



# FACTNet Newsletter

FACTNet, Inc.-Fight Against Coercive Tactics Network

Protecting freedom of mind by exposing cults and mind control...  
because only you have the right to control your mind.

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## Scientology Loses Copyright Round in Court

A recent judicial ruling in the FACTNet lawsuit represents a real opportunity for FACTNet and others who have been suppressed by Scientology's silence-by-litigation tactics. Although Scientology initiated the lawsuit, it is now probable that Scientology is more on the defensive than FACTNet, as Scientology faces accusations of committing fraud on the copyright office and the federal court. FACTNet recently filed a number of powerful motions revealing prevalent fraud regarding Scientology's copyrights. Please see the FACTNet web site at [www.factnet.org](http://www.factnet.org) under Headlines for these motions in full.

An excellent article was written on the ruling by John Borland of CNET News.com, called "Scientology Loses Copyright Round" [November 9, 1998] at <http://www.news.com/News/Item/0,4,28539,00.html> [In 1995 Scientology raided FACTNet's offices on questionable grounds and then sued FACTNet, events that propelled FACTNet into national news. At issue in the lawsuit are the positive aspects of freedom of expression and nonprofit libraries, versus Scientology's agenda to silence its critics. FACTNet has spent over \$2 million on the lawsuit and is committed to raise the funds needed to win this important case. See

<http://www.factnet.org/Scientology/raid.html> for details of the lawsuit. Donations are much needed and tax-deductible. -FACTNet]

[Note from the Webmaster: because of copyright restrictions, the format of this on-line version of the mailed newsletter differs somewhat from the newsletter physically mailed. The content of this on-line version is, however, virtually identical to the newsletter as e-mailed to subscribers.—FACTNet Webmaster]

## Jonestown 20 Years Later: 1978 Tragedies Killed 912 People

November 18, 1998 marked the 20-year anniversary of the mass tragedy at Jonestown, Guyana, in which 912 members of the People's Temple died after leader Jim Jones issued murder-suicide orders. Those who refused to drink cyanide-laced punch were forced to drink at gunpoint or shot. Mothers administered the poison to their babies using eyedroppers. Of the 912 dead, 276 were infants or children.

Jones ordered the deaths after People's Temple members killed Congressman Leo Ryan, who had gone to Jonestown on a fact-finding mission. After only a day at the Jonestown compound, a member tried to stab Ryan. The injury was minor, but Ryan decided to leave, and a couple dozen People's Temple members

decided to leave with him. Other members followed the group to the airstrip and opened fire, killing Ryan, three journalists, and one of the departing members.

Within a few months of the mass deaths, other People's Temple members who had survived also committed suicide, with one mother slitting the throats of her three children.

A year later, ex-People's Temple members Jeanne and Al Mills and their daughter, who had been speaking out about their cult experience, were killed in their Berkeley, CA home. They had become among the most vocal People's Temple critics and for months had feared for their safety.

Each year, a memorial is held at Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland, CA where 260 People's Temple children are buried. Due to the lack of dental records, the children were never able to be identified and thus were buried together there.

In memory of the tragedies at and surrounding Jonestown, especially for the children who suffered, FACTNet has set up a special Jonestown memorial section on the FACTNet web site with the heartfelt hope that public awareness of the severe dangers of cults may help avert similar future devastation. FACTNet's special memorial section is located on the FACTNet web site at [www.factnet.org](http://www.factnet.org) under Headlines.

## Happenings at FACTNet

Welcome to the October-December issue of FACTNet's newsletter. Our limited resources have prevented us from publishing a newsletter every month, but we have been working on other exciting projects.

Internet users are visiting FACTNet's web site in droves. In November, almost 17,000 people brought more than 400,000 hits to the site, viewing almost 2 billion bytes of information! In 1997, it took us six months to receive as many hits as we now get each week! It is wonderful and heartening to see that people are becoming educated and FACTNet is serving its mission on such a large scale.

