

'NIGHTMARE' AT THE

Former members tell of 'living hell' at Cape compound

LIKE A PICTURE on a postcard, the Community of Jesus sprawls long and low along the waterfront in Orleans on Cape Cod — the image of beauty, serenity and grace.

The buildings exude understated splendor; white clapboard, black shutters and enormous bay windows sitting atop a perfectly manicured, emerald-green lawn.

The gardens are a burst of color; pink and white peonies, red poppies and blue hydrangeas stand at attention under the American, Christian and community flags flapping in the summer breeze.

Behind the gates that set the community apart from the busy fishing port of Rock Harbor, industrious followers tend the grounds, chop wood or bustle toward the chapel for prayer services.

To the tourists who pass by on their way to the fishing boats, the 35-acre compound is a kind of Norman Rockwell painting come to life — an Eden from another age that offuses prosperity, tranquility and peace.

But to dozens of former members, the Community of Jesus is a living hell, a religious concentration camp dedicated to harassment, persecution and abuse, where families are destroyed, psyches broken, and fear and torment are the order of the day.

"It was a nightmare every day every single day," said Heidi Laser Anderson, 40, a member of the community's inner circle for more than 22 years.

"It's incredible that I still believe in God, but I do, because I think it was him who helped me make it through all those years."

"I sincerely believe that if it wasn't for God, I would be insane right now."

And Heidi's husband, Peter Anderson, 40, the son of community founder and director, Cay Anderson, believes the wealthy Protestant cult is a potential Jonestown.

"At this point," he said, "all that's missing is the Kool-Aid."

The Andersons and dozens of

SUNDAY HERALD SPECIAL REPORT

Stories by GAYLE FEE

other members who broke away from the community in recent years paint a frightening picture of a rigid, closed society where authority has gone awry.

They claim followers are brainwashed, mentally tortured and families are split.

Members who don't conform to the rigid, authoritarian structure have been kicked, slapped, brow-beaten, isolated and sometimes drugged, they allege.

The former members say the two matrons who run the community, Cay Anderson, 72, and Judy Sorensen, 58, live a lifestyle that is radically from the one they espouse.

While members are ordered to deny themselves, the community leaders are treated like queens.

They are waited on hand and foot, wear expensive jewelry and hand-made clothing.

They travel around the world, drink heavily and argue violently, ex-members say.

The women counsel married members about relations with their spouses even though they do not live with their own husbands. They share a luxurious apartment and former members say the bedroom they use has only one large bed.

And while the women have encouraged members to go on radical diets — weeks with only grapes, grape juice and raisins — they eat huge meals and are overweight.

"When you are in the community and you see these things, you rationalize them away," said former member Barbara Tamasi, 43, a writer from Dennis who has formed a support group for about 60 former members.

"But once you're out, you realize how hypocritical the whole thing is, and you wonder, 'How could I have been so stupid for so long?'"

Community leaders deny all the allegations, attributing them to a "family vendetta" organized by the Andersons and Judy Sorensen's adult sons, Doug and John, who also defected.

"Let's just say that all four were colluding, and now three are married — two to each other. That explains a lot of things," Mrs. Sorensen said.

In a written statement, Mrs. Sorensen's daughter, community administrator Jill Elmer, elaborated:

"Many priests, nuns brothers or sisters who leave a vocation ... feel an internal conflict over their 'decision,'" she wrote.

"Often their efforts to resolve it take the form of a compulsion to condemn the ... way of life ... they are leaving."

Community leaders claim to be puzzled about the motives of



COMMUNITY FOUNDERS: Community of Jesus leaders Mother Cay Anderson and Mother Judy Sorensen at the community's property in Orleans, Cape Cod. The women say allegations made against the community of mental and physical cruelty are unfounded.

Staff photo by Barry Chin

Leaders deny allegations of cruelty

"PLUM!" and grandmotherly with quick smiles and sharp wits, Cay Anderson and Judy Sorensen don't look like the tyrannical leaders of an autocratic religious cult ex-members of the Community of Jesus describe.

As she bustles through the community compound, proudly showing the rooms crammed with heirlooms, the antique wood-burning stoves, the perfect flower arrangements, Sorensen could be any Cape Cod housewife guiding visitors through her home.

"This is a picture of Cay and I with (former Anglican) Bishop Genders at the Cathedral in Bermuda," she says chattily, stopping in front of a massive oil painting hanging in a hallway outside the chapel.

"One of our favorite things was to have the healing services there."

Turning quickly, she leads the group of community leaders and a Herald reporter into the chapel where a group of community members are finishing up a regular Gregorian chant service.

"Every three hours, approximately, we chant for 10 or 15 minutes in here," she explains.

"And of course there's the 24-hour prayer vigil that goes on all the time."

The beamed chapel is a repository for an impressive collection of community treasures — the antique pipe organ, intricate carvings made by the sisters and brothers, hand-drawn lace, stained glass and the bust of a suffering Jesus sent from a monastery in Agenton, France.

