

Confessions of a Straight “A” Student and the Mad Genius of L. Ron Hubbard

I was once a very successful student with high grades and remarkable athletic achievements, and I was accepted at Yale, Stanford, and USC. However, I was a fake. In fact, I was worse than a fake because I didn't know I was a fake. This is the story of my mis-education and rehabilitation.

Neither of my parents went to college. As the eldest son, I was expected to go to college and I felt pressure to excel in school. The problem was that I had no idea of how to excel in school. My teachers encouraged me to “guess at the meanings of words” and said that if I “read enough” I would become smart. Our public school classrooms did have dictionary sets, which sat very respectfully on the shelves, unused. So I was forced to memorize in order to somehow accommodate the pressure.

As I have said, with my “good” grades, honors, and my high scores on standardized tests (thanks to test-prep materials) I could have attended any college. However, my parents had little money, and, since my father had wanted to attend a service academy, I attended the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. At least I would not have to go to Vietnam for the next four years, I thought, and by then maybe the war would be over.



US Air Force Academy, Colorado.



Captain Sully and myself just before being sent to Purdue.

While there, my parents divorced and my father disappeared for a time. Meanwhile, along with the rest of the country, my sympathies began to shift to those of the antiwar protesters. I even began to think of declaring myself a pacifist, a conscientious objector.

In 1973, I graduated near the top of my class at the Academy, and I was immediately sent to Purdue University to get a master's degree.¹ Afterwards I was sent to Edwards Air Force Base to test and evaluate the ergonomics of jet cockpits.

In the Air Force I was expected to actually *do* something with my knowledge. I was possibly

¹ My classmate at the AFA (in the psych department) and at Purdue (also in the psych department) was Captain Sully Sullenberger.

one of the worst lieutenants in military history. I was critical of the government and the Air Force and with some other lieutenants, I was routinely smoking marijuana when off-duty and experimenting with LSD. At this same time some of my family members joined the Church of Scientology, and, encouraged by them, I began to take Scientology classes in Los Angeles on the weekends, driving there from my job at the base.

In 1975, I officially applied to the Air Force to obtain status as a conscientious objector. In February of 1976 I was released from the Air Force, not having completed my five year commitment, and I moved to Los Angeles to be near the Church. I took many courses, and I eventually became a staff member and instructor. Although I never met Hubbard in person, my mother met him when she was on one of his ships in the Caribbean Sea. Meanwhile, I joined the staff as an instructor and was also ordained as a Scientology minister for the state of California.

Over three years, from about 1977-1980, working about 50-60 hours per week with no vacations, which caused a lot of animosity from my non-Scientology family members during the Christmas season, I later calculated that I earned about 25 cents an hour. So I had to take menial part-time jobs in order to survive—selling “office art” door-to-door, moving furniture, or delivering newspapers in my van to convenience stores and liquor stores. Also, for two months I lived in my van in the Church parking lot on Sunset Boulevard. Later, I moved into a two-bedroom apartment which slept twelve of us, and still later I rented my own room in a large house.

As an instructor, I taught students Dianetic and Scientology principles and techniques. I excelled in certain areas and did very poorly in others. Mostly I excelled in coaching students on communication drills and I was proficient in training students on the use of the E-meter.



Mark V E-meter from about 1976.

The E-meter was used by the Scientology counselor to locate an incident of past trauma. The counselor would then have the counselee re-experience the incident and talk about it, as many times as necessary, in order to discharge the negative emotional “charge.” William Burroughs, who embraced Scientology for a time, described it to Allen Ginsberg like this: “They do the job without hypnosis or drugs, simply run the tape back and forth until the trauma is wiped off.”²

If the emotional charge wouldn’t discharge, the counselor would look for an “earlier similar

² <http://www.openculture.com/2018/06/how-william-s-burroughs-embraced-then-rejected-scientology.html>

incident” and repeat the procedure until the most basic incident was found and discharged, at which point the entire series of incidents would discharge. I understood the principles well, and I used them successfully on others and later on myself.

Much of the counseling I received and much of the counseling that I taught to students was similar to a confessional, in which you would reveal the secrets you were withholding from others. Hubbard called them “withholds” and he claimed that they could cause a lot of problems in a relationship. For example, if you were on the E-meter, and you criticized a particular person, you would be asked a question like, “What have you done [your secret or withhold] that that person *almost* found out about?” For me, despite my effort to repress a certain thought whenever it would momentarily appear in my mind, causing the needle on the meter to move a certain way, the counselor would say softly but precisely, “*That.*” I would remain silent trying to think of something *else*, while the counselor kept an eye on the meter, “*That...there...*” he would repeat whenever the unwanted thought returned. “What was that thought you just had? *That.*” And finally I would give a slight chuckle and with some embarrassment say, “Oh, *thaaat,*” and out would come the confession.

For example, around 1983, as I was slowing drifting away from Scientology, I started to substitute teach. At first everything went smoothly, however I noticed that sometimes I would lose my temper with the students for no apparent reason. This bothered me and so one day I picked up my E-meter and I asked myself, “Have you done anything which the students almost found out about?” The E-Meter immediately responded and what came to my mind was that I had smoked marijuana. As I thought about my experiences of losing my temper I remembered that sometimes a student would mention marijuana in passing, or make a joke about it, and I would kind of freeze up—not knowing if my mention of my prior usage of the drug would cause some student to report me to the principal and I would lose my job—and that shortly after that I would lose my temper about something unrelated.

The next time it happened I gulped, took a chance, and casually mentioned that I had used it earlier in my life, while carefully emphasizing that I no longer used it, and I recommended that they didn’t use it either. They just smiled and said, “No longer?” as if it were strange that I had quit. I looked them in the eye and honestly said, “No longer.” I waited the rest of the day for the principal to call me into his office, but it never happened, and after that I realized that student-teacher rapport involved not “ratting out” each other for minor offenses.

