

Selling Satan: The Tragic History of Mike Warnke

by Jon Trott Mike Hertenstein I always wanted to write him a letter and say, 'Mike, when were you able to have this coven of fifteen hundred people?' About the most exciting thing we used to do was play croquet. One of Mike Warnke's college friends

This is the story of well-known comedian, evangelist, and professed ex-Satanist Mike Warnke. Known as "America's Number One Christian Comedian," Mike Warnke has sold in excess of one million records. June 29, 1988, was declared "Mike Warnke Day" by the governor of Tennessee. The Satan Seller has, according to its author, sold three million copies in twenty years.[1] His 1991 Schemes of Satan quickly climbed the best-seller list. Mike Warnke's press material includes credits for appearances on "The 700 Club," "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "Larry King Live," "Focus on the Family," and ABC's "20/20." Mike has won numerous awards from the recording industry, including the 1992 Grady Nutt Humor Award. He continues to perform two hundred live shows a year. He is truly a figure of national prominence.

Mike Warnke's ministry and public profile are based upon the story he tells of his previous involvement with Satanism. As written in The Satan Seller, the story goes like this: a young orphan boy raised in foster homes drifted from whatever family and friends he had to join a secret, all-powerful satanic cult. First, he descended into the hell of drug addiction. Then he ascended in the satanic ranks to the position of high priest, with fifteen hundred followers in three cities. He had unlimited wealth and power at his disposal, provided by members of Satanism's highest echelon, the Illuminati. And then he converted to Christ.

A generation of Christians learned its basic concepts of Satanism and the occult from Mike Warnke's testimony in The Satan Seller. Based on his alleged satanic experiences, Warnke came to be recognized as a prominent authority on the occult, even advising law enforcement officers investigating occult crime. We believe The Satan Seller has been responsible, more than any other single volume in the Christian market, for promoting the current nationwide "Satanism scare." [2]

Through the years, Cornerstone has received many calls from people who felt something was not right concerning Mike Warnke. After our lengthy investigation into his background, we found discrepancies that raise serious doubts about the trustworthiness of his testimony. We have uncovered significant evidence contradicting his alleged satanic activity. His testimony contains major conflicts from book to book and tape to book, it contains significant internal problems, and it doesn't square with known external times and events. Further, we have documentation and eyewitness testimony that contradict the claims he has made about himself.

The evidence we present here includes testimony from Mike's closest friends, relatives, and daily associates—people whose names Mike disguised or omitted entirely in his "official" testimony. These people knew the real Mike Warnke, who was not a drug fiend or a recruiter for Satanism. But he was a storyteller.

Michael Alfred Warnke was born November 19, 1946, to Alfred "Al" Warnke and his wife, Louise. Mike's parents lived in Evansville, Indiana, and according to their son's confirmation certificate, had Mike baptized at St. Anthony's Catholic Church. [3]

When Mike was five, the Warnkes moved to Manchester, Tennessee, where Al opened Warnke's Truck Stop. [4] Located on Highway 41, north of town, the diner soon became part of the local landscape. On January 15, 1955, Louise, on her way home from town, lost control of the family's brand-new Packard and was killed. She was thirty-seven; Mike was eight years old. [5]

Mike had other family, too, from his father's previous marriage. His half sister, Shirley Schrader [6] was twenty-two years older than he was. She first met Mike in 1954, when Al brought his family to California on a visit. As Shirley recalls, "Dad, Louise, and Michael came out to California in the mid-fifties. Prior to that, I wasn't writing my father. I didn't even know where he was. My dad had abandoned me when I was little. He was an alcoholic, and maybe twice in my childhood did he make any effort to communicate with my mother. So I was working and they came to my office, very unexpectedly. He says, 'I'm your father,' and he came on big and strong, 'Oh, my daughter, my daughter.' They spent maybe a week in California, and then went back to Tennessee."

When Mike's mother was killed, Al flew Shirley to Tennessee for the funeral. During that visit, Al Warnke asked Shirley if she and her husband, Keith, would move to Manchester and help run the truck stop. "You always think, Wouldn't it be neat to know your own dad? That was probably one of the biggest mistakes I ever made." Shirley, Keith, and their six-year-old son Keith, Jr., came out to Manchester in February of 1955. But Al and Shirley soon had their problems. "He had me working days, with Thursday off, and he had my husband working nights, with a different day off. Then there was the fact that my father was a drunk. We weren't there but a few days when he went off on a big binge and didn't show up again for a week. There would have been enough money to support us all. But he forgot we were supposed to be paid."

Al Warnke seems to fit the description given him by his son in his books and records. But what about Mike Warnke? Shirley recalls Mike as a little boy who spent a lot of time "sitting two feet from the television. I tried to tell my dad, 'Hey, the boy can't see.' And he'd say, 'Don't try to tell me about my son!' And my dad would give the kid ten bucks and send him uptown. That was a lot of money for those days."

Disgusted with Al and his truck stop, but feeling empathy for Mike, the Schraders returned to California. Two years later, Al Warnke was dead of heart failure.[7]Mike Warnke's story of his life, *The Satan Seller*, opens just after Al's funeral, with adults discussing Mike's future as he eavesdrops. As the book indicates, the eleven-year-old boy was initially placed with his two aunts, Dorothy and Edna, who lived in Sparta, Tennessee. Warnke has a segment on his *Mike Warnke Alive!*[8] album called "Tennessee Home and Blankety-Blank," in which he describes how he raised one aunt's dander with his crude, truck stop ways. The first night I was up there this lady came out and she said, "Well, honey, how do you think you're gonna like it here?" And I said, "Well, this is a pretty nice blank-blankety-blank place. We oughta get along pretty blank-blankety-blank well as long as you feed me blank-blankety properly."

Aunt Edna Swindell[9] denies any such child appeared at her Tennessee home. "He was just a typical boy. We had no problems." What about his claims about being a foulmouthed brat? "He wasn't that here." Meanwhile, Shirley Schrader was trying to get custody of young Mike. "We wanted Michael," Shirley recalls. "And we fought through the courts for Michael for months before they let him come out here."

Aunt Edna notes, "He stayed with me seven months. I guess if I wanted him, I could have kept him the entire time. His half sister in California wanted him, and that's where he wanted to go."

{mospagebreak title=Mike Moves in with the Schraders}

Mike Moves in with the Schraders

During the summer of 1959, Mike went to live with his half sister and her family near Riverside, California. Shirley confirms Warnke's story of how his Aunt Edna sent him to California loaded down with anti-Catholic materials.

Shirley Schrader took the boys to church— that is, she took her eleven-year-old son Keith with her to Catholic mass and allowed thirteen-year-old Mike to attend a nearby Protestant church. "And that was fine for as long as he wanted to do it, because we weren't going to force religion on him."

In Riverside, Keith, Jr., attended a parochial school ; St. Francis deSales. Mike eventually decided he wanted to go to that same parochial school. "He went for a year, until we moved up on the mountain," says Shirley. In February of 1961, the Schraders and fourteen-year-old Mike moved to Crestline, a small community planted among the pine trees atop the San Bernardino Mountains overlooking the vast San Bernardino Valley.

The Schraders were well respected in Crestline. Community pillars, they ran a tight ship at home. Keith, Sr., head of the Pilot Rock Conservation Camp, was in charge of minimum security inmates assigned to fight forest fires. "We took the boys on camping trips. We rock hounded. We did things together," recalls Shirley. "We sat them down and had the sex talk. We had the talk about alcohol. We were a regular family."

Keith, Jr., recalls, "Mike and I had a good time growing up together. We were real close during high school— when we weren't fighting." [10]

Mike Warnke attended Rim of the World High School. His best friends through these years were Tim Smith [11] and Jeff Nesmith. [12] "We'd spend lots of time at each other's houses," says Jeff Nesmith, "go to school dances together, proms, and one summer Mike and I worked for my dad in the construction business. We weren't hellions, but we weren't angels either. We had our parties, gate crashed some dances."

All of Mike's friends and family we were able to contact denied his assertion that he drifted at one point to a "rougher" crowd. In fact, most of the kids Mike hung out with were, by all reports, good, clean, Catholic boys. Tim Smith and another local boy, David Goodwin, [13] were altar boys at St. Francis Cabrini Church. "Tim and I went to morning mass every day before school," says Goodwin. "Sometimes Mike Warnke attended mass with us." Tim's sister Terri explains, "I believe Mike got interested in Catholicism from hanging out with us. He was like a piece of furniture at our house." [14]

One day Mike announced to the Schraders that he, too, wanted to become a Catholic. In the spring of his senior year in high school, Warnke was confirmed in the Catholic Church. His sponsor was Tim's dad, Paul "Jerry" Smith. [15] Two months after being confirmed, Mike graduated with the rest of his class at Rim High in the class of '65.

Everybody we talked to who knew Mike Warnke at "Rim" remembers him first and foremost as a chronic storyteller. His high school partner in various escapades was Jeff Nesmith. Once, says Jeff, Mike had a date but no car, and Jeff had his parents' Lincoln. "Mike talked me into dropping him and his date off at a restaurant and then picking them up after dinner. Before we picked up Mike's date, we stopped at a local uniform store and got me a chauffeur's cap. From the moment

the girl got into the car, Mike spun this wild tale about me being an orphan boy and how his family had taken me in, and how I sometimes performed various services for them such as being their chauffeur. She just soaked it all in."

The thing that always struck Nesmith about his pal was that Warnke would never break out of character. "We'd go into some restaurant, and Mike would pretend to be a Russian immigrant who couldn't speak English. I'd translate Mike's order into English for the waitress. Sometimes just to get him I'd order something I knew he'd hate. But Mike was always enough of a pro that he'd stick with it and wouldn't say anything . . . until we got outside the restaurant and he'd yell at me." The Schraders also knew Mike as a boy with the gift of gab. "Michael is a showman," says Shirley. "He is an actor, and he always swore he would never make a living with his hands, that he would make his living with his mouth." Keith, Jr., adds: "Mike is the kind of guy that can sell somebody the Golden Gate Bridge. Or swamp land in Florida. I gotta hand it to him. I wish I was as good a salesman."

In high school, storytelling had been a diversion, a way to get by. According to his friends in college, it would increasingly become a part of Mike Warnke's identity.

{mospagebreak title=Mike Warnke at College}

Mike Warnke at College

Here begins the critical period described in *The Satan Seller*, the defining moment of Mike Warnke's later testimony and ministry his involvement with and subsequent banishment from a satanic cult.

On September 13, 1965, Mike Warnke began school at San Bernardino Valley College, a two-year school.[16] Mike writes in *The Satan Seller* that it was after he started college that he first was introduced to drugs, sex, and finally Satanism. And, he continues, it was only after the Satanists threw him out of their coven that he joined the navy. Warnke's military records say he entered the navy on June 2, 1966.[17] Therefore, whatever happened in Mike's life regarding Satanism had to have happened between September 13, 1965, and June 2, 1966. (See sidebar "Under a Full Moon," p. 9.) Mike, in his 1991 book, *Schemes of Satan*, claims to have had no close friends at college and to have virtually disappeared: In my own case, being away from home at college and not having any close friends there meant that almost no one could have known what was happening to me except, of course, the members of the Satanic Brotherhood, and they were not telling![18]

In reality, Mike Warnke simply did what countless other freshmen have done: he found a new circle of friends. We found that new circle, and they were not a part of the Satanic Brotherhood. None of these people are mentioned by Warnke in *The Satan Seller* or anywhere else.

Greg Gilbert[19] was one of Mike's first and closest friends at college. Today an English professor at a southern California university, Greg reflects upon the notoriety of his old college roommate. "After Mike became a star, I assumed that since he had gotten this far with his Satan story, he'd always get away with it. I never knew what to do. Who could you tell?"

Right around the time college started in 1965, Greg met Mike through a mutual friend, Dennis Pekus.[20] Greg was living with his elderly grandparents in San Bernardino and took Warnke to meet them. "When my grandparents said they were from Tennessee, Mike said, 'I come from Tennessee, too,' " Greg recalls. "Before the evening was over he had us all convinced he was a long-lost relative. Next thing we knew, he'd talked his way into living with us."

Greg's college girlfriend, Dawn Andrews,[21] gave us her assessment. "The first time I saw Mike Warnke was at Greg's house. He was introduced to me as Greg's cousin," says Dawn. "He told everybody he was. I remember how upset I was when *The Satan Seller* came out, because what Warnke said was a lie. He has a very fertile imagination."

Dyana Cridelich[22] was another of Mike Warnke's college friends introduced by Greg. "After he got famous, I always wanted to write him a letter and say, Mike, remember me? The one you gave the silver cross to? When were you able to have this coven of fifteen hundred people? Don't you remember, about the most exciting thing we used to do was play croquet in Greg's backyard?" "In *The Satan Seller*, Mike never mentions croquet. He was too busy becoming a teenage alcoholic. I attended classes regularly at first, but I wasn't about to cut down on my drinking. As the days went by, it became harder to concentrate on what the professors were saying, but I could still talk my way out of anything, and this carried me through. I was drinking so much by now, it was starting to wreck my stomach." [23]

Was Mike a heavy drinker? Not according to those who knew him. "We drank occasionally," says Greg, "but mostly we just talked about it. We weren't of age, and alcohol was hard to come by."

This group of college freshmen often sat on the lawn between classes, or got together in the student union cafeteria, The Tomahawk Room. It was there that Lois Eckenrod,[24] a girl who was soon to be his fiancée, joins the story. "Mike and I met in September or October, that first semester at Valley," Lois said. "It was only a couple of months before we got engaged. Hardly a day went by that we didn't see each other."

