

Transcript of Astra and Lawrence Woodcraft interviews on Glosslip

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Interview by Dawn Olsen (**DO**) of Glosslip.com with Astra Woodcraft (**AW**) of ExScientologyKids.com and Lawrence Woodcraft (**LB**), ex-Scientologist.

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[0:00]

DO: Good Evening Glosslip listeners, I am Dawn Olsen of Glosslip.com. I am very excited to have two wonderful guests this evening. I have Astra and Lawrence Woodcraft, they are father and daughter and they are also ex-Scientologists who are one of the faces that we see in the media who have spoken out against the Church of Scientology. For Astra's part, she was born into the religion and was in it for the most part of her life. Her mother was a public Scientologist and her father, being a dutiful husband, was recruited by Astra's mother into the Church of Scientology. He ended up joining the Sea Org, at least for a while, as did Astra as a child and a teenager until she left, and they both have very interesting stories.

[1:00]

DO: For Astra's part, she was married off very young and became pregnant, and as we've learned over the course of the shows we've done, the Sea Org does not look kindly upon pregnancy. In fact, after you sign that billion year contract, they expect to have complete control over your life. So when Astra found out she was pregnant, she was faced with the choice of having an abortion or leaving the Church of Scientology and the Sea Org and essentially being disconnected from everyone that she knew and loved. Fortunately for Astra and obviously her daughter, she chose to leave the Sea Org, and I'm sure it was a very painful choice. We're going to talk to Astra first, her father should be coming on later in the show and we'll talk a little bit more about his experience. But thank you Astra so much for being here with us.

AW: Oh, thank you for having me.

DO: Why don't you tell us a little bit about your experiences as a child growing up in the Sea Org.

[2:00]

AW: Well, I was seven years old living in England when my mom was recruited for the Sea Org and she joined at Flag, which is in Florida. We all moved from England to Florida. She knew what was going on but my dad, she called my dad up to get him to come and join too. She had gone to Flag to take some services and that's where she had been recruited. My dad was told that we were going to live in a two bedroom oceanfront condo, that the kids would attend a private school, that he would be an architect for all their new projects, and basically was completely lied to. My mom came back to England to get us and told me that we were going to go on vacation, a long vacation, which wasn't true either. When we arrived, there was

no two bedroom condo, there was no private school, there were no days off. There was nothing. There was one motel room for all five of us.

[3:00]

AW: Soon after that, I was moved to a room with other children and only saw my mom once a week and my dad was sent off to the Freewinds to help with their remodeling. And it was completely different from what we'd been told. But my dad approached my mom and said "That's it. We should go back to England because it is all lies." And she said "Well you can go back to England but I'm staying here with the kids." So I was very, very unhappy, I missed my friends and I missed everything in England. I thought we were only there on vacation and it turned out we were there for good. Those two years I was there, from when I was seven to when I was nine, I would go to school, then come back, we would be made to do chores all afternoon and evening and then we would be sent off to bed in these dormitory rooms with other children. We would do that every day and then when it was the weekend we would work all day doing chores like cleaning people's rooms and various chores around this motel that everyone lived in. And we would see our parents once a week on Sunday morning while they were doing their laundry.

[4:00]

AW: I even recall a time when I got really, really ill, when a bad flu was going around. I was about 8 years old, I had a fever of almost 105(degrees) and my mom didn't even want to give me medication for it because they are against any medications. She didn't take me to the doctor, and she left me. She said she had to go back to work, and she left me. I remember just laying there really, really ill and just crying for her. When I was much younger, she was really kind and caring and attentive mom when we were growing up in England, but when she joined the Sea Org it was like she became a different person. The most important thing to her was spreading Scientology and getting people into Scientology. It was like family wasn't important anymore.

DO: That's an interesting story. One of the things, and you know this, you're a mom, that's really heartbreaking is when your children are sick and you want so badly to take that pain away from them, because we all have been sick. Everybody has had the flu or some sort of relatively minor but at the time felt very serious illness.

[5:00]

DO: I have small children and your daughter, she is nine?

AW: She's nine.

DO: She's nine. Okay. So you've been through enough illnesses that you know what its like; you're there for them, making sure they're well taken care of. That's a very good example...

AW: I can't imagine, if my daughter had a fever of 100(degrees) of me leaving her for hours at a time and telling her I had to go back to work. I understand. I was in Scientology. I was in the Sea Org myself. I know what its like to be brainwashed. I know what it's like to think in a certain way because you're forced to. I understand that. And people always say "Well, why didn't you just leave?" but it's not like that. But I will never understand how a parent could turn on their child in that way and basically desert them in that way. Now being a mother myself, I'll never understand that aspect of it.

[6:00]

DO: So you would say that your mother went through a radical transformation from before she became a Scientologist to joining the Sea Org and becoming this sort of devout, fervent, adherent.

AW: Absolutely. She was a Scientologist my whole life but she just kind of, she dabbled. She wasn't in the Sea Org. But up until I was 7 years old, she was a very, very devoted, caring mom. I remember her being extremely patient with me. Really, really a great mom. I have all these really good memories of her. That's what was so hard when we moved to Florida was

she was just gone, I didn't understand and I couldn't talk to her. And she would just say "I have to go back to work". It was just such a radical change, it was bizarre. But she had decided, she even told my dad when he said "So what's the deal? You're not going to see the kids? You only see them once a week?"

[7:00]

He'd been off with the Freewinds, helping with the renovations and came back to find out she hadn't had a day off in months and she was only seeing us once a week. And she said "Well, I have to clear the planet". That's what she kept saying. "If I don't clear the planet, there won't be anything here for the kids, so that's what I have to do". But from the very beginning when you join the Sea Org, the first thing they do is kind of disable the family unit. They split you up. The kids have to go live with other kids. My brother was twelve. He was immediately sent to work in the Sea Org. He never went to school and we hardly ever saw him. He was just working all the time. And they sent my dad away. They completely disable the family unit and you are told "You know, you had other parents in other lifetimes, you've had other children in other lifetimes so this is just one of many lifetimes so family isn't really important. What's important is getting Scientology, getting people to get into Scientology". So that's what they focus on. I have a story from when I worked in the Sea Org I was about seventeen years old and I was in charge of their ethics and security department.

