

Sacramento, Calif.
The Union

JUL 17 1977

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Fear held girl in

By JACK NOCK

PHOENIX, Ariz. (UPI) — For 18 months, Genny Ayers lived outside of society, disillusioned with her way of life but trapped by fears that kept her from doing anything about it.

Fears of turning her back on God. Fears of returning in the next life as a sub-human. Fears of the "outside."

Genny had become a member of the Hare Krishna sect. She had entered what she now describes as a world of "good and evil," of countless days of little sleep, of total subservience, commitment and reliance.

She remained a cult member until her mother, Genevieve Ayers of Jacksonville, Fla., contacted deprogrammers. With their help and the help of the courts, Genny is resuming the life she once left.

HER BRUSH with Hare Krishna began after dropping out of Northern Arizona University at Flagstaff, dissatisfied with the school, the education she was receiving and the town.

She stayed in Flagstaff a couple of months, working in a restaurant and a day care center, but she feared she "was vegetating." Reading about Hare Krishna and meeting cult members on the street, she drifted to San Diego and joined the sect.

"The first part of it was exciting," says Genny, now

"It was a whole new experience. There were rituals chanting and dancing. It was a new environment."

Genny was assigned to a "Sankirtan," a fund raising function that primarily sold books and pamphlets.

"I WOULD GET up at 2 o'clock after four to five hours sleep," she says. "Most of the day was spent running around towns, raising donations — selling books."

In her 18 months with the Krishnas, Genny travelled across the country, from Los Angeles to Miami, to Portland, Ore., to Salt Lake City. The sect discouraged contact with her family and she wrote to her mother only two or three times.

"There were many, many months between letters that I didn't know where she was and when I called places where I thought she might be, I was told there was no such person there," her mother says.

"Everything outside of the movement is evil," says Genny.

"Your perspective is narrowed in one direction so the whole world is divided into good and evil."

Mrs. Ayers saw her daughter twice while Genny was a member of the sect. The first time was in May 1976 after Genny called her from Los Angeles and invited her to a special feast.

"I spent a whole day trying to find her," Mrs. Ayers says. "I went from apartment to apartment in the area where they lived." No one knew of Genny Ayers and no one would admit knowing a young woman answering Genny's description.

Hare Krishna sect

THE SECOND DAY, Mrs. Ayers found Genny in a Krishna temple.

"Other people were there and they wanted to do all the talking," Mrs. Ayers says. "They wouldn't allow us to leave. They wouldn't even let me walk around the block with her."

She and Genny were permitted to go to the visitors' room, which Mrs. Ayers believes was "bugged."

LAST FEBRUARY, Genny called her mother from Salt Lake City and Mrs. Ayers left immediately for Utah.

The second meeting was much like the first.

"I felt we were not left alone a minute," says Mrs. Ayers. "They would not let us go out into the yard. They would say, 'No, no, no,' to all my requests. Finally, a man came out and said someone wanted to talk with me on the telephone. The call was from Los Angeles, I believe. He wanted to know why I was there, how long I was going to stay. I just hung up."

"THE ENTIRE time, Genny was sitting on the floor, reading. I told her, 'Genny, I'm your mother, you called me. Please get up and follow me.' I kept telling her, 'I feel you are a slave in this house.' She wasn't allowed to answer me."

The Sankirtan of which Genny was a member included six to eight girls, most of them in their teens and early 20s.

"Women are completely spit upon," she says.

"Women have half the brain size of men, they are one step above monkeys. They are completely contaminated and servants of men."

At the same time, however, men and women alike are led to believe they are "exclusive and special" because God has led them to the movement, says Genny.

"THE IDEOLOGY is sharply defined," she says. "People out of the movement are called hogs, dogs, camels and asses. It completely condemns the individual unless he is serving the goal of the movement. It wipes out goals, expressions, thoughts."

"You are trapped by fear and guilt. You begin to fear having a separate opinion."

Money was a constant problem and Genny says she was encouraged to call a bank in Florida to demand money from a trust established in her name. Her mother says a man also called the bank demanding money from the trust.

"WE WERE TOLD that sometime in the future that prostitution would be an accepted way of getting money for the group," says Genny. "There is some stealing, shoplifting, but that's not looked up to."

The Krishnas talk of "taking over the world," says Genny. "They 'know' who's going to be President of the United States. They are trying to give books to senators and congressmen — trying to PR them."

"They believe there will be a war between Krishnas

✓ —to page 6

Fear kept girl member of Hare Krishna sect

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and outsiders. They believe there will come a time when you can walk up to a person and say to him, 'Hare Krishna,' and if he doesn't answer you with 'Hare Krishna,' it will be all right to shoot him in the head."