His friends remember Mike Warnke as thin, with thick glasses and short hair. He was bright, he was mainly happy though Lois remembers he could swing easily to depression. Yet Mike says in *The Satan Seller* that when college started, he was a "heavysset, jovial guy" who only later lost weight due to drug use. His hair, he writes, was already collar length. Within a short time, he claims to have become a full-fledged hippie: I made a return trip to the Salvation Army and bought some black pants and freaky shirts. My hair was longer than ever, and I bleached it blond. I was really craving attention, and I got it. You know, weird people attract chicks.[25]

"He looked like everybody else," says Greg. He did have one constant accessory, a silver cross. (This cross Warnke gave to Dyana, she says.)

Warnke writes in *The Satan Seller* that he frequented a coffeehouse called Penny University, where he danced, obtained hard liquor, and got acquainted with the owner while practicing his fake English accent.[26]

Lois says that she and Mike did go to Penny University, "quite a bit because Mike really liked folk music. But there was no room for dancing. The place was full of tables and stuff." Cornerstone also talked with John Ingro,[27] who in 1965 not only owned Penny U., but also was a district attorney (currently he is a San Bernardino judge). "You couldn't dance there. It was very small, and packed with chairs. As far as alcohol, we only served coffee at a penny a cup. That's where the place got its name." As for remembering Mike and the fake English accent? "No. Is this a joke?"

{mospagebreak title=Storytelling in the Tomahawk Room}

Storytelling in the Tomahawk Room

Storytelling developed into an art form among the Tomahawk Room crowd. One student, Gary Manbeck, is remembered as having some of the best stories. "Gary always told stories about being in the Green Beret," says Dawn. "He was very good, but I never thought any of it was true."

Mike Warnke joined right in. "Gary and Mike vied for attention with stories, trying to be the life of the party," says George Eubank,[28] another of the Tomahawk crowd. "Who can one-up ya. That's a real good description of the two of them together."

Warnke produced a never-ending stream of tall tales. "He claimed he had some kind of white witchcraft background," recalls Greg Gilbert. "He claimed he'd been reincarnated any number of times, that he was born in the Irish Moors in the 1570s. Along with his other stories, he claimed he'd once been a Trappist monk." In *The Satan Seller*, Warnke paints himself as a freshman guru, dispensing wisdom to an eager audience of disciples: Most of my friends were the pseudo-intellectual type. We liked to lie out on the lawn in the quad after classes and discuss psychology, philosophy, religion, art, and politics. Other students began coming around, and they seemed to look to me for answers to their questions. Anything I said was okay with them. And it was certainly okay with me. If they were that hung up for a leader, I was happy to oblige." [29]

Greg Gilbert remembers things this way: "We sat out under the trees at school, all right. And there were times we listened to Mike tell his tall tales. But if Mike thought we believed what he was saying, or that we looked at him like some kind of guru, he was greatly mistaken. We were all part of the same bragging team."

It was difficult, at times, to know whether Warnke believed his own stories or not. "I don't think it was in fun. I think he himself wanted to believe it," says Phyliss Catalano,[30] Lois's best friend. "I used to sit there and be embarrassed, because I'd think, How could somebody that young have done all these things? He'd done everything. And everything he told was with a straight face."

Phyliss's mother, Mary Catalano,[31] saw Warnke on a regular basis when the gang gathered at the Catalano house. "He was a likable young man when he visited our house," she says, "but anything brought up in conversation he'd done it. He said he'd been a Greek dancer, and he'd dance for us, round and round. He said he'd been a professional ambulance driver. And he was a monk—he'd come to the house all dressed in black. Of course, we never believed him. We just said, 'Boy, is he one big liar.'"

In college, as he'd done in high school, Warnke continued to costume himself for his roles. Mike particularly liked being a priest. "I remember at Halloween he dressed up like a priest and went around pretending," says Dawn. "My parents saw him—they're very Catholic so I heard about it." Another occasion for the priest impersonation was a double date with Lois and Phyliss and her boyfriend David Gibbet. "I'll never forget when he went dressed as a priest to Jay's Coffeehouse," says Lois. "He met us there, and came walking in wearing robes and a white collar. I about died."

Yet another student, Tom Bolger,[32] recalls Warnke boasting how he'd dressed as a priest and gone panhandling in downtown San Bernardino. "He said he'd made fifty dollars." And finally, Greg recalls Mike unsuccessfully using the priest bit to get drinks. "He got the robes at a costume shop, went to Corky's Liquor Store, and tried to get Christian

Brothers wine for the mass. They just laughed him out."

{mospagebreak title=The Satan Seller And the Way Things Really Were}

"The Satan Seller" And the Way Things Really Were

According to The Satan Seller, though, things are by now getting serious. The story is set in motion by the mysterious college-age individual named "Dean Armstrong," who Warnke alleges was a satanic high priest. Mike says Dean lured him into drug use, sexual promiscuity, witchcraft, and Satanism. We will examine these elements of the story, then compare each with what witnesses remember. For starters, Mike's associates at school affirm that none among them remotely resembled the Dean character in The Satan Seller.

According to the book, Mike was encouraged by Dean to quit drinking so much and start smoking marijuana. Mike tells Dean no, but later an unnamed roommate brings up the subject again: My stomach was still hurting. I tried everything I could think of, except giving up drinking. My new roommate suggested I try . . . [grass], and not wanting to be left out, I finally went along with it. . . . I really liked marijuana.[33]

Regarding drug use, Greg laughs. "Drugs? No way, not at Valley, and not in 1965. Two years later there was plenty of grass around, but back in '65 we still believed Reefer Madness." Did Warnke ever talk about drugs around anybody else? "None of us were into drugs," says Dyana. "We didn't even smoke cigarettes." Yet in The Satan Seller, Warnke and his friends are allegedly full-blown into drug use early in the year: When we tried the peyote, we decided it was better and heavier than pot. We also started eating mescaline in our food in increasing quantities, and from there we went on to reds. . . . Some doctors came to the campus to conduct controlled group experiments on [LSD]. My friends and I decided to volunteer for the tests.[34]

Not only do Mike's friends deny controlled or uncontrolled experimentation with drugs, but according to the records, no LSD experiments took place on the campus of San Bernardino Valley College. This was underscored in our conversation with Dr. George Zaharopoulos, head of the Social Sciences Department at Valley. "I taught here during those years, and we never, ever, asked for or had any LSD experiments take place here. This is only a junior college."

In The Satan Seller Mike not only claims to have used drugs, but to have been a major-league drug trafficker: One time I took some money for a drug payoff down to El Centro, a burg in the desert of California, not far from the border town of Mexicali. A really big load was involved, and this caused quite a flap. It was the most money I had ever seen at one time fifty thousand dollars in bundles of hundred-dollar bills.[35]

On his Mike Warnke Alive! album, Mike further claims: I'd had hepatitis four times from shooting up with dirty needles. I had scabs all over my face from shooting up crystal. I was a speed freak. I weighed 110 pounds soaking wet. My skin had turned yellow. My hair was falling out. My teeth were rotting out of my head. I'd been pistol-whipped five or six times. My jaw had been broken. My nose had been almost ripped off. I had a bullet hole in my right leg. Two bullet holes in my left leg.

Greg Gilbert and the others saw Mike on a daily basis, and say that it is totally impossible for Mike to have had hepatitis, facial scabs from injecting "crystal," and wounds from being shot three times. "Without us knowing it? It's a lie," Greg says.

Lois's reaction to Mike's tale? "That's just make-believe," she states. "Mike never fell in with drugs. My dad was an alcoholic, and because of our family situation, I'd had to move in with the Catalanos. So I was really sensitive to things like that. Second, I was training to be a nurse, and I think I would have known if he was using drugs. I wouldn't have dated Mike if he was drugged. I didn't even allow people to drink around me."

In The Satan Seller, drugs and sex were the magnet that drew Mike Warnke along. Warnke gradually found himself running errands for Dean, attending occult discussion meetings, until, finally, Dean decided his charge was ready for the real thing: a satanic ritual service.

The Black Mass in an orange grove turned out to be just what anybody would expect who's seen Rosemary's Baby or other films of this genre: black robes, a naked woman on the altar, blasphemy and incantations. "After the Invocation of Satan, I listened intently to the Offertory, where the members offered their souls to Lord Satan." [36]

According to The Satan Seller, Warnke signed his name in blood to give his soul to Satan, and a few pages later took over the coven from Dean as the new High Priest. I swung the now screaming cat over the smoking caldron and then over the heart of the girl on the altar. Then, when the sword point touched the cat's belly, I thrust it in.

"Now!" I suddenly shouted. . . . I drew an upside-down star on the girl's stomach, with the freshly spilled blood. From the weird utterances that now came from her mouth, I knew we were being graced by the presence of one of the denizens of hell.[37]

Just before he published *The Satan Seller* in 1973, Warnke brought manuscript copies to his old high school friends Jeff Nesmith and Tim Smith, and asked them to sign affidavits swearing the events depicted were true. Jeff Nesmith had lost track of Warnke after high school and had little idea what he did during college or who he hung out with. On a rare visit to Mike's apartment during his college days, Mike asked Jeff to join a "coven." But Jeff laughed it off, thinking it was one of Mike's stories. In any event, when Warnke asked Jeff to sign the affidavit, he refused.[38] "My initial reaction to the book was, 'Come on, Mike! This is poppycock!'"

Tim Smith dropped out of college after only two months, but notes, "I had contact with Mike off and on all the way through the fall of 1965 until the summer of 1966." Tim states he never saw Warnke with long hair or in the drug-induced emaciated state he claimed to be during that period. "Sign the affidavit? I told him, 'Nope. Can't do that.'"

Warnke's two high school buddies saw him sporadically throughout the year, but not every day. Yet Mike brought Jeff and Tim the affidavits, but not Lois, Greg, Dawn or the others. It does not speak well for the veracity of Warnke's claims that he did not ask those who knew him on a daily basis in San Bernardino Valley College to endorse his story.

{mospagebreak title=The College Crowd and the Occult}

The College Crowd and the Occult

Interestingly, most of Mike's college friends did dabble in occult activities. "Some of them were into seance and Ouija board type stuff," says George Eubank. "But it wasn't serious, just the kind of stuff freshmen in college play with. Especially sheltered freshmen in college that are all of a sudden free from their parents, spreading their wings, so to speak."

Bill Lott,[39] another college student who is now a Christian, took the experimentation more seriously. "People were messing around with stuff like reincarnation, tarot cards, Ouija boards. Mike was one of those people. But he never talked about Satanism or being a devil worshiper," Lott says.

"People talked about witches and Ouija boards," says Dawn. "It was that era. None of us belonged to a coven, and none of us were witches. If we'd have thought anybody was serious, it would have scared us to death. We did table tipping once, and the table tipped and that was that. No more table tipping for me."

Warnke and a few of the guys created a not-so-secret society. "We started a club called The Royal Order of the Lantern," says Greg. "We played chess, drank beer, and told tall tales. It was a group that really never took off."

Adds George Eubank, "The Royal Order of the Lantern had to do with this lamp we'd stolen from somebody's driveway. Warnke wanted to get an apartment and have a group of guys. I don't think it was supposed to be secret. It was supposed to be fun and games. It flopped because nobody was willing to put the effort into it. Mike carried it as far as he could at the time. It was kind of a defunct fraternity that never got anywhere." The Royal Order of the Lantern is a far cry from *The Satan Seller's* fifteen hundred followers in three cities, financed by a worldwide network of Satanists.

Mike eventually did get his own apartment, and the place became a favorite hangout for the Tomahawk Room crowd the guys in particular. Mike gave both Greg Gilbert and Bill Lott keys. The apartment "was above a garage," says Greg. "There was an exterior stairway that went up to a room with an open-beam ceiling, the gable coming to a point." In *The Satan Seller*, Warnke describes the exterior of his apartment in this way: a second-floor apartment approached by an outside stairway. The interior, however, was redecorated by the Satanists after Warnke became high priest: A long, low, oxblood leather couch replaced the sagging old brown horsehair one, and there were two sets of bookshelves full of books [on the occult]. . . . The biggest surprise was on the floortwo chicks sitting on a white rug "We hope you like it, Mike, because we come with the apartment," said the blonde one named Lorraine.[40]

The two women allegedly remained at Warnke's beck and call, rarely leaving the apartment unless it was to get groceries or drugs. "It's a fantasy," says Dennis Pekus, who knew Mike in both high school and college. Greg Gilbert says he never knew Mike Warnke to have a girlfriend in college besides Lois Eckenrod. None of the college friends who frequented the apartment ever saw occult books, an oxblood leather couch, or two love slaves. Mike says plenty of "soft pink sex"[41] is at the center of his satanic experiences. These begin with the orgies Warnke says initially drew him into the coven: Then they split off into couples. It was great, because there was a girl for every guy, not like most places I had been where there is a chronic chick shortage. Cool-looking, sexy girls, too. . . . These chicks were free-lovers. . . . "Come on over here, Mike," a blonde said.[42]

Then there's the sexual recruiting Mike says he helped organize and rituals that degenerate from cat killing to the rape of an innocent virgin. (Warnke is careful to exclude himself from direct participation in the rape, though he writes that it was his idea.)

In a later book, *Schemes of Satan*, Warnke suggests that sex was a routine part of the rituals:

On more than one occasion, I regret to admit, we participated in ritual sexual abuse that even involved rape. Most of the time I was too doped up to perform sexually, but I would watch these lust rituals with great desire.[43]

Such tales of perversion and criminal activity raise serious questions. If Mike led in acts of rape and other violent crimes, why (after his conversion) didn't he turn himself in and aid the police in apprehending his old satanic friends? If, on the other hand, his rape and abuse stories are not true, what does this say about the imagination of their author?

Mike's college crowd completely rejects these stories of violence and sexual perversion. "Oh, my goodness, no," says Phyliss. "To talk about sex orgies and all these drug parties. He didn't do them with Lois and me, that's for sure!"

"I never slept with him," says Lois. "We kissed and hugged, but I never would have had sex with him because I was a very devout Catholic, and I wanted to be a virgin till I got married. Thank God I didn't marry him."