FACTNet provided cult information packages to families of Concerned Christians members. Concerned Christians is the cult that disappeared from Denver in October. Some members have turned up in Jerusalem, thought to be their ultimate destination because leader Monte Kim Miller predicted he'll die there next year. A mass murder-suicide is feared. FACTNet is at the disposal of these families to set up an Internet chat room or post letters to missing loved ones. We hope we may help these families and their loved ones safely through this time of crisis.

FACTNet is co-sponsoring a conference with CULTINFO, a new cult information resource. We hope you will join us! See article for details.

FACTNet helped bring a major court ruling against Scientology. In November federal judge John Kane made an important ruling in FACTNet's favor in the FACTNet-Scientology lawsuit. Judge Kane vacated the January trial date and denied Scientology's motion for summary judgment, saying FACTNet had presented substantial evidence to question the legality of the copyrights Scientology is accusing FACTNet of violating. Judge Kane also appointed a special judge to review all of Scientology's 1,914 copyrights, many of which FACTNet believes were obtained illegally. If the federal court finds Scientology's copyrights are fraudulent, there will be unprecedented positive repercussions for the many former members and critics Scientology has sued for alleged copyright infringements.

## FACTNet Co-Sponsoring Cult Awareness Conference

Yes, FACTNet is still planning a conference! But rather than host an entire conference ourselves here in Denver, we have decided to co-sponsor a conference with a new cult awareness organization called CULTINFO. CULTINFO rose out of the ashes of the original Cult Awareness Network, Inc., and opened a national office in September in Bridgeport, CT under the auspices of its legal entity, Cult Information and Resource Center, Inc.

In addition to providing a hotline, newsletter, and resources for families, CULTINFO is hosting a conference in Stamford, CT Friday to Sunday, February 12-14, 1999 over Presidents' Day weekend, an especially apt time to celebrate our freedoms of mind, religion, and speech. FACTNet is a proud co-sponsor of this conference, and has made good use of the conference questionnaires submitted by you, our readers. Many thanks!

The conference is shaping up to be quite an event. Featured speakers will host major presentations, and workshops will address a variety of timely topics, including FACTNet's specialty, Cults and the Internet. Other workshops include:

FACTNet's good work is not going unnoticed. Here are some notes of support we have received lately:

*"The cult destroyed relationships with my family, my friends, and my coworkers. To build up trust again takes time. Please keep me on your mailing list as it helps in my healing process."* -J

*"...Ah, and your site is really great. You really managed to get a great deal of information on cults. It is very well designed and invaluable for all those who care about the actions of cults worldwide."* -Anon

*"You are doing a TERRIFIC JOB! Thanks for your perseverance and courage."* -A

I hope you will consider supporting FACTNet at this time, our holiday donation drive. Our goal is \$15,000. Tax-deductible contributions of \$500, \$1,000, \$5,000, or more are much needed, but all contributions help. And whether or not you are able to help us at this time, please accept our wishes for a joyful and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,  
Justine Janette, Executive Director

## Your Donations at Work

We strive to stretch each contribution to its fullest. In so doing, we track use of the FACTNet web site versus operating costs incurred by FACTNet. For August through November:

### FACTNet web site hits:

Aug: 205,044    Sept: 213,514    Oct: 362,822    Nov: 409,643

### Web site pages viewed:

Aug: 45,285    Sept: 44,151    Oct: 79,732    Nov: 90,948

### FACTNet expenses:

Aug: \$17,038    Sept: \$57,146    Oct: \$8,250    Nov: \$12,223

### Cost per web site hit:

Aug: \$0.08    Sept: \$0.27    Oct: \$0.02    Nov: \$0.03

### Cost per web site page viewed:

Aug: \$0.38    Sept: \$1.29    Oct: \$0.10    Nov: \$0.13

**Critical thinking: Cult proofing you and your kids.** Presented by Dr. Steven Novella of Connecticut Skeptics, and the New England Skeptics Society.

