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International
New York City
NATIONAL ENQUIRER
LANTANA, FLA.
W-3, 400, 000

21.38

SEP. 16-80

Former Fanatics Reveal Cult Horrors: 'I Was Willing to Die or Kill'

You are a brainwashed robot, willing to die for the cause — or kill for it. You will allow your leader to select a mate for you. And you will give up your children.

As a woman you will turn to prostitution to get funds for the church.

These are among the horror stories revealed by young people who once were members of fanatical religious cults.

"They got me to the point where I was willing to die or kill for the cause," admitted Paul Ford, 31, who spent five years with the Hare Krishna sect.

"Even without being ordered, I tried to kill twice."

On both occasions, Ford said he brutally assaulted young men he perceived as a threat to the movement.

He explained: "You are hearing all the time in the lectures and Krishna readings... that it is a holy, sacred act for Krishna devotees to kill demons — anybody who is not accepting Krishna."

Most cults foster "an us against the world" attitude among followers.

Devotees of The Way, per-

haps the fastest-growing cult in the U.S., are even taught to use rifles.

By BOB PRATT

"It scares me," said ex-member Shella Toney, "because I know those kids would kill if given the command."

"We were taught that clergymen were possessed by demons and that our parents didn't raise us right. We were taught that all businesses are corrupt, all politicians corrupt. Everyone is demon-possessed."

A near-starvation diet, insufficient sleep and constant immersion in cult doctrine turns followers into zombies. Said Ford: "When you become completely indoctrinated, you get to a state where you are totally dependent on the leadership."

In such a brainwashed condition, cult members willingly allow their leaders to select

mates for them and to take away their children.

Said former Moonie Deborah Kreie, 28: "In the Unification Church, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon (the founder) decides who you're going to marry. And they usually make it impossible for you to keep your children. They stay in a camp."

Said Ford: "In Hare Krishna, children are taken away from parents between the ages of 3 and 5. They are sent to schools in India."

Raising money for the leadership seems to be the primary function of members of most cults.

"They take a young man or woman, who otherwise would be going to school," said Ford, "and use them to collect money from 3 o'clock in the morning till 10 o'clock at night. And no matter how much they collect, it's not enough."

Female members of the Children of God, a worldwide cult, are encouraged to raise money through prostitution, according to former member Jim Knowllock. "It's called prostitution for God," he said.