

Palmer —

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3½-hour interview, showed no remorse for the many people who say they were hurt by him. Yet he became emotional over a German shepherd. And mild-mannered or not, he's a fighter, portraying himself not as the cause of his critics' problems but as a victim of their discontent.

The Greywolf episode illustrates both Palmers. In the same breath that he mourns his dog, Palmer accuses his followers of kidnapping it last October. And he uses the alleged kidnapping as the reason he stopped making refunds to those who claim he owes them refunds for Scientology classes they

saw — heavy discipline, pressure for money, diminished self-confidence among his followers.

And if those things did go on, Palmer said he certainly wasn't responsible. He was just another worker at the center, he says. "There was a board of directors here. I was usually out-voted. I really did my own thing." And his own thing had nothing to do with money or discipline.

He says his leading critics, including Hoffman, should start looking to themselves if they want someone to blame. He says his message to the flock always was: "You're your own guru." As for the confusion and diminished self-

never received. Moreover, Palmer adds, their complaints about money add up to nothing but an extortion campaign.

But even these two glimpses of Palmer don't explain the man. He is an elusive character; he confuses, he contradicts, he twists and turns. Still, in the course of last week's interview and a one-hour telephone conversation early last month, some things about him seem clear.

For one thing, he has complete confidence in his power to influence. Even as his former management team was going public with their criticisms, Palmer was saying they'd be back. "The reason these people are attacking me is because I have refused to make decisions for them. They were weaned. They were dependent on me and the center. You're hearing the yelping of weaned pups. Now they think I'm awful. In six months, they'll think I'm wonderful."

That confidence has global dimensions. As Palmer tells it, some 25,000 people inquired about or took his programs in Elmira since he began teaching Scientology in 1974 (after leaving a career as student center director in the Elmira school system). Now he's extending around the world with his new program, Avatar — he abandoned Scientology early last year — and says he already has licensed 119 centers in nine countries.

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esteem and disillusionment they felt, he said, "I think they all did it to themselves..."

"It's a lot easier for these people to find something wrong with me than to inspect their own inadequacies of performance, their own inadequacies of ethics."

But Palmer does have a habit of blaming others; for

example, after this series began, he fingered Hoffman as the person responsible for inciting his other followers. "Margie's fantasy for a long time has been to write a book about me and tell the whole truth...whatever that whole truth is. I think it just makes a heck of a better story to really have gone through it and have it be terrible, horrible, rough."

And he blames the Church of Scientology in part for the crumbling of his empire.

All of which is consistent with the fact that Harry Palmer sees himself as a victim. "This is an extortion campaign, pure and simple," Palmer says of those who say he owes them money. "They saw the success of Avatar and they're trying to cash in."

He says he even tried to be charitable, claiming that his followers asked for 50 percent of their losses, and he paid the money in some cases — but not because he really owed it.

"I had no responsibility to give any money back. It was a gesture of kindness..."