"We can hold 350 people in here," Sorensen explains. "And the pews are removable so we can convert to a television studio."

"Our programs are all along the lines of what we are called to do, so there is no infringement on the chapel."

Beneath the church is the undercroft, a huge basement that houses a restaurant-sized kitchen, crafts workshops, and a large fellowship hall that on this day is retreat headquarters for a gathering of eight Catholic nuns led by a smiling Mrs. Anderson.

Sorensen stops to chat briefly with the group then makes her way down a hallway leading to the outside. Abruptly, she stops before a closed door.

"This is the boiler room," she says smiling mischievously. "This is where we keep them chained up."

For a fleeting second, the entourage of community members appears stunned. Then they begin laughing uproariously.

"You have to laugh," Sorensen said, wiping a tear from her eye. "Otherwise you'd go crazy."

Sorensen's sudden joke was her first and only spontaneous reference to the controversy that began several years ago and intensified in recent months after 20 members defected and began publicly criticizing the Community of Jesus.

"I know their motivations, but I can't tell you I won't," Sorensen said determinedly.

"I'll just have to take it on the chin because I won't violate the confidences they are violating."

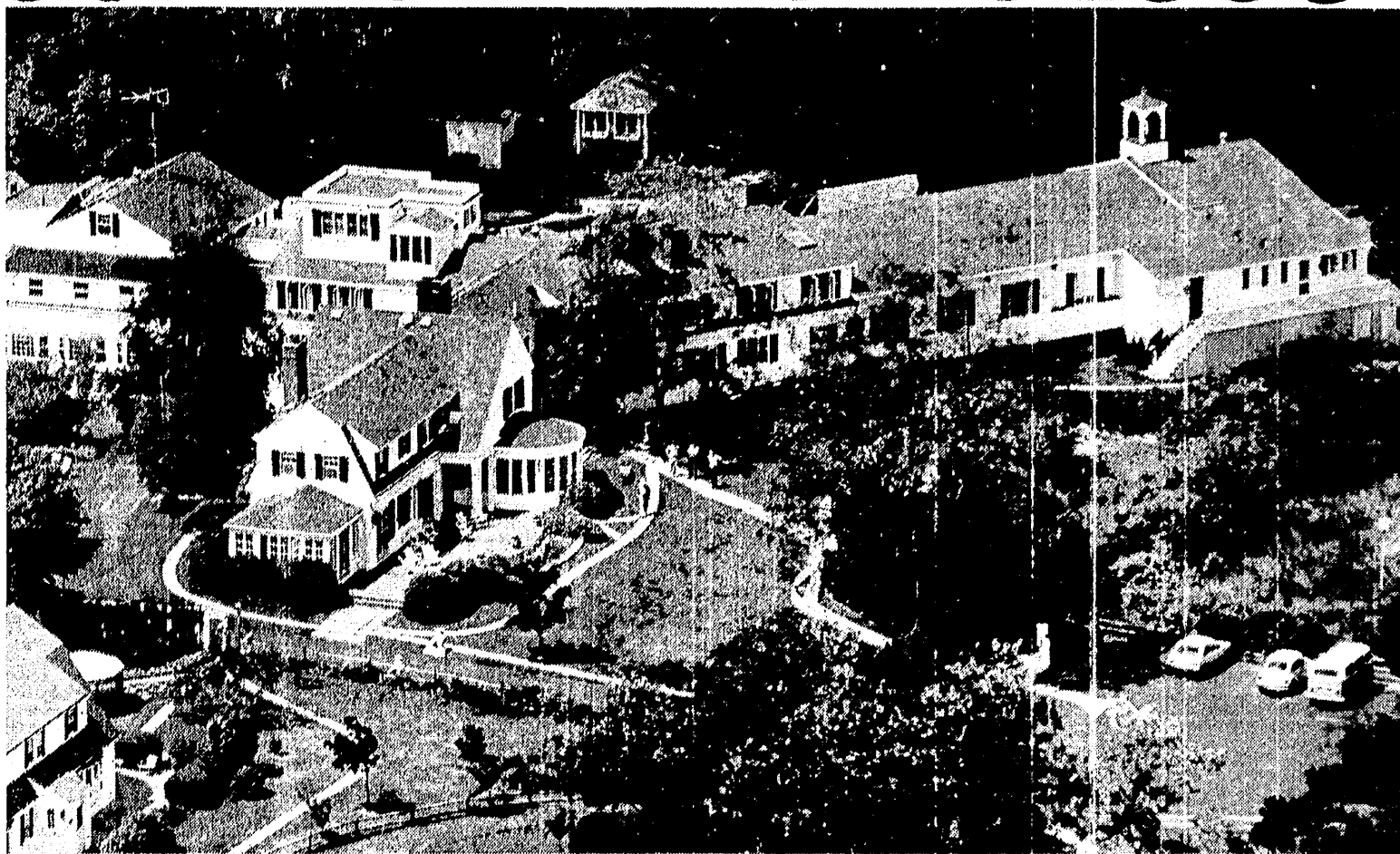
Over the past four years, Anderson and Sorensen had denied all press requests for interviews to discuss allegations about the practices at the Community of Jesus.