**Parents' panel.** Presented by Dr. Ed Lottick, who lost a son in Scientology, and Mr. & Mrs. Meader, parents who lost children in the Heaven's Gate tragedy. Moderated by David Cole.

**Cults on campus.** Presented by Sandra Stephon, organizer of Maryland state legislation for a task force on cults on campuses; Dean Robert Thornberg, Boston University chaplain; and Glenn Davis, graduate of the University of Bridgeport. Moderated by Ron Loomis.

**How to help a loved one in a mind control cult.** Presented by Steve Hassan and Joe Szimhart.

**Deceit and manipulation.** Presented by the Amazing Randy.

**Illegal activities of cults and other extremist organizations.** Presented by Dr. Herbert Nieberg, Detective Mark Roggeman, and Detective Steve Reigstad. Moderated by Larry Zilliox.

To register for the conference, contact CULTINFO at 203-338-9776 or PO Box 1180, Bridgeport, CT 06601. Join us!

## Remembering Lisa McPherson

Lisa McPherson died three years ago December 5<sup>th</sup> while in Scientology's care. On the heels of Scientology's indictment in her death, Lisa's family members and protestors gathered in Clearwater, FL, where she died, to remember her life and express intolerance for Scientology's unethical practices.

### Sites on Lisa McPherson's life and death

#### **Operation Clambake**

<http://www.xenu.net/>

#### **Critical Information about Scientology**

<http://www.primenet.com/~cultxpt/cos.htm>

## Scientology indicted for member's death

The Lisa McPherson case has been an open investigation in Clearwater, FL since McPherson's death three years ago. Lisa McPherson died in December, 1995 at 36 after spending 17 ghastly days in the hands of Scientologists in Scientology's landmark building, the Ft. Harrison hotel. The records of Scientologists in charge of her during those days depict a psychologically distressed woman, but she was not medically treated. When she became extremely ill, Scientology staffers drove 45 minutes - past two hospitals - to bring her to a Scientologist doctor. She was pronounced dead shortly after arrival. Autopsy reports show she was severely dehydrated and bruised, with insect bits on her body.

State prosecutors have been studying evidence in an effort to determine whether to file charges against Scientology for McPherson's death. In December 1997 investigators recommended to State Attorney Bernie McCabe to prosecute Scientology on criminal charges. On November 13, 1998, McCabe indicted Scientology in McPherson's death, charging the organization with abuse or neglect of a disabled adult and practicing medicine without a license, both felonies. Scientology has pleaded not guilty.

### Major media stories on indictments of Scientology **Felony Information, by Bernie McCabe**

<http://www.factnet.org/Scientology/mccabefelony.htm>

#### **Scientology charged in member's death, St.**

Petersburg Times, November 14, 1998

[http://www.sptimes.com/TampaBay/111498/Scientology\\_charged\\_i.html](http://www.sptimes.com/TampaBay/111498/Scientology_charged_i.html)

#### **Church of Scientology charged in member's death, CNN, November 13, 1998**

<http://www.cnn.com/US/9811/13/scientology.death/>

#### **Church of Scientology charged in member's death, Fox News, November 13, 1998**

[http://www.foxnews.com/js\\_index.sml?content=/news/wire/s2/1113/n\\_ap\\_1113\\_261.sml](http://www.foxnews.com/js_index.sml?content=/news/wire/s2/1113/n_ap_1113_261.sml)

