

# Cults are not a fad — COMA spokesman says

He had always been a quiet, slightly morose teenager. He'd never say anything unless he was asked first.

But now he had changed, and his parents and friends were at first pleased but then disturbed with the change.

It all started when he joined "The Church".

In a thousand Canadian homes the same feelings are being experienced by parents watching their children change and slowly surrender their minds and bodies to a new religion.

Some people call these new religious organizations cults.

Cults are big business in the United States and, to a somewhat lesser degree, here in Canada. But that doesn't lessen their danger, according to one local expert.

Dr. B.W. Shaw, psychologist, is a board member of the recently formed Council on Mind Abuse, a Toronto-based group dedicated to countering the mindnumbing effects of the pseudo-religious movements.

"These cults are in Canada, they're in Toronto and they're here in Oakville," he said in a recent interview. "There are many people being caught up in them right in this town."

Some of the cults are well known across the nation, Scientology, founded by L. Ron Hubbard, a former writer of science fiction stories; the Unification

Church founded by the Korean "messiah" Sun Myung Moon and the People's Temple of California, whose Guyana commune tragedy will be remembered forever.

"These cults are serious organizations," Shaw said. "They're not just little groups selling pamphlets and candy. They are groups that will take your children away from you and within two months they will turn them against you."

In defending themselves from their critics, the cults usually claim they are legitimate religions and hide behind constitutional problems.

There are differences between a cult and a legitimate religion, Shaw said.

"The big thing is that they use deceitful methods to recruit people who are vulnerable and young," he said, adding that the most popular age group for the cults are people between the ages of 16 and 25.

"This is a very fragile age range where the are susceptible to the offerings of cults," he said.

Why would the normally healthy, well-financed children of Oakville want to get involved in a religious organization demanding total and unquestioning obedience?

"The cults seem to offer a wonderful benefit and solution to all of the problems that youth think they have. About that age people start to feel more loneliness and the cults seem to offer an almost instant answer."

"They start by inviting you to dinner at their club or to a song and fellowship evening, but as the evening goes on they are psychologically seduced and hounded if they try to break out of the cobweb."

At that point, he said, the process of brainwashing new members begins. In most cases, recruits are isolated from the rest of the world, they are given no chance to sit by themselves and analyze the new ideas that are being presented.

Sometime during the evening or weekend, the recruit will be asked to make a commitment to the group.

"Then they'll cut you off from all your old contacts, they'll isolate you from your friends, family and job, because the form of brainwashing they practice relies on isolation from all people and information, except what they want you to hear."

The second step in the process, Shaw said, is to confuse the subject, "to get him thinking that everything he had believed was wrong. Usually they'll talk in riddles that are supposed to contain the answer until you don't know if you're coming or going."

The final step is for the cult to offer the answer, "and if they have you sufficiently isolated and confused you'll be hungry for an answer to resolve that feeling... you find the answer to the confusion caused by the cult leader."

After that, "the cult becomes your family, you identity, your home and the meaning of your exist-

ence."

Why are people so willing to make a commitment to a group they don't really understand?

"People have lost the traditional anchors of home and church and in this state of unclear identity and social change, young people are more confused. The time was ripe and the cults just sprang up to take advantage of it."

Civil libertarians and others including the cults, have argued that there is no difference between them and legitimate religions. They have even drawn comparisons between the vilification they endure and what the early Christians experienced.

According to Shaw, however, there are clear differences.

"You can't openly examine the doctrine of a cult and compare it to others as you would with a legitimate church," he said. "The cult is always holding the fear of rejection over your head."

"They are also very careful to keep you away from your parents and others who are a source of information because if you can get other information, then you won't be totally and slavishly devoted to the cult leader."

Isn't this the same thing Roman Catholic monasteries do when men and women enter?

"The recruitment isn't deceitful there. The monk makes a voluntary commitment to God rather than to a particular leader and if he wants to leave then he

isn't harassed by the Church."

After a month or so of isolation and confusion, the cult member loses his ability to think clearly,

"because all of their thinking is limited to what the cult members tell them they can think."

"Asking questions just isn't considered kosher," he said.

Eventually the members become cold, apathetic, emotionless and very rigid in the routines of their life. Health problems may develop because of the unusual diet they receive from the cult.

