

The Shannon "Biography"

A Report
Prepared by:
The Church of Scientology
Department of
Public Relations Information

Michael Linn Shannon (also known as Bill Hess) has set out to expose what he conceives to be the myth of the world reknowned author and founder of Scientology L. Ron Hubbard.

Without a doubt, many stories exist about the life of L. Ron Hubbard. He is talked about and his exploits are discussed by as many people as have met him, but let us not confuse those stories with the truth.

Michael Shannon takes up stories, asserts they are claimed facts, asserts that he finds variances in the documentation -- or more often, that he has failed to locate documentation -- and then asks the reader to jump to the conclusion that the facts of Hubbard's life are in question.

Shannon's problem, aside from his extreme prejudice which clearly colors his judgement, is that he was not working with original source documentation on a man who had led a very active life and who in many times and places has become a living legend.

To bolster his credentials in the eyes of his reader, Shannon boasts, "I have gathered, or have access to, nearly everything that has ever been written on the subject of Scientology -- pro con or objective".

If true, such documentation may be relevant to the history of the Church of Scientology which begins in 1950 but would have little relevance to a biography of Hubbard's life prior to 1945 such as Shannon states he is attempting.

Shannon is wise not to try to claim he has all the material on Hubbard for if he did he would (1) be most wrong and (2) could not have written what he did.

In actual fact, Shannon's paper mostly deals with documentation which he could not find. Shannon's failure to find documentation, however, can have little bearing on the true events of Hubbard's life which are, in fact, well documented in the thousands of pages of assembled material currently in the hands of a non-Scientologist biographer.

Since Shannon lacks Hubbard's own biographical records and data, he must reach to ridiculous lengths

to carry out his crusade.

For example, Shannon picks on Hubbard's spelling of the name of an American Indian tribe in an early novel "Buckskin Brigades" to imply that Hubbard probably never had a lot of experience with these Indians.

Shannon writes, "What is interesting is that the name Blackfoot is incorrect, it's Blackfeet, according to the Museum of the Plains Indians in Montana, and the Blackfeet Indian Agency, also in Montana. If Hubbard based his first book 'Buckskin Brigades' on his vast experience with these Indians, it seems that he would have spelled their name correctly."

Shannon apparently has not examined the book he criticizes. Hubbard uses both spellings and uses "Blackfeet" on the first page of the book, the preface, and a chapter heading. (See attached, #1)

If Shannon had bothered to check a dictionary, the American Heritage, for example, he would have found that the spelling "Blackfoot" is correct and "Blackfoot" and "Blackfeet" both correct plural forms.* (See attached, #2)

* If "Blackfeet" has indeed become the preferred plural form then Shannon had better get busy correcting the Bureau of American Ethnology which published The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, with Comparative Material from Other Indian Tribes by John C. Ewers. (Bulletin #159, Washington, D.C., 1955)

The point may be petty, but the pettiness is Shannon's and illustrates the lengths to which he is willing to go to make incomplete data seem to support what are actually unfounded conclusions motivated by prejudice. Similar examples can be found throughout the paper.

For example, Shannon states flatly that Hubbard claims to have received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The actual documents from Sequoia University show that on February 10, 1953, (long after the years Shannon says his article deals with), Sequoia University chose to confer upon Hubbard an honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy in recognition of his work in Dianetics and Scientology. (See attached, #4)

Disgusted by the atrocities which had been perpetrated under the name "doctor", Hubbard renounced his title in the early 50s and then officially published a renouncement in 1966 when he discovered that his earlier requests not to be so named had been ignored by some.

So Shannon's charge is false on two accounts. He omits the fact that the degree was honorary and omits that Hubbard, far from claiming the title, renounced it over a decade ago.

Shannon understandably did not have the documents from Sequoia, but the published renouncement was right there in his complete set of everything that was ever written

about Scientology.**

In another place in his article, Shannon lists Hubbard's grades at George Washington University for a whole page but does not mention that Hubbard, a young man of 20, was already supporting himself as a professional writer.

Had Shannon also investigated Albert Einstein he would also have found poor grades in school especially in mathematics.

A letter from Hubbard's engineering professor at George Washington states, (April 19, 1941), "His success in writing prove his ingenuity and resourcefulness... His average grades in engineering were due to the obvious fact that he had started in the wrong career. They do not reflect his great ability". (See attached, #5)

No where in his article does Shannon's deep bias surface so plainly as in the following quote, "As the story continues, Hubbard continued his 'research' into the composition and destiny of man after his release from the Navy hospital, and made some incredible discoveries, how to brainwash masses of people. The government heard about this and tried to force him into revealing his secrets".

Only those entirely unfamiliar with the Church of Scientology would believe that the Church itself would

** HCO Policy Letter of 14 February 1966, Doctor Title Abolished, Volume 2, Page 119, Organization Executive Course.

propagate a story that Hubbard discovered brainwashing.

