the transformation with their own eyes. "A madman was made sane on the high seas," de la Carriere said. "To do that, you have got to have a certain amount of greatness."

ONCE A WEEK, there was a movie night on the aft deck, with a recently released film flown in. Popcorn was made, a screen erected, and when everyone was settled Hubbard would descend from the prom deck, resplendent in his Commodore's uniform, with Mary Sue and the children in tow.

In the interest of public relations, Hubbard staged free concerts at various ports of call, using the ship's ragtag band, the Apollo Stars. He wanted to "revolutionize music," and composed original songs for the band to play. He started a modern dance troupe as well. Quentin wanted to join the dancers, but his father sternly told

him that he had other plans for him. By 1974, Hubbard had decided that his two oldest children by Mary Sue—Diana, twenty-two, and Quentin, twenty—were to take over the major management and technology functions of Scientology. Diana was enthusiastic—she had been the Lieutenant Commander since the age of sixteen and was often at her father's side—but everyone knew that Quentin's great ambition was to fly. His cabin was full of model airplanes, suspended from the ceiling with dental floss, and books about flying. He was often seen weaving along the deck with his arms outstretched, making engine noises, completely absorbed in being a plane.

Jim Dincalci, the medical officer who was still beached in Madeira, learned that the Apollo was headed in his direction. By now, he had made friends with many of the local people, and he was surprised to learn from them that the Apollo was widely suspected of being a spy ship for the CIA.[8] He sent telexes warning the ship that it would be better to avoid Madeira, but Hubbard came anyway. Soon after the Apollo docked, a mob arrived and began stoning the ship. Hubbard ordered fire hoses turned on the crowd, which further infuriated them. There were motorcycles belonging to crew members and two of Hubbard's cars which had been offloaded onto the pier; the mob shoved them all into the harbor, then loosened the moorings so that the ship drifted offshore. Mary Sue and some other members of the ship's company were stranded in town and had to be rescued by the local authorities.

Quentin returned to the ship in bad shape. He had taken an overdose of pills in a failed suicide attempt. After his stomach was pumped at a local hospital, he was brought back to the ship, pale and weak, and put in isolation in his cabin, guarded night and day, becoming the second person to undergo the Introspection Rundown. Suzette was the only one to visit him. He looked like a

broken doll.

Quentin was now twenty years old, popular and free-spirited, but in many ways still a soft-spoken, dreamy boy. Although he was small like his mother, and had her coloring, in other respects he bore a strong resemblance to his father. His facial features were almost an exact match: almond-shaped eyes under low, reddish brows; protuberant lips; and a deep cleft in the chin. Even though Quentin became one of the highest-rated auditors in the Sea Org, his father was constantly disappointed in his performance. “You have to improve,” he barked at Quentin in front of the other auditors. “It doesn’t matter that you’re a Hubbard.” Quentin would sit there and smile, seemingly unfazed, as the others cringed for him. Privately, he confided, “Daddy doesn’t love me anymore.”

Eventually, Hubbard sentenced Quentin to the Rehabilitation Project Force. His “twin” on the RPF was Monica Pignotti, an auditor in training at age twenty-one. As they practiced auditing each other, they became close. Quentin sneaked some peanut butter from the family pantry and shared it with Monica. They made up skits and played with his tape recorder. They never became intimate. Quentin told her that he had once become sexually involved with a woman, but when his father found out, she was sent off the ship. He knew that people regarded him as a homosexual, he said, but that was only something he told other women on the ship who were after him because he was Hubbard’s son.

Quentin Hubbard, circa 1973

HUBBARD SET a new course: due west, toward America. The destination was Charleston, South Carolina. The crew were thrilled that they would be returning to the States, only to be crestfallen when a message arrived from the Guardian's Office, just as the ship was approaching port, alerting Mary Sue that agents from US Customs, Immigration, Coast Guard, DEA, and US Marshals were waiting for them to dock, plus 180 IRS agents waiting to impound the ship. The federal agents had a subpoena to depose Hubbard in a civil tax case in Hawaii. A Scientologist on shore realized what was happening when he was blocked from entering the dock area. He sent a pizza to a radio operator with a message inside to send to the ship. Hubbard was just five miles offshore, but he suddenly

broadcasted a new course over the radio—due north for Halifax, Nova Scotia—then turned sharply south and headed to the Bahamas.

Hubbard was sixty-four years old in 1975, as the Apollo began its circumnavigation of the Caribbean. He weighed 260 pounds. He was still meticulously groomed, but his teeth and fingers were darkly stained from constant smoking. He was on the run from the courts, fearful of being discovered, marked by age, and visibly in decline. In Curaçao, he suffered a small stroke and spent several weeks in a local hospital. It was becoming clear that life at sea posed a real danger for a man in such frail health. His crew rationalized his obvious decline by saying that his body was battered by the research he was undertaking and the volumes of suppression aimed at him. "He's risking his life for us," they told each other.

By now the rumor about the CIA spy ship had spread all over the Caribbean, making the Scientologists unwelcome or at least under suspicion everywhere they went. They were kicked out of Barbados, Curaçao, and Jamaica. Moreover, the Arab oil embargo had sent the price of fuel skyrocketing, so the roving life was getting too expensive to support. It was time to come ashore.

FROM THE APOLLO, Hubbard sent a couple of delegations to locate a land base for Scientology—specifically, a town that the church could take over. One team arrived in the Florida retirement community of Clearwater—a resonant name for Scientologists—to look over a dowdy downtown hotel called the Fort Harrison, which had earned a place in popular history when Mick Jagger wrote the lyrics for "Satisfaction" beside the swimming pool in 1965. Hubbard purchased the Fort Harrison and a bank building across the street using a false front called the United Churches of Florida,

which he calculated would not disturb the staid moral climate of the conservative community. When the mayor of Clearwater, Gabriel Cazares, raised questions about the extraordinary security that suddenly appeared around the church buildings, Guardian's Office operatives tried to frame him in a staged hit-and-run accident and planted false marriage documents in Tijuana, Mexico, to make it appear that Cazares was a bigamist. Several months passed before the flabbergasted citizens discovered that Clearwater had become the Flag Land Base for the Church of Scientology. (Scientologists would simply call it Flag.)

Hubbard had been keeping a low profile in a condominium nearby, but in January 1976 his tailor leaked the news to a St. Petersburg Times reporter that the leader of Scientology was in town. As soon as Hubbard heard this, he grabbed twenty-five thousand dollars in cash, collected Kima Douglas, his medical officer, and her husband, Michael, and lit out in his Cadillac for Orlando. The next day, he announced that they were going to his old hideout in Queens. The Cadillac was too conspicuous, so he sent Michael out to buy a nondescript Chevy hatchback. The trip to New York took three days, with Hubbard smoking continuously in the backseat and crying, "There they are! They're after us!" every time he saw a police car. When they finally arrived, Kima judged Queens too depressing, so they turned around and went to Washington, DC.

Meanwhile, agents from the Guardian's Office raced to Southern California to look for remote properties where Hubbard could operate more discreetly. Soon, Hubbard and Mary Sue, along with her Tibetan terriers, Yama and Tashi, set up in their new quarters on three large properties in La Quinta, California, a desert town south of Palm Springs. Hubbard grew a goatee and let his hair hang down to his shoulders. "He looked like Wild Bill Hickok," one Sea Org member recalled. He kept a hopped-up Plymouth and half a

million dollars in cash ready for a quick getaway.

Left behind in Clearwater, and without his father hovering over him, Quentin became freer and more assertive. He befriended an older Scientologist from New Zealand, Grace Alpe, who arrived at Flag Base with terminal cancer. “She looked like a witch, with gray hair and a hooked nose, like she was in a haunted house,” said Karen de la Carriere, who was Alpe’s auditor. During auditing sessions Alpe would just rock back and forth, crying, “I’m going to die! I’m going to die!” Everyone kept a distance from the woman, except Quentin, who took over her case. He actually let her move into his room and sleep in his bed, while he slept on the floor. Then he made a catastrophic mistake.

Dennis Erlich, the chief “cramming officer” at Flag, who supervised the upper-level auditors, noted jarring disparities between Quentin’s upbeat reports on Alpe and her glaring lack of progress. Erlich called Quentin in for a meeting. “Quentin, or ‘Q’ as his friends called him, was 22 at the time,” Erlich later wrote. “He looked 15 and acted 5.” During the interview, Quentin continually zoomed his hand through the air and made airplane noises. He calmly told Erlich that he had falsely reported the results. “I think a lot of my father’s stuff doesn’t work,” he said. “So I false report whenever I need to. Personally, I think my father’s crazy.”

Not only was Quentin the founder’s son, he was also one of the highest-ranked auditors in the church, and yet he had committed an unpardonable offense. Erlich had no choice but to tell him that he would have to surrender all of his training certificates and start the entire Scientology series all over again—years of work. Quentin seemed completely nonchalant.

What happened after this is full of contradiction and mystery. Tracy Ekstrand, who was Quentin’s steward, set a cookie on his bedside table that evening. It was still there the next night. The bed had not been slept in. Erlich was expecting Quentin to show up to

go over his new training program, but he didn't appear that day or the next. Word went out that Quentin had "blown"—in other words, he had fled. He left a confused note, full of references to UFOs, saying that he was going to Area 51, the secret airbase north of Las Vegas, Nevada, where the CIA has developed spy planes; in popular culture, Area 51 was said to be where an alien spacecraft was stored. Quentin had only just learned to drive a car, in the parking garage of the condominium, where he accidentally ran into the wall with such force that the entire building registered the shock. He was scarcely qualified to drive all the way across the country by himself. Quentin had repeatedly requested a leave to take flying lessons, but Hubbard was convinced that Quentin couldn't be trusted to fly a plane under any circumstances.

Frantic, Mary Sue dispatched three hundred Guardian's Office operatives to find him. Weeks passed, as the Scientologists checked hotels and flying schools in multiple states. A cover story was put out that Quentin had been given flying lessons as a present from his parents, and he was driving to California to fulfill his lifelong ambition.

Quentin was indeed headed for Nevada. It was one of the very few times in his life when he was on his own and free. He stopped in St. Louis on his drive west and took a VIP tour of the giant aerospace manufacturer McDonnell Douglas. He was enthralled by the display of aircraft and artifacts of the Mercury and Gemini space programs; he even got a ride in one of the company's business jets. "He was so happy," Cindy Mallien, who had lunch with him that afternoon, recalled. "He was just beaming."

But only a few days later, Las Vegas police were trying to identify a slight young man with blond hair and a reddish moustache who had been discovered comatose in a car parked on Sunset Road facing the end of the runway of McCarran Airport. He was naked. He was five feet one inch tall, and weighed just over a

hundred pounds. There were no identifying marks on his body and no personal identification. The license plates had been removed. The engine of the white Pontiac was still running when he was discovered. The windows were rolled up, and a vacuum tube led from the exhaust through the passenger's vent window. Two weeks later, on November 12, 1976, the young man died without regaining consciousness. Las Vegas police were finally able to connect the Pontiac with Quentin through a Florida smog sticker and the vehicle identification number.

An agent from the Guardian's Office came into Hubbard's office in La Quinta as he was having breakfast and handed him the report on Quentin's death. "That little shit has done it to me again!" Hubbard cried. He threw the report at Kima Douglas and ordered her to read it. The report said Quentin had died of asphyxiation of carbon monoxide. It also noted that there was semen in his rectum. When Hubbard told Mary Sue that Quentin was dead, she screamed for ten minutes. For months, she was disconsolate, hiding behind dark glasses. Everyone knew that Quentin was her favorite.

A spokesman for the church said that Quentin had been on vacation. Meantime, Mary Sue arranged for three further autopsies to be performed. In the last one, the cause of death was said to be unknown. She put out the word that he had died of encephalitis. Hubbard himself was convinced that Quentin was murdered as a way of getting at him.

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[1] Harriet Whitehead, an anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in Scientology in the United States and the United Kingdom between 1969 and 1971, writes of the "fundamental kinship" between psychotherapy and religion. "The cosmological system that surrounds a renunciatory discipline cannot for long remain 'secular,' that is, finite and this-worldly, in its orientation," she writes. "This is one of the reasons … secular

therapeutic doctrines often develop a religious or mystical cast." Although Freud was a nonreligious Jew, the techniques of analysis he developed may have had their roots in certain mystical practices rooted in the kabbalah, such as the interpretation of dreams and the use of free association to uncover hidden motivations. Jung subsequently steered psychoanalysis into deeply spiritual waters—a course, as Whitehead points out, that parallels the evolution of Dianetics into Scientology: "It would thus be facile to dismiss the promulgation of a quasi-empirical supernaturalism in the Dianetics movement as simply the product of amateur theorizing by a spinner of tales, when Hubbard's predecessors who established the framework within which psychotherapy, amateur and otherwise, would subsequently develop, did hardly any better" (Whitehead, Renunciation and Reformulation, pp. 27–8).

[2] A federal district court eventually allowed E-Meters to be used for "bona fide religious counseling," but ordered that each device bear a warning that "the E-Meter is not medically or scientifically useful for the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of any disease. It is not medically or scientifically capable of improving the health or bodily functions of anyone" (Amended Order of US District Court for the District of Columbia, No.71–2064, Mar. 1, 1973).

[3] The ban was repealed in 1973.

[4] According to the church, "The first Sea Organization members formulated a one-billion-year pledge to symbolize their eternal commitment to the religion and it is still signed by all members today. It is a symbolic document which, similar to vows of dedication in other faiths and orders, serves to signify an individual's eternal commitment to the goals, purposes and principles of the Scientology religion."

[5] The church explained, "As it became a matter of tradition among the crew members at that time having adopted the practice of overboarding, Mr. Hubbard set forth rules in October of 1968 to ensure it was conducted safely in attaining the spiritual benefit intended. To that end, given that it was an ecclesiastical penance, the procedure includes the Chaplain making the following statement as part of the observance: 'We commit your sins and errors to the waves and trust you will arise a better thetan.' "

[6] The church denies that Scientologists worked with General Oufkir's men or used the E-Meter to provide security checking for the Moroccan government.

[7] The church supplied me with a number of affidavits from former Sea Org members saying that they had not been forced to terminate their pregnancies.

[8] The CIA at the time was taking note of Hubbard, mainly through newspaper clippings. “There is no indication that HUBBARD or members of his organization have been engaged in intelligence or security matters,” an agency dispatch notes. “Rather, HUBBARD appears to be a shrewd businessman who has parlayed his Scientology ‘religion’ into a multi-million dollar business by taking advantage of that portion of society prone to fall for such gimmicks” (“Scientology/L. Ron HUBBARD,” CIA dispatch, Mar. 18, 1971).

Part II

HOLLYWOOD

4

The Faith Factory

Despite its reputation for carnality and narcissism, Los Angeles has always been a spawning ground for new religions. In 1906, a one-eyed black preacher named William Seymour set up a church in a livery stable on Azusa Street and began a revival that lasted for three years. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims came to hear his message. Stigmatized as Holy Rollers and decried because of their interracial worship, Seymour's followers gave birth to the Pentecostal movement, which quickly spread across the world, becoming an enduring force in modern Christianity. In 1912, a theosophist colony called Krotona took root just below the current Hollywood sign, where the hills were said to be "magnetically impregnated." An organization called Mighty I AM Presence began in Los Angeles and expanded all across America, gaining about a million followers by 1938. The founders were Guy and Edna Ballard, who claimed to be able to communicate with "ascended masters." Guy wrote a popular book titled Unveiled Mysteries, in which he related his travels through the stratosphere, visiting great cities of antiquity and unearthing buried loot—much as Hubbard attempted to do several decades later. Writers William Butler Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, Christopher Isherwood, and Aldous Huxley passed through the city, all drawn by its reputation as a center for spiritual innovation.

One of the most famous preachers in American history, Aimee Semple McPherson, built the Angelus Temple near Echo Park in

1923, where she married Pentecostalism with Hollywood theatricality. She created sets for her sermons on a stage designed for her by Charlie Chaplin, who may have been one of her secret Hollywood paramours (Milton Berle claimed to be another). Anticipating the garb of Hubbard and the Sea Org, McPherson liked to dress in an admiral's uniform, while her disciples wore nautical outfits. As a teenager, Anthony Quinn played the saxophone in the church and translated for Sister Aimee when she preached in Mexican neighborhoods. After he became a movie star, Quinn would compare her to the great actresses he worked with, including Ingrid Bergman and Katharine Hepburn. "They all fell short of that first electric shock Aimee Semple McPherson produced in me."

And so when the Church of Scientology was officially founded in Los Angeles, in February 1954, by several of Hubbard's devoted followers, there was already a history of religious celebrities and celebrity religions. The cultivation of famous people—or people who aspired to be famous—was a feature of Hubbard's grand design. He foresaw that the best way of promoting Scientology as a ladder to enlightenment was to court celebrities, whom he defined as "any person important enough in his field or an opinion leader or his entourage, business associates, family or friends with particular attention to the arts, sports and management and government." It was not surprising that Hubbard would hire as his personal assistant Richard de Mille, son of the legendary producer and director Cecil B. DeMille, who had started Paramount Pictures and was in some ways responsible for the creation of Hollywood itself.

In 1955, a year after the church's founding, an editorial in Ability, a publication affiliated with the church, urged Scientologists to recruit celebrities. A long list of desirable prospects followed, including Marlene Dietrich, Walt Disney,

Jackie Gleason, John Ford, Bob Hope, and Howard Hughes. “If you want one of these celebrities as your game, write us at once so the notable will be yours to hunt without interference,” the editorial promised. “If you bring one of them home you will get a small plaque as your reward.” Author William Burroughs and actor Stephen Boyd were drawn into the church in its early days. Scientology was a religion rather perfectly calibrated for its time and place, since American culture, and soon the rest of the world, was bending increasingly toward the worship of celebrity, with Hollywood as its chief shrine. At the end of the sixties, the church established its first Celebrity Centre, in Hollywood. (There are now satellites in Paris, Vienna, Düsseldorf, Munich, Florence, London, New York, Las Vegas, and Nashville.) The object was to “make celebrities even better known and to help their careers with Scientology,” Hubbard wrote. “By accomplishing this Major Target I know that Celebrity Centres can take over the whole acting-artists world.”

Hubbard was particularly interested in stars whose careers had crested but still had enough luster that they could be rehabilitated and made into icons of Scientology. The prototype was Gloria Swanson, one of the greatest stars of the silent movie era, who personified the lavish glamour of that era. Although she never regained the international fame she had known before the talkies, she continued acting on television and in occasional movies—most memorably, as Norma Desmond in the 1950 classic Sunset Boulevard. Hubbard’s top auditor, Peggy Conway, a South African entertainer, ardently cultivated Swanson, calling her “My Adorable Glory,” in her many letters to the star, although she saves her highest praise for Hubbard, who was also her auditor: “The Master did his Sunday best on me,” she wrote Swanson in 1956. “He never went to bed—we talked the clock around—day after day—night after night—I was six thousand light years above Arcturus—what a

genius is our Great Red Father!”

A constant stream of aspiring young actors, writers, and directors came to Hollywood with common dreams, trying to leverage whatever ability or looks they might have in a market already overwhelmed by beautiful and talented and chronically unemployed young people. Many of them were rather poorly educated—they had left school to gamble on stardom—but they were smart, talented, and desperately ambitious. Scientology promised these neophytes an entry into the gated community of celebrity. The church claimed to have a method for getting ahead; just as enticing was the whispered assertion that a network of Scientologists existed at the upper levels of the entertainment industry eager to advance like-minded believers—a claim that never had much to support it, but was not entirely untrue. Scientology was a small but growing subculture in the Hollywood studios.

Kirstie Alley was an aspiring actress from Wichita who left the University of Kansas in her sophomore year, then struggled with an addiction to cocaine. She says that a single auditing session cured her habit. “Without Scientology, I would be dead,” she declared. The testimonials of such celebrities would lead many curious seekers to follow their example. Posters with the faces of television and movie stars were placed outside Scientology churches and missions, saying, “I AM A SCIENTOLOGIST…COME IN AND FIND OUT WHY.” In the Hollywood trade magazine Variety, Scientology offered courses promising to help neophyte actors “increase your self-confidence” and “make it in the industry.” Scientologists stood outside Central Casting, where actors sign up for roles as extras, passing out flyers for workshops on how to find an agent or get into the Screen Actors Guild. Courses at the Celebrity Centre focused on communication and self-presentation skills, which were especially prized in the entertainment industry. The drills and

training routines would have felt somewhat familiar to anyone who had done scene work in an acting class. Many actors, at once insecure but competitive by nature, were looking for an advantage, which Scientology promised to give them. The fact that anyone was interested in them at all must have come as a welcome surprise.

Others who passed through Scientology at the same time as Paul Haggis were actors Tom Berenger, Christopher Reeve, and Anne Francis; and musicians Lou Rawls, Leonard Cohen, Sonny Bono, and Gordon Lightfoot. None stayed long. Jerry Seinfeld took a communication course, which he still credits with helping him as a comedian. Elvis Presley bought some books as well as some services he never actually availed himself of. Rock Hudson visited the Celebrity Centre but stormed out when his auditor had the nerve to tell him he couldn't leave until he finished with his session, although the matinee idol had run out of time on his parking meter. The exemplary figure that Hubbard sought eluded capture.

VERY EARLY ONE MORNING in July 1977, the FBI, having been tipped off about Operation Snow White, carried out raids on Scientology offices in Los Angeles and Washington, DC, carting off nearly fifty thousand documents. One of the files was titled "Operation Freakout." It concerned the treatment of Paulette Cooper, the journalist who had published an exposé of Scientology, The Scandal of Scientology, six years earlier.

After having been indicted for perjury and making bomb threats against Scientology, Cooper had gone into a deep depression. She stopped eating. At one point, she weighed just eighty-three pounds. She considered suicide. Finally, she persuaded a doctor to give her sodium pentothal, or "truth serum," and question her under the anesthesia. The government was sufficiently impressed that the

prosecutor dropped the case against her, but her reputation was ruined, she was broke, and her health was uncertain.

The day after the FBI raid on the Scientology headquarters, Cooper was flying back from Africa, on assignment for a travel magazine, when she read a story in the International Herald Tribune about the raid. One of the files the federal agents discovered was titled "Operation Freakout." The goal of the operation was to get Cooper "incarcerated in a mental institution or jail."

One of the doors the federal agents opened during the raid in Los Angeles led to the darkened basement of the old Cedars of Lebanon Hospital on Fountain Avenue, newly christened as Scientology's Advanced Org building. There were no lights, so the heavily armed agents made their way down the stairs with flashlights. They found a warren of small cubicles, each occupied by half a dozen people dressed in black boiler suits and wearing filthy rags around their arms to indicate their degraded status. Altogether, about 120 people were huddled in the pitch-black basement, serving time in the Rehabilitation Project Force. The ranks of the RPF had expanded along with the church's need for cheap labor to renovate its recently purchased buildings in Hollywood. The federal agents had no idea what they were seeing. Within moments, a representative of the church's Guardian's Office arrived and began shouting at the agents that they were exceeding the limits of their search warrants. Seeing that the Sea Org members posed no threat to them, the agents shrugged and moved on.

It is instructive to realize that none of the Sea Org members consigned to the RPF dungeon took the opportunity to escape. If the FBI had bothered to interrogate them, it's unlikely that any of them would have said that they were there against their will. Most of them believed that they were there by mistake, or that they deserved their punishment and would benefit by the work and

study they were prescribed. Even those who had been physically forced into the RPF were not inclined to leave. Despite federal laws against human trafficking and unlawful imprisonment, the FBI never opened the door on the RPF again.

Jesse Prince, one of the very few black members of the Sea Org, was among those being punished. He had been attracted to Scientology by the beautiful girls and the promise of superhuman powers. He recalls being told he would learn to levitate, travel through time, control the thoughts of others, and have total command over the material universe. In 1976, when he signed up for the Sea Org, Scientology had just purchased the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, part of the real-estate empire that the church was acquiring in Hollywood, along with the Château Élysée and the old Wilcox Hotel, which functioned as Sea Org berthing. The hospital was a mess; there were leftover medical devices and body parts in laboratory jars; there was even a corpse in the basement morgue. The Sea Org crew slaved to convert the hospital into a dormitory and offices. One night Prince was awakened after an hour of sleep and ordered to report to a superior, who chewed him out for slacking off. Prince had had enough. “Fuck you, I’m outta here,” he said. His superior told him he wasn’t going anywhere. “He snapped his fingers and six people came and put me in a room,” Prince recalled. “I was literally incarcerated.” It was March 1977. Prince was placed in the RPF with two hundred other Sea Org members, doing heavy labor and studying Hubbard’s spiritual technology. He would be held there for eighteen months. “They told me the only way to get out is to learn this tech to a ‘T’ and then be able to apply it.”

The question posed by Prince’s experience in the RPF is whether or not he was brainwashed. It is a charge often leveled at Scientologists, although social scientists have long been at war with each other over whether such a phenomenon is even possible. The

decade of the 1950s, when Scientology was born, was a time of extreme concern—even hysteria—about mind control. Robert Jay Lifton, a young American psychiatrist, began studying victims of what Chinese Communists called "thought reform," which they were carrying out in prisons and revolutionary universities during the Maoist era; it was one of the greatest efforts to manipulate human behavior ever attempted. In 1949, a number of Americans and Europeans who had been imprisoned during the Maoist revolution emerged from their cells apparently converted to Communism. Then, during the Korean War, several United Nations soldiers captured by Chinese troops defected to the enemy. Some American soldiers among them went on camera to denounce capitalism and imperialism with apparent sincerity. It was a stunning ideological betrayal. To explain this phenomenon, an American journalist and CIA operative, Edward Hunter, coined the term "brainwashing." Hunter described robotic agents with glassy eyes, like zombies or the products of demon possession. A popular novel, The Manchurian Candidate, published in 1959, and a film of the same name that came out three years later, capitalized on this conception of brainwashing as being the total surrender of free will through coercive forms of persuasion.

Lifton's early work on thought reform has become the basis for much of the scholarship on the subject since then. Lifton defined thought reform as having two basic elements: confession, which is the renunciation of past "evil," and re-education, which in China meant refashioning an individual in the Communist image. "Behind ideological totalism lies the ever-present human quest for the omnipotent guide—for the supernatural force, political party, philosophical ideas, great leader, or precise science—that will bring ultimate solidarity to all men and eliminate the terror of death and nothingness," Lifton observes. In facing the commonplace charge that psychiatry, or the Marines, or Catholic schools all engage in

forms of brainwashing, Lifton developed a set of criteria to identify a totalistic environment, and contrasted these with more-open approaches to reshaping human behavior.

The totalist paradigm begins with shutting off the individual's access to the outside world, so that his perceptions of reality can be manipulated without interference. The goal at this stage is to provoke expectable patterns of behavior that will appear to arise spontaneously, adding to the impression of omniscience on the part of the controlling group. Those who are involved in the manipulation are guided by a sense of higher purpose that permits them—actually, compels them—to set aside ordinary feelings of human decency in order to accomplish their great mission. Those who are being manipulated may come to endorse the goals and means of the group—as Prince did—or simply abandon the will to resist. In either case, the individual is robbed of the chance for independent action or self-expression.

Because the moral climate is entirely controlled by the group, the "sins" that one is made to confess function as pledges of loyalty to the ideals of the movement. The repetitive nature of these confessions inevitably turns them into performances. When the treasury of real sins is emptied, new ones may be coined to satisfy the incessant demands of the inquisitors. In Scientology, one can conveniently reach into previous existences to produce an endless supply of misdeeds. Lifton points out that in totalist hands, confession is used to exploit vulnerabilities, rather than to provide the solace or forgiveness that therapy and religion seek to provide. The paradoxical result can be the opposite of total exposure: secrets proliferate, and doubts about the movement go underground.