There always seemed to be a story. In college, as in the high school role-playing with Jeff Nesmith, Warnke refused to drop out of character. "He played it to the end," says Greg. "He never gave up. That was the remarkable thing about him. We'd question him about his stories and he always came up with some half-baked answer. And you couldn't disprove what he was saying that was the common thread. It was never anything we were likely to have the real answer for or the time to check into. So he could say anything he wanted." Warnke's refusal to admit to his own storytelling made him untrustworthy in the eyes of some members of the group. "I didn't know anything about his past, so I didn't know what was true and what wasn't," says Dawn. "I didn't feel like he was sincere in anything he did. If the situation required him to be macho, he was macho. If it required him to be mean, he was mean. He just sort of blended into the situation and tried to monopolize everyone. There was nothing real about him."

{mospagebreak title=Mike and Lois Plan Their Marriage}

Mike and Lois Plan Their Marriage

By Christmas of 1965, Mike and Lois were seeing each other on a daily basis. "It was pretty fast that we said we were going to get married," says Lois. "Within two or three months of school starting, he gave me a rose ring with a diamond in it. It cost \$60. He had to make payments on it. I thought he really loved me. And I thought I loved him, too."

In *The Satan Seller*, Warnke has gone through his drugs, sex, and promotion to high priest before Christmas of 1965. (Trying to fit the long list of his claims onto a real calendar is a challenge. See sidebar, p. 18) Shirley Schrader says Mike had Christmas dinner in Crestline with the family. "He didn't seem emaciated by drugs to me," she says.

College records show Mike Warnke left school after the first term. "Most of us dropped out after the first semester," recalls Lois. The group continued to hang out together at Mike's apartment, the Catalanos', and elsewhere. What about the Mike in *The Satan Seller* who flew around the country on satanic business trips to San Francisco (where he allegedly met Anton LaVey), New York, and Salem, Massachusetts? "You're a real traveling salesman for Satan, Mike, and we want you to go to Salem and get more hip with some really serious organization." [44]

"How could he fly when he didn't have two pennies?" asks Lois, who adds that Mike never went anywhere, and when he did it was with her. "If he says he was a Satanist between September of 1965 to June of 1966, he's lying. How could I not know my boyfriend was into Satanism? I don't remember there ever being a time when we didn't see or talk to each other every day."

Every day? "Yes," says Lois. "We went to movies together, I went to the country club with him in the mountains, we went to the beach. We used to go to Jay's Coffee Shop in San Bernardino. That was the big thing. He introduced me to hot fudge sundaes. I spent the majority of that year with him."

Lois says she and Mike used to play pool over on Highland Avenue in San Bernardino. We read her a story from Warnke's book *Hitchhiking on Hope Street*. In it Mike writes that he got into a gunfight with Ray, a local pimp, at the pool hall: I was drunk as a skunk when I shot at him with the .44, because I missed him by a country mile and blew off the corner of the pool table. . . . The two of us went roaring down the street, screaming and shooting. . . . he . . . got off a lucky shot. It hit me in the leg and knocked me down.[45]

The predictable reaction: "Oh, my goodness. You're kidding. . . ." Lois dissolves into laughter.

According to *The Satan Seller*, Mike Warnke's reign as a satanic high priest ends, apparently sometime in the spring of 1966, when Warnke crumples under the strain of too much responsibility and too many drugs. On a "Focus on the Family" radio broadcast, he described his appearance at this time: "I had white hair. It was about down to my belt. . . . I had six-inch fingernails; I painted them black." [46] (See picture, p. 8, taken April 30, 1966.) Warnke says he was intentionally overdosed with heroin by one of his live-in love slaves and thrown, naked, on the steps of a local hospital. After a few weeks of drying out at the hospital, Warnke escaped by joining the Navy.[47] On the Mike Warnke Alive!

album, he describes his hair length the night before boot camp: "It hit me just below the pockets." He continues: The night before I went to boot camp I went to this party. . . . I smoked a bunch of dope and ate a bunch of reds and got crashed out in a corner. . . . But the girl I was with decided the thing that would really be cute is if she braided my hair. . . . She put beads with the first bunch, feathers with the next bunch, a piece of red ribbon about that long with the last bunch, braided it all together, and hung a jingle bell on the end of each braid.

Lois says she was the girl who gave Mike his going-away party. When she heard this story for the first time in 1979, she was furious. "I couldn't believe it when I heard that!" she says. "I'm the one who gave him the going-away party! We never touched drugs. He never had long hair his hair was short, short, short!" Greg and Dawn, who had just gotten married, offered Lois the use of their apartment for the party. "I bought a big cake decorated with a navy boat," Lois remembers. "It said 'Ship Ahoy, Mike.' Dawn and I made food and pop, and we had a bunch of people over. It was just clean fun. I took him to the bus stop, put him on the bus to go to boot camp," Lois says. "We were supposed to get married when he finished."

{mospagebreak title=Mike, Sue, and Campus Crusade}

Mike, Sue, and Campus Crusade

On June 2, 1966, Mike Warnke joined the U.S. Navy. During the time he was there, he and Lois stayed in touch by letter. According to Warnke's official story, boot camp is where he meets two Christians who are such a bold witness for Christ that the ex-Satanist converts to Christianity.

According to his service records, Mike Warnke graduated from boot camp August 22, 1966.[48] His fiancée, Lois, and the Schrader family attended graduation. "I went down with a friend and gave Mike a St. Christopher medal," says Lois. There was a fifteen-day leave after camp ended. During this time Lois noticed a change in Mike. "He was different. He was carrying a Bible. I asked him about it, and he said he'd found Christ at boot camp. He was real excited about being a Christian, finding God." Within days Mike told Lois "he'd had this Christian conversion and he had to go on. That this was it. I didn't see him anymore after that."

The Satan Seller, once again, tells a different story. There is, of course, no mention of Lois Eckenrod before or after boot camp. Instead, when Warnke returns home from boot camp, he begins dating Sue Studer, a fellow Rim High alumnus who was soon to become his first wife. "I turned around and was surprised to see Sue Studer, the girl who had always dated the football heroes. Sue was still as pretty as ever." [49]

Warnke writes that he then told Sue of his recent conversion to Christ, and to his delight Sue replied she, too, had become a Christian. "Sue had worked on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ at the Arrowhead Springs Headquarters." [50]

In The Satan Seller, Mike Warnke says that he was chased by Campus Crusaders attempting to convert him when he was the campus Satanist. However, Lois and several others do remember Mike Warnke taking some interest in religion and Campus Crusade before boot camp. "I remember him starting to get interested in religion," Lois says. "He'd go up the hill to Campus Crusade's headquarters."

Just how early Mike dabbled with Christianity is unclear, but at least one witness says she saw him proclaiming faith in Christ in 1965, a whole year before The Satan Seller says he became a Christian. Charlotte Tweeten,[51] a 1964 Rim graduate who attended Valley College, told Cornerstone, "It was in the fall of 1965. I know that because by winter I had already left school. Mike Warnke came up to me while I was sitting there drinking coffee and started proselytizing me. It was the born-again thing. Mike was doing his religious thing and Sue Studer was with him."

On September 7, 1966, Mike Warnke reported to Hospital Corps School in San Diego.[52] Mike gives us our choice of stories as to why he chose to become a medic. In The Satan Seller he writes he joined the Hospital Corps because "I could be of more use to God mending guys than swabbing decks." [53] On the album Hey, Doc!, he says he joined the Hospital Corps because of drugs and nurses: "Dope and women . . . for pay . . . far out!" [54]

In late 1966, Warnke graduated from medic school and, after training with the marines at Camp Pendleton, went to work at the naval dispensary in San Diego.[55] Marriage records show Mike and Sue Studer were married May 13, 1967, in Crestline.[56] Soon after, the couple moved onto San Diego's Louisiana Street. While in San Diego, the Warnkes visited Scott Memorial Baptist Church, pastored by now well-known church leader and author Tim LaHaye and his wife, Beverly. In The Satan Seller, Warnke offers one version of what happened when the LaHayes visited the Warnke home. Mike says he told Tim LaHaye about the Illuminati. I had already told him I had been to an occult conference. "There were some weird guys that seemed to be the real backers of the whole thing. . . . I heard the word Illuminati." [57]

"The conversation really wasn't like he put it in his book," says Dr. LaHaye.[58] "I brought up the term Illuminati first. I had been reading a book on the subject, and I tried testing him to see if he really knew anything about it. He didn't seem to have ever heard the word before." "Mike gave us a little of his testimony," says Beverly LaHaye,[59] who is now the

head of Concerned Women for America. "He said a book about the leaders of the Satan church had disappeared off his shelf when he became interested in Christianity." Dr. LaHaye sums up, "His type of personality tells stories for effect, not for accuracy."

{mospagebreak title= Mike in Vietnam}

Mike in Vietnam

In November of 1967, the Warnkes moved back to Camp Pendleton and Oceanside. In May of 1969, Warnke was transferred from Pendleton to the Third Marine Division, Vietnam.[60] Warnke says he spent his time in Vietnam, like so many who served there, anesthetized from the experience of war by drugs.[61]

The following is a list of the other things Mike Warnke says happened to him while in Vietnam: My faith was weakening fast![62] A buddy of mine was killed a mortar shell landed directly on him, disintegrating him except for his shoes.[63] I was existing from one bottle to the next.[64] The message [a spy] was carrying was a detailed description of myself and the skipper, identifying us as prime targets for the Viet Cong. I shot a spy, went to my tent, cooked dinner, and ate. And something died inside of me.[65] I was the first to enter the tent [of marines who had been "fragged" killed by their own people]. [66] Anyway, one day we were into this fire fight. . . . Everybody is shooting at each other. All of a sudden: zooooom, zonk, and my arm is pinned to the ground with an arrow! I look over at this other Marine Corps sergeant, who goes, "Only you, man, only you!"[67] One time I went through a village and was handing out candy bars to little kids. Just standing in the back of my Jeep. . . .

When I get done, I'm putting the box back and this twelve-year-old kid goes in his house, comes back out with a gun, and shoots me.[68]

Add to the list this story from Keith Schrader, Jr.: "Mike told me that he killed a man in a bar fight in the Philippines."

Despite the impression such a long list may give, records show Warnke was in Vietnam for only six months.

In *The Satan Seller* Mike says that he was wounded twice. In his second book, *Hitchhiking on Hope Street*, he says he was wounded five times.[69] Military records obtained by Cornerstone show that Mike Warnke, hospital corpsman, second class, service number B98 05 49, received one Purple Heart, and, along with the rest of his unit, several additional medals. The Third Marine Division he was connected to was withdrawn from Vietnam in October of 1969 and sent to Okinawa.[70]

Warnke was sent back to the U.S. in the spring of 1970 and for the first time was able to see his infant son, Brendon Michael, born December 2, 1969, while Mike was overseas. In return for reenlisting for six more years, Mike was enrolled in cardiopulmonary school. The Warnke family settled in San Diego.

George Wakeling,[71] who worked with young drug addicts, says he was contacted by Mike around this time. George was the founder of the Drug Prevention Center, or "the Hotline," a ministry to addicts at the Melodyland Christian Center in Anaheim. Mike started spending time at the Hotline, and getting instruction from Hotline speaker Dick Handley. It was through the Hotline that Mike made his first contacts with Jesus Movement-era Christianity.

{mospagebreak title=Mike Meets the Jesus Movement}

Mike Meets the Jesus Movement

Melodyland was one of the Southern California centers of the charismatic renewal movement then sweeping the Church. The ex-addicts and others who ran the Hotline were among the original Jesus People, part of a new youth counterculture uniquely compatible with the charismatics. Both preferred informal gatherings and a vital, experience-oriented faith. The culturally conservative Melodyland crowd thus understood when the exuberant young hippies suggested "getting high on Jesus."

Both groups majored on the theme of acceptance. The mainstream church was sadly out of touch with the needs of counterculture youth and, even more sadly, unwilling by and large to reach out to them. But Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God seemed to grasp what God was doing among children of the sixties. Uncritically, without attacking the cultural preferences of the young, many charismatics and Pentecostals shamed their mainstream peers by being (in Paul's words) all things to all men.

But as with nearly all revivals, there were problems with the newly revived. The mix of uncritical acceptance plus emphasis on experience was easily taken too far. It opened the door for various cults among the Jesus People; it also opened the door for those with fascinating though unprovable conversion stories.

"A lot of people came to the Hotline and told their drug testimonies," says Ron Winckler,[72] a leader there. "Mike

Warnke came with the added attraction of the Satanist experience, which was a big hit with the Full Gospel Businessmen and charismatics. The times were right for that sort of testimony."

Hotline speaker Dick Handley and friends in Crestline had introduced Mike Warnke to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Through Handley, Warnke met Dave Balsiger, a writer who had done promo work for Melodyland and now was media director for charismatic evangelist Morris Cerullo.

After starting a youth ministry in San Diego, Cerullo had come in contact with kids dabbling with the occult and decided to write a book on the subject. Balsiger was assigned the job. It was during this time he met Mike Warnke and enlisted his aid. The book was to be called *Witchcraft Never Looked Better*.^[73] They also created a specially outfitted trailer, purchased to house "research materials" such as voodoo oil, graveyard dust, and fortune-telling spray. The vehicle, dubbed the "Witchmobile," was to be unveiled at an upcoming Morris Cerullo convention, The Seventh Deeper Life Conference.^[74]

Cerullo's vision, Warnke's story, and Balsiger's media talents combined to make the January 1972 meeting a smash. A twelve-page tabloid on Cerullo was inserted into the San Diego Evening Tribune. Warnke and the Witchmobile were introduced to the media at a press conference, and at the Saturday night youth rally.^[75]

Christianity Today covered the event, noting that Cerullo "bore down heavily on the theme that satanic forces are loose in the nation."^[76] Mike Warnke, who gave a seminar on the occult, was one of the newsmen's favorites.