In Scientology I also received practice in leadership, forced into supervisory positions in an organization that desperately needed personnel to achieve Hubbard’s grandiose aim—to save humanity by clearing them of their mental aberrations. I learned the importance of professionalism, honor, and competency—things I studied at the Air Force Academy with regard to defending my country—but which did not seem relevant to a controversial overseas war.

It was around this time that there was an oil crisis and for the first time in my life I had to wait in long lines at gas stations. I was rudely, but rightfully, shaken out of my youthful idealism. It was the first of several events that made me question my involvement in Scientology.

I had a problem during my three years as a Scientology staff member—I almost always failed to graduate an acceptable number of students from my course. This was an intensive internship course for counselors, run according to the very strict principles and techniques laid out by Hubbard. I had taken the course myself.

However, there was always a lot of pressure to graduate students as quickly as possible so as to keep production statistics high. So I was rushed through my internship course, and I later stated that I had not achieved the aims of the internship and had falsely attested to its completion. However, they

left me on the job, apparently because no one else wanted it.

The internship counseling sessions, like all the counseling sessions, were meticulously recorded by hand during the sessions, and were then strictly reviewed by the case supervisor. If the case supervisor found any procedural mistakes, the intern would study and do drills in my course to correct their mistakes before doing another session. Sessions were also sometimes audio recorded and evaluated by myself and the case supervisor. The final requirement of the course was to successfully complete ten hours of counseling in one day—without any errors. I didn't want to rush students through the class like I had been, but, while learning-by-teaching, I valiantly attempted to meet my assigned quotas each week.

Sometimes upper management would notice my lackluster graduation rates and they would investigate. I remember one time a lady in our quality control division, who I greatly respected, was quizzing me on the E-meter, trying to find out *why, why, why* I could not produce more graduates. She was really pressing me and I suddenly broke down crying. She was a little shocked and so was I. It was a pivotal point in my life. After that I began to change for the better. I became a poor student.

Let me explain. Scientology courses are self-paced. At the beginning of each course, and at the beginning of every book, it was made very clear that you should look up every word you didn't fully understand. The course supervisor would sometimes come to you, look over the material you were studying, pick out an unusual word and say, "What's the meaning of ____." If you could not answer immediately, you were told to look up the word in the dictionary and later the supervisor would reexamine you.

So while studying I used a dictionary like everyone else. I looked up some words and I spouted off the definition when asked. I also demonstrated the meaning with small objects, although often after overhearing or overseeing someone else do it. I finished my counseling course and my internship course, and I became an instructor of the interns.

I had seen poor students in Scientology. We called them "bogged students," probably because as they went through the course, looking up so many words, it was as if they were making their way waist deep through a peat bog.

They were never removed from the course. They were left alone, buried in their dictionaries, looking up a word, then looking up a word within the definition of *that* word, then looking up a word within the definition of *that* word, while dutifully writing down each word, and then crossing them off as they made their way back up the "word chain." I had found them curious. I couldn't understand how they could not just *read* the material. Yet they unabashedly carried on and I noticed they had an integrity and certainty that I lacked.

However, after the crying incident, a horrible idea began to dawn on me—perhaps I didn't really understand many of these words I was reading. I could not accept it at first. After all, I had graduated from some highly respected universities with top grades, honors and a master's degree—yet I was having trouble on this post.

So I carefully began looking up more words, lots of words, eventually even simple ones, and soon enough I could not even make it through a word chain and back. I became a hopelessly bogged student.

However, I knew that earlier misunderstood words could affect your understanding of later words—just like earlier traumatic experiences could affect later traumatic experiences. So I began to think that perhaps there were words from my pre-Scientology education that were misunderstood.

Then, about 1979, I saw a Church bulletin, not written by Hubbard personally, but by the Board of Directors, that said that many bogged staff members were getting help by studying the textbooks

from their prior education, in K-12 school or college—only this time properly defining the words. Of course I understood that these misunderstood words *could* have been located and defined on the E-meter, as they were linked to negative emotional charge, and that there were not enough skilled E-meter operators to go around. We staff members knew that these skilled operators were needed to serve the high-paying, public Scientologists.

Which textbook to choose first? The bulletin said the student should choose whichever ones they were most interested in.³ At that time, I was most interested in studying grammar, so, in a used bookstore I found a grammar textbook similar to my old high school one.

I had always hated grammar in school—every year the same old routine: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, ad nauseam. I also knew that if I hated a subject, there was probably a lot of emotional charge on that subject and many misunderstood words.

I still vividly recall sitting upstairs in the staff study room overlooking Sunset Boulevard and looking up words like “noun,” “verb,” and even “word.” I made diagrams of what these words meant, their relationship to each other, and their relationship to my physical surroundings. I began to have some “Oh!” moments. I was rather embarrassed and amazed to find that I had not fully understood these simple words.

It about was then that I remembered a time in primary school when my well-meaning teacher had held up a pencil and said, “This is a noun.” I had believed her (apparently children have a kind of belief module in the brain) and from that point on, unconsciously, “nouns” surrounded me. The universe was full of “nouns.”

However, now, in the staff study room, when I thought about where nouns existed, it became clear to me that they existed only in books, and, when spoken, in the air. The universe was *not* full of nouns. In fact, the mass of all the nouns, the weight of the ink and paper on which they lay or the vibrating molecules of air on which they traveled, was minuscule compared to the mass of all the buildings, cars, the Sun and Earth and the rest of the universe. So finally, at the age of 27, I grokked that a physical pencil was *not* a noun and that the *word* “pencil” *was* a noun.