Since the Council on Mind Abuse was formed about a year ago, there have been several attempts to discredit the organization, including a false newsletter that was sent to newspapers in which references were made to Hasidic Jews and Quakers as some of the dangerous cults to be combatted.

"Apparently that fake newsletter was intended to discredit COMA. The way it was written suggests it was done by the cult organizations rather than simply by individual members."

"I think they're afraid that COMA will interfere with their leaching on society. If we provide true information about them it would make it much more difficult for them to operate," he said.

Also, despite the accusation of some cults, COMA is not involved in kidnapping and deprogramming at all. There isn't much of that in Canada and even

Continued on Pg. C2



## Steve Arnold Cults author

Steve Arnold the author of this in-depth look at cults, their pros and cons, put many hours of work into research in trying to give an accurate look at the emergence of the cult phenomenon.

Mr. Arnold is a reporter-writer with The Oakville Beaver and has been with the newspaper for more than three years.

His stories have appeared regularly in Halton's five Inland Publishing Co. Limited community newspapers.

# Champion Perspective

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION  
MILTON, ONTARIO  
WEDNESDAY AUGUST 27, 1980  
THIRD SECTION

## Left family to join the Brotherhood

Like most of the others, she was depriving herself constantly to give money to Him.

The poetry she used to write, sensitive and flowing, is now almost unintelligible. She talks of little else other than Kenneth George Mills.

Her parents, living in Oakville with the rest of their children, are saddened and at the same time angered at the changes that have come over their daughter since she joined Mills' cult "The Brotherhood".

They are willing to tell their story but don't want their names published because they fear for their daughter in the cult.

Her story isn't greatly different than any of the other stories of children who willingly surrender their minds to the cults.

In this case, she was working in a night club when she met a man who invited her to spend the evening with some "really great people."

That was four years ago. Since then, her visits to her parents have dwindled from once or twice a year to only when she needs help or money that isn't provided by the cult.

"She was always a little different from the other children," her mother recalls. "She always seemed to be searching for something."

Apparently, they say, she has found that meaning in the almost unintelligible musical poetry sessions called "Unfoldments" by insiders of the cult, started by a former concert pianist from New Brunswick.

"She always used to be sensitive to other people's feelings," her parents say, "but now the Brotherhood is the only family she's interested in."

"Her full time is devoted to Mills now. He is God to her."

What troubles them more than the new focus in their daughter's life is the gap that has appeared between them because of her almost slavish devotion to Mills.

"When she first became involved," her father recalls, "it was all smiles and everything else because she had met these people she thought were the living end. They flattered her until she was mentally surrounded."

"In the early stages," her mother adds, "she was very hopeful of getting her brother and sister involved, but now, when she does come out to see us, she hardly mentions Mills at all because she knows we aren't receptive."

"At the start it was Mr. Mills every five minutes."

Over the last four years, her visits to her parents have been getting fewer and farther between because, like all other cult members, she is discouraged from too much contact with the outside world.

Continued on Pg. C2



## Ed found way out

For seven years Ed lived and breathed little else than the words and thoughts of Kenneth George Mills. His life and existence evolved around the teachings of a former concert pianist from New Brunswick.

"It wasn't obvious that I was being recruited," Ed said in a recent interview. "I just went along with some pressure from friends, and when I showed some interest they started demanding things."

Ed was a member of the Toronto based group known as The Brotherhood. He devoted seven years to the group and tried twice to leave it.

"The danger about these groups is that you'll never know what is happening to you," he said. "It starts with a friend saying something like 'you're not a friend of mine if you don't come along to this group. Of course no true friend would ever say something like that but it took me some time to realize that.'"

Ed depicts the Brotherhood as a group of people slavishly devoted to the "spontaneous" mutterings of Mills.

Once a person has joined the group, Ed alleges, they are exposed to a never ending pressure to stay, to conform to what the group expects of them, and they are persecuted if they try to leave.

In the end they lose their ability to make decisions for themselves.

"The suppression of your own personality is so strong that you start to do all your thinking through Mills. His success becomes your success."

According to Ed, the programming and demands to which members of the Brotherhood are exposed is subtle and the loss of personality very gradual.

"If you've been in the group for less than a year and you say you want to leave, they'll argue and say you really haven't had a chance to find out what the group is all about."

"If you've been in for more than a year and want to leave they'll say you should know better," Ed said.

