

The Weather

Today—Partly cloudy, high in low to mid 90s, low in 60s. Chance of rain 20 per cent today, near zero tonight. Sunday—Sunny, high in 80s. Yesterday—3 p.m. AQL, 120 Temp. range, 96-77. Details, Page B2.

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Agents Search Scientology Offices

By Timothy S. Robinson

Washington Post Staff Writer

Federal agents raided Church of Scientology offices here and in Los Angeles yesterday in search of masses of documents they said were illegally taken by covert agents for the church from the government's voluminous investigative files on the group.

Spies for the church allegedly stole the files over the past two years by infiltrating federal agencies, bugging government offices, and, on at least one occasion bugging an Internal Revenue Service meeting, according to an affidavit filed by an FBI agent in support of the search warrants.

The plot originated "at the very highest

level of the church" and resulted in numerous illegal entries by Scientology agents into the Justice Department, the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Attorney's Office here, according to the affidavit.

The information in the affidavit came from a man who was once one of the top five Scientology officials in the U.S., and who is now being held under guard by U.S. Marshals because of his fear of reprisal from the church, federal officials said.

The Church of Scientology, founded by former science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, claims 3 million members in the U.S. and another million abroad. It is distinguished by an unusual counseling technique

that its members say eradicates negative memories to produce a "clear" mind and "enhance its adherents' knowledge of themselves and their Creator."

The government has monitored the activities of the group and its founder, who originally ran the organization from aboard ships at sea, for years and once filed a lawsuit over the church's alleged claims of the medical benefits of so-called "E-meters" used in its counseling processes.

Although government officials have not publicly outlined the specific reasons for its intense interest in the sect, several said the monitoring has been carried out because of the international aspects of the unusual or-

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for U.S. Documents

ganization and allegations that it practices "mind control" on its converts. The government also has been trying to determine if the group is a bonafide religion and deserves to retain the tax exempt status held by most of its branches, according to officials.

Scientologists have numerous suits pending against the government under the Freedom of Information Act in which the church is trying to seek access to what it contends are voluminous government files on the religion. The sect also has claimed it has been the subject of widespread government harassment in the past.

The Rev. Vaughn Young, a Scientology official in Los Angeles, said agents showed

up at the church's headquarters at the old Cedars of Lebanon Hospital there at 6:30 a.m. with sledgehammers, crowbars, and wirecutters and forcibly entered the offices there.

"We have about 100 agents crawling all over us here," Young said during the raid. "Someone put out the order, 'Get the church'."

More than 20 agents raided one of the church's offices here at 2125 S St. NW, to carry out a similar search. They also were prepared to forcibly enter the administrative offices there, but were instead allowed inside by Scientology officials.

See SEARCH, A4, Col. 1

Scientology Offices Raided In Search of U.S. Documents

SEARCH, From A1

Both Young and The Rev. Hugh Wilhere, Scientology spokesman in D.C. denied that the government's informant in the case, Michael Meisner, was a former top Scientology official and scoffed at the FBI's allegation that Scientologists would countenance break-ins and buggings.

Wilhere said Meisner "worked at a middle level job at the most" in the D.C. offices and never was a national official of the organization. "He wasn't a real 'group' type of guy here," Wilhere said. "He had a lot of personal problems. There's no way he was one of the top five people in the U.S."

Young said the church has only used legal means, such as the Freedom of Information Act, to get documents from the government. "I don't have any inside leaks in government offices, he added, saying he was not aware of any break-ins and buggings.

According to the FBI affidavit, the investigation leading to the raids yesterday began when Meisner and another Scientologist, Gerald Bennett Wolfe, were caught using forged IRS credentials to enter the U.S. Courthouse here in June, 1976.

Wolfe ultimately pleaded guilty to using the fake credentials, and was sentenced last month to two years on probation. However, Assistant U.S. Attorney Garey Stark said at the time of the sentence that he was continuing to investigate because, among other reasons, Wolfe had refused to enter a plea to a misdemeanor and cooperate but instead wanted to plead to a felony that could have ended in a five-year prison term for him.