The dogma of the group is promoted as scientifically incontestable—in fact, truer than anything any human being has ever experienced. Resistance is not just immoral; it is illogical and

unscientific. In order to support this notion, language is constricted by what Lifton calls the "thought-terminating cliché." "The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed," he writes. "These become the start and finish of any ideological analysis." For instance, the Chinese Communists dismissed the quest for individual expression and the exploration of alternative ideas as examples of "bourgeois mentality." In Scientology, terms such as "Suppressive Person" and "Potential Trouble Source" play a similar role of declaring allegiance to the group and pushing discussion off the table. The Chinese Communists divided the world into the "people" (the peasantry, the petite bourgeoisie) and the "reactionaries" or "lackeys of imperialism" (landlords and capitalists), who were essentially non-people. In a similar manner, Hubbard distinguished between Scientologists and "wogs." The word is a derogatory artifact of British imperialism, when it was used to describe dark-skinned peoples, especially South Asians. Hubbard appropriated the slur, which he said stood for "worthy Oriental gentleman." To him, a wog represented "a common, ordinary, run-of-the-mill, garden-variety humanoid"—an individual who is not present as a spirit. Those who are within the group are made to strive for a condition of perfection that is unattainable—the ideal Communist state, for instance, or the clearing of the planet by Scientology.

When a preclear voices a criticism of Scientology or expresses a desire to leave the church, the auditor's response is to discover the "crimes" that the client has committed against the group. In Scientology jargon, those crimes are called "overts and withholds." An overt is an action taken against the moral code of the group, and a withhold is an overt action that the person is refusing to acknowledge. Hubbard explained that the only reason a person would want to leave Scientology is because he has committed a

crime against the group. Paradoxically, this is because humanity is basically good; he wants to separate himself from the others in order to protect the group from his own bad behavior.

In order to save the preclear from his self-destructive thoughts, the E-Meter is used in a security check (sec-check) to probe for other thoughts or actions. For extreme cases, Hubbard developed what he called the Johannesburg Confessional List. The questions include:

> Have you ever stolen anything?
>
> Have you ever blackmailed anybody?
>
> Have you ever been involved in an abortion?

There are further questions asking if the respondent has ever sold drugs, committed adultery, practiced homosexuality, had sex with a family member or a person of another race. It winds up by inquiring:

> Have you ever had unkind thoughts about LRH?
>
> Are you upset about this Confessional List?

The result of the sec-check procedure is that the person expressing doubts about the church is steered into thinking about his own faults that led him to question Scientology in the first place. In the Chinese Communist example, Lifton points out, the combination of enforced logic and clichéd discourse creates a kind of melodrama, in which formulaic thoughts and handicapped language substitute for real emotions and complex understandings of human nature. Once inside the powerful logic of the group, one drifts further and further from the shore of common understanding.

According to Lifton, factors such as these award the group life-and-death authority over individual members. And yet, despite the

Communists' absolute control of the environment, of the forty victims that Lifton studied, only three were "apparent converts" to the ideology. That figure has been used to discredit the notion of brainwashing, although Lifton himself later said that he was impressed by the extent to which minds could be altered and "truth blurred to the point of near extinction."

The CIA, alarmed by the reputed success of Chinese indoctrination, started its own research into mind control, through a program called MKUltra. In the mid-1950s, the agency began funding Dr. Ewen Cameron, a Scottish-born American citizen who was then directing the Allan Memorial Institute at McGill University in Montreal. Cameron was one of the most eminent psychiatrists of his time: earlier in his career, he had been a part of the Nuremberg tribunal that examined the atrocious human experiments of Nazi doctors; later he became president of the American Psychiatric Association, the Canadian Psychiatric Association, and—when the CIA stumbled onto his work—president of the World Psychiatric Association. Cameron hoped to cure mental illness by eliminating painful memories and reordering the personality through positive suggestion. The agency's goal was somewhat different, of course; the stated reason was to uncover effective methods of mind control and then train American soldiers in ways of resisting such efforts. The CIA eventually destroyed the files of the MKUltra program, saying that it had acquired no useful information, but the real intention of the agency may have been to learn scientific ways of extracting information from unwilling subjects. (After 9/11, documents emerging from the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base showed that the methods used by US interrogators to question al-Qaeda suspects were based on Chinese Communist techniques.)

The methods that Cameron used to erase his patients' memories certainly meet the definition of torture. Electroshock therapy was

administered to break the “patterns” of personality; up to 360 shocks were administered in a single month in order to make the subject hyper-suggestible. On top of that, powerful drugs—uppers, downers, and hallucinogens—were fed to the incapacitated patients to increase their disorientation. According to author Naomi Klein, who wrote about these experiments in The Shock Doctrine, when Cameron finally believed he had achieved the desired blank slate, he placed the patients in isolation and played tape-recorded messages of positive reinforcement, such as “You are a good mother and wife and people enjoy your company.” Some patients were put into an insulin coma to keep them from resisting; in that state they were forced to listen to such mantras up to twenty hours a day. In one case, Cameron played a message continuously for more than a hundred days.

Cameron was a perfect archetype for the evil that science has done in the name of mental health, and in the minds of many Scientologists, his work justifies the campaign the church has waged against psychiatry. It is intriguing to compare these actual experiments with Hubbard’s mythic vision of Xenu and the R6 implants, in which the disembodied thetans were forced to sit in front of movie screens for thirty-six days of programming at the hands of psychiatrists.

Although it is unlikely that Hubbard would have known about MKUltra when it was going on, he had become fascinated by the mind-control scare. In 1955, he distributed a pamphlet, which he probably wrote, called “Brain-Washing: A Synthesis of the Russian Textbook on Psychopolitics.” For some former Scientologists, “Brain-Washing” provides a codex for Hubbard’s grand scheme. There is an eerie mirroring of the techniques described in the pamphlet and some Scientology practices, especially those put into effect in the RPF.

The pamphlet opens with what is claimed to be a purloined

speech given by Lavrenti Beria, the head of the Soviet secret police under Joseph Stalin, to American students studying at Lenin University, on the subject of "psycho-politics." The term is defined as "[t]he art and science of asserting and maintaining dominion over the thoughts and loyalties of individuals, bureaus, and masses, and the effecting of the conquest of enemy nations through 'mental healing.' "

The text specifies how to realign the goals of the individual with those of the group. The first task is to undermine the ability of the person to act and to trust himself. Next, his loyalty to his family is destroyed by breaking the economic dependency of the family unit, lessening the value of marriage, and turning over the raising of children to the State or the group. The individual's trust and affection for his friends is shattered by anonymous reports to the authorities, supposedly from people close to him. Ultimately, all other emotional claims on the person have been broken; only the State or the group remains. "A psychopolitician must work hard to produce the maximum chaos in the fields of 'mental healing,' " Beria says in his introductory speech. "You must labour until we have dominion over the minds and bodies of every important person in your nation."

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE of those social scientists who believe that brainwashing is a myth or a fraud that has been used to denigrate new religious movements, including Scientology, Jesse Prince must already have been a convert, or close to one, before he went into the RPF. Although he says he was attracted to the church largely because of the girls, he was aware of the rigors of the Sea Org before he joined it. Perhaps, like the three victims of Chinese Communist thought reform that Lifton termed "apparent converts," Prince was predisposed to be a part of a totalitarian movement

because of his own psychological need to conform, or to be a part of a polarized system that separates all humanity into the saved and the damned. Such persons, the theory goes, are reared in either chaotic or extremely authoritarian homes. They have conflicted images of themselves as being at once extremely good and extremely bad. This is particularly true in adolescence, when identities are still volatile. Prince didn't need to be brainwashed, the theory goes; he was actively looking for a totalistic organization that accommodated his polarized personality.

Some incidents in Prince's background support this hypothesis. Although his upbringing was "tumultuous"—his mother died when he was ten—Prince maintained close and loving relationships with his father and his three younger siblings. After his mother died, however, he began experiencing bouts of total body paralysis accompanied by a sense of falling—"like jumping off the Grand Canyon." The feeling was of helpless, abject terror. Then, suddenly, he would be outside his body, as if a parachute had opened, and he could observe himself sleeping in his bed. The intensity of these experiences made them absolutely real to him, but he decided not to talk about them because "if you bring that up, you go to the crazy house." Prince now sees those episodes of body paralysis as severe anxiety attacks, but they prepared him to accept the truthfulness of the paranormal powers that Scientology claimed to provide.

Brainwashing theory, on the other hand, proposes that strenuous influence techniques can overwhelm and actually convert an individual to a wholly different perspective, regardless of his background or pre-existing character traits, almost like an addiction to a powerful drug can create an overpowering dependency that can transform an otherwise stable personality. Stripping away a person's prior convictions leaves him hungry for new ones. Through endless rounds of confession and the constant, disarmingly

unpredictable fluctuations between leniency and assault, love and castigation, the individual is broken loose from his previous identity and made into a valued and trusted member of the group. To keep alienated members in the fold, "exit costs"—such as financial penalties, physical threats, and the loss of community—make the prospect of leaving more painful than staying.

Whether Prince was brainwashed, as he believes, or spiritually enlightened, as the church would have it, his thinking did change over the year and a half he spent in the RPF. In order to move out of the RPF, a member has to have a "cognition" that he is a Suppressive Person; only then can he begin to deal with the "crimes" that he committed that caused him to be confined in the RPF in the first place. During his many hours of auditing, Prince later related, "You just kinda get sprinkles of little things that seem interesting, sprinkles of something that's insightful. And then you're constantly audited and in a highly suggestible state … like being pulled along very slightly to the point where now I might as well just be here and see what this is about now. Maybe it's not so bad, you know?"

ONE OF JESSE PRINCE'S COMPANIONS in RPF was Spanky Taylor, an old friend of Paul Haggis's from his early days in Scientology. She had become close to Paul and Diane soon after they arrived in Los Angeles. She called him "Paulie," and had helped him market some of his early scripts when he was still trying to break out of cartoons. From the beginning, she had seen his talent; her own talent was helping others realize theirs.

"Spanky" was a schoolyard nickname for Sylvia, but it had such a teasing twist that she could never escape it. She was the child of Mexican American laborers in San Jose. When she was fourteen, she became a fan of a local cover band called People!, which

included several Scientologists. She began helping the group with concert promotion, and soon she was working with some of the other great bands coming out of the Bay Area, such as Creedence Clearwater Revival and Big Brother and the Holding Company. Scientology was just another expression of the political and cultural upheaval of the times. Even members of the Grateful Dead were drawn into Scientology, which promised mystical experiences without hallucinogens. Albert Ribisi, the keyboard player for People!, introduced Spanky to the church. She joined the staff at the Santa Clara mission when she was fifteen.

She was a cheerful young woman with warm brown eyes who called everyone "honey." Because of her experience with promotion, she was posted to the Celebrity Centre. The place was constantly buzzing with activity—tie-dyeing, fencing, poetry readings—and she loved it. Famous people were always passing through, which added to the sense that something fun and important was happening here.

Spanky inevitably came to the notice of Yvonne Gillham, who had created the Celebrity Centre in 1969, after gaining Hubbard's permission to go to LA and escape the tension of his romantic pursuit of her. Gillham came to look upon Spanky almost as an extension of herself, with the same easy, natural flair for dealing with people. Even though Spanky was still a teenager, Gillham arranged for her to take care of some of the most important figures associated with the church.

One celebrity quickly took precedence. John Travolta was in Mexico making his first film, The Devil's Rain, a cheap horror movie starring Ernest Borgnine and William Shatner. He got to be friends with Joan Prather, a promising young actress and dancer, who was one of the few cast members his age. "He glommed onto me from day one," she said. "He was extremely unhappy and not doing well." Prather began talking about how much Scientology

had helped her. Actors are often asked to get in touch with feelings that can be quite devastating. “Dianetics offered a tool to get to one’s raw emotions without going completely bonkers,” she observed.

“It sounded really interesting, so I brought up certain things about my case and asked if that could be handled,” Travolta later recalled. “And she said it could. I said, ‘Come on … could THAT be handled? You know, I couldn’t believe it.” Prather gave him a copy of Dianetics. It helped with his bouts of depression and insomnia. “Sometimes people say the most incredible things in the world to me that last year would make me suicidal,” he observed. On another occasion he remarked, “Before Dianetics, if people said negative things to me or about me, I would cave in easily. Being a man, that wasn’t a very appealing quality. Some people would say, ‘The boy is too sensitive.’ But many times I had suppressive people around me who would cave me in on purpose. I was sort of like a minefield.”

Prather also counseled him using some of the basic processes of Scientology. “I went outside my body,” Travolta later said. “It was like the body was sort of on its own and I was outside walking round it. I got real frightened, and she said, ‘Oh my goodness, you’ve gone exterior.’ ”

When he returned to Los Angeles, Travolta began taking the Hubbard Qualified Scientologist Course at the Celebrity Centre with about 150 other students. He confided to the teacher, Sandy Kent, that he was about to audition for a television show, Welcome Back, Kotter. After roll call, Kent instructed everyone to point in the direction of ABC Studios and telepathically communicate the instruction: “We want John Travolta for the part.” At the next meeting, Travolta revealed he had gotten the role of Vinnie Barbarino—the part that would soon make him famous. “My career immediately took off,” Travolta boasted in a church publication. “I

would say Scientology put me in the big time."

Gillham adored Travolta and constantly told him he was going to be a star. To prove it, she gave him Spanky.

Although Travolta craved fame, he was taken aback by the clamor that came along with it. Spanky managed his relationship with his fans. She went to the tapings of his television show, accompanied him to his many public appearances, and persuaded Paramount Pictures to buy a large block of Scientology auditing for his birthday. She was his liaison with the church—in Scientology language, his terminal ("any person who receives, relays or sends communications"). She also became a conduit between the rising young star and other Scientologists in the industry, such as Paul Haggis, who gave Spanky a spec script for Welcome Back, Kotter to pass on to Travolta (it was never made).

Travolta generously credited the church for advancing his career and giving him the poise to handle his burgeoning celebrity. "You always have the fear, 'Success is terrific now, but will it last forever?' " he observed in one interview. "When you hit it quickly, you don't know where it will go.... Scientology makes it all a lot saner." He introduced a number of fellow actors to Scientology, including Forest Whitaker, Tom Berenger, and Patrick Swayze, as well as the great Russian dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov. (Travolta's friend Priscilla Presley was the only one who actually stuck with the church.) Spanky Taylor was a visible reminder of Travolta's increasing devotion to Scientology, as well as the church's investment in his fame, which could be jeopardized by the indiscreet behavior of a talented but entitled movie star.

When the FBI raid on the Church of Scientology took place on July 8, 1977, Taylor was six months pregnant and living with her husband, Norman, in the squalid Wilcox Hotel. Norm was an executive in the legal bureau. Early on the morning of the raid, he frantically called Spanky and told her to get over to Yvonne's office

right away to get the loaded gun she had been given by a friend, which she kept in her desk. By the time Taylor arrived, there were FBI agents everywhere—more than 150 of them at two Scientology buildings, the Advanced Org and Château Élysée. It was the largest FBI raid in history, and it went on all day and night. They brought battering rams and sledgehammers to break the locks and knock down walls. In addition to the 200,000 documents they were carting off—many of them purloined by Guardian's Office operatives from government workplaces—they found burglar tools and eavesdropping equipment. Taylor dutifully made her way through the chaos to Yvonne's office and slipped the gun into her purse. She didn't allow herself to think how crazy it was to be carrying a weapon past all these lawmen.

Outside the gates, reporters were clamoring to get in. Just then, a school bus pulled up, full of kids from a religion class at the Pacific Palisades high school. Taylor recalled with alarm that they were coming to take a tour that she had previously arranged. The wide-eyed teens watched as Taylor explained to the teacher that this wasn't the best time for the tour. (They never rescheduled.)

Within the church, the explanation for the raid was that some Scientologists were being charged with stealing the Xerox paper they used when they had copied the reports on the church in government files—in other words, it was just another example of jackbooted government goons twisting the Constitution in order to crack down on religious freedom. But when the indictments came out the following year, the scale of Operation Snow White was plainly exposed. Eleven Scientology executives, including Mary Sue Hubbard, were indicted in Operation Snow White. Her husband was named as an unindicted co-conspirator, although it had arisen from his original plan.

Saturday Night Fever premiered at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood in December. Travolta had spent five months training

for the film, running two miles a day and dancing three hours a night. He recognized the opportunity that the film provided, and he supplied a singular, electrifying performance. But when he walked down the red carpet past the fusillade of camera flashes, he looked dazed. “When I got out of the limo in front of Grauman’s, I was dumbfounded, I didn’t know how to take it,” he said in a televised interview at the after-party. “It was like a fantasy, it was like a dream tonight.” He was twenty-three years old, now an international star. He was also the most conspicuous Scientologist in the world, after only L. Ron Hubbard himself. And who is to say that Scientology didn’t help make his dreams come true?

YVONNE GILLHAM HAD fallen ill. She complained of headaches and was losing weight. She wanted desperately to go to Flag, where she could get the upper-level auditing she thought could cure her, but she was told there wasn’t money for that. Instead, she was sent on a mission to Mexico with her husband, Heber Jentzsch, an actor and musician who later became president of the church, a largely ceremonial post. They had married five years earlier. On her fiftieth birthday, October 20, 1977, while still in Mexico, Yvonne suffered a stroke. Jentzsch sent her back to Los Angeles, while he completed the tour. After that, her daughter Janis, one of Hubbard’s original Messengers, received a beautiful suitcase from her. Inside there was a letter, but it made no sense. Janis tried to find out what was wrong, but no one would say. Her sister, Terri, went to the Sea Org berthing and found Yvonne lying in her room unattended. Finally, she was sent to a hospital, where doctors found a tumor in her brain, which had caused the stroke in the first place. It would have been operable if she had come to them sooner, the doctors said.

Desperate to get Gillham the auditing she still thought she

needed, Taylor went to the financial banking officer and begged her for the funds to send her friend to Flag. “If she wants to go to Flag, she can take the fucking Greyhound,” the officer responded.

“You’re Yvonne’s assassin!” Taylor shouted.

For her impertinence, Taylor was sentenced to RPF. Her new baby daughter, Vanessa, was taken away and placed in the Child Care Org, the Scientology nursery. There were thirty infants crammed into a small apartment with wall-to-wall cribs, with one nanny for every twelve children. It was dark and dank and the children were rarely, if ever, taken outside.

When she got the news, Taylor cried, “You can’t do that now!” She was thinking of Travolta. He had just called her the day before, saying that he was arriving on an Air France flight after his appearance at a film festival in Deauville, where he was promoting Saturday Night Fever. Despite his triumph, Travolta appeared depressed and withdrawn. During the filming of Saturday Night Fever his girlfriend, Diana Hyland, had died in his arms. She was two decades older than he—she played his mother in a made-for-TV movie, The Boy in the Plastic Bubble—and had already had a double mastectomy when they met. Their romance was doomed when her cancer recurred. Taylor had helped Travolta through that period of grief, but now his mother, the most important figure in his life, had also developed cancer. Travolta asked Taylor if she would pick him up at the airport. She promised him, “Wild horses wouldn’t keep me from being there!”

The church officials now told Taylor that someone else would meet Travolta. Taylor knew the star would feel surprised and betrayed. He had come to rely on her, both as an unpaid assistant and for emotional support. He would immediately suspect that something terrible had happened and worry about her. Taylor was mortified to think that she would be the cause of his discomfort.

The RPF had moved out of the basement up to the top floor of

the old V-shaped building that formerly housed the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. Nearly two hundred people were crammed by the dozen into old patient rooms in bunks stacked three high. Because of the overcrowding, Taylor was given a soggy mattress on the roof. It was cold. She could hear the traffic on Sunset Boulevard only a block away. She had a view of the Hollywood Hills and the endless lights of the wakeful city, which was throbbing all around her. So many young people like her had been pulled into the matrix of Hollywood glamour and fame, even if they would never enjoy it themselves. And now, here she was, in the heart of it—isolated, trapped, humiliated, an unnoticed speck on a rooftop. Who could believe that a person could be so lost in the middle of so much life?

Moreover, she was pregnant again. It happened a few weeks after she entered RPF, during a brief marital visit from her husband. There was no maternal care or any easing of the intensely physical work she was made to do with the other "RPF'ers," as they called themselves. For one two-week stretch, they were putting in thirty hours at a stretch with only three hours off. Like everyone else, Taylor ate slop from a bucket—table scraps or rice and beans. After six months on this diet she still wasn't showing her pregnancy; indeed, she was losing weight. She worried that she was going to lose the baby.

A pair of missionaires came to see Taylor one day with a strange request. They were thinking about how to reward the RPF'ers for having done the renovations to the Advanced Org building, which were now almost complete. "We would like you to arrange a private screening of Saturday Night Fever," they told her.

Of course, no one in the RPF had been able to see the movie, despite the fact that it was an international sensation. Getting to Travolta wasn't easy, however. He was now the top box-office star in the world. Playboy called him "America's newest sex symbol."

The church hierarchy was worried that he was also drifting away from Scientology. A screening of his movie would underscore his commitment to the religion at a moment when that seemed in doubt.

As the church's liaison to Travolta, Taylor was the obvious person to make the arrangements.

"First of all, I can't use the phone," Taylor told the missionaires. "Secondly, I can't leave the building. Maybe you'd like a Beatles reunion while you're asking for that."

"We just think you could take care of this," they replied.

Taylor had to figure out a way to get a print of the film from Travolta without having to explain why she had failed to pick him up at the airport and then disappeared from his life for months, without a word. A couple of days later, the missionaires arranged for her to use a pay phone on one of the lower floors of the building. Taylor called Kate Edwards, Travolta's creative director at the time.

"Spanky! Where are you?" Edwards cried. Travolta and his production company had been looking for her frantically.

"Honey, I can't really talk," Taylor said. She told Edwards that she was in the Los Angeles complex. "I've been specially selected to do a program that will help me," she explained vaguely. She said she had an urgent favor to ask—a print of the film.

That was a problem. The movie was being shown around the world and all the prints were out. The only one available was Travolta's personal copy, but Edwards said she would make the request. "Johnny said if you ever called and needed something, just do it," Edwards assured her.

"You can't tell John about this call!" Taylor said.

"I'm going to have to tell him," Edwards replied. "I'm going to have to ask him to borrow it."

The next time Taylor was allowed to call, Edwards told her that

Travolta had agreed to loan Taylor the print, under one condition: that he could see her. The missionaires conferred with their superiors. They decided that as long as Taylor got the print, she could meet Travolta for dinner on the Sunday night after the screening.[1]

Travolta followed up by sending flowers, which were delivered to Taylor in RPF.

The screening took place on Saturday night in Scientology's Lebanon Hall. It was a high point for everyone, all the more so because it was followed by a disco dance. Across the country similar dances were taking place, inspired by Travolta's passionate performance.

Taylor wouldn't be a part of it, however. As soon as the movie was over and the credits were rolling, several Scientology executives, including Yvonne's former husband, Heber Jentzsch, escorted Taylor to an office and told her to call Travolta and cancel their date for dinner the following night.

"I can't do that!" Taylor said.

"There have been all sorts of efforts to recover him, and we can't let you get in the way of that," Jentzsch told her. "Call him right now."

"It's after midnight!"

Travolta was furious when he heard what she had to say. "We had a deal!" he said.

"I know, I'm sorry."

"How could you do this?" he demanded. "How could you leave your baby?" For the first time in their relationship, he raised his voice. "My mother died, and you weren't there!"

Taylor began to bawl so hard she couldn't speak. She recalled that Travolta was asking questions she couldn't answer, questions she had been afraid to pose herself. He seemed to know what she was going through. "Unless you killed somebody, which I don't

think you did, there's no reason for you to be where you are," Travolta told her. He had never said an unkind word to her in their entire relationship, and his frankness was devastating.

"I'm doing this so I can be better!" Taylor sobbed. "So I can help you more."

Meanwhile, Jentzsch was jabbing his finger at her and mouthing the order to hang up the phone. She quickly said good-bye and set the phone in the cradle. Then she was escorted back to RPF.

All that night she cried and cried, but when the sun came up, she was flooded with clarity. "I am so fucking out of here!" she decided. "I don't know how, but I'm getting out."

It wasn't obvious how she could escape. She had been placed in RPF in March; now it was September. There hadn't been time to plan because she was working constantly. She didn't know where to turn. It didn't occur to her to call her parents because she was so apprehensive that she might bring shame on Scientology if anybody knew what had happened to her. In any case, she was forbidden to speak to anyone outside the RPF, even to other Sea Org members. And even if she did escape, she realized, she actually knew very little about what was going on in the world. Since she had joined Scientology at the age of fourteen, she had never read a book that hadn't been written by L. Ron Hubbard.

Taylor managed to slip away to visit her ten-month-old daughter in the Child Care Org across the street. To her horror, she discovered that Vanessa had contracted whooping cough, which is highly contagious and occasionally fatal. The baby's eyes were welded shut with mucus, and her diaper was wet—in fact, her whole crib was soaking. She was covered with fruit flies. Taylor recoiled. The prospect of losing both her unborn baby and her daughter seemed very likely.

She finally conceived a plan. Explaining to her guards that she had to telephone the doctor, she managed a brief call to Travolta's

office and asked Kate Edwards to meet her the next day at a certain time, giving the address of the Child Care Org. She hung up without even hearing Edwards's response.

The next day she was allowed a brief visit to the nursery. Taylor put an extra diaper in her purse. She had four dimes, all the money she had in the world, and a toothbrush. Fortunately, Edwards arrived, right on time.

Taylor explained to her Scientology escort that Edwards was her sister-in-law who had come to take Vanessa to the doctor.

"Is this approved?" he asked.

"Oh, absolutely!" Taylor opened Edwards's door and handed her the baby. Edwards stared in bewilderment as Taylor loudly told her to call as soon as she found out what the doctor said. Then, under her breath, she added, "Kate, when I shut this door, please drive away as quickly as you can." Edwards nodded, then Taylor jumped in. Edwards hit the gas.

"Spanky, no!" the escort cried.

Taylor hadn't planned any further than this.

She was still dressed in a man's black boiler suit, with the sleeves and legs rolled up. Edwards fetched some clothes from her mother that would fit Taylor's emaciated frame and picked up some diapers for Vanessa, then checked them in to the Tropicana Hotel on Santa Monica Boulevard. Taylor finally called her husband in the Guardian's Office. Another executive picked up the line. "Spanky! They're looking for you everywhere! Where are you?" he demanded.

"I want to talk to Norm," she said.

"You need to come back!"

Taylor said she would call back at eleven that night. This time, her husband answered.

"Are they there?" Taylor asked him.

"Yes."

She hung up. After an hour or two, she called again. He said he was alone. She told him she was out of the church and not going back. The baby was safe, she said. Norm wanted to meet, and Spanky finally told him where she was. She realized their marriage was probably over, but she felt she owed him that. Norm came over to the Tropicana and they spoke for several hours.

The next morning at nine there was a knock on the door of Taylor's hotel room. Three Sea Org executives were there to haul her back to RPF.

Taylor still believed in the revelations of her religion. She worried that her salvation was at stake. But she was also gripped with fear that her baby and her unborn child were in mortal danger.

At first, she was firm in telling the men that she wasn't coming back. "If you lay a hand on me or my child, I'm filing charges!" she cried. They assured her they just wanted to talk. They told her that they hated to see her be declared a Suppressive Person. She would be cut off from any other Scientologist—nearly everyone she knew. There was a proper way to "route out," they reminded her. Eventually, Taylor agreed to return to the office to file the paperwork that would allow her to leave the Sea Org on good terms and still be a Scientologist.

