

# Illness freed girl from cult grasp

By Bill Dampier Toronto Star

On Friday, Feb. 8, a girl we will call Shirley Caine left home. She is 18 years old, a slow learner who had never been able to find a full-time job.

She left suddenly and without explanation.

Her mother, Mrs. Susan Caine, had gone to work that morning as usual. Shirley had an appointment to see about a federal retraining program — "the one where they give you \$100 a week while you're learning" — and phoned midway through the morning to say she was going to the Canada Manpower office. She did not keep the appointment, and she didn't return home that night.

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*The Ontario cabinet is expecting a controversial report on cults to be presented soon. Reporter Bill Dampier has been investigating the subject for a month; this is the first article of his series.*

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"There was no note, nothing," Mrs. Caine said at the time. "We didn't sleep all weekend. We imagined all the worst things that can happen to a girl that age."

Shirley phoned the following evening and said she was well, that she was staying with friends, and was not going to

come home. When her mother asked where she was, she hung up.

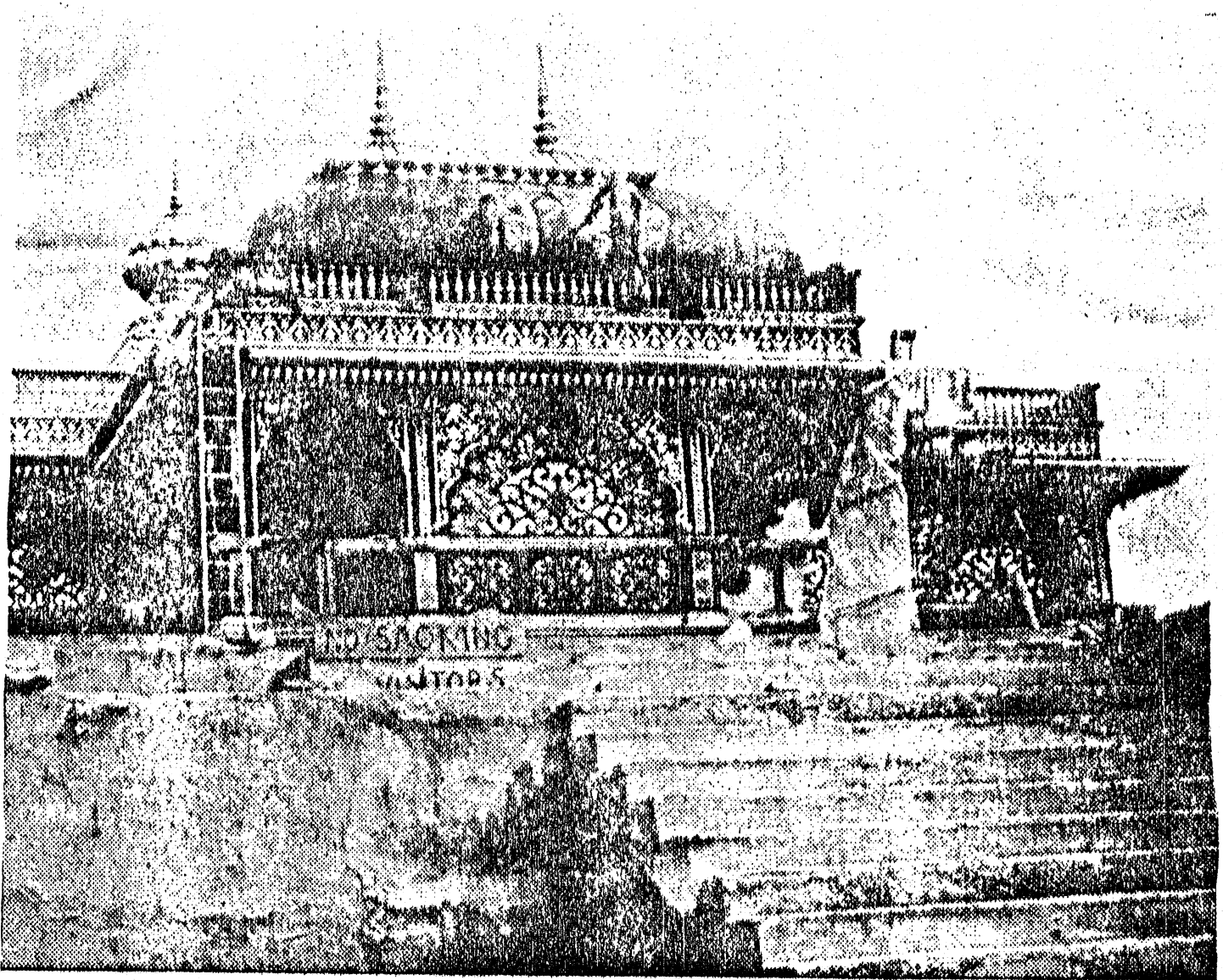
Mrs. Caine worried for a few days, then called the police. The officer who spoke to her was courteous, but he explained carefully there was nothing he could do.