But that policy was abruptly reversed three weeks ago after months of ex-members' intense criticism of them and their church.

They hired Boston lawyer Bob Popeo, the man who won an acquittal in the bribery trial of former state Rep. Vincent Phre, and agreed

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COMMUNITY OF JESUS



COMMUNITY HEADQUARTERS: Aerial view of the main buildings at the 35-acre Community of Jesus compound in Orleans on Cape Cod. The community, founded in the late 1950s, owns 22 houses in Orleans as well as property in Bermuda and Canada. More than 250 people live at the Orleans site.

Staff photo by Kevin Cole

other former members who vehemently criticize the church they once loyally served.

The Rev. Hal Holms, one of 10 clergymen who live at the community, believes the outcry is simply the latest example of the chaos threatening all symbols of authority.

"We live in an age in which all authority, including the authority of ministers in churches, has been seriously eroded," he said.

"This is one of the factors making the Community of Jesus look like something it isn't."

"It isn't a cult based on personalities."

"It is an attempt of people to live in a way that is very ancient

and very acceptable in world Christianity."

"It tries to embrace that which is good," he continued. "And it's sad to see it pilloried as something weird and strange, when a lot of us know it really isn't."

COOL

THE COMMUNITY of Jesus had its start in the late 1950s, when Cay Andersen, a Cape Cod housewife, met Judy Sorensen, a fledgling evangelist and faith healer, at an Episcopal church service in Orleans.

Cay suffered from a nervous

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Methods similar to the Moonies and Jonestown, says cult expert

PRACTICES described by former members of the Community of Jesus are distressingly similar to methods used by the Moonies and at the Rev. Jim Jones' lethal People's Temple, according to a cult expert.

Michael Langone, a psychologist and cult researcher with the American Family Foundation in Weston, said former members' allegations about the community suggest that the Cape Cod group may be a destructive cult operating under the guise of a benign Protestant retreat.

"There are a number of things we see with destructive cults," he said.

"For example, there is usually a great deal of psychological pressure, and it is usually virtually impossible for members to leave."

"The leaders are highly manipulative, and there is often a good deal of psychological damage to members."

"The leaders dictate in great detail how members should think, feel and act. The leaders usually claim some kind of special or exalted status as justification for doing this."

In the Community of Jesus, followers believe the directors, Cay Andersen and Judy Sorensen, speak for the Holy Spirit, former members say.

This kind of "magical belief

system" works to keep cult members at odds with family and friends "on the outside," Langone said.

"Most destructive cults exploit members psychologically, physically and financially, although money often does not appear to be the main motivating factor," Langone said.

"The leaders' ego satisfaction and satisfaction of their vanity is often the most important thing."

Community practices, such as so-called "light sessions," are a classic mind-control technique, Langone said.

"I see two things in operation there," he said. "There is the induction of anxiety and guilt through the criticism. Then relief from that anxiety and guilt when a member says the right thing, confesses or shows the proper contrition."

"Many studies have shown the power of groups to shape the behavior of an individual," he continued.

"The 'light' groups are a powerful tool for instilling conflict. The irony is they are touted as liberating."

Langone said ex-members' reports about the dispensing of tranquilizers, forced dieting and gorging are also common control tactics.

"Jim Jones had a doctor who used to prescribe drugs for peo-

ple. It made it a lot easier for people to kill themselves," he said.

"The dieting I would consider a dangerous practice," he continued. "Eating nothing but grapes, grape juice and raisins could be physically debilitating."

"But it is also easier to exercise control over someone's thoughts when they are weak from lack of food."

A practice of forcing someone to gain weight to cure "vanity," as one ex-member described, "is another example of total control," Langone said.

"They are showing concern with the details of a person's private life that is way beyond acceptable standards," he said.

Dr. Ellendale Hoffman, an Episcopal priest and psychologist who has counseled a number of former members of the Community of Jesus, said most carry a lot of guilt about their decision to leave the group.

"The problem with the community is that people are not able, emotionally, to leave freely. They are treated as though doing so is something very wrong," she said.

"They have a lot of feelings of self-condemnation and guilt. The experience has been very hurtful and painful for them."

"The Gospel for them was not freeing. It was oppressive."



Staff photo by Ron Norton



Herald photo by Frank Paparo

FORMER MEMBERS: Heidi and Peter Andersen, above, and Arthur and Margaret Guyer say violence was a regular feature of life at the Community of Jesus.



COMMUNITY WORK: A member waters plants in the community's lush grounds.

Staff photo by Barry Chin

Ex-members tell of life at Cape religious community

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disorder, and she asked Judy to pray for her. According to a community history, Judy placed her hand on Cay's knee and told her: "I'll give you fair warning. Your life will never be the same again."

The statement was prophecy, the story goes, and Cay's health improved. The two became prayer partners, leading a local group of born-again Christians they called the Rock Harbor Fellowship.