After the January 1972 conference, Warnke and Balsiger parted with Cerullo and decided to write a book together about Mike's Satanist experience. We asked Dave Balsiger about evidence for the story told in the book. Was he concerned about that? "Oh, yes." And what was the evidence Mike offered for The Satan Seller's fifteen-hundred-member cult; the all-powerful Illuminati, the intricate rituals complete with various knives, candles, books, and robes? "Mike took me to some of the sites." (The reader should recall that Mike's experiences had allegedly occurred six years before the book was written.) "I saw where there had been a fire started. And there were some indications of cultic writings and graffiti."^[77]

During the first half of 1972, Warnke had been working hard (with the help of Morris Cerullo's organization) to get out of the navy so he could go full-time into the ministry. "I helped him write letters," recalls Cerullo staffer Jean Jolly,^[78] "and I got hold of [Congressman] Del Clawson's office. We got him out of the navy." On June 2, Warnke was granted an early discharge on conscientious-objector basis.^[79]

"As soon as he got out, Mike sent a letter to Morris Cerullo's headquarters and said we were forbidden to use his name or his material," recalls George Eckeroth,^[80] who headed Jolly's department. "And Balsiger left Cerullo around the same time."

Mike launched his ministry under the banner "Alpha Omega Outreach." In mid-June, Warnke went to Explo '72 in Dallas, a sort of Campus Crusade version of Woodstock attended by over eighty thousand.^[81] Guideposts was running a feature on Warnke's story,^[82] and his book was due in the fall.^[83]

{mospagebreak title=The Satan Seller a Best-seller}

"The Satan Seller" a Best-seller

Logos International released *The Satan Seller* in early 1973.^[84] At that moment, Christian publishing was in the midst of an unparalleled boom with the success of blockbusters like *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey and the Praise books by Merlin Carothers. While the party lasted, Logos was the life of the party, the industry leader in both output and income.^[85]

Yet, as a former Logos editor has admitted, the boom-time books were often "too quickly written."^[86] That same year, Logos published *Michael, Michael, Why Do You Hate Me?*, the purported story of born-again rabbi Michael Esses. A later expose revealed Esses' bogus credentials and immorality.^[87]

Into this heady atmosphere *The Satan Seller* was born. The book was positively reviewed in publications ranging from *Moody Monthly* to *The Christian Century*, with nary a question as to its credibility. ^[88] "The only thing I remember about that book is that it sold better than we thought it would," says Logos founder Dan Malachuk. Indeed, by April 1973, *The Satan Seller* was a religious best-seller.^[89]

Other ex-Satanist testimonies followed Warnke's. John Todd's warnings about the Illuminati and a conspiracy of witches were promoted in a series of Jack Chick comic books. According to Ron Winckler, Todd visited the Hotline once with a group of underlings to check out Mike Warnke. "There was a backstage confrontation," says Ron Winckler. "Todd accused Warnke of stealing his material about the Illuminati."

Another alleged ex-Satanist, Hershel Smith, purchased the Witchmobile from Morris Cerullo and began his own tour. Smith's testimony, seen in the 1974 book *The Devil and Mr. Smith*, coauthored by Dave Hunt, was an apparent effort to one-up *The Satan Seller*.^[90]

Hershel Smith eventually dropped out of sight. Todd's story was later discredited. When a book debunking Todd was written, Mike Warnke wrote the forward. "We as Christians have to be careful of those who take the name of the Lord in vain," said Warnke. ^[91] In Ron Winckler's analysis, "Mike Warnke had the jump on John Todd. He understood the Full Gospel mind-set better."

Now a published author, Mike Warnke found increasing demand for his story and told it in coffeehouses and churches beyond the West Coast. In August of 1973, Warnke spoke at a Christian music festival in Pennsylvania. The Jesus Movement had spawned its own music, and Warnke gravitated toward this fraternity of musicians. Tim Archer of the group *The Archers*, told the crowd at Jesus '73, "Mike Warnke is the Chaplain of Gospel Rock."^[92]

In his travels, Warnke had met Charles Duncombe, an elderly Pentecostal evangelist. "Brother D," who started in the ministry under English preacher Smith Wigglesworth, was loved and respected by all who knew him. In 1974 Mike, Sue, four-year-old Brendon, and newborn Jesse^[93] all moved to Oklahoma near Duncombe's small school, Trinity Bible College. Mike would attend school while Sue tended children.

Trinity Bible College was a nine-month preparation for ministry, located in a big country house outside Tulsa, Oklahoma. The thirty students were mostly new converts, many from a counterculture background and eager to learn. "Within two weeks of our conversion my wife and I were in Trinity," says John Witty,^[94] who with his wife Vicki Jo had been a nightclub comedian.

Fellow students Bob and Karen Siegal^[95] ran a Jesus People ministry in southern Illinois and had met Brother D at a Full Gospel Businessmen's meeting. "We were the token hippies at FGBM," says Karen. "They'd bring us in there and have us give our testimonies." Student Bill Fisher, known as "Wild Bill," was a colorful local who later became Mike Warnke's traveling partner and confidant.

In some ways Mike Warnke was the star pupil, since he was already doing what everybody else was just learning to do: ministering in churches around the country. "Here was a guy who was going out on the weekends and leading hundreds to Jesus," says John Witty. "He was a hero to us all."

On local gigs, Trinity students would tag along, sometimes even joining Warnke on stage. "Mike liked to introduce me as a former hippie or drug addict which I'd been, but I wasn't proud of," Karen Siegal says. "Then he started introducing me as a former prostitute, which I'd never been. I had to ask him to stop."

Another new convert at Trinity, one with a sensational testimony of her own, was to see her real-life story blended with Mike Warnke's. "Part of the program at Trinity was tell your testimony," she says. "I got up and said, 'My name's Carolyn Alberty and I'm third-generation Mafia. My father ran gambling houses, and my mother ran brothels. We had connections in political circles and the entertainment business.'"^[96]

This story caught Warnke's interest, says Carolyn. "Mike told me he knew me from some parties I had given in California." He convinced her he'd been to some, though she didn't remember him. "Then he started inquiring about my connections and ability to promote."

Carolyn rattled off a list of things Warnke needed to do to further his ministry. "Mike brought me to his home, introduced me to Sue, and said, 'I really think Carolyn can help us.' " Carolyn assembled his first real promotional package and called churches to make connections for speaking engagements. She says she told Mike, "Ease up on the satanic stuff and concentrate on the funny stories you've started to tell."^[97]

It didn't take long for the relationship to move beyond a professional level. "Mike started telling me he and Sue had different ideas about what they wanted out of life, and that he didn't love her anymore," says Carolyn. "Mike began passing notes to me in class, with stuff like 'Hubba, hubba' written on them."

As the year wore on, Karen Siegal realized something was up. "Carolyn and Mike started getting really hot and heavy," says Karen. "I confronted them and said, 'This is not godly.' They basically told me it was none of my business." Karen took her concerns to fellow students, but they suggested she was being judgmental.

Brother D was taken by Warnke's sincerity, says Karen. John Witty adds that the rest of the class was too naive to realize what was happening. "Back then, Mike and Carolyn seemed to be just what Jesus freaks would call 'brothers and sisters in the Lord.' I now realize the relationship had warning signs all over it from the beginning."

Karen Siegal protested one last time. "I'd repeatedly told Mike he needed to clean up his act with Carolyn," she says. "One time he came over to our house when nobody else was home. I made the mistake of confronting him again. All of a

sudden, he said, 'It's not Carolyn or Susie I love. It's you.' He grabbed me. It freaked me out and I pushed him away. I yelled, 'Get out of here! I love my husband!' "

Carolyn Alberty admits her relationship with Warnke took the inevitable turn near the end of the school year. "We'd been assigned to paraphrase the book of Isaiah. Mike rented a cabin outside Tulsa to do his work, and he offered to help me with my homework there. I thought that sounded reasonable, since I was living with the Siegals and had no privacy."

After they'd worked at the cabin for awhile, Carolyn says, the two went for a drive, and Warnke stopped at a convenience store. "He asked what kind of cigarettes I used to smoke, and I said, 'Pall Mall Gold. Why?' He just shut the door and kept on walking. I went, 'Uh-oh.' " Warnke returned to the car, says Carolyn, with "two bottles of Annie Greensprings wine, two packs of cigarettes, and a package of peanut butter cookies." That day they began an affair that would lead to marriage two years later and divorce two years after that. "I guess from day one I was wrong," says Carolyn.

Meanwhile, recalls John Witty, "Mike's testimony was just starting to break nationally. He was beginning to get calls from big churches." Among the churches calling Warnke during this time was the Golden Heights Christian Center in Brockport, New York.[98] Pastor Don Riling tried his best to disciple the young Christian musicians and speakers who came to his church. "I loved Mike Warnke as a son," he says. But soon problems cropped up. "We had a woman in the church who'd just become a Christian. She began to hang out with Mike Warnke he seemed to have an eye for people with weaknesses," Riling says. "Later, she confessed to me she'd met him a number of times in hotels for sex when he was in the area."

{mospagebreak title=The Syro-Chaldean Connection}

The Syro-Chaldean Connection

During the Trinity '74-'75 school year began one of the strangest, and longest-running, chapters of the Mike Warnke story. Elijah Coady, an independent bishop in an Eastern Orthodox splinter group called the Syro-Chaldean Church, ordained Warnke a deacon.[99]

Warnke had met Coady on the road, and expressed interest in the bishop's brand of independent Eastern Orthodoxy. Several Trinity students remember Bishop Coady's visit to Tulsa. A few were present when Coady ordained Warnke at a local church. "The bishop wore a strange hat, like a stack of pancakes," says Bill Fisher, who adds that Charles Duncombe expressed some concerns about Coady. "Brother D told us to be cool. He'd gotten a real check in the spirit about the guy."

Another ordination was bestowed upon Warnke by Brother Duncombe on his graduation from Trinity in the spring of 1975. After graduation, Carolyn says Warnke made promises to her but would not be rushed. "He told me he was going to divorce Sue, that I should wait and be patient, that he needed to set up his escape."

Soon afterwards, Warnke did a show at The Happy Church in Denver,[100] where he met Pastor Wally Hickey and his wife Marilyn. Mike and Sue Warnke decided to move to Denver with their two children, and Mike invited Bill Fisher and Carolyn to join him there. The entourage arrived in Denver in August of 1975, where Mike and Sue settled.[101] Mike had promised Fisher and Carolyn jobs with Happy Church, but the jobs didn't materialize. Mike leased a 270-acre mountain retreat called Joy Ranch in Evergreen, Colorado. "Mike would go catch the plane in Denver, and I would keep the place together up there," notes Bill Fisher.[102]

The relationship between Warnke and Happy Church is unclear. Bill Fisher says Mike was "a kind of evangelist for them," not on the payroll but working under Marilyn's Life for Laymen organization. An article in the Denver Post in October '75 identifies Warnke as "an evangelist with Life for Laymen, a Denver-based movement." [103] The Hickeys refused to talk with us, but their spokesperson said Warnke and his wife attended the church during the seventies, primarily for counseling.

According to Carolyn, Warnke now began to push for a divorce from Sue. The Hickeys tried to reason with him. "Mike told them he and Sue would try to work it out," says Carolyn. "But he told me he wanted out of the marriage." Not long after, the relationship was broken between Mike Warnke and The Happy Church.

In November 1975, Mike was invited to do a show at the Adam's Apple coffeehouse in Fort Wayne, Indiana.[104] Christian artists Nancy Honeytree and Phil Keaggy were recording a concert that night. The tape kept rolling during Warnke's part of the show. A proposed Keaggy/Honeytree live album didn't materialize, but the Warnke tape found a buyer in Myrrh Records, a subsidiary of Word, Inc.[105]

Another Christian artist Mike had done concerts with on the road was Randy Matthews. Randy, along with Wes Yoder, was co-owner of Dharma Artists Agency, a fledgling Christian management company based in Matthews' garage in Nashville. After talking with Matthews, Warnke and Carolyn flew to Nashville, where he signed with the company.[106] "While Wes was signing Mike, he asked me to work with Dharma," says Carolyn. "Wes said he'd split my bookings down

the middle, fifty-fifty. Mike said, 'I can't beat that. He may get half of me, but I get half of it back.' So I became a working member of the team."

During this time Brockport, NY, pastor Don Riling[107] continued to befriend Warnke. He was growing more and more concerned over what was going on in Mike and Sue's marriage. "On several occasions Mike had told me and my wifecrying and the whole bit 'Sue doesn't love me. She's kicked me out,' " Riling says. "Mike kept saying how all he wanted to be was a family man, to raise his two boys. I told him he'd have to choose between the road and his family." According to pastor Riling, Marilyn Hickey then visited the Rilings. "I asked Marilyn, 'Isn't there anything we can do to persuade Sue to go back to Mike?' Marilyn about fell out of her chair. She said, 'What are you talking about? Sue loves Mike. She wants to save their marriage. Mike is the one who wants to end it.' Then it was my turn to be surprised. All I'd known about the marriage problems before this was that Mike said Sue was cheating on him." [108]

Riling flew to Denver in the late summer of 1976 on a desperate mission to try to save the marriage. On arriving, Riling said he found Mike had left Sue and the two children and had moved into an apartment with Carolyn. So Riling met with Sue. "She wanted to get back together with Mike. Sue said at one time she had dated another man, but she was plugged into Hickey's church and her attitude was 'I just want to be with my husband.' I think Mike saw it as his chance to dump Sue." (Carolyn told us that Mike had urged both Sue and herself to go out with others when he was away on the road. Finally, Carolyn says, Sue did go out once with her to a dance hall.)

After talking with Sue, Pastor Riling stayed with the Hickeys but spent most of his time with Mike and Carolyn. Riling got his information about Carolyn from Warnke: "Mike was out on the road, and he had supposedly led this gal Carolyn to Jesus. Before then, she had run these houses of ill repute. Mike told me he had to bring her home to help rehab her, and she lived right there with Sue."