## News Briefs

**Amway.** Financial independence, personal power, and a life of luxury – all alluring parts of the touted American dream, craved by many but attained by few. It's the kind of life that Amway Corporation promises its distributors. However, as those who have been involved in the company all too often discover, that promise doesn't come with a money-back guarantee. "They love people who are broke because they're weak," says Lori Mauldin, according to FW Wire [July 13, 1998]. Mauldin had a brief but memorable experience with Amway. "They really prey on the desire of materialism. They constantly show the material gain and say, 'You can have this, too.' When you're recruiting people, they tell you to ask people what their dreams are. They love to find the people who want the Mercedes, the boats, the big houses. That's exactly what they're looking for." Despite its success, Amway's track record is one with a high dropout rate, low average incomes, and lawsuits from competitors, regulators, and its own distributors. Amway is often referred to as a cult and considered a pyramid scheme (despite a 1979 ruling by the Federal Trade Commission to the contrary). "Amway is a cult. There's no getting away from that," Brock Akers, a Houston attorney representing 29 distributors in a \$200 million suit against the company, told FW Wire. "My clients, who are very high up in the Amway system, just now are realizing some of these things. They're getting deprogrammed. And they can't believe some of the things they have done. I think the Internet may ultimately cause the demise of Amway. Anyone who is thinking about getting into Amway, who has a computer and has a clue can check it out. And they're going to find a lot of unhappy people out there." Amway's detractors are many and yet it remains a fascinating mystery of the business realm. Indeed, the superhighway is strewn with tales of money, dreams and friendships lost in the treacherous waters surrounding Amway. Most are in the process of rebuilding their lives; some are attempting to mend broken marriages. All are bitter and more than a little bit angry with themselves for being duped.

**Apostolic United Brethren (AUB).** A seven-page complaint authored by a former member of the Apostolic United Brethren reads: "This open letter calls for a Montana Governor's full-scale investigation of a Polygamous Cult Leader's lawlessness, which includes fraudulently stealing homes, businesses, securities and exchange fraud, property tax evasion, welfare fraud, fixed voting and election practices and just a general disregard for all man made or God given law and order." The document is authored by Ronald Bierer, a former member of AUB and follower of leader Owen Allred. Montana officials are investigating the allegations in Bierer's complaint. Allred responded by waging a publicity campaign, holding press conferences, and allowing an unprecedented visit to his Bluffdale compound by crime and domestic abuse experts from the Attorney General's Office. The visit was intended to counter the credibility of Bierer's allegations, which paints a picture of a rogue community under the direction of lawless leaders. Allred and top-ranking AUB officials own approximately 1,000 acres and control government and community operations in similar fashion to another polygamy operation in Hilldale, Utah.

**Aum Shin Rikyo.** By law, teenagers should be in school, but Rika Matsumoto, 15 years old and the third daughter of cult leader Shoko Asaharais, is rumored to have taken charge of the Aum Shin Rikyo cult while her father is on trial facing 17 charges which include murder. Aum, a Japanese cult, was brought into the public spotlight when they masterminded the deadly gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995. That same year, the Tokyo district court deprived Aum of its legal religious status and liquidated their assets, but the Japanese government decided last year that the group posed no "immediate or obvious threat" to Japanese society, rejecting a request from officials to outlaw the sect. In addition to Rika's recent stewardship of her father's empire, other alarming signs of the group's resurgence abound. Among them, say Tokyo police, is Trisal, a cult-owned store that customizes computer systems at discount prices. The tiny shop in a small Tokyo building is staffed by very young salesmen and is often jammed with bargain hunters. Japanese officials note the group's allure to young scientists, engineers, and other well-educated people capable of reassembling an arms arsenal. Officials' greater concern involves Aum's continuous acquisitions of real estate. Since February, they have purchased at least five substantial properties. One of these, a former factory building in the rural town of Sanwa, some 40 km (25 miles) north of Tokyo, is nearly as large as some buildings at Aum's former compound near Mount Fuji, where

the cult carried out experiments and made sarin, which was eventually utilized in the subway attacks and was the tool used in the deaths of other Aum victims. The group has grown to approximately 5,000 followers, 500 of which are "ordained monks" who live communally. Aum operates approximately 28 installations at 18 branches throughout the country and despite the ban against them in Russia, the group remains active there, as well as in Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. At its height in 1995, Aum had approximately 10,000 followers in Japan and up to 40,000 in other countries, with most of them in Russia. Aum also maintains encrypted Web sites and chat rooms in Japanese, English, and Russian, and controls a network of electronic, computer and other stores. These holdings jointly generated about \$30 million in revenue last year. Aum's publishing company, currently its second-largest source of income, re-opened in April and issues at least one book or pamphlet per month.