[8:00]

AW: There was a woman working in our organization who... they had a ranch for the children of Sea Org members and they were kept about an hour away, an hour outside of Los Angeles. The parents sometimes were allowed to go see them once a week during Sunday morning when it's your time to do your laundry. Then they decided that you can't go and see your kids then, you can only go see your kids when you get the day off. A lot of Sea Org members didn't even get one day off the year, or maybe got only one or two days off at the most. So there was this one woman whose daughter had become suicidal. She had said she wanted to kill herself. She was really, really upset. So the mom came to me and said "You know, I've been told that my daughter is really, really upset and in bad shape and then said she wants to kill herself and I need to go see her". So I said "Okay, go get permission from your Senior", Senior is what they call your boss. So she came back to me and said "I'm not allowed to go. It's not my job."

[9:00]

AW: "It's the job of the Sea Org members at the ranch to handle her. It's not my job". She was distraught. I said "Well, go ask again", and he said "No" again. She ended up just going anyway, like any parent would and should do, is go see their kid.

DO: Exactly.

AW: And she got in huge trouble. She was told that she had blown. Blown is what they say if you leave without permission, you've blown. It's like going AWOL. And it's one of the worst things you can do. She was sent back to me in all kinds of trouble and I was supposed to handle her. I was at a loss at what to do because I was thinking she should have been allowed to go, this is ridiculous. Soon after, her and her husband both left, thank goodness for them. But that's the typical attitude there, it's like your kids are not your kids, your family is not your family, this is just one of many lifetimes, it's not important. I think that is the first way they control you, to break apart the family unit, which I think is one of the major ways you can identify any cult is when they start controlling and breaking apart families.

[10:00]

DO: That is absolutely correct, and it's so funny because you have Pat Harney down at Clearwater and Karin Pouw, both stating as though they are telling the truth, they are such bold-faced liars about Disconnection, that they bring families together and that Disconnection doesn't even exist, that it's something that the media has made up to make Scientology look

bad. Really your story is particularly heartbreaking. Now I wanted to ask you something about specifically in your bio and I have some questions from also the chatroom. Now, you were married at fifteen?

AW: Yeah, a month after my fifteenth birthday.

DO: Was this someone that you had dated, or someone who was sort of foisted on you?

AW: Well, there is no dating in the Sea Org, per se, because you don't have time off. You're not allowed to go out anywhere or even leave the building.

[11:00]

AW: But they don't arrange marriages where they say "You and you are going to get married", but as soon as you're kind of together – you're given maybe ten minutes between when you get off work and you need to go to bed, if you're spending that ten minutes together, basically my ex-husband and I were hanging out outside my dormitory room and we were kissing – we were ordered, "Okay, you need to go get married before you get in trouble". You're not allowed to do anything beyond than kissing or you'll get sent to this thing called Rehabilitation Project Force which is like prison camp. My brother was sent there for that reason, so you're very afraid of doing that, so they're like, "Okay, you two go get married" so as soon as you give any indication that you're interested in each other, that's it, you've got to go get married. And then I couldn't even get married in California 'cause you can't get married under the age of sixteen in California, so I was sent off to Las Vegas which is where a lot of the people went to get married.

[12:00]

DO: Now, part of being in the Sea Org is you're not really supposed to have kids. Do they provide, and I'm not trying to be nosy, I'm just curious because we know they do try and force abortions on people, Marc Headley made that very clear...

AW: You're going to ask me if they provide birth control, aren't you?

DO: Well, I'm just curious if they did give it to young girls?

AW: They don't! They, that's the unbelievable and completely irresponsible thing is that they don't provide birth control. You have to go to Planned Parenthood to get birth control, you have to get permission to get time off, and if it costs any money you're probably going to have to pay for it yourself. If you're going to use condoms, you're going to have to buy them yourself. The standard pay was about forty-five-dollars a week and most of the time I was there we either didn't get paid or we got quarter-pay/half base and it would be eleven-dollars per week or twenty-five-dollars a week. That was all the money we had to buy any types of snacks, any types of hygiene items, anything. That was all the money. And we weren't allowed to receive money from outside sources.

[13:00]

AW: We weren't allowed to get money from people who weren't in the Sea Org, no one was allowed to give us money, all the money you were allowed to have was what they would give you. So you don't even make enough money really to buy condoms. And they also kind of frown on any sexual activity that they consider perverted or anything, anything except just straight sexual intercourse. They think it's really bad and they actually make you fill out these life-history forms in detail, every episode of sexual activity you've ever had. And they make you update it, even detailing out the sexual activities you've had with your spouse while you were in the Sea Org, they make you write that out in exact detail. So, I don't disagree that they frown on people having children in the Sea Org. They used to allow people having children in the Sea Org and they had a building where they kept all the kids, and the kids were completely neglected. It was disgusting conditions, kids running around without their diapers changed, no one taking care of them, just being in the crib.

[14:00]

AW: It was horrific. I remember seeing it and it was horrible. I do completely think it's wrong for them to tell anyone they shouldn't have children, but in the situation they were at I think anyone in the Sea Org shouldn't have children if they were going to keep them in those circumstances. But to be not providing birth control and then forcing women to have abortions is just disgusting.

DO: Well, it's a Catch-22, you're in that position, humans are humans, and humans are going to ... that's why I've always thought, "Sure, preach abstinence, but don't count on it". I was a teenager, I know what I did, and that's what teenagers do.

AW: But we're talking about married couples too, who are in this place and then they are in big trouble, and all in the name of religion is the most bizarre thing. They just don't want to pay the Sea Org members, they don't want to pay for them to have proper food or proper places to live, I mean the conditions we lived in were disgusting.