During the visit, Riling didn't let up. "Every opportunity I could, I pleaded with Mike to go back to Sue for the sake of his marriage, for the sake of his ministry. Mike wouldn't hear anything about leaving Carolyn." Riling was in a restaurant with Warnke when Mike told him Sue was being served with divorce papers that very moment. (The summons is dated August 20, 1976.) [109] His mission a failure, the pastor returned to New York. Upon receiving the divorce petition, Sue Warnke called Ron Winckler and George Wakeling, along with others, and asked for prayer, saying Mike had run off with another woman.

It was at this point that Dr. Walter Martin, a well-known counter-cult apologist and founder of Christian Research Institute (CRI), was asked to speak to Mike about his marriage difficulties. (Dr. Martin died in 1989.) Gretchen Passantino was Martin's senior research consultant at the time, in charge of CRI's research staff, [110] and her duties included overseeing Walter Martin's travel arrangements.

"Dr. Martin had a speaking engagement near Denver and asked me to book a couple extra days so he could speak with Mike Warnke and his wife, Sue," says Gretchen. "When he got back, he took me aside. He said, 'I had this real difficult meeting with Mike and Sue Warnke. I hope what I did was enough.' Realizing that Mike was determined to leave the marriage, Dr. Martin had prayed and counseled with both of them, advising Mike he needed to leave the ministry."

{mospagebreak title= Mike and Carolyn in Music City}

Mike & Carolyn in Music City

Harmony magazine was the Christian music magazine in the mid-seventies, and in September 1976, Mike Warnke was on the cover. [111] During this era, Mike relocated to what was becoming the center of the contemporary Christian music business. Jesus music began to be shaped by the powerful influence of Nashville, country music capital and home of the Gospel Music Association (GMA). The "music" part was welcomed in Music City. As for Jesus, insiders there have a saying: "Nashville has changed more Christians than Christians have changed Nashville." [112]

Mike and Carolyn pulled into town with a U-Haul trailer. "Mike and I moved into an apartment together," says Carolyn. "Once we'd moved in, Mike went and bought cases of whiskey, different wines, and beer." At the time, of course, Warnke was still married to Sue. Among their Nashville Christian music friends, the only ones to protest Mike and Carolyn's living arrangements was a couple they had met on the road, Mike and Karen Johnson. [113]

Though many of our readers may be unacquainted with Mike Johnson, he was a Jesus music pioneer, starting his first Christian band in 1968. According to many Jesus music historians, Johnson never received recognition equal to the dues he paid and miles he and Karen logged on the coffeehouse and church basement circuit.

When Mike Warnke came to town with Carolyn, Karen Johnson wanted to know what was going on. "We said, 'Hey, what about Sue?' Mike told us, 'She's running around on me.' I called Sue, and she said that wasn't true. She said Mike found this other woman and he wanted to marry her. And the only way you could get a divorce in the Christian community was to say somebody had been unfaithful."

Out of their concern, the Johnsons orchestrated another meeting with mutual acquaintance Don Riling. "We thought Mike Warnke was a mess and wanted him to get help," says Karen. "Don Riling was the only pastor that Warnke opened up to and submitted to in any form. He was like a father figure to Mike." Mike Johnson told the Rilings that Warnke had asked him to be best man in his wedding with Carolyn. "We pushed for a meeting," says Karen Johnson. "Wes set it up. Don Riling flew to Nashville."

The meeting was held at the Dharma offices. Riling, Mike Johnson, Wes Yoder, and Mike and Carolyn were there. "You'd have never guessed that this was a meeting of Christians," says Riling. "Mike and Carolyn were swearing the whole time, and they must have gone through a whole pack of cigarettes." The meeting went on for hours in an effort to get everything out on the table with Warnke. "He moped around, saying his life was a mess," says Riling. "I tried to convince him to go back to Sue and save his ministry."

At one point in the meeting, Carolyn brought up Warnke's continuing affair with the woman at Riling's church in Brockport. "Mike was still very involved with her," says Carolyn. Pastor Riling was struck by the bizarreness of the situation: "I'm sitting there listening to this woman Warnke was committing adultery with talk about how Mike was cheating on her."

As the meeting bogged down, Riling took Wes Yoder aside and tried to make him understand the gravity of the situation. "Wes wouldn't deal with it," says Riling. "He knew Mike Warnke had a problem, but Wes was young and inexperienced. Wes said to Mike, 'Do whatever you want to. Stay with this woman. Go back to your wife. It's okay. I'm behind you, because we have to keep the ministry going.' Mike Johnson was horrified by this," says Riling.

Carolyn says she also gave Wes advice: "I thought Mike Johnson was being sanctimonious and Don Riling was a joke. Wes came to me and said, 'What's going on?' I said, 'Look, the guy's a joke. He's trying to get his paws on Mike, but you've got him signed and if you don't keep him it's your fault.' So it was really us against them."

Wes Yoder says of those days, "I should have run Warnke out of town when he first showed up with Carolyn. I was stupid. I didn't miss it. I just didn't know what to do about it. I was sinful in allowing him to use me as a cloak of decency for what he was doing. The Lord doesn't bless in things like that." [114] Karen Johnson forgives Wes for his part in the debacle, saying, "Here he was, this young guy trying to be a part of Christian music, and he's involved with all these crazy people."

Carolyn says the meeting accomplished nothing. "Nobody I ever met who was around or who was connected with Mike Warnke in any way ever had any effect on him." The day after the meeting, Mike Johnson left Dharma. His path then began to lead downward by degrees. It was also after this meeting, says Carolyn, that Mike Warnke initiated her in what he called an Indian ceremony. "We were at a motel, and he said, 'I'll show you how much I love you.' He took a pocket knife and cut his wrist, and cut mine, and mixed our blood. He said, 'Now we are one.' He gave himself the name Many Horses because I was part American Indian."

Bill Fisher said, "Mike told me he got the name Many Horses from an Indian medicine man." Bill Fisher told us, explaining the Indian identity as one of Warnke's many "mojos": "Mike would personify himself as various characters at times. Mike had his Indian mojo, or sometimes he'd be a Scotsman, or Jewish, or a Catholic priest, or Jeremiah Johnson, or blackhe wanted to think he had black blood because Andre Crouch told him he had soul." The divorce of Mike Warnke from Sue was finalized on December 3, 1976. [115] Mike and Carolyn were married four months later. [116] Instead of Mike Johnson, Wes Yoder was best man.

{mospagebreak title=Downhill into the Bigtime}

Downhill into the Bigtime

In his books and on his records, Mike Warnke goes from Satan to Christ. In Nashville, the path led from rags to riches. Warnke had no money or credit when he came to town, says Carolyn. The bang-up combination of a hit record and the Dharma Agency soon changed that. [117] And the money started rolling in. "Lots of money," says Carolyn. "Not all of a sudden. But it wasn't uncommon for us to make five thousand dollars on the road, spend two to three thousand a day, buy whatever we wanted, go where we wanted, do whatever we wanted."

The Dharma Agency prospered. During this period, they moved their offices from Randy Matthews' garage to Music Row, and later to a penthouse suite in the United Artists Towers. They hired additional booking agents. [118] Dharma's star rose with the fortunes of something that was now called contemporary Christian music.

Writes Christian media observer William D. Romanowski, "The industry scaffolding began to go up as concert halls replaced coffeehouses and church fellowship halls, as record labels replaced custom recordings, and as contemporary music radio formats replaced tapes of preachers. . .

Christian entrepreneurs were building a Christian entertainment industry that paralleled its secular counterpart not just in

musical styles and trends, but in marketing techniques, management, concert production, publicity, and glamorization." [119]

The whole atmosphere surrounding the music changed. "We took our eyes off what had been very precious and innocent," says industry veteran, Dan Hickling, "the joy of being a Christian and going around and singing music for people that would bring them closer to God." [120]

Buddy Huey, Word Records' artists and repertoire man, who had signed Warnke, was part of the big change. [121] "What we were trying to do was have better distribution to get the Word out. We ended up compromising lots. When I was with Word, the intent of the company was nothing more than trying to find those people who had a voice or a platform. And then all we could go on was what they told us." Including Warnke's satanic story? "It was just accepted," says Huey. "That's one of the things you'll find in the industry. You see something that might be salable, marketable that's what you look at. It saddens me that I was a part of setting up things in the industry that I wish I had a chance to undo."

Romanowski writes, "Evangelism was the rhetoric, business became reality." The manipulation of language, he says, transformed "money-making into ministry, easing the consciences of those few who earn healthy incomes off the music." [122]

"You could see a kind of downhill slide," says Larry Black, a one-time Christian deejay who is now an actor. [123] "To see the marriages dissolve, to see them slowly begin to justify various vices." Was this behavior common knowledge in the industry? "Yeah. I think there was general knowledge. But you're caught in that old trap of not wanting to criticize a brother."

We asked Buddy Huey if there was any company policy regarding Christian artists who were exhibiting non-Christian behavior. "No, there really wasn't," says Buddy Huey. "I didn't personally do cocaine, for instance, but I was present when others did cocaine. Looking back at that, I think my silence was worse than them doing the drugs."

Scott Ross, who now works for CBN Television and back then was the country's foremost Christian disk jockey, recalls how kinky things had gotten. "There was a lot of immorality, drugs, and booze."

Says Karen Johnson, "Mike [Johnson] tried to stay so straight, for eight years. Then everything fell apart after we'd been in Nashville for awhile. Mike looked around and realized that Warnke and his friends were making lots of money and fooling around on their wives. My husband thought, 'What difference does it make?' He started drinking, smoking grass. He started hanging around with these Christian music people that didn't care if you were moral or not."

Says Mike Johnson, "I was one big mess." Adds Karen, "When my Mike came home from being on the road with Warnke, he'd confess all in the name of repentance to all this drinking and going to discos."

In the fall of 1978, the future seemed bright for Mike Warnke. His albums were "the most popular Christian comedy records ever produced anywhere, with sales reaching to nearly 200,000." [124] Doubleday Publishing was assembling a book of material from the first three albums. With dates around the world, 1979 was slated to be his biggest tour ever. Mike asked Bill Fisher to travel with him.

At home, Carolyn says she and Mike had been fighting, and that several times he had hit her. Because of this, Carolyn's mother, Peggy Alberty, had moved to Nashville to be near her daughter.

{mospagebreak title= Enter Rose, Exit Nashville}

Enter Rose, Exit Nashville

Warnke was on the road almost constantly. "We figured it out one time," says Bill Fisher. "We traveled over 280,000 air miles in about ten months that year, with three days off a month." About halfway through the whirlwind ten-month tour, Warnke performed in Hazard, Kentucky. [125] It was there, says Rose Hall, that she first met Mike Warnke. [126]

Carolyn confirms this story. "While Mike and I were still married, he went to Kentucky to do a show, and that's where he met Rose." Carolyn says Mike came home very excited about something. "Then he went down to a jewelry store where we'd established credit and began buying jewelry for someone else, who I later found out was Rose."

The story of Mike Warnke's romance with Rose Hall is told in her book, *The Great Pretender*. Rose never mentions Carolyn or the fact that Mike was married to Carolyn during his courtship with Rose. She says she met Warnke in various cities and stayed in the hotel with him in separate rooms. "Looking back, it had never occurred to me to say, 'You're a minister, an evangelist; are you married?' It never entered my mind." [127]

During the time she was traveling around with Warnke, Rose says she went with him to Nashville. There, she writes, both his road manager and his agent objected to the relationship. [128] Wes Yoder says, "Rose came along before Mike and

Carolyn were divorced. The whole thing with Carolyn, I couldn't deal with personally. With Rose I did. But I was still there. I was so wrong."

Mike Warnke's relationship with the Johnsons went from bad to worse. As Karen Johnson tells it, "Mike called on the phone and said he wanted to come over, because he knew I was angry at him over what had happened to my Mike. I told him no, that I felt he was leading people astray, and I didn't want him associating with my husband because he was helping destroy our marriage. But later Warnke came over anyway and said, 'Karen, I don't want you to dislike me. I want us to be friends.' I said, 'Then change what you're doing. You're deceiving people. You're committing adultery.' He said, 'I can't change.'"

After Karen told Warnke to get out, "He came at me like he was going to kill me." Mike Johnson says of this episode, "I was in pretty good shape back then, and I was ready to go at it there in the living room." Warnke left, says Karen, "screaming obscenities at me."

The end for Mike Warnke and wife Carolyn was, as she tells it, the stuff of melodrama. "We were fighting and he threw me into a wall and split my head open. He said, 'If you go to a local hospital and tell them what your name is, I'll kill you. I don't have to do it physically. I can do it from another room or another state.'"

"There was a revolver in the nightstand," Carolyn says. "I took it out and said, 'If you hit me again Mike, I'm gonna kill you, because I'm tired of your beatings. I just can't take any more.' " Carolyn says she jumped into her car, started driving, and didn't stop until she reached Pensacola, Florida.

Tom Carrouthers found Carolyn in a convenience store in Pensacola that summer night in 1979, dazed and bleeding. "Carolyn said she and her old man had gotten into it," says Carrouthers.[129] "She had a big gouge on the top of her head, and a wad of dried blood. I took her to the hospital. When we got there, she was like a kid and didn't want me to leave. She stayed with my sister and me for a week or so."

Carolyn gave us a note she received from Mike. "Dear Carolyn," it reads, "I don't know how we ever got to this place. All I know for sure is that we are here. . . . I can't blame you for not wanting to be around me right now. Nor can I condemn your disgust at my rages and tantrums. I'm trying hard to get control. . . . I'll always be there when you need me. The scar on my wrist will never fade. . . . Peace to you. Many Horses."