Meisner, meanwhile, was a fugitive until he called Stark on June 20 of this year and said he wanted to return voluntarily to the District.

When he returned here, Meisner told federal officials he had escaped from the church and was willing to testify against it. He said that while he was in California as a fugitive he had been held under 24-hour guard,

repeatedly "audited"—a church term for counseling individuals—and was once removed from one building to another while handcuffed and gagged.

Prosecutors emphasized yesterday that Meisner has not been granted immunity for his testimony, and has agreed to plead guilty to a five-year felony.

During two weeks of intensive questioning by Stark and FBI agent Robert Tittle and others, Meisner then unfolded his complex tale of conspiracy and cover-up involving the church, the affidavit said.

He told the agents that specific church officials headed covert operations to acquire government documents critical of the religion, as well as covert operations to discredit and remove from power anyone whom the church perceives to be its enemy.

Meisner said he has risen to a position in the church that allows him direct access to "extremely sensitive church documents . . . which authorized the implementation of a policy of infiltration of government agencies and elimination of individuals who were considered enemies of the church," according to the affidavit. He said he was national secretary of the church's "Guardian's Office" and had regularly discussed the conspiracy with other top Scientology officials, and had access to the church's most secret files, the affidavit reported.

He told the agents that the plot began when Scientologist Guardian Order 1361 (GO 1361) was issued by one of the top international officials of the church in 1974. It called for an all-out attack on the IRS—which has occasionally withheld tax-exempt status from church subsidiaries—through the use of lawsuits, public relations attacks, and the infiltration of the agency, according to the affidavit.

The church recruited Wolfe to infiltrate the agency and had him get a job as at the IRS, in order to have access to the agency's files, according to the affidavit. When Wolfe said he was

having trouble getting such files, Meisner and another Scientology official went to his office with him and took a file out to show Wolfe how to carry out such a plan, the affidavit continued.

About the same time, according to the affidavit, Scientology officials in Los Angeles placed a listening device in an IRS conference room there to overhear IRS agents discuss strategy concerning the church. Meisner has told federal officials he has since seen a transcript of that meeting.