In 1968 Judy and her husband Bill decided to sell their home in New Jersey and live on the Cape year 'round with their four children.

While the Sorensen summer home on Crystal Lake in Orleans was winterized, the family moved into the Andersons' Rock Harbor Manor guest house — the building that was renamed Bethany and now serves as the community's main retreat house.

According to community history, the families' early experiences living together formed the basis for the community doctrine of "living in the light" — a method of open confrontation, confession and correction designed to expose and eradicate sin.

But Peter Anderson has a different version of events:

"Mother was always a very violent person," he recalled. "She and my father had quite frequent fights, violent episodes, screaming and yelling for hours at a time."

"As I recall, mother usually started it. She was a real nagger."

"Judy came into picture around 1957 or 1958, and before long, the same kind of fighting mother and dad had, started between Cay and Judy."

"It was violent to the point where Cay would pick things up and throw them at Judy. I once saw Judy so frustrated she was sitting on the couch abusing herself, slapping herself in the face."

At first, Anderson said, his mother was remorseful after the violent fights. She considered them un-Christian and promised to repent.

But at some point, Anderson said, "Mom decided all this fighting and yelling was not wrong — in fact, it was a virtue — and they institutionalized it at the Community of Jesus."

"Down there, everyone is expected to act like Cay does, and they've all become little Frankensteins."

"This is called 'living in the light.'"

Soon after they moved in together, Cay and Judy began winning followers.

Four young women — one of them Heidi Laser — took oaths of loyalty to the women and renounced their right "to own, to choose and to marry," forming the nucleus of the community's celibate sisterhood.

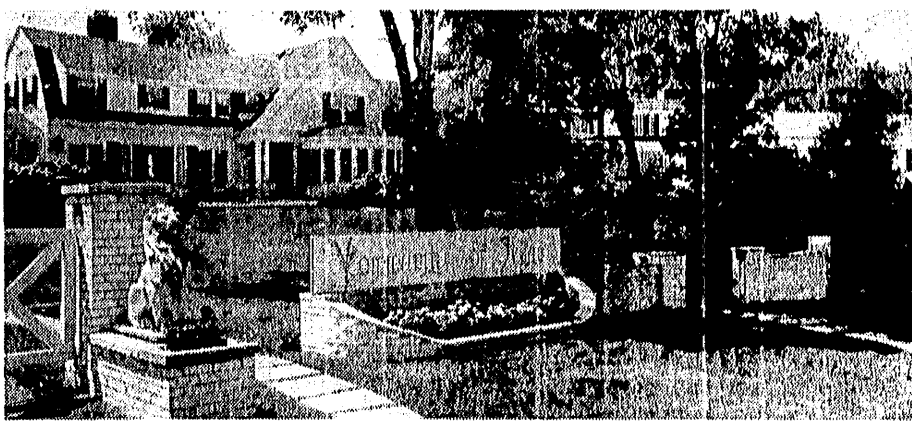
Working through wealthy mainline Protestant churches, the two women — who had begun calling themselves Mother Cay and Mother Judy — pulled in devotees from all over the country.

Before long, followers from places like Cambridge, Quincy, Darien, Conn., and upstate New York were pulling up stakes and buying up property around the Andersons' Rock Harbor Manor.

By the mid-1970s, the membership list was a roll call of wealth and social prominence:

There's Bill and Sally Kanaga out of Greenwich, Conn. He is chairman of Arthur Young International — one of the country's top accounting firms. She is the perfectly polished executive wife.

There's ex-Doubleday editor David Manuel and his wife, Bar-



COMMUNITY EXTERIOR: Front entrance of the Community of Jesus property in Orleans, Cape Cod.

barn, now a community administrator. A former undersecretary of the Navy is a non-resident member, and two former Anglican bishops are frequent visitors.

Peter Marshall, a prominent East Dennis minister, joined and brought most of his congregation with him. His mother was religious author Catherine Marshall; his father was the former Senate chaplain and the subject of her book, "A Man Called Peter."

And there are Rockefeller heirs, members of the New York Stock Exchange, names from the Social Register and "Who's Who," two doctors, four lawyers, three architects, several college professors and eight Ph.D.s.

All told, there are 280 live-in members, sharing Bethany and 22 private homes in the immediate neighborhood. The sisterhood's ranks have swelled to 43 while a similar brotherhood numbers 10.

Although members own their own homes, families live communally in the spirit of the Andersons' and Sorensens' early days. And each member is encouraged to point out and correct other members' "sins," to strive always to "live in the light."

Outside the community, there are some 600 non-resident members scattered around the United States and abroad; and about 1,000 Christians make annual retreats to the Orleans compound.

In Bermuda, the community gained control of a 45-acre wilderness preserve, and in Canada members run an exclusive prep school. The worth of the real estate holdings in all three countries has been estimated at more than \$200 million.

While personal wealth is retained, the membership donates staggering amounts to the community, former members say.

"When it began, no one realized what it would eventually become," Heidi Anderson said. "I know if I had, I never would have become involved."