As part of the routing process, Taylor was given a confession to sign detailing all the "crimes" she had committed. She glanced at the document. Some of the actions cited were drawn from her preclear folders, things she had confessed to her auditors that were supposed to remain confidential. She knew how it worked; she says she had once been assigned to go through members' folders and circle any "evil intentions" toward Scientology. Sexual indiscretions or illegal acts were always highlighted. These would be forwarded to the Guardian's Office to be used against anyone who threatened to subvert the church. If the crimes weren't sufficiently damning,

Taylor came to learn, scandalous material would simply be manufactured. She signed her confession without really reading it. Later, she was given her bill.

The theory of the "freeloader's tab" is that people who join the Sea Org don't have to pay for the cost of auditing and the coursework to move up the Bridge. The truth is that there is never much time to take advantage of such instruction. Taylor had been in the Sea Org for seven years, however, and the bill for the services she might have taken amounted to more than $100,000.

Just before she left the office, the executive handling her case was called away for a moment. Taylor took her confession off his desk and stuffed it in her purse. When she finally left the building, she tore it to pieces.

WHEN HUBBARD FOUND OUT Yvonne Gillham was dying, he sent her a telex asking if she wanted to keep her body or move on to the next cycle. She decided it would be quicker just to let go, but she still wanted the auditing. Hubbard agreed to let her travel to Clearwater, to do an "end of cycle on her hats"—meaning that she would brief her successor at the Celebrity Centre before she died.

Hana Eltringham was stationed at Flag, and she was shocked at the sight of her dear friend. Yvonne was dizzy and frequently lost her balance, and her thoughts trailed away. She refused to take pain medication because it would interfere with her auditing. She tearfully blamed herself for the terrible "overt" of dying and deserting Hubbard. She was desperate to see her children, to say good-bye, but they were kept away.

Hubbard designated Elizabeth Gablehouse, one of Yvonne's closest friends, to talk to her about the celebrities in her care—who was a reliable speaker, who was good at recruiting other celebrities. Yvonne talked about various people—some television

actors, a Mexican pop singer, the producer Don Simpson, Karen Black, Chick Corea, and Paul Haggis, among others—but she was particularly worried about Travolta. “Please help him. He’s especially sensitive,” she said. She advised Gablehouse to deal with the celebrities the same way she treated Hubbard—very delicately, and with an open mind. Gillham died in January 1978.

Spanky Taylor’s son, Travis, was born that March, weighing less than three pounds, although he was carried to full term. (Both of Taylor’s children are alive and healthy today.)

Many former Sea Org members found their departure from the church to be tangled in confusion, panic, grief, and conflicting loyalties. Many still cling to a relationship with the church, sometimes for years, like Taylor, or for the rest of their lives. The coda to Taylor’s story is that a year after leaving the Sea Org, she traveled to Houston to meet with Travolta. He was filming Urban Cowboy at the time. On her own initiative, she came to “recover” him for the church. She had heard that he was having problems in his life, and she worried that her own troubles had prevented him from turning to the church for help. It was also possible that if she brought Travolta back into the fold, her standing in the church would be improved.

Like most celebrities, Travolta had been shielded from the church’s inner workings. The scandals that periodically erupted in the press about Hubbard’s biography, or his disappearance, or the church’s use of private investigators and the courts to harass critics—these things rarely touched the awareness of Scientology luminaries. Many simply didn’t want to hear about the problems inside their organization. It was easy enough to chalk such revelations up to religious persecution or yellow journalism. “There are two sides to the story, but I don’t know both sides,” Travolta blithely said when he was asked about Operation Snow White. “I’m not involved with that.” In any case, for someone like

Travolta, who was so publicly associated with the church, it would be hard to just walk away. He had been asked to declare himself publicly, and he had done so, again and again.

The star was staying in a private house in Houston. He and Taylor met in the evening, after dinner, over a plate of chocolate-chip cookies that she had brought. She explained that she had left the Sea Org and was with her children now, then quickly changed the subject and asked about him. He described the problems he was having.

Former Scientologists have given conflicting accounts of Travolta's stressful relationship with the church at that time. The church hierarchy was desperately concerned that their most valuable member would be revealed as gay; at the same time, the hierarchy was prepared to use that against him. Bill Franks, the church's former executive director, told Time magazine that Travolta was worried that if he defected, the church would expose his sexual identity. Jesse Prince has stated that Travolta was threatening to marry a man, although that wasn't a legal option at the time. In Franks's opinion, the church had Travolta trapped. At one point, the star sought assurance from Franks that his private confessions wouldn't be used against him. "My sessions are protected, right?" he asked Franks. In truth, intelligence officers inside the church had already been directed to gather material—called a Dead Agent pack—that would be used against Travolta if he turned.

In Houston, however, Travolta told Taylor that he didn't really feel that he needed to be recovered—he was just taking a break. However, Taylor did persuade him to buy a costly package of auditing so that he could get back on the Bridge. He had stopped his coursework after completing OT III.

After that, Taylor received a letter from Hubbard saying, "Well done." The founder asked if there was anything she needed. She

asked nothing for herself, but begged Hubbard to do a "Folder Error Summary" on Travolta, in which the founder would personally review all the star's auditing over the years to spot any mistakes—a tremendous honor for any Scientologist. A Messenger assured her that it would be done.

Not long afterward, however, Travolta stopped talking to Taylor. She got a call from Priscilla Presley, who asked what was going on. Presley had run into Travolta and he said that they should get together. "I'll call Spanky," Presley had told him.

"No, don't go through Spanky," Travolta said.

When Spanky heard this, she realized she had been declared a Suppressive Person. Nobody had bothered to tell her, but from now on, no Scientologist would be allowed to talk to her.

Taylor never tried to speak to Paul Haggis again, worried that she might compromise his relationship to the church. For his part, Haggis had no idea what had happened to Spanky. He wondered why she had just disappeared. But Scientologists were always drifting in and out of his life. Sea Org members, even friends like Spanky, might be suddenly posted somewhere else without explanation, or assigned to Clearwater for advanced training, or sent to a secret Sea Org base where they were rarely in contact with the outside world. That might explain her absence. He didn't inquire. He readily identified with the church's narrative that Scientology was being victimized by an intolerant and uncomprehending press, self-serving politicians, careerist bureaucrats, and reactionary police agencies looking for headlines. By publicly defending Scientology, he took on the great burden of scorn and ridicule routinely directed at the church; and in that way, he also allied himself with persecuted minorities everywhere: he was one of them.

If he had known that his friend had been declared a Suppressive, Haggis would have had a difficult choice to make. It was one he

would face soon in any case. In 1983, Haggis's writing partner on the TV series Diff'rent Strokes, Howard Meyers, who was also a Scientologist, decided to follow a splinter group led by David Mayo, who had been one of the highest officials in the church. Haggis told Meyers that he couldn't work with him anymore. Because Meyers was the senior writer on the show, Haggis resigned and went looking for other work.

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[1] Travolta's attorney denies there was an agreement to visit Spanky in exchange for his personal copy of Saturday Night Fever.

5

Dropping the Body

Hubbard never lost his interest in being a movie director. He wrote innumerable scripts for Scientology training films, but he still thought he could take over Hollywood. He had particularly high hopes for one script, "Revolt in the Stars," that was based on one of his novels. Inspired by the thunderous success of Star Wars, Hubbard worked on the script in 1979 with the legendary acting teacher Milton Katselas with the aim of having it made into a feature film.

A journeyman theater and film director before taking over the Beverly Hills Playhouse, Katselas had directed the 1972 film Butterflies Are Free, starring Goldie Hawn and Edward Albert (Eileen Heckart won an Oscar for Best Actress in a Supporting Role). He was a vital link to the Hollywood celebrity machine that Scientology depended upon. The list of his protégés included Al Pacino, Goldie Hawn, George C. Scott, Alec Baldwin, Ted Danson, Michelle Pfeiffer, Gene Hackman, George Clooney, and many other now-familiar names. His invitation-only Saturday master class was seen by many young actors as a portal to stardom. He attained OT V status and was one of the most profitable sources of recruits for the church, receiving in return a ten percent commission on the money contributed by his students. At one point, Katselas asked if he could join the Sea Org, but Hubbard told him it was more important to continue doing what he was doing.

When Katselas and Hubbard finished the script of "Revolt in the Stars," Hubbard dispatched one of his top Messengers, Elizabeth

Gablehouse, to Hollywood to make a deal. After the Moroccan adventure, Hubbard had appointed her his Personal Public Relations Officer. Gablehouse came from a moneyed background, and she knew how to talk about finances. She shopped the script around and found a buyer willing to offer $10 million—which, at the time, would have been the highest price ever paid for a script, she was told. The Guardian's Office became suspicious and investigated the buyers, who they learned were Mormons. Hubbard figured that the only reason Mormons would buy it was to put it on the shelf. Gablehouse wound up being sent to the RPF, and when she balked at that, she was demoted even further—to the RPF's RPF, alone, in the furnace room under the parking garage of the Clearwater base. The script never did get made into a film.

Hubbard's location was a deep secret. Scientologists who asked were told he was "over the rainbow." Meantime, a full-fledged movie studio, the Cine Org, was set up in a barn at Hubbard's La Quinta hideaway. With his usual brio, Hubbard assumed that he was fully capable of writing, producing, and directing his own material, but his novice staff often frustrated him. He would do scenes over and over again, exhausting everyone, but he was rarely satisfied with the outcome. He walked around the set bellowing orders through a bullhorn, sometimes right in the face of a humiliated staff member.

Hubbard was becoming increasingly cranky and confused. He slept with guards outside his door, hiding in the tamarind trees that flanked his cottage. One morning he accused the Messenger outside his door of abandoning his post. "Someone came in and exchanged my left boot for a boot half a size smaller," he said. "They even scuffed it up to make it look the same. Someone is trying to make me think I'm crazy."

IN AN EFFORT to lighten the mood, several of the crew made up a comic skit and gave a video of it to Hubbard. He was offended; he was sure they were mocking him. “He was shouting at the TV,” one of his executives recalled. “He sent the Messengers to find the names of everyone involved.”

One of the perpetrators of the skit was a cocky young camera operator named David Miscavige. Only seventeen years old, Miscavige had already been marked as a rocket within the church. He spent his early years in Willingboro, New Jersey, a suburb of Philadelphia; it was one of the mass-produced Levittowns built in America after World War II. He and his older brother, Ronnie, played football in a children’s league for a team called the Pennypacker Park Patriots. Despite his athleticism, David was handicapped by his diminutive size and severe bouts of asthma, which caused numerous trips to the emergency room.

His father, Ron Miscavige, a salesman at various times of cookware, china, insurance, and cosmetics, was the first in the family to be drawn to the work of Hubbard. Frustrated with the ineffective treatment his son was getting for his asthma, Ron took David to a Dianetics counselor. “I experienced a miracle,” David later declared, “and as a result I decided to devote my life to the religion.” But in fact asthma continued to afflict him, and his disease was at the center of the Miscavige family drama.

Soon Ron and his wife, Loretta, and their four children were getting auditing at the Scientology mission in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Ronnie Junior was the oldest of the children, followed by the twins, David and Denise, and the youngest, Laurie. In 1972, the family moved to England in order to take advanced courses at the church’s worldwide headquarters at Saint Hill. At the age of twelve, David became one of the youngest auditors in the history of the church—“the Wonder Kid,” he was called.

The following year, in June, Ron and Loretta had to return to the

United States for a couple of weeks. They needed someone to take care of David while they and the other children were gone. There was another American studying at Saint Hill, Ervin Scott, whose wife was also afflicted with asthma. His memory is that he agreed to let the boy stay with him. He recalls that in the first encounter David's parents, along with his twin sister, met with him before they left. Scott immediately liked the family. The father was "wonderful and bright," the mother was "very beautiful, with high affinity," and the daughter was "the cutest thing." David, however, sat at the end of the couch, unsmiling, with his arms crossed. The family wanted to make sure that Scott knew what to do in case of an intense asthma attack. "They said, 'We have to warn you about Dave,' " Scott recalled. " 'David has episodes, very unusual episodes.' " The parents explained that Dave became extremely angry when he was suffering an asthma seizure. "Then they said, starting with the husband, 'When these episodes occur, do not touch him!' The mother reiterated, 'Yes, please don't touch him!' I said, 'What happens?' They said, 'David gets very, very violent, and he beats the hell out of you if you touch him.' And the sister says, 'Oh my God, he does beat you, really hard!' " Again and again, the family members emphasized that David had beaten them during an attack.

Scott glanced at David, who, he recalls, nodded in agreement. He seemed almost smug, Scott remembers thinking, "like he was arrogantly proud of kicking their ass."

Scott was puzzled. He had never heard of asthma making a person violent. In his experience, a person in the grip of such an attack was frozen with fear. He said he would heed the warning, however.

The next morning, David moved in. Scott took him shopping and then to a pub, where he bought him a Coke. Scott also got a nonalcoholic drink. They chatted with some other Scientology

auditors and David began to warm up. He seemed pleased to be around auditors, but Scott felt that there was “a certain falseness” in his behavior.

They went back to Scott’s quarters and watched television, then turned in around ten. Scott placed David in the bed by the window, which was cracked to give him some fresh air. David went right to sleep. Scott was used to the rattle of asthmatic breathing, so he soon fell asleep as well.

Scott remembers hearing a scream around one o’clock. He jumped up and turned on the light. David was leaning on the bed with one arm. His face was blue and his eyes were rolled back. Scott had never seen anything like it. He started to touch him, but drew back and performed a Scientology “assist.” He said, “That’s it, David, come up to present time,” repeating the command twice. David blinked and then jolted awake. He was still disoriented, so Scott performed another Scientology exercise, called a locational: “Look at that wall. Look at that bed.” Slowly, David began to focus. Finally he asked Scott, “Did I hit you?”

“No.”

“Whew!”

David was still groggy and quickly went back to sleep, but Scott was unsettled. He watched the boy for another hour before drifting off again himself.

In the morning, David remembered nothing of what had happened during the night. He got ready to take a shower. When he took off his pajama top, Scott did a double take. He had never seen a thirteen-year-old boy with such muscles. “This kid is built like Arnold Schwarzenegger!” he thought. “A young, very small Arnold Schwarzenegger.”

While David was in the shower, Scott took a look at the medication on his nightstand. He remembers seeing two bottles and two inhalers. One of the inhalers was a typical over-the-counter

medication, but all the others contained steroids. Scott had grown up on a farm, and he had used steroids to treat some diseases in animals, but also to build up the muscle mass in cattle. Could that have had the same effect on Miscavige? (Actually, asthma medications often use corticosteroids, which do not have the same effect as the anabolic steroids that weightlifters and athletes employ. Corticosteroids can stunt growth, however, and if Miscavige took them might have contributed to his short stature.) Scott decided to write a Knowledge Report about what he had seen, which would go to the Ethics Officer. "Here is a Scientologist, and he's taking drugs, and he's having these very bad episodes of asthmatic attacks, that can and should be handled by auditing." He also asked for David's preclear folder, which should have a record of his previous auditing. He was told that David didn't have a PC folder. Scott had never heard of a Scientologist without one.

Scott worked with David on some of his coursework and training drills. At times, the teenager struck him as highly intelligent, but robotic, and there were some concepts he couldn't seem to grasp. For instance, with the most basic E-Meter drill, which was simply to touch the meter and then let go, Scott recalls that David's hand was shaking. "David, relax! This is just a drill," Scott said. David settled down, and they continued the drill, but Scott was troubled. The boy was supposed to be a qualified auditor but he didn't seem to be trained at all. According to Scott, David admitted that he had never audited anyone and that, in fact, he had never even been audited himself. "Auditing is for weaklings," he said. In any case, he said, he was Clear from a past life. Scott wrote up another Knowledge Report.

The course supervisor was strangely impatient with Scott for taking extra time to get Dave through the drills. There was something else that was peculiar, too. A photographer kept following David around. Later, Scott learned that a Scientology

magazine was preparing an article about the youngest auditor to complete an internship in the Sea Org. Scott was complicating matters by holding up David's progress.

Scott remembers that on Monday, David audited a preclear. When he came back to the room, he seemed agitated, and Scott asked him what was going on. "Those fucking women!" Scott remembers David exclaiming. "There should be no women in the Sea Org." Scott learned that there were three women who were overseeing David's internship at Saint Hill. David's attitude toward women was deeply troubling, as Scott noted in yet another Knowledge Report. So far, no one in the Ethics Office had responded.

That changed a few days later. Scott was called into the Ethics Office and told that David had complained that Scott was enturbulating, or upsetting, him and causing problems because of the abundant reports he was writing. "This kid is an SP," Scott warned, "and you better handle him." Then he opened the door to leave. David was standing just outside. His reaction told Scott that he had overheard him calling him a Suppressive Person. "He went into total fear," Scott said. That very day, David was moved into another room, and his parents soon returned from the United States. But David avoided Scott whenever they passed each other.

In August, Scott was sitting out in the yard across from the castle and the auditing rooms on the Saint Hill grounds. He was talking to a friend of his, a Norwegian nurse. Suddenly they heard a young woman wailing. Scott remembers looking up and seeing David, his face red and the veins visible in his forehead. He had a preclear folder under his arm. Behind him was the crying girl, who was holding her side in apparent pain. According to Scott the nurse exclaimed, "He beat up his PC!"

Karen de la Carriere was also a young intern at Saint Hill, and she was directed to join the others in the internship room. "They

told us that David Miscavige had struck his PC," she recalled. "He had been removed from his internship, and we were not to rumor-monger or gossip about it. We were supposed to just bury it."

David was not done with Scientology, however. At fifteen, he went Clear in his present life. On his sixteenth birthday in 1976, "sickened by the declining moral situation in schools illustrated by rampant drug use," he dropped out of tenth grade and formally joined the Sea Org. He began his service in Clearwater; less than a year later, he was transferred to the Commodore's Messengers in California, where once again he quickly captured the attention of the church hierarchy with his energy and commitment. He rose to the position of Chief Cinematographer at the age of seventeen. After the skit that made such a poor impression on Hubbard, David redeemed himself in the founder's eyes by renovating one of his houses and ridding it of fiberglass, which Hubbard said he was allergic to.

David Miscavige filled a spot in Hubbard's plans that once might have been occupied by Quentin, although Miscavige displayed a passion and focus that Quentin never really possessed. He was tough, tireless, and doctrinaire. Despite David's youth, Hubbard promoted him to Action Chief, the person in charge of making sure that Hubbard's directives were strictly and remorselessly carried out. He ran missions around the world to perform operations that local orgs were unable to do themselves—at least, not to Hubbard's satisfaction.[1]

HUBBARD FINISHED WRITING his thousand-page opus, Battlefield Earth, in 1980. (Mitt Romney would name it as his favorite novel.) Hubbard hoped to have the book made into a major motion picture, so the Executive Director of the church, Bill Franks, approached Travolta about producing and starring in it. Travolta

was excited about the prospect. Suddenly Franks got a call from Miscavige saying, “Get me John Travolta. I want to meet that guy!” Miscavige began wining and dining the star. “He just moved in and took over Travolta,” Franks recalled. But he says that privately Miscavige was telling him, “The guy is a faggot. We’re going to out him.”

Fleeing subpoenas from three grand juries, and pursued by forty-eight lawsuits, all naming the founder, Hubbard slipped away from public view on Valentine’s Day, 1980, in a white Dodge van, with velvet curtains and a daybed. It had been customized by John Brousseau, a Sea Org member who took care of all of Hubbard’s vehicles. The elaborate escape plan involved ditching the Dodge for an orange Ford. In the meantime, Brousseau purchased another Dodge van for Hubbard, identical to the first. He then cut the original one into pieces and took them to the dump. The Ford was chopped up and dumped as well.

Hubbard briefly settled in Newport Beach, California, in a one-bedroom apartment with a kitchenette. In the apartment next door were Pat and Annie Broeker, his two closest aides. Pat, a handsome former rock-and-roll guitar player, enthusiastically adopted the role of an undercover operative, running secret errands for Hubbard and going to any lengths to keep their location a secret. His wife, Annie, one of the original Commodore’s Messengers, was a shy blonde, totally devoted to Hubbard.

Hubbard soon decided that the Newport Beach location was compromised, so the three of them hit the road. Pat drove a Chevrolet pickup with a forty-foot Country Aire trailer, which mainly contained Hubbard’s wardrobe, and Annie piloted a luxurious Blue Bird mobile home that John Brousseau had purchased for $120,000 in cash under a false name. The Blue Bird towed a Nissan pickup that Brousseau had converted into a mobile kitchen. For most of a year, this cumbersome caravan roamed the

Sierras, lighting in parks along the way. At one point, Hubbard bought a small ranch with a gold mine, but he didn't really settle down until 1983, on a horse farm in Creston, California, population 270, outside San Luis Obispo, near a spread owned by the country singer Kenny Rogers. He grew a beard and called himself "Jack Farnsworth."

Hubbard had been used to receiving regular shipments of money, but after he took flight, the entire structure of the church was reorganized, making such under-the-table transfers more difficult to disguise. Miscavige ordered that $1 million a week be transferred to the founder, but now it had to be done in a nominally legal manner. One scheme was to commission screenplays based on Hubbard's innumerable movie ideas. That way, Hubbard could be paid for the "treatment"—about $100,000 for each idea. Fifty such treatments were prepared. Paul Haggis was one of the writers asked to participate. He received a message from the old man asking him to write a script called "Influencing the Planet." The script was supposed to demonstrate the range of Hubbard's efforts to improve civilization. Haggis co-wrote the script with another Scientologist, Steve Johnstone. "What they wanted was really quite dreadful," Haggis admitted. Hubbard sent him notes on the draft, but apparently the film was never made.

Meanwhile, Miscavige consolidated his position in the church as the essential conduit to the founder. Miscavige's title was head of Special Project Ops, a mysterious post, and he reported only to Pat Broeker. Miscavige was twenty-three years old at the time and Broeker a decade older. As gatekeepers, they determined what information reached Hubbard's ears. Under their regency, some of Hubbard's most senior executives were booted out—people who might have been considered competitors to Miscavige and Broeker in the future management of the church—and replaced by much younger counterparts.

Miscavige and Broeker would communicate in code on their pagers. At any hour of the night, John Brousseau, who was Miscavige's driver, would take him to one of the several designated pay telephone booths between Los Angeles and Riverside County to wait for a call revealing the rendezvous point. It was usually a parking lot somewhere. The drivers of the two men would wait while Miscavige and Broeker talked, sometimes for hours.

Gale Irwin, who had been on the Apollo when she was sixteen years old and had risen to being the head of the Commodore's Messengers Org, began to wonder what was going on. Hubbard's dispatches had become increasingly paranoid, and his only line of communication to the outside world was through these two ambitious young men. Nearly every one of the original Messengers who had joined Hubbard on the Apollo had been purged. David Mayo, who was Hubbard's personal auditor, had also been shut off from contact. He, too, became suspicious of Miscavige and ordered him to be security-checked, but Miscavige refused this direct order from a superior. Gale Irwin says she confronted him, and Miscavige knocked her to the ground with a flying tackle. (The church denies all charges of Miscavige's abuse.)

Brousseau got a call from Irwin. She was agitated. She told him that Miscavige had gone psychotic. She said she had to contact Pat Broeker right away for a meeting. When Brousseau asked to talk to Miscavige, Irwin began shouting orders at him, saying that Miscavige was raving and had to be restrained. In no way could Brousseau talk to him! He must arrange the meeting with Broeker immediately!

Brousseau drove her to a prearranged pay phone outside a Denny's restaurant in San Bernardino, which was used only for emergencies. As they waited for the call from Broeker's driver, a black Dodge van came barreling into the parking lot and slammed to a halt between Brousseau's car and the phone booth. The doors

blew open and half a dozen men spilled out of the van, including David Miscavige. Irwin says that Miscavige used a tire iron to pummel the pay phone, without much effect. Finally he was able to yank the receiver off the cable. Miscavige ordered Irwin into the van, and she meekly acquiesced.

With this action, the coup was accomplished: Miscavige and Broeker were now fully and defiantly in control of Scientology. The founder was isolated, caged by his notoriety and paranoia. No one knew if the orders coming from over the rainbow were from Hubbard or his lieutenants, but now it no longer mattered. Irwin was busted. A year later, in 1984, Miscavige declared her a Suppressive Person, which would happen to nearly every one of the original Messengers, the most trusted circle of Hubbard's advisers. David Mayo was sent to the RPF. He was made to run around a pole in the searing desert heat for twelve hours a day, until his teeth fell out.

There was one last obstacle that Miscavige had to remove. In 1979, as a result of the FBI raid, Mary Sue had been charged and convicted of conspiracy, along with ten other Scientology executives, and sentenced to five years in prison, despite the evidence that her health was in decline. She suffered from chronic pancreatitis, a painful condition that made it difficult to digest food. "She was frail and thin and completely oblivious to anything she had done wrong," recalled a Scientologist who escorted her into the back door of the courthouse in Washington. "She said, 'I don't want to be photographed.' That was more important to her than the fact that she was going to jail for five years."

While her case was on appeal, Mary Sue was placed in a comfortable house in Los Angeles, well away from Hubbard. She posed a dilemma for the church, and particularly for her husband. Hubbard was concerned that he might be indicted by a grand jury in New York that was looking into the church's harassment of

Paulette Cooper, the journalist who had written The Scandal of Scientology. If Mary Sue were sufficiently alienated to implicate Hubbard, Scientology would be devastated. Hubbard dictated frequent letters telling her what to say to prosecutors; the letters would be read to her and then destroyed. A crew of Messengers spent weeks sorting through all the orders and correspondence relating to Operation Snow White and other possible criminal activity that the FBI had not seized, making sure that Hubbard's name was excised from any damning evidence.

Mary Sue still commanded the loyalty and affection of many Scientologists who saw her as a martyr. Moreover, she refused to divorce Hubbard or to resign her position as head of the Guardian's Office. The sprawling intelligence apparatus that she built still operated in secret, behind locked doors. The Commodore's Messengers Org and the Guardian's Office were parallel and sometimes competing arms of their founders, and they had often struggled for power, in a kind of bureaucratic marital spat. Now that Miscavige was fully in control of the CMO, he concluded that the GO had to be ripped out of Mary Sue's grasp—but without upsetting her to the point that she sought revenge.

In the spring of 1981, a delegation of Commodore's Messengers—including Miscavige and Bill Franks—went to meet Mary Sue at a conference room in the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. Each of them wore a hidden microphone. Miscavige's audacious plan was to seize control of the GO and place it under control of the Messengers, who numbered only about fifty at the time. Several thousand Guardians were still working for Mary Sue. She had treated them kindly, paying them decent wages and allowing them to live in private homes. Most of them remained loyal to her and thought that she was being made a scapegoat. They would have to be purged.

Mary Sue received the delegation of Messengers coolly. Her case

was still on appeal, but the outcome was clear: she was taking the fall for a program that Hubbard, after all, had put in motion. She understood the influence she still wielded in the church and the threat she represented. She demanded to deal with Hubbard himself, but Miscavige refused. He controlled access to the church's founder so thoroughly that even his wife couldn't talk to him. Indeed, they hadn't spoken in more than a year. Mary Sue cursed Miscavige and threatened to throw a heavy ashtray at him. But her negotiating position was not strong, unless she was willing to betray everything she had worked to build with the man she still believed was a savior.