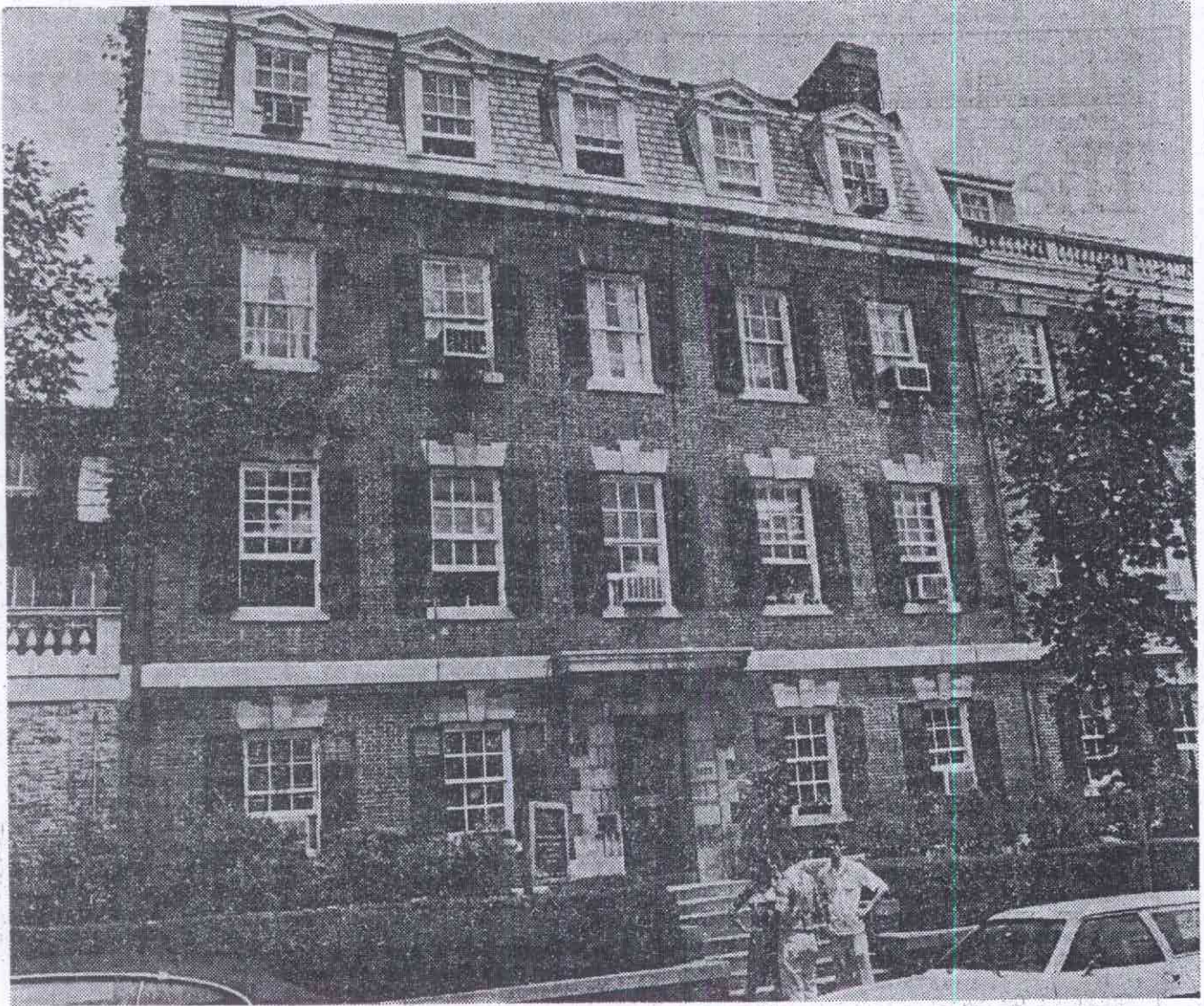
Meisner himself took over the supervision of "all covert Scientology agents within government agencies" in March, 1975, the affidavit said. He supervised break-ins at numerous offices at IRS headquarters here, from which government files were stolen, copied and then returned by Scientology agents.

Meisner said he then recruited a church member who was able to get a job in the Justice Department as a secretary to a Justice Department attorney who was handling suits involving the church, but learned from her that most of the documents in which the church was interested were kept in the office of Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan Dodell in the U.S. Courthouse here.

At Justice, however, the employee was able to copy documents involving the CIA, the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Customs Service, Interpol, and the Defense Communications Agency, according to the affidavit.

Meisner and Wolfe, meanwhile, broke into the IRS office's photographic identification room and forged IRS documents they would ultimately use to enter the U.S. Courthouse, the affidavit continued.

They first entered the courthouse in May, 1976, but found Dodell's office locked. Later, however, they returned during the lunch hour and found a secretary had left her keys on the desk outside Dodell's office.



By Ellsworth Davis—The Washington Post

The Washington headquarters of the Church of Scientology on S Street NW was raided in search of U.S. documents.

They copied the keys and returned them surreptitiously, the affidavit said. Then, they would return at night to the courthouse ostensibly to use the court's law library, but instead would enter Dodell's office and copy reams of Scientology-related documents kept there.

A librarian and building guard became suspicious of their repeated entries, and confronted them and called FBI agents who questioned them and permitted them to leave the building,

the affidavit said. After that confrontation, Meisner said, he called Scientology officials in Los Angeles who instructed him and Wolfe to come to Los Angeles to discuss the problem.

In Los Angeles, Scientology officials concocted a cover story in which Wolfe would return to Washington and claim he faked the IRS credentials one night while he and a man he knew as John Foster were drunk and that they had used the cards to do legal research in the court library, the affidavit continued.