Carrouthers remembers Carolyn talking with Warnke on the phone during the two weeks she was there; things seemed to be improving. But when Carolyn finally returned to Nashville from Florida, she was in for a surprise. "I came home and there was a 'For Sale' sign on the house. All the locks had been changed, and everything in the house was gone. In just a matter of days, I had no funds, no furniture, nothing," she says.

Carolyn didn't go back to Dharma. She felt most of the people she knew in the industry had been siding with Mike, who was telling everyone the stories about her unfaithfulness. In a bizarre twist, Carolyn got a job working as an undercover narcotics operative with the Regional Organized Crime Information Center, a law enforcement organization in Nashville.

Mike and Carolyn's divorce was final on November 29, 1979.[130] Mike Johnson says Warnke told him that Carolyn was rubbed out by the mob, "bludgeoned to death in a ditch." A friend from the Trinity days, Clarence Benes, heard from Warnke that Carolyn had been killed in a boating accident.[131] Don Riling says he was told by Warnke that Carolyn had drowned.

From Carolyn's viewpoint, "Mike is one of the greatest con artists I've ever known in my life. And coming from my background, that says quite a bit."

Mike and Karen Johnson divorced two years later, and he is no longer in Christian music. "Mike Johnson has really reaped what he has sown," says ex-wife Karen. "He has no family, no friends, no career, no money, no life. It makes me angry that Mike Warnke, on the other hand, seems to be making money, going on with life, and continuing to deceive people."

Among the friends that took a different path than Warnke at the end of 1979 was Bill Fisher. "Mike and I parted when he moved to Kentucky to be with Rose," says Bill. "He was divorced, but that's not grounds for moving in with someone. Mike said, 'We married each other before the Lord.' I said, 'Do it before the state, too.'"

{mospagebreak title= Holy Orthodox Catholic Church in Kentucky}

Holy Orthodox Catholic Church in Kentucky

Mike Warnke married Rose Hall in Paintsville, Kentucky, on January 2, 1980.[132] It was his third marriage, her fourth. With the marriage came several changes: Rose was often onstage and on record with Mike;[133] Warnke left Dharma Agency and began to book his own concerts; the public focus shifted from onstage concerts to the ministry back

home.[134] As Mike has said: "When you get right down to it, I'm just a glorified cheerleader. The real work of our ministry goes on back there." [135]

The name of the "ministry back there" was Warnke Ministries; its nonprofit status was listed under "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Church in Kentucky" (HOCCK). This built on Warnke's previous 1974 ordination in Tulsa by Bishop Elijah Coady while Warnke was attending Trinity Bible School. With HOCCK, Mike Warnke joined the ranks of "independent" Eastern Orthodox churchmen who founded their own autonomous denominations. During the early eighties, Warnke met James Miller, a local bishop in the American Orthodox Church. Miller told us he ordained Warnke a deacon and then a priest in early 1983. He suspended the ordination later when Warnke failed to submit regular reports.

And then Mike Warnke became a bishop. This final ecclesiastical step occurred when another independent bishop, Richard Morrill, consecrated Warnkean event we have verified by speaking to three other bishops who say they were told by the late Morrill that he had indeed made Mike Warnke a bishop.[136]

Bishop Richard Morrill had officiated over Mike and Carolyn's marriage in Nashville.[137] According to Elijah Coady, Morrill was an itinerant cleric given to flamboyance and the founding of organizations, many of which seemed to exist only on paper. In 1981, Morrill incorporated in Texas under the name "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Church, Eastern and Apostolic." [138] One year later, Mike and Rose incorporated as "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Church in Kentucky." [139]

HOCCK's offices were located at first in a converted garage behind the Warnkes' Versailles home.[140] As time went on, they staffed it with a series of Christian women whose opinions of the Warnke ministry were much higher when they joined than when they left. In the summer of 1983, Dorothy Green heard Rose on a Lexington Christian radio station and invited her to speak to the Danville, Kentucky, Women's Aglow.[141] Soon afterwards, "Dot" was hired to answer letters and do phone counseling. Dot's friend, Jan Ross, joined later as Rose's personal secretary. Roxanne Miller and Phyllis Swearinger eventually worked in the bookkeeping department.

All four women were nonplussed by Mike's preference for High Church "chapel" services. Dot remembers an early chapel service with Mike: "He had incense, and he'd come down the aisle with his robes, swinging it in this thing."

Roxanne Miller's opinion had less to do with the High Church trappings than with an event where Mike's ritual got in the way of a few friends' prayer time. "We used to go down to the park for lunch," Roxanne recalls.[142] "Dot, Jan, myself, a few others . . . and we'd just talk about what God had done in our lives. What He still was doing. Mike was usually out of town, but one day he just showed up and said, 'I'm gonna do the teaching this week.' So we sang, and then Mike put on his robes. I thought he was plain ridiculous. It was like dressing up to be something you're not. It made me feel sad. He wants to be so much, and he isn't. I can still see him standing there in his robe, all velvet and dark."

{mospagebreak title= The Ministry and the Money}

The Ministry and the Money

Another point which perplexed the women was HOCCK's finances. Roxanne Miller had been hired to get control of the finances and says that while she was there (1985-1986) HOCCK covered various expenses for Mike and Rose. "We paid for the car, we paid for the gas, we paid for the parsonage, we paid for their clothes and their food," she says. Yet she says her job was a continual battle of the budget. Mike seemed to have no concept that money made by a nonprofit ministry is different than personal income. Once, she says, Mike Warnke responded to her efforts to curb his spending this way: "He told me, 'Every bit of the money is mine. I earned it. If I wasn't out front, there would be no money.'"

Jan Ross told us, "On several occasions Rose said to me that anybody who was in the position she and Mike were in deserved to have the best of everything because of who they were and what they had given up to be where they were. I thought, 'What did you give up?' " [143]

Phyllis Swearinger said there were problems making ends meet.[144] "I'd worked at banks before, so I was used to handling large amounts of money. But the amount that came in here every week sort of threw me. And then to find out it just wouldn't go far enough! Once Mike called me, upset because he needed some trees pruned at his home, and I wouldn't write a check for it because we didn't have enough money in the account at the moment. What struck me about this conversation is Mike told me he felt he deserved to make as large a salary as Jimmy Swaggart was making."

The Warnkes' home was certainly in line with his high aspirations. Back in July of 1983 Rose's mother, Blanche Hall, had purchased a huge mansion (at one time a plantation) near Danville. "Lynnwood Farm" was leased to HOCCK for several years and later sold to Rose, who with Mike referred to it as "the parsonage." [145]

Tax returns indicate HOCCK's total revenue for 1984 was over \$900,000. In 1985 HOCCK grossed over \$1,000,000, with over \$500,000 in love offerings alone. In 1986, the total went over two million: love offerings brought in over \$1,000,000; product sales (i.e., books and records) grossed over \$180,000; and direct public support totaled over \$450,000. The 1987 total was \$2,239,927. Revenue figures for 1988 through 1990 continued at slightly over \$2,000,000.[146]

HOCCK tax returns show that the Warnke's personal salaries[147] steadily rose (see Table 1).=====

Table 1: Warnke's annual income

	MIKE	ROSE	1984: \$ 34,500	\$ 11,500	1985: \$ 95,617	\$
83,417	1986: \$163,632	\$155,418	1987: \$177,450	\$177,450	1988: \$183,917	\$183,917
\$204,383	1989: \$239,291	\$230,291	=====			

The growth of Warnke Ministries in the mid-eighties paralleled a sudden explosion of public fears about Satanism. In March of 1985, Mike Warnke appeared on an ABC "20/20" report called "The Devil Worshipers," part of a deluge of talk shows and books on contemporary Satanism. Stories of hideous satanic crimes were often woven together by self-proclaimed "experts" to demonstrate the existence of a worldwide satanic conspiracy similar to the Illuminati network outlined in The Satan Seller.

Each year, goes the theory, thousands of children are being sacrificed in satanic rituals laced with sex and violence. Alleged adult survivors of satanic ritual abuse testify to the hidden cult's existence. The Satan Seller seems tame in comparison. Yet when evidence for the conspiracy is requested, true believers (including a few therapists and police officers) often refer skeptics to Warnke and his book as a final authority.[148]

In the early eighties, when Mike and Rose began to speak about their Kentucky ministry to audiences on the road, they offered descriptions typically centered around their work helping victims of the occult—like "Jeffy."

"Supposedly, Jeffy was this little boy who had become a vegetable because of all the satanic abuse he'd had," says Jan Ross. "The story was used to raise money to 'help all the Jeffys of the world, so there wouldn't be so many Jeffys.' Mike would say, 'What if your child was sent to preschool and this happened? How'd you like this to happen to your child?'"

The home office would always know when Mike was telling the Jeffy story, says Dot Green. "People would write on the offering envelopes, 'This is for all the children like Jeffy.' It was amazing how many envelopes would come back with Jeffy's name on it. Mike always had to count the money after a concert and call Rose to give her an idea of what was there," Dot continues. "She'd ask if he'd told the Jeffy story. If he hadn't, she'd say, 'You tell the Jeffy story tomorrow night.'" Several staffers say the Warnkes' interest in the at-home ministry never made it home from the road. Says Dot, "I'd try to tell them about somebody who wrote needing help, and they didn't want to hear."

Adds Jan Ross, "We didn't get that many calls, maybe four or five actual calls a day. Some people just wanted attention, but every once in a while there'd be people with real problems. Mike and Rose just didn't want to deal with them. They'd go on the road and say, 'We're here to help you,' but when you called they didn't want to deal with you."

For a while, Dot Green tried to ignore everything at Warnke Ministries that wasn't connected to her counseling duties. "I loved my job so much," she says. "I fooled myself into thinking it was my ministry, since Mike and Rose didn't seem to have any interest in it. But I started realizing the people I was writing to were sending in offerings. I always put a pink offering envelope in with each letter. I began marking my envelopes so I could tell which came back with my mark. The month I left, my letters brought in over \$21,000. At that point, the Lord let me know I was just as guilty as they were as long as I stayed."

Jan Ross was in the midst of her own struggle. The staff attended a series of Warnke shows in Cincinnati. "We did this concert; it was just a super evening. Then we walked out and went to a bar. The Warnkes were buying rounds of drinks, dancing. I kept thinking the whole time, I wonder if anybody's going to come in and recognize them."

Roxanne remembers that trip. "We went to Cincinnati once. It just grossed me out. They went out and drank and carried on afterwards, Mike and the road guys. I said, 'I just can't handle this.'"

Dot Green and Jan Ross left Warnke Ministries at the end of 1985. Roxanne Miller was fired in February 1986 (for refusing to give Rose several signed, blank checks, she says), and Phyllis quit soon after. "It's not been something we have forgotten easily," says Jan Ross. "It's scary to think you can get involved with something like that with a pure heart, to serve God, and then find out it's run on deception, lies, and thievery."

Warnke Ministries continued to expand. In October of 1986, the Warnkes purchased property in Burgin, Kentucky, which they then sold to HOCCK.[149] A newsletter announced that a long-promised "Center" was about to become a reality. Plans included rehab and medical facilities. "Phase I" was the construction of an administration building.[150]

The fund-raising campaign began. "This Center is fast becoming a reality and will be a reality if you make it one," said Mike in a ministry newsletter. "Your gifts, offerings, and prayers enable Warnke Ministries to continue its missions." [151]

By April of 1987, Warnke Ministries was able to move to Burgin and into their beautiful new colonial-style brick office

complex.[152] Dr. John Cooper worked for a short time in this building. In the late eighties, Warnke Ministries opened a seminar department to teach police and others the gruesome facts about Satanism and occult crime. Dr. Cooper, a former college professor and author of twenty-nine books, was hired in 1989 as director.

Cooper has this to say about the Warnkes' "Center": "They were raising money for a children's center for refugees from Satanism. Phone calls would come to my office, people wanting to send kids there. I'd explain to them that there wasn't any such thing there, only a building with offices. The only parts of that building not dedicated to getting Mike speaking engagements or handling receipts were a large room set up like a Greek Orthodox Church and a library." [153]

Cooper disputes the Warnkes' claim of 50,000 counseling calls and letters a month.[154] "There isn't any way in the world for that to be so," he says. "My guess would be, on a daily basis, they might get 6 calls." (Such a figure, if accurate, would translate to 120 calls per month.) "The only ministry I know of that went on there was one fellow who worked part-time answering the phone. And he'd usually just give out other ministry numbers and tell people to call them."

John Cooper spent several months preparing a seminar presentation, which he premiered in May. Shortly afterwards, he was fired. He later tried suing the Warnkes, but the case died in court.

A more important court case for Warnke Ministries was the 1991 divorce of Mike and Rose. According to the Warnkes' new book, *Recovering from Divorce*, the serious problems in the marriage date as far back as November 1984. In the book, Rose notes an "It's over, isn't it?" talk with Mike that took place in his office in December of 1984.[155]

Some comparison with Rose's previous book is enlightening. Written in mid- to late 1985, *The Great Pretender* reveals how Rose caught Warnke in an "affair" in 1984. "We had a situation this last year when we felt there was nothing left between us. We weren't communicating, and Satan provided a woman to fill the gap in Michael's life." [156] The conversation in the first book goes like this: He began to tell me there's nothing to this and that I'm misunderstanding it all. "Okay, okay," I growled, "I don't want to hear it. If you're not going to tell the truth, don't say anything. . . . You're throwing your ministry away, your life, the whole works. I'll guarantee you, people will not accept this. You're not going to go through another divorce and people accept it." [157]

Rose says she threatened on Christmas Eve to call the woman, and Mike responded by moving out. Later, after Warnke had promised to end the relationship, Rose found out he was still calling the woman. Says Rose, "He hid all the guns. Michael's a big gun collector, and I know how to shoot. . . . I said, 'I'll continue running the ministry, I'll get myself established ministry-wise, then I don't care what you do. You're not going to wreck my life. I'll establish myself. You do what you want.'" [158]

These incidents go unmentioned in the new book. Instead, *Recovering from Divorce* presents a rather psychologized story of a marital mismatch, doomed from the start. While the Warnkes are evasive on the exact reasons, they make it clear their marriage was a painful experience for both of them. Court records say the couple last lived together in October of 1989.[159]

Despite her earlier warnings in *The Great Pretender* about how people would not accept another divorce, Rose Warnke filed for divorce on September 4, 1991. A property settlement agreement drawn up by Rose's attorney and signed by both Mike and Rose was filed the same day.[160]

Blanche Hall had deeded Lynnwood Farm to Rose in April of 1991. In the divorce property settlement, Rose was also awarded 327 additional acres surrounding the farm, which the couple purchased in April 1991 for \$525,000 (despite the fact that they hadn't lived together there since October, 1989.) [161] Mike Warnke also agreed to pay half the mortgage for the new acreage.[162]

Additionally, Rose got a condominium the Warnkes owned in Stewart, Florida (purchased in May, 1986, for \$398,000), and another condominium the couple owned near Danville (purchased in July, 1989, for \$231,500). [163] Further, Rose got everything in all the houses mentioned above, plus the Yamaha piano, the 1985 Cadillac, and the couple's four horses.