**Bible Readers Fellowship.** From birth to death, Harrison Johnson's life was shaped by his parents' fervent adherence to a small Bible-based group as the only authority in their lives. Police in Brevard County, Florida charged his parents, Wylie and Kelly Johnson, with failing to report his birth. Now Hillsborough County sheriff's officials are investigating his tragic death. Harrison died after a swarm of yellow jackets stung him 432 times. The Johnsons did not call 911 until seven hours after the attack. Florida law defines neglect as depriving a child of "necessary food, clothing, shelter or medical treatment," including care to ease "immediate pain." But the law adds that a parent "legitimately practicing religious beliefs in accordance with a recognized church or religious organization who thereby does not provide specific medical treatment for a child shall not, for that reason alone, be considered a negligent parent." The exemption does not address emergency care. The Johnsons, who belong to a small group known as the Bible Readers Fellowship, have refused to talk to Hillsborough detectives. But in 1996 they told Palm Bay police their faith allows no room for doctors, and a fellow group member equated medicine with sorcery.

**Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT).** The Church Universal and Triumphant has been in the news of late for various reasons. The group's spiritual leader, 58-year-old Elizabeth Clare Prophet, announced that she has Alzheimer's disease. Prophet assured her followers that she will continue her mission insofar as she is able. The group also announced recently that it will sell a portion of its 13,000-acre property, which borders Yellowstone National Park, to the US Forest Service. Park rangers and environmentalists applaud the decision; the group's use of its land adjacent to the park had been in question. At one point, fuel tanks on CUT property were leaking into the soil. At another, CUT planned to use energy from natural hot springs, which could have impacted the park's geysers, including Old Faithful. And recently, CUT slaughtered hundreds of buffalo that wandered from park limits onto its property in search of food; CUT claimed the animals were a danger to its livestock because they can carry a disease transmittable to cattle. CUT plans to use the \$13 million revenue from the land sale to recruit new members into its ranks.

**Joseph & Evangeline Combs.** A former pastor and his wife allegedly kidnapped a 4-month-old baby girl from a children's home in Indiana, then raised her to believe God wanted her to be their family's servant. For nearly 20 years, the girl served the couple and their four children while enduring physical and sexual abuse by the couple, according to an indictment. The abuse was detected when the woman, now 20, was hospitalized after a suicide attempt last year. Joseph Combs, 50, was charged with kidnapping, aggravated assault, perjury, and seven counts of rape. He was pastor of the now-defunct Emmanuel Baptist Church. His wife, Evangeline Combs, 49, is charged with kidnapping, aggravated and misdemeanor assault, and child abuse. The Combses were jailed in lieu of \$250,000 bail each. According to police, the couple did not mistreat their three biological children or an adopted daughter. The young woman, however, was allegedly beaten with a rope, brooms, sticks, a metal whip, a baseball bat, and a wooden shoe. Authorities state the couple kept the girl in seclusion, so that her existence was known only to family members and a few church members. She was home-schooled but is unable to read or write. The woman has been reunited with her birth parents and is receiving dental work and other much needed attention.

**Concerned Christians.** The sudden mysterious departure this fall of a Denver religious group, Concerned Christians, has families and authorities fearing a mass murder-suicide. The doomsday cults' leader, Monte Kim Miller, stated his intention to die in the streets of Jerusalem in December 1999, after which he prophesies he will rise

### FACTNET FEATURE

#### My Experience with Children of God/The Family

FACTNet presents an ongoing series by a former member of the Children of God cult, also known as The Family.

Parts I-IV currently appear on the

FACTNet web site. See Part I at

[http://www.factnet.org/cults/children\\_of\\_god/experience\\_i.html](http://www.factnet.org/cults/children_of_god/experience_i.html)

## Children Found Dead in Colombia

The grim discovery of the bound bodies of 23 children and youths, almost all skeletons, were recently recovered in the western city of Pereira in Colombia. With a population of approximately 700,000 people some 110 miles from the country's capital, Bogota, Pereira is also home to a movement called "Satan's Youth" that has become increasingly active.