Meisner, meanwhile, would change his appearance by cutting and dying his hair, shaving his moustache and switching from glasses to contact lenses bought by the church, the cover story continued.

Wolfe carried out his part of the cover story, according to the affidavit, by entering his guilty pleas and refusing to change his story in a subsequent grand jury appearance. Wolfe later gave Scientology officials a summary of his grand jury appearance, according to Meisner.

Scientology: Quackery or a

The mind is a storehouse and network of mental image pictures (facsimiles) used as a tool for computation and evaluation by the spirit or Thetan . . .

An engram is a mental image picture or facsimile (copy) of a past incident containing pain and unconsciousness . . .

By pastoral counseling techniques, the basic engram-impediments are removed from the spirit. The earliest of these engrams were recorded by the spirit at the very inception of its material existence, some trillions of years in the past . . .

—from the Doctrines and Practice of the Church of Scientology

By Cynthia Gorney

Washington Post Staff Writer

Scientologists call it "spiritual counseling," a cleansing of the soul. They say their church knits Buddhism and Hinduism, the Bible and the Bhaga-

vad-Gita, modern science and the world's great philosophies.

Its detractors call it expensive nonsense. Federal Judge Gerhard A. Gesell has referred to its founder as "a facile, prolific author," whose "quackery flourished throughout the United States and in various parts of the world." The Food and Drug Administration fought it for 10 years, the town of Clearwater, Fla., has erupted into controversy over its arrival, and now the Church of Scientology has been raided by the FBI.

Scientologists see the raid as just one more assault on their church. "We feel that there's some basic religious prejudice underlying all of this," said Hugh Wilhare, a Church of Scientology minister, in a telephone interview yesterday.

The church was founded in Washington 23 years ago by Lafayette Ron

Hubbard, a science fiction writer who an explorer, a photographer, and a is also described by church officials as philosopher. Using a coined name from both Latin and Greek—scio, from the Latin, was meant to convey "knowing in the fullest sense of the word," church literature says, and the Greek Logos to mean "doctrine"—Hubbard defined his teaching, according to church literature, as "the doctrine of Knowing the Ultimate."

Now claiming 4 million followers worldwide, the church teaches that human failings grow out of early traumas—the accumulation of spiritual burdens that scientologists compare to the eastern concept of karma. Those traumas can be located, scientologists say, with the help of a small machine called a Hubbard Electrometer, or an E-Meter for short.

The meters are 7½ volt, transistor operated boxes, each equipped with

Way to Know the Ultimate?

two handles, that measure what Wilhare described as "resistance in the body." A scientologist sits with an E meter and a church companion—called an "auditor" in the sometimes bewildering language of the church—explores, by watching the signals of the E meter, the stages of his own past.

Exploration means confrontation, scientologists say. And when the church member has confronted each of the damaging stages of his past, he is "clear"—clear of "unwanted spiritual travail," the literature says, "free from the thrall of the physical universe."

Scientology is taught in courses, and the courses cost money. A program in "communication," which might include such drills as learning to gaze directly into another person's eyes, goes for \$35, Wilhare said. A course in "how to study" might cost

\$100, he said. It is through these fees, which Wilhare referred to as "donations," that each of the four Washington area churches, and the many others nationwide, supports itself, he said.

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There has been constant tension between scientologists and the federal government since the church's incorporation in 1954. Particularly aggravating to federal health officials were

the E meters, which the government said were being advertised as medical devices, and in January 1973 a group of deputized Baltimore longshoremen raided the scientologists' Washington headquarters for the food and drug Administration to confiscate from 85 to 100 E meters, along with thousands of scientology books and pamphlets.

Scientologists, declaring that the E meters were not medical devices but rather religious artifacts, like holy water, fought the FDA in a battle that lasted 10 years. In 1971, Federal Judge Gerhard A. Gesell ruled that the devices could be used in "bona fide religious counseling," but could not be advertised as treatment for disease. Two years later, in a ceremony attended by 100 gratified members of the church, the E meters and pamphlets were returned from the storage company where they had been locked away since 1963.