It must have been galling for her to negotiate with Miscavige, who was twenty-one at the time—the age Mary Sue was when she married Hubbard. Privately, she called him "Little Napoleon." In exchange for her resignation from the GO, the Messengers offered a house and a financial settlement. Mary Sue had substantial legal bills and no other means of support. Under the guise of having to sort out the messes that would be left behind in the wake of her resignation, Miscavige went over a number of different subjects, even including a couple of murders that were alleged to have been committed by a member of the GO office in London. He wanted Mary Sue on tape, confessing to other crimes, which could then be fed to the government. This was done, Bill Franks asserts, with Hubbard's knowledge: "Hubbard wanted her out of the way. He wanted all guns pointed at her so he could go about his old age without worrying about being thrown in jail."

Mary Sue lost her last appeal. She began serving a five-year sentence in Lexington, Kentucky, in January 1983. Hubbard never visited her in prison. Her letters went unanswered. "I don't believe he's getting them," she later reasoned. Mary Sue was released after serving one year. She never saw her husband again.

MANY PEOPLE WHO JOINED the church under Hubbard would later contend that Miscavige's machinations were opposed to the will of the founder. But there is evidence that Miscavige was acting on Hubbard's direct orders. Jesse Prince says that when Hubbard was angry at someone he would command Miscavige to hit or spit on them, then report back when he had done so. Larry Brennan, who was a member of the church's Watchdog Committee in charge of dealing with legal affairs, had seen how a minor infraction could be inflated into a major offense that justified the most severe penalty. There were no mistakes; there were only crimes. Every action was intended. This logic brooked no defense.

Once a week, after Hubbard disappeared, Brennan had to drive ninety miles southeast of Los Angeles to the little town of Hemet in order to write up confidential reports to be sent to the missing leader. The church operated a secret base there in a former resort known as Gilman Hot Springs. Two Sea Org bases are located on the old Gilman resort, Gold and Int. Gold Base is named after Golden Era Productions, the lavishly equipped film and recording studio set up by Hubbard to make his movies and produce Scientology materials. Int. Base is the church's international headquarters. On the north side of the highway, nestled against the dry hills, is Bonnie View, the house that Hubbard hoped one day to live in. Miscavige keeps an office on the property. Few Scientologists, and almost no one outside of the church, knew of its existence. The local community was told that the bankrupt property on California Highway 79 had been purchased in 1978 by the "Scottish Highland Quietude Club." Most of the Sea Org members on the base had no idea where they were; they had been transported there overnight from the former base at La Quinta in a deliberately circuitous route.

Gold Base was the only place deemed secure enough for Brennan to send his dispatches. Brennan says that in late 1982 he witnessed

Miscavige abusing three Scientology executives who had made some small error. The three offenders were lined up before their leader. According to Brennan, he punched the first one in the mouth. The next he slapped hard in the face. He choked the third executive so hard that Brennan thought the man would black out. No explanation was offered. This came at a time when Hubbard was furious that his legal situation left him in limbo, and he was upset about the church's finances. Brennan had access to all the correspondence coming from Hubbard to the Watchdog Committee, and he knew that Hubbard was demanding action. "He wanted a head on a pike," Brennan said.

Gold Base, the Scientology compound in Gilman Hot Springs, California. It includes Bonnie View (center rear), awaiting Hubbard's anticipated return from other realms; the management building (to its right), which houses David Miscavige's offices; and staff apartments (right front).

Brennan says that after the beating, the three executives were held as prisoners on the base.[3] They were assigned lowly tasks and

Sea Org members spat on them whenever they passed. Later, one of the three men approached Brennan, in tears, worried about what might happen to him. “He had to have great courage just to speak to me, because they were not allowed to speak unless spoken to,” Brennan recalled. “I had Hubbard’s orders in my hand to spit on him. I couldn’t do it.”

In December 1982, David Miscavige married Michele “Shelly” Barnett, a slight blonde, twenty-one years old. She had been one of the early Commodore’s Messengers on the Apollo. She was quiet, petite, and younger than most of the other Messengers at the time—about twelve when she joined—and a bit overshadowed by the older girls. “She was a sweet, innocent thing thrown into chaos,” one of her shipmates recalled.

John Brousseau was married to Shelly’s older sister, Clarisse, and one day he proposed that the two couples go fishing. Miscavige had never been. They drove up to Lake Hemet, a glacial lake in the mountains above Gold Base. It was a beautiful spring day, the sun was glinting off the water, a mild breeze was blowing, the wildflowers were out, and birds were singing. Everyone was dressed in shorts or jeans. They had brought sandwiches and sodas for a picnic.

Brousseau baited the poles with salmon eggs, and then showed the others how to cast. He said to just let the line sink to the bottom and then sit back and wait. Maybe a trout would take a bite.

Brousseau recalls looking over at Miscavige five minutes later. He was visibly shaking, his veins were bulging. “You got to be kidding me!” he said. “This is it? You just sit here and fucking wait?”

Brousseau said that was the general idea.

“I can’t stand it!” Brousseau remembers Miscavige saying. “I feel like jumping in and grabbing a fish with my fucking hands! Or

cramming the hook down their fucking throats!”

That was the end of the fishing trip.

After Quentin’s suicide and Mary Sue’s prison sentence, the remainder of Hubbard’s family broke apart. His oldest daughter, Diana, had been Hubbard’s main supporter. She and her husband, Jonathan Horwich, lived at Flag Base in the Fort Harrison penthouse in Clearwater, with their daughter, Roanne. As her father became increasingly remote, Diana decided to try her luck as a singer and songwriter. She released a soft-jazz album titled LifeTimes in 1979, using notable Scientologist musicians, including Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke, as backup. The cover features her in a black dress, lips parted, arms crossed, her pale shoulders hunched, and her waist-length red hair stirring in the breeze.

Although the album received little notice, Diana decided to leave her husband, and the Sea Org, and marry John Ryan, a public Scientologist who had produced her record. She moved to Los Angeles to dedicate herself to music. Horwich agreed to the divorce, but he refused to part with Roanne, who was two years old at the time. Hubbard strongly supported this decision, but Mary Sue was opposed. She wanted her granddaughter to be nearby, and she began agitating for Diana to gain custody.

Several missions were sent to bargain with Diana, but she was unmoved. Finally, Jesse Prince got the assignment. “It was a do or die mission,” he recalled. If he didn’t succeed in gaining clear custody of Roanne for Horwich, he would be sent back to the RPF. For whatever reason, Diana signed the release he put in front of her. Hubbard was thrilled. He rewarded Prince with a leather coat, a gold chain, some cash, and an M14 assault rifle.

Suzette, Diana’s younger sister, was increasingly disaffected. Quentin’s death had been a blow, but the fact that there had been no ceremony afterward—his name was essentially erased from family history—left her embittered and wary. She longed for the

warmth of her Saint Hill childhood, when her mother would read to her and her father would laugh and toss her in the air. Those days were long gone. The forces pulling her family apart were far too powerful for her to resist. She wanted nothing more than to walk away and start a family of her own. But that was not so easily done. She had tried to elope with another Sea Org member she had met years before, in Washington. “We had fallen in love and wanted to get married and live together for the rest of our lives,” her suitor, Arnaldo Lerma, later said. He flew to Clearwater; they got blood tests and a marriage license. Suzette then confessed the plan in an auditing session. “She spilled the beans and I got arrested—well, detained,” Lerma said. “I remember being in a room with a chair and a light bulb and two guys outside the door. I was interrogated for several hours. I was not struck, hit, or physically abused. However, what I do remember is the deal I was offered: ‘We will give you a guarantee of safe passage out of the state of Florida with all body parts attached if you tell Suzette Hubbard the marriage is off.’ ” Lerma did as he was told, leaving the church as well. Later, when Hubbard learned about another man Suzette was interested in, he paid him to leave her alone. She was isolated and desperately lonely.

She did finally get married to a Scientologist named Michael Titmus, in 1980, when she was twenty-five, but her father didn’t trust him either. Titmus was sent to RPF and denounced as an infiltrator. Suzette was told to divorce him, which she did; soon after that, she was transferred to Gold Base to work in the Household Unit, cleaning rooms and doing the laundry—for David Miscavige, among others.

IN 1985, with Hubbard in seclusion, the church faced two of its most difficult court challenges. In Los Angeles, a former Sea Org

member, Lawrence Wollersheim, sought $25 million for emotional distress caused by "brainwashing" and emotional abuse. He said he had been forced to disconnect from his family and locked for eighteen hours a day in the hold of a ship docked in Long Beach, California, deprived of sleep, and fed only once a day. After attaining OT III status, Wollersheim said, his "core sense of identity" had been shattered. "At OT III, you find out you're really thousands of individual beings struggling for control of your body. Aliens left over from space wars that are giving you cancer or making you crazy or making you impotent," he later recalled. "I went psychotic on OT III. I lost a sense of who I was."

In order to substantiate the charges, Wollersheim's attorney introduced Scientology's most confidential materials—including the OT III secrets—as evidence. At this point, those materials were still unknown to the general public. The loss of Scientology's chest of secrets was not just a violation of the sanctity of its esoteric doctrines; from the church's perspective, open examination of these materials represented a copyright infringement and a potential business catastrophe. Those who were traveling up the Bridge would now know their destination. The fog of mystery would be dissipated.

The Wollersheim suit had been filed in 1980, but Scientology lawyers had been frantically dragging it out with writs and motions. An undercover campaign was launched to discredit or blackmail Wollersheim's lawyer, Charles O'Reilly. His house was bugged and his office was infiltrated by a Scientology operative. There was an attempt to trap him or his bodyguards in a compromising situation with women. The church also harassed the judge in the case, Ronald Swearinger. "I was followed," the judge later said. "My car tires were slashed. My collie drowned in my pool." A former Scientology executive, Vicki Aznaran, later testified that there was an effort to compromise the judge by

setting up his son, who they heard was gay, with a minor boy.

When the case finally came to trial, the church stacked the courtroom with OT VIIs. "They thought OT VIIs could move mountains," Tory Christman, a former Sea Org member, said. Although she was only an OT III at the time, she persuaded church officials to let her into the room. The Scientologists directed their intentions toward the judge and the jury, hoping to influence their decisions telepathically.

On a Friday afternoon, the judge announced that the OT III documents would be made public at nine a.m. the following Monday, on a first-come, first-serve basis. This was the disaster the church had been dreading. When the courthouse opened that Monday, there were fifteen hundred Scientologists lined up. They filled three hallways of the courthouse, and overwhelmed the clerk's office with requests to photocopy the documents in order to keep anyone else from getting their hands on the confidential materials. They kept it up until the judge issued a restraining order at noon, pending a hearing later in the week. Despite these efforts, the Los Angeles Times managed to get a copy of the OT III materials and published a summary of them.

"A major cause of mankind's problems began 75 million years ago," the Times account begins. In a studiously neutral tone, the lengthy article reveals Scientology's occult cosmology. The planet Earth, formerly called Teegeeack, was part of a confederation of planets under the leadership of a despotic ruler named Xenu. Although the details were sketchy, the secrets that had stunned Paul Haggis were suddenly public knowledge. The jury awarded Wollersheim $30 million.[3] Worse than the financial loss was the derision that greeted the church all over the world and the loss of control of its secret doctrines. The church has never recovered from the blow.

The other court challenge that year involved Julie Christofferson

Titchbourne, a young defector who had spent her college savings on Scientology counseling. She argued that the church had falsely claimed that Scientology would improve her intelligence, creativity, communication skills, and even her eyesight. For the first time, much of Hubbard's biography came under attack. The litigant said that Hubbard had been portrayed as a nuclear physicist and civil engineer. The evidence showed that he attended George Washington University but never graduated. In response to Hubbard's claim that he had cured himself of his injuries in the Second World War, the evidence showed he had never been wounded. Other embarrassing revelations came to light. The church stated that Hubbard was paid less than the average Scientology staff member—at the time, about fifteen dollars a week—but witnesses for the plaintiff testified that in one six-month period in 1982, about $34 million had been transferred from the church into Hubbard's personal bank from a Liberian corporation.[4] One former Scientologist described training sessions in which members were hectored and teased over sensitive issues until they were desensitized and would no longer react. In two such instances of "bull-baiting," Christofferson Titchbourne saw the eight-year-old son of the registrar repeatedly put his hands down the front of a woman student's dress and a female coach unzipping the pants of a male student and fondling his genitals. The jury seemed most disturbed by testimony that members of the Guardian's Office had culled the auditing files of members, looking for salacious material that could be used to blackmail potential defectors. Christofferson Titchbourne had originally sought a $30,000 refund from the church. The jury awarded her $39 million. At the time, that sum could have bankrupted Scientology.

That evening, Miscavige and other members of the church hierarchy had a gloomy meeting in a condo in Portland, Oregon. One of the executives vowed that Christofferson Titchbourne

would never collect because he was going to kill her. “I don’t care if I get the chair,” he said. “It’s only one lifetime.” There was a lengthy silence, and then Miscavige said, “No, here’s what we’re going to do.” And on the spot, he came up with the Portland crusade.

As many as 12,000 Scientologists came from all over the world in May and June 1985 to protest the judgment in what they called the Battle of Portland. Day after day they marched around the Multnomah County courthouse, shouting “Religious freedom now!” and carrying banners reading WE SHALL OVERCOME! Chick Corea flew in from Japan to play a concert, along with other musicians affiliated with the church, including Al Jarreau, Stanley Clarke, and Edgar Winter. Stevie Wonder phoned in and sang “I Just Called to Say I Love You” as the crowd cheered.

The most notable presence in Portland was John Travolta. It was a decisive moment in his relationship with the religion. The church had made enormous efforts to persuade him to attend. Two years before the Portland crusade, Travolta had told Rolling Stone that although he still believed in Scientology, he had not had any auditing for the past year and a half. When asked if he was being exploited by the church to promote its cause, he responded, “I’ve been something of an ostrich about how it’s used me, because I haven’t investigated exactly what the organization’s done. One part of me says that if somebody gets some good out of it, maybe it’s all right. The other part of me says that I hope it uses some taste and discretion. I wish I could defend Scientology better, but I don’t think it even deserves to be defended, in a sense.”

But here he was in Portland, unshaven and exhausted, having flown his own plane in at midnight for a two-hour visit. “Once in a while you have to stand up for what you believe in, and I’m here tonight, I’ve had counseling, I give counseling, and I don’t want to lose that,” he declared. “And it’s as simple as that.”

The Portland march was one of the greatest triumphs in Scientology's history, capped by the judge's declaration of a mistrial. He ruled that Christofferson Titchbourne's lawyers had presented prejudicial arguments to the jury by saying that Hubbard was a sociopath and that Scientology was not a religion but a terrorist organization. Church members who had been in Portland would always feel an ecstatic sense of kinship. (A year and a half later, the church settled with Christofferson Titchbourne for an undisclosed sum.)

FOR YEARS, Hubbard's declining health was a secret known to few in the upper levels of the church. Only a handful of his closest followers were allowed to see him. He had made no clear arrangements for a successor, nor was there any open talk of it. There was an unstated belief that Operating Thetans did not grow frail or lose their mental faculties. Old age and illness were embarrassing refutations of Scientology's core beliefs.

Death was a subject that Hubbard rarely addressed, assuring Scientologists that it was of little importance: "If you had an automobile sitting out here on the street and you came out totally expecting to find this automobile there and it's gone, it's been stolen and so forth, you'd be upset," he said in 1957, reflecting on the death of one of his close followers. "Well, that's just about the frame of mind a thetan is usually in when he finds his body dead." The thetan has to report to a "between-lives" area, Hubbard later explained, which for most of them is the planet Mars. There the thetan is given a "forgetter implant." "The implant is very interesting," Hubbard later wrote. "The preclear is seated before a wheel which contains numbers of pictures. As the wheel turns, these pictures go away from him.... The whole effect is to give him the impression that he has no past life." The thetan is then sent

back to Earth to pick up a baby's body as soon as it is born. "The baby takes its first gasp, why, a thetan usually picks it up." Sometimes there is a shortage of new bodies, and occasionally a thetan will follow a pregnant woman around waiting for the moment of delivery so he can pounce. Contrarily, when a body dies, it's important for the thetan to be freed as quickly as possible—preferably by cremating the corpse and scattering the ashes in water, so that nothing clings together. "It's very confused, this whole subject of death," Hubbard observed. "It's quite funny, as a matter of fact, the amount of this and that that is paid, the amount of flowers and that sort of thing which are shipped around at dead corpses after the thetan has shoved off, and so on. It's very amusing." He presented himself as an expert on the subject, claiming he had been pronounced dead but had come back to life on two or three occasions.

Hubbard suffered a severe stroke on January 16, 1986, at the Creston ranch. He realized that he was in his final days. He summoned Ray Mithoff, one of his most senior Messengers, to help him put his affairs in order and administer a "death assist." He didn't ask to see any of his family members; indeed, one of his last actions was to sign a will reducing their inheritance, except for a provision for Mary Sue, who received $1 million, which may have been a part of the agreement that had kept her from testifying against him. He had previously disowned his daughter Alexis, an embarrassing reminder of his bigamous marriage to Sara Northrup. Hubbard was in a nightgown, pacing up and down, saying, "Let's get this over with! My head is hurting!" He signed the will with a shaky hand.

Hubbard also proclaimed Flag Order 3879, "The Sea Org & the Future," in which he promoted himself to Admiral and retired the rank of Commodore. He instituted a new rank, that of Loyal Officer, after the stalwart members of the Galactic Confederacy

who had imprisoned the tyrannical overlord Xenu. Hubbard appointed only two persons to serve at that level, Pat and Annie Broeker. They were an attractive couple, his closest advisers; he was clearly passing them the scepter. “I’ll be scouting the way and doing the first port survey missions,” Hubbard promised his followers. “We will meet again later.”

On Friday evening, January 24, 1986, Hubbard died in the Blue Bird bus that had served as his living quarters for the past three years. Ray Mithoff, Pat Broeker, and Hubbard’s personal physician, Eugene Denk, were at his side, along with a handful of acolytes and employees. His body had suffered the usual insults of old age, along with the consequences of obesity and a lifetime of heavy smoking. Dr. Denk had given him injections of Vistaril, a tranquilizer, usually prescribed for anxiety. Whatever powers Scientology was supposed to bestow were no more evident in the death of its founder than they had been in his life.

Late that night, a handful of senior executives and a couple of private investigators drove to a restaurant in Paso Robles, where they were met by Pat Broeker, who guided them to the Creston ranch. The site was so secret that none of the executives, including Miscavige, had ever actually been there. They arrived around four in the morning. Earle Cooley, a church attorney, took charge of the body. At seven thirty that morning, about twelve hours after Hubbard’s death, the mortuary in San Luis Obispo was notified. Cooley demanded an immediate cremation, but when the owner of the mortuary saw the name on the death certificate, she called the coroner. After learning that Hubbard had signed a new will the day before his death, the coroner ordered an autopsy, but Cooley was able to produce a document signed by Hubbard stating that an autopsy would violate his religious beliefs. The lawyer did permit the coroner to take a blood sample and fingerprints to verify that the corpse was actually Hubbard. Many questions would be asked,

since Hubbard hadn't been seen in public for nearly six years.

There was another problem that had to be dealt with quickly: how to explain Hubbard's death to Scientologists. Broeker and Miscavige came up with a plan: Hubbard didn't die, he had intentionally "dropped his body" in order to move on to a higher level of existence.

Miscavige told one of the other executives he didn't want to see "any grief bullshit." Sinar Parman, Hubbard's former chef, arrived that morning, to help with cooking and logistics. He found Annie Broeker sitting on the floor of the cabin, with Miscavige's wife, Shelly. Annie had obviously been crying. Meanwhile, he noticed Miscavige and Broeker in another room. "They were joking," he recalled. "They were ecstatic. They'd never been so happy."

That Sunday, Hubbard's ashes were scattered in the Pacific.

The next day, more than two thousand Scientologists gathered in the Hollywood Palladium for a special announcement. The news had been kept quiet until then. Miscavige stepped onto the stage. He was twenty-five years old, wearing his double-breasted Sea Org uniform with a black tie and a gold lanyard over his right shoulder. For most Scientologists, this was their first introduction to the man who would dominate the religion in the decades after the founder's death. Short and trim, with brown hair and sharp features, Miscavige announced to the assembled Scientologists that for the past six years of exile, Hubbard had been investigating new, higher OT levels. "He has now moved on to the next level," Miscavige said. "It's beyond anything any of us has imagined. This level is, in fact, done in an exterior state. Meaning that it is done completely exterior from the body." Someone in the audience whistled in amazement. "At this level of OT, the body is nothing more than an impediment, an encumbrance to any further gain as an OT." The audience began to stir as the realization began to sink in. "Thus—," Miscavige said, then paused and adjusted the microphone. "Thus, at

two thousand hours, Friday, the twenty-fourth of January, A.D. 36 [that is, thirty-six years after the publication of Dianetics], L. Ron Hubbard discarded the body he had used in this lifetime for seventy-four years, ten months, and eleven days." Miscavige turned to a large photograph of Commodore Hubbard with the waves behind him and began to applaud. "Hip, hip, hooray!" he cried, as the audience echoed him. "Hip, hip, hooray!"

MISSIONAIRES HAD BEEN SENT to Scientology centers all over the world to coordinate the announcement of Hubbard's death. Afterward, they flew back to Los Angeles and met at the Liberace mansion in West Hollywood, near the church headquarters. Most executives in the church naturally assumed that the leadership had already passed to Pat and Annie Broeker, who were the Loyal Officers, the highest post available. That seemed to be as clear a statement of the line of succession as anyone would ever find. Miscavige was not mentioned in the founder's final declaration.

Jesse Prince was at the gathering, having just returned from delivering the news to Scientologists in Italy. After his lengthy indoctrination in RPF, Prince had become a trusted member of the Sea Org inner circle. He and Miscavige were friendly. Prince could tell that he was upset when Miscavige confided that something would have to be done about Pat Broeker. During the memorial service at the Hollywood Palladium, Broeker had told the assembled Scientologists that Hubbard had made significant breakthroughs in his research. At that point, the highest level possible on the Bridge to Total Freedom was OT VII (OT VIII would not be introduced for another two years). Broeker surprised everyone by saying that before Hubbard dropped his body, he had completed the OT IX and OT X levels. Broeker even held up a handwritten page that he represented as being from OT X. It was a

very long string of numbers, which he said was a date. It was so far back in time he couldn't denominate it, except to say it was "twelve down and fifteen across," about 180 numerals altogether. "I wanted to show the significance, the magnitude of what he's done," Broeker had said. The audience had tittered in amazement. The little teaser about the OT X materials reinforced Broeker's standing as the new leader of the church. Only he knew what lay ahead.

Every new religion faces an existential crisis following the death of its charismatic founder. Through his missionary work, Paul the Apostle kept Christianity alive after the crucifixion of Jesus. Brigham Young rescued the Church of Latter Day Saints following the murder of Joseph Smith by leading the Mormon exodus across the Great Plains into Utah. Religious geniuses arise all the time, but the historical test falls upon the successor, whose fate is to be forever overshadowed by the founder. Miscavige knew his own talents and limitations. He didn't pretend to be a prophet, nor was he skilled in public relations. "People think I'm trying to be the leader," he confided to his brother-in-law, John Brousseau. "That's not my job. I'm the whip." Other possible successors had been purged or had fled the organization, however, leaving only the Broekers as rivals. Neither of them was a match for Miscavige. He angrily told Prince that Pat had made a fool of himself at the Palladium. Prince was surprised. Until that night in the Liberace mansion, he had been convinced that Miscavige had no interest in leading the church; now he realized that Miscavige felt compelled to remove the Broekers in order to keep Scientology from being destroyed. Whatever reservations Miscavige had had about seizing power had fallen away.

Over the past six years, Pat Broeker and David Miscavige had forged a powerful alliance. Broeker had been on one side of the gate, controlling all access to Hubbard; Miscavige had been on the

other, acting as the conduit for the church. Broeker deliberately stayed in the shadows, setting up elaborate drops for the messages that had passed to and from Hubbard's hideaway, sometimes adopting disguises and carrying an Uzi machine gun when he left the ranch. He fancied himself a crafty undercover operative. The consequence of his secrecy, however, was that even Scientology insiders knew little about him.

David Miscavige speaking at the inauguration of the Church of Scientology in Madrid, 2004

Miscavige was also well schooled in intrigue. Although he was still quite a young man, he had been running operations for Hubbard for several years, with brutal efficiency. In order to eliminate Hubbard's designated successors, however, Miscavige needed a lieutenant with similar qualities of remorselessness and total commitment.

MARK RATHBUN CAME FROM a distinguished but deeply troubled family. His father was a graduate of the US Naval Academy. His artistic mother was the daughter of Haddon Sundblom, the illustrator who created some of the most enduring images in American commercial history—Aunt Jemima, the Quaker Oats man, and the famous Santa Claus drinking a Coca-Cola beside the Christmas tree. The Rathbun family lived in Marin County, a Bohemian enclave just north of San Francisco. When Mark was a young child, his mother had a series of nervous breakdowns. On five or six occasions she received what was the standard treatment of the day, electroshock therapy. In September 1962, when Mark was five, his mother's body was found floating in San Francisco Bay. Her car was parked on the Golden Gate Bridge.

Mark turned into a restless young man. He went to college to study creative writing but dropped out in order to experience the real world. In 1976 he was living in a camp of migrant workers, hoping to become the next Jack London, when he learned that his brother Bruce had become catatonic and had been committed to a state hospital in Oregon.

Mark hitchhiked to Portland to oversee Bruce's care. He carried around a backpack full of books on Buddhism and the works of Jiddu Krishnamurti. Although it is easy to see in hindsight that the nineteen-year-old Mark Rathbun was primed, because of his troubled background and questing philosophy, to become a part of

the Church of Scientology, it wasn't clear to him at the time. His current spiritual mentor, Krishnamurti, preached against the idea of messiahs, but he also stated that every individual has the responsibility for discovering the causes of his own limitations in order to attain universal spiritual and psychological freedom. That resonated with Hubbard's aim of "clearing the planet."

Psychotherapy had evolved somewhat from the indignities that had been inflicted on their mother; it had moved into pharmacology. But drugs didn't seem to offer a solution to Bruce's problems; in Mark's opinion, his brother was just being warehoused, held in a chemical straitjacket. Rathbun got a job as a short-order cook at Dave's Deli, and each day, when he went to the bus stop in downtown Portland on his way to the hospital, he would pass the Scientology mission on Salmon Street. He would banter with the Scientology recruiters and soon got to know them by name. One day, he told a recruiter, "I've got ten minutes. Why don't you give me your best shot?" The Scientologist started pitching the Hubbard communications course, which at the time cost fifty dollars. It immediately appealed to Rathbun. "The problem is, I've only got twenty-five bucks to my entire name," he said. The recruiter let him take the course, and threw in a copy of Dianetics as well.

In that first course, Rathbun went exterior. It was completely real to him. All the Eastern philosophy he had absorbed had been leading to this moment. He finally realized that he was separate from his body. Hadn't this been the point of the Buddha's teachings—to isolate the spirit and end the repetitive cycle of life and death? From that moment on, Rathbun never looked back. He was transformed.

Another recruiter persuaded Rathbun that he would be better able to deal with his brother's problems if he had more training, which he could afford if he joined the Sea Org. Rathbun signed the

billion-year contract in January 1978.[5]

A few months later, Rathbun was sent to work in LA. One night, he was assigned to escort Diane Colletto, the twenty-five-year-old editor of Scientology's Auditor magazine, from the publications building to the Scientology complex in Hollywood where they both lived. It was late at night on August 19, 1978. Diane was a petite and mousy intellectual, with thick glasses. A diligent worker, she was often the last to leave the office. On this night, she was frightened.