□□□

HEIDI LASER ANDERSEN first met Cay and Judy when she was a 21-year-old German immigrant who came to the United States to work as a governess for the Sorensen family.

"Cay and Judy would always be together. I thought it was a little strange at first, but gradually I became very impressed with them," she recalled.

"I thought they were very special, holy, because they said people got better when they pray for them, things like that."

"But yet I saw all this hurt, all this fighting."

Heidi admits she was a prime target for any authoritarian religious cult because of her strict Lutheran upbringing in Ger-

many. Soon after she came to America, she fell under the women's spell.

"It's a very interesting thing how they got hold of you," she said. "I know exactly how they got hold of me."

At a church picnic, Heidi recalled, Cay and Judy came up to her and said, "You have some terrible grief about your father in you."

"It was true. My father was killed by the Nazis, and it was very hard for me and my mother; it was a very traumatic thing in our lives."

"I was sad. I started to cry. There was something about how they said it or something. I cried for four hours. A friend of theirs took me home. I couldn't stay at the picnic — I was crying so hard."

"Right then and there they got hold of me. It impressed me so that they knew this about me. They make you feel as though they have this special gift of insight into you, and they know these secret things about you."

"They touched this vulnerable place. And this is how they work on people."

For the next 20 years Heidi dedicated her life to wait on Cay and Judy hand and foot, without pay.

"These two women are so lazy," she said. "They wouldn't even lift a finger to get dressed in the morning. We had to dress them, comb their hair, serve them their food, and God help you if something doesn't please them."

"The bad thing is, you start to believe that if you're not right with Cay and Judy, you're not right with God."

But during the course of her work, Heidi began to notice that the two women did not always practice what they preached.

Community rules that discouraged drinking — and prohibit it on community grounds — didn't stop the women from enjoying beer and wine, she said.

"When everyone would be down in the chapel praying, the sisters would sneak cases of Heinekken beer up the stairs to their apartment," Heidi recalled.

"We wrapped it in blankets so the people wouldn't hear the bottles rattling," she said.

In their apartment above the chapel, the women had a closet full of wine, champagne and sherry. They drank with every meal, and if they had guests, Cay's and Judy's glasses were filled out of their sight, Heidi said.

"They opened their first beer at about 11 in the morning," she recalled. "They told us not to worry. You couldn't become an alcoholic if you only drank beer and wine."

But there were times when it was obvious the women had too much to drink, Heidi said.

"We had to hold Cay on the

toilet once. She was vomiting. And Judy teased her, saying, 'You had too much to drink, Carrie May,'" Heidi recalled.

Several times — usually after an argument with Cay — Judy would go up to a rooftop porch and quaff whole bottles of champagne, ex-members said.

Other times when she was upset, Judy would go down to a basement video room and watch old Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald movies the community stocked for her.

"She'd sit down there and watch these movies and cry and cry," Heidi said.

But the women's fighting continued, Heidi said.

"Sometimes I had to physically hold them apart," she recalled. "They would often wake me in the middle of the night to pacify them."

"One time, I remember, Cay pulled out a handful of Judy's hair."

"But they always had an excuse for the fighting. They would say, 'We are fighting for the body of Christ.' Or also, 'We are fighting because someone is in sin.'"

Mrs. Sorensen and Mrs. Anderson do not deny that they drink but they do dispute Heidi's claims that their drinking is excessive. And the women say that although they have disagreements — they never turned violent.

Heidi contends that the women fought about "everything and nothing," but one of their biggest problems was their weight and they would often announce they were going on diets, she recalled.

"They would call all the residents into the chapel and say, 'We're going on a grape fast. Who will stand with us and support us?'"

Dozens of residents would volunteer for a 40-day diet of grapes, grape juice and raisins. Meanwhile, Heidi said, the two women broke their fast by lunchtime.

"They wanted to be thin, but they couldn't do it," she said. "Judy was even taking diuretics to try to lose weight. She took so many she got chest pains. Nothing worked."

Their weight problems were compounded by their almost total inertia, Heidi said.

"They laid around their apartment all day reading magazines," Heidi said. "It got so bad they didn't even read the Bible or pray anymore."

The women had little need to leave their posh apartment, Heidi said: It is equipped with every amenity — sauna, hot tub, luxurious carpets and furnishings, and modern electronic equipment that allows them to hear, and in some places see, everything that goes on in the compound.

One ex-member remembers a

meeting in Bethany when one woman defended a community member who had come under attack.

"All of a sudden, out of the fireplace came Judy's voice," she recalled. "She yelled, 'You're speaking for Satan!'"

"It surprised the hell out of us."

But members soon adjusted to the idea that Cay and Judy could see and hear everything that went on, he said.

"They know everything and ran everything," Heidi said. "Everyone ran around carrying out their orders."

Members believe that Cay and Judy deserve their exalted position because they are the recipients of special gifts of God — when they speak, they speak for the Holy Spirit.

In the community hierarchy Mother Cay and Mother Judy are on top. Right below are the community members most obviously endowed by God: The wealthy, the prominent and the clergy, former members say.