[15:00]

AW: The food we ate, we were not allowed to buy food outside the building even if we had the money. We would get in trouble if you went to a café or store or anything. The food budget per staff member for three meals a day, seven days a week, was eight dollars a week, a little over a dollar-a-day. The food served was disgusting, like day-old bread that was going to be thrown out, we didn't get fresh salad or fresh fruit or fresh vegetables or anything. They don't want to spend any money. There's no medical insurance for the staff, there's no facility or way of dealing with the elderly who can't work any more, they have no care for their staff members. On top of that, when they did have staff members or Sea Org members having children, they didn't care for them properly, so their solution was to say "No more children – leave or have an abortion". And it's just sickening. All the way around, and then you have like David Miscavige who's running Scientology and he has luxury cars, tailored suits, someone to walk his dog... It's just a disgusting situation.

[16:00]

AW: They don't take care of the Sea Org members, yet they're not allowed to leave, they are forced to stay because if they leave they'll get declared a Suppressive Person, or like for example, I have some things in front of me ... Karin Pouw always says, "Oh we don't do disconnection, we don't do that". And I have a report my ex-husband wrote on my father when I left the Sea Org they wrote a report on my father because they considered it was his fault that I wanted to leave. And it says in the report, "Astra Senior had caught onto her dad as being the Potential External Influence and ordered that she not see her on any of her liberties", liberty being day off. She said "She can only see Lawrie if she was going to work on getting him back into the Sea Org". So right there they told me I couldn't even see my Dad simply because he wasn't in the Sea Org. And then he wasn't even declared a Suppressive Person or anything, I was simply told I couldn't see him because he wasn't in the Sea Org and we're not allowed to, they have a big thing about external influences.

[17:00]

AW: And so they completely isolate you and cut you off from the outside world.

DO: You haven't had any contact with your mother in years? Is that correct?

AW: For eight years, I left the Sea Org ten years ago, and then eight years ago I was approached to do a story for the San Francisco Chronicle about being raised in Scientology as a child. I agreed to do that interview and when they called Scientology for their response to the interview, Scientology flew my mom to Los Angeles to try to get me to retract the story. She spent almost a week seeing me everyday to retract the story and I said I wouldn't retract it because it was true. As a result of that she disconnected from me, as well as my brother and grandmother who all remain in Scientology. And I haven't heard from her since then, in eight years.

DO: So she's never met your daughter?

AW: She met her at that time, when my daughter was about...

[18:00]

DO: Well I'm very sorry to hear about that, that's very upsetting and, I mean, when I think about your story, everything that you had to endure, its amazing you're so well-adjusted to life outside Scientology. So obviously some people see beyond the brainwashing and see that something is not right. Your dad, clearly, he saw that something was not right.

AW: He always saw through it but he got trapped in, he knew that we were all going to be made to disconnect from him and he didn't have the money to fight a giant legal defense against Scientology if my mom tried to do a custody battle. So as we got older, he knew that when I was in the Sea Org that if he spoke negatively that I would disconnect from him, so he was in a horrible position. He bided his time, supported me, stayed in contact with me, and then helped me leave and helped me get back on my feet.

[19:00]

AW: When I left I told him what had happened in the Sea Org, and he couldn't believe just the stuff that had gone on. Then he told me about stuff that I could read on the internet, the stuff about the actual OT levels and all that crazy space opera stuff, that none of us knew about, most people in the Sea Org. I was not up to any level in Scientology to have learnt any of that stuff, so that was a big shock to learn that I had been dedicating my entire life and given up my childhood for a space alien soap opera thing. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when I read about that. But the thing was that we were told that if we ever left that we would be, what they called 'Degraded Beings', that we would be a bum, that we would be homeless, we couldn't do anything, we would be pathetic. A lot of us have left, we were fighting against this, we were like, "No, we can succeed despite what you've done, despite you taking away our childhood, despite you taking away our education and all those opportunities. We're not going to do what you say and become bums or anything like that".

[20:00]

AW: It's ridiculous that they tell us that, but we believed it. We thought, "Oh, anyone who leaves the Sea Org, that's it, they're just not going to be able to do anything with their lives". And it's absolutely not true.

DO: Right.

AW: But I think a lot of us who got out of it at a young age are lucky that we have our whole lives ahead of us. We're happy to be out and we're happy to have the freedom that we have now, we can recognize what we have now and...

DO: Absolutely!

AW: It is really sad about my family, about my mom and my brother and my grandma. It's really sad for my daughter that she doesn't have a dad, she doesn't have a grandma, she doesn't have any of that, but at the same time I'm very happy...

DO: She's not in that.

AW: ...to be away from it, and have her away from it.

DO: Yeah. And your dad. A lot of the people in the chatroom, the Anonymous people who really think you're very brave and your dad, he should be very proud of himself. I've seen a lot of a videos and interviews with you both, he really did bide his time and really waited.

AW: Yeah.

[21:00]

DO: You know he's a good representation of a good dad, doesn't have to be a Scientologist, this is someone who loves his kids and was doing everything he could to try and help them in a very difficult situation.

AW: Yes, it was very difficult and I think he still feels guilty that it happened in the first place. But what he did for us was amazing, to have that patience and persistence, and in the end my sister got out and I got out and we're doing really great. I'm doing really well, my

sister's graduating from university, it's fantastic.

DO: Good for her. And you're studying to be an architect as well?

AW: Yes, I'm halfway through my exams to get licensed and I'm really happy.

DO: Excellent. You keep studying hard! You're a very bright young woman, you've got whole life ahead of you and I wish you very well.

I meant to ask you about this, I hope it's not a difficult subject. You said you discovered your mum was involved in some way in the Lisa McPherson case.

[22:00]

DO: Can you elaborate a little on that?

AW: Yes, I had left the Sea Org ten years ago but for the first couple of years I didn't speak out. It only took me a few months to realize that everything was a lie and I didn't want to be a Scientologist any more, but my mom would contact me periodically and tell me I needed to pay this \$89,000 bill they sent me.

DO: Huh!

