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THE RUUD ERA

Linebacker Barrett Ruud steps up to lead the defense after Derrick Brooks' exit. **Sports, 1C**



**Niemann,
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Royals 7-1. 1c**

St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

tampabay.com

R Sunday, August 2, 2009

INSIDE SCIENTOLOGY | A TIMES SPECIAL REPORT

ACCOUNTS OF ABUSE AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE CHURCH EMBOLDEN OTHERS TO TELL THEIR STORIES.



STRENGTH IN THEIR NUMBERS



IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR DEFECTORS WHO SPOKE PUBLICLY IN JUNE, 11 MORE FORMER CHURCH STAFFERS ARE NOW ON THE RECORD WITH ACCOUNTS OF PHYSICAL OR MENTAL ABUSE BY SCIENTOLOGY LEADER DAVID MISCAVIGE.



BY JOE CHILDS AND THOMAS C. TOBIN
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

They are stepping forward — from Dallas and Denver, Portland, Las Vegas, Montana — talking about what happened, to them and their friends, during their years in the Church of Scientology.

Jackie Wolff wept as she recalled the chaotic night she was ordered to stand at a microphone in the mess hall and confess her "crimes" in front of 300 fellow workers, many jeering and heckling her.

Gary Morehead dredged up his recollection of Scientology leader David Miscavige punishing venerable church leaders by forcing them to live out of tents for days, wash with a garden hose and use an open latrine.

Steve Hall replayed his memory of a meeting when Miscavige grabbed the heads of two church executives and knocked them together. One came away with a bloody ear.

Mark Fisher remembered precisely what he told Miscavige after the punches stopped and Fisher touched his head, looked at his palm and saw blood.

These and other former Scientology staffers are talking now, inspired and emboldened by the raw revelations of four defectors from the church's executive ranks who broke years of silence in sto-

ries published recently by the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Those behind-the-scenes accounts from Marty Rathbun and Mike Rinder, the highest officials ever to leave Scientology, were buttressed by detailed revelations of highly placed former managers Amy Scobee and Tom De Vocht.

Now their stories have prompted other former Scientology veterans to go public about physical and mental abuses they say they witnessed and endured.

Some want to support and defend the initial four, whom church representatives labeled as liars attempting a coup. Others say they feel more secure now that Rathbun, Rinder and the others are on the record with their unprecedented accounts of life on the inside.

But fear still prevents many defectors from talking. For every former church staffer willing to speak out, one or two more refused.

Those who talked confirm the earlier defectors' stories of erratic, dehumanizing treatment and provide a deeper view into the controlling environment in which members of the religious order known as the Sea Org live and work.

Four men joined Rinder, De Vocht and Rathbun in saying: David Miscavige assaulted me.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 8A

VIDEO INTERVIEWS WITH CHURCH DEFECTORS AT TAMPABAY.COM/SCIENTOLOGY

With blind trust, we can't see

CFO Alex Sink set up a blind trust to avoid conflicts. But with no law defining trusts, public disclosure has suffered.

BY SYDNEY P. FREEDBERG
AND ADAM C. SMITH
Times Staff Writers

When Alex Sink became Florida's top financial watchdog almost three years ago, she put her assets in a blind trust, which she said would help her avoid conflicts of interest.

Yet Sink's effort to avoid potential conflicts and hold herself to a self-proclaimed higher standard has an unintended consequence: There is less public disclosure about her finances than other officials and greater uncertainty as to whether she is deciding matters in which she may have a financial interest.

Why? Because blind trusts are not regulated in Florida, and there are no rules guaranteeing that officeholders' financial dealings are being handled independent of their public duties.

In fact, the Florida Commission on Ethics once ruled that one of Sink's predecessors could not avoid conflicts of interest by creating a blind trust and parking his financial holdings in it.

Now a candidate for governor, Sink dismisses the reasoning, saying her blind trust is still the best way to go above and beyond the state's ethics laws. "It's blind because I don't know what's in there."

"I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't," she lamented. "I think I deserve a lot of credit for doing something that I wasn't even required to do, doing the right thing, and not wanting there to be any question for people to believe that I have integrity and that I'm making the best decisions I possibly can."

» See SINK, 12A



Associated Press
Florida's Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink on her list of assets: "It's blind because I don't know what's in there."

Books finally close on bad investment

For 11 years, officials searched for money lost with Clearwater's Keller Financial. They're done.

BY JEFF HARRINGTON
Times Staff Writer

Long before Bernie Madoff was a household name, before the Ponzi schemes of Floridians Art Nadel and Lou Pearlman wiped out investor portfolios, there was the implosion of Keller Financial Services.

The high-flying auto finance company in Clearwater run by ubersalesman Brian R. Keller lured thousands of investors in the 1990s with the promise of high-yield returns — until monthly interest checks, which had arrived like clockwork, suddenly stopped.

Now comes the denouement. Eleven years after Keller Financial tumbled into bankruptcy, more than 9,000 investors are receiving final reimbursement checks this summer from a bankruptcy court and a related civil suit. The final bankruptcy payout, put together with earlier disbursements, adds up to 51 cents on the dollar for investors. In the civil suit, preferred shareholders who bought Keller notes are winding up with far less: up to 20 cents on the dollar.

It's a lesson in how long it takes the wheels of justice to turn and how victims are never made whole again. And the perpetually elusive lesson

» See KELLER, 5A

Encounters | An occasional feature

DID THEY FIND DOG, OR HE THEM?

Suddenly, family finds it can't live without him.

BY LANE DEGREGORY
Times Staff Writer

PORT TAMPA — Yolanda Segovia heard a knock on her door one morning, just before 8.

Her neighbor was on the porch, with a dog and a story.

Stacey Savage had found the little dog in front of an elementary school. He wasn't very big, looked like some sort of terrier. Burrs clung to his belly. His honey fur was caked in mud.

He didn't have a collar. Stacey

had taken him to the vet and he didn't have a chip, either.

Now Stacey had to go to work. Could Yolanda keep him?

Yolanda is 47. She's a divorced mom with two boys. In recent years she has survived breast cancer and cervical cancer, lost her dark hair and eyelashes to chemo. A hairdresser, she hasn't worked since 2006.

"You can leave the dog here," Yolanda told Stacey. "But just for today."

» See DOG, 15A



WILLIE J. ALLEN JR. | Times

Yolanda Segovia pets RaeLee, the found dog she credits with saving the life of her son Christian Mason.

TODAY'S WEATHER

Scattered storms

8 a.m. Noon 4 p.m. 8 p.m.
81° 90° 92° 84°
 40% rain chance.
More, back page of Sports

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