Cult activity is suspected, but police have not ruled out extreme paramilitary groups or even organ smugglers. Authorities have been unable to make arrests in 250 cases filed by families in Pereira who have reported children missing over the past year.

Police are investigating potential motives, from "social cleansing" of suspected juvenile delinquents by vigilante squads to cult members abducting victims to fulfill deadly rituals. Pereira Mayor Luis Alberto Duque stated, "It's a chilling thing. The big concern is we don't know what it's all about." State prosecutor Elena Osorio added, "It's a city where Satanism is widely practiced, and there's a lot of talk that children are used in rituals."

Twelve victims were located this week in a riverbed by workers fixing electrical lines, who originally believed the remains were animal bones. Other remains were found last week in underbrush by a child. Liquor bottles were found beside many of the victims, two of whom had been tied to trees, having apparently been tortured. Experts estimate the oldest of the victims was 16, but many were 10 or younger.

## Cult's Ban on Medical Care Causes Children's Deaths

In June 1970, Darren, born more than a month premature, died just four days after birth. His 20-year-old father, Russ Briggs, stood over the body of his firstborn son and wept. Midwives from his church tried to save the baby solely by feeding him with an

eyedropper and praying for him. Briggs never questioned why they didn't do more. A life-long member of the Followers of Christ Church, Briggs accepted that conventional medical care was forbidden. He was raised to believe God would protect those who deserved to live.

When his second son died with no medical attention the next year, Briggs began to question his faith. He discovered that dozens of Oregon City families in the church lost children who were also denied medical care. Dr. Larry Lewman, state medical examiner, said that in the past two decades as many as 25 children from the church have died of common medical problems.

"This is child abuse -- neglect," Lewman said, according to *The Oregonian* [April 26, 1998]. "The stark reality here is that we have a whole slew of kids who, without question, would have survived with basic medical care."

The church's president, Dale Morris, would not comment to *The Oregonian*, saying only, "I don't expect you to understand. A lot of people won't understand."

"It's a captive society," Briggs told the *Oregonian*. "One man was interpreting God's word, and the rest of the people were going along with whatever he said. That's David Koresh. That's Jim Jones. That's any cult that ever existed."

Before his first daughter was born in 1972, Briggs left the church. "They're not fully aware of the personal pain, agony and suffering that's being caused," he said.

## Time dwindling for Scientology refunds?

Former members of Scientology may have only a few days left to retrieve their money from Scientology. After December 31, 1998, Scientology's tax-exempt status will have no more scheduled reviews by the IRS. Thus, any inappropriate actions Scientology has taken should be presented to the IRS before then. This includes Scientology's noncompliance with its IRS deal to refund members' donations if members are dissatisfied with results. Now is the time to request your donations back from Scientology, along with any unpaid back wages for your labor as a staff member.

FACTNet encourages you not to delay in filing your refund request. For instructions and information, see [www.factnet.org/Scientology/refund\\_request.html](http://www.factnet.org/Scientology/refund_request.html). Please also send FACTNet a copy of your refund request and any response you receive from Scientology. Before the end of the year, FACTNet is going to take all refund requests and bring an administrative action to the commissioner of the IRS, revealing all information regarding Scientology's refusal to comply with its agreement with the IRS. This action will be in addition to the class action suit being brought by another entity (For information, see [www.factnet.org/Scientology/refund\\_request2.html](http://www.factnet.org/Scientology/refund_request2.html)).

again in three days. Cult watchers who have been monitoring the group agree that Miller is capable of leading his followers to mass murder-suicide. Ten members of the missing Colorado doomsday cult have recently resurfaced in Israel, but according to Jerusalem police, at this time they are not posing a threat to themselves or others. Israeli police have established a special task force to prepare for the arrival of such groups as the millennium approaches.