AW: I worked there from the age of fourteen until nineteen, and when I left they gave me a bill for \$89,000 dollars for the services I got, most of which was security checking that I had to have when I left to find out what all my crimes were that were making me want to leave the Sea Organization. She would call me up periodically and I would have to gloss over it and say "Oh yeah, I'll try to pay it", because if I told her I wasn't going to pay it she would disconnect from me. About six months went by where I hadn't heard from her, my daughter's birthday went by and she didn't send her a card, she wasn't calling. I tried to call her and I would just get the run-around or be told she didn't work there anymore.

[23:00]

AW: I realized she had been made to disconnect from me because I had left the Sea Org and I wasn't paying back this \$89,000 dollars. Then one day I read on the internet a deposition that she had given because it turned out she had been involved in the death of Lisa McPherson. She had been in charge of the Ethics and Security Division for the organization where Lisa worked and she had arranged the security watches. Lisa McPherson had people watching her 24 hours a day in her room that had to sit with her and they weren't allowed to speak to her, they just had to make sure she couldn't leave. My mom herself had done that, she'd sat in the room and watched her soon before she died. I think within a week before she died and I mentioned it to my sister, and my sister said "I remember that," because my sister was there at the time when Lisa McPherson died and my sister had heard about it. My mom would never level with us or be honest with us about stuff that was going on, she would never tell us the full story but my sister asked her what happened with Lisa McPherson and she responded "She was just some crazy woman."

[24:00]

AW: I was so enraged, I realized that my mom had lost all compassion for people. She was so brainwashed that she no longer – how could she – this woman died and due to them, due to their neglect and that was her response about it, "She was just some crazy woman. She was creating problems for us", kind of thing. She already hadn't spoken to me in six months, I was really upset and I ended up contacting – at the time there was this Lisa McPherson Trust and they were helping people who wanted to leave, they were trying to expose Scientology for what they'd done to Lisa McPherson and there was a criminal suit going on, and I read the deposition – My mom had to give testimony in regards to her involvement in it and I actually went to Florida, I met with the police investigator who'd interviewed her and he said she was a hostile witness.

[25:00]

AW: There was no remorse, there was no compassion for this woman who died. It just so upset me. Then I was approached by this writer for the San Francisco Chronicle who was

looking for someone who would be interviewed in regards to growing up in scientology. He said he could not find anyone else who would speak, who would go on record, give their name publicly about it. Everyone was too afraid. Scientology somehow created a culture of fear that everybody is so afraid to speak out because they have seriously harassed people who have been critical of them. I agreed to do, I was absolutely terrified but I thought for my own well-being I needed to speak out. I wasn't going to live in fear of them for the rest of my life. I thought that I would never have actually left. I wouldn't have been able to believe that I would be able to speak my mind. I was just fed up. There were a lot of things that needed to be exposed, I agreed to do the article.

[26:00]

DO: Your mom, amongst other people, watched this woman dying. There is a lot about the whole Lisa McPherson story that we just don't really understand and Marc Headley said that there were things he was going to talk about. It's unconceivable to me. It is though they let her die simply because they... I don't really understand why they let her die. Maybe because she was mental, she had a mental breakdown. Or was it just an accident? I never really grasped whether it was an accident or intentional sort of... or something in between.

AW: It is really a bad combination of Scientology being so irrationally terrified of psychiatry – Lisa McPherson had been committed to a mental institution and they got her out – and Scientology being completely focused so much on anything they consider to be a security risk. Anyone speaking badly about them, anyone going to the press or anything. So they considered her to be an extreme security risk.

[27:00]

AW: Because she had a mental breakdown in public, she had been committed. Having been a scientologist, they decided they needed to handle her, otherwise it was going to be what they consider a security flap. And then you have a bunch of people who have no knowledge or training on having to deal with people having mental health problems. They lock her in a room, they don't let anyone speak to her. She got dehydrated, and it is just a combination of all those things. It is sick. When you see that video with Tom Cruise saying: "We are the experts". They are the exact opposite. They have no clue what they are doing. They drive people crazy. It is just really scary that they do that.

[28:00]

AW: When I worked in the Sea Organization for many years, I was in charge of ethics and security of the staff that were there. Anyone who wanted to leave the Sea Org, it was my job to handle them. We would lock people in rooms, simply because they wanted to leave. Until we had them do like months and months of confessionals to confess all the crimes they have committed, because it is considered that you would never want to leave unless you committed crimes you haven't to confess to. We would lock people in rooms to be under security watch. I remember my husband was put on some top secret security watch for almost a year. I hardly saw him, because he was watching this woman who was locked in a room. They are so paranoid about anyone speaking badly about them that they go to this length to prevent that.

DO: Do you feel things are improving now since Anonymous has kind of joined the cause?

AW: I am really excited because for many years I have felt a little bit isolated.

[29:00]

AW: I have spoken out, but I felt like I don't know anyone else who ... I know a few people – especially people my age – nothing was really going on and all of a sudden, since the beginning of the year with Anonymous coming out... I think Anonymous makes a lot of people feeling safe about speaking out. They see a light there, a huge group of people who are standing up for them. And it is an amazing feeling. When we launched our website – [Ex-Scientology Kids](#) – Kendra, Jenna and I, we all felt really great about the fact that we had people there supporting us and speaking out for us. And all of a sudden, Jenna comes

speaking out, Kendra is speaking out, Marc is speaking out. All of a sudden, all these people speaking out. I think we're realizing that while Scientology definitely is a force to be reckoned with, while they're definitely very scary. They definitely harass people. They have done horrible things. If we all just speak out, we don't need to be afraid if we are all speaking out about it together, you know what I mean.

[30:00]

AW: We don't have to be unnecessarily afraid of them. And they've created, for so many years, this culture of people being absolutely terrified of speaking out, and people still are, but there are more and more people willing to speak out, seeing it is possible to speak out and still survive.

DO: You know what, you're absolutely right. And that's a message that needs to be propagated, even the mainstream media where they're certainly more protective than a lone site such as my own, as myself, or a lone person such as yourself who was inside the organization and has even more things to be afraid of from the church than someone like myself. I absolutely encourage people to come out and stand up to this, 'cause you know, I feel actually safer now than I did at the beginning even though I am pushing harder than I had from the start, simply because there are so many people now. Their targets are so many and so varied and in so many different places that they have no choice.