Her daughter is 18, and deemed to be an adult, the officer said. If he located her and she did not want her parents to know where she was staying, he would not be able to tell them.

Two days later, Mrs. Caine called the police again and an officer came to the house.

"He wasn't pleasant to me," Mrs. Caine recalls. "His manner seemed to say 'Well,

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**'Krishnaland.'** That is the name one spokesman gave to describe the gold-plated temple, equipped with marble toilets and fountains shaped like elephants, being

built on McCreary's Ridge, W.Va. It explains where some of the money begged by Hare Krishnas is going.

## INSIDE THE CULTS/Part 1

# Brainwash or belief?

'They only had her for two weeks' but her daughter's 'like a robot' after meeting cult, Metro mom says

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she's 18, there's nothing I can do, why are you wasting my time?"

"Shirley is 18, but she's not very mature for her age. She's not as mature as some girls are at 14.

"Eventually he told me that I had a problem, that I was the one who needed help."

A week after her daughter disappeared, Mrs. Caine learned that she was living in a temple on Avenue Rd. owned by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness — the Hare Krishnas. She also learned, to her surprise, that a neighbor's son was a devotee of the sect, and had been taking Shirley to meetings there for some months.

## Living in temple

When she next saw her daughter, it was at the Hare Krishna temple, under the careful eyes of half a dozen sect members.

"Shirley came in, wearing a long blue dress and a cowl on her head, and she had lost about 10 pounds, just in that short time.

"I put my arm around her and kissed her and it was like kissing a board. There was no response at all. She was like a robot. She never looked me right in the eyes, not once."

Shirley's parents, who live in a mobile home outside Toronto, are by their own description "not a wealthy family. We don't have any money to hire a de-programmer. And there isn't anything here in Canada to help us. There's nowhere to turn."

So it is only by the barest chance that Mrs. Caine got her daughter back.

Shirley phoned her mother about a week later, sounding happy and unusually elated. She wanted her mother to send her flannelette pyjamas and a dress. She said she needed the pyjamas because it was cold where she was sleeping — on a mat on a cement floor. She needed the dress for sam-kirtan — selling Krishna litera-

In the normal course of events, Mrs. Caine might not have heard from her daughter again. But in this particular case an accident intervened: Shirley got sick.

Two weeks after she had moved into their temple, members of the group checked Shirley into the Women's College Hospital. Two days later she called her parents in tears and asked them to come and get her.

## Garlands in hospital

They found their daughter in a room decorated with pictures of the sect's leader and gods, festooned with garlands of flowers. Sect members had left a tape recorder of Krishna chants, and books for her to read. They had also brought special vegetarian food, which they said Shirley must eat.

The Caines learned their daughter was suffering from severe malnutrition and incipient phlebitis.

"Her legs and knees were all swollen," Mrs. Caine says, "and she was very weak. She couldn't bathe herself or wash her hair. We had to help her."

Shirley had changed in other ways as well, Mrs. Caine says.

"She's much more child-like than she was before. She needs someone to hold onto, to hold her hand, and she's terrified they're going to come and take her back."

"We took her to her grandmother's house, and she couldn't sleep until her brother went outside and walked all around the house. She thought there was someone hiding outside."

"Mom, I hear noises," she said. "They're going to come and get me."

"And there's something else wrong with her, something I can't really explain. She'll be talking and smiling and cheery, and then something you say, or something in

the conversation will set her off. Her eyelids droop and her face goes blank, as if she's in some kind of trance."

Shirley has since been re-admitted to hospital, on the orders of the family physician — but a different hospital, and with her name deleted from the register because the family fears cult members will try to reach her again. They have already phoned four times, asking where Shirley is being kept.

Mrs. Caine says Shirley told her "she wanted to leave" the temple but "she had one of the whatchamacallit — devotees — with her all the time, even when she was talking to me on the telephone."

