

1

In October of 1972 I called Jim Jones' house at the number listed in Redwood Valley to try to set up an interview with him for the news. I talked with a woman, a senior named Ester Mueller, who Jones had taken in. I told her of my interest and she suggested I call the S.F. Temple where Jones was at that time. I called but was told to call back on the weekend. A few days later I received a call at my office from a man who asked if I would meet with him to discuss the Peoples Temple. I found the request very curious; I said o.k. and we met the next day in a Stockton restaurant. The man told me his name was Gary Jackson. I asked him what he did and he said that he worked for the government, but I couldn't get him to be more specific. He asked what prompted my interest in Peoples Temple. I asked him how he knew that I was interested in the Temple. He paused for a few moments, then said something to the effect-- "There are ways if you think about it." The answer was obvious-- Jones' phone was tapped. I told him that a series of articles in the S.F. Examiner prompted my interest. I said I wanted to look into some of the things the articles said about Jones and the Temple, and if I found them to be true, I was planning to do an exposé for our TV news program. Jackson (somehow I doubt that was his real name) said there was a lot more to the Temple than what the Examiner wrote. He said it was a revolutionary organization led by a dangerous man, bent on destroying our system of government. He talked to me a while longer, telling me various things Jones had supposedly said and done, then he made a proposal. He said if I could be successful at joining the Temple full time as a staff member and report regularly on what was going on inside the organization, he would arrange for me to be paid \$200 a week.

In thinking back upon it, I must have been checked-out and considered to be a good prospect since I had been a dedicated Christian church-goer, attended college in conservative Orange County, good student with no involvement in any kind of organization or activity that could be considered "questionable." I told

the man that I found his offer intriguing but that I first wanted to pay a visit to the Temple. He agreed, saying I wouldn't be able to join on the first visit anyway. But he said I wouldn't be able to get a good picture of the organization until I was inside it, because the public meetings were only so much posturing. I arranged to attend a service at which I heard Jones preach. Later, I got to talk with him privately. I was surprised to hear him speak so openly against the system in my presence, particularly so soon after the negative publicity about him. But I was fascinated by his ministry and I thought it would make great stuff for a book or screenplay, which I thought I might like to write. I talked with Jones for at least two hours. I asked him if he needed more staff. He said he could use as many as were willing to work voluntarily with the Temple providing only living expenses. I told him it was something I wanted to give serious thought to, and he said he would be thrilled to have me. (M)

Jackson called me a couple of days later and I told him I was going to quit my job and accept his offer. I didn't tell him I wanted to write a book about the Temple. Arrangements were made for me to be paid (the payments were left for me at various predesignated locations, always in the form of cash enclosed in plain white envelopes.) My reports were made verbally (from pay phones at which I was called) because it was too risky to write anything, as there was a lot of suspicion in the Temple (as one might imagine) of a reporter who quit his rather prestigious job as a bureau chief to join an organization that didn't pay any salaries.

As time passed, I gradually began to feel conflict over my role as an informant, even though I wasn't providing what one might call valuable or sensitive information. I was starting to identify with the problems and sufferings of the members. As I observed various ones troubles being resolved by the Temple's program, the conflict I was feeling turned to guilt. I had been watching Jones for sometime, as closely as possible without drawing attention to myself. His schedule was unbelievable. He was up at all hours calling people on the phone, consulting, reading

reports, and staying in touch with every phase of the organization. It was obvious he worked harder than anyone-- but I questioned his motives. Personally, I didn't like the man after the first few months I was in the Temple. But I recognized that it was for reasons that were subjective and which I didn't want to affect my judgment of his character. One thing I was noticing was that he was almost always the first to notice someone's need and point it out-- a senior in a packed auditorium without a chair, for example, or ~~inquiry about~~ ^{interest in} someone's health who lived alone. He was always dealing with needs and often ones that weren't that obvious to others. He seemed unusually sensitive. Everytime I saw him he was expressing concern, or doing something for someone or asking that it be done. But he didn't leave it at that. He was keen on following-up on whether the thing he had asked be done for someone, was actually carried out. Still, in view of all this, I didn't give him the benefit of the doubt. I had to be sure about him.