Diane's husband, John Colletto, a highly trained auditor, had recently been declared a Suppressive Person. John had gotten into an argument with church officials over a matter of policy. After being declared, he went to visit a Scientology chaplain, who could see that he was having a breakdown. He kept crying and grabbing his head in despair. At that point, he was forcibly detained in the RPF. He spent several weeks there, but managed to escape. Diane was ordered to disconnect from him. She told the chaplain that John had threatened her, saying that if he couldn't have Scientology, then neither could she.

Rathbun—a big man, a former college basketball player—knew nothing of this as he rode back to the berthing with Diane in her Fiat. She was uncommunicative. She drove north on Rampart Boulevard, where the Pubs Org was located, to Sunset, and then left on Santa Monica Boulevard. It was mid-August, but there was a breeze from the ocean and the night air was unseasonably cool. As soon as Diane turned the corner from North Edgemont Street onto Fountain Avenue, in front of the Scientology complex, a pair of headlights on high beam blinded them, then a car rammed into them, pinning Diane's vehicle against the curb.

Rathbun was in shock, but he managed to get out of the passenger side of the car. They had come to a stop in front of a small house with a picket fence. He saw the man in the other car

get out and run toward Diane, who was still in the driver's seat. Rathbun came around the front of the car, just in time to hear a popping noise and the sound of glass shattering. It was the first time in his life he had ever heard a gunshot. Jesse Prince, who was in RPF on the seventh floor, heard the sound and rushed to the windows. People were shouting, "John Colletto!" Everyone knew immediately what was happening.

Rathbun grabbed Colletto, and they spun around in the street. He got Colletto in a headlock, but Colletto pistol-whipped him and Rathbun momentarily lost consciousness. Both of them tumbled to the ground.

When Rathbun recovered, he saw Diane on all fours, crawling on the sidewalk, and Colletto running toward her with the gun. Rathbun says he got up and tackled John. They crashed through the picket fence and wrestled on the lawn. More shots were fired. At one point, according to Rathbun, the barrel of the revolver was pressed against the nape of his neck and Colletto pulled the trigger. The gun didn't fire, but Rathbun went exterior, viewing the scene from twelve feet above his body.

Colletto broke free and caught up to his wife. He stuck the gun in her ear. Rathbun says he saw what was happening and did a "flying sidekick," but at that fatal moment the gun fired.

Colletto was knocked to the ground by Rathbun's blow and the gun skittered across the pavement. Rathbun picked it up and tried to fire it at Colletto, but the chambers were all empty. Colletto got in his car and screeched away.

Rathbun went back to Diane. Blood was gurgling and spewing from her mouth. He thought she was drowning in her own blood. Rathbun took off his shirt and put it under her head. As he heard the sirens screaming, she died in his arms.[6]

Three days later, John Colletto's decomposing body was found. He had slashed his wrists and bled to death on the shoulder of the

Ventura Freeway.

Because of this incident, Rathbun was singled out for his fearlessness, or what Scientology terms his "high level of confront." Soon after that, he was sent to La Quinta, Hubbard's winter headquarters, where the old man was just then building up his moviemaking enterprise. Miscavige had appointed Rathbun head of what was known as the "All Clear" unit. The object was to resolve the dozens of lawsuits around the country that had named Hubbard as a defendant. He was also the target of grand juries in Tampa, New York, and Washington, DC. Hubbard wanted to be able to return to his moviemaking full-time, but he was afraid to show himself until he was assured that he wouldn't be hauled into court. (He died before that happened.)

Like many Sea Org members on the secret base, Rathbun adopted an alias for security reasons, one that was similar to his real name but that separated him from his previous identity; it also made it more difficult for anyone to find him. Mark became Marty.

AS THE NEW CHURCH LEADER, Pat Broeker quickly sought to exert his influence. He had a special uniform made up for himself, with solid gold epaulettes, and a "Loyal Officer" flag that was to be flown wherever he was in residence. He announced that he was going to issue a new "Grade Chart" on Sea Org Day in Clearwater. He justified the alteration of Hubbard's sacred material with his own divinations because he claimed to be in telepathic communication with the founder. His Sea Org Day speech was stymied, however, when he was told that church authorities expected that a government raid would take place if he showed himself in public. That wasn't true, but it wasn't out of the question. For several years, the leaders of the church, including Hubbard, Miscavige, and Broeker, had been targets of an IRS criminal investigation. Church

lawyers persuaded Broeker that while the investigation was still ongoing he should confine himself to another ranch near Creston that Hubbard had purchased. Broeker was content with that arrangement. He seemed more at home with the quarter horses that he so lovingly purchased with the church's money than he did with the bureaucrats in the church hierarchy. He continued shopping for exemplary breeding stock even after Hubbard's death, claiming he was carrying out the founder's vision. He seemed to think he could run the church from the sidelines.

Other than Hubbard's imprimatur, Broeker had few assets on his side. He had the unfortunate combination of being garrulous without being articulate. Many of the executives he had been close to had been forced out of the church or had fled. Even people who didn't like him, however, were fond of Annie. She was in many ways her husband's opposite. She was measured where he was goofy and impetuous. Sweet and shy, with a fragile beauty that some compared to the actress Jessica Lange, Annie had been born into Scientology and was one of the few original Messengers who hadn't been purged. In 1982, Hubbard had made her Inspector General of the Religious Technology Center, the highest post in the church bureaucracy, in charge of protecting the sanctity of Scientology's spiritual technology. It was a job she was ill suited for, by nature and also by circumstance, as she was not an auditor, and for years she had been living at the remote ranch as Hubbard's caretaker, away from the administration of church affairs. In March 1987, Miscavige seized control of the RTC, making himself the Chairman of the Board. He downgraded the Inspector General's post by dividing it into three parts. His new lieutenant and henchman, Marty Rathbun, became the IG for Ethics.

Still, both Pat and Annie remained untouchable because of Hubbard's final decree. And, most tantalizingly, only Pat seemed to know where the new OT levels—which he now claimed went all

the way up to XV—were hidden. They were his insurance. Nothing could be more precious in the world of Scientology—to its members, who sought to gain Hubbard's final revelations on the Bridge to Total Freedom, and to the organization, which profited from that journey.

At Miscavige's direction, Rathbun hired a team of private investigators to follow Broeker and dig into his private life. One of them was a former cop who met Broeker at a gun show, then began frequenting Broeker's favorite tavern. He would chat him up whenever he came in. They got to be so friendly that at Christmas the ex-cop gave Broeker a cordless phone. Because such phones emit a weak radio signal, Rathbun's minions were able to record Broeker's calls. The detectives followed him everywhere, but there was no clue as to where the secret OT levels might be hidden.

Miscavige still worried that Broeker was holding vital material back. A few months later, he and church attorneys went to the ranch to persuade the Broekers to hand over whatever confidential materials they might have to the church for safekeeping. While this was going on, a gang of a dozen powerful men assembled by Rathbun surrounded the ranch quarters and hid in the bushes.

Inside the ranch house, Miscavige and the lawyers argued that Scientology would never get its tax exemption if the church did not have in its possession its most important documents. Miscavige also threatened Broeker with the prospect of criminal prosecution. Rathbun had discovered that there was $1.8 million of Hubbard's funds that Broeker couldn't account for. Broeker appeared to cave in. He let Rathbun load the file cabinets in the ranch house into a truck. Had Broeker not agreed, Rathbun was prepared to signal his goon squad to storm the place and seize everything. It took months to sort through the voluminous files, only to find that there was really nothing there—certainly, nothing that resembled new OT levels.

In November 1987, the IRS notified the church that its criminal investigation had concluded. No charges were filed, but that also reduced the leverage Miscavige had over Broeker. A few months later, Miscavige decided that a final operation to retrieve the missing OT levels was in order. This time there would be no subterfuge, no subtle argument. Rathbun brought along a team of armed private investigators and off-duty LA cops as muscle, along with several other church executives. One of them found fifty thousand dollars stashed under the kitchen sink.

Miscavige concentrated his attention on Annie. He took her to a separate room and interrogated her as a detective barred the door, preventing her husband from seeing her. Eventually, Annie admitted that Pat kept a storage locker in nearby Paso Robles, and she coughed up the key. Rathbun's team found more files, but not what they wanted. Rathbun eventually came to the conclusion that there were no further OT levels—no OT IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV—it was all a bluff on Broeker's part, a lie that the church would have to live with, since the levels had been so publicly announced.[7]

In April 1988, Miscavige formally canceled Hubbard's final directive, Flag Order 3879, that had named the Broekers Loyal Officers. Miscavige declared that Pat Broeker had fabricated the order, although he produced no evidence to substantiate his charge. Broeker's last claim to the legacy of L. Ron Hubbard was destroyed. He fled the country, followed by two private detectives, Paul Marrick and Greg Arnold, who claim that they tailed Broeker for the next twenty-four years, even to foreign countries. They say they were supervised personally by David Miscavige and paid from church funds. "He lived a very quiet, normal life, and everybody around him loves him," Marrick later said of Broeker. "So that's his whole story from our perspective."

The same day that Miscavige canceled Hubbard's order, Annie showed up in a remote re-education camp, in the Soboba Indian

Reservation in Southern California, that Scientologists called Happy Valley. It had once belonged to an order of nuns, who left a sign on the gate that said VALLEY OF THE SINGING HEART. An armed guard stood watch. Dogs were trained to track down anyone who tried to leave.

Miscavige was now in complete control.

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[1] Miscavige has been circumspect about what missions he actually performed in his capacity as Action Chief. He once testified: "What is a mission? Okay. Well, you have a situation and a situation is defined as a departure, major departure from the ideal scene, and at the bottom of that there's some Y. Y is defined as an explanation that opens a door to a handling. And if you have actually pulled the strings on the situation all the way down, you will now have a Y, which means that the situation can be resolved. A mission would take a situation, knowing what the Y is, and therefore knowing what exact handling steps are thus possible as a result of the door being opened because the Y was found by evaluation, and they would … operate on what is known as a set of mission orders, and the set of mission orders is an exact series of steps, sometimes consecutive, sometimes not, sometimes they can be done concurrently within each other.… These mission orders have an exact purpose to be accomplished, exact major targets, exact primary targets, exact vital targets, exact operating targets; they have listed the means of mission communication, and they have also listed the target date for completion." He did not clarify the situation further. (David Miscavige testimony, Bent Corydon v. Church of Scientology, July 1990.)

[2] The church categorically denies all charges of Miscavige's abuse.

[3] In 1989, an appellate court reduced the judgment to $2.5 million, which the church finally paid in 2002, plus interest, which brought the sum to $8.6 million.

[4] The church claims that Hubbard's income was generated by his book sales.

[5] Rathbun was never able to apply those advanced techniques on his brother. In 1981, two boys walking their dogs near a vacant lot in Garden Grove, California, discovered Bruce Rathbun's body buried under a pile of debris. The cause of death was never determined

and the case was never resolved (www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/?q=police/Unsolved/1981/Rathbun).

[6] The police report confirms Rathbun's story. "A suspect, tentatively I.D.'d as her husband, fired one shot through the driver's side of the auto," the report states. "He then forced her vehicle to stop, got out, and became involved in a fight with her male companion, during which time he was firing the weapon, a .22 caliber (short), 8-shot revolver.... The male companion was able to wrest the revolver from the suspect, at which point the husband fled." The companion was identified as Mark Rathbun. The empty gun was found at the scene (Michael A. Shepherd, County of Los Angeles Case Report, Aug. 19, 1978).

[7] None of the promised levels has ever been released.

6

In Service to the Stars

In 1986, the same year that L. Ron Hubbard died, Paul Haggis appeared on the cover of the church's Celebrity magazine, marking his entry into the pantheon of the Scientology elite. The photo shows Haggis sitting in a director's chair, holding a coffee cup. He's clean-shaven, with glasses, wearing a herringbone jacket with a pocket square in the breast pocket and pleated linen slacks, looking like a nerdy Hollywood executive with a lot of money to spend on clothes. The article took note of his rising influence in Hollywood. He had broken free of the cartoon ghetto after selling a script to The Love Boat, then ascended through the ranks of network television, writing movies of the week and children's shows before settling into sitcoms. He worked on Diff'rent Strokes, Who's the Boss? and One Day at a Time. He was now the executive producer of The Facts of Life, a top-rated Saturday night staple. Celebrity noted, "He is one of the few writers in Hollywood who has major credits in all genres: comedy, suspense, human drama, animation."

In the article, Haggis said of Scientology, "What excited me about the technology was that you could actually handle life, and your problems, and not have them handle you." He added, "I also liked the motto, 'Scientology makes the able more able.' " He credited the church for improving his relationship with his wife, Diane. "Instead of fighting (we did a lot of that before Scientology philosophy) we now talk things out, listen to each other and apply Scientology technology to our problems."

Haggis told the magazine that he had recently gone through the Purification Rundown, a program intended to eliminate body toxins that form a "biochemical barrier to spiritual well-being." For an average of three weeks, participants undergo a lengthy daily regimen, spending up to eight hours a day in a sauna, interspersed with exercise, and taking massive doses of vitamins, especially niacin. In large amounts, niacin can cause liver damage, but it will also stimulate the skin to flush and create a tingling sensation. The church says that this is evidence of drugs and other toxins being purged from the body. Although many in the medical profession have been hostile to the Purification Rundown, citing it as a fraud and a scam, Hubbard thought he deserved a Nobel Prize for it.

In the Celebrity interview, Haggis admitted that he had been skeptical of the procedure before going through it—"My idea of doing good for my body was smoking low-tar cigarettes"—but the Purification Rundown, he said, "was WONDERFUL. I really did feel more alert and more aware and more at ease—I wasn't running in six directions to get something done, or bouncing off the walls when something went wrong." He mentioned the drugs that he had taken when he was young. "Getting rid of all those residual toxins and medicines and drugs really had an effect," he said. "After completing the rundown I drank a diet cola and suddenly could really taste it: every single chemical!" He had recommended the Rundown to others, including his mother, when she was seriously ill, and had persuaded a young writer on his staff to take the course in order to wean herself from various medications. "She could tell Scientology worked by the example I set," Haggis told the magazine. "That made me feel very good."

The Purification Rundown is a fundamental feature of Scientology's drug rehabilitation program, Narconon, which operates nearly two hundred residential centers around the world. Celebrity Scientologists conspicuously promote Narconon, citing

the church's claims that Narconon is "the most effective rehabilitation program there is." Kirstie Alley, who served as the national spokesperson for Narconon for a number of years, describes herself as "the heart and soul of the project," because it had helped break her dependency on cocaine. A year after 9/11, Tom Cruise set up a program for over a thousand rescue workers in New York to go through a similar procedure, which was paid for in part by using city money. Many participants reported positive results, saying that they had sweated a kind of black paste through their pores while in the sauna. The Borough of Manhattan gratefully declared March 13 (Hubbard's birthday), 2004, as "Hubbard Detoxification Day."

Kelly Preston has promoted Narconon in her native Hawaii. "Starting in the schools, we've delivered to over ten thousand different kids," she said. Preston and Travolta's sixteen-year-old son, Jett, who was autistic, died of a seizure in January 2009. His parents had taken him off of Depakote, an anti-seizure medication, saying it was ineffective. (The church claims that it does not oppose the use of such drugs when prescribed by a doctor; however, Hubbard himself denounced the use of anti-seizure medications.) Previously, Preston asserted on the Montel Williams Show that Jett suffered from Kawasaki syndrome, a rare disorder that she thought was brought on by his exposure to pesticides and household chemicals.

"With Jett, you started him on a program that I think is talked about in this book by L. Ron Hubbard," Williams said, holding up Clear Body, Clear Mind, which outlines the principles of the Purification Rundown.

"Exactly," Preston replied.[1] She then talked about her own profound experience on the program. Novocaine from previous dental work began to surface. "I had my entire mouth get numb again for an hour and a half," she said. Other drugs were purged as

well, along with radiation exposure from the sun. “I had a bathing suit when I was seven years old—this is completely true. I had a bathing suit that I thought was so cool with holes in the side and a hole in the center,” she said. “And I got a sunburn in it. And twenty years later, I had this same sunburn come out in my skin, the entire sunburn.” Preston brought copies of Hubbard’s book for the entire studio audience.

DESPITE HIS EXUBERANT TESTIMONIAL, Haggis was increasingly troubled by the contradictions in the church. Scientology had begun to seem like two different things: a systematic approach to self-knowledge, which he found useful and insightful; and a religion that he simply couldn’t grasp. He liked and admired his auditor, and the confessions were helpful, and he continued to advance on the Bridge, even after his unsettling encounter with OT III. He saw so many intelligent people on the path, and he always expected that his concerns would be addressed at the next level. They never were. After OT III, it was all “intergalactic spirituality,” in his opinion. On the other hand, he had already paid for the complete package, so why not continue and see what happened? “Maybe there is something, and I’m missing it,” he told himself.

When Haggis reached OT VII, which was the peak at the time, he still felt confused and unsatisfied. At the top of the OT pyramid, the thetan was promised the ability to control “thought, life, form, matter, energy, space and time, subjective and objective.” The final exercise (according to documents obtained by WikiLeaks—Haggis refused to talk about it) was “Go out to a park, train station or other busy area. Practice placing an intention into individuals until you can successfully and easily place an intention into or on a Being and/or a body.” But even if you could do that, how would you know if you succeeded? If you were transmitting the intention

“Scratch your head” and a person did so, was he responding to your psychic order or was it simply coincidental? It was difficult to evaluate.

Haggis thought that Hubbard was such a brilliant intellect that the failure to grasp these concepts and abilities must be his alone. He finally confided to a counselor at the Celebrity Centre that he didn’t think he was a very good Scientologist because he couldn’t bring himself to believe. He said he felt like a fraud and thought he might have to leave the church. She told him, “There are all sorts of Scientologists,” just as there are many varieties of Jews and Christians with varying levels of belief. The implication was that Haggis could believe whatever he wanted, to “pick and choose,” as he says.

Haggis’s career was going so well that in 1987 he was approached by Ed Zwick and Marshall Herskovitz to write for a new television series called thirtysomething. They were looking for distinctive voices. “I love the fact that you guys are doing a show that’s about emotions,” Haggis told them. “I hate writing about emotions. And I don’t like to talk about my own.” But he seemed to be looking for a chance to push himself creatively. With his first script, Zwick and Herskovitz told him, “This is really good, but where does it come from?” Haggis didn’t know what they meant. “Where does it come from—within you?” they explained. The thought that his own experience mattered was a revelation.

Zwick and Herskovitz sensed that Haggis wasn’t happy on the show; in any case, he got a lucrative offer to create his own series and left after the first season. But he had won two Emmys, for writing and producing, and the experience transformed him as a writer. From working with Zwick and Herskovitz, Haggis became interested in directing. He finally got the chance to do a brief ad for the church about Dianetics. He decided against the usual portrayal of Scientology as a triumphal march toward

enlightenment, choosing instead to shoot a group of people talking about practical ways they had used Dianetics in their lives. It was casual and naturalistic. Church authorities hated it. They told him it looked like a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Then, out of the blue, Haggis got a huge break. He did a favor for a friend who wanted to create a new series that would star Chuck Norris, whose career as an action-movie hero had gone into decline. Haggis wrote the pilot for Walker, Texas Ranger, which ran for eight seasons and was broadcast in a hundred countries. Haggis was credited as a co-creator. "It was the most successful thing I ever did," he said. "Two weeks of work. And they never even used my script."

With his growing accomplishments and wealth, Haggis became a bigger prize for the church. He agreed to teach a workshop on television writing while he was still the executive producer of Facts of Life, and that brought a number of aspiring scriptwriters into the Celebrity Centre. Then, in 1988, Scientology sponsored a Dianetics car in the Indianapolis 500, and Paul and Diane were invited to attend. Executives from the major book chains were attracted to the Scientology reception by the presence of stars, including Kirstie Alley and John Travolta, and also by the fact that Hubbard's books have traditionally sold extraordinarily well. B. Dalton ordered 65,000 copies of Dianetics and Waldenbooks asked for 100,000. Dianetics went back on the New York Times paperback best-seller list for advice books, thirty-eight years after it was originally published.

David Miscavige was at the race. It was one of the few times he and Haggis ever met. The organizer of the event, Bill Dendiu, recalled that Miscavige was not pleased that Haggis had been invited. Dendiu defended his decision because Haggis was now a bona fide celebrity. "He has had a string of hit TV shows and by my estimation is a very devoted member of the church," he told

Miscavige. Paul and Diane met Miscavige and other top-level members of the church for dinner. “Paul takes no shit from anybody,” Dendiu recalled. “The fact that he did not suck up to Miscavige—and in fact, had a couple of little zingers or one-liners for him while we were at the dinner—that got me some additional browbeating.” He added: “You have to understand that no one challenges David Miscavige.”

The Dianetics car crashed in the first lap. Paul and Diane flew home in Travolta’s plane, with Travolta himself at the controls.

SUZETTE HUBBARD BLEW in February 1988.

Five years earlier she had met Guy White, a Sea Org marketing executive, on the RPF running program, which at the time was in Griffith Park in Los Angeles—about fifty people running all day long, even after dinner, stuffing themselves on bread and honey to keep themselves going. Suzette was warned by an auditor that Guy was gay. In fact, Guy didn’t know if he was gay or not. When he joined the staff, he had to respond to a questionnaire that asked, “Have you ever been involved in prostitution, homosexuality, illegal sex or perversion? Give who, when, where, what in each instance.” He had never actually had a homosexual relationship and had been celibate for a decade; moreover, it was generally assumed that homosexuality was a false identity, a “valence,” in Hubbard’s language, and that such longings would disappear when he got to OT III.

Suzette and Guy married in March 1986, three months after her father died. Their son, Tyson, was born nine months and a day later. It was strange having a child on Gold Base. Suzette had been pregnant when the order was issued banning Sea Org members from having children,[2] and the only other child around was Roanne, Diana Hubbard’s daughter. Other Sea Org members looked

upon the children longingly. “People could see what they could never have,” Guy White said. The fact that Tyson had been born so soon after Hubbard’s death, and that he had shockingly red hair, stirred speculation that he might be a reincarnation of the founder. “Is he? Is he?” they asked themselves.

Every church or mission maintains an office for the day Hubbard returns. A pen and a yellow legal pad await him at each of his desks. His personal bathrooms have toothbrushes and identical sets of Thom McAn sandals beside the shower. On Gold Base, his modest original house was razed and replaced with a $10 million mansion. A full-time staff attends the empty residence, regularly laundering the founder’s clothes and keeping the house ready for his white-glove inspection. His vehicles are still in the garage, gassed up, with the keys in the ignition. On his nightstand is a Louis L’Amour novel, with a bookmark placed midway through. The dining table is set for one.

The search for Hubbard’s reincarnated being resembles the quest for the new Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism, although there are few clues about his identity. He had prophesied that he would be out of action “for the next 20–25 years.” In some versions of the story, Hubbard will be recognized by his red hair, which is why Tyson’s birth aroused such expectations.

Suzette was terrified that Tyson would be taken away from her. She had little time with him as it was. There was a Sea Org policy, written by her father, which mandated an hour a day of “family time,” but that had been canceled. Now Suzette was pregnant again. Over a period of days she smuggled toys and clothes via a laundry basket into her little Mazda; then one night she left a farewell note for Guy, grabbed Tyson, and drove to San Diego. A few days later, she moved in with Mary Sue. Mary Sue was living in a house in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles that the church provided when she got out of prison. Amid all the anxiety,

Suzette had a miscarriage.

After Suzette blew, Guy recalls being sent to Happy Valley and being told he would have to divorce his wife. Jonathan Horwich, Roanne's father, was also in Happy Valley, along with Arthur Hubbard, Ron and Mary Sue's youngest child. One night, while Horwich was supposed to be standing guard, Arthur blew and was never recovered.

In October 1988, Guy also decided to escape. Each evening, he went for a stroll along the fence line, a little farther each time, carrying a snack for the German shepherd guard dogs. One night, he jumped the fence, but the dogs betrayed him and began barking. He had to dive off the road when he saw the lights of the blow team coming after him. For hours, he stumbled through the brush, bleeding, his clothes torn, until he made it to Hemet, where he pounded on the door of a bowling alley. In broken Spanish, he told the person who peeked out that he had been in a car wreck.

Guy finally rejoined Suzette. (They had two other children before he came out to her as gay. They divorced in 1998.)

LIKE PAUL HAGGIS, Tom Cruise had been raised Catholic, although he was more religiously inclined than Paul. His family moved frequently, and he spent part of his childhood in Canada, where he had the reputation of being a headstrong, troublesome, charismatic, and charming boy. His schoolwork suffered because of dyslexia, and he later said that when he graduated from high school he was "a functional illiterate." However, he excelled in sports and drama. His family, like the Haggis family, threw themselves into theater, founding an amateur troupe of players in Ottawa. His antisocial, bullying father was a disruptive force in the family, and early one morning, when Cruise was twelve, his mother packed up her three daughters and her precocious son and fled back to America. "We

felt like fugitives," Cruise later recalled.

Spiritual questing and a tendency toward piety were already features of Cruise's personality. He spent a year in seminary in Cincinnati, with a view toward joining the priesthood. But there was another, intensely ambitious side that was focused entirely on stardom. He went to Hollywood when he was eighteen, and managed to get a role in Endless Love, a movie starring Brooke Shields. He was a natural actor, but also persistent and choosy, quickly finding his way into memorable roles. The longing to express his spiritual side had never gone away, but it was difficult, in Hollywood, to know exactly how to fit that in.

There was one church that was especially designed to resolve this dilemma.

Cruise's first wife, the actress Mimi Rogers, introduced him to Scientology in 1986. He had just finished filming Top Gun, which had made him the world's biggest movie star. He had little incentive to publicly declare himself a Scientologist after the widespread opprobrium directed at Scientology following the FBI raids on Operation Snow White and the exposure of the church's esoteric beliefs. Rumors of his involvement began to mount, however. For several years he managed to keep his affiliation quiet, even from church management. Using his birth name, Thomas Mapother IV, he received auditing at a small Scientology mission called the Enhancement Center in Sherman Oaks, which Rogers had started with her former husband. Rogers's close friend, and former roommate, Kirstie Alley, did her auditing there, along with singer—and later, congressman—Sonny Bono, who had also been brought into the church by Rogers. Cruise would later credit Scientology's study methods for helping him overcome his dyslexia.

The triumph of adding Cruise to the Scientology stable was fraught with problems. Mimi Rogers was at the top of that list. Her parents had been involved with Dianetics since the early days of

the movement. In 1957, when Mimi was a year old, they had moved to Washington, DC, to work for Hubbard, and her father, Philip Spickler, had briefly joined the Sea Org. But Mimi's parents had become disaffected by the end of the seventies. They were considered "squirrels," because they continued to practice Scientology outside the guidance of the church. It would be one thing to have Tom Cruise as a trophy for Scientology, but it would be a disaster if he became a walking advertisement for the squirrels.

When Miscavige learned of Cruise's involvement in Scientology, he arranged to have the star brought to Gold Base, alone, at its secret desert location near Hemet, in August 1989. He assigned his top people to audit and supervise the young star during his first weekend stay. Cruise arrived wearing a baseball cap and dark glasses, trying to keep a low profile, although everyone on the base knew he was there.

Cruise was preparing to make Days of Thunder that fall. He had just seen a twenty-one-year-old Australian actress, Nicole Kidman, in the thriller Dead Calm, and he was so enchanted that he cast her in a part she was far too young to play: a brain surgeon who brings Cruise's character back to life after he crashes his race car. They had an immediate, intense connection, one that quickly became a subject of tabloid speculation.

