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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

17 June 1982

MEMORANDUM FROM DOUGLAS F. MARTIN

1. Nelson Keener at Moral Majority doesn't know of them personally, but one of the fellows in his office said he understood they were a cult.
2. Pat Landrum at the National Association of Evangelicals said they didn't recognize the diety of Christ, nor the trinity, and that they tended towards the cult, and possibility of mind control. Fairly widely acknowledged as a cult by those who regularly define cults.
3. Dr. Ray Bringham talked to Rev. Wilbur Jackson in Cincinatti who said they were a "cult" with questionable morals. You can receivethe "Holy" spirit by paying \$200, and it is guaranteed. Wierwille says he is first to correctly interpret the scriptures since the Apostles. There is word in south Ohio area that two reporters were almost run off road when they attempted to interview this group. Ray Bringham's number is 714-728-5020.

White House
Washington

WHB028(1346)(1-020081C166)PD 06/15/82 1342

1982 JUN 15 PM 2 49

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01037 COLUMBUS OH 297 06-15 231P EDT

PMS MR MORTON BLACKWELL

WHITE HOUSE DC

THE WAY INTERNATIONAL BIBLICAL RESEARCH, TEACHING AND FELLOWSHIP
MINISTRY WILL PRESENT THEIR 40TH ANNIVERSARY BIBLICAL RESEARCH
CLASS ENTITLED "LIVING VICTORIOUSLY" FROM JUNE 19 - JULY 5, 1982.
THE WAY IS A NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY FOUNDED IN
1942. DR. VICTOR PAUL WIERWILLE, THE FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, ALONG
WITH

OTHER MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR OUTREACH MINISTRY WILL SHARE FROM THE
INTEGRITY AND ACCURACY OF GOD'S WORD DURING THIS SPECIAL CLASS.

THERE WILL BE 8 - 10,000 CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS GATHERED TOGETHER AT
THE WAY INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN OHIO FOR MORE THAN TWO

WEEKS. THESE CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS ARE COMING TO OHIO FROM EACH OF THE
50 STATES OF THE UNION, FROM WASHINGTON, D.C., AND FROM OVER
25 DIFFERENT NATIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

ON THE OPENING DAY, JUNE 19, 1982, WE WILL START A CONTINUOUS 24
HOURS OF PRAYER THAT WILL CONTINUE UNTIL JULY 5, 1982. WE WANT
THE 40TH PRESIDENT OF THESE OUR UNITED STATES, RONALD REAGAN, TO KNOW
THAT UPON THE OCCASION OF OUR SPECIAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY CLASS FERVENT
PRAYER WILL BE MADE TO THE TRUE GOD ON HIS BEHALF, AND ON THE
BEHALF OF HIS WIFE, CABINET, THE OTHER BRANCHES OF OUR
GOVERNMENT AND THE ENTIRE NATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA. WE PRAY FOR YOUR CONTINUED STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE IN
THE PURSUIT OF THE FREEDOM OF THIS NATION, BELIEVING PSALM 33:12
WHICH SAYS, "BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD."

I AM REQUESTING A RESPONSE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO DR. AND MRS WIERWILLE AND THE 8-10,000 CLASS PARTICIPANT IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR PRAYERS AND BELIEVING FOR THE PRESIDENT AND OUR COUNTRY DURING THIS SPECIAL CLASS AND CONTINUOUS 24 HOURS OF PRAYER.

ALL COMMUNICATIONS CAN BE MADE THROUGH ME:

C/O REV. ROBERT MIRABITO
5701 CROWN CREST LANE
COLUMBUS OH 43220
(614) 889-2830

THANK YOU
UNSIGNED

NNNN

Morton: I believe THE way to be a
CULT. BASED ON PARTIAL BIBLICAL TRUTH,
Pat at Bob DeLoach's office confirms this. Shall
we just tell them it is to The White House
shut a time to get a Presidential ^{Washington} message & thank
them for their prayers?

