



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

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A Piece of Blue Sky--Scientology, Dianetics and L. Ron Hubbard Exposed

by Jon Attack

A Lyle Stuart Book / Carol Publishing Group, New York, 1990 -- Reviewed by Mike Sullivan (Part One)

Layfayette Ronald Hubbard was a middle-aged penny-a-word pulp science fiction writer when he submitted an article for the January 1950 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction* titled "Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science." That article, and the book that followed, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, started the worldwide cult of Scientology that has destroyed the lives and emptied the bank accounts of tens of thousands of people over the past 40 years.

Scientists promote their cult religion under the guise of a science-based self-help mental therapy, but quickly indoctrinate new members in bizarre mental and physical drills, endless and expensive "levels" of mind-numbing counseling, and fanatical devotion to the writings of their founder, the eccentric Hubbard.

Jon Attack was a member of the Church of Scientology from 1974 to 1984, advancing to some of the highest levels within the "tech," the Church's term for the Dianetics therapy. This 400-page book chronicles his own journey through the Byzantine world of the Church, and provides one of the best-documented histories of the cult and its founder to date.

A Piece of Blue Sky is really two books: Attack's personal history of his involvement with the Church, plus a carefully referenced and documented chronicle of Hubbard, his followers, and the internal workings of the Church.

Attack came to the Church when he was 19, seeking comfort from a broken love affair. After reading one of Hubbard's books, *Science of Survival*, Attack called the local Church Mission in Birmingham, England. Hooked by the scientific basis claimed for Dianetics, which Hubbard said was an extension of Freudian analysis, Attack was drawn into the cult as much by Hubbard's writings as by the incredibly cheerful staff he met at the Birmingham Mission.

Attack was also impressed by Hubbard's fictional personal achievements, which are still proffered today in Church books

and brochures. Hubbard, according to Church materials, was a famous world explorer, a double-degreed nuclear physicist and mathematician, and a U.S. Navy Commodore squadron commander who was decorated 27 times and who saw action in all five theatres of World War II. Blinded and crippled by his war injuries, the Church claims, Hubbard cured himself completely when he discovered a way to blend modern science with Eastern philosophy and Freudian analysis. (*[Part Two](#) of this review will appear in our next issue*)

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January Meeting

Election of the Board of Directors Appointment of Officers

The January meeting of the North Texas Skeptics was held at UT Arlington on January 20, 1991. The meeting was used to conduct the annual election of officers called for by the NTS bylaws. All NTS members were invited to attend, nominate members for election to the Board of Directors, and vote. Your fellow members took the following actions at the January meeting:

Elected by the members present to the Board of Directors:

John Blanton
Mark Meyer
Mike Sullivan
Joe Voelkering
Ron Hastings
Laura Ainsworth
Tony Dousette

Appointed by the new Board of Directors to official positions:

John Blanton, President
Joe Voelkering, Vice President
Mark Meyer, Secretary & Treasurer
Mike Sullivan, Newsletter Editor
Keith Blanton, Associate Newsletter Editor

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Meeting News

Your Board of Directors has decided to change the format, time and location of the North Texas Skeptics monthly meetings. In an effort to make the meetings more accessible to members and guests, as well as add a social aspect to the meetings, the Board has decided to make these changes to our meeting format, beginning with the March meetings.

Monthly Board of Directors Meetings:

The Board has decided to conduct these business and planning meetings in a public place and invite the participation of our members. Most of these meetings center on ideas and planning for future NTS public meetings, discussion of newsletter topics and other general business. In the past these meetings were held on the Monday preceding the regular

3rd Sunday NTS public meeting in the home of Board member John Blanton.

The Board has decided to hold the March business meeting at Dave & Buster's restaurant in Dallas, located on Composite Drive just behind Restaurant Row off of Stemmons Freeway. The business meeting will start at 7:30 PM on Monday, March 11th. All NTS members are welcome to attend and participate in the meeting, or just stop by and enjoy some of the fine refreshments and snacks at D&B's! You can call D&B's at 353-0649.

March Public Meeting:

With the beautiful North Texas spring weather already here, your Board has also decided to adopt a more convenient time and place for the regular monthly public meetings. It was felt that the Sunday afternoon meetings held in the past were hurting participation, since no one can be blamed for wanting to enjoy weekend time with family and friends.

Although we would like to hold our monthly public meetings in a more accessible location, Dave & Buster's would quite reasonably require that we order a certain quantity of food and beverages to dedicate their meeting room for our use. Therefore, we are still looking for a better location for our monthly public meetings, and we invite our members to investigate any locations they may know where the group may meet. Please contact the editor or any member of the board if you find a meeting location that would be suitable.

As for our March meeting, it will be held in the Farmers Branch Manske Library, located on the corner of Webb Chapel and Golfing Green, about three blocks north of Valley View Lane.

Our guest speaker is the well-known Ole Anthony, a few of Mr. Anthony's credentials being:

- Founder and President of Trinity Foundation, Inc.
- CEO of the Dallas Project, calling for a revolution in the welfare system in America
- Board of Directors, "War on Poverty"
- Regional Campaign Manager for Senator John Tower
- Finance Chairman for Dallas Mayor Wes Wise
- Taught campaign strategy for Republican National Committee
- Author of Crossfire
- Co-hosted nightly TV Talk Show

Mr. Anthony will speak about his investigations of so-called faithhealers and specifically about what he has discovered about Robert Tilton. Our monthly program will be held Wednesday evening on March 20. We will begin at 7:00 PM by showing a video tape of some of Mr. Anthony's TV appearances, and then from 7:30 to 9:00 Mr. Anthony will present his program.