According to Rathbun, Cruise and Miscavige now had a common interest: getting rid of Mimi. She demanded and received a church mediation of their relationship, which involves each partner being put on E-Meters and confessing their "crimes" in front of the other. But with Cruise ready to move on and Miscavige seemingly set against her, Rogers stood little chance. Marty Rathbun and a church attorney went to her home carrying divorce papers. "I told her this was the right thing to do for Tom, because he was going to do lots of good for Scientology," Rathbun recalled. "That was the end of

Mimi Rogers.”

Rogers later said that she and Cruise were already having difficulty in their marriage. He had been seriously thinking about becoming a monk, in which case marriage wouldn’t fit into his plans. “He thought he had to be celibate to maintain the purity of his instrument,” she told Playboy. “Therefore, it became obvious that we had to split.”

AFTER TWO YEARS, Annie Broeker had worked her way out of Happy Valley. She was assigned to Gold Base, which serves as the headquarters for the Commodore’s Messengers Org; Golden Era Productions, which makes Scientology films and manufactures the audiovisual materials for the church, as well as E-Meters; and the Religious Technology Center, which enforces the orthodoxy of Scientology practices. Through his position as chairman of the RTC, Miscavige directed the church’s operations, spending much of his time living on the base. Rathbun and other top executives were also living and working on the five-hundred-acre base, which was still so hush-hush that few Scientologists knew of its existence. Rathbun believed that Miscavige wanted Annie close by, in case Pat Broeker ever stirred back to life.

An ex-marine named Andre Tabayoyon, who oversaw construction of the security at the Gold Base, later testified that church funds were used to purchase assault rifles, shotguns, and pistols; he also said that explosive devices were placed around the perimeter to be used in case of assault by law enforcement officials. Surrounded by a security fence with three-inch spikes, patrolled by armed guards, and monitored by cameras, motion detectors, infrared scanners, and a sniper’s nest at the top of a hill, the property houses about eight hundred Sea Org members, in conditions that the church describes as “like one would find in a

convent or seminary, albeit much more comfortable."

Annie resumed using her maiden name, Tidman. Although she was continuously under guard, she had fallen in love with another Sea Org member—Jim Logan, the same man who had recruited Paul Haggis into Scientology on the street corner in London, Ontario. Annie had met Logan in Happy Valley when both were on the RPF. Jim and Annie married in June 1990 and moved to Sea Org berthing near Gold Base. Logan was no longer the long-haired hippie he had been in those days; he was now middle-aged and balding, with a black moustache, but he still had those intense, playful eyes and a ready laugh. His outsized, boisterous personality didn't always fit well in the highly regimented life he had signed up for. In the summer of 1992, Logan was served with a "non-enturbulation order," which meant that he should stop stirring things up. In October, eight men came to escort him to a detention facility where troublesome staff members were confined. Logan was told that he had been declared a Suppressive Person and was going to be booted out of the Sea Org.

Annie had previously confided that she was "finished" with the Sea Org and would leave if Jim was ready. He didn't want to go then; he still hoped to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the church, but Annie made application to formally route out of the Sea Org. In a few months, if all went well, they would have a quiet reunion in Nova Scotia, where they could have children and forget the past. Annie promised him, "They can't make me divorce you." But on October 8, 1992, Logan's last day in the Sea Org, church officials told him that Annie had been ordered to disconnect from him. He was served with divorce papers, given a freeloader tab for more than $350,000, and then dropped off at the bus station with a ticket to Bangor, Maine.

Several times after that, Jim and Annie were able to speak secretly. She would manage to sneak a call to him late at night, or

he would have his mother call her. When Annie couldn't wait any longer to see him, Jim bought her an open ticket from Ontario, California—the nearest airport—to Bangor. It would be waiting for her to pick up whenever she wanted. A few weeks later, Jim got a call from Annie: she was on her way. It was about five in the morning in California. She was catching a flight that stopped in Denver, then went on to Boston, where she would change planes for Bangor. Jim set out from Nova Scotia for the nine-hour drive to the airport.

Rathbun got the message that Annie had fled the base about an hour and a half after she left. He was panicked. Annie knew as well as anyone the inside story of the secret money transfers to Hubbard, the offshore accounts, the shredding of incriminating documents. She could torpedo the church's application for tax-exempt status. She also knew the true circumstances of Hubbard's last days. She might even reunite with Pat Broeker, and the two of them could pose a challenge to Miscavige. Rathbun saw Annie as a potential "doomsday machine."

According to Gary Morehead, the hulking chief of security at Gold Base at the time, a "blow drill" went into effect immediately. Morehead had refined the process to a model of Sea Org efficiency. Each year, a minimum of a hundred people attempted to escape from Gold, but few got away cleanly. Morehead's security team kept files on members, containing bank account and credit card numbers, family contacts, even hobbies and predilections. When one senior executive fled in 1992, for instance, Morehead knew he was a baseball fan. He caught him a week later in the parking lot of the San Francisco Giants stadium.

Morehead's team was aided by the isolation of the base—Gold was in a narrow valley in the middle of the desert, seven miles from the village of Hemet. There was a single highway, easy to patrol; mountain ranges enclosed the base on either side, and the

rocky slopes were copiously supplied with cactus and rattlesnakes. Many of the Sea Org members had neither the resources nor the skills to get very far. There was an ingrained distrust of the non-Scientology "wog" world and its system of justice, as well as a fatalistic view of the reach of the church, especially among Sea Org members who, like Annie, had grown up in Scientology. Those who had cell phones used them mainly as walkie-talkies for communication on the base; phone records were monitored and the phones would be taken away if they were used to make outside calls. Few of them had cars of their own, or even driver's licenses, so the best they could do was to try to get to the bus station before they were discovered missing. By the time the bus made its next stop, however, there was usually a member of Morehead's team waiting for them. If that failed, Morehead's security squad would stake out the houses of the blown member's family and friends, using scanners that could listen in on cordless phones and cell phones, and running the license plates of everyone who came and went. When the team finally confronted their prey, they would try to talk them into returning to the base voluntarily. If that failed, occasionally they would use force.[3]

Most of those who fled were torn by conflicting emotions. On the one hand, they were often frightened, humiliated, and angry. They desperately wanted a life outside the organization. Some, like Annie, wanted to have children, which she was forbidden to do as a Sea Org member. On the other hand, they believed that their eternal salvation was at stake. The youthful enthusiasm that had caused them to sign their billion-year contract of service may have been dampened, but there was usually some residual idealism that the security team could appeal to. Typically, in these confrontations, Morehead would bring along the escapee's "opinion leader," which could be his case supervisor, or another family member who was in Scientology—his wife or his mother, for

instance. In many instances, the fleeing Sea Org member didn't even argue; he just gave up, knowing that he would probably be taken directly to RPF, where he might spend months or years working his way back into good standing.

At any time, a fleeing member could guarantee his safety by simply calling the police, but that rarely if ever happened. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department, whose jurisdiction includes Gold Base, says that there has never been an outcry of abuse, or an accusation of illegal detention from members of the church at the base. Although the Sea Org members lived inside a highly secure compound in a desert hideaway, surrounded by fences and high-tech sensors, most of them weren't really being held against their will. On the contrary, it was their will that held them. But according to Morehead, no one who escaped ever returned voluntarily.

As soon as Morehead learned that Annie had blown, his team began combing through her personal effects, calling hotels and motels in the area, and looking for clues as to where she was headed. The easiest way of doing that was to have someone pretend to be Annie and try to book a flight, then be told, for instance, "Oh, we already have you on the eleven-ten flight to Boston." If that didn't work, another member would call the airlines, posing as a sick relative, and demand help in finding the missing "son" or "wife" or whatever; if the airline representative refused to give out that information, the member would continue asking to speak to a higher-up, until he got the information. In one case, it was the vice president of an airline who, thinking he was responding to a family medical emergency, gave up the pertinent details. Morehead also hired former FBI or CIA agents as private investigators. As soon as an escapee made the mistake of using a credit card, the team would know almost immediately where the charge was placed. Morehead was always surprised at how easily

such supposedly confidential information could be obtained. His team quickly learned that Annie was on the flight to Boston.

Minutes later, Marty Rathbun lit out for the airport at a hundred miles an hour. He didn't even have time to change clothes. He was wearing a T-shirt, sweatpants, and sneakers. His secretary booked a direct flight that would arrive at Boston only twenty minutes after Annie's, and just twenty minutes before her connecting flight to Bangor.

It was winter and snowing in Boston when he landed, at ten at night, when most of the air traffic had ended. He ran through the nearly empty corridors of Logan Airport to the gate for the Bangor flight. There was a stairwell that led downstairs, and a door that opened to the tarmac. Rathbun rushed outside into the frigid air. The passengers were still on the ramp; Annie was only six feet away from him. "Annie!" he cried. She turned around. As soon as she saw who it was, her shoulders slumped, and she walked toward him.

Rathbun talked to Miscavige and said that he would get a couple of hotel rooms in Boston and bring Annie back in the morning, but Miscavige was unwilling to risk it. He told Rathbun that he had already arranged for John Travolta's jet to pick them up a few hours later.

Annie and Jim Logan were finally divorced on August 26, 1993. He never saw her again. (She died in 2011 of lung cancer, at the age of fifty-five.)

BY HIS ACTIONS, Miscavige showed his instinctive understanding of how to cater to the sense of entitlement that comes with great stardom. It was not just a matter of disposing of awkward personal problems, such as clinging spouses; there were also the endless demands for nourishment of an ego that is always aware of the

fragility of success; the longing for privacy that is constantly at war with the demand for recognition; the need to be fortified against ordinariness and feelings of mortality; and the sense that the quality of the material world that surrounds you reflects upon your own value, and therefore everything must be made perfect. These were qualities Miscavige demanded for himself as well. He surrounded Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman with an approving and completely deferential environment, as spotless and odorless as a fairy tale. A special bungalow was prepared for their stay at Gold Base, along with a private rose garden. When the couple longed to play tennis, a court was rehabilitated, at significant expense. Miscavige heard about the couple's fantasy of running through a field of wildflowers together, so he had Sea Org members plant a section of the desert; when that failed to meet his expectations, the meadow was plowed up and sodded with grass. Miscavige assigned them a personal chef, Sinar Parman, who had cooked for Hubbard, and had a high-end gym constructed that was mainly for the use of Cruise and himself. When a flood triggered a mudslide that despoiled the couple's romantic bungalow, Miscavige held the entire base responsible, and ordered everyone to work sixteen-hour days until everything was restored to its previous pristine condition.

In July 1990, Cruise's involvement with the church became public in an article in the tabloid Star. (Cruise himself didn't admit his affiliation until two years later, in an interview with Barbara Walters.) The fact that the information was leaked, probably from a source within the church, was at once a great embarrassment for Miscavige and a relief, because Cruise's name was now finally linked irrevocably in the public mind with Scientology. He offered an unparalleled conduit to Hollywood celebrity culture, and Miscavige went to great lengths to court him. At Thanksgiving, 1990, he ordered Parman to cook dinner for Cruise's whole family.

Miscavige even arranged for Cruise to place some investments with the Feshbach brothers—Kurt, Joseph, and Matthew—three Palo Alto, California, stockbrokers. They were devoted Scientologists who had made a fortune by selling short on the stock market. According to Rathbun, when Cruise's investments actually lost money, the Feshbachs obligingly replenished the star's account with their personal funds.

Early on, Cruise and Miscavige shared a powerful sense of identity with each other. They were both short but powerfully built, "East Coast personalities," as Parman diagnosed them. They shared a love of motorcycles, cars, and adventurous sports. Miscavige was bedazzled by the glamour surrounding the star, who introduced him to a social set outside of Scientology, a world Miscavige knew little about. He had spent most of his life cloistered in the Sea Org. He was thrilled when he visited Cruise on the set of Days of Thunder, and the actor took him skydiving for the first time. Cruise, for his part, fell under the spell of Miscavige's commanding personality. He modeled his determined naval-officer hero in A Few Good Men on Miscavige, a fact that the church leader liked to brag about.

Just before Christmas, 1990, Sinar Parman was told that Tom and Nicole were going to get married, and that he and a Sea Org pastry chef, along with their wives, would be cooking for the wedding party. Parman was assured that they would get paid for their trouble; in the meantime, they should buy some civilian clothes suitable for a cold climate. Parman went shopping and put everything on his credit card, along with a Christmas present for Cruise. Then Cruise's private jet flew them to Telluride, Colorado, where the wedding took place. They spent three days preparing meals for guests. Cruise's auditor, Ray Mithoff, performed the ceremony, and David Miscavige served as best man. Afterward, Parman was informed that Miscavige had changed his mind about

paying for his services and the expenses incurred. Parman was left with hundreds of dollars charged to his credit card, which he struggled to pay off on his Sea Org salary—fifty dollars a week at the time.

At first, Tom and Nicole seemed like the ideal Scientology power match. They were intelligent, articulate, extraordinarily attractive people. At Gold Base, Tom reached OT III. He would have spent a considerable amount of time after that self-auditing in order to exorcise his body thetans. Although Nicole didn't share Tom's obvious enthusiasm for Scientology—she was a cooler personality in any case—she was drawn along by his intensity. She went Clear in no time. Within a year, she had reached OT II, but then, mysteriously, stopped. A candidate who has begun the OT levels is not supposed to pause until OT III has been achieved. Miscavige suspected the influence of a Suppressive Person—specifically, Kidman's father, Antony Kidman, a clinical psychologist who had written several popular self-help books in Australia. From the beginning Kidman was privately considered a Potential Trouble Source.

One day at Gold Base, Marty Rathbun summoned a sixteen-year-old Sea Org member, Marc Headley, and told him that he had been selected to undergo special auditing. He was to tell no one about it, including his co-workers and his family. And by the way, the auditor would be Tom Cruise.

Headley reported to a large conference room. Right away he noticed Nicole Kidman, who was also receiving auditing, and Kirstie Alley, who he later came to believe was there mainly as a "celebrity prop," since she did little other than read.

"Hello, I am Tom," Headley remembers Cruise saying, vigorously shaking his hand.[4] He handed Headley the metal cans that were attached to the E-Meter and asked if the temperature in the room was all right. Then he instructed Headley to take a deep

breath and let it out. This was a metabolism test, which is supposed to show whether the preclear was prepared for the session. Apparently, the needle on the E-Meter didn't fall sufficiently. Headley was so starstruck that he was having trouble focusing.

"Did you get enough sleep?" Cruise asked.

"Yeah."

"Did you get enough to eat?"

"Yeah."

"Did you take your vitamins?"

Headley said he never took vitamins.

"That might be the problem," Cruise said. He went into the pantry, which was filled with snacks for the celebrities. Headley was used to the meager Sea Org fare, and he was taken aback by the cornucopia laid out for the stars to nibble on. As Cruise rummaged through the cabinets, Headley bit into a cheese Danish. The actor found several vitamins and then asked, "Do you take a lot of bee pollen?"

Headley had no idea what he meant.

"Never had bee pollen?" Cruise said excitedly. "Oh, that will do the trick for sure."

He led Headley to his Yamaha motorcycle and rode the two of them to the base canteen. It was dinnertime, and the canteen was filled with Headley's gawking co-workers. Headley was surprised to learn that there was bee pollen for sale, although he says Cruise didn't pay for it; he just grabbed it and they went back to the conference room. This time, Headley passed the metabolism test, although he privately credited the Danish over the bee pollen.

According to Headley, Cruise helped him through the Upper Indoctrination Training Routines. "Look at the wall," Cruise would have said, according to Hubbard's specifications. "Thank you. Walk over to the wall. Thank you. Touch the wall. Thank you." The purpose of this exercise, according to Hubbard, is to "assert control

over the preclear and increase the preclear's havingness." Cruise went on to ask Headley to make an object, such as a desk, hold still, or become more solid. Another exercise involved telling an ashtray to stand up, at which point the preclear stands and lifts the ashtray, thanks the ashtray, and then commands the ashtray to sit down. With each repetition, the preclear's commands get louder, so soon he is yelling at the ashtray at the top of his voice. The purpose of this drill is to come to the realization that your intention is separate from your words and the sound waves that carry them. These procedures went on for hours, as Headley robotically responded to Cruise's commands. "You learn that if you don't do what they say, they'll just ask the same questions five million times," Headley recalled. At one point, he fell asleep, but he kept responding automatically. This training went on for hours every day for several weeks, until Tom and Nicole returned to Hollywood.

When Nicole moved into Tom's mansion in Pacific Palisades, they were under constant watch. Miscavige's wife, Shelly, interviewed Scientology candidates for Tom and Nicole's household staff. According to former executives, the Scientologists who worked for Cruise and Kidman reported to the church about whatever they observed. Miscavige offered the couple significant gifts of service from Sea Org members. They installed a sophisticated audiovisual system. Sinar Parman, the chef, says he helped design the kitchen. There was a comfortable, symbiotic relationship between the star and the church. The use of unpaid church clergy to help him renovate his house, hire his staff, and install sophisticated technology was simply a part of the deal.[5]

PAUL HAGGIS WAS ALWAYS a workaholic, and as his career took off, he spent even less time with his family. He wouldn't get home till late

at night or early in the morning. His three daughters scarcely knew who he was.

In general, Haggis was far more interested in causes than people. He drove an environmentally friendly car—a little yellow Mini Cooper with a WAR IS NOT THE ANSWER bumper sticker. The Haggis house became a regular stop for the social-justice sector of the Hollywood left. Once when Haggis threw a fund-raiser for Tibet, the Dalai Lama came. The backyard was strewn with celebrities and chanting monks. The girls thought it was hysterical. Barbra Streisand introduced herself to the Dalai Lama, and he asked what she did. "A little singing, a little dancing," she told him.

For years, Paul and Diane's marriage had been in turmoil, and in 1983 they began an epic and bitter divorce. The proceedings lasted for nine years. The girls lived with Diane, visiting Paul every other weekend. During this period of estrangement from his wife, Haggis flew to New York with a casting director, who was also a Scientologist. They shared a kiss. He later confessed the incident during an auditing session and was sent to the Ethics Office, where he was assigned some minor punishment. He had been to Ethics before, usually for missing coursework, but he was beginning to feel that the more famous he became, the less likely he was to be rebuked for behavior that was considered "out ethics" for other members.

Anytime Haggis boggled at an illogical or fanciful piece of data, he was invariably reminded that it was his failure entirely. He had come into Scientology as an adult, so his experience outside the church still informed his judgments. When he stumbled on something in Scientology that he thought was ridiculous, he would make a mental detour around it, not wanting to spend the time and money to do the "repairs" that his supervisors would prescribe. Although he never lost his skepticism, his daughters were born into the religion. They were schooled in it from the beginning. Nearly

everyone they knew was a Scientologist.

Each of the girls was a near clone of one of the parents. Alissa and Katy were Paul, pale and blond, but more sharp-featured, with dimpled noses and sculpted cheekbones. Lauren, the middle daughter, was Diane, inheriting her half-Greek mother's olive skin and dark, Mediterranean eyes. The girls were bright, inquisitive, and cheerful by nature, but their parents' divorce was an endless, churning, distracting, heartbreaking trauma, and it took a toll.

The girls went to Delphi Academy, a private school that uses Hubbard "study tech." It is largely self-guided. According to Scientology pedagogy, there are three barriers that retard a student's progress. The first is "Lack of Mass." This principle was derived from Alfred Korzybski's observation that the word and the object that it names are not the same thing. If the student is studying tractors, for instance, it is best to have a real tractor in front of him. The absence of the actual object is disorienting to the student. "It makes him feel physiologically condensed," Hubbard writes. "Actually makes him feel squashed. Makes him feel bent, sort of spinny, sort of dead, bored, exasperated." Photographs of the object can help, or motion pictures, as they are "a sort of promise of hope of the mass," but they are not an adequate substitute for the tractor under study. The result for the student is that he becomes dizzy, he'll have headaches, his stomach gets upset, his eyes will hurt, and "he's going to wind up with a face that feels squashed." Illness and even suicide may be the expected result. Hubbard's study tech remedies the problem by using clay or Play-Doh for the student to make replicas of the object.

The second principle is "Too Steep a Gradient," which Hubbard describes as the difficulty a student encounters when he makes a leap he's not prepared for. "It is a sort of a confusion or a reelingness that goes with this one," Hubbard writes. His solution is to go back to the point where the student fully understands the

subject, then break the material into bite-size pieces.

The "Undefined Word"—the third and most important principle—occurs when the student tries to absorb material while bypassing the definition of the words employed. "THE ONLY REASON A PERSON GIVES UP A STUDY OR BECOMES CONFUSED OR UNABLE TO LEARN IS BECAUSE HE HAS GONE PAST A WORD THAT WAS NOT UNDERSTOOD," Hubbard emphasizes in one of his chiding technical bulletins. "WORDS SOMETIMES HAVE DIFFERENT OR MORE THAN ONE MEANING." A misunderstood word "gives one a distinctly blank feeling or a washed out feeling," Hubbard writes. "A not-there feeling and a sort of an hysteria will follow in the back of that." The solution is to have a large dictionary at hand, preferably one with lots of pictures in it. All Scientology texts contain glossaries for specialized Scientology terms. The need to understand the meaning of words, Hubbard writes, "is a sweepingly fantastic discovery in the field of education and don't neglect it."

These last two principles are fundamental to the induction of Scientology itself. Because the church asserts that everything Hubbard wrote or spoke is inarguably true, whatever you don't understand or accept is your fault. The solution is to go back and study the words and approach the material in a more deliberate fashion. Eventually, you'll get it. Then you can move on.

Lauren loved her teacher at Delphi, but the Hubbard method placed the responsibility of learning almost entirely on the student. For Lauren, her parents' tumultuous divorce was a crushing distraction. It seemed to her that no one was paying attention to her, either at home or at school. She was illiterate until she was eleven. She couldn't read or write her own name.

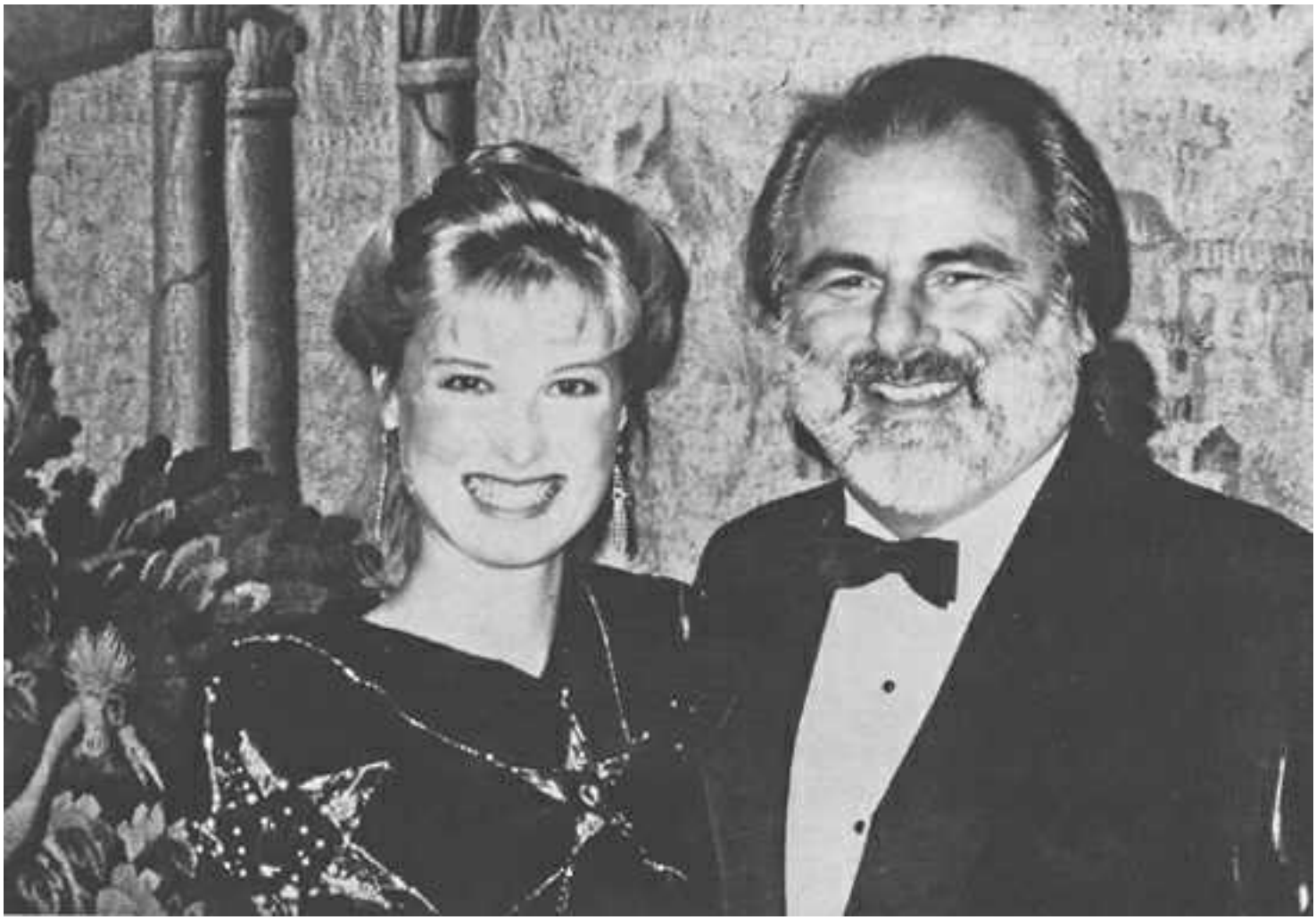
Second-generation Scientologists are typically far more at home with the language and culture of the church than their parents are. And yet they may find themselves a little lost when trying to deal

with an uncomprehending society. The first time Alissa noticed that she was doing something different from most people was when she performed a Contact Assist. Scientology preaches that if you repeatedly touch a fresh wound to the object that caused the injury and silently concentrate, the pain lessens and the sense of trauma fades. If a Scientologist sees a person close his hand in a door, for instance, a church manual instructs the Scientologist to "have him go back and, with his injured hand, touch the exact spot on the same door, duplicating the same motions that occurred at the time of the injury." There are other kinds of assists that will awaken an unconscious person, eliminate boils, reduce earaches and back pain, and make a drunk sober. Instead of crying when she hurt herself, Alissa would quietly redo the action over and over, until she had drained it of its sting. She noticed that non-Scientologists had no idea what she was doing. She was also surprised when she went to a friend's house for dinner and the family said grace before the meal. It took her a second to realize what they were doing. In her opinion, God plays a negligible role in Scientology. "I mean, there's a spot for it, but it's sort of a blank spot." So whenever her friends began to pray, "I would bow my head and let them have their ceremony."

Paul was also scarred by the divorce—although, as would often be the case for him, he would mine the experience for his work. He created a television series, Family Law, that was based to some extent on his divorce from Diane. He always found more solace and meaning in his work than he did in his family. Each year he grew more successful, but the gap between him and his daughters grew wider. They knew him better as a writer than as a father, and they would puzzle over the fact that he was so cool to them, when his scripts were often full of emotion. Paul felt guilty about not spending time with the girls, so he would arrange to bring them to the set and assign them some small task. Alissa got to do nearly

every job in the industry, from wardrobe to production assistant; she received a Directors Guild card in Canada by the time she was fifteen.

In 1991, Haggis went to a Fourth of July party at the home of some Scientologist friends. He met a striking actress there named Deborah Rennard. She had grown up in Scientology. In her early twenties she had studied acting at the Beverly Hills Playhouse and had fallen under the influence of Milton Katselas, the legendary acting teacher and Hubbard's former collaborator. They became lovers. Milton was spellbinding, but he was twenty-seven years older than Deborah, and their relationship was an exhausting roller-coaster ride. They stayed together for six years. When Paul met her, Deborah and Milton had recently broken up. She was a successful actress with a recurring role in the long-running television series Dallas—as J. R. Ewing's loyal but always unattainable secretary.



