

Sciencologists

# Scientologist Plot Detailed In Court File

## Document Theft Ring Operated for Years

By Allan Frank

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The leadership of the Founding Church of Scientology engaged in a massive conspiracy for at least four years to steal secret documents from government agencies, trade associations, Washington-law offices and various newspapers, court documents released late yesterday show.

The documents also indicate that a second conspiracy occurred from June 1976 into July 1977 in a Scientology attempt to cover up the widespread, highly organized documents thievery ring.

The factual accuracy of the documents has been agreed to by the Scientologists' lawyers.

The Scientology plan to infiltrate 136 government agencies, plus numerous other groups, began to unravel in mid-1976.

It had begun in 1973.

Three federal grand juries investigated various aspects of the Scientologists' activities and prosecutors spent the last 2½ years working toward a final U.S. District Court hearing today in the criminal conspiracy case against nine top Scientologists.

The defendants, including Mary Sue Hubbard, wife of church founder L. Ron Hubbard, have agreed through their attorneys to accept verdicts of guilty from U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey based on evidence agreed on as facts by both the defense and prosecution.

Papers filed with Richey outline the conspiracy in which Scientologists gave awards to church members who succeeded in removing thousands of classified documents from government files.

The court papers were unsealed late yesterday by Richey in preparation for a hearing today at which the judge is expected to find each of the Scientology defendants guilty of one count contained in the 28-count indictment.

Two Scientologists who used false Internal Revenue Service credentials to enter the U.S. District Court House here aroused the suspicions of a law librarian who called FBI agents to question the two. Although

the two were released, the investigation begun that day — June 11, 1976 — resulted in the arrests that proved crucial to untangling the secret plots.

The Scientology documents show that church officials wanted to penetrate the government illegally to fight what the church considered illegal harassment, including numerous tax audits, designed to curtail its religious freedom.

The scope of the conspiracies became evident to prosecutors in June 1977 when Michael Meisner, one of the men questioned at the court house, became disgruntled with his Scientology superiors.

Meisner surrendered to FBI agents on June 20, 1977, after escaping from a Los Angeles apartment where the Scientologists had kept him under nearly constant guard while coaching him on a cover story to give federal investigators.

Had an agreement not been reached to have guilty verdicts entered against the Scientologists without a trial, Meisner, who remains in the federal protective custody, would have been the star witness.

He identified numerous other Scientology operatives, including a woman who obtained copies of CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency and other security agency documents while employed by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

That woman, Nancy Douglas, relayed the documents to other Scientologists in Washington who forwarded them up the chain of command to the Los Angeles office of the military-style church hierarchy. She also is under federal protection.

Methods used included placing Scientologists as secretaries and other low level employes in various agencies to copy documents surreptitiously, forging identification cards for entry into government buildings; forced entry, electronically-bugging offices, and even the importation of a lock-picking expert from Los Angeles to crack extra tough file cabinets and door locks.

Among the offices burglarized by Scientologists in 1976 were dozens in the Justice Department and the Internal Revenue Service, including the office of then-Deputy Attorney General Harold B. Tyler Jr.

The thrust of the Scientology theft plan was three-fold:

- Illegally photocopy any documents relating to investigations of Scientology for possible tax violations and other crimes.

- Illegally photocopy any documents that might be used to intimidate so-called "enemies" of the church.

- Illegally photocopy any documents about government or trade association operations that might embarrass them when leaked to the press.

While some of the burglaries at Justice and IRS had been mentioned in the indictments handed up by a federal grand jury Aug. 15, 1978, many others were not publicly confirmed until yesterday.

They include infiltration by Scientologists working as employees at Coast Guard Intelligence, the Drug Enforcement Administration, IRS offices in Los Angeles and London, Interpol offices here and in London, the office of the district attorney in Los Angeles, the California Attorney General's Office and the San Diego Police Department.

When the Scientologists learned through church lawyers that the Internal Revenue Service was planning a November 1974 conference about the tax-exempt status of the church's branch in Hawaii, an expert at bugging rooms was flown here by the church to plant a device to eavesdrop on the IRS conference.

The documents say that the Scientology electronics man was taken into IRS headquarters by another Scientologist with phony IRS credentials who acted as a lookout while the bugger implanted a transmitter in an electric socket in the conference room wall. The entire conference then was broadcast to an FM radio in a Scientologist's car opposite the IRS headquarters at 1111 Constitution Ave. NW.

The American Medical Association headquarters in Chicago and the offices of the AMA's lawyers here also were "penetrated" by Scientology agents called "missionaires" by the church.

The outline of the government's case against the Scientologists is contained in a 284-page "stipulated record" — an account of the facts of the case that will be presented in lieu of testimony.

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... records was prepared by prosecutors led by Assistant U.S. Attorney Raymond Banoun and agreed upon by attorneys for the Scientologists, who continue to contend that they were prosecuted for religious reasons.

Had the defendants pleaded guilty, they would have lost the right to appeal.

The agreement calls for the church's No. 2 official, Hubbard, to be found guilty of one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice, obstruct an investigation, to harbor a fugitive and to make false declarations before the grand jury.

That crime carries a possible sentence of up to five years in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

Other defendants expected to accept a verdict on that charge are: Henning Heldt, the British-based church's top U.S. official, Duke Snider, Richard Weigand, Gregory Willardson, Gerald Bennett Wolfe and Cindy Raymond.

Mitchell Hermann, also known as Mike Cooper, who oversaw many of the burglary operations here, is expected to be found guilty of conspiracy to intercept oral communications, burglarize and steal.

Sharon Thomas, who was employed as a Justice Department secretary, and was one of the principals involved in the illegal photocopying of government documents, which the Scientologists code-named "Judys," is expected to be found guilty of theft of government documents. That crime carries a penalty of one year and a \$1,000 fine.