One day I had taken some letters to his apartment in the S.F. Temple just as he was coming out the door. He was late for an appointment, so he told me to put the letter on a table inside. He left and then I went out. I started back to my office and then changed my mind and went downstairs to get a drink from the water fountain. Down the hall I noticed Jones had stopped and watched for a moment as an elderly woman moved slowly up another staircase. Jones didn't see me as he was facing the other way, and there was no one else around. Even though he was late for his appointment, he was going to take another five minutes to help that woman up the long flight of stairs (She could not have seen Jones as her back was to him.) He went up and began assisting her and then I intervened and told him to go ahead to his appointment. That act of kindness did it for me. I had become virtually convinced of Jones' sincerity. I had finally seen him do something in private that I had suspected he only did in public or when others were around to see it. I became even more convinced of his basic integrity on subsequent occasions in which

I observed his actions--for example, toward animals--when he was unaware that I (or anyone for that matter) was around.

But that first occasion was enough for me. I could no longer justify informing on Jones and his organization. During my next contact, I told Jackson what I thought of Jones and he desperately tried to convince me I was wrong. I told him I had to act according to what I had seen and experienced, and my conscience simply wouldn't allow me to continue selling information that might be used against an organization I believed in. I told him that even though I didn't particularly care for Jones and I didn't agree with some ways in which his organization was run, I felt it was making tremendous achievements in terms of human rehabilitation and improvement in the quality of peoples lives and character. He asked me what I planned to do. I told him I was going to stay with the Temple and possibly write a book about it. He urged me not to tell Jones about him and I told him I saw no reason why I should do that unless I suspected someone else was taking my place.

|

(4)

|

Jonestown had nothing to hide. Most of its visitors went there unannounced. The project was talked about far and wide in Guyana and, thus, anyone who had heard about it would inevitably drop in if they were anywhere in the area. Often we had visitors almost everyday of the week. Some non-hostile relatives came to spend time with members of their family, and others were scheduled to come, including my own mother and brother. But the positive testimonies about Jonestown from such persons were not enough to halt the organized efforts of those determined to destroy Jonestown. Neither were the visits of the President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (the "Black Press of America"), Dr. Carlton Goodlett, or the former Methodist superintendent from the Bay Area, the Rev. Dr. John Moore, who found "every aspect of the work and life...impressive." Dr. Goodlett wrote in the Jonestown guestbook, "I have lived today in the future." But, unfortunately, the black press is not the white press, and we realized something more had to be done to get the harassers off our back. Thus, a request was made to the United Nations to send a team to Jonestown. But our communication received a negative reply (see letter).

At that point we were left with little choice but to take a chance and let the same press in which had carried on a relentless attack against the Temple. (Feelers had already gone out to Bill Moyers, David Wolper Productions, and a number of other journalists and filmmakers, without success.) Finally, an agreement was reached to allow in one of the Temple's biggest press enemies-- the S.F. Examiner. But for some strange reason (which will never be revealed by the paper), the Examiner decided to back out of it at the last minute. What had happened? Were they afraid their man wasn't prejudiced enough against the Temple or that he might get there and discover that he couldn't do a decent smear job? It is just a bit incredible that after all the clamoring about the goings on in Peoples Temple, the Examiner decided it would stick with second-hand reports and innuendo from such sources as Tim Stoen's lackeys. The Examiner didn't want to take the chance

that it would not be able to confirm its yellow headlines of the past because it would hurt its credibility and, more importantly, it would mean fewer bucks from the sale of other headlines in the future. Afterall, the Examiner created some of its most sensational banner headlines using the Temple.

One got the feeling, in Jonestown, of being backed up against the wall-- not being able to win for losing. But when Congressman Ryan--whose May, 1978 letter to us declared his sympathy for Mr. Tim Stoen--announced his intentions to come, with media, the feeling of being entrapped turned to belief-- it had to be a set up. Paranoia? I doubt it, but even if it was, the key question in all this is-- who created it? Who tapped the Temple's phones in California? Who was blackmailing Dennis Banks to get at us? Who was putting up all the money for the Stoen-Mazor operations? Does Joseph Mazor now deny that when he came to Jonestown last year he told us that he was hired to come there months earlier with sophisticated arms and mercenaries on a mission to "get the children out" and that if he had to wipe out hundreds of adults in the process, he was prepared to do that. But the plan was abandoned, he said, because he saw no evidence--such as gun towers, barbed wire and armed patrols, which he was told existed--that anyone was being held against their will. (A Ukiah Daily Journal article or editorial once mentioned a "concerned relative's" desire to use mercenaries to get people out of Jonestown.) Was that venture what turned Mazor against Tim Stoen-- because Stoen had lied to him about Jonestown? (Both during and after Mazor's subsequent visit to Jonestown, he said, on at least two occasions, "I hate your politics, but I love what you're

doing here.") If there wasn't a conspiracy to destroy Jonestown, why did Mazor ^{insert a letter} offer Jones a bullet proof vest and offer to train the community's security personnel in the use of weapons?!