Deborah Rennard and Milton Katselas in Silverlake, California, 1985

Paul was still going through his epic divorce. Early in his relationship with Deborah, Paul admitted that he was having a spiritual crisis. He said he'd raced up to the top of the Bridge on faith, but he hadn't gotten what he expected. "I don't believe I'm a spiritual being. I actually am what you see," Paul told her. Deborah advised him to get more auditing. Personally, she was having breakthroughs that led her to discover past lives. Images floated through her mind, and she realized, "That's not here. I'm not in my body, I'm in another place." She might be confronting what the church calls a "contra-survival action"—"like the time I clobbered Paul or threw something at him." She would look for an "earlier similar" in her life. Suddenly she would see herself in England in the nineteenth century. "It was a fleeting glimpse at what I was doing then. Clobbering husbands." When she examined these

kindred moments in her current existence and past ones, the emotional charge would dissipate. Paul would say, “Don’t you think you’re making this up?” At first, she thought he might be right. But then she wondered if that really mattered. She felt she was getting better, so who cared whether they were memories or fantasies? As an actor she went through an analogous process when working on a scene; she would grab hold of a feeling from who knows where. It felt real. It helped her get into the role. As long as the process worked, why quibble?

Deborah made sure Paul showed up at the annual gala and became involved in Scientology charitable organizations. Over the years, Haggis spent about $100,000 on courses and auditing and an equal amount on various Scientology initiatives. This figure doesn’t include the money that Diane gave to the church while she was married to Paul. Haggis also gave $250,000 to the International Association of Scientologists, a fund set up to protect and promote the church. Deborah spent about $150,000 on coursework of her own. Paul and Deborah held a fund-raiser in their home that raised $200,000 for a new Scientology building in Nashville, and they contributed an additional $10,000 from their own pocket. The demands for money—“regging,” it’s called in Scientology, because the calls come from the Registrar’s Office—never stopped. Paul gave them money just to keep them from calling.

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[1] A lawyer for Preston and Travolta claims that the couple “never put their son through a ‘Purification Rundown’ treatment and would never have engaged in any type of conduct that would have endangered their son’s health, welfare, or well-being in any way.” He maintains that Preston was referring to herself when she responded to Williams’s question.

[2] According to the church, “The Sea Org policy on children changed in 1986. The

Executive Director International, Mr. Guillaume Lesevre, issued the change in policy which provided that Sea Org members could no longer have children and remain in the Sea Org."

[3] The church denies that there is such a thing as the blow drill. The church produced an affidavit by Morehead, executed Mar. 31, 1997, in which he says: "I have seen people leave and they were free to do so. I am now doing so myself.... I am aware of stories of individuals claiming to have been held against their will, but I know for myself and from my security position that the stories are completely false." Morehead repudiates the statement, saying, "In March of 1997 at that specific moment I would have signed anything."

[4] Cruise, through his attorney, says he has no recollection of meeting Marc Headley. Bruce Hines, who was there to make sure the process was done correctly, witnessed the sessions and clearly remembers Cruise auditing Headley.

[5] Cruise's attorney remarks, "So far as I know, Mr. Cruise has always paid for any services he received."

7

The Future Is Ours

Now that he was firmly in control of the church, Miscavige sought to restore the image of Scientology. The 1980s had been a devastating period for the church's reputation, with Hubbard's disappearance and eventual death, the high-profile lawsuits, and the avalanche of embarrassing publicity. Miscavige hired Hill & Knowlton, the oldest and largest public relations firm in the world, to oversee a national campaign. The legendarily slick worldwide chairman of Hill & Knowlton, Robert Keith Gray, specialized in rehabilitating disgraced dictators, arms dealers, and governments with appalling human-rights records. As representatives of the government of Kuwait, Hill & Knowlton had been partly responsible for selling the Persian Gulf War to the American people. One of the company's tactics was to provide the testimony of a fifteen-year-old girl, "Nayirah," to a human-rights committee in the US House of Representatives in October 1990. Nayirah described herself as an ordinary Kuwaiti who had volunteered in a hospital. She tearfully told the House members of watching Iraqi soldiers storm into the prenatal unit. "They took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die," she said. The incident could never be confirmed, and the girl turned out to be the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States and had never volunteered at the hospital. The propaganda operation was, at the time, the most expensive and sophisticated public relations campaign ever run in the United States by a foreign government.

Gray had also worked closely with the Reagan campaign. He regaled the Scientologists with his ability to take a "mindless actor" and turn him into the "Teflon President." Hill & Knowlton went to work for the church, putting out phony news stories, often in the form of video news releases made to look like actual reports rather than advertisements. The church began supporting high-profile causes, such as Ted Turner's Goodwill Games, thereby associating itself with other well-known corporate sponsors, such as Sony and Pepsi. There were full-page ads in newsmagazines touting the church's philosophy, and cable television ads promoting Scientology books and Dianetics seminars.

Then, in May 1991, came one of the greatest public relations catastrophes in the church's history. Time magazine published a scathing cover story titled "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power," by investigative reporter Richard Behar. The exposé revealed that just one of the religion's many entities, the Church of Spiritual Technology, had taken in half a billion dollars in 1987 alone. Hundreds of millions of dollars from the parent organization were buried in secret accounts in Lichtenstein, Switzerland, and Cyprus. Many of the personalities linked with the church were savaged in the article. Hubbard himself was described as "part storyteller, part flimflam man." The Feshbach brothers were the "terrors of the stock exchanges," who spread false information about companies in order to drive down their valuations. Behar quoted a former church executive as saying that John Travolta stayed in the church only because he was worried that details of his sex life would be made public if he left. The article asserted that Miscavige made frequent jokes about Travolta's "allegedly promiscuous homosexual behavior." When Behar queried Travolta's attorney for the star's comment, he was told that such questions were "bizarre." "Two weeks later, Travolta announced that he was getting married to actress Kelly Preston, a fellow Scientologist,"

Behar wrote.

"Those who criticize the church—journalists, doctors, lawyers, and even judges—often find themselves engulfed in litigation, stalked by private eyes, framed for fictional crimes, beaten up, or threatened by death," Behar noted. He accused the Justice Department of failing to back the IRS and the FBI in bringing a racketeering suit against the church because it was unwilling to spend the money required to take the organization on. He quoted Cynthia Kisser, head of the Cult Awareness Network in Chicago: "Scientology is quite likely the most ruthless, the most classically terroristic, the most litigious and the most lucrative cult the country has ever seen."

After the Time article appeared, Miscavige was invited to appear on ABC's Nightline, a highly prestigious news show, to defend the image of the church. He had never been interviewed in his life. He rehearsed for months, as much as four hours per day, with Rathbun and Rinder. He would prod them to ask him questions, then complain that they didn't sound like Ted Koppel, the show's courtly but incisive host. Miscavige would ask himself the questions in what he thought was Koppel's voice, then respond with a hypothetical answer. He sorted through what seemed to his aides an endless number of wardrobe choices before settling on a blue suit with a purple tie and a handkerchief in his breast pocket. Finally, on Valentine's Day, 1992, he went to New York, where the show would be broadcast live.

The interview was preceded by a fifteen-minute report by Forrest Sawyer about Scientology's claims and controversies. "The church says it now has centers in over seventy countries, with more on the way," Sawyer said. Heber Jentzsch, the president of the Church of Scientology International, was featured, claiming a membership of eight million people. Sawyer also interviewed defectors, who talked about their families being ripped apart, or

being bilked of tens of thousands of dollars. Richard Behar, the Time reporter, recounted how Scientology's private investigators had obtained his phone records. Vicki Aznaran, a former high official in the church, who was then suing the church, told Sawyer that Miscavige ordered attacks on those he considered troublemakers—"have them, their homes, broken into, have them beaten, have things stolen from them, slash their tires, break their car windows, whatever."

Koppel allowed Miscavige to respond to the Sawyer report. "Every single detractor on there is a part of a religious hate group called Cult Awareness Network and their sister group called American Family Foundation," Miscavige said. "It's the same as the KKK would be with blacks." He seemed completely at ease.

"You realize there's a little bit of a problem getting people to talk critically about Scientology because, quite frankly, they're scared," Koppel observed.

"Oh, no, no, no, no."

"I'm telling you, people are scared," Koppel insisted.

"Let's not give the American public the wrong impression," said Miscavige. "The person getting harassed is myself and the church."

Koppel then lobbed what seemed like an easy question for a man who had spent so much time preparing for this encounter. "See if you can explain to me why I would want to be a Scientologist."

"Because you care about yourself and life itself," Miscavige said eagerly. He gave the example of communication skills. "This is something that major breakthroughs exist in Scientology, being able to communicate in the world around you," he said. "There's an actual formula for communication which can be understood. You can drill on this formula."

"So far in life, I haven't had a whole lot of trouble communicating," Koppel drolly noted.

"What in your life do you feel is not right, that you would like to

help?" Miscavige asked. It was a classic Scientology technique, to find a subject's "ruin," the thing that was blocking his access to happiness.

"I feel perfectly comfortable with my life," Koppel replied.

Miscavige switched tactics. "Let's look at it this way, then, what Scientology does. If you look out across the world today, you could say that if you take a person who's healthy, doing well, like yourself, you'd say that person is normal, not a crazy, not somebody who is psychotic, you look at a wall and they call it an elephant," he said, extemporizing. "And you can see people below that—crazy people, criminals—that I think society in general will look at and say, 'That breed of person hasn't something quite right because they're not up to this level of personality.'…What we are trying to do in Scientology is take somebody from this higher level and move them up to greater ability."

"What about the folks 'down there'?"

"We don't ignore them. My point is this: Scientology is there to make the able more able."

"Another way of saying that is: you're interested in folks who've got money."

Miscavige objected, claiming that the money in the church goes to good causes. "We are the largest social reform group in the world," he said, adding that if a person stays in Scientology long enough, he'll have plenty of money. Then he referenced Sawyer's report again. "The one girl there that was complaining about it, a girl named Vicki Aznaran, which by the way, this is a girl who was kicked out for trying to bring criminals into the church, something she didn't mention."

"You say a 'girl.' I think we're talking about a grown woman, right?"

"A grown woman, excuse me," Miscavige said. "She violated the mores and codes of the group."

“Either you have made an accurate charge against someone or—what a number of … the pieces written about Scientology suggest is that when you have a critic before you, you destroy those people.”

“That’s easy to say—”

“You smear them.”

“That’s easy for the person to say, but she’s the one on that program smearing me.”

As for Richard Behar, the Time reporter, Miscavige remarked, “The man was on record on two occasions attempting to get Scientologists kidnapped. That is an illegal act.”

The hour had ended, but Miscavige had just made another unsupported allegation. Koppel decided to extend the show “a few minutes,” but it went on another half hour without any commercial breaks. He asked Miscavige to explain what he meant about Behar. “Some people had called him up and he was telling them to kidnap Scientologists out,” Miscavige said.

“Now, kidnapping, as you well know, is a federal crime,” Koppel observed. “So, why didn’t you bring charges against him?”

“He didn’t succeed,” Miscavige said. “Ted, Ted, you’re missing the point.”

“There is such a thing as attempted rape, attempted murder, attempted kidnapping. It’s also a crime.”

“I think you’re really missing the issue, Ted, because my point is this: That man represents himself as an objective reporter. Here he is on record a full three years before he wrote this article, stating that he felt Scientologists should be kidnapped to change their religion.

“Second of all,” Miscavige continued, “let’s look at this article, and let’s not fool ourselves. It wasn’t an objective piece. It was done at the behest of Eli Lilly,” the pharmaceutical manufacturer. “They were upset because of the damage we had caused to their

killer drug Prozac."

"I'm sure you have evidence of that," Koppel said. "You have affidavits?"

"Let me tell you what else I have—"

"You have affidavits?"

"From them? Of course not. You think they'd admit it?" Miscavige said. "We put in a call to Eli Lilly. Their response was, 'We can neither confirm nor deny.' "[1]

In Sawyer's report there was a brief clip of Hubbard telling his followers, "I was up in the Van Allen Belt. This is factual. And I don't know why they're scared of the Van Allen Belt, because it's simply hot. You'd be surprised how warm space is." Koppel observed, "When I hear about a man talking about having been taken out to the Van Allen space radiation belt or space ships that were essentially the same thing as the DC-8, I've got to tell you, I mean, if we're talking about this man's credibility, that certainly raises some questions in my mind."

Miscavige said that Hubbard's quote had been taken out of context.

"Take a minute, if you would, and see if you can put it into context for us so that it does not sound ridiculous," Koppel said.

"Okay," said Miscavige. "I want you to take the Catholic Church and take right now and explain to me, to make sense that the Virgin Mary was a virgin, scientifically impossible, unless we're talking about something …" He trailed off, then said, "Okay, I'll be like you, I'll be the cynic. If we're talking about artificial insemination, how could that be? If you're talking about going to Heaven, except we have a space shuttle going out there, we have the Apollo going out there, you do that. I'm not here—" He was obviously confused and uncomfortable.

"You were a Catholic as a child, right?" Koppel asked helpfully.

"Yeah."

“So you know full well that those issues are questions of faith.”

Miscavige wouldn’t accept the life raft that Koppel offered him. Scientology is sold as an entirely rational approach to understanding and mastering existence. “No, no,” Miscavige replied. “Talk about the Van Allen Belt or whatever, that forms no part of current Scientology, none whatsoever.”

“But what did he mean when he was talking about it?”

“Quite frankly, this tape here, he’s talking about the origins of the universe, and I think you’re going to find that in any, any, any religion, and I think you can make the same mockery of it. I think it’s offensive.”

“I’m not mocking it, I’m asking you a question,” Koppel replied. “You turn it around and ask me about Catholicism. I say we’re talking about areas of faith.”

“Well, it’s not even a matter of faith,” Miscavige insisted, “because Scientology is about you, yourself, and what you do. You’re bringing up something that isn’t part of current Scientology, that isn’t something that Scientologists study, that is part of some tape taken from, I have no idea, and asking me about it and asking me to put it in context, that I can’t do.” Later, Miscavige told Koppel that he had never heard the Hubbard tape before. (It was a part of a lecture Hubbard gave in 1963, in which he talked about the between-lives period, when thetans are transported to Venus to have their memories erased.)

After the show, Miscavige returned to the greenroom, where Rinder, Rathbun, and Norman Starkey, another executive, were waiting. “How’d I do?” he asked.

“Gee, sir, you kicked ass,” one of the men said.

“It was a home run,” Rathbun assured him.

“Really?” Miscavige asked doubtfully. “Jesus Christ, I was just there and I don’t know. The guy was pissing me off so much.”

Koppel won an Emmy for that show. Miscavige took credit for it,

saying, “I got Ted the Emmy.” He even had a replica of an Emmy made and placed in the Officers Lounge at Gold Base. But he never went on television again.

THE TIME STORY WAS a turning point in the church’s history. The embarrassment for Scientology celebrities undercut the church’s strategy of making the religion appear to be a spiritual refuge for the show-business elite. One of the chief appeals of the religion to prospective recruits was the perceived network that Scientology provided its members, especially in Hollywood, awarding them an advantage in a ruthlessly competitive industry. With the Time article, affiliation with the church became an embarrassing liability.

Tom Cruise was one of the stars who appeared to be backing away from Scientology.[2] He stopped moving up the Bridge. He and Nicole adopted two children, Isabella and Connor, and began spending more time in Sydney, Kidman’s hometown, where she could be close to her family. He hired a powerful publicist, Pat Kingsley, who was able to enforce rigid control over the content of the interviews the star granted. Although his affiliation with Scientology was generally known, there was no more fuel for the media mill. He seemed to be putting as much distance between himself and the church as possible.

The church began to plot its counterattack. The Cult Awareness Network, besieged by more than fifty lawsuits brought by Scientologists, went bankrupt in 1996. An individual Scientologist purchased its name and assets at auction. Soon after that, the reorganized Cult Awareness Network sent out a brochure lauding the Church of Scientology for its efforts to “increase happiness and improve conditions for oneself and others.” The church also began a $3 million campaign against Time, placing full-page ads every

day in USA Today for twelve weeks, charging that the magazine had "supported" Adolf Hitler, for instance, by naming him the 1938 "Man of the Year" because of his dominance in European affairs. A lengthy supplement was placed in USA Today titled "The Story That Time Couldn't Tell: Who Really Controls the News at Time—and Why," in which the church claimed that Time was actually under the sway of the pharmaceutical industry—specifically, Eli Lilly and Company, the maker of Prozac. The church had charged that Prozac caused people to commit mass murder and suicide. The Time article was the drug company's revenge, the church alleged.[3]

Rathbun directed the ferocious legal assault on Time and oversaw the team of private detectives probing into Behar's private life. The church, employing what was reported to be an annual litigation budget of $20 million and a team of more than a hundred lawyers to handle the suits already in the courts, filed a $416 million libel action against Time Warner, the parent company of the magazine, and Behar. Because the church is regarded under American law as a "public figure," Scientology's lawyers had to prove not only that the magazine's allegations were wrong but also that Behar acted with "actual malice"—a legal term meaning that he knowingly published information he knew to be false, or that he recklessly disregarded the facts, because he intended to damage the church. Although there was no convincing evidence proving that the facts were wrong or that the reporter was biased, the case went all the way to the US Supreme Court, which sustained the district court's initial ruling against the church. In the process, it cost Time more money in defense costs than any other case in its history.

Rathbun's strategy followed Hubbard's dictate that the purpose of a lawsuit is "to harass and discourage rather than win." Hubbard also wrote: "If attacked on some vulnerable point by anyone or anything or any organization, always find or manufacture enough threat against them to cause them to sue for peace.... Don't ever

defend. Always attack." He added: "NEVER agree to an investigation of Scientology. ONLY agree to an investigation of the attackers." He advised Scientologists: "Start feeding lurid, blood, sex, crime, actual evidence on the attackers to the press.... Make it rough, rough on attackers all the way.... There has never yet been an attacker who was not reeking with crime. All we had to do was look for it and murder would come out." These were maxims that Rathbun took as his guidelines.

The Time article capsized Miscavige's attempts to break free of the negative associations so many people had with Scientology. But there was an even larger battle under way, one in which the church's very existence was at stake: its fight with the IRS to regain its tax-exempt status as a bona fide religion, which it had lost in 1967.

The government's stance was that the Church of Scientology was in fact a commercial enterprise, with "virtually incomprehensible financial procedures" and a "scripturally based hostility to taxation." The IRS had ruled that the church was largely operated to benefit its founder. Miscavige inherited some of that liability when he took over after Hubbard's death. A tax exemption would not only put the imprimatur of the American government on the church as a certified religion, rather than a corrupt, profit-making concern, but it would also provide a substantial amount of immunity from civil suits and the persistent federal criminal investigations. A decision against the tax exemption, on the other hand, would destroy the entire enterprise, because Hubbard had decided in 1973 that the church should not pay its back taxes. Twenty years later, the church was $1 billion in arrears, with only $125 million in reserves. The founder had placed Scientology's head on the executioner's block.

The war between the church and the IRS had already gone on for more than two decades, with both sides waging a campaign of

intimidation and espionage. Miscavige accused the Criminal Investigation Division of the IRS of engaging in surveillance of church leaders, wiretaps, and illegal opening of the church's mail. Now the church upped the ante by besieging the IRS with 200 lawsuits on the part of the church and more than 2,300 suits on behalf of individual parishioners in every jurisdiction in the country, overwhelming government lawyers, running up fantastic expenses, and causing an immense amount of havoc inside the IRS. Miscavige boasted that the entire legal budget of the federal agency was exhausted: "They didn't even have money to attend the annual American Bar Association conference of lawyers—which they were supposed to speak at!" The church ran ads against the agency, using the images of beloved celebrities (who were not Scientologists) such as John Wayne and Willie Nelson, who had been audited by the IRS. "All of America Loved Lucy," one ad said, over an iconic photo of Lucille Ball, "except the IRS." A ten-thousand-dollar reward was offered to potential whistle-blowers to expose IRS abuses. Private investigators dug into the private lives of IRS officials, going so far as to attend seminars and pose as IRS workers, to see who had a drinking problem or might be cheating on a spouse. Stories based on these investigations were promoted by a phony news bureau the church established, and also published in the church's Freedom magazine, which Scientologists passed out for free on the steps of the IRS headquarters in Washington. The hatred on both sides for the other was intense. It seemed bizarre that a rather small organization could overmatch the US government, but the harassment campaign was having an effect. Some government workers were getting anonymous calls in the middle of the night, or finding that their pets had disappeared. Whether or not these events were part of the Scientology onslaught, they added to the paranoia many in the agency were feeling.

Both the church and the IRS faced the challenge of addressing the question of what, exactly, constituted a religion in the eyes of the American government. On the church's side was a body of scholars who had arisen in defense of what were called "new religious movements," such as the Hare Krishnas, the Unification Church, and of course the Church of Scientology. The term was employed to replace the word "cult," because these academics found no reliable way of distinguishing a cult from a religion. They believe that new religious movements are persecuted and ridiculed simply because they are recent and seem exotic. Often, such experts are paid to testify in court on behalf of these organizations. In the courtroom setting, the casual distinctions that many people often make about cults and brainwashing have proven to be difficult to sustain, as the experts pose telling comparisons with the history of mainstream religions, whose practices and rituals have long since been folded into a broad cultural acceptance.

The Church of Scientology had decided to enlist such experts following the FBI raids in 1977, which exposed Operation Snow White and created a major crisis in the church. There was a deliberate campaign to provide religious cloaking for the church's activities. A Scientology cross was created. Scientology ministers now appeared wearing Roman collars. And religious scholars were courted; they were given tours and allowed to interview carefully coached church members.

Frank K. Flinn, a former Franciscan friar and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, has testified repeatedly on behalf of Scientology—notably, in 1984, when the Church of Scientology, along with Mary Sue Hubbard, sued Gerald Armstrong, the former archivist for the church. Flinn defined religion as a system of beliefs of a spiritual nature. There must be norms for behavior—positive commands and negative prohibitions or taboos—as well as rites and ceremonies, such as initiations, sacraments, prayers, and

services for weddings and funerals. By these means, the believers are united into an identifiable community that seeks to live in harmony with what they perceive as the ultimate meaning of life. Flinn argued that Scientology amply fulfilled these requirements, even if it differed in its expression of them from traditional denominations.

Like Catholicism, Flinn explained, Scientology is a hierarchical religion. He compared L. Ron Hubbard to the founders of Catholic religious orders, including his own, started by Saint Francis of Assisi, whose followers adopted a vow of poverty. Financial disparities within a church are not unusual. Within the hierarchy of Catholicism, for instance, bishops often enjoy a mansion, limousines, servants, and housekeepers; the papacy itself maintains thousands of people on its staff, including the Swiss Guards who protect the pope, and an entire order of nuns dedicated to being housekeepers for the papal apartments.

The Catholic Church also maintains houses of rehabilitation (like the RPF) for errant priests hoping to reform themselves. Flinn saw the RPF as being entirely voluntary and even tame compared to what he experienced as a friar in the Franciscan Order. He willingly submitted to the religious practice of flagellation on Fridays, whipping his legs and back in emulation of the suffering of Jesus before his crucifixion. Flinn also spent several hours a day doing manual labor. As a member of a mendicant order, he owned no material possessions at all, not even the robe he wore. Low wages and humble work were essential to his spiritual commitment.

There is a place for a Supreme Being in Scientology—in Hubbard's Eight Dynamics, it's at the top—but the God idea plays a diminished role compared to many religions. On the other hand, some religions worship objects—stones or icons or mandalas—rather than a deity. Scientologists don't pray; but then, neither do

Buddhists. The idea of salvation, so central to Christianity, is not so different from Hubbard's assertion that the fundamental law of the universe is the urge to survive. Flinn compared the Scientology distinction between preclear and Clear to Buddhist notions of entanglement and enlightenment, or Christian doctrines of sin and grace. The Scientology creed that humans are "thetans" simply means we are beings with immortal souls, which no Christian would argue with.

One of Flinn's most interesting and contested points had to do with hagiography, by which he meant attributing extraordinary powers—such as clairvoyance, visions of God or angels, or the ability to perform miracles—to the charismatic founders of a religion. He pointed to the virgin birth of Jesus, the ability of the Buddha to "transmigrate" his soul into the heavens, or Moses bringing manna to the people of Israel. Such legends are useful in that they bolster the faith of a community, Flinn said. The glaring discrepancies in Hubbard's biography should be seen in the light of the fact that any religion tends to make its founder into something more than human.

Flinn was asked to testify about a policy Hubbard had written in 1965 titled "Fair Game Law," in which he laid down the rules for dealing with Suppressive Persons. That category includes non-Scientologists who are hostile to the church, apostates, and defectors, as well as their spouses, family members, and close friends. "A truly Suppressive Person or Group has no rights of any kind," Hubbard wrote. Such enemies, he said, may be "tricked, lied to or destroyed." In 1965, he wrote another policy letter ambiguously stating, "The practice of declaring people FAIR GAME will cease. FAIR GAME may not appear on any Ethics Order. It causes bad public relations. [The new ruling] does not cancel any policy on the treatment or handling of an SP." The supposed revocation of Fair Game took place before Operation Snow White,

the harassment of Paulette Cooper and other journalists, the persecution of defectors, and many other actions undertaken by church insiders that were done in the spirit, if not the name, of the original policy.

"Almost all religious movements in their very early phase tend to be harsh," Flinn reminded the court. He contended that they tend to evolve and become more lenient over time. As for disconnection, he declared that it was "functionally equivalent to other types of religious exclusions," such as shunning of nonbelievers among Mennonites and the Amish. In the Book of Leviticus, for instance, which is part of the Torah and the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, idolaters and those who have strayed from the faith were to be stoned to death. That practice has disappeared; instead, Orthodox Jews will sit Shiva for the nonbeliever, treating him as if he is already dead. "So this kind of phenomenon is not peculiar to Scientology," Flinn concluded. The implication underlying Flinn's testimony was that Scientology is a new religion that is reinventing old religious norms; whatever abuses it may be committing are errors of youthful exuberance, and in any case they are pale imitators of the practices once employed by the mainstream religions that judges and jurors were likely to be members of.

In the 1990s, Flinn had interviewed several Scientologists who were doing RPF in Los Angeles. Their quarters didn't look any worse than his cell in the monastery, where he slept on a straw bed on a board. He asked if they were free to go. They told him they were, but they wanted to stay and do penance.

Flinn admits to having been a cutup when he was in the order, and he felt out of place. "I was an Irishman in a sea of Germans." He would be sent out to dig the potato field as punishment for his misbehavior. However, when he finally decided to leave his order, instead of being incarcerated or given a freeloader tab, he was

given a dispensation releasing him from his vows. He never felt the need to escape. He took off his robe, put on civilian clothes, and walked away. His spiritual adviser gave him five hundred dollars to help him out. He was never punished or fined, or made to disconnect from anyone.

IN TRUTH, the IRS was ill equipped to make a case in court that Scientology—or any other creed—was not a religion. Moreover, the commissioner of the IRS, Fred T. Goldberg, Jr., had to balance the longing on the part of some of his executives to destroy the church against the need to keep his resources, both human and financial, from being sucked into the black hole that Scientology had created.