Back in primary school grammar had become mistakingly entwined with the universe and the universe had become a somewhat hateful place. But now grammar fell into its proper place in the world. I walked out of the building in kind of euphoric daze, unable to study anymore. I went home and took some dirty clothes to a laundromat and stood outside by a small tree waiting for them to finish their cycle. My entire worldview had shifted, and I felt a tremendous sense of peace.

Many years later, around 2006, I wrote an op-ed for a weekly newspaper where I was substitute teaching at the time, entitled, “Most Students Can’t Identify Nouns.” In the article I explained how I had conducted an experiment in about 600 classrooms, holding up a pencil and asking students, “Is this a noun? Raise your hand if you think this is a noun.” About 95% raised their hands.

I would then write on the board the dictionary definition of noun: “a word that describes a person, place, thing, or idea,” and next to it I wrote the *word* “pencil.” I pointed to the chalk marks of “pencil” on the board I said, “*This* is a noun,” and while holding up the pencil again for comparison said, “This is *not* a noun.” If they didn’t understand I would write the word “tree” on the board and compare this to a tree outside the window of the classroom, etc. I talked about the two kinds of noun words: the written word and the spoken word and said that the spoken word travels invisibly through the air at about 750 miles per hour. I usually then walked across the front of the room and asked, “Is

³ Of course this would mean they would be motivated and not be overwhelmed by the material.

what I am doing a verb?” Finally, I would ask, “So where do we find nouns and verbs?” and see if they could answer correctly.

When I was teaching at an elite university in China I did the same pencil test on them. The number who got it right went from 5% to about 65%. Of course, it was not a fair comparison. If I did the same test with Ivy League students it would be a fair comparison.

So about this time, 1979, I became aware of an entire sea of words that I didn’t understand. I became on fire to look up more words, and I became an evangelist throughout the organization for clearing up misunderstood words from one’s previous education. I annoyed a lot of people, and eventually the lady who had unintentionally made me cry said, “Bill, not *everyone* needs to clear up earlier misunderstood words!”

I backed off a bit. But I continued searching through my old textbooks for words that I could clear up. From the three years of supervising the interns on my course, I had acquired a lot of knowledge about negative emotional charge and how to relieve it. So every time I found some key words that I had memorized but not connected to the physical universe I would work to discharge the emotional charge on word and subject. A kind of silent terror and hatred buried deep inside me was turning to understanding.

During this period I recalled something else I had completely forgotten about. It was a time in the fourth grade when I was having a lot of difficulties just *sitting still* in my seat, and the teacher was quite annoyed with me. During recess I asked a classmate of mine how he managed to sit still in class. “You have to learn to sleep with your eyes open,” he said, and then ran off chasing a basketball. I was tired of my teacher and parents criticizing me about my behavior and I decided that I would play the Game of Education. So for the next thirteen years I played the game quite successfully, winning many different awards—while sleeping with my eyes open.

Back in Scientology something interesting happened. A student intern from another course asked me if I wanted to have my earlier misunderstood words cleared up on the E-meter. I was doing quite well by myself—working with various dictionaries to get the concept of the word, linking it to the physical universe, comparing and contrasting the word with other words until the emotional charge on the word disappeared. If the charge didn’t disappear, I looked for earlier similar words and cleared them up and then a whole branch of the subject would clear up. However, when the student offered to help me for free—part of his internship course requirement—I thought, “Why not?” So we went into session and began to clear up various words. The problem was that working with this intern was extremely slow compared to what I could do by myself.

Back when I had first started working by myself the pace had also been agonizingly slow. The dictionary itself can be overwhelming. Even after I had learned the many symbols and abbreviations used, there were too many content words that I did not understand. So I developed a simple technique to allow myself to feel more comfortable using the dictionary and which offered me an entry point into its usage: I begin to look up simple words, very concrete words, that I already knew—words like *cat*, *car*, *house*, etc., which allowed me to get practice in the use of the dictionary and gave me more certainty and understanding of the English language. Eventually I felt quite comfortable looking up the unknown content words.

With the college textbooks I had kept or could locate, I would usually start with looking up the words in the chapter headings, which would often lead to earlier similar words. Sometimes I would spend days trying to grasp the meaning of a word. The word “*criterion*” appeared frequently in many of my textbooks. To understand it I had to look up the word “*standard*,” and then the words “*quality*,”

“value,” “measurement,” and “units.” I had to draw diagrams of these words and delineate what they meant and what they didn't mean. When I finished I firmly understood the word “criterion,” and I knew I could use anything as a unit of measurement or a criterion. Since the word “criterion” was used frequently throughout my education, Hubbard called this a “crashing misunderstood word,” because it can cause one to crash, and it did cause me to crash.

I also cultivated a curiosity about words. For a time, I looked up the words I saw on the stores and shops around me and the words associated with my home. I remember that clearing up the word *valve* had quite an impact on me since it is used in so many machines and also in the body. I also cultivated a curiosity about words and their origins. After a time I could look at the etymology of the word, glance over the definitions, draw some diagrams, and the negative emotions would evaporate. I would move on to the next word. My speed slowly increased and eventually became very rapid. After a time I could look at the etymology of the word, glance over the definitions, draw some diagrams, and the negative emotions would evaporate. I would move on to the next word.

Also, although Hubbard required students to go through *every* definition of the word and make sentences for *each*, after a time I could look at the etymology of the word, glance over the definitions, draw some diagrams, and once I grasped the word and the negative emotions had evaporated, move on to the next word. So, my speed increased exponentially and eventually became very rapid.

Luckily for me, after about eight hours of an agonizing slow pace, the student asked me if I wanted to attest to the end result of this particular E-metered process which was “Recovery of One’s Education.” I was shocked at first. I felt we had barely waded into that vast sea of my misunderstood words, and I couldn’t believe that the student and the case supervisor thought I was finished.