Mike also agreed to pay Rose \$8,000 per month (\$96,000 per year) for the rest of her life via a wage assignment out of Mike's salary from HOCCK. Mike agreed to assume responsibility for paying various liens, pay for the education of Rose's daughters until the year 2001, divide a \$15,000 IRA with Rose, and also split the debt to their accountant.

Rose also got 65 percent of Warnke's ownership of his copyrights for and royalties from absolutely everything he will make from his books and recordings. Mike agreed to keep various existing life insurance policies and take out an additional \$2 million life insurance policy on himself, with Rose as the beneficiary, for the next fifteen years.

Finally, Mike agreed to pay Rose \$20,000 to equalize the division of property.

In the same property settlement, Mike Warnke was awarded whatever property was located at the condo where he was

staying, his motorcycle, and visiting rights to the horses. October 2, 1991, the Warnkes' divorce was granted.[164] The local paper quoted a ministry spokesman who said nothing would change. Rose, who was identified as the music director and an administrator, would continue to do separate shows and possibly make joint appearances with Mike.[165]

When it came time for Mike Warnke to announce his third divorce officially to the friends of Warnke Ministries, he used a rationale which he was sure his fellow believers would respect: He did it, he said, for the ministry.

"As many of you know," wrote Warnke, "Rose and I, after seeking the Lord's guidance, and two years of intensive Christian counseling, accepted the fact that our marriage was beyond reconciliation, and the only hope of saving the Ministry we have poured our lives into, was divorce." [166]

Six weeks after his divorce was finalized, on November 18, 1991, Mike Warnke married Susan Patton, an old Rim High classmate, and moved to California.[167]

As of this writing, Mike and Rose are scheduled to appear together at the Christian Booksellers Association convention in late June, where they will be promoting their new book, *Recovering from Divorce*. According to CBA press material, the Warnkes will be available for interviews to discuss their "unique perspective on the troublesome issue of divorce."

Their unique perspective: forgive and forget. In the book, Mike and his ex-wife share the pain of their relationship and parting; then the experiences are interpreted by their editor, Lloyd Hildebrand, and therapist, John Joy. There is much talk of how sad divorce is, and much assigning of blame to dysfunctional backgrounds and a codependent relationship. Although they could not be married, Mike and Rose conclude, they can now be friends.

"Perhaps no one is ready for this book," writes Mike. "Could being 'up front' about our failure cost it all? That's the chance I must take. Rose feels the same way. We both have come to the place where we know that the only real choice we have is to go on as ourselves." [168]

For those who would raise objections to what is, indeed, in the Christian Church a "unique" perspective, Mike Warnke fires a preemptive blast. "So I messed up. Does that change who Jesus is?" [169] Likewise, he decries "the Gospel Gestapo" who feel bound to discover and publicize the failures of those in ministry, "even if the evidence proves to be true." [170] After our research was complete, we contacted Mike in early May to set up an interview with him, to which we had invited some other Christian leaders (Ron Enroth, Don Riling, and others). Mike declined our interview and said he would only meet with us at his attorney's office in Kentucky. We considered this a matter for the Body of Christ, with no lawyers being necessary, and asked about the possibility of meeting somewhere convenient for everyone. Mike's response: that we have no further contact with him except through his attorney. This ended our communication.

This concludes a long and painful survey of the life and ministry of Mike Warnke. We did not prepare it lightly, but solemnly and with counsel from many dedicated ministers.

{mospagebreak title=A Biblical Plan of Action}

A Biblical Plan of Action

We would be remiss in our duty as Christian journalists if we could not offer some concrete suggestions and reflections.

Some of our readers will expect us to have followed the steps of Matthew 18:15-17, starting with a private confrontation. This passage gives Christ's instructions on what to do "if your brother sins against you," and the process stops if the brother repents privately. We have two remarks on this passage.

First, Mike has already been confronted numerous times over the years by many concerned Christian friends, acquaintances, and church leaders. Mike knows what the Bible says about truthfulness, integrity, and fidelity. He is responsible to put into practice what he already knows.

Second, this is not a private dispute between Mike Warnke and a magazine. A public figure is susceptible to public scrutiny and criticism. Matthew 18 is not violated when public figures are publicly rebuked. (However, other scriptures are violated if the rebukes being made are not fair, true, or applicable to the person.)

Mike has sinned against the public for years, and the public is entitled to know the truth about his claims and actions. The misinformation about Mike's testimony is still in circulation, influencing how Christians view contemporary Satanism. For the sake of the Church and the watching world, it must be corrected. (A more complete discussion of the biblical grounds for Christian reporting appears in the article, "Public Trust," on page 5.)

The statements made in this report are factual and verifiable. Anybody can read Mike's book, study its time line, and see that there is no way for him to have done the things he claimed in *The Satan Seller*. Mike's former fiancée, his roommates, relatives, and cohorts in school emphatically contradict his claims on everything from hair length to drug use

and from out-of-town trips to "love slaves" in his apartment. Mike's own friends refused to sign an affidavit that his Satanism testimony was true.

If Mike has any real evidence to disprove what we've offered here, we're willing to print it. However, the evidence we have uncovered leads us to the conclusion that Mike doesn't have any. One thing is certain: the Church should not let the master storyteller get by with telling just another story: "There really was a satanic coven; they just didn't talk to the right people. . . ."

At this stage, excuses aren't sufficient. Mike needs to provide either evidence or repentance. It is not enough to make religious excuses for sin or sophisticated attempts to change the subject: "Those girls came on to me, and I was at a vulnerable point in my life. . . ." "The person who said 'the Christian Church is the only army to shoot its own wounded' was totally right. . . ." "It's not up to you to judge my actions. Last time I read my Bible, Jesus was sitting on the throne, and He's not about to get off and let you take His place. . . ." This is sidestepping. It's a move to change the subject and get away from calling one's actions sin and asking for forgiveness. The issues are whether Mike has told the truth, whether he is fit for public ministry, and whether he meets the standards for biblical leadership. Like it or not, by addressing thousands of people he is assuming a pastoral role, regardless of what he calls himself.

If Mike were to seek forgiveness and restoration, what could the Church expect to see as evidence of the genuineness of his repentance? The following principles should apply to any Christian leader who has manifestly fallen.

Repentance. Repentance is fundamental to Christianity. It denotes a complete turnaround, heading in the opposite direction than previously. Like "to love," to repent is a verb denoting action. Nobody wants to see another Jimmy Swaggart crying crocodile tears on camera but returning to save "the ministry" three months later . . . and returning to the same sin after that. In Mike Warnke's case, true repentance would necessitate complete withdrawal from public ministry.

Confession. If Mike is repentant, he should make an open admission of guilt. On the other hand, Mike Warnke has built a career of telling us about past and present sins. The Church must not allow him to emerge as a new authority on fraudulent testimonies.

Restitution. True moral change involves some attempt to undo past wrongs and to provide some kind of restitution. Perhaps the best kind of restitution Mike Warnke could perform would be to take Satan Seller and all his other products off the market.

What about the rest of us? Accountability is a public as well as a personal matter. Christian publishers have an obligation to validate the books they print, whether nonfiction or historical fiction books. At the same time, it is our responsibility as the book-buying public to ask for evidence before accepting a story.

After Warnke's testimony began circulating, those few who knew the truth kept silent: they felt powerless against the immensity of the story. Where could they turn? Well, the publisher would be a place to start. We need the active participation of all members of the Body of Christ in provoking each other to righteousness and, where necessary, in providing biblical confrontation and counsel.

Sometimes a twisted man can preach a straight gospel. Through the years, we've known many people who could speak truth while ignoring it in their personal lives. Scripture testifies that God may bless or anoint a sermon even while condemning the deeds of the preacher (Num. 23-24, 2 Pet. 2:15, Matt. 23:3).

Yes, the love of God is truly as infinite and wondrous as Mike Warnke has been telling us for twenty years. God loves Mike Warnke as he really is—ex-Satanist, war hero, Ph.D.—or not. His choice now is no different than it has ever been: losing the whole world or losing his soul. For no one can know the love of God whose heart is closed to the truth.

Perhaps he has never stopped feeling like an outsider, and even when Christianity opened its arms to him, he would not give up his storytelling. His adolescent flirtation with the occult was exaggerated into a postadolescent fantasy of having incredible amounts of money, sex, prestige, and power as a Satanist. He later achieved money, sex, prestige, and power. Sadly, it was in the name of Christ.

It's not too late for Mike to change, if he wants to. The secular press may scoff, and those who consider themselves real Satanists may snicker, but the Jesus of the Bible is still the God of truth. The Lord, who makes ruined lives whole and restores purity to harlots and liars, offers each of us forgiveness and acceptance. Not on our terms, but His. To Mike, and all others, who have been tempted to sacrifice the truth for the sake of "the ministry," we can offer no better words than these of the apostle Paul: Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Cor. 4:1-2)

{mospagebreak title=Endnotes}

ENDNOTES

1. Coauthor David Balsiger, in his biographical sketch, says *The Satan Seller* has sold only 500,000 copies.
2. So-called satanic panic has led to tragedy in many cases. For further information, see Jon Trott, "Satanic Panic," *Cornerstone* 20, iss. 95 (1991): 9.
3. Mike Warnke marriage licenses. Interview, Fr. Bob Nagler, St. Francis Cabrini Church, Crestline, CA.
4. Interview, Mildred Warnke Jordan; Al Warnke obituary, *Manchester Times*, 17 Oct. 1958.
5. Mildred Warnke Jordan; Larry Nee, *Manchester Times*, 16 Oct. 1991, spoke with local undertaker, who referred to his notes on Louise Cooper.
6. Interview and letter, Shirley Schrader.
7. "Final Rites for A. J. Warnke," *Manchester Times*, 17 Oct. 1958.
8. Mike Warnke Alive!, Mike Warnke, Myrrh Records, 19769. Interview, Edna Swindell.
10. Interviews, Keith Schrader, Jr.
11. Interview, Tim Smith.
12. Interviews, Jeff Nesmith.
13. Interview, David Goodwin.
14. Interview, Terry Smith Perry.
15. Confirmation certificate (see above).
16. Charles Donovan, San Bernardino Valley College ref. librarian.
17. Warnke, Michael Alfred, USN, #B98 05 49.
18. Mike Warnke, *Schemes of Satan* (Tulsa, OK: Victory House, 1991), 87.
19. Interviews, Greg Gilbert.
20. Interviews, Dennis Pekus.
21. Interviews, Dawn Andrews.
22. Interview, Dyana Cridelich.
23. Mike Warnke, with Dave Balsiger and Les Jones, *The Satan Seller*, (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1972), 18.
24. Interviews, Lois Eckenrod.
25. *Satan Seller*, 19.
26. *Satan Seller*, 14.
27. Interview, John Ingro.
28. Interviews, George Eubank.
29. *Satan Seller*, 19.
30. Interview, Phyllis Catalano.
31. Interview, Mary Catalano.
32. Interview, Tom Bolger.

33. Satan Seller, 19.
34. Satan Seller, 19, 20.
35. Satan Seller, 30.
36. Satan Seller, 33.
37. Satan Seller, 100, 101.38. In 1981, Logos went bankrupt and sold its titles to Bridge Publishing, which has since been purchased again. The new owners were unable to locate any affidavits, signed or otherwise, for The Satan Seller.
39. Interviews, Bill Lott.
40. Satan Seller, 64, 65.
41. Satan Seller, 29.
42. Satan Seller, 28.
43. Schemes of Satan, 73.
44. Satan Seller, 90, 91.
45. Mike Warnke, Hitchhiking on Hope Street (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1979), 63, 64.
46. "Focus on the Family" broadcast, 16 March 1985.
47. Satan Seller, 112-114, 116, 121.
48. Naval records show Warnke was transferred out of Recruit Training Command on 22 August 1966. This is also the date he gives on his video Do You Hear Me? as the day he became a Christian.
49. Satan Seller, 135.
50. Satan Seller, 137.
51. Interview, Charlotte Tweeten.
52. Navy Records.
53. Satan Seller, 136.
54. Mike Warnke, Hey, Doc!, 1978, Myrrh Records; Also, Hitchhiking on Hope Street, 34.
55. Completed Hosp. Corps School 12/22/66; Reported to Field Med. Serv. School, Camp Pendleton; 1/5/67; Reported to Naval Adcom, San Diego, 2/7/67.
56. Certificate of Registry of Marriage, San Bernardino co., CA.
57. Satan Seller, 149, 150.
58. Interviews, Tim LaHaye.
59. Interview, Beverly LaHaye.
60. Transferred to Third Marine Division, Vietnam, 5/2/69.
61. Warnke Ministries Newsletter, 1 (1991), 4.
62. Satan Seller, 163.
63. Ibid., 165.
64. Ibid., 166.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., 168.