[31:00]

DO: You know, there aren't enough of them to harass and assault.

AW: They can't get through to everybody.

DO: Exactly. Now, would it be okay if we spoke about the Freewinds, I know that that is a big story, you were fabulous!

AW: Sure. Do you want me to hand the phone over to Lawrence?

DO: That would be great, and before you do, I want to thank you so much Astra – you are absolutely a wonderful person and I hope I can have you back some time.

AW: I would be so glad.

DO: And that you will be celebrating the end of Scientology. And give your daughter a big hug and tell her we're really glad she's here and you made such an important choice.

AW: Yeah, I would love to come back on.

DO: That would be so great, thank you so much

AW: Alright, thank you Dawn, here's Lawrence.

DO: Okay.

LW: Hello?

DO: Good evening Mr Woodcraft, how are you?

LW: Hi Dawn, great to talk to you!

DO: Oh, I am so glad to talk with you! I have seen so many videos now I feel like I almost know you.

LW: Yeah, and I've got quite a bit of exposure on the internet.

DO: Especially recently.

[32:00]

LW: Yeah, but I first put stuff up there since when we first went to the Lisa McPherson Trust in 2001, so its been up there for seven years. I think the interest in it has increased a great deal with the work from Anonymous and everything, bringing attention to Scientology and its numerous scams.

DO: Anonymous has done a tremendous job, they've done it very intelligently, and with a lot of precision. I really have to hand it to them. You only get so many opportunities to exact a positive result in the world and this is one of those times when, you know it's almost too easy, how could you not do something positive for the world by exposing very dangerous and abusive practices by a group calling themselves a religious organization? I know specifically

that some, we have a lot of Anonymous, we have quite a few people in the chatroom who will hopefully be able to transcribe this and get this information out there.

[33:00]

DO: And you are rich with the experience of being inside the Sea Org and having to extract your children from there, although not all of them, sadly. But one of them that is a big story I think and it's got a lot of legs to it and after I talk with you I am hoping I can keep working on it, is the Freewinds. Now you exposed the blue asbestos because you are an architect and you were helping them refit the Freewinds?

LW: Yeah, they had asked me back in '86, '87, around about then. When they purchased the ship it was a really run-down, crummy ship and as Jason Beghe said, it was kind of like a rust bucket, and so they had all these visionary plans to upgrade. In fact, they spent millions of dollars upgrading all the cabins, and all-new finishes, upgrading all the restaurants and everything, so they poured a ton of money into it to bring it up to standard.

[34:00]

LW: So that's what they had asked me to help them with, work on the plans for that.

DO: Now, the blue asbestos thing you came across because you said you are very familiar with recognizing this sort of thing, being your line of profession, was that on the ship when you bought it?

LW: Oh yeah, the history of the ship, I did some research on it and there is no way Scientology can run away from this because the ship has a full set of original blueprints on board from the shipyard when it was built. Even if they destroyed those there would probably be available at the shipyard, back in Finland. But the ship when it was built, was originally built as a car ferry, so you can imagine a car ferry; one of the entire decks, the sea deck, was the car deck, so obviously it's a ferry boat for accommodating cars and gasoline at sea, it had to have very strict fire precautions because if there's a fire at sea there is like nowhere to run.

[35:00]

LW: All the decks were lined with blue asbestos and then it had bulkheads or firewalls at regular intervals, all lined with asbestos, obviously to be completely non-combustible to stop fire going from one compartment to another. So this was how the ship was built and I think when the authorities in Europe and America realized that asbestos was such a health hazard then pretty much all of these ships from that period were scrapped. They build the ship and then they spray in the asbestos in all the decks and walls, then they run all the pipes in and ducts. To get the asbestos out you'd have to strip the entire ship back to its steel hull and it just wouldn't be cost effective, so I think most of the ships from that era were scrapped. The cruise ships you see now are all just a few years old and there's obviously no asbestos inside.

[36:00]

DO: You were concerned yourself because you were exposed to this probably more so than even most people. Have you been checked by a doctor?

LW: No, I haven't and thank God I haven't had any symptoms in twenty years but as I understand now the data coming out is that even after forty years or more it can still be a health problem. I'll go get checked but if you've got these microscopic particles in your lungs I don't even know if they have a way to spot them. I guess they just have to wait until it's a problem, but yeah it freaks me out that I was exposed to that and I'm angry that they exposed me to that because I think anyone who's been to the Freewinds should be full of anger that you've been exposed to something so unnecessarily....

DO: Knowingly...

LW: Yeah ...

DO: I've been asked to tell you to speak up a little because everybody's in love with you and they want to hear your voice and I guess its coming across quietly.

LW: Oh, sorry.

[37:00]

DO: You have many fans in the chatroom by the way. One of the questions I wanted to ask you speaking legally, who in the highest levels of the church are aware of your concerns. Who were you able to voice your concerns about the blue asbestos to anybody directly like David Miscavige.

LW: No, I didn't tell him directly. I told the chief engineer and the captain directly and then Bitty Miscavige was the executive. She was uplines, she was David Miscavige's sister-in-law so she was uplines and I think at that time she was the Commodore's Messenger, some really high position. She was in charge of the ship so I informed her, we had a meeting about it and discussed it at length. I know she's out now, she's Jenna's mom and she's out of Scientology so that's just water under the bridge but she was the highest level executive I informed.

[38:00]

LW: She's a nice lady, she was sympathetic, she understood it. But another guy called Steve Kasaki, who was put in charge of the overall renovations, they all shouted it down. I pretty much met a brick wall and they said "Well, L. Ron Hubbard said nothing about asbestos being dangerous so it's not dangerous". He says "If you're weird in relationships and you're a sexual deviant, that's what causes cancer not asbestos", so I just hit a complete brick wall. David Miscavige and his cohorts used to come to the ship regularly so I'm pretty sure they were aware of it. I started posting warnings online as early as '97 through 2001 because I just wanted to somehow stop Scientologists going to that ship and getting lung cancer, taking their kids there. It's unthinkable.