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UNSIGNED

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LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 1 STORY

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October 13, 1981, Tuesday, Final Edition

SECTION: First Section; A1

LENGTH: 3260 words

HEADLINE: The Way Of Many;

Recruiters for 'The Way' Are Active in D.C. and Tidewater Areas;
'The Way' Methods Disturb Congressmen;
Ohio-Based Sect Claims 40,000, Aim Recruiting Efforts Here

BYLINE: By Sandra G. Boodman, Washington Post Staff Writer

DATELINE: NEW KNOXVILLE, Ohio

KEYWORD: THEWAY

BODY:

Hannah Janney, who grew up on a farm in Northern Virginia, remembers feeling amazed the first time she saw The Way International headquarters rising out of

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the relentlessly flat Midwestern landscape. Amid endless miles of cornfields were meticulous gardens, man-made ponds, gurgling white marble fountains and buildings so freshly painted they gleamed under the summer sun.

Most impressive, Janney recalls, was the sight of 16,000 brothers and sisters who had flocked to this tiny hamlet outside Dayton for an annual week-long festival, called The Rock of Ages. Like Janney, they were devout members of The Way, a little-known fundamentalist Christian sect, which some theologians believe to be the nation's second largest cult.

The Way now has an estimated 40,000 followers -- more than Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church. "Everybody thinks the Moonies are the big cult because they've gotten the lion's share of publicity, but the Way is much bigger and more pervasive," says Lowell Streiker, director of San Francisco's anti-cult Freedom Counseling Center. The only larger cult in the United States, said Streiker, is The Church of Scientology.

Founded nearly 40 years ago by Victor Paul Wierwille, now 65, The Way exemplifies the growth of religious cults in American Christianity, a phenomenon that some religious scholars say tends to accelerate in times of economic and political stress. "There are times in history when the soil is ripe for the growth of cults," said Thomas Schafer, a professor at Chicago's McCormick

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Divinity School. One of the characteristics that distinguishes cults from religious movements is members' devotion to and obedience of a living leader, Schafer said.

The Way meets that criterion, combining Wierwille's off-beat brand of born-again Christianity with survival training, faith healing and speaking in tongues. Wierwille, an graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and a former minister of the United Church of Christ, has added aggressive Dale Carnegie-like salesmanship techniques and ultraconservative political views. He teaches followers to hold regular book-burnings -- former members say they were encouraged to burn materials not published by the sect -- and instructs them to read books that call the Nazi Holocaust a hoax perpetrated by Jews and Communists.

Although The Way has maintained a relatively low profile despite its growth in the past decade, the sect is attracting the attention of some members of Congress troubled by its recruiting methods, its now-abandoned firearms training program and its efforts to attract young military personnel.

The Way is actively recruiting Military members in the Washington suburbs -- where it claims 500 members -- and in Tidewater Virginia, site of major Navy, Army, and Air Force installations. Law enforcement sources in Ohio said the

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IRS has been looking into The Way's tax-exempt status for several years, although the IRS declines comment. Those same sources estimate The Way assets at \$20 to \$30 million.

Critics, many of them former members, call The Way dangerous. They tell stories of firearms training, sleep deprivation, psychological manipulation and blind allegiance to Wierwille, whom The Way members often compare to Jesus Christ.

"That's just a bunch of out and out lies," said Vince Finnegan, The Way's chief recruiter, who said the lies are spread by Jews "and the adversary, the Devil, who doesn't want the word to live When you look within yourself there's emptiness . . . there are no answers outside God's word."

Many attracted to the word as The Way interprets it are young, lonely, depressed or confused, caught in adolescent identity crises, trapped in shaky marriages. Some are searching for direction and meaning, for more intimacy than their own families offered.

Harvey John Platig, 25, the son of a Bethesda psychologist and State Department official, found The Way in 1976. He was playing in a rock band at Bethesda's Psychedelly and unhappily living a life of "booze, motorcycles and

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dope."

"I used to be really turned off to Christianity," said Platig over lunch in the cavernous Way cafeteria where a giant banner reads: "The Word of God is the Will of God."

"I could never understand how if God was all perfect . . . there could be any evil. The Way people gave me a straight answer. They said there was more than one spiritual force at work: the Devil."

Psychiatrists critical of cult methods and former Way members say the friendship, comfort and sense of purpose The Way offers mask the fact that the group recruits pliable members who are obedient and help provide The Way continued financial support.

Because The Way is a homegrown Midwestern sect whose members hold regular jobs, wear everyday clothes and hairstyles, and do not live in isolation, Streiker says, the group has avoided the scrutiny other cults have received.