67. Hitchhiking on Hope Street, 42, 43.

68. Ibid., 45.

69. Ibid., 42.

70. "Decorations and Awards: Good Conduct Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal, Purple Heart, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation; Warnke transferred home 3/1/70.

71. Interview, George Wakeling.

72. Interview, Ron Winckler.

73. Don Musgraves, director of Cerullo's Youth Action Center in San Diego, interview: "It was during those times that I began to have heavy contact with people coming out of the occult . . . "; Peter Brown, "Dropout Heads Witchcraft Fight," San Diego Union, 15 January 1972, 1; "Evangelism Group Fights Witchcraft," San Diego Union, 22 January 1972, p. 5B; Dave Balsiger, "Charismatic Insider's Report," Logos Journal, May/June 1972, 39, 40.

74. Interview, Morris Cerullo; Balsiger, "Insider's Report;" Christian Life, March 1972, 12.

75. Dave Balsiger, et al., "It's Happening Now," insert, San Diego Evening Tribune, 17 January 1972. (See Roddy, below: " . . . Cerullo, surprisingly unassuming in contrast to the image created by his flashy PR people . . . ") Peter Brown, "Dropout Heads Witchcraft Fight"; John Dart, "Converted 'Priest' Offers Guided Tour of Satanism," Los Angeles Times, 19 January 1972, Sec. C, Part II, 1; "Evangelism Group Fights Witchcraft"; Balsiger, "Insider's Report."

76. Lee Roddy, "Morris Cerullo Crusade: A New Anointing?" Christianity Today, 18 February 1972, 52-53.

77. Interview, Dave Balsiger. 78. Interview, Jean Jolly.

79. Navy Records, date of discharge, 2 June 1972.

80. Interview, George Eckeroth.

81. "YEAR END REPORT and APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE," Alpha Omega Outreach, Rev. Mike Warnke, president, January, 1973.

82. Michael Warnke, "When Evil Fights Back," Guideposts, Nov. 1972, 22-26.

83. Dave Balsiger, "Charismatic Insider's Report," Logos Journal, July-August 1972, 54.

84. Dave Balsiger, "Charismatic Insider's Report," Logos Journal, Nov-Dec 1972, 56.

85. John P. Ferre, "Searching For the Great Commission: Evangelical Book Publishing Since the 1970s," in American Evangelicals and the Mass Media, ed. Quentin J. Schultze (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990), 99-101.

86. David Hazard, "Decatrends in Christian Publishing," Charisma, August 1985, 140.

87. Michael Esses, Michael, Michael, Why Do You Hate Me? (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1973); Betty Esses DeBlase, Survivor of a Tarnished Ministry (Santa Ana, CA: Truth Publishers, 1983).

88. James Danne, "Demonic Spirits," Christian Century, 4 July 1973, 738; Paul Nevin, "On Selling Your Soul to the Devil," Moody Monthly, July-August 1973, 52.

89. Dave Balsiger Biographical Sketch.

90. James E. Adams, "Regards Peril of the Occult As Worse Than That of Drugs," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 29 November 1972; Hershel Smith with Dave Hunt, The Devil and Mr. Smith (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1974); James H. Brewster, "Rolling Along with the Witchmobile," Probe the Unknown magazine, March 1973, 22-25; Interview, Jean Jolly.

91. Darryl E. Hicks and Dr. David A. Lewis, *The Todd Phenomenon* (Harrison, AK: New Leaf Press, 1979), foreword by Doug Wead and Mike Warnke.
92. Don Cusic, "Mike Warnke: Jester in the King's Court," *Contemporary Christian Music*, June-July 1979, 130; Paul Baker, "Two-Fold Laughter from Mike and Rose," *Contemporary Christian Music*, December 1982, 14.
93. Jesse Joshua Warnke was born 4/18/74, according to Susan L. Warnke Response, Civil Action D17252, District Court, Adams County, CO.
94. Interview, John Witty.
95. Interview, Karen Siegal.
96. "Holdup Victim Named as Call Girl's Queen," *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, Evening Final, 8 January 1971, identifies Carolyn's mother as "kingpin of a local prostitution racket . . . " Police call incident "the latest rounds in a mob war over control of prostitution in the LB-LA area."
97. Bill Hance, "That One-Liner Religion is Good Enough for Him," *The Nashville Banner*, January 13, 1978, 30: "Until four years ago, he was `just one of those preachers. . . . So, I started lightening my testimony by telling jokes"
98. Bill Fisher says he flew with Warnke to Brockport while they were still in Trinity (Fall '74-Spring '75). Fisher has a photo of himself and Warnke on stage in Brockport, dated October 1975, and another photo of himself and Warnke there, dated June 1976.⁹⁹ See Dave Medina, "Former Rabbi Named Chaldean Archbishop," *Logos Journal*, Nov-Dec 1972, 58.
100. Carol O'Connor, "Ex-Satanist Happier with Christ," *The Denver Post*, 20 June 1975, 4BB.
101. Petition For Dissolution of Marriage, D-17252, confirm Warnke moved to Colorado in August 1975.
102. March 1976 is the date on a photograph of Bill Fisher at Joy Ranch.
103. Virginia Culver, "Devil-Worshippers Called Possible Cattle Mutilators," *The Denver Post*, 5 October, 1975, 31.
104. The back cover of *Mike Warnke Alive!* notes "Recorded Live at: Adam's Apple, Fort Wayne, Indiana, November 14, 1975."
105. The story of the recording of the album is told in Cusic, "Jester in the King's Court," 28; Paul Paino interview.
106. Affidavit with Respect to Financial Affairs, Civil Action D-17252, Adams County District Court, CO, 8/6/76. Warnke lists his employer as "Dharma Productions, 807 Redwood Cr, Nashville, TN." 107. Interview, Dan Riling.
108. According to Petition for Dissolution, D-17252, Mike and Sue last lived together January 1, 1976.
109. Date based on Mike Warnke's statement to Don Riling that Sue was served while Riling was in Denver. The Affidavit of Service says Sue Warnke was served Aug. 20, 1976, at 8:42 am.
110. Interviews, Gretchen Passantino. Two other CRI staffers also contributed information regarding this meeting.
111. Cover story by Peggy Hancherick, "Mike Warnke, Jester in the King's Court," *Harmony*, vol. 2, no. 3, 8-9. Full-page ad for "Mike Warnke Alive!", 11.
112. This saying was related to us by Frank Edmonson (aka Paul Baker), ex-DJ, writer, and popular historian of Jesus Music. Edmonson worked for Word at the time Warnke was signed, and played a key role in the signing.
113. Interview, Mike and Karen Johnson.
114. Interview, Wes Yoder.
115. Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, Civil Action D-17252, Adams County District Court, CO, 12/3/76.
116. Marriage Certificate, Davidson County, Tennessee, 4/25/77. 117. "When Mike Warnke Speaks, the World Listens!", Myrrh records ad in *Contemporary Christian Music* (hereafter, abbreviated CCM), February 1979, 26.
118. See 21-page commemorative section celebrating Dharma Agency's 10th anniversary in the February 1982 issue of

CCM.

119. William D. Romanowski, "Contemporary Christian Music: The Business of the Music Ministry," in American Evangelicals, Quentin Schultze, ed., above, 152, 155.

120. Interview, Dan Hickling.

121. Interview, Buddy Huey.

122. Romanowski, 144, 151.

123. Interview, Larry Black.

124. "When Mike Warnke Speaks, etc."

125. Itinerary in May 1979, CCM.

126. Rose Hall Warnke with Joan Hake Robie, *The Great Pretender* (Lancaster, Pa.: Starburst Publishers, 1985), 73-74.

127. Rose Hall Warnke, *Great Pretender*, relates her romance with Mike, 73-85; quote cited on page 79. Carolyn is never mentioned, nor that Warnke was married during this time, only the note, "He, too, had been previously married." Final Decree, Sumner County Court, 11/29/79, shows Warnke filed for divorce from Carolyn on 8/27/79, summons served 8/30/79. cf. *Great Pretender*, 83: "In September of 1979, Michael said, 'I want to marry you.'" CCM itinerary shows Mike Warnke scheduled to play Sept. 28-29, 1979, in Canada. Rose says she went to Canada with Mike (p. 83).

128. Rose Hall Warnke, *Great Pretender*, 81-82.

129. Interview, Tom Carrouthers.

130. Final Decree, Circuit Court for Sumner County, TN, 11/29/79.

131. Interview, Clarence Benes.

132. Certificate of Marriage, Johnson County, Kentucky, 1/2/80. 133. Mike and Rose Warnke, "First-Hand Rose," CCM, April 1981, 50; "Road Rap," CCM, July 1982, 51; Paul Baker, "Twofold Laughter from Mike & Rose," CCM, December 1982, 14.

134. Warnke, *Great Pretender*, on booking, 119, on accounting, 148.

135. Television interview with Mike Warnke, "Believer's Lifestyles," Channel 52, Orlando, Florida, 2/2/91, air-date 2/22/91.

136. Interviews, Elijah Coady; Joseph Morse; William Schillereff.

137. Marriage Certificate, Davidson County, Tennessee, 4/25/77. Marriage "was solemnized by Mar Apriam I." 138. Articles of Incorporation, The Holy Orthodox Catholic Church, Inc., dated 12/23/81. Pamphlet "This We Believe, Holy Orthodox Catholic Church, Eastern and Apostolic" is dated 1977, copyright by "His Beatitude, Mar Apriam I, Patriarch."

139. Articles of Incorporation, 11/19/82, for "The Holy Orthodox Church in Kentucky, Inc."; Certificate of Assumed Name, 11/4/83, HOCCK authorized by to do business under name "Mike Warnke & Associates."; Certificate of Assumed Name, 3/1/88, HOCCK authorized to do business under name "Warnke Ministries." "HOCCK, Inc. dba" appears on Warnke Ministries letterhead.

140. Mike Warnke, "The Root of the Problem," CCM, February 2, 1981; Rose Warnke, "Little Keys Unlock Big Doors," CCM, July 1981, 54; Land Contract, 7/1/81, for 153 Elm Street, Versailles, between Warnkes and Virginia Wiglesworth, her husband James, for \$180,000.

141. Interviews, Dorothy Green. 142. Interviews, Roxanne Miller.

143. Interviews, Jan Ross.

144. Interviews, Phyllis Swearingen.

145. Deed, Equitable Relocation Management Corporation and Blanche Hall, 7/29/83, for \$235,000. Deed, Blanche Hall and Rose Hall, 3/1/91, for "the sum of One (\$1.00) dollar, cash in hand paid, and the Grantor's love and affection for her daughter."

146. Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax, HOCCK, 1984-1990 Forms.

147. Ibid.

148. One well-known example: James G. Friesen, Ph.D., *Uncovering the Mystery of MPD* (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, 1991), uses Warnke's book in both text and footnotes to bolster far-reaching claims concerning a satanic cult conspiracy.

149. Deed, Lelia Mann Brown, et al. and Michael A. Warnke and Rosemary H. Warnke, 10/28/86, for \$20,395.70. Deed, Michael Warnke and Rosemary Warnke and HOCCK, for "the sum of \$1.00 and as a gift, contribution, and donation."

150. Warnke Ministries Newsletter, 1st Quarter, 1987, 1.

151. Ibid.

152. Warnke Ministries Newsletter, 1st Quarter, 1988, p. 2 " . . . by the time you receive this newsletter, we will be moved into the new building."

153. Interviews, Dr. John Cooper.

154. Cf. Rose Warnke, *Great Pretender*, 181, "At ministry headquarters we get some 50,000 letters and telephone calls each month."

155. Michael A. Warnke & Rose Hall Warnke, *Recovering From Divorce*, (Tulsa: Victory House, Inc.), 22-25.

156. Rose Warnke, *Great Pretender*, 86.

157. Ibid, 87-88.

158. Ibid, 88-90.

159. Petition for Dissolution of Marriage, 9/4/91.

160. Petition for Dissolution of Marriage, Mercer Circuit Court, Kentucky (#91-CI-00274), Rose Hall Warnke vs. Michael A. Warnke, 9/4/91; Response, Entry of Appearance, and Waiver by Respondent, 9/4/91; Separation and Property Settlement Agreement, 9/4/91.

161. Lynnwood Farm, see above note. Deed, Land Owners, L.P., and Michael A. Warnke and Rose H. Warnke for new acreage, 4/19/91, for \$525,000.

162. Mortgage, American Fidelity Bank & Trust, Corbin, KY, 9/10/91, Rose Hall Warnke and Michael A. Warnke for \$250,000. Mortgage, State Bank & Trust Company, Harrodsburg, KY, 9/27/91, Rose Hall Warnke and Michael A. Warnke, for \$31,500.50.

163. Deed, Charles W. Pistole and Michael and Rose Mary Warnke, 5/30/86, for 2001 Salifish Point, Apt. 308, Stuart, FL for \$398,000. Deed, Mary & Clinton Woodard and Michael A. Warnke and Rose H. Warnke, 7/24/89, for Chimney Rock property for \$231,500.

164. Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, Mercer Circuit Court, Kentucky (#91-CI-00274), Rose Hall Warnke vs. Michael A. Warnke, 10/2/91.

165. Amy Wolfford, "Official downplays effect of Warnke divorce on ministry," *Danville Advocate-Messenger*, 24 Oct. 1991, 1.

166. Undated Warnke Ministries letter (begins "Dear Ministry Family, It is again the start of a New Year, PRAISE GOD!").

167. License and Certificate of Marriage, Santa Cruz County, CA, 18 Nov. 1991. 43. "Authors Available for Interview," *Christian Booksellers Convention*, Dallas, Texas, June 29--July 2, 1992, 15.

168. Warnke & Warnke, *Recovering From Divorce*, 63.

169. Ibid, 164.

170. Ibid, 159.

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