DO: Sure...

[39:00]

LW: You don't buy a million dollar ship without getting an inspection so I'd love to see the inspection report because it probably told them there was asbestos and they just chose to ignore it.

DO: Here's my question, you may not know the answer to this. I don't know what the governing body is, but they usually dock [the Freewinds] at Curacao or someplace in the Caribbean and it must have been when they were doing these renovations that it was discovered. Who is the governing body that would determine that this ship could no longer transport passengers because it poses a health risk? Calling OSA probably isn't going to help but there's got to be somebody who controls this, I'm just curious. Who would I call if I wanted to report my concerns? What do you think is the course of action?

LW: I think the ship's registered in Panama though that might just be the paper registration and then...

DO: Okay.

[40:00]

LW: Curacao is just a small little government but I think the Dutch government has some authority over it, and maybe even the European community, because I think it's a protectorate of the Dutch. I don't know the ins and outs politically, and then there's also a shipping or insurance company out of Scandinavia, I think it's called Detnoskovaritos. That, I think, is their overall insurance carrier so maybe there'll be some leads there. Curacao is the where workers there have been exposed to it so I would have thought that they're going to be pretty outraged.

DO: Sure.

LW: I would think their standards are probably much more lax than the standards in the States and Europe, which is why they never bring the ship here.

DO: I was wondering about that, I've never heard of it being docked anywhere near the United States.

[41:00]

LW: It doesn't meet ANY codes in the States. They have very strict hygiene codes in the States where everything has to be stainless steel, nothing in that ship would qualify for the States so they couldn't bring it here.

DO: Well, what is Tom Cruise...here's Mr. Tom Cruise he can certainly afford lots of nice things. Why would he want to be on a ship like that? I could see the Church of Scientology imposing their will on rank-and-file members who don't really have any recourse, but why would a celebrity want to be on a rust bucket like that, especially now that the information about the blue asbestos being on there?

LW: Well, I'm sure when he was there for his birthday party, partying away, he was unaware of the asbestos and I bet he's very pissed off now that its come to light. "Hey, I've got asbestos in my lungs too, thanks a lot David!" I would think that he's not too happy.

DO: I would think that he would not be too happy and he's not the only [one] I'm sure that Jason Beghe was on there, I'm sure there was lots of celebrity Scientologists who've been exposed.

[42:00]

LW: Yeah, they're all going to be upset. You might as well be exposed to a dose of uranium or cyanide, it's as deadly.

DO: Exactly, and its insidious. It's not like you can go and say, "Oh, I've been exposed to this, what do I do?" There's no way of knowing really for another forty years when you're dying some slow agonizing death.

LW: That's what I'm feeling now, a little mental stress, because is it in my lungs. How much, is it going to be a problem... Who the hell wants to die of cancer? So there's that mental stress factor and I'm sure that must be a legal consideration too.

[43:00]

DO: Yes, well I'm definitely going to pursue this, hopefully you and I can talk offline, I can get some quotes from you and ascertain some of the stuff you've already written about. I think that this may be one of those stories that could be a really big issue for them, like a legal issue as well, because it amazes me how much they've gotten away with that. I feel like there are times that I'm beating my head against a brick wall trying to explain to people who don't really understand all of the horrible things they do. It's as though [they] think that all these people who've come out and talked about them are all lying, it's some mass conspiracy, when in reality all of the ex-scientologists I've spoken with who are now going up against the Church are very compelling, very articulate...believable voices in all of this. So I'm sure it's very frustrating for you.

LW: It always comes back too. It always seems in these situations, Scientology is this weird combination of sort of like criminal on the one hand and stupid on the other hand. Stupid that, most corporations that know don't expose thousands of people to a deadly toxin or you're going to get sued the pants off you, they'll know that. So they're stupid and then on the other hand they want to be criminal and cover it up as best they can.

[44:00]

LW: I'm just hoping that this is a situation where, I just don't see a way out of it, what is your reason for exposing all these people to asbestos when you fully knew the dangers? I just don't see what their excuse can be.

DO: Well that's exactly right. For example there's somebody in the chatroom who said that they've spent up to four months on the Freewinds, should this person be worried?

LW: I don't want to tell someone to turn around and start to worry unnecessarily, I'm worried myself. What do you do in that situation? I would speak to a doctor for peace of mind. When I was in England in the 70s in architecture, I remember there were questions about it in Parliament and they were saying, "Do you mean to tell me this one speck of asbestos can sit in your lungs for 20 or 30 years and then give you lung cancer?"

[45:00]

LW: And they said “Yes, as far as medical knowledge goes that’s the case”, so you can't turn around and give someone peace of mind. I suppose you've got to be ever vigilant that you don't start developing symptoms and then jump on it if you do.

DO: That’s good advice. I will say, when I was doing some research on this, it said that one – this is obviously taken with a grain of salt – that one time exposure at even a high level exposure isn't as big of a threat as, say, a long period of low level exposure which it sounds like you were probably exposed to. So I pray that you somehow escape unscathed. Now, I can't say the same about other people, I certainly don't hope that they escape it but I certainly hope you do.

LW: I feel sorry for the Sea Org members who were on there in total ignorance and they've been there twenty years breathing it in.

[46:00]

DO: I've heard there's a very high cancer rate among Scientologists.

LW: Absolutely, yeah, because they're told to not go to the doctor, they're told that auditing will fix them.

DO: Right.

LW: They live on a bad diet, they're run down, of course cancer's going to hit them.

DO: And who knows what the e-meter does after long term use certainly that can effect something within your body? Low voltage constant basis...

LW: ...hours at a time

DO: Hours at a time, exactly. I can't imagine that could be too good for you. I did talk to a lawyer today and he said that people should go see their doctor. If they're concerned they should see their doctor first, as far as building a case, before they go see a lawyer because that can come back to haunt people in the court of law.