Once again the quota pressure that was put on staff and students probably played a part. Also, much later I realized that most people in Scientology had not had the extensive college and graduate school education I had had, and that perhaps many of them *could* finish this process in just a few hours. So I had a choice of saying “no” and continuing to work painfully and slowly with this intern, or lying and returning to work quickly by myself. By then I had begun to suspect that some lying was going on within the Church, so I didn't feel guilty about also lying, and besides, I knew I was letting the intern finish with his class.

Meanwhile the official bulletin describing the procedure I had been using on myself had been cancelled, “because it had not been written by Ron.” I was somewhat shocked yet again. I think money played its part here, because if people could do this procedure by themselves, then why would they need to pay big dollars to get it done by a professional Scientology counselor? So now I had another choice—remaining true to Hubbard’s “standard technology” or continuing to do what was working for me. I took the practical path, although I was still enough of a “true believer” that I felt guilty about it for several months.

By this time, whenever I read something, such as a magazine article, the misunderstood words—words that I supposedly knew— would jump out of the page at me somewhat like a totally unfamiliar word. For example, the word “arbitrary,” the emotionally charged and misunderstood word, would stand out like the never-seen-before word “nikhedonia,” (the pleasure or excitement that comes from anticipating success). When I looked at the misunderstood word it seem to have a kind of a fog around it and I would experience unpleasant emotions.

In 1980 my staff contract with Scientology ended and I went back to Chicago for a couple of months to visit with—and work for—my father. There, in my off hours, I began to tackle another big subject—mathematics. This was also a subject which I had silently hated throughout school, but in which I had received “A.” Restudying this subject was to have a very profound effect on me, perhaps

even more so than the subject of grammar, for the subject of grammar had ended with the first year of college, but the subject of mathematics continued for several years after that and was also widespread throughout my heavy course load of science and engineering classes.

How to connect it to the physical universe, to make it more concrete? To represent the numerals 1, 2, 3, etc., I began to use dots or lines on a page. (Later, I found that the Greeks also used lines to represent numbers.) In my mind the dots represented apples, boats, or people, etc., and the lines represented amounts of water, etc. I drew pages and pages of dots and lines, demonstrating various axioms or equations, and the subject began to feel more *grounded* (my word, not Hubbard's). Also, the *numerals* became separate from the *amounts*—Roman numerals, Mayan numerals, Babylonian numerals, etc., could all represent the same number of dots in a different way.

For geometry, I remember looking around me as I rode on the Chicago “L” train and everywhere seeing angles, lines, rectangles, cubes, etc. I filled more pages with lines, figures, shapes and angles.

At some point I asked myself: why does $1 + 1 = 2$? I recalled from primary school that “two objects could not occupy the same place at the same time.” Thus, one apple plus one apple could never equal just one apple. This insight gave me a practical foundation for the subject.

Also, I realized that addition and the other operations implied *motion*. When you add something you are *moving* something. So behind all those abstract numerals and symbols in mathematics books was an enormous amount of motion. Math became not only grounded but also dynamic for me.

My education in math had been the traditional “drill and kill” approach: give the students the formula, equation, etc., and have them memorize it and then drill, drill, drill, test, test, test them on it, until all natural curiosity about the subject was completely extinguished. Now, however, I began to do my own explorations in math. I would ask a question and then explore it with numbers, drawings, dots and lines. To take a trivial example, instead of being told that $a-b$ does not equal $b-a$, I could try it and see—I could develop on my own the various axioms, and later, when I was teaching mathematics, I used this exploration method with the students whenever possible.

I remember discovering things like the fact that pi, 3.1415... was somewhat arbitrary. Pi is the *circumference* of a circle divided by the *diameter*, which is a constant number for all circles, but it could easily have been the inverse, the *diameter* divided by the *circumference*, 0.3183... . Meanwhile clarifying math words such as “ratio” and “common denominator” clarified other branches of my knowledge tree—words or phrases such as “rational,” “rationality” or the “common denominator of success.”

Also, I saw that mathematical terminology was used for a reason. A “quad” was a square courtyard and a “quadratic equation” always had a squared term, etc. I also became more aware of how the sound of a word often matches its meaning—onomatopoeia. Words had not been arbitrarily picked out of the air, and this fundamental idea—why *that* word?—has stayed with me ever since and made it much easier to learn and remember the meaning of a word.

Like with grammar, an astounding thing happened as I was grounding these math words. I remember walking upstairs from the basement bedroom of my father's home, where I lived and studied, when suddenly a barrage of faces, maybe two hundred of them, flashed rapidly before me, in succession—as if they had all been pages in a book that someone had suddenly riffled in front of me—except that I felt each image in my mind as a kind of very quick and subtle thud. It all happened in less than two seconds. I wanted to slow it down to see who these people were—but I couldn't—at the end of the two seconds they were all gone and I felt a load lifted off my mind.

I was somewhat scared for a second. However, I thought about the meaning of it and what came

to my mind was that these were people that I had dealt with in some manner in the past who had thought I was a bit crazy—from my words or actions—and that from now on my actions would be much more logical—and they were.

After two months of math review, I *liked* mathematics. When I returned to Southern California from Chicago one of my friends said to me: “You look like a completely different person.” And I felt that way too. Much later I saw the movie *The Matrix*, and there is a scene in which Neo—still an unconscious battery in a pod—has the plug removed from the back of his head and all the electrodes start popping off his body—at which point he is flushed down a tube and enters the real world for the first time. I felt that that scene described almost exactly my feeling after getting all these math words and symbols grounded.