The Hare Krishnas say, however, that Shirley was at the temple voluntarily and could have left at any time.

Mrs. Caine says the cult kept \$160 Shirley took with her when she entered the temple — "they say she made a contribution to the church" — and they still have the dress Mrs. Caine sent her daughter to wear when she went out begging.

But Mrs. Caine has her daughter.

"I can't tell you how happy we are to have her back," she says, "but it's so sad to see her like this. I think she'll have to have help for a long time."

"And they only had her for two weeks!"

There is nothing unusual about the Caines' story. Estimates of the number of members of the 2,500 cults active in North America vary from 300,000 to 3 million and there are not even good guesses about the number of cult members in Canada or in Toronto.

But it is probably fair to say that every day of the year, somewhere in North America, some family somewhere has an experience similar to that of the Caines.

With one difference: Usually the kids don't come back.

Not many generalizations can be made about the quasi-religious cults, and their cousins, the quasi-therapeutic "human potential" movements.

Some, like the "UFU" cult headed by "Bo" and "Peep" — also known as Marshall Herf Applewhite, 47, musician, and Bonnie Lu Trousdale Nettles, 51, nurse — claim fewer than 60 members.

Others are enormous in size and influence. For example, the Unification Church, headed by a Korean industrialist named Sun Myeung Moon, is part of a world-wide organization with assets estimated at \$200 million. One U.S. congressional investigator calculated that the Unification Church — only one part of the Moon empire — took in between \$1 and \$3 million a month, most of it from street corner "donations."

It also tried quietly, according to U.S. federal charges, illegally, to gain control of a Washington, D.C., bank. It owns daily newspapers in New York, Tokyo and Frankfurt, and Moon has said he intends to found a chain of church-owned newspapers in all 50 U.S. states.

Making money is not a casual activity for the cults. L. Ron Hubbard, the science-fiction writer who founded the Church of Scientology, an organization that started as a "mind improvement" program, is said to have told a convention of science-fiction writers in Newark, N.J., that "writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man really wanted to get rich, the best way would be to start his own religion."

Hubbard obviously took his own advice. Time magazine estimates the net assets of Scientology at \$50 million.

The money is used to "extend the work" of the cult, but that work can be difficult to distinguish from the personal welfare of the leader. L. Ron Hubbard, for example, spends much of his time cruising the Mediterranean aboard a luxurious yacht owned by the church. The French have convicted him of fraud in absentia and sentenced him to four years in jail, and his wife Mary is currently appealing a U.S. conviction for conspiring to obstruct justice.

(A Scientology spokesman recently announced that while it was true Mrs. Hubbard had been convicted of a crime, she would not be expelled from the church because she and her co-conspirators had "sincerely repented.")

Sun Myeung Moon, the leader of the Unification Church, spends much of his time in a luxurious mansion in upper New York state that comes complete with two yachts.

"When you have a rebirth, it is accompanied by a certain amount of zeal," says Neil Salonen, the U.S. leader of the Unification Church, "and it is out of this zeal that you want to give everything you have."

But one disgruntled ex-member of the church notes: "It is a condition of faith that, if you give money, you will be saved."

## Marble toilets

The Hare Krishnas are spending a substantial amount of their money to build "Krishnaland" — described by one spokesman as the religious equivalent of Disneyland — complete with a gold-plated temple, marble toilets, and fountains in the shape of elephants spouting water in the unlikely environment of McCreary's Ridge, W.Va.

If it is arguable whether the cults do good, there is no question at all that they do well. And they are rarely choosy in the methods they use.

Some examples:

□ The Moon organization runs armament factories, uses free labor from its members to win office-cleaning contracts at unbeatably low prices (aided by a tax-free status that makes the profits either ridiculously easy to hide or subject to "religious exemptions"), makes movies, publishes books, and sends the members out in thousands to panhandle on street corners.

One ex-Moonie, for instance, calculates that she gave the organization \$250,000 over four years. She raised the money by begging on street corners and selling flowers 18 hours a day — and a good part of the money was raised in Toronto.

new money in the Eaton Centre and half a dozen suburban shopping plazas. They operate from houses owned by the church in the Kensington Market area, and run a "babes camp" — an indoctrination centre — near Rice Lake.