At the bottom rung were the "sisters" and "brothers" who had no money or status and functioned as unpaid slaves.

"For three years they sent me out to work in a nursing home," Heidi recalled.

"I couldn't tell you what I made, because I would just bring home the check and hand it over."

"I didn't care. Money was nothing to me. Nothing was anything except to make it through the day and stay half-way sane."

While she was working on the outside, Heidi was still expected to perform her duties as a sister.

One of those duties was handling out medication for members who couldn't cope with community life, she said.

Heidi says she remembers passing out a variety of powerful tranquilizers to about a half-dozen members.

"I remember Mellaril, Haldol, Tranxene, Stelazine and Phenergan," she said.

"The doctor prescribes them if you are upset, and everyone gets very upset if they are not in good favor with Cay and Judy," she said.

"The doctor would do exactly what Cay and Judy would say," she added. "If they said 'Give this person something to calm her down,' he would just do it."

In some cases, ex-members say, tranquilizers were used to control members' "rebellion."

Several former members say that medication was prescribed for Judy's son, Doug, who rebelled against his mother's orders that he stay in the brotherhood.

Doug, who has since defected, was given Mellaril, a powerful mood-altering drug proscribed for psychosis, ex-members said.

"The reasoning was that Doug, since he didn't want to be a brother, was mentally ill," said one former member who asked not to be named.

"Therefore, he had to have Mellaril."

The doctor named by former members denied all the allegations, saying he never prescribed medication on Cay and Judy's orders or to control members.

But other former members corroborated the story and said drugs were not the only means of discipline the community used.

A brother who had been caught masturbating was put in a straitjacket when he went to bed at night, ex-members said.

He defected.

One former member recalls an incident when two men who

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Inside the Community of Jesus on Cape Cod

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to answer questions, arrange interviews and offer "free, open access to the community."

In a recent session at Popco's office, 11 community leaders met with The Herald to discuss the former members' allegations.

On hand were Anderson; community administrators Barbara Manuel and Jill Elmer, who is Sorenson's daughter; long-time member Sally Kanaga; a community doctor and three community clergymen.

Popco acted as moderator, but he was not the only lawyer in the room. Four others — including two community attorneys — assisted, taking notes, offering comments and suggestions, and interceding frequently to challenge questions.

During the three-hour session, the community leaders disputed nearly all the allegations raised by their critics — flatly denying reports about brainwashing, physical violence, and forced silences, diets and fasts.

How do you force someone to keep silent, to fast or to eat something they don't want to eat, they asked.

How could two former housewives brainwash a group of bright, independent, successful

and articulate adults, they wanted to know.

Why would you hold someone against their will, and why would members stay if those terrible things really happened, they wondered.

"They concluded that the bulk of the allegations were 'absolutely ludicrous.'"

"This kind of work can suffer and has suffered from the repetition of charges... with no other purpose but to discredit and destroy," the Rev. Hal Holms said.

"I have no (argument) with people who want to withdraw from the Community of Jesus. I hold no ill will towards them."

"The thing that I find difficult is that they go and make a cause out of badmouthing what they had previously said was helpful."

Looking distressed, Anderson denied former members' stories about her lifestyle with Sorenson: "There is no excessive drinking or physical violence, she said, and she dismissed any suggestion that the two sleep in the same bed."

"I am not a homosexual and neither is she," Anderson stated flatly.

"We sleep in separate beds and we would sleep in separate rooms if, when my husband designed the (apartment) and turned it into

our study, he had been able to put in two fireplaces and still have two bedrooms."

Anderson said she and Mrs. Sorenson took vows of celibacy with their husbands' consent when they formed the celibate sisterhood in the late 1960s. After Sorenson's cancer operation they moved into the apartment together.

A distinguished-looking community doctor disputed reports that powerful drugs were prescribed for members who could not cope with community life.

The doctor acknowledged that he has prescribed "mild tranquilizers" for patients several times during his seven years at the Orleans compound.

But he vehemently denied that he authorized Holdi Anderson to pass out pills or that medication was prescribed on orders from Cay Anderson and Sorenson.

"I am my own man," he declared.

All the community leaders loudly denied reports of physical violence.

Cay Anderson said she never saw Holdi Lasor Anderson — or any other community member — kicked, slapped or forcibly restrained from leaving the group.

And all 11 members denied reports that a young man who was in the community brotherhood was placed in a straight jacket after being caught masturbating.

Joining that denial was a community clergyman who, according to two former members, previously admitted that the incident had occurred and excused it because it was done with the brother's permission.

The community leaders termed most of the criticism the product of a "family vendetta" organized, they said, by Mrs. Anderson's son Peter, his wife Holdi, and Mrs. Sorenson's sons John and Doug.

"I can understand why Holdi would make allegations such as these, given her background," Jill Elmer said.

"Being brought up in Nazi Germany, The trauma and tragedy of seeing people die on the battlefields, having to go out and take chocolate off the bodies of dead American soldiers to survive, having her father die in the war."