I also remember spending a long time re-studying physics and physics equations. I had a book called *The Science of Swimming* which I had never read before, but now I eagerly read it and understood how to apply Newton’s Laws to my swim strokes. In my early swimming career I had used mostly strength and conditioning to achieve results, but now I saw my stroke technique greatly improve, and when I began competing in master’s swimming a few years later I became ranked fifth in the world after only six months of training.

Also, I was now thinking more in images. Einstein had famously said that “imagination is more important than knowledge,” and now I understood that. In my earlier academic courses, when I had to submit a paper for a class, I had not used any imagination—I had only rearranged words. I would take some words and phrases from several sources and quote or paraphrase them and then, like a good student, list them in my bibliography. There was little original thought.

At some point I decided to use my college transcripts for this big review of mine. For each course listed, I recalled which words, equations, etc. were most important. This was easy because those were the words and equations I had most thoroughly memorized. Clearing these up often cleared up the entire subject for me.

Then I decided to look at how each subject related to the other subjects. This also had an extraordinary effect on me. I remember looking out the window at a tree and imagining the photons hitting the leaves, the stresses on the branches, the maintenance of the tree, the costs involved, while at the same time seeing the inside of the tree: the photosynthesis, transpiration, and the carbon cycle. The names of the various subjects, “mathematics,” “biology,” “chemistry,” “physics,” “economics,” had disappeared and there was just a tree with all its various particles and forces.

Later, I came across Buckminster Fuller’s phrasing, “nature has no categories,” and that’s what I had experienced. I also later read the advice of a Nobel Laureate, Christian de Duve, “Don’t study subjects—study the relationship between subjects.” Since then I have had many innovative ideas, and they never fit into a particular discipline but combined aspects of two or more of them. I began to suspect that the mystery of “creativity” was nothing more than being able to combine two or more unrelated ideas.

I returned to Los Angeles in 1981 and visited the Scientology organization where I had worked for three years. I saw the lady who had made me cry and I spoke with her, and to my surprise I now felt she was a bit slow, a bit dull—it was another shock to me.

I decided to enroll for the evenings and weekends in a major Scientology course that covered all of Hubbard’s material from 1948 to present. This was something I had looked forward to since 1975. Now, instead of being a bogged student I moved quite quickly on the course. Other students would come to an unusual reference by Hubbard about the Navy, or some historical event, and they would have to stop and look it up, but, with my educational background, which included military history as

well as many other subjects that Hubbard was familiar with, I rarely had to stop. The others would take their time studying the reference, and I later realized that many of them probably had had no college education and so they were sort of using this course to broaden their general education.

One day I came across a bulletin by Hubbard in a file cabinet which I thought was interesting and I showed it to the course supervisor. I was being very polite and not arguing or anything but she lost her temper and said, “You think you know everything don’t you! You just get yourself down to ethics!” Being sent to ethics was like being sent to the principal’s office. Instead, I walked out to my car and drove off. A few days later someone from the Church came to my home and asked me to come back, but by then I was beginning to realize I had outgrown Scientology.

I needed a job so I applied at a private school and they gave me an IQ test. My IQ had been measured at the Air Force Academy and it had been 136. Now it measured 149. Not a bad improvement, I thought. However, unbelievably to me at the time, the director of the school didn’t hire me because she felt I “would get bored.” I was a bit annoyed with her, but sure enough, whenever I later tried to become a regular school teacher, I *did* get bored.

In the fall of 1982, I started to teach mathematics as a substitute teacher in the Los Angeles inner city and in a few other districts. I had begun to feel guilty about leaving the Air Force without fulfilling my five year commitment to them, and this was a way of punishing myself for that. I did this for many years. Eventually, over some 25 years, I taught grades K-12 at about 116 different schools in thousands of different classrooms in dozens of subjects. Substitute teaching gave me the challenges I needed and allowed me to pursue my own interests in the evenings. After a couple of years, I would go into the class with no preparation and students would later say to me, “You explain things better than our regular teacher.” Incredibly, after many years, a few even said, “I learned more from you in one day than I have learned all semester from our regular teacher.”

If a teacher was pregnant or had a serious injury or illness, I would sometimes teach a class for an extended period, and once, when I need money badly, I taught for two years at a middle school in South Central Los Angeles. I was there during the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising.

They couldn’t get a regular teacher to work there, so they would hire me for 30 days as a substitute, as that’s all my credential allowed, dismiss me for a day, and then re-hire me for another 30 days. Eventually, they just did the dismissal on paper and left me in the classroom. This was quite a challenging job, but one day an eighth grader came to me and said, “Mr. Lauritzen, because of you I quit a gang. Thank you. I will always remember you.”



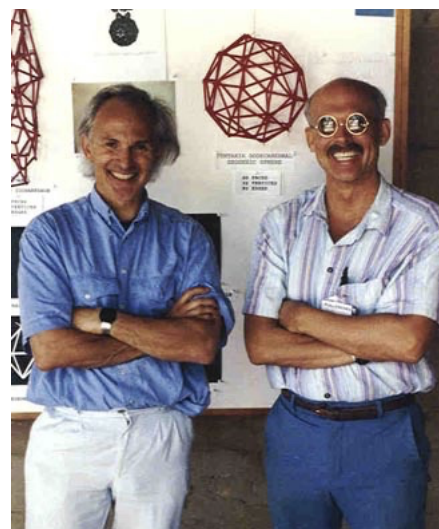
Teaching in math and geometry South Central LA in 1992–93.