There is no dispute that The Way and Wierwille, who declined to be interviewed, have prospered. From his 150-acre family farm and headquarters here Wierwille presides over a tax-exempt multi-million-dollar religious empire.

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Since 1974, The Way has bought college campuses in Kansas and Indiana, a ranch in Colorado and a survival school in New Mexico, acquisitions the group says have been made possible by the "abundant sharings" of followers who give at least 10 percent of their salaries to The Way. Many give much more.

Only 15 years ago Wierwille scoured tiny Midwestern hamlets on his raspberry-colored Harley-Davidson motorcycle, inviting farm families to attend services in his living room. Today, he maintains an uneasy coexistence with the 800 people of this rural crossroads. He has mostly forsaken his motorcycle, traveling instead by customized private jet or luxury bus to visit his disciples in more than 45 countries and all 50 states.

Two years ago, The Way moved into Washington and targeted area suburbs and Virginia's Tidewater area, with its huge concentration of military personnel, as fertile territory for recruiting. "There's a lot of interest in The Way in Washington," said Finnegan. "We do real well there."

Way officials say it has 500 active members in the Washington area and counts among its members U.S. Court of Claims Judge Robert M. M. Seto. "Are you aware that the Mormons are a cult? That the Jewish religion is a cult?" asked Seto. "The Way believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and the word of God."

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The Way spokesman Alison Heaney says Way members are "Bible-toting pacifists." Until last February, however, Way members received organized firearms training with .22-caliber pistols and rifles at The Way-owned College of Emporia in Emporia, Kan, and at Camp Gunnison, the cult's 100-acre ranch in Colorado.

That training and The Way's interest in military recruitment bothers Rep. G. William Whitehurst (R-Va.) who represents the Tidewater area. "We're very concerned," said Whitehurst aide Peter G. Loomis. "Military people are far from home and they would be ideal recruits for The Way."

"Most of these kids don't know what the bottom line of joining a cult is," said Dr. Margaret Singer, a professor of clinical psychology at the University of California at Berkeley and a cult expert. "The new recruits get "love-bombed" -- they receive a lot of affection, attention and flattery. Most cults get people to drop out of school, sever ties with their families and tell them their salvation and even their life depends on staying in the cult. It's hard to walk away when you've burned your bridges behind you."

"Going to a Bible study meeting*seems so innocent and the peer support feels very good," said Jean Merritt, a Northern Virginia psychologist who counsels former cult members and their families. "If you're lonely it's a nice way to

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meet people. It's not like hitting Clyde's."

Hannah Janney, now 23, got involved with The Way in 1977 for precisely those reasons. "It was the first day of school," she recalled. "I'd just arrived in Boston, I didn't know anyone and I was sitting on my bed in my dorm room when this girl down the hall was going door to door . . . She invited me to go to a fellowship in her room. She never mentioned The Way."

"I wanted to determine my own moral values," said Janney, the youngest of four children of a close-knit Quaker family. "I was looking for answers." The Way had them.

Buoyed by the camaraderie she encountered, Janney spent \$100 to take Wierwille's 33-hour videotaped "Power For Abundant Living" course. The class met four nights a week in a college classroom decorated with Wierwille's picture.

The Way members hugged and kissed new recruits. During the last week of the class, Janney was taught to speak in tongues -- usually a stream of unintelligible syllables The Way members and other fundamentalists regard as the word of God and proof of spiritual rebirth.

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One of The Way's more unusual rituals occurs every March 15 when The Way members celebrate "Uncle Harry's Day," the anniversary of the death of Wierwille's beloved older brother who is buried at The Way headquarters. On that day, members burn books or what The Way members call "Devil-inspired" objects -- clothing, jewelry, records, television sets -- that remind them of their past lives.

Psychiatrists critical of The Way say that acceptance of such rituals as speaking in tongues or Uncle Harry's Day is crucial to conditioning that the critics label "mind control" -- the replacement of past attitudes with new beliefs tailored to the needs of the cult.

Dr. John G. Clark Jr. of the Harvard Medical School said speaking in tongues is part of this process because it induces a mind-numbing trance-like state. Through a combination of peer pressure, constant supervision, "love-bombing" and the shedding of old friends, family and beliefs, a new personality emerges.