**Damanhur.** A new age sect that produces gourmet Italian food and luxury fabrics for European fashion houses is being investigated for allegedly exploiting its members. Founded in 1976 by Oberto "The Falcon" Airaudi, a former insurance salesman, the Damanhur sect has become a multi-million-dollar business empire based in an underground Alpine temple that looks like a Bond film set. The Italian interior ministry claimed life at Damanhur was "regulated by rigid dispositions that limit the personal freedom of its members." The group is also under investigation by the public prosecutor for arson and aggravated fraud. Two former members said they were forced to work 15 hours a day building the temple deep under the Alps.

**Gatekeepers.** Christopher James Turgeon, 35, identified as the leader of a group called Gatekeepers, and Blaine Alan Applin, 28, were charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of Daniel Jess, 40, a part-time tree cutter, on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Days before his death, according to court papers, Jess told Turgeon by telephone he knew the cult leader had been writing bad checks. Turgeon and Applin are facing charges in San Diego that include attempting to kill a police officer and armed robbery, which occurred during a holdup, high-speed chase, and shootout on July 13. On July 20, a SWAT team served a search warrant on the group's five-acre compound in the sparsely populated area of Pala, 60 miles north of San Diego, recovering guns and spoils of previous robberies. Turgeon, who reportedly claimed to be the prophet Elijah, originally called his group Ahabah Asah Prophetic Ministries, but changed the name to Gatekeepers in March 1995. He preached that women were inferior to men and that a man must not submit to a woman. After being based in Edmonds, Lynnwood, Everett, and Lake Stevens, Gatekeepers moved to Southern California in September 1997 after a series of questionable financial transactions. Turgeon and Applin had been sued by several individuals and businesses accusing them of fraud.

**Holyland.** Four children believed to be under age 4 died in a fire that destroyed a dormitory at a rural religious compound called Holyland. Martin Crawford, a Holyland officer, said the cause may have been an electrical short but they really don't know what happened. Holyland, a 54-acre compound, is part of a multimillion-dollar operation called Reach. Last year when 71-year-old founder Luke Edwards and his group were profiled by the Associated Press, it was discovered that Edwards was beleaguered with litigation battles including \$1.3 million in court judgments, child-labor fines (a state probe found 129 child-labor violations, with children as young as 14 doing construction work and slaughtering cattle), and claims by Edwards' estranged daughter and some former members of sexual improprieties. Holyland owns three motels, four restaurants, a small slaughterhouse, three stores, a cattle feedlot, a hog farm, a four-seat airplane, 2,800 acres of land, several limousines, and two garages. The Holyland's businesses are not its only forms of revenue. There is also a panhandling system, known as "The Route." Vanloads of adults and children are sent on the road for weeks at a time asking for money outside stores nationwide. A former resident recalls soliciting in distant states at age 13 from dawn until after dark. Holyland residents receive only room and board for their work. Edwards denies the group is a cult, despite former resident reports to the contrary, including a lawsuit settlement award of \$650,000 to a former resident who accused Edwards of using mind control and trying to seduce her. Similar allegations arose from members of Edwards' own family. Edwards' daughter Brenda Garris claims he added to his flock by fathering dozens of children by Holyland women. Edwards acknowledged 18 children, but denied having any out of wedlock.

**Iskcon (Hare Krishnas).** The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Iskcon) is experiencing internal upheaval over a series of sex scandals involving its gurus. Leading the upheaval is long-time devotee Vineet Narain, founder of the newly established Iskcon Reform Group (IRG) with branches in Australia, France, Germany, the UK, and Canada. Narain stated that former disciples are rejecting guru Loknath Swami after discovering the swami was responsible for molesting a teenaged girl in the US. Recently, several other self-proclaimed gurus fell from grace due to serious

## Cult Awareness Events, Meetings, & Announcements

### *Events*

#### **CULTINFO hosts cult awareness conference, co-sponsored by FACTNet**

CULTINFO is a new national cult awareness organization whose mission is to reduce the number of people who join destructive and cultic organizations, help people victimized by such groups, create public awareness regarding such groups, and foster open discussion of such groups.