[47:00]

DO: If they go see a lawyer and the lawyer suggests they go see a doctor... Apparently the message should be you go see a doctor first and then from there based on that, then you would want to talk to a lawyer. It's just horrifying to even have to have this conversation when we've known for the last thirty years that asbestos is a deadly toxin and it's a very serious thing.

LW: I know. I go back to, there's Carnival Cruise lines, Princess Cruise lines, there are all these cruise lines and I'm sure they're way too smart to ever expose their passengers to asbestos. They would never be so...just stupid. And yet Scientology is just so arrogant that they think, “Oh well, L. Ron Hubbard said its okay therefore we'll just go our own way,” and I just hope that one day that arrogance and stupidity combination is going to be what crashes them or brings them to sense.

[48:00]

DO: Yes. Well, I plan on pursuing this particular story as best as I can so I'm hoping you'll be able to help me provide that and God bless you for bringing it up for so many years. Obviously you're trying to save people, help people and make people aware. And as you said, you've got to figure that even a guy devoted like Tom Cruise, he lives in his crazy little bubble, would be unhappy about being exposed to something very toxic.

LW: This Tom Cruise, he's married to Katie, he's got millions in the bank, his life is great and yet he's got this big question mark now. “Oh, in a few years am I going to start developing a cough and all my money can't do a damn thing to help me?” That's the irony.

DO: Exactly.

LW: If I were him I'd be very upset.

[49:00]

DO: I wonder if he knows, that's going to be my goal. While I'm obviously very concerned

about rank-and-file people and people who may have just worked on the ship but aren't necessarily Scientologists, I'm going to target something in my posts about celebrities – you should go get checked out, you should be aware of this – because they are the face that's put on in the media so they need to know too. I don't want John Travolta developing lung cancer because he was on the Freewinds.

LW: There's a lot of celebrities, Kirstie Alley, Travolta, they've all been, and it kinda brings them down to our level because all their millions ain't necessarily going to help them if they develop cancer.

DO: That's absolutely the truth. That's why this is such a good story to follow, I mean it's not "good" but it's a good lead for journalists to follow. For your part, when you left the church, did you find yourself 'fair gamed' at all? I know you were declared a suppressive person...

[50:00]

LW: I did because after I left, my daughters were still in and so I desperately wanted to, as you know from my things that I was trying to be cunning. I didn't want to be disconnected from them so I was sort of playing at being a good Scientologist, all the time scheming at trying to get them both out, which thank god for me worked out. For other people it's gone the other way and they've disconnected from their family, so I just count my lucky stars on that one. But I posted stuff online and they thought that Astra got pregnant as a guise to get out, they thought that was all my doing, so they ended up by declaring me. I was an architect at this time I was working a number of Scientology clients because that's who I knew. So the church took it upon themselves to, and I've got these letters faxed to me, they wrote to my clients who were Scientologist and told them to disconnect from me. I had these clients calling me up going "What do we do, we're halfway through an architectural project, we like what you've done and we're told we can't have anything to do with you?"

[51:00]

LW: So I said "Search your own heart, have I been a good professional, have I done my job for you properly, are you going to listen to me or the church?" Naturally you know the way that went, they all dropped me like a hot potato because the church told them too.

DO: Sure.

LW: So it was very tough for me because overnight back in 2001 when I was declared my workload suddenly nosedived. Luckily by then I knew enough non-Scientologists to rally things around and gradually build up again. Their plan was "Oh this guy has helped his daughters get out of the Sea Org, now let's bankrupt him and see what he says about that". That was their attitude.

DO: Now, obviously you divorced Astra's mother at some point when all this fell apart, have you gotten remarried have you been able to put your life back together?

[52:00]

LW: Oh yeah, I married a second time just for a couple of years so that didn't last too well, she was a Scientologist as well [laughs]

DO: [laughs] We need to find you a nice non-Scientologist girl, I think there are several women in the chatroom that would like to marry you!

LW: [laughs] Yeah, that's what I think I'll concentrate on now! But you know the second time I got married I actually managed to show her stuff on the internet and when she read the story about Xenu and the galactic stuff going on 75 million years ago and how we're all the descendants of dead space aliens, she decided to drop it too so I did her a favor.

DO: Oh, yes you did. This is a question I've wondered and you're a good person to ask, I don't know if anybody else is interested but I'm a pretty happily married person and I think how lucky I am that my husband and I see so many things eye to eye. He's been very supportive in all of this.

[53:00]

DO: He runs the site that owns mine, he's got one of the much bigger sites and he's absolutely vigorously told me to pursue this, he thinks its important, agrees with everything that Anonymous stands for but I think to myself how heartbreaking it would be to have to be disconnected from a loved one. If you can explore that, what was that like watching this person you married who's the mother of your children become somebody who's entirely different to you? That must be very painful.

LW: It was horrifying. I've never quite come to terms with it because you know I was married to her for thirteen years in England. For most of the time she was out of Scientology and I can honestly say, we didn't have a 'fantastic' marriage, but we were happily married so I wasn't thinking about getting divorced or anything like that. As Astra says, she was a good mother, she seemed to be an attentive mother. My family back in England has commented "What happened to Leslie because she seemed so..."

[54:00]

LW: She taught Astra to read when she was three. If a kid was sick, she'd be all over it, she was a good loving mother, there's no question. So then I just don't know...it could be she was on the original ship with Ron Hubbard and met him way back and so it just seemed... She just seemed to be very susceptible to that kind of brainwashing, so when we got to Florida you know, Flag, the Scientology headquarters, she just became someone I didn't know. She got so into Scientology she neglected the kids, they were no longer her priority and, like Astra said, when I asked her about it she said "If we don't push Scientology's goals and aims we don't have a future anyway, nor the kids," so she just went through. I know other cults have their horrible things too but ...

DO: Hello? Oh, I think I lost him ...

[55:00]

DO: Hang on here, okay you guys, I think that we've lost the call so hopefully he'll call back in. We're at 9:55pm anyway and, just checking the switchboard here. Well, you guys can see here that Astra and her father are obviously extremely compelling figures. I pray to God, you know my God, that poor Mr Woodcraft is not having any ill-effects from all his years on the Freewinds. It doesn't even sound as if this is somebody who even really wanted to be, he was recruited by his wife into Scientology and here he is being exposed to something so deadly. Are you there?