"There's definitely a change in thought," said The Way spokesman Cathy Crawley. "Sometimes it seems very sudden, but it's because people never knew what was in the Bible."

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"It's not so much brainwashing," said Streiker, "as people who are willing to surrender control of their minds for what they get in return." Often what they get is love or the promise of it.

"I fell in love with the guy who taught the class," said Janney. "He convinced me that the best way to make people happy was to work for The Way and move God's word."

Soon her only friends were Way members. She dropped courses and spent her days "witnessing" -- proselytizing. Her evenings were spent at fellowships. Most of the money her parents sent her went to The Way, she said.

Janney dropped out of the Boston Conservatory of Music and became one of The Way's 2,000 missionaries assigned to cities far from their homes at their own expense. Former members say the traveling further severs family ties and cements new ones. Way missionaries are supposed to go home only for a funeral.

Sue DuChesne, 20, of Green Bay, Wis., joined The Way at 18 and until March was a missionary in Hyattsville. She lived with three Way members in a shabby house furnished with cast-offs from Prince George's County trash containers.

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One member ran the house, making sure that each missionary "witnessed" at least 48 hours a week, found a part-time job and gave at least 10 percent of that salary to The Way. Of the \$85 DuChesne earned each week, she said \$60 went to rent and food. She gave \$10 to The Way, leaving \$15 for her personal expenses.

"I was so tired all the time it wasn't funny," DuChesne said. "I would go to bed at midnight and then get up at 4 a.m. to pray and get ready for work, take two buses to get to Howard Johnson's, waitress for five hours, take a bus to the University of Maryland and witness in the student union and dorms." After witnessing came prayer and house meetings where the group discussed improving witnessing techniques.

"We were supposed to offer comfort and warmth at exam time, not tell people right off who we were, just make friends with them, go out for coffee, find out what they needed and where they were vulnerable, stuff like that."

DuChesne left The Way after awaking one morning to find her eye bleeding, the result of an infection. "They didn't want me to go to a doctor. They said if I just believed in God hard enough it would be healed. They said I wasn't believing enough.

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"I must have snapped into reality or something," DuChesne said. She called her grandmother, who wired money for a bus ticket. But when she told her housemates she was leaving, they angrily told she had lost faith. The local Way leader came to the house and kept her awake until 3 a.m., telling her not to leave.

"Finally, I said I would stay," DuChesne recalled.

The next morning, however, she sneaked off to the District bus station -- where she found several Way members who tried to convince her to stay. When she got off a bus in Chicago 18 hours later, DuChesne said, more Way members met her. So did her family.

"That never happened," said Finnegan. "We never force anyone to do anything. We teach people to have free will."

Janney left The Way two months ago, after her parents paid more than \$10,000 to have her "deprogrammed" -- a controversial method designed to reverse the cult conversion process -- during a rare visit home.

She had been a trusted Way staff member, a veteran of a year's missionary work in Phoenix, a member of The Way Corps, an elite group from which most Way

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leaders are drawn. Corps members pay \$4,300 a year for four years to attend the unaccredited Way College of Emporia, a school that combines rigorous physical and survival training with Wierwille's interpretation of the Bible. Because her parents refused to support her, Janney's tuition was paid by wealthy Way members.

At Emporia, Janney said, she received firearms training with a .22-caliber rifle. Janney and others also prepared a detailed autobiography: "I want the where, what, who, when, why and how regarding every major decision point in your life," Wierwille wrote corps members. "For example: I got into sex in the sixth grade; I started drugs when I was 12; I robbed the local liquor store." Janney also was required to keep a diary of only positive thoughts. She said it was subject to unannounced inspection.

"We were supervised all the time," she recalled. "There was never any time to just be by yourself. You always had to be doing something. I got there just after Jonestown and Wierwille told us that the U.S. Army had killed those people and covered it up. We were constantly taught that when the Communists or whoever took over, we had to be the ones to survive. We always had to have our backpacks ready, have supplies of canned goods and firewood, never let the gas tank get more than half empty."

