

Felton father joins search for cult leader

By PAUL BEATTY
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FELTON — A second parent has joined the search for his children who are believed to be somewhere in Europe with cult leader Arthur J. Hempel.

Edward Marshall of Felton says he's become so worried in reading recent newspaper accounts of Hempel and his followers (who include Marshall's wife, Sarah, and their three children) that he's petitioning the U.S. State Department for help.

A similar appeal by Sondra Elkins of Pasadena a week ago led to an international search for Hempel by Interpol. He remains at large.

Hempel's cult began in the early 1970s in San Jose and from 1974 to 1979 ran a foster home at Christ Circle camp, north of Boulder Creek.

The cult leader never paid much atten-

tion to secular law and by 1979 was in trouble with county zoning officials and state and federal foster home officers.

The court closed Christ Circle in the fall of 1979, and Hempel moved the cult to Boonville in Mendocino County. It immediately ran afoul of the law again.

He picked it up and headed for Elko County, Nev.

In leaving the state, Elkins was asked to give legal custody of her sons, Jonas McMillen, 11, and Terry Sanders, 6, to Hempel's aide, Sarah Marshall.

Elkins says she agreed so that the children could get medical aide if necessary and only on the condition that she could cancel the power of custody at any time.

By the time she caught up with the cult again it was in Hochfeld, Austria.

In 1980, she took a trip to Austria to recover her sons, and was told the legal work had to be done in the U.S.

At Hochfeld, Elkins says Hempel was calling the cult the Episcopal Church, dressing as a bishop, flying the Nazi flag and preaching the superiority of homosexuality.

When she returned with her legal rights established, she found the church had moved to an unknown location.

Reports of Elkins' experience have disturbed Edward Marshall, since his wife has custody of their children, Kathryn, 18, Phillip, 16, and Dhyana, 13.

"I hear Kathryn has joined the circle and taken the name 'Sister Agnes,'" Marshall says.

He recounts that he and Sarah got interested in Hempel's teachings in the early 1970s when he was in San Jose.

By the time Christ Circle was set up, Sarah had joined and was staying at the camp north of Boulder Creek.

"I didn't join, but I would stay for dinner just to keep in contact.

"At that time my wife and I couldn't get along, but I wanted to keep the children from the emotional trauma (of the parents' disagreements) so I continued to make contact.

"Our meetings ended in arguments and finally I quit going. Then there were just a couple of calls. Finally, I went back for one last time.

"When I did, they wouldn't leave me alone with my wife. They hung around me like buzzards. I started yelling and Hempel told Sarah she didn't have to stand for that and sent her away.

"I argued with him; yelling at him. He sat there saying nothing. He sat there like a lump on a log."

Marshall said he didn't want a divorce; he wanted an explanation of what was going on.

He never got it, and his wife went with the group when it ran. She took the children.

"I don't even like to think about what is happening to the children now," he says.

He's contacting the State Department and says he'll join Elkins in her legal charges against Hempel and the group.

Sarah Marshall is a San Jose State graduate with a K-12 grades teaching credential, according to information she gave the Ukiah Daily Journal on Sept. 16, 1979.

It was while the cult was trying to settle in Boonville and had come under charges of child abuse.

Hempel told reporter Eric Krueger that the incidence of staff members losing control and hitting a child was extremely rare.

Sarah Marshall said, "I myself have pulled a child's hair, but I don't consider that abuse.

She said the hair-pulling came about

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because she got tired of the child speaking to her "obscenely."

She said that in any organization, people "lose their tempers."

Corporal punishment, she said, was not part of the philosophy of the group nor is it "the policy of any of us as individuals."

A number of Hempel's followers and/or workers at Christ Circle say they were unaware of his sexual preference.

One said Hempel's son showed up at Christ Circle one day, so they knew he had been married.

Hempel did not live at Christ Circle, but kept a home in San Mateo and an apartment in San Francisco.

He showed up with two or three men he was living with at various times and after one apparently left him, Hempel told the group he was "removing Hubert's name from the book of life."

The only recorded reference to Hempel's wife was an obituary notice that was falsely filed.

It stated a Muriel Hempel died in Palo Alto in November, 1969, leaving a husband, Arthur J. Hempel of Aptos.

Hempel said the notice was false, but couldn't explain why it had been published, or why it went unchallenged.

The only information known about Hempel's early life is contained in a life story he wrote as part of a probationary report.

Written in 1964, it states that Arthur James Hempel was born in New Jersey in 1933, raised by an unfeeling mother after the father, an immigrant from Germany, deserted the family.

Hempel said the only time he tried to kiss his mother on the cheek she called him "a sex maniac."

He said he learned the code of the criminal and took up its practice. He stole cars and burglarized homes and started doing time.

He couldn't get along with other criminals and spent a lonely time in prison.

It wasn't until he was sent for counseling at Pueblo, Colo., that a psychiatrist broke through his defenses and began the long road of rehabilitation for him, Hempel wrote.

His probation report was submitted when Hempel had a relapse back into crime and he wrote in it that at times he felt like a "Jekyll and Hyde."

One follower here says she believes it, and fears that it is Hempel's bad side — the criminal Hempel — that's running the show.