LW: Oh yeah, sorry, I don't know what happened.

DO: I don't know, the switchboard may have kicked you off. I was just blabbing away, waiting for you to call back in.

[56:00]

DO: So you were saying that how difficult it was to be separated from this person you married, they changed and became an entirely different human being.

LW: Yes, she was just very susceptible to Scientology, I guess. To neglect her kids to that degree, I still can't fathom it out.

DO: You can't talk to your son, right? You have a son also?

LW: Well he's not my, when I married Lesley she already had a son.

DO: Okay.

LW: So, he was like a step-son, but I knew him from the age of three to the age of thirteen and now I've had no contact since. We were pretty close when he was growing up, I treated him just the same as I treated Astra and Zoe, but now I haven't heard from him in eight years. I wouldn't say its difficult for me, it's way more difficult for Astra and Zoe being disconnected from a mother, a grandmother, and a brother.

[57:00]

DO: Right. You know what, I'm sure Astra, I'm sure you guys are very close, your other daughter Zoe and of course Astra's, what is your granddaughter's name?

LW: It's Kate.

DO: Kate, so aside that you guys are very close with each other, at least Kate has you. She doesn't have her grandma or her uncle, but she does have you. She doesn't have a father either, [so] you play a very important role in her life. That's what's so distressing about the policies of the church, how damaging it is to families. When you look beyond the nasty things they do like exposing people to asbestos, which could happen probably, not likely, but anything like that can happen in regular life. But the fact that you're now being separated from your loved ones, marriage destroyed, loved ones being ripped from each other...

[58:00]

DO: It amazes me it's been allowed to continue as long as it has with virtually no opposition other than what we see now.

LW: Yeah, well you know my other daughter, Zoe, won't even really talk about it. It's so painful for her.

DO: Awww.

LW: About disconnections, my conclusion is it's almost like your family members are dead and you're kind of in mourning about them. In reality it's not as sad and as complete as that, but it's kind of along the path. I think that's why it's so devastating. Without a question it's the single-most evil aspect about their behavior, and they do it at the drop of a hat. When I first arrived in Florida and said "I don't like the conditions here, you've lied to me about the job, you've lied to me about everything, and I think we're out of here", they said, "Well, you can go, but you'll be disconnected from your family". So they just do it at the drop of a ... it's like second nature for them. There's no compassion there, it's just "You'll be disconnected", and that's it.

[59:00]

DO: And then they lie about it to the media when asked about it. So of course, the media just assumes "Oh, of course, they told us that". I'm always surprised how the media takes what the church says at face value, simply because they don't want to be seen as this religious bigot. In some way, L. Ron Hubbard was a genius by couching all of this in a religious element, because then it really does protect them and allows them to get away with the things that they otherwise wouldn't be able to get away with. But their time is running out. I really feel that, I don't see them being able to get away with this forever, so it's people like you and Astra, you guys are the inspiration for us all because we see what you've been through and I cannot thank you enough. I hope that I can have you back as this Freewinds story takes on life of its own.

[1:00:00]

DO: I'm hoping you and I can come back on and talk more specifically about your experiences and you can help us sort of expose that.

[[BlogTalkRadio]]

DO: Don't pay any attention to that, we're still streaming, it saves it in the archive. People can't hear us in the chatroom because the live part cut off, so we'll finish up. So, you guys were great and I know the time is limited, you've got you know Kate and everything and you've got to do all that. But thank you so much, I'm gonna e-mail Astra, would it be okay for me to get your e-mail?

LW: Well sure, yeah.

DO: That's okay with you? Because I'd love to be able to tell you what I'm working on with the Freewinds story, maybe you can give me some quotes too, just based on your own experience.

LW: Absolutely. I hope one day I might be testifying in a court of law about it. Really give them some grief.

DO: That is, that is my hope. I really, really hope to push that, and you know obviously I've been doing this for the last four-and-a-half, five-months.

[1:01:00]

DO: We've probably saved people from going into the church, and we've probably helped some people come out, but we haven't brought them to justice yet. I think that is the end goal, to bring them to justice so that people who are stuffed right now, it would be nice to be able to read about, you know, family members. Maybe some are too far gone and they will always be damaged, but there are those like you, the Marc Headleys, Astra, Jenna, people who still have a life ahead of them outside of this very dangerous organization. So, we want to keep fighting for you guys. So don't give up hope. There is still, there is still hope.

LW: Sure, well, I think that its great because, you know, when I got involved in Scientology back in the 70's, I think if there had been Google, obviously you wouldn't go into anything these days without going on the internet. You'd have to be really, really stupid to go into it, if you can read all that data. The first thing that comes up is Clambake, then Anonymous, I think they're going to steer clear of it. The word is getting out and its fantastic.

[1:02:00]

DO: Yes, the word is getting out and that's the key. That's the first step, prevent new people, cut off their money supply. Sure, Tom Cruise is probably still going to donate money, but eventually, we suffocate them enough financially, then the chips will begin to crumble, that's certainly my hope. Thank you so much.

LW: Back in the good old boom days people would go in blind but that's just not going to happen anymore, that's just not going to happen. There's too much information.

DO: There is too much information, and thank god for the Old Guard and the ex-Scientologists who are brave enough to speak out. It's a story that needs to be told, absolutely, and I'm just glad I caught wind of it when I did. I'm really proud to be part of something I think is a good and noble cause. Saving, saving people.

LW: Fantastic job, and very brave of you.

DO: I don't feel very brave, you guys are the brave ones.

[1:03:00]

DO: I'm just giving you a format to tell your story. I'm so thankful that people, ex-Scientologists, have been willing to come forward, and you guys are great. You give those girls a hug and I'll get your e-mail and we'll talk more.

LW: Okay, thanks so much!

DO: Take care! Good night Lawrence.

LW: Good night.

[1:03:22]

[[TRANSCRIPT ENDS]]