At the various schools I usually passed out rulers, compasses, and protractors that I brought with me from home to let the students get some hands-on practice. Sometimes, when not constrained by the high-pressure “drill and kill” style curriculum, we would go outside and measure the height of the flagpole, make large geometrical figures on the playground with string, or make geometric shapes in the classroom using drinking straws and string. Once, for two months I taught at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles where I met and observed an award-winning math teacher, Jamie Escalante, who was later portrayed in the movie *Stand and Deliver*. I would try to walk causally by his classroom without him noticing to catch a glimpse of his style. I was disappointed that I didn't see any hands-on work, but later I found out he did use it.

Nowadays, I find hard to believe that I used to hate mathematics. Whenever I have some free time I like to study it on my own. During the 1990s, I did some independent research into number theory and found some interesting social applications for “highly composite numbers.” I wrote a paper about this and sent it to Martin Gardner and Douglas Hofstadter. Gardner called it “eminently publishable,” while Doug Hofstadter called it “interesting” and asked me several questions about it. Also, I later invented a completely new number system, a base-12 system with simplified and colorful visual numerals. I also simplified the nomenclature of mathematics by changing the Greek and Latin terms to common English words.⁴

In chemistry, sometimes I would ask a high school class how much space was occupied by a “mole” of liquid water. Students said, “as big as the ocean,” “as big as the room,” “can't be measured,” etc. Only about 1% to 2% answered correctly, despite the fact that they were solving problems almost every day with moles. It's about 18 milliliters which conveniently fits into a test tube, which I would then show them.

In 1994, I taught a high school chemistry class for several months, reading each chapter of the book on the weekend before teaching it. I was constantly taking the students to the laboratory to give them some hands-on experience. The other chemistry teacher would say to me, “You're taking them to the lab again!?” During this time, it was announced that a new form of carbon had been discovered — a spherical form called Carbon-60 because it contained 60 atoms of carbon. I thought that the models of C-60 in the news were not quite correct. I found out that two of the discoverers would be at a scientific conference near LA, so I sent them a short paper and a photo of my model — which showed the stability of the triangular bonds — and they invited me to the conference. They won the Nobel prize for their discovery two years later.



Sir Harold Kroto and myself in front of my model of Carbon 60.

I think with too much emphasis on standardized testing, real world, exploratory education disappears, as we strive to show that our students are “educated” because they score high on an abstract paper-and-pencil test. We *don't* want high test scores because we give the students “test-taking strategy sessions” every week or because we hire professional consultants to prep our teachers. We want high test scores as a *by-product*

⁴ This nomenclature was praised by cognitive psychologist Elizabeth Loftus.

of an education that emphasizes a connection to the real world. Then perhaps more students could identify a noun, a mole, etc.

It took me about three years to ground my education and during this time I had gathered about ten dictionaries at various levels—from a very simple pocket dictionary up to the Oxford ten-volume dictionary. The two in the middle eventually became completely worn and frayed from constant use.

During these years another extraordinary thing happened. My school memorization, what I had used to parrot back or regurgitate the textbook information on tests, what Hubbard called “memory circuits,” became visible in my mind. These had always been unconscious before, but now they appeared as a vast, ethereal, semi-transparent, metallic-gray web, with thousands of interconnections, in the shape of a huge disc that was bulging outwards in the middle.

Math symbols were interlinked with chemistry formulas and physics formulas while history, psychology and English were all interlinked, etc. It was a huge word and symbol network efficiently designed and organized for one primary purpose—to get good grades. But now, 1) as I was grounding my education, 2) as I understood the first, or fundamental, principles of each subject and how to apply these principals, and 3) as I understood how to derive the various facts of the subject from these fundamental principles, this memory disc began to collapse and disappear. Meanwhile, after all this work, the prescription for my eyeglasses had changed from 20/200 to about 20/45, and I was able to pass the eye exam for a summer job as a lifeguard.

During the last half of the 1990s I begin to write my first book—about the origins of mythology. I sent part of this to Martin Gardner and Sir Arthur C. Clarke. They both responded positively and Clarke sent it to another author who later emailed me and said that Clarke had called me “some kind of genius.”

When I went into inner city classrooms as a substitute teacher, particularly English and history classes, I would sometimes pick an unusual word out of the textbook, one that I had misunderstood as a student, write it on the board, and ask students what it meant. I would then write all their guesses on the board and, after about twelve or fifteen guesses, tell them that none of these were correct. Then I would give them the real meaning of the word.

How could a situation like this arise? I can think of several reasons.

Firstly, teachers telling students to guess at the meanings of words. In my opinion, this is both foolish and destructive.

Secondly, an overemphasis on phonics rather than meanings. Students learn how to *pronounce* the word without gaining a full understanding of the *meaning* of the word. Students look like they are reading but they are only “word calling.” I vividly remember teaching one particular class in which students were taking turns reading. They would read a paragraph or two, stop and say “popcorn,” and then call out another student’s name to read. They were all merrily “reading,” but then one particular boy was picked and suddenly the room became very quiet. He very slowly and painfully read each word. Rather than making fun of him, the students seemed to sense that there was something extraordinary about him. There was. He was reaching for and accessing the meaning of every word as he read.

Thirdly, using the “standard textbook” instead of a lower level textbook when needed. Once I taught an 8th grade algebra class and I knew that the textbook was too hard for them because I was constantly having disciplinary problems. I tried to convince the head counselor to change the class to a pre-algebra class, but she refused. So I gave them their first test, directly from the book, and the

average grade was about 55%. I showed the results to the counselor and then she agreed with me and we changed the class—allowing a few students to transfer to another algebra class. After that, the average went up to about 84%. I had no disciplinary problems, and we all enjoyed that class.

