

Martin Rosenthal

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Cult 'Deprogramming' Takes Toll On Couple

By LARRY HALEY
Sun-Tattler Staff

For six years Martin Rosenthal was a cloistered Hare Krishna monk, lead- ing a monastic, spartan life in a Gain- ville temple of his eastern religious sect.

Known to his peers by his religious name, Madhava, the 33-year-old Ros- enthal recently married and was ad- vided by his spiritual leaders to take his wife and go out into "the real world" as a layman — what Hare Krishna call "householders."

On a brief visit to his parent's Plan- tation home last week, Rosenthal and his new bride stepped into what he de- scribed as a nightmarish world of kid- napping, brain washing and torture.

NOW ROSENTHAL is in a Ft. Lau- derdale psychiatric hospital as a men- tal patient, fighting to get out. His wife is still missing.

On the night of June 11, Rosenthal and his wife, Marcia, were abducted from a Plantation street by a squad of six men as they went for a stroll, says Rosenthal's attorney, Assistant Bro- ward Public Defender Fred Goldstein.

The couple was taken to a Plantation house by six "goons" and subjected to 20 hours of badgering, sleeplessness and torture.

It is called deprogramming — a procedure performed by a profes- sional, hired team of deprogrammers whose aim is to brainwash the rel- gious cult member back into "normal society."

EARLY TODAY, Broward Circuit Court Judge Paul Marko was to hold a hearing at the Coral Ridge Psychiatric Hospital where Rosenthal was admit- ted after the deprogramming session as a mental patient. Marko was to de- termine if Rosenthal was legally ad- mitted to the hospital under the state's Baker Act as mentally un- stable.

Goldstein said the Baker Act re- quires that before a patient can be ad- mitted, he must be a danger to him- self or society.

"I'm not convinced Rosenthal meets the deprogrammers' investigation into the alleged kidnap- ping to bring possible charges against the deprogrammers."

Rosenthal's attorney, Assistant Bro- ward Public Defender Fred Goldstein, said that requirement, "the attorney said, "He's logical and fairly calm consid- ering what he has been through. His biggest crime is being a little bit dif- ferent and under our mental health system, if you're different you run the risk of being locked up."

ROSENTHAL was admitted to the private mental hospital by his father, Lester Rosenthal.

The father declined to comment about his son. He denied any knowl- edge of the deprogramming. "I've been trying to get hold of deprogram- mers all across the country," he said.

Goldstein instigated the court hear- ing to gain Rosenthal's release from the hospital by filing a writ of habeas corpus which contends that the patient is being held unlawfully.

THE ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER said he has also asked the Broward State Attorney's Office to conduct an investigation into the alleged kidnap- ping to bring possible charges against the deprogrammers.

Goldstein said Rosenthal has not

seen his wife since they were abducted a week ago by the deprogramming team.

Hare Krishna leader Bill Ogle, who knows Rosenthal and his wife, said Marcia was abducted and depro- grammed once before in early April.

"SHE WAS TAKEN off the street by a deprogramming team and spent three days being badgered, heckled and not allowed to sleep. They (the team) stuck ice cubes in her mouth; they kept badgering her until they were convinced she now hated the religion she once loved. Then they re- turned her to her parents," Ogle said.

Ogle, a governing body commission- er for the religious sect in the South- east, said his group petitioned a Gain- esville Circuit Court for a writ of habeas corpus to gain her release from a psychiatric hospital where she was admitted as a Baker Act patient after the ordeal. The petition for a writ was successful and she was re- leased, the Hare Krishna leader said.

"Now we don't know where she has

When the deprogramming victim gets out of the mental hospital, Ogle said, he or she will usually file a civil suit against the deprogrammers or the parents who hired them. "It has been our experience that few cases end in court action because the vic- tims are reluctant to see it through be- cause the villains often their par- ents."

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been taken. She could spend days being deprogrammed," he said.

OGLE SAID deprogramming is a common occurrence throughout the country. "Many parents hire the depro- gramming team for \$1,000 a day to brain- wash their children's minds away from their chosen faith. Deprogramm- ing clearly violates the victim's con- stitutional rights but most people ig- nore it because they look at the vic- tims as only being weird eastern cult fanatics who sell flowers or books at the airport."

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**CHARLES
WHITFIELD**

What Is a Cult And What Is Real Religion?

Hare Krishna uplakes Cult or valid religion?
It seems to depend on how you look at things.

Sometimes in the bitter domestic furor that can be generated in families over a controversial belief, one wonders which side — pro or con — is the more extreme.

The point seems pertinent to me in light of the hassle surrounding a South Florida couple, Martin and Marsha Rosenthal.

They were wrenched apart by well-meaning parents who, so the story goes, had Marsha kidnapped away from her Hare Krishna husband and "deprogrammed." But she went back to him finally — and to the sect.

These must be children, right? Kids don't know any better.

Marsha Rosenthal is 31 years old. Her husband is 33.

So much for the free will of consenting adults.

I FIRST became conscious of the Hare Krishnas in the late 1960s. It was downtown Flagler Street on a hot day. Here they came in their saffron robes, shaking rattles, beating sacred tom-toms, chanting.

The Krishnas, in the eyes of the fearful, are cultists, and therefore somehow dangerous. Besides, the country has become a teeming mix of far-out groups — Children of God, Moonies, Scientologists, People's Temple folk, followers of this guru or that.

THE CULT does have a powerful appeal in this turbulent society. It teaches absolutes. One does not have to think about values or grapple with right and wrong. Just believe. Great for ex-drug addicts.

With the rise of modern sects, there also came into existence a bizarre professional: the religious kidnaper, snatching people away for deprogramming. Sometimes it worked, and the errant offspring of frantic parents returned to the fold of middle-class values, traditional religious ethic and respectable materialism.

Some cults are undoubtedly dangerous. The horror of the Jim Jones mass murder-suicide rites in Guyana showed the extremes to which the far-out can go. But stand back for an objective look and you sometimes wonder why one movement is called a "cult" and another is not. One man's cult is also another's belief. All of us, in some way, seek a means of making sense out of this crazy world in which we live.

ONE GROUP chants, another prays. Some people sit in a circle and say "Ommmmmmmm." Some become born-again Christians. Some join the Republican Party. I'm sort of a nut about jogging. As for brainwashing, did you ever watch a Billy Graham TV special?

The Hare Krishnas, as far as I know, are a legal and legitimate enterprise. They have a constitutional right to practice religion as they please. From what I've read in The Godhead, the sect's Eastern beliefs are rooted in ancient virtues: love, devotion, discipline.

Cult? Sect? Religion? Twenty years ago, while flying in Tennessee, I became fascinated by a group of monks who lived in a commune at Gethsemane, Ky. I would drive up with my family, just to soak in the peace of the place.

These monks were men who'd rejected the real world and retreated into cloister. They lived by 12th Century disciplines of toil and absolute silence. They'd get up in the middle of the night to do strange chants. But I doubt if any was ever kidnaped and deprogrammed.

Their commune was called a monastery. The men were Catholics, the chants Gregorian. They were Trappists.

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