

25 YEARS
(1980 - 2005)

News from Info-Cult

February 2008, #10

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Health Issues](#)
[In Memoriam](#)
[Education and Awareness](#)
[Info-Cult](#)

Health Issues

On an almost daily basis Info-Cult is asked to provide information and needed advice concerning a family member, friend or client who is involved in a group suspected of being harmful. Fortunately, in many of these cases, there is no indication the persons involved are in any imminent physical danger, though there may be other factors for concern.

Info-Cult helps the worried party through our knowledge and resources and encourages them to take the time to consider their options rather than move on a reflexive response which could result in damaging their relationship as well as draw a person closer to the group in question.

Still, every year there are cases where families, friends, health professional and officials must deal with a potential life or death situation resulting from involvement in certain groups. In these cases, concerned parties may have little time on their side to make a decision about what to do.

Some of these situations concern health and medical issues due to a group's belief system. Beliefs may vary from: health problems are simply

caused by emotional issues, medical treatments show a lack of faith, an illness is God's will, a group's leader can cure health problems to the belief that a certain dietary regime will cure and/or prevent illnesses.

One example occurred recently when a young woman whom I'll call Mary contacted us about her mother. The mother had been involved in a group who believed they had a method to treat medical problems. Her involvement in this group was not too worrisome to Mary until her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and shortly afterward stopped going for regular medical treatments. Mary's mother also believed that any negative views about what she was doing would affect her cure.

Mary adamantly tried to convince her mother to pursue a traditional approach to treating her cancer. Mary's confrontational style caused a rift between them straining continued communication. With nowhere else to turn she called Info-Cult.

We are working with Mary and have presented her with different options on how to deal with the crisis.

Mary has most recently reported that she and her mother are communicating again.

During the past year, a number of life and death situations have been in the news involving the Jehovah's Witnesses as a result of their prohibition against blood transfusions. In one case the brother of a member who died began circulating a petition to get the government to make it illegal to refuse treatment for religious reasons. He is not the only one to have raised a voice against this religious practice.

What is to be done? From a family member's perspective one sees a loved one making a decision that could lead to their death. The view is often that the individual in question is being manipulated or has been "brainwashed" into refusing a transfusion and governmental officials should do something about it.

In Memoriam

Marilyn Wener

It is with great sadness that we mourn the passing of Marilyn Wener. Marilyn was one of the founders in the late 1970s of a Montreal parents' group which eventually became Info-Cult. In the early 1970s before "cults" became an issue of concern and before resources existed for families having a cult-related problem, her family experienced a personal loss. Marilyn funneled the pain and suffering of this tragedy into action and became involved in the organizing of educational activities, as well as providing moral support to others who needed someone to turn to who could understand what they were experiencing. In addition, she started different projects to help fund Info-Cult. One of her pet projects was recovering golf balls from a lake near her country house. After cleaning and packaging them in egg cartons she would sell them. She was active until the end and her great strength and character and her presence will be sorely missed. Our sincere sympathies to her husband Edgar and the rest of her family.

Jacques Hebert

We were saddened to hear of the death of [Jacques Hebert](#). His involvement with Info-Cult was not as well known as his participation in a number of other public causes, but no less important. As a member

Where children are concerned, state agencies can intervene and court order a transfusion to take place to save a child's life.

Even though one may believe that adults are making decisions under the influence of an individual or group, they are legally considered consenting adults. Though one may vehemently disagree with the Jehovah's Witnesses view on blood transfusions, or find objectionable other individuals or groups' views on medical treatment, freedom of religion and freedom to choose for oneself, are fundamental rights of adult citizens. The mission of Info-Cult is to provide education and information as well as the tools and skills with which to deal with the complex issues surrounding "cults", "new religious movements" and related groups and subjects. We have helped thousands of individuals during our 28 years in operation and we will continue to do so in the years to come.

of our board for many years his passionate belief in liberty and in helping the underdog manifested itself in his thoughtful observations on the cult phenomenon. His views reflected the commitment of our organization for education, awareness and assistance. An extract from an allocution he gave during an Info-Cult press conference in 1991 continues to inspire us today.

"When the Jehovah's Witnesses were being persecuted by Maurice Duplessis, the premier of Quebec in the 1950s, I found myself, without hesitation, on the side of the Jehovah's Witnesses. With other men of freedom more prestigious than me: the Frank Scotts, the Pierre Trudeaus, the Michael Oliviers, the Gerard Pelletiers, the Patenaudes and many others.