"That kind of experience is enough to do someone in for life. I can understand where Holdi is coming from and sympathize with where she's at."

"As far as Peter Anderson is

concerned, he left for Germany in 1967 and for the past 18 years, he has been in the Community of Jesus a total of 10 days.

"As far as my brothers are concerned, I would like to suggest that it is simply a family feud."

John and Doug Sorenson, who left the community several years ago, have kept silent on the subject of their mother's church in recent weeks, letting other former members have their say.

"Since April I have refrained from further public criticism of the Community of Jesus," said John Sorenson, who presently lives in Virginia where he is studying to become an Episcopal priest.

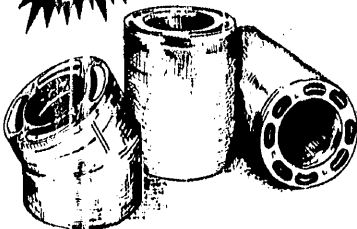
"It is apparent that my statements as a member of the Sorenson family enabled them to label the criticism as a family vendetta."

"It has been my hope that by personally withholding from this controversy, members of the Community of Jesus will be able to turn their attention away from their critics and back onto themselves and that they will find a way to deal constructively with the sincere concerns that former members have attempted to communicate."

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Cape community accused of mental, physical violence

From Page 14

needed to "get with the program" were kicked in the buttocks by 40 community men, while Cay and Judy looked on approvingly.

"The women were all upstairs praying that the two men would see the light," he recalled.

Arthur Guyer, 69, a retired education official, remembers a time when his wife, Margaret, 60, was instructed to slap him repeatedly to "get out her frustrations."

A similar incident he said he witnessed became more violent. A wife who was instructed to slap her husband hit him so hard he put up his hands to protect himself.

"Immediately," Guyer said, "one of the biggest men in the community leaped up, grabbed him, smashed him over a chair and knocked him flat on his back. I think the man would have killed him, except that a couple of other men intervened and stopped the attack."

And Heidi Andersen recalls the case of a sister who was slapped in the face, because Judy didn't like the fit of a dress the sister sewed for her.

Another sister was forcibly stopped from leaving the community when Judy threw her to the floor and sat on her, Heidi said.

Mrs. Andersen and other community leaders denied all the allegations of physical violence.

Most former members agree that in recent years physical abuse has lessened, but they say emotional battering has increased.

"The practice most commonly criticized is the community's so-called 'light sessions,'" Guyer said.

"They get a group of people in a room, then the leader of the session will single out some person for abuse," recalled ex-member Chris Johnson, 38, a Dennis retailer.

"After the leader gets through, they go around the room, and everyone has to think of something negative to say about the person."

"They never said anything positive," Guyer added. "The only thing important was the negative."

Former member Peter Hamilton, an Orleans boat builder who says his family was shattered when he and two daughters left the community and his wife and three other children remained, described light sessions as "a constant mental beating."

"It was constant harranguing," he recalled. "They would pick out something you did wrong — ridiculous things — and jump all over you for it."

Arthur Guyer remembers being criticized for his "jealousy" when a community leader decided he envied a piece of chicken on his wife's plate.

Margaret Guyer remembers she was accused of envy when another community member received flowers and she didn't.

"You were always wrong; they never were," Guyer said. "Even when you were being publicly humiliated, ridiculed, scorned, shouted at, yelled at, ripped up, and down — you felt you deserved it."

(Continued)

IN SPECIAL CASES where light sessions failed to correct flaws, Cay and Judy would order special disciplines, the former members said.

In March 1981, Margaret Guyer was singled out.

"I wasn't coming under," she said. "I had been on grape fasts and other disciplines for months, but they said I was still rebellious. Finally, they decided that I

should be sent to Bermuda."

Margaret's husband, Arthur, said he was not told she was leaving.

"I was just presented with a bill for her ticket," he recalled, "and I didn't see her for six months."

When she arrived in Bermuda, Margaret said she was informed that Cay and Judy wanted her to keep silent during her entire stay.

"I was only allowed to speak when the leaders told me I could," she recalled. "And, of course, if we had company, I was encouraged to talk."

"It was very hard," she continued. "At breakfast, for instance, I would have a bowl of cornflakes."

"If no one remembered to pass the sugar, I had to go without, because I couldn't ask for it."

"Everything to humiliate you and make you feel worthless and useless."

During the six months of her Bermuda discipline, Mrs. Guyer said she spent most of her days doing laundry in a small basement room, cleaning bathrooms or writing notes confessing her sins.

Community leader Stephen Elmer, who was director of the Bermuda program for 10 years, disputed Mrs. Guyer's version of events. He said her silence discipline lasted only three weeks at most and that the entire experience was a positive one.

"It was completely voluntary, and she never raised any objection to it," he said.

"In the end I think it was good for her, and afterward she often mentioned to my wife and I how much she appreciated what we'd done for her in Bermuda."

But Mrs. Guyer disagreed, saying the ordeal was "six months in hell." The experience resulted in her and her husband's decision to leave the community, she said.

