

-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

**Open Letter to Karin Pouw, Public Affairs Director Church of Scientology International
Portland, OR**

September 2008

Dear Ms. Pouw,

I am sure you are aware that on the 11th of March, 2008, I issued a press release entitled "Mother Bear Defends Cub." This release detailed my efforts to bring my daughter, Katherine, home for a vacation with her family. During the fifteen years that my daughter has been a member of the Church of Scientology's Sea Organization, she had only come home for one three day visit in 1996 - cut short by the Church due to some "emergency".

When I allowed my daughter, then a minor, to join the Sea Organization, I was told that Sea Organization Members are allowed three weeks holiday per year. In fact, it is stated in the contract that Katherine signed in 1993: "2. HOLIDAYS: '...three (3) weeks per continuous active year for Sea Org Members'." This has never happened.

During Christmas of 2004, Katherine was denied permission to attend a family reunion in Minnesota, with relatives she has not seen in many years, some of which she has not seen since childhood. After the travel reservations had been made and tickets purchased, Katherine informed me that she was not able to go. To somehow include Katherine in the reunion, she was put on the speaker phone to wish both grandparents a Merry Christmas. She was sobbing and apologizing for not being able to be with them.

I have tried to be patient with the Church. I have had no objection to Katherine following her religious principles and beliefs and have not objected to her work for the Church of Scientology. But I have objected to the continuing and systematic isolation of Katherine from her family. Katherine and I have enthusiastically discussed vacation plans many times, with no plans ever coming to fruition. My calls with Kate have become less and less frequent, and at times, I find myself talking to her on a speaker phone, with others present in the room who do not identify themselves. My daughter sounds less and less herself and more and more "coached" and cautious in her responses.

To deny my daughter normal communication with me, and the opportunity for vacation time with her family, is unconscionable. Last March, I reached the end of my tether, and issued a press release about the situation. I issued an ultimatum: "Have my daughter at home in my living room within two weeks, or I will go to law enforcement and the media."

As a result of this ultimatum, a hurried meeting was arranged between myself and my daughter. I flew down to Los Angeles and met my daughter and her Office of Special Affairs "handler," a woman named Beth, at the J. Paul Getty Museum. It was wonderful to see my daughter, and Katherine and I hugged and cried together. Katherine bought postcards from the museum store, wrote notes on the back of them, and gave them to me:

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"Dear Mom,

These postcards are to remind you of our day together, to remind you we will always be in communication, no matter the distance, to remind you that you raised a happy, healthy, contributive person, to remind you that I will visit you, to remind you that I love you!

All M' Love, Katherine"

Katherine promised me that she would come soon for a vacation. Her handler also promised me that it would absolutely be worked out so Katherine could come and visit us in Portland. She seemed sincere. I felt reassured.

On April 30th Katherine informed me that she was going to do a "special program", and that I would not be able to talk to her until the program was completed. Katherine told me that I could speak with Beth while this program was in progress. I asked what kind of program it was, but Katherine and Beth refused to say. The program, which was supposed to take four or five weeks, is still not completed.

It is now four months later, and we are no closer to Katherine visiting than we were in March. My own vacation came and went. My birthday came and went. No Katherine. On my birthday, I received flowers from Katherine, followed by a phone call not from Katherine, but from her OSA handler Beth, asking if I had received the flowers. Beth wished me a Happy Birthday.

In August, Katherine reached the point in her program where she was allowed to speak with me. The last time I talked to my daughter was mid-August. My daughter was not her spontaneous, loving self, but sounded strained and stiff. She expressed concern, that because I am no longer in Scientology, that I do not approve of what she is doing with her life as a Scientology staff member. She asked me to send her any critical things I had been reading about the Church, (so she could "handle" me on each one of these). This would have to be done, she said, before she could come and see me.

This is ridiculous. In the first place, I have no intention of spending our valuable vacation time with my daughter arguing about religion. I have always respected her decision to follow Scientology. As you know, I am myself a former Scientologist. I left the Church for my own reasons, as is my right. That my daughter and I have chosen different religious paths is of no consequence to anyone, and, frankly, is no business of the Church of Scientology. Many parents and children disagree on religious matters, or political matters, or a host of other things. It does not affect their love and respect for each other, and is no reason to forbid connection between them.

Scientology preaches that communication is the "universal solvent" and will resolve anything. Yet in this case, that sentiment is not being applied. Communication is being denied. Do you seriously think that Katherine's faith is so fragile that the slightest contact with any criticism of Scientology will shatter it? If so, then you have less faith in Katherine's intelligence and strength than I do.

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You want to know what my main criticism of the Church of Scientology is? That they have isolated me from my own daughter and made it impossible for me to maintain the close and loving relationship that both Katherine and I desire. That is my objection. How can I be "handled" on this objection? Easy. Grant Katherine her well-earned three week leave to see her family. Is that so hard?

I never, ever thought I would have to sacrifice my relationship with my daughter over religious differences. Many, many families across the world have differences with their choices of religions and political ideologies. A loving family does not let these differences impede their relationships with each other.

You, yourself, have denied publicly that Scientology disconnects families. In your press release of 14 January of this year, you stated that "...most family members of Scientologists are themselves not Scientologists. And yet, as any one of millions of Scientologists would have told Morton if he had asked, they maintain a loving relationship with their families. Indeed, the Church always counsels to mend any and every familial upset – whether between Scientologists or those of another faith." Nice words. A wonderful, politically correct sentiment. But the question is, Ms. Pouw, are you actually willing to stand by those words? Are you willing to put them into action? Are you, as a Scientologist, willing to factually practice what you so eloquently preach?

I am still waiting for my daughter's arrival in Portland for the vacation that she and I have been promised.

The Church claims that its senior policy is to **deliver what is promised**.

At long last, will you?

Sincerely,

Susan Lentsch

PS: I am mailing a copy of this letter to my daughter so she can read and understand how I feel. I will be checking with her to make sure she personally received it.

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**MEDIA CONTACT (do not publish): For more information, contact Susan Lentsch at
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