One afternoon in Washington, in October 1991, Miscavige and Rathbun were having lunch at the Bombay Club, a swank Indian restaurant near the White House. Miscavige was fed up with the stalemate, which looked as if it could go on forever, in an endless stream of billable hours to the church's attorneys. At the lunch, Miscavige announced to Gerald Feffer, one of their lawyers, "Marty and I are just going to bypass you entirely. We're going to see Fred."

Feffer laughed at the thought that Miscavige would talk directly to the commissioner.

"I'm not joking," Miscavige said. "Marty, do you want to go?"

The two men hailed a cab after lunch and went to 1111 Constitution Avenue, the IRS headquarters, and announced to the security officer that they wanted to see the commissioner.

"Is he expecting you?"

"No, but if you phone him on the intercom and tell him we are from the Church of Scientology, I'm sure he'd love to see us."

Within a few moments, several of the commissioner's aides came

down to the lobby. Miscavige told them that he wanted to bury the hatchet. He said he knew how much hatred there was on each side, going back for decades, and that an intervention from the top was necessary. An hour later there was a call in their hotel room saying the commissioner would see them the following week.

In that first meeting with Goldberg, in a drab government conference room at a giant table, Miscavige, Rathbun, and Heber Jentzsch were facing about a dozen upper-level government bureaucrats, including the commissioner. The level of distrust between the negotiating parties was extreme, made even greater for the IRS representatives who knew that Scientologists had stolen documents and wiretapped meetings in that very building. Both sides had an incentive to bring the hostilities to an end, however. Miscavige and Rathbun made their carefully rehearsed presentation. Miscavige recited a litany of examples in which he felt the IRS had singled out Scientology for unfair treatment. “Am I lying?” he would turn and ask Rathbun theatrically. Rathbun had a briefcase stuffed with documents obtained from the 2,300 Freedom of Information Act lawsuits the church had filed, or the countless public records that the church had combed through. Among the many internal memos the Scientologists had gathered was one they called the Final Solution document. It was the minutes of a meeting in 1974 of several top IRS executives who were trying to define “religion” in a manner that excluded Scientology but not other faiths.

Miscavige made it clear that the barrage of lawsuits lodged against the IRS would come to an immediate halt if the church got what it wanted, which was an unqualified exemption for all of its activities. When Miscavige finished his presentation, Goldberg called for a break, but he signaled to Rathbun to hang back. Goldberg asked him privately if the government settled, would Scientology also turn off the personal attacks in Freedom

magazine?

"Like a faucet," Rathbun told him.

Goldberg appointed his deputy commissioner, John Burke, who had no history with the conflict, to oversee a lengthy review of Scientology's finances and practices. That process went on for two years. During that time, Rathbun and Miscavige commuted to Washington nearly every week, toting banker's boxes stuffed with responses to the government's queries. Two hundred Scientologists in Los Angeles and New York were mobilized to go through the books of the church's tangled bureaucracy. The odds against success were high; the courts had repeatedly sided with the IRS's assertion that the Church of Scientology was a commercial enterprise. Miscavige and Rathbun were very much aware that the future of Scientology, if there was one, awaited the result of the IRS probe. Either the panel would rule against them, in which case the church's tax liability for the previous two decades would destroy it, or they would fall under the gracious protection of the freedom of religion clause of the First Amendment, in which case the Church of Scientology, and all its practices, would be sheltered by the US Constitution.

Overshadowing this debate was an incident that renewed the public concern about the dangerousness of totalistic movements. In February 1993, agents for the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms tried to execute a search warrant on a religious commune a few miles east of Waco, Texas, that was run by a Christian apocalyptic group calling themselves the Branch Davidians. The leader, David Koresh, was stockpiling weapons, practicing polygamy, committing statutory rape, and was said to be physically abusing children, although that last charge was never proved. Following a shoot-out that caused the deaths of four government agents and six Branch Davidians, the FBI began a siege lasting nearly two months and culminating in a catastrophic blaze—

broadcast all over the world—that consumed the entire compound. Seventy-five members of the sect died in the final assault, including twenty-five children. The Waco siege threatened to create a backlash against all new religious movements. On the other hand, the government's handling of the siege, and the disastrous finale, provoked an international uproar. The hazards of unorthodox belief were clearly displayed, as were the limitations of police forces to understand and deal with fanatical movements.

On October 8, more than a thousand Scientologists stood and cheered in the Los Angeles Sports Arena as Miscavige announced, "The war is over!" The IRS had settled with the church. Although the terms were secret, they were later leaked to the Wall Street Journal. Instead of the $1 billion bill for back taxes and penalties that the church owed, Scientology agreed to pay just $12.5 million to resolve outstanding disputes; the church also agreed to stop the cascade of lawsuits against the agency. In return, the IRS dropped its investigations. "The magnitude of this is greater than you can imagine," Miscavige said that night at the Sports Arena. He held up a thick folder of the letters of exemption for every one of the church's 150 American entities. The victory over the IRS was total, he explained. It gave Scientology financial advantages that were unusual, perhaps unique, among religions in the United States. For instance, schools using Hubbard educational methods received tax exemption. Eighty percent of individual auditing on the part of members was now a tax-deductible expense. Two Scientology publishing houses that were solely dedicated to turning out Hubbard's books, including his commercial fiction, also gained the tax exemption. The church even gained the power to extend its tax exemption to any of its future branches—"They will no longer need to apply to the IRS," Miscavige marveled. From now on, the church could make its own decisions about which of its activities were exempt.

“And what about all those battles and wars still being fought overseas?” Miscavige continued. “Well, there’s good news on that front, too.” In the past, he observed, foreign governments would say, “You are an American religion. If the IRS doesn’t recognize you, why should we?” As a part of the settlement, Miscavige revealed, the agency agreed to send notices to every country in the world, explaining what Scientology was. “It is very complete and very accurate,” Miscavige said of the government brochure. “How do I know? We wrote it!”

Miscavige summed up the mood in the Sports Arena: “The future is ours.”

A MONTH AFTER the church’s historic triumph over the IRS in 1993, Rathbun blew. He had come to see Miscavige in a different light during the two years they labored over the tax case. The last six months of the tax case had been particularly arduous. During that period, he slept only about four hours a night. The former athlete was a physical wreck. “I’m only doing this for LRH,” he told himself, as he and Miscavige ate dinners together night after night in Washington and trudged back to the Four Seasons in Georgetown. “I’m not going to be this guy’s bitch for the rest of my life.”

No doubt the stress affected Miscavige as well. On the night of his big victory speech in the Sports Arena, Miscavige showed up for a run-through, but the stage manager, Stefan Castle, was still fiddling with the cues for a complicated laser and pyrotechnic display. According to Castle, Miscavige stormed out into the arena and began to strangle him. Miscavige let him go before any real harm was done, but it was an alarming signal. Amy Scobee, head of the Celebrity Centre at the time, also noted that Miscavige’s personality began to shift immediately after the IRS decision,

becoming more aggressive and hostile. At the party at the Celebrity Centre following his speech, Miscavige rudely shoved her aside as he entered. “You just want to get rid of me,” she remembers him saying.

As far as Rathbun was concerned, it didn’t help that Miscavige scarcely acknowledged him in the speech that night. Immediately after the event, reporters from The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times were calling Rathbun to ask about Miscavige’s salary, which had been disclosed in the IRS documents. Miscavige and his wife together were making more than $100,000 a year—not an extraordinary figure by the standards of world religious leaders, but quite a contrast to the $30 a week most of the Sea Org members were earning. Miscavige was outraged by the impertinence of the reporters, and Rathbun felt that he was taking it out on him. This was all coming at a time when he had been postponing a final visit to see his father, who was dying of cancer.

The St. Petersburg Times published an editorial demanding that Congress investigate the tax-exemption decision. Rathbun was sent to Florida to turn around the Times editorial board, who were not at all persuaded by his arguments. Miscavige was furious that Rathbun failed to handle the situation. One evening, Shelly Miscavige called everyone in Rathbun’s office together, and in front of his subordinates she stripped the captain’s bars off his uniform.

The next day, Rathbun took four gold Krugerrands that he had stored in a safe, got on his motorcycle, and drove to Yuma, Arizona. He called his father in Los Angeles from a bar, but a church official answered. He was waiting there with Rathbun’s wife, Anne, who begged him to come back. Rathbun felt guilty and conflicted. Drinking steadily, he somehow made it to San Antonio, although he was in frequent communication with church leaders. He finally agreed to call Miscavige, who apologized for his

treatment. “You know the kind of pressure I was under. Please just see me,” the church leader said, adding that he could be in San Antonio in a matter of hours. “No, I want to see the Alamo,” Rathbun told him. They agreed to meet for dinner at the Marriott in New Orleans two days later.

That evening, Miscavige showed a chastened, vulnerable side of himself that Rathbun had never seen before. According to Rathbun, Miscavige promised to “cease acting like a madman.” He praised Rathbun for his part in gaining the IRS exemption. “Because you did this,” he declared, “you’re Kha-Khan.” It was a title that Hubbard had come up with in one of his policy letters for a highly productive staff member, but in the culture it was understood that such a person would be forgiven for misdeeds in future lifetimes. Hubbard had awarded it to Yvonne Gillham after she died. Rathbun knew that Miscavige was manipulating him, but he was touched nonetheless. As a further reward, Miscavige offered Rathbun the opportunity to go to the Scientology ship, the Freewinds, and cruise the Caribbean for two years doing nothing but studying and training to be an auditor. Rathbun could finally obtain OT III. It was an offer he couldn’t resist.

That was a rewarding time for Rathbun. But as soon as he got off the ship after his time away, Miscavige called him into his office and said, “I finally know who my SP is. The two years you were gone was the only unenturbulated time in my life.” He ordered him to Clearwater, his rank broken, as a trainee. That didn’t last, either. A number of tabloid sensations arose surrounding Scientology celebrities—Lisa Marie Presley was divorcing Michael Jackson, Kirstie Alley was divorcing actor Parker Stevenson—and Miscavige again turned to Rathbun to cool the press down.

Then, on December 5, 1995, a Scientologist named Lisa McPherson died following a mental breakdown. She had rear-ended a boat that was being towed in downtown Clearwater, Florida,

near the church's spiritual headquarters. When paramedics arrived, she stripped off her clothes and wandered naked down the street. She said she needed help and was taken to a nearby hospital. Soon afterward, a delegation of ten Scientologists arrived at the hospital and persuaded McPherson to check out, against doctors' advice. McPherson spent the next seventeen days under guard in room 174 of the Fort Harrison Hotel.

For Scientologists, McPherson's mental breakdown presented a confounding dilemma. McPherson had been declared Clear just three months before, after ten years of courses and auditing and substantial contributions to the church. The process had been like "a gopher being pulled through a garden hose," she later said, but it had been worth it. "I am so full of life I am overwhelmed at the joy of it all!" she wrote. "WOW!"

Clears are supposed to be invulnerable to mental frailty. People on the base knew that McPherson had been acting strangely before her breakdown. Marty Rathbun, who was at Flag Base during this time, remembers seeing McPherson screaming in the hallways of the Fort Harrison Hotel, because she had just been declared Clear. "Aaaaaah! Yahoo!" she cried. She looked insane. How did she get to be Clear when she was obviously irrational? And who was responsible for deciding that she had achieved that state? According to Rathbun and several other former church officials who were present at the time, the case supervisor who pronounced Lisa McPherson Clear was David Miscavige. He had gone to Flag in the summer of 1995 to take over the auditing delivered at the base. He would also supervise the treatment of McPherson that followed.[4]

When McPherson entered room 174, she was a lovely, shapely young woman. She underwent an Introspection Rundown, the same procedure that Hubbard had developed on the Apollo two decades earlier to treat psychotic behavior. It involved placing McPherson

in solitary confinement and providing her with water, food, and vitamin supplements. All communication had to be in writing. Instead of calming down, McPherson stopped eating. She screamed, she clawed her attendants, she spoke in gibberish, she fouled herself, she banged her head against the wall. Staff members strapped her down and tried to feed her with a turkey baster.

On December 5, McPherson slipped into a coma. When church members decided to take her to the hospital that night, they bypassed the Morton Plant Hospital, just down the street, where McPherson had originally been seen, and drove her forty-five minutes away, passing four other hospitals, to the Columbia New Port Richey Hospital, where there was a doctor affiliated with the church. The woman they finally wheeled into the emergency room was skeletally thin and covered with scratches, bruises, and dark brown lesions. She was also dead. She had suffered a pulmonary embolism on the way to the hospital. In the eyes of the world press, Scientology had murdered Lisa McPherson. She was one of nine Scientologists who had died under mysterious circumstances at the Clearwater facility.

The night after McPherson died, Rathbun got word from church officials to wait for a call at a pay phone at a nearby Holiday Inn. “Why aren’t you all over this mess?” Miscavige demanded, when Rathbun answered the call. “The police are poking around. Do something.”

Rathbun discovered that church officials in Clearwater had already lied in two sworn statements to the police, claiming that McPherson hadn’t been subjected to an Introspection Rundown. The church’s official response, under Rathbun’s direction, was to continue to lie, stating that McPherson had been at the church’s Fort Harrison Hotel only for “rest and relaxation” and there was nothing unusual about her stay. In the meantime, Rathbun went through the logs that McPherson’s attendants had kept. As many as

twenty people had been rotating in and out of McPherson's room; some of them were scratched and bruised from trying to subdue her; that was hardly the isolation and absolute silence and calm that the Introspection Rundown called for. Rathbun noted that, among other entries in the logs, one of the caretakers admitted that the situation was out of control and that McPherson needed to see a doctor. In the presence of a Scientology lawyer, Rathbun handed several of the most incriminating logs to a church executive, and said, "Lose 'em."

The McPherson case loomed over the church for five years, with an ongoing police investigation, protests in front of Scientology facilities, lawsuits on the part of the family, and endless unwanted press. Embarrassing details emerged, including the fact that McPherson had spent $176,700 on Scientology services in her last five years, but she had died with only $11 in her savings account. Rathbun and Mike Rinder, the church's spokesman, were responsible for managing the situation, but Miscavige supervised every detail. The level of tension was nearly unbearable.

Rinder had the particularly unrewarding task of defending the church to the public. He was articulate and seemingly unflappable, and he had a talent for disarming hostile interviewers. He had been a Scientologist since he was five years old, in South Australia, when the religion was banned. He had sailed with Hubbard aboard the Apollo. Few had a deeper experience of the religion than he and no one was more publicly identified with it. But even Rinder could not quell the furor that arose from the McPherson affair.

Perhaps because of Rinder's lifelong service to the church, Miscavige saw him as a rival; or perhaps the leader's frustration with the continual bad press made his spokesperson a particular object of his wrath. At any rate, Marty Rathbun got a call from Shelly Miscavige around Christmas in 1997, the first year of the protests over Lisa McPherson's death. Rathbun was back at Gold

Base. Shelly said that Dave wanted him to report to his quarters right away. Rathbun rushed down the hill to Miscavige's bungalow, where Shelly was waiting just outside the screen door. A moment later, Mike Rinder, who had also been summoned, came racing around the corner of the house. According to both men, the screen door suddenly flew open and Miscavige came out, wearing a terry-cloth bathrobe. According to Rathbun and Rinder, Miscavige hit Rinder in the face and stomach, then grabbed him around the neck and slammed him into a tree. Rinder fell into the ivy, where Miscavige continued kicking him several times.[5] Rathbun just stood there, stunned and puzzled about why he had been ordered to watch this display. Afterward, he decided that he was there to back up Miscavige in case Rinder had the nerve to resist. He was the "silent enforcer."

Rathbun's management of the defense in the McPherson case was one of his most successful accomplishments for the church. The medical examiner in the case, Joan Wood, had vehemently denied the church's assertion that Lisa McPherson's illness and death were sudden. Her health had obviously deteriorated over a long period. She had been without liquids for at least five days, the medical examiner told a reporter, saying, "This is the most severe case of dehydration I've ever seen." She ruled that the cause of death was undetermined, and the State of Florida filed criminal charges against the church. If the church were to be convicted of a felony, it could lead to the loss of its tax exemption and then its probable extinction.

Miscavige and his team brought to bear Scientology's two greatest assets, money and celebrity. The church was building up a strong defense in its case by hiring some of the most prestigious medical examiners and forensic scientists in the country—experts who questioned Joan Wood's conclusion that the likely cause of death was a blood clot caused by dehydration. One of the local

lawyers retained by the church arranged a personal meeting between Miscavige and Wood's attorney, Jeffrey Goodis. Miscavige and Rathbun made a number of presentations to Goodis, trying to persuade him that his client was in legal jeopardy because of her ruling in the McPherson case. Wood was known as an unflappable witness and a formidable opponent to defense attorneys; her testimony would be crucial if the case went to trial. Rathbun says that Miscavige repeatedly warned Goodis that the church was going to discredit his client and sue her "into the Stone Age." Four months before the McPherson case was set to go to trial, Joan Wood changed her ruling to say that McPherson's death was "accidental." The State's case collapsed, charges against the church were dropped, and Wood avoided a lawsuit. Wood retired and became a recluse. She told the St. Petersburg Times that she suffered panic attacks and insomnia. (She died of a stroke in 2011.)

The civil case against the church on the part of McPherson's family continued, however, along with the negative publicity. Tom De Vocht, who was head of the Flag Land Base in Clearwater, says he arranged a meeting with Mary Repper, an influential political consultant who had led the campaigns of many of the state and local officials in the area, including the state attorney who had filed the criminal charges against the church. Repper had the reputation of being anti-Scientology, but she agreed to have lunch with Rinder, Rathbun, and Miscavige at the Fort Harrison Hotel. It turned out that she was a fan of the soap-opera star Michelle Stafford, who was a Scientologist. Repper was invited to Los Angeles to meet her at a Celebrity Centre gala. When she returned, Repper began hosting a series of dinners and lunches for local officials to meet other Scientology celebrities. Tom Cruise dropped by Repper's house on several occasions to enjoy her famous coconut cake and schmooze with local officials including the mayor of Tampa and influential lawyers and judges. He showed clips of

his movies and testified about how Scientology had changed his life. Fox News host Greta van Susteren provided sunset cruises on her yacht. Repper held a brunch for Michelle Stafford; the guests were mainly women who were fans of The Young and the Restless, including the secretaries of local judges. Meantime, the church threw black-tie galas in the ballroom of the Fort Harrison Hotel, where Edgar Winter, Chick Corea, or Isaac Hayes would perform. The Pinellas County sheriff attended these events, along with the mayors of Clearwater and Tampa, as well as a number of lawyers and judges who had been targeted by the church as community leaders. Rathbun says that when Miscavige learned that Jeffrey Goodis and his wife were big fans of John Travolta, they were invited to a gala at the Fort Harrison Hotel, and Travolta was asked to thank them for their help. Rathbun says the star was told, "This guy is really going to bat for us."

The church poured money into local charities. According to Rathbun and Rinder, the idea was to change the climate of public opinion and thereby influence the attitude of the courts toward the church. Rathbun says there was a parallel campaign to discredit Lisa McPherson's family as golddiggers who were exploiting their daughter's death.

In a recent deposition, Rathbun estimated that the entire campaign to shut down the prosecution of the church cost over $20 to $30 million. (The civil suit brought by the family settled for an undisclosed sum in 2004.)

SCIENTOLOGY WAS UNDER ATTACK elsewhere in the world as well. Germany, acutely sensitive to the danger of extremist movements, viewed Scientology with particular alarm. In Hamburg, in 1992, the state parliament created a commission to investigate "destructive groups," a category that included the Church of Satan,

Transcendental Meditation, and the Unification Church, but was mainly aimed at Scientology. Scientologists were barred from holding government jobs and forbidden to join Germany's main political party, the Christian Democratic Union, because they weren't considered Christians. The youth wing of the party organized boycotts of Cruise's first Mission: Impossible and Travolta's movie Phenomenon. The city of Stuttgart canceled a concert by Chick Corea when it was discovered that he was a Scientologist. Seventy percent of Germans favored the idea of banning the organization altogether.

The 1990s saw the rise of apocalyptic movements in many different countries. As the millennium drew near, the theme of science fiction and UFOs became especially pronounced and deadly. In October 1994, police in Switzerland, investigating a fire in a farmhouse, discovered a hidden room with eighteen corpses wearing ceremonial garments, arranged like spokes in a wheel. Other bodies were found elsewhere on the farm. Their heads were covered with plastic bags; some had been shot or beaten. The next day, three chalets burned in another Swiss village. Investigators found more than two dozen bodies in the ruins. They had been poisoned. Some of the dead had been lured to the scene and murdered, but most were followers of Joseph Di Mambro, a French jeweler, who had created a new religion, the Order of the Solar Temple. Di Mambro's chief lieutenant, a charismatic Belgian obstetrician named Luc Journet, preached that after death the members would be picked up by a spaceship and reunited on the star Sirius. Like Hubbard, Journet had been influenced by Aleister Crowley and the Ordo Templi Orientis. A year after these macabre incidents, the burned corpses of sixteen other members of the group were found in Grenoble, France; then, in 1997, five more members of the order burned themselves to death in Quebec, making a total of seventy-four deaths. In contrast to the Branch

Davidians or the followers of Jim Jones, who were predominantly lower class, the members of the Solar Temple were affluent, well-educated members of the communities they lived in, with families and regular jobs, and yet they had given themselves over to a mystical science-fiction fantasy that turned them into killers, suicides, or helpless victims.

In March 1995, adherents of a Japanese movement called Aum Shinrikyo ("Supreme Truth") attacked five subway trains in Tokyo with sarin gas. Twelve commuters died; thousands more might have if the gas had been more highly refined. It was later discovered that this was just one of at least fourteen attacks the group staged in order to set off a chain of events intended to result in an apocalyptic world war. The leader of the group, Shoko Asahara, a blind yoga instructor, combined the tenets of Buddhism with notions drawn from Isaac Asimov's Foundation Trilogy, which depicts a secretive group of scientists who are preparing to take over the world. Many of Asahara's followers were indeed scientists and engineers from top Japanese universities who were enchanted by this scheme. They purchased military hardware in the former Soviet Union and sought to acquire nuclear warheads. When that failed, they bought a sheep farm in Western Australia that happened to be atop a rich vein of uranium. They cultivated chemical and biological weapons, such as anthrax, Ebola virus, cyanide, and VX gas. They had used such agents in previous attacks, but failed to create the kind of mass slaughter they hoped would bring on civil war and nuclear Armageddon. Still, Aum exposed the narrow boundary between religious cultism and terror, which would soon become more obvious with the rise of al-Qaeda. A spokesperson for the Church of Scientology in New Zealand explained that the source of Aum Shinrikyo's crimes was the practice of psychiatry in Japan.

Just as the debate in Germany was coming to a climax, in March

1997, thirty-nine members of a group calling itself Heaven's Gate committed suicide in a San Diego mansion. They apparently had hoped to time their deaths in order to ascend to a spacecraft that they believed was following Comet Hale-Bopp. Marshall Applewhite, their leader, a former choirmaster, represented himself as a reincarnated Jesus who was receiving guidance from the television show Star Trek.

Although Scientology has persecuted its critics and defectors, it has never engaged in mass murder or suicides; however, the public anxiety surrounding these sensational events added to the rancor and fear that welled up in Germany. Could Scientology also turn violent? There were elements mixed into these various groups that resembled some features of Scientology—magical beliefs and science fiction being the most obvious. Past lives were a common theme. Like Aum Shinrikyo, Scientology has ties to Buddhist notions of enlightenment and Hindu beliefs in karma and reincarnation. Structurally, Aum Shinrikyo was the most similar to Scientology, having both a public membership and a cloistered clergy, like the Sea Org, called renunciates, who carried out directives that the larger organization knew little or nothing about. When the attacks on the subway took place, Aum's membership in Japan was estimated to be about 10,000, with an additional 30,000 in Russia, and some scattered pockets worldwide, with resources close to $1 billion—figures that compare with some estimates of Scientology today. What separated these groups from Scientology was their orientation toward apocalypse and their yearning for the end-time. That has never been a feature of Scientology. Clearly, however, the lure of totalistic religious movements defies easy categorization. Such groups can arise anywhere and spread like viruses, and it is impossible to know which ones will turn lethal, or why.

Both the German government and the Scientologists viewed their

struggle through the prism of Germany's Nazi past. Ursula Caberta, the head of the Hamburg anti-Scientology task force, compared Hubbard's Introduction to Scientology Ethics to Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf: "Hitler was thinking that the Aryans were going to rule the world, the untermenschen. The philosophy of L. Ron Hubbard is the same." In response to such statements, in January 1997 a group of Hollywood celebrities, agents, lawyers, and movie executives published a full-page open letter to Chancellor Helmut Kohl in the International Herald Tribune. "Hitler made religious intolerance official government policy," the letter stated. "In the 1930s it was the Jews. Today it is the Scientologists." The letter compared the boycotts of Cruise, Travolta, and Corea to Nazi book-burnings. The letter was written and paid for by Bertram Fields, then the most powerful lawyer in Hollywood, whose clients included Travolta and Cruise. None of the thirty-four signatories of the document were Scientologists, but many were Jews. Most of them—such as Oliver Stone, Dustin Hoffman, and Goldie Hawn—had worked with the two stars or were friends or clients of Fields.

Entertainment Tonight sent the actress Anne Archer, a well-known Scientologist, to Germany on a "fact-finding mission." She later testified before the US Congress, as did other Scientology celebrities—Travolta, Corea, and Isaac Hayes—about the suppression of religious freedom in Germany. "Individuals and businesses throughout Germany are routinely required to sign a declaration, referred to as a 'sect filter,' swearing that they are not Scientologists," Travolta told Congress. "Failure to sign means that companies will not hire them, trade unions will not admit them, they will not be permitted to join social groups, banks will not open accounts for them, and they are even excluded from sports clubs, solely because of their religion."

In April, John Travolta met with President Bill Clinton at a conference on volunteerism in Philadelphia. It was a freighted

moment for the president, since Travolta was portraying a character based on him in the forthcoming movie Primary Colors. “He said he wanted to help me out with the situation in Germany,” Travolta later said. “He had a roommate years ago who was a Scientologist and had really liked him, and respected his views on it. He said he felt we were given an unfair hand in that country, and that he wanted to fix it.” Clinton set up a meeting for Travolta and Cruise with Sandy Berger, his national security advisor, who was given the additional assignment of being the administration’s “Scientology point person.”

None of this had any effect on Travolta’s character in the film, as the movie had already been shot, nor on Germany’s policy toward the church, which refused to recognize Scientology as a religion or allow members to join political parties. However, the US State Department began pressuring the German government on behalf of Scientology. The Germans were puzzled that their American counterparts seemed not to know or care about the church’s RPF camps, which the Germans called penal colonies, and the reported practices of confinement, forced confessions, and punishing physical labor, which they said amounted to brainwashing. There was a belief within the German cabinet that the church’s real goal was to infiltrate the government and create a Scientology superstate. “This is not a church or a religious organization,” the labor minister, Norbert Blum, told Maclean’s magazine. “Scientology is a machine for manipulating human beings.”

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[1] Behar says that a private investigator, posing as a distraught parent, called him and begged for help with a child who had gone into Scientology. Behar had referred the caller to the Cult Awareness Network. He says he never advised kidnapping. The private investigator taped the conversation, and Behar’s attorneys subpoenaed the tape for his

defense in the lawsuit brought by the church.

[2] Cruise, through his attorney, denies that he ever retreated from his commitment to Scientology.

[3] A spokesperson for Time categorically denied this charge.

[4] According to a church spokesperson, “Mr. Miscavige was not involved in any aspect of Ms. McPherson’s spiritual progress in Scientology.”

[5] The church denies that Miscavige has abused any members of the church, saying that the abuse claims have been propagated by a “group of vociferous anti-Scientologists.”