L. Ron Hubbard apparently learned about Freudian psychoanalysis as an 12-year-old from a naval officer named Joseph Thompson who was a psychoanalyst and might have even studied with Freud.⁵ Hubbard adopted many of Freud's ideas such as "earlier similar" incidents. Thompson felt that psychoanalysis had strayed too far from Freud and later Hubbard expressed similar sentiments:

I'm sure Freud had a lot of workable technology. It doesn't survive in the practice of psychoanalysis, I assure you. Because what I was taught in 1924 as Freudian analysis isn't in any textbooks anymore.⁶

Regarding education, Hubbard had seen new naval officers come aboard ships—officers who could get "A" on their test but could not apply the material. Here's an excerpt from an audio tape which, knowing Hubbard, is probably an exaggeration:

I've had such a chap walk aboard, take a look at the helm and say, "So that is a wheel! Well, I've often wondered. And that is a binnacle, that's a compass! Oh, goodness! And that's an engine room telegraph! How interesting!"⁷

Hubbard's father wanted him to go to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, but he failed the entrance examination.⁸ Later, while attending George Washington University he failed several classes. However, Hubbard tells a story (unconfirmed) of a time, about 1930, when he was studying coordinate geometry:

... I'd sat at the back of the class and I got intrigued with this stuff because it could be applied to aerial navigation. And I found out that you could draw up a formula out of it which would solve the drift of wind—you know, wind drift, and a few other things could be applied very easily—and I found out that it might be a jolly useful mathematics. Oh, *I made a mistake, man!* ... I told the professor—name was Hodgson. If you ever saw a *flame* light in any man's eye, it was to see this beautifully *dead* mathematics being given purpose and application. I told him rather indifferently. I didn't try to push it through. I wasn't doing anything, not arguing, very polite. He flunked me just like that—the whole course.⁹

If the story is true, and I think it's possible, fake people like this professor, and me, people who had memorized but could not apply, probably drove Hubbard "mad." (Excuse my use of a non-technical term.) So, as a Scientology staff member, when not on our post, we were always doing drills and demonstrating concepts in clay or with miscellaneous small items. When we were examined on our study materials, besides asking us for definitions of words, we were always asked, "How could you *apply* this information on your post?"

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Cheesman_Thompson

⁶ *The Study Tapes*, Lecture 8: Study and Intention, Golden Era Productions.

⁷ Study and Intention, *The Study Tapes*, Golden Era Productions.

⁸ <http://www.religio.de/books/wakefield/us-02.html>

⁹ Study and Intention, *The Study Tapes*, Golden Era Productions.

When you first get into Scientology you are taught some very simple and useful things such as work skills, study skills, communication skills, and organizational skills, but later, other things slowly creep into your mind. Things like 1) past lives, 2) evil psychologists and psychiatrists, 3) the incompetent medical and educational professions, 4) alien civilizations and visitations, and 5) the vast superiority of Scientology (and its creator). You become, like I did, a “true believer.” (Some of Hubbard’s criticism of psychiatry may have been justified. For example, psychiatrists at that time were doing lobotomies while attacking him for doing talk therapy.)

Others have said, and I agree, that the lower levels of Scientology are useful and the confidential upper levels are not. For example, the upper levels are where Hubbard describes the bizarre, “science fiction” aspect of his religion involving space aliens coming to Earth. People have to pay a lot of money to access this “top secret” incident. However, this incident, now available online, is no more irrational than some ideas of Christianity and other religions. Today, I am not sure if he really believed this information or if he just wanted to get people’s attention.

When I left Scientology about 1985 there were just a few published books written about it. I remember three of them, which one of my friends called “the forbidden books.”¹⁰ Nowadays there are dozens more books, mostly written by former members. Some of these members had experiences similar to mine, and some didn’t.

There’s little doubt that Hubbard was, and still is, a polarizing individual. Judge Breckenrich summarizes the situation:

The evidence portrays a man who has been virtually a pathological liar when it comes to his history, background and achievements. The writings and documents in evidence additionally reflect his egoism, greed, avarice, lust for power, and vindictiveness and aggressiveness against persons perceived by him to be disloyal or hostile. At the same time it appears that he is charismatic and highly capable of motivating, organizing, controlling, manipulating and inspiring his adherents. He has been referred to during the trial as a “genius,” a “revered person,” a man who was “viewed by his followers in awe.” Obviously, he is and has been a very complex person and that complexity is further reflected in his alter ego, the Church of Scientology.¹¹

In addition, the Church has been accused of: 1) trying to suppress criticisms of itself and Hubbard, 2) harassing outspoken members who are critical of it, 3) engaging in indoctrination or mind control (but what religion does not engage in some form of indoctrination or mind control?) 4) trying to hold members against their will,¹² 5) physical abuse of lower ranking staff,¹³ 6) encouraging abortions for high-ranking female staff, 7) falsifying sales records of a book to get on bestseller lists,¹⁴ 8) breaking up families through its policy of encouraging disconnection from people hostile to Scientology, 9) being a pyramid scheme.¹⁵ Hubbard himself has been accused of skimming large

¹⁰ *Bare-Faced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard* by Russell Miller, 1987; *A Piece of Blue Sky* by Jon Atak, 1990; *Madman or Messiah*, by Bent Corydon, 1987.

¹¹ Breckenridge Jr., Paul G. (October 24, 1984). *Memorandum of Intended Decision*, Church of Scientology of California vs. Gerald Armstrong. Quoted by Miller, pp. 370–71

¹² I was never held against my will. For awhile I even joined the Sea Organization and when I decided to leave it, only two weeks later, there were no objections.

¹³ I personally never experienced nor saw any physical violence while in Scientology, although much later one person told me that while he was on the Flag Ship he saw L. Ron Hubbard punch someone in the nose. The person he allegedly punched was Bill Frank.

¹⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-scientology062890-story.html>.

¹⁵ For more details on these see the Wikipedia entry: “Scientology Controversies.”

amounts of cash from the church.¹⁶ However, I would guess that most church members believe he deserved that money.