The Guyers made the final break last fall and shortly afterward about 15 other members also left.

"Now our problem is we still have two daughters in the community; one is a sister," Guyer said.

"When we told the girls we were leaving, they cut us off. Shut us out of their lives."

"They're totally brainwashed and couldn't see our side at all."

"Our oldest daughter said to us: 'When you're near the Mothers, can't you just feel the aura of the Holy Spirit?'"

"That's what they believe."

MARGARET GUYER'S Bermuda discipline was not an isolated incident. Heidi Andersen relates a similar ordeal:

She returned a day late from a visit to her mother in Germany and was punished by being confined in a tiny cottage, forced to scrub pots, do laundry and write long, insulting notes to her mother.

"I went on my knees in front of Judy, cried and pleaded for forgiveness," Heidi remembered. "She kicked me with her foot and said: 'Get out of my sight.'"

Eventually, Heidi worked her way back into the Mothers' good graces, only to fall again in late 1981.

At that time, Peter Andersen was visiting the community on a vacation from the German monastery where he served as a monk for 17 years.

Heidi, who had known and loved Peter since childhood, put on a special dress to look nice for him when he arrived.

"The Mothers told me I was 'totally vain' and that I would have to put on weight to get over my vanity."

A petite woman at 120 pounds, Heidi said she was ordered to get up to 140 and keep her weight there.

"I had to eat mountains of food. They would load up my plate with these extra little hills of butter and mayonnaise."

"In between the meals I had to eat these real thick, thick sandwiches with peanut butter and butter and goat's milk."

"I hated it. I would sit there, and I would cry through every meal, every snack. I couldn't get the food down. I'd be sick to my stomach from the last meal, and it would be time to eat something else."

Every day Heidi was weighed. If she lost weight or it stayed the same, her food was increased, she said.

Finally, she went to Cay and Judy and begged to be taken off the diet.

"I told them if they didn't take me off, I might have to call my cousin to come and get me out of the community."

"You know what they did? They laughed at me. They never thought I'd leave."

A few nights later, while Heidi was in a basement doing laundry, another sister came in and told her to be ready to leave for Bermuda the next morning.

"I later found out that Cay and Judy were leaving for one of their trips — this time to Australia and the Far East," Heidi said. "They sent me to Bermuda, so I couldn't escape while they were gone."

When Heidi arrived at the community compound in Bermuda, she said her passport, identification and money were confiscated. Troubled and despairing, she went into the chapel and prayed.

"I said, 'Oh God, why after all these years aren't things getting any better? They're getting worse. I've tried so hard for 22 years and nothing gets better.'"

"It was then I realized that nothing would ever change and I would have to leave."

Heidi had a cousin who lived in Massachusetts, and she tried to find him. After checking phone listings for every town, she finally located his number, called him and asked him to come get her.

"I said, 'I have to run away. I'll hide behind the bushes. Come up the entrance, I'll be on the left side.'"

"He said, 'Come on, give me a telephone number or something so I know how to reach you.'"

"I said: 'You can't, because I have to run away.'"

The next day, Heidi waited all day in the bushes, but her cousin didn't come.

In the afternoon she heard a community leader calling her name. She panicked and ran to a nearby store.

"I said to the girl in there, 'Please help me. Hide me.'"

"She let me use her phone, and I called my cousin's office, but his secretary said he had left and should be in Bermuda."

"What had happened was this: There are three entrances to the property, and I only knew of one. He missed me."

Community leader Stephen Elmer found Heidi in the store and told her, "Your plan almost worked. Your cousin was here. He has gone back to Boston," she said.

"I was in despair. I cried all night."

But the next day her cousin returned with a lawyer and an official from the American consulate. Heidi was given her passport and papers, and she left the community for good.

Elmer has denied making the statement in the store and said Heidi was never kept in Bermuda against her will.

"We kept her passport in the office for safekeeping. If she wanted it all she had to do was ask," he said.

"She's 40-how-many-years-old? How could we hold her against her will? How could we force her to eat things if she didn't want to? Why didn't she go to the authorities?"

Shortly after she left the community, Heidi wrote to the Elmers and apologized for "hurting you both so much," he pointed out.

"I was so brainwashed I still protected them," Heidi said. "I thought it was a good place. I thought it just wasn't for me."

Two years after her dramatic departure, Heidi was living on her own. She had her nurse's license and a good job.

Peter came to America on vacation from the monastery. He found Heidi and realized he was

still in love with her.

In April 1984, Peter gave up his life as a monk and became Heidi's husband.

"We always loved each other, but Cay and Judy wouldn't let us get married," Peter said. "Our love survived 17 years and all kinds of torment. But we're happy now."

Heidi agreed.

"Whenever you had any idea of leaving there, they tell you something like you are going to die, or something terrible is going to happen to your kids."

"You are petrified about what is going to happen to you if you leave there."

"But you leave and nothing happens. You're still alive after so many years and nothing horrible has happened."

"In fact, you're suddenly quite happy and you've stopped crying."


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