

Matriarch Surrenders

Scientologists Appear in Court

By Ron Shaffer

Washington Post Staff Writer

At 1:45 p.m. yesterday, Mary Sue Hubbard, wife of Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard and a person seldom recognized in public, slipped into a U.S. District courtroom, flanked by two lawyers, and took a seat with eight other Church members who had come to surrender to the court.

With her arrival, the audience of Scientologists, reporters and lawyers drew noticeably quiet. None of the Church members, which includes top officials, claimed to have ever seen her before or know whether she would appear.

She stepped demurely to the bench, a slender woman dressed in black, with long brown hair and a Scientology medal around her neck, and listened as her rights were explained.

Then she turned over her passport, stiffening momentarily when chief prosecutor Raymond Banoun asked if she had any passports under aliases.

"I'll take that to be not an insult, that it was not intended as an insult," the Church matriarch said curtly. "No, I do not." She then was led to the court cellblock by U.S. marshals

to be arrested, fingerprinted, photographed and released on her own recognizance.

The other eight Church members received similar dispositions before U.S. Magistrate Jean Dwyer in what proved to be a simple beginning of the government's case against them following 14 months of investigation. All nine members were indicted here Tuesday as part of an alleged conspiracy to plant spies in government agencies, break into government offices, steal official documents and bug government meetings.

Two other Church members, said to live in England, did not appear yesterday and extradition proceedings were begun.

Mrs. Hubbard is described by the government as being the highest ranking official indicted. She has the titles Commodore Staff Guardian and controller of the Church and is second in command, according to prosecutors.

Scientologists deny that she is in any chain of command. They say she is retired now like her husband, and is simply "a consultant." The D.C. Bail Agency report listed her age as

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47 and her income as \$34,000 a year as a Church consultant.

Whatever her position, Scientology officials make no attempt to hide their reverence for her. "Certainly she is second in all of our hearts," said Henning Heldt, the top Church officer in this country and one of those indicted.

The bond hearing was a solemn contrast to a vitriolic press conference earlier at the Sheraton Park in which Heldt accused the government of "the largest concentrated attempt to eradicate a church since the holocaust of Nazi Germany."

Heldt accused U.S. intelligence agencies "and their operatives" around the world of spreading "lies and falsehoods about the Church in order to create "an international suppression of the religion of Scientology."

According to Heldt's deputy, Duke Snider, this situation has come to pass because the Church was born

amid the paranoia of the McCarthy era in the 1950s, when government agents investigated and contrived reports about the Church, including alleged links to LSD, homosexuality and brainwashing. "The files lived on—I believe the government believes its own files," Snider said. The situation has been exacerbated by the Church's unending quests under the Freedom of Information Act to get those files released and corrected, Heldt said.

Banoun, asked later about the allegations, said they were absurd.

"The fact of the matter is the grand jury said they [Scientologists] sent people to this courthouse; they broke in; they burglarized offices in the Justice Department and IRS; they stole documents, they bugged meetings; they lied to the grand jury and they conspired to cover it up," he said.

"This indictment represents grand jury findings of criminal conduct. Nowhere does it mention religion,"

Banoun said. A U.S. judge in Los Angeles already has rejected as "totally unfounded" all Church motions alleging the government has been acting in bad faith, Banoun said.

Hubbard, a former fiction writer, founded Scientology in the early 1950s as a means of offering peace of mind to followers through counseling, or "auditing" sessions by trained church members. Church officials claim several million members worldwide; its critics place the number of active participants at between 20,000 and 30,000.

In addition to Mary Sue Hubbard, Heldt and Snider, Scientologists who were arrested and released on their recognizance yesterday were Gregory B. Willardson, 31; Gerald B. Wolfe, 28; Priscilla O. Raymond, 39; Sharon Thomas, 28; and Richard P. Weigand, 31. Bench warrants have been issued for the arrest of Jane Kember and Morris Budlong, who are said to live in England.



Associated Press

Mary Sue Hubbard, wearing sunglasses, leaves U.S. District Court yesterday after surrendering her passport.



By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

Scientology members Henning Heldt, left, and Duke Snider, third from left, walk with attorney Philip Hirshkop.