As people become more and more dependent on Mills for the answers to their questions, Ed said, he threatens to stop speaking to them unless they show their devotion to him.

This devotion takes many forms, he said, including regular attendance at his lectures, (called Unfoldments) and at the "rehearing" sessions at which serious students study the sayings of their master and search for the hidden meanings.

This devotion, he said, also takes a financial form. Serious students, when Ed was a member, were expected to pay dues of \$80 a month to the group, as well as tithing 10 per cent of their income.

Mills has published 14 record albums, tapes and books, and students are expected to purchase them.

"The people who don't buy these things are expected to stand up in front of the group and explain

Continued on Pg. C2

# Scientology enhanced the quality of her life

Nothing that a religious cult may do is truly as dangerous as the fear campaign being waged by the Council on Mind Abuse, according to a long time adherent of the Church of Scientology.

Arda Froese, of Mississauga, has been a Scientologist for 10 years now. Far from being brainwashed, she feels the knowledge she has gained through her association has greatly enhanced the quality of her life.

"It never seems to get printed that I have two healthy children, or that I'm happy and successful," she said in a recent interview. "I enjoy life and understand my life so much better because of my experiences in Scientology."

Froese said that Scientology has helped her come to grips with her spiritual being, and with her past and present.

She also stresses that her conversion to Scientology was not a brainwashing process, but a religious experience "and when you're talking about religious conversion you're not talking about brainwashing."

Like many teenagers drifting between the ages of 16 and 23, Froese tried many different avenues to answer the questions she had about values and life.

"I did Christianity, yoga, tarot cards, drugs and a bunch of east Indian stuff before some friends introduced me to Scientology," she said.

She explained that her first husband also became involved in the group and she was amazed at the changes that occurred in his personality.

"I don't think I had ever seen him as calm as he was after joining the church," she said. "It was as though he had finally come to grips with himself and it just blew me away."

That example led her to purchase one of Hubbard's books "and it really made sense to me."

Froese said her involvement with Scientology was very gradual. The first communications course she purchased took seven months to complete.

"I never felt intimidated by my experiences. For me, it was a gradual coming to grips with myself as a spiritual being," she said.

Over the last decade she has taken several courses designed to move her through scientology's ranks of spiritual development, "and there's never been any question to me about how much it costs."

"In fact, I found that because I was better able to understand myself, I was better able to make money. Besides, if I want to spend money on Scientology, then I want the right to do that without interference," she added.

Like any other religion, she said, Scientology provides its adherents with guidelines for living, rules that can be followed to improve the quality of

life.

A number of these points, the ones Froese tries to live by, are contained in the Scientologist's Code of Honor.

The Code requires observers to: "Never desert a comrade in danger or in trouble; never withdraw allegiance once granted; never desert a group to which you owe support; never disparage yourself or

minimize your strength or power; never need praise, approval or sympathy; never compromise with your own reality; never permit your affinity to be alloyed; do not give or receive communication unless you yourself desire it; your self determination and your honor are more important than your immediate life; your integrity to yourself is more important than your body; never regret yesterday (for) life is in you

through deceptive means.

"I didn't consider myself recruited," Roedl said in a recent interview. "I was referred to Mr. Mills as one of the best piano teachers in Toronto and I met him as you would meet anyone else."

"I quickly found that he had more to offer than any other teacher. I found that Mr. Mills had a great deal of value in what he had to say."

According to Dedrick and Roedl, The Brotherhood had its beginnings when individual students sought Mills' advice on philosophic questions.

"Eventually, because there were so many people

Identical looks of sadness cross their faces as they listen to the charges and criticisms levelled at the man they revere as their Teacher.

The "Teacher" is Kenneth George Mills, whose critics say has former a pseudo-religious cult with himself as leader.

According to Christopher Dedrick and Linda Roedl, two of his long-time associates, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Both are quick to refute charges that The Brotherhood is a cult. One of the characteristics of a cult, they say, is that members are recruited, often

seeking his advice, he started asking all the students who wanted to talk to him to come at once. When there were too many for his living room, he started to hold gatherings in larger places," Dedrick said.

From that modest start, according to critics and published reports of the group, Mills now has 400 students scattered through Ontario, New York State, Arizona and Texas.

Unlike some other cults, Dedrick and Roedl claim Mills did not try to sell them a magic cure for all the problems of life.

Continued on Pg. C2

## Brotherhood proved helpful