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Janney said that in October 1979 Wierwille told corps members to get their guns ready and prepare to defend themselves against a nuclear attack. "He told us that God had spoken to him and that the Communists were going to attack," she recalled. "We were supposed to speak in tongues and pray around the clock and not tell anyone or else word might leak out. There was just mass panic. I got ready to go out into the field, but then Wierwille told us that our speaking in tongues had averted the attack."

Way officials said that never happened either. They said the firearms training was discontinued this year, the victim of unwarranted negative publicity. "It was just a hunter's safety course," said The Way's Washington area director Michael Rood, a former Marine Corps marksman. "We teach people how to floss their teeth, do jet-style packing and handle guns."

Ten years ago, The Way's approach to life was less systematic. Then it was known as one of the "garbage cults," because its members foraged food from trash cans, said Harvard's Clark.

The Way was founded in 1942 when Wierwille, a recent seminary graduate, said the word of God was revealed when he saw snow fall on a New Knoxville gas station in July.

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For years, he tried to spread the word to Midwestern farmers without much luck. His first major success came in the late 1960s during a visit to San Francisco's Haight-Asbury district. He returned to Ohio with about 30 followers. Others stayed behind and founded The Way West, a prototype for local chapters around the country.

That was followed in 1971 by a foray to the upper-crust Manhattan suburb of Rye. Life Magazine wrote an article about Wierwille, the man who turned bored suburban kids onto God. In Rye, Wierwille videotaped his Abundant Living course, which was later shown on college campuses and drew thousands of recruits.

Alison Heaney, the daughter of a retired General Motors executive, was a Rye convert and has been a member ever since. "I was 15 and I'd taken mescaline, smoked dope, done moratoriums and macrobiotic diets and gone to the Unitarian Church but none of it really worked," said Heaney, now 27.

Today Heaney is one of 400 paid staff members who work at The Way headquarters, which houses Way Productions, the ministry's music and theater group that tours high schools and colleges, and Way Publications and American Christian Press, publishers of a slick bimonthly magazine and Wierwille's books.

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They are located in a new \$5 million administration building that also houses a computer center full of IBM equipment and a film production unit. Oil paintings of Wierwille and his wife hang in the lobby of the building over gold plaques that read "President" and "First Lady." Smaller photographs of Wierwille adorn desk tops and office walls. Buttons and stickers read "Speak in Tongues," "Keep Smiling" and "Think About God".

Two miles from headquarters at Neil Armstrong Airport is The Way's new hangar and its two planes: "Ambassador One," a twin-engine 21-seat turboprop jet bought in 1977 from Exxon of Libya for \$750,000, and "Acts II," a Cessna 210 bought two years ago for \$100,000.

The interior of "Ambassador One," which is reserved for Wierwille's use, is decorated with teak paneling, blue velvet armchairs, tape deck, smoked mirrors, color TV sets, a baby-blue Princess telephone and silver trays for serving drinks.

Way officials will not discuss the finances of the group, which is run by a three-man board that includes Wierwille and his eldest son. Federal tax forms show The Way declared assets of \$1.3 million in 1974 and nearly \$10 million in 1978. Ohio law enforcement sources estimate that the group currently has assets worth \$20-\$30 million.

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Despite The Way's financial success, its relationship with New Knoxville residents is edgy -- even though Wierwille places advertisements in a local newspaper reminding residents that the group spends more than \$25,000 a month in the community. Way members' efforts to enter local politics have made many people here nervous. Several Way members are now running for town trustee and the local school board.

Last year, county prosecutor Scott Jarvis, a Way member who also served as the group's chief lawyer, was defeated for reelection. During his tenure, Jarvis provoked an uproar by deputizing an armed three-member police force of Way members called "The Bless Patrol," which has since been disbanded.

But despite the controversy, the criticism and the fears that The Way is somehow dangerous, its members say they are only interested in spreading the word of The Way. "We're a horrible failure if we're trying to take over the world," Heaney said. "But then again, people thought Jesus Christ wanted to overthrow the government."

GRAPHIC: Picture 1, Victor Paul Wierwille, founding father of The Way, By Ed Roberts -- Dayton Newspapers Inc.; Picture 2, The new \$5 million administration building, headquarters of 'The Way' at New Knoxville, Ohio, houses a publishing firm, sophisticated computers and a film production unit.; Pictures 3 and 4,