□ The Way International, a cult with headquarters in New Knoxville, Ohio, induced a quadriplegic in California to sign over 15 per cent of the \$1.5 million he won in settlement of the accident that left him crippled for life by telling him that their prayers and faith-healing methods would cure him within a year. He had to hold the pen in his teeth to sign their agreement. (He later sued and got the money back).

□ The Church of Scientology, which claims more than 5 million adherents world-wide, charges its members as much as \$15,000 each for "courses" designed to improve their intelligence and make their lives happier, once they master the techniques of becoming an "operating Thetan." One Oregon woman won a \$2 million judgment against the church — now being appealed — when a jury agreed with her charges that the claims were false, and that Scientology's techniques had caused her psychological damage. In Toronto, the Scientologists have invested some of their profits in a nine-storey office building at 696 Yonge St., just south of Bloor.

□ Therafiels, not a cult but a large "therapeutic community" operating on Davenport Ave., charges members from one-quarter to one-third of their income for the benefits of "counselling."

□ The Hare Krishna temple on Avenue Rd., which claims 4,000 active members in Toronto, sends them out to "sell literature" on Yonge St. The Krishnas sometimes forsake their characteristic saffron robes for business suits and wear wigs to make the selling easier. They also dress up as Santa Clauses at Christmas to solicit money.

□ The Children Of God, a U.S. cult that operated widely in Canada but has now gone underground after changing its name to the Family of Love, used to practise a technique known as "flirty fishing." Female members were encouraged to engage in "holy prostitution" — identical in every respect to the unholy kind — and turn the proceeds over to the group. At regular group meetings each of the sisters was asked to describe their three top "flirty fish" of the month and the best were given rewards, while their less enthusiastic sisters were chastised and encouraged to do better.

Cult members say they don't do that any more.

Piecing together the full extent of cult activities is extremely difficult.

The Unification Church, for example, operates at least 140 associated or "front" organizations, ranging from the innocent-sounding Collegiate Association for Research of Principle, or CARP, which is in fact a recruiting arm of the church operating on university campuses across North America, including the University of Toronto, to the equally high-toned International Conference for the Unification of Science.

connected with Scientology, a drug rehabilitation group listed in the front cover of the Toronto telephone book under the headline Drug Crisis.

It is also connected with the ostensibly respectable APRIL — the Alliance for the Protection of Religious Liberty — and its Canadian counterpart. Recently released Scientology documents, seized by the FBI as part of a long investigation which resulted in the conviction of top U.S. Scientologists for obstructing justice (they were accused of bugging a meeting of the Internal Revenue Service that was discussing Scientology's tax exemptions) show APRIL as one of a number of "PR front organizations" whose names should be coded in internal communications to conceal their connection with Scientology.

## 'Heavenly deception'

APRIL, as its name might suggest, is a lobby that promotes the interests of "minority religions" — chief among them Scientology.

This "divine deceit" or, in the Moonies' term, "heavenly deception" is a normal, expected, and rigorously applied method of operation used by the major cults, even at the level of soliciting money on the streets.

Former members of the Moonies say it is commonplace for new members to have joined the group, left their families and moved into a communal home, often in a different city, before they discover the group they have joined is the Unification Church.

Privately, the cults defend "heavenly deception" as a necessary method of saving souls.

"Telling a lie only becomes a sin if you tell it to take advantage of a person," Sun Myeung Moon writes in a collection of his speeches distributed to inner members, "but if you tell a lie to do a good thing for him, that is not a sin. In restoring man from evil sovereignty, we must cheat. Even God tells a lie every so often."

In practical terms, that means that the Harvard university student who signed up for a \$20 Florida vacation sponsored by the innocent-sounding CARP and found himself in a Moonie indoctrination centre was not sinned against. "She never mentioned the Unification Church," the student said of his recruiter after a worried parent called the Florida police from Boston to ask them to investigate the camp. "For all I knew, CARP was a goldfish breeding club."

It is worth noting that there is also a HARP — a Highschool Association for the Research of Principle — that recruits for the Moonies in high schools.

One result of the "heavenly deception" practised by cults is that when you give a dime to some unknown but worthy-sounding "charitable" organization, you may well be contributing to the luxurious lifestyle of some cult leader somewhere.

A more serious result is that an innocent-sounding invitation to a "love feast" at a religious meeting, or to meet "a great group of people who share the same ideas you have," or to "come and visit a farm a bunch of people I know have near Rice Lake" or even to take a "free psychological test" can be the fatal first step in a long, damaging and harmful involvement in some cult you've never heard of.