Since Shannon has all published materials on Scientology he most certainly has the very popular book Science of Survival (1951) in which Hubbard describes how his technology of the mind could undo a vicious mind control war weapon that certain military and intelligence organizations had been using extensively since WW II. (See attached, #6)

Twentyseven years after Science of Survival was published, Walter Bowart, in his book Operation Mind Control, further details these government intelligence techniques and credits Hubbard's comments in Science of Survival as a very early exposé of such abuse. (See attached, #7)

With the power to undo mind control in Hubbard's hands the government may have tried to get Hubbard to give up his work but Hubbard's technology certainly was not secret.

Hubbard published his technology of the mind in 1950 in the book Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health which has sold over three million copies. (See attached, #8)

Bowart's book describes an old intelligence trick; accuse the opposition of the very thing of which you yourself are guilty. The CIA, Bowart's book explains, was quick to accuse anyone of brainwashing when at the same time the CIA was itself engaged in intensive experiments to

create mind control assassins. (See attached, #9)

Another old intelligence trick is to try to invalidate a man and his work by casting doubt on his past.

It is certainly too flattering of Shannon to label him an intelligence operative. His work is too unprofessional. Shannon attempted to get the Church to purchase his article after he threatened to publish it.

The Church refused Shannon's offer so he peddles his article amongst die-hard Church critics, anti-religionists, and ner'do wells who use it to flatter their own prejudices.

Even the alleged size of the place where Hubbard grew up is serious fodder for Shannon. He has avidly worked to disprove that his home and early stomping grounds was not one "quarter of Montana" as Shannon says Hubbard told a Montana newspaper. Shannon takes this very seriously. Shudder to think if he should investigate Texans and what Texas papers quoted.

Shannon assaults several excursions Hubbard took as a youth. Shannon finds them to be "exaggerated completely out of proportion" with his (Shannon's) own views. Assuming complete infallibility in himself, Shannon decrees, for example, that "a number of sources have been checked to confirm an Alaskan expedition but "no record" of Hubbard's work "can be found". Shannon's

problem with such searches (he quite often says there are no records that he could turn up -- thereby asking the reader to equate this with no records in existence) is that Shannon really did not know where to look or who to ask.

The Alaskan expedition is well preserved (as are other trips) and documented even with government correspondence from 1940. (One official told Hubbard that the information provided "will prove of value in revising the Sailing Directions for the British Columbia area".**) Nor does Shannon have the mineralogical reports or maps of a trip to San Juan which Shannon also disputes.

Shannon's greatest problem is that he is simply biased and set out not to discover the truth but establish what he had already decided was true. He cannot accept for example, that Hubbard was in China. Shannon can find no passport for a youthful Hubbard and Naval records do not show Hubbard's father in China -- ergo, Hubbard could not have been in China.

Again, unfortunately, where Shannon does not have the documents he picks a fight. While the details will be

** The letter is in the possession of a non-Sci-entology biographer. Shannon is clearly not a man of the sea. He tries to put down one of Hubbard's trips by saying that he did it in a "small boat" and fails to describe the craft for what it was -- a 200 foot four-master.

released shortly Hubbard was very much a traveler of China with his parents. The diaries, photographs, and letters in existence tell the story quite adequately. ***

Traveling in the Far East while others were in school, Hubbard was getting an education not found in any classroom. At the same time, he was not getting the "learning" that the American system demanded at the time. Thus returning from his eastern travels, Hubbard did not enter the public schools but a private system allowing tutors. Shannon, upon discovering this, and insisting that Hubbard was actually in school all that time (rather than traveling with family), makes another critical leap -- Hubbard was a "poor student".

If Shannon had examined the facts just a little bit further he would have found that in his late teens Hubbard was a writer of technical and travel subjects. He was also well known as a professional photographer. He considered college an "interruption" of his professional career and when he emerged from it the depression had settled over the world. Despite that, he went straight into fiction writing and before the end of two months had established himself at a pay level which for those

*** Shannon drifts between what has been said about Hubbard and what Shannon says Hubbard says -- as if the two were interchangeable. Shannon thinks he is disputing Hubbard but he isn't because Hubbard didn't make the claims Shannon is disputing.

times was astronomical.

In later years he could boost the circulation of magazines by 80,000 by having his name on the cover. While Shannon does not share the same public enthusiasm he could at least acknowledge it.

Instead, Shannon, like a man using a net to try to catch the wind, tries to snare Hubbard. But rather than suspect a flaw in his methods, Shannon simply declares that Hubbard's past does not exist.

Shannon's account suffers from several very basic flaws:

1. He is clearly prejudiced and allows this to actually sway his judgement and conclusions.
2. He is working from hearsay and pretends that this is Hubbard himself but never refutes anything that Hubbard has said about himself personally.
3. His documentation is (understandably) lacking.
4. He commits the very crime he levies against others -- he mixes fact with fancy.

And most important:

5. He simply did not do his homework.

###