Yet, I had no particular sympathy for that cult which like many others rejects all those that don't bow to their brand of the "truth" and considers all criticism as negative, and of "satanic" inspiration.

Because I try hard in all circumstances to be on the side of freedom, I above all don't want to prevent anyone from practicing the religion of their choice, from propagating their beliefs however absurd and weird the theories are. I am ready to fight for religious freedom but also ready to fight against those that outrageously abuse the freedom that

our society grants them – thank God! One of the most democratic in the world...

I summarize in two words: cults, all cults have the right to exist in a free society, the right to express themselves; to recruit followers. But the public also has the right to know their methods, their real objectives, their financial situation... And the public has the right to demand that cults, all cults respect the laws like any organization, like any citizen.”*

Jacques Hebert is no longer with us, but he is and always will be a source of inspiration, and his words

Education and Awareness

ICSA Conferences

As mentioned in our previous News ([May 2007 # 9](#)), Info-Cult is collaborating closely with the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) in organizing international conferences. The most recent annual conference was held in Brussels, Belgium in June/July 2007 and was very successful. Two hundred and twenty people from 26 countries registered for this conference which was the capacity for the conference venue.

The introduction to the conference was written by Michael Langone Executive Director of ICSA and Mike Kropveld Executive Director of Info-Cult. The text is available at:
<http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/intro12june07eng.pdf>

During the Belgium ICSA conference Mike Kropveld was honored with the **Herbert L. Rosedale Award**. This award is *presented in recognition of leadership in the effort to preserve and protect individual freedom* and was established to honor a pioneer and leader in the struggle for human dignity and freedom.

Herbert Rosedale, an attorney, was the president of the American Family Foundation (the predecessor of the International Cultic Studies Association) from 1988 until his death in 2003. He was a mentor and guide for individuals in the cultic studies field, donating thousands of pro bono hours to individuals who had been harmed by cultic groups. Rosedale wrote and lectured extensively on cults and was considered to be one of the most respected experts on the subject.

will continue to resonate for all who struggle for rights and freedom.

Carolle Tremblay - President
Jean-Pierre Fafard – Treasurer
Maria Peluso - Secretary
Michael Crelinsten - Administrator
Herschel Segal - Administrator
Mike Kropveld – Executive Director

* Translation by Info-Cult from the original French text.

The Herbert L. Rosedale Award has been presented annually since 2004 to individuals or institutions who exemplify Mr. Rosedale's qualities of courage, leadership and resolution in educating the public about cults, in helping victims of cults, or in opposing the harmful practices of cults.

The 2008 ICSA conference will be held at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania June 27-29, 2008.
http://www.icsahome.com/infoserv_conferences/conference_home_2008.asp

We are in the midst of planning the 2009 conference which will be held in Europe at a location to be announced.

FECRIS (European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism) Conference

Info-Cult's Executive Director was invited to the 2007 FECRIS conference in Hamburg, Germany and gave a presentation titled: *A Comparison of Different Countries Approaches to Cult-Related Issues*.

The presentation is accessible on the FECRIS website:
<http://griess.st1.at/gsk/fecris/hamburg/kropveld%20en.htm>

and on Info-Cult's at:
<http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/ICPubs.html>

Info-Cult website

Information is added to our site on an ongoing basis. To remain up to date we suggest visiting our site on a regular basis. Some of the recent additions deal with:

Upcoming and past TV and Radio programs as well as conferences and other announcements on our

Announcements page:

<http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/ic-events.html>

Government reports for example in Belgium, France, Switzerland and the United States at:

<http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/ic-gov.html>

Info-Cult's **Library Collection and New Acquisitions** reflecting the growing body of work from different perspectives on "cults", "new religious movements" and related groups and subjects:

<http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/ic-pub.html>

Legal Decisions in Canada:

<http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/Legalcases.html>

Info-Cult

Info-Cult is a non-profit charitable organization and as such relies on the generosity of individual donors for an important part of its funding. If you would like to support Info-Cult you can either make a donation through CanadaHelps: <http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/ic-e3.html> or by check to Info-Cult, 5655 Park Ave. #208, Montreal, QC H2V 4H2

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