**What:** CULTINFO's first national conference (see story on page 2)

**When:** Friday to Sunday, February 12-14, 1999 over Presidents' Day weekend

**Where:** Stamford, CT

**Contact:** CULTINFO at 203-338-9776 or PO Box 1180, Bridgeport, CT 06601

### *Meetings*

#### **Focus meetings held monthly in Boston**

**What:** Focus is a support group for former cult members. Focus meetings for ex-members of cult groups only.

**When:** 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month

**Where:** Boston area

**Contact:** Co-facilitators Mike and Nancy at 617-353-5269, option 2

### *Announcements*

#### **Original Cult Awareness Network, Inc. opens web site**

The original Cult Awareness Network, Inc. has set up a web site at [www.CAN-Inc.org](http://www.CAN-Inc.org) to keep the public informed of its status and ongoing legal battles. Take some time to visit [www.CAN-Inc.org](http://www.CAN-Inc.org).

#### **A&E Investigative Reports with Bill Kurtis presents The World Premiere: Inside Scientology**

**What:** A probe into the conflict surrounding the controversial Church of Scientology. Is Scientology guilty of threatening and driving its enemies into bankruptcy, or are the media and government harassing a legitimate religious organization? Also looks into the life of founder and science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard.

**When:** 9 – 11 p.m. (EST), Monday December 14<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday December 15<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday December 19<sup>th</sup> (Check local listings).

**Where:** A&E cable channel

#### **Internet radio program Cyberwoman interviews cult expert Janja Lalich**

**What:** A cyber-radio interview, accessible via the Internet numerous times over the next few weeks. Host Rebecca Anderson talks with cult expert Janja Lalich, co-author with Dr. Margaret Singer of *Cults in Our Midst*. The interview is primarily about cults and cultic relationships, geared toward the show's primarily female audience

**When:** Interview will be aired on three time slots, 1 a.m., 9 a.m., and 5 p.m., on these dates: Friday November 27<sup>th</sup>, Monday November 30<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday December 8<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday December 16<sup>th</sup>, and Friday January 1<sup>st</sup>. After that, it will be in the Cyberwoman archives of past shows.

**How:** To hear the show, go to the web site <http://www.imagineradio.com>, then click Imagine Talk, then click Listen.

#### **New Russian anti-cult magazine Prozreniye makes debut**

The first issue of a new Russian magazine focused on cults was recently published. *Prozreniye*, or *Seeing the Light*, is devoted to providing education on cults, which are increasingly prevalent in Russia. The issue covers criminal activities of cults, cult advocates in Russia's political elite, and the harms cults cause to individuals. The magazine's publishers are the Moscow Patriarchate's publishing house and the St. Irenaeus of Lyons Center. The center is headed by cult expert Aleksandr Dvorkin, who also chairs the cultic studies department at St. Tikhon Orthodox Theological Institute. Dvorkin also wrote "Introduction to the study of Cults" (*Vvedeniye v Sektovedeniye*), a book exposing the dangers inherent in the teachings and activities of totalitarian cults.

#### **Twisted Scriptures book helping people read their way out of destructive churches, cults**

Exit counselor Mary Alice Chrnalogar's book *Twisted Scriptures* appeared in bookstores last year. Since then she has received numerous letters of appreciation from people and estimates hundreds have left abusive groups after reading it. The book explains the characteristics of controlling and abusive groups. According to Chrnalogar, many cult members don't recognize the control their group wields until someone points it out to them. *Twisted Scriptures* seeks to point out such dangers in a non-controlling arena. The book and her expertise tend toward abusive Bible-based churches. To order the book, call Chrnalogar's hotline at 423-629-0082.

**Cult awareness organizations:** If you have an event, meeting, or announcement and you would like FACTNet to publicize it in the newsletter or on the web site, please let us know. Email [manage@factnet.org](mailto:manage@factnet.org) or write to FACTNet, PO Box 3135, Boulder, CO 80307-3135.