Furthermore, from 1973 to 1977 Hubbard's wife Mary Sue, and other top Scientology officers, led Project Snow White, a Scientology project which infiltrated and stole documents from 136 government agencies, foreign embassies and consulates, especially the IRS and US Department of Justice. Eventually, thanks to an alert cleaning lady working late at night, some were caught by the FBI and pled guilty which led to a massive raid by the FBI on Scientology organizations in Hollywood, D.C., and Los Angeles. The raid in LA used 156 agents and lasted 21 hours. In 1980 Mary Sue was sentenced to five years' imprisonment but ended up serving only one year. L. Ron Hubbard was named an "unindicted co-conspirator" and went into hiding. He stayed in hiding until his death in 1986. I was teaching in the building on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles when it was raided. However, I was in a different part of the building so I saw very little of it, and it was never mentioned in any Scientology communications to staff.

To put all this into some perspective, without justifying it, we can look at some things which other religions have done, but Scientology has *not* done. It has not 1) sacrificed children (as some ancient religions did), 2) allowed widespread sexual abuse of member's children, 3) sanctioned military crusades into other sovereign territories, 4) tortured people for not believing in its doctrines, 5) burned people at the stake for not believing its doctrines, 6) encouraged colonization to "spread the word," 7) drowned women for being witches, 8) encouraged suicide bombers to martyr themselves, 9) issued legal opinions condemning someone to death, 10) ordered its members to commit mass suicide by drinking poison ("drinking the Kool-Aid"). Of course, one could argue that ethical standards have changed over the past decades and centuries and that Hubbard and Scientology should be held to newer, stricter standards.

I think to fully understand L. Ron Hubbard you need to see him as would-be conqueror and explorer. First of all, his father was a career naval officer. In 1924 he became an Eagle Scout. He later bragged about getting an "A+" in history class and giving lectures in history.¹⁷ Furthermore, he became a member of the Explorers Club. The Explorers Club as of today has offered 122 Flags. Flag #105 was given to Hubbard for the Alaska Radio Experimental Expedition (1940) and Flag #163 for the Oceanographic-Archeological Expedition (1961) and the Hubbard Geological Survey Expedition (1966). So I think Hubbard was probably quite familiar with the conquests and battles of Caesar, Napoleon and Alexander as well as the naval explorations Columbus, Magellan, and Cook. Thus, besides being mad because of all the fakes he saw around him, he was also driven to conquer, and to do that he had to keep expanding and earning money and that was another source of his madness.

Something not mentioned in books about Hubbard is that he realized that most people never get down to the "rock-bottom" fundamentals of a subject. Much of Scientology addresses fundamentals—fundamentals of the mind, communication, problem solving, working, study, relationships, organization, finance, etc. In this chapter I have given an example of just one fundamental of one subject, study. This fundamental—using a dictionary to know the meanings of words—is not applied widely enough in our society at this time, even though this was one of the most important things I learned in Scientology. More specifically, I learned to clear up the misunderstood words and symbols I had memorized in my earlier education and to connect the words to the real world. Ironically, all this

¹⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/07/11/us/scientology-chief-got-millions-ex-aides-say.html>.

¹⁷ Data Assimilation, *The Study Tapes*, Golden Era Productions.

dictionary use allowed me to see Scientology in a much more objective light—facilitating my eventual exit.

When I was substitute teaching once again around 2008, I was at one middle school where displayed large signs declared boldly, “Our Focus is Reading Comprehension.” They were trying to raise their standardized test scores in this area. However, based on my experience, I think they would've done much better to say, “Our Focus is Using the Dictionary.”

Although the media tends to polarize opinions about Scientology, and some people feel Scientology is a dangerous organization that should be attacked, today it is recognized by the IRS as qualified for tax exempt status,¹⁸ which suggests it falls under the Bill of Rights and the “free exercise” of religion.

So I am as tolerant of Scientology as I am of Christianity. Since it was this Bill of Rights that allowed Hubbard to grow Scientology (although Scientology had to fight misinformation about itself in government databases), I think it only fair that Scientology supports the US government, its laws and general customs, and so does not engage in any of the criticisms previously mentioned and especially not: 1) promote or encourage physical abuse or violence directly or indirectly, 2) limit freedom of responsible speech, 3) try to change our secular government into a religious one, or 4) promote anti-scientific ideas that can affect the health of the community or world.

Retrospecting after 35 years, I learned many practical things in Scientology, mixed in with some science-fiction and metaphysical nonsense. It has flaws, as do all religions, but these flaws and crimes need to be weighed against any social benefits. In 1999, I told author Martin Gardner that Hubbard had taught me to look up words that I didn't understand. He laughed and said, “Why, *anyone* could have taught you that!” True, and it seems obvious in hindsight, but Hubbard had to hammer and pound it into my brain daily for several years, and, as I have shown in the first part of this book, oftentimes the obvious can be overlooked, a fact that fostered the madness, the genius, and the religion of Lafayette Ronald Hubbard.

About 2008, I was told that a student teacher “would be teaching today,” and I didn't have to do anything, “just watch the lesson.” The classroom needed a credentialed teacher and I had an official substitute credential which was “good enough.” So I watched the student teacher go through her grammar lesson and then at one point she held up a pencil and told the class, second graders, rather firmly, “This is a noun.” Half of them looked confused at first, struggling with the idea. However, eager to please the teacher, they all finally accepted it. This all happened in a few instants. It was an uncanny experience and I felt a bit dazed.

The galaxy had spun, the Earth had rotated while revolving around the Sun, and in my own life a circle had closed.

¹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/03/09/us/scientology-s-puzzling-journey-from-tax-rebel-to-tax-exempt.html>.