April Public Meeting

Our April meeting date and location has not been firmed-up yet. We plan to have a speaker who will discuss hypnosis and the areas of use where it is currently valid, and the areas where it is not .

In early April we will mail a postcard to all NTS members to inform you of our April meeting plans and location.

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Letters to the editor

We welcome letters from our readers. Please make your comments brief and related to topics of interest to NTS members. Letters must be signed, and are subject to editing for space considerations.

Letters

Gentlemen:

Unlike Keith Parsons, in his article "What is Skepticism?" (The Skeptic, Jan/Feb 91), I do not find universal skepticism to be a dead end. Philosophical skepticism is based on the doctrine that absolute knowledge is unattainable -- and that judgments must be continuously questioned in order to attain relative certainty.

Parsons seems to suggest that skepticism be reduced to a yes or no level -- instead of evaluating a question and assigning the proper degree of probability to it. With approximately 10,000 hours of flight time, I've certainly bet my life on evaluating the odds. But, I don't recall considering any decision as a 100% sure thing -- or thinking I had a 0% chance of error.

To quote Paul Kurtz: "The quest for absolute certainty must be recognized as alien to the scientific attitude, since scientific knowledge is fallible, tentative, and open to revision and modification."

It's interesting to note the legal community has a parallel set of standards that address varying degrees of probability -- and that the most strict does not require absolute certainty. In declining order, they are:

1. Beyond a reasonable doubt. (Beyond the degree of doubt that would cause a prudent person to hesitate before acting in matters of importance. Generally the standard in criminal cases.)
2. Clear and convincing. (A reasonable certainty regarding the fact at issue. An interim standard falling between the normal criminal and civil ones.)
3. Preponderance of the evidence. (More probable than not. The standard for most civil litigation.)
4. Probable cause. (More evidence for than against -- using the evidence currently available. Commonly, the degree necessary to justify a criminal charge or civil suit.)

In my accident analysis work, I constantly seek the highest orders of probability as to the causes. However, 100% and 0% seem to exist only in abstract theory. I feel I've been able to get very close to those values in many instances. Please don't ask me how close, though -- I doubt if I could count the zeros between the decimal point and the final digit.

And everything I've stated here could be wrong...

Respectfully,

Joe Voelkering
20 Feb 1991

{Joe Voelkering is a member of the board of the North Texas Skeptics and an NTS technical advisor -- Ed.}

Writing for The Skeptic

Do you have something to share with other NTS members? Submit it for publication in The Skeptic! News clippings, original cartoons, articles, book reviews, letters, excerpts from technical journals on controversial topics, and any other materials related to rational inquiry are always welcome. You may contact us:

By US Mail:

The skeptic
c/o Editor
P.O. Box 111794
Carrollton, TX 75011-1794

By E-mail: skeptic@ntskeptics.org

Original writing may be submitted on paper, on computer diskette or via modem. Please contact the editor for more information.

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Notes and announcements

Program Director Needed

The NTS Board of Directors would like to solicit the help of any of our members who can help the group develop and schedule speakers for our monthly public meetings. The monthly meeting is the best opportunity we have on a regular basis to bring the public a critical evaluation of pseudoscientific topics, and nothing does that better than a qualified presenter.

Almost anyone with expertise in a scientific or professional field is a speaker candidate. Members of the degreed professions, scholars, media personalities, authors and researchers should be expert in one or more subjects of interest to our membership. With proper preparation, any of these people should be able to present one of our monthly programs. The program director, working with the NTS board at monthly board meetings, will help select and schedule topics and speakers for future meetings.

If you are willing to research and contact potential guest speakers for the NTS public meetings, please write or call any NTS director for additional information.

Speakers Bureau

NTS sponsors a group of individuals, known as our Speakers Bureau, who are available to speak individually to organizations that have a genuine and serious interest in the expert information and counseling our bureau can provide. Each member is a volunteer and is available also to answer inquiries from the news media concerning topics in his particular field of knowledge. Contact NTS President John Blanton for details.

The Skeptics Challenge

In the James Randi tradition, we at the North Texas Skeptics have decided to put our money where our collective mouths are. We will pay \$2000.00 to anyone who can adequately prove the occurrence of a paranormal event, subject to a set of rules of evidence which we will publish in the next issue of this newsletter. If you want the details now, contact John Blanton.

Congress At Work

From The Washington Monthly, January 1991: "Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Claiborne Pell has an aide, C.B. Scott Jones, who draws a staff salary of \$50,000 a year to study 'paranormal phenomena.' Jones recently wrote a letter on Senate stationery to Secretary of Defense Cheney asking if there was any national security significance to the word 'Simone,' which Jones claimed to have heard when certain speeches by President Bush, Secretary of State James A. Baker, and Cheney were played backwards." -- Submitted by Tony Dousette {Jones held a press conference for Capitol Hill reporters to play the tapes and bring attention to what he called "a potentially dangerous signal" hidden in the speeches leading up to Desert Storm -- Ed.}

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CSICOP Eyes Dallas for 1992 Convention

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