GENNY SAYS she thought about leaving "every day."

"Everybody wants to leave," she says, "but you're very controlled. Guilt, shame and fear, they are the controlling factors. The fear is that everything outside is evil and if you leave you turn your back on God and you have a chance to become a dog or a worm in your next life."

"You come to depend on the cult for everything material and spiritual. Everything is regimented and controlled. You can't just leave."

Mrs. Ayers believed her daughter "was under complete mind control." After reading articles on cults and talking with other parents and former cult members, she contacted a deprogramming group which put her in touch with attorney Ben Martin of Phoenix.

"I had a feeling something was going to happen," says Genny.

WHILE SELLING cult books at Salt Lake International Airport last May 4, she was approached by a sheriff's deputy. The deputy told her he had a complaint about her solicitation permit and asked her to accompany him outside.

What the deputy had was a court order issued by Third District Judge Jay Banks, granting Mrs. Ayers temporary custody of her daughter. Genny was taken to a deprogramming center. Martin declines to give the center's location.

The sect complained that Genny was a victim of "judicial kidnapping" and claimed that she was being sub-

jected to brainwashing. Genny, however, wrote Banks and thanked him for what he had done, saying she no longer identified with the Krishna sect.

"**DEPROGRAMMING** is just discussion and confrontation," says Genny. Its main aspect is "trying to get cult members to talk."

"You're not forced to do anything but stay in a room. You just have to get over the fear and guilt. After a few days, we got out." She says she's been reading, playing music and taking hikes.

Martin says Genny "has made remarkable progress" and "has not regressed."

"She has had complete freedom of movement," he says. "Only the first couple of weeks were her movements restricted. With a lot of kids, that takes five to six months."

Martin doubts that the Krishnas will try to get Genny back into the fold.

"**I'M SURE THAT** if they could isolate her and impose their will on her they would do it. Our experience has been that once a cult member says publicly, 'I don't want anything more to do with the cult,' they won't do anything. It's embarrassing to them to lose a member."

Genny thinks she would like to help in deprogramming other cult members.

"I don't have anything against them (cult members), individually," she says. "They're really sincere. They're mostly young, idealistic people. They want to serve God and help people. That's how people get into the cult."

"They are caught up in something extreme and fanatical. They're trying to clean up the act. They think by this kind of revolutionary thing they are going to change the world. It doesn't help anything."

"When you're in the movement you think it's helping you, and it may in some small way, but it's destructive because it destroys the individual."

'Deprogrammed' ex-member's



Barefoot view of typical Hare Krishna session.

NEWS PHOTO

By JACK MOCK

FOR 18 MONTHS, GENNY AYERS lived outside of society, disillusioned with her way of life, but trapped by fears that kept her from doing anything about it.

Genny had become a member of the Hare Krishna sect. She had entered what she now describes as a world of "good and evil," of countless days of little sleep, of total subservience, commitment and reliance.

The slender brunette says now she thought about leaving "every day."

"Everybody wants to leave, but you're very controlled," she said. "Guilt, shame and fear, they are the controlling factors. The fear is that everything outside is evil and if you leave, you turn your back on God and you have a chance to become a dog or a worm in your next life."

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She stayed in Flagstaff a couple of months, working in a restaurant and a day care center. But she feared she "was vegetating." Reading about Hare Krishna and meeting cult members on the street, she drifted to San Diego, Calif., and joined the sect.

"The first part of it was exciting," said Genny, now 22, who wore jeans and a red shirt during an interview in the office of an attorney here. "It was a whole new experience. There were rituals, chanting and dancing. It was a new environment."

Genny was assigned to a "Sankirtan," a fund raising function that primarily sold books and pamphlets.

"I would get up at 2 o'clock after four to five hours sleep," she said. "Most of the day was spent running around towns, raising donations - selling books."

In her 18 months with the Krishnas Genny travelled across the country, from Los Angeles to Miami, to Portland, Ore., to Salt Lake City. The sect discouraged contact with her family and she wrote to her mother only two or three times.

"There were many, many months between letters that I didn't know where she was and when I called places where I thought she might be, I was told there was no such person there," her mother said.

BECAUSE THE SECT DID NOT WANT outside influence, Genny said, "letter writing was kept down to once every six months."

"Everything outside of the movement is evil," she said. "Your perspective is narrowed in one direction so the whole world is divided into good and evil."

Mrs. Ayers saw her daughter twice while Genny was a member of the sect. The first time was in May 1976, after Genny called her from Los Angeles and invited her to a special feast.

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