I believe Tim Stoen was a CIA operative, if not from the beginning, then certainly long before the end. Where was the money coming from to keep him on the Temple's case full-time with an office, to hire a private detective (Mazor) and a prominent S.F. public relations firm (Lowery, Runhom, & Leeper) to work against the Temple. Where was the money coming from to send relatives and attor-

neys to Guyana and put them up in the best hotels while they did their dirty work? There was too much money behind Tim Stoen. And why did he suddenly decide he wanted his wife's son back, who he knew was fathered by Jim Jones-- a fact both he (Stoen) and she acknowledged publicly and privately in the Temple. Moreover, Jones had no reason for claiming the child from virtually the time of his birth, if the child was not in fact Jones'. But suddenly Grace and Tim Stoen were back together again, in public, acting as if they were reconciled, after literally hating each other for years (since 1972, in fact, when I lived with them near Redwood Valley) and during a period when Grace was living with another man. But Stoen's announced goal was the destruction of Jim Jones and the Temple. He realized the child was a point of vulnerability because he knew Jones wouldn't give him up even if a court directed him to do so. Stoen knew he had an advantage, being the husband of the child's mother, and he also knew it would be virtually impossible to prove he was not the father since he and Jones had the same blood type. But when the Guyana courts failed to make a decision in the case, Stoen applied more pressure on another front. Using the so-called "Concerned Relatives", Stoen kept the pressure on by hitting again at what he knew to be Jones' most vulnerable area-- his loyalty to his members. He promised never to give up anyone who didn't want to leave. So all these "concerned relatives" show up in Guyana with Congressman Ryan (supposedly on separate missions)-- some of whom were so concerned that they hadn't bothered to even call or write their Temple relatives in years. They suddenly show up and discover that all of their relatives in Jonestown are happy and don't want to leave. But unfortunately, in the process, about 20 persons ~~(some of them)~~ ~~(some of them)~~ did want to leave, triggering the tragic incidents that Stoen and the forces backing him were hoping for. And now Stoen has quietly disappeared from the scene.

For clarification: I am convinced beyond all doubt that there was no conspiracy from within Peoples Temple to kill Con. Leo Ryan. Tim Carter was sent to the States to deliver some legal documents. While he was there, Terri Buford left the Temple and said she was going underground to get information about the conspiracy against the Temple. Jones and others around him (i.e., Harriet Tropp, Carolyn Layton, & Maria Katsaris) doubted that her real intention was to get information for the Temple. They thought her letter was a smokescreen for getting out altogether. According to Harriet Tropp, Jones instructed her to give a message to S.F. to have Carter infiltrate the "Concerned Relatives" to see what he could find out about Buford. That was Carter's mission. It was already known that Ryan was planning to come to Jonestown. When Carter returned to the project, he told Jones that Stoen & the "Concerned Relatives" were counting on an overreaction on the part of Jones and the Temple to Ryan's visit. From that point on, Jones desperately tried to keep Ryan from coming in. Jones feared that Ryan was coming to deliberately provoke an incident and that he was bringing the media to record it. ~~Whenxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~is~~ One thing in particular that added credence to Jones' and others fears was that Ryan showed up totally unannounced at the Temple's Georgetown headquarters late one night (just prior to flying out to the project). Then the next day at a press conference, it appeared evident that he was attempting to set the stage for ~~his~~ the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ type of investigation he would seek to make into Jonestown. He said he was concerned about a church that had no signs of religion at its headquarters. He also made deprecating remarks about members of the Georgetown household because they appeared to be stand-offish. After Ryan's press conference, Jones and his staff were convinced that the community was in for a rough time with Ryan. Then Ryan announced that he was coming in, welcome or not, with the media. That was the worst thing he could have said. It came across as a virtual threat, made by an arrogant white person representing the American ~~xxxxxx~~ "establishment" which had failed the blacks and the poor who--for that very reason--were attempting to build a new life where ^{they had found} ~~there was~~ an opportunity to do so. Ryan's actions only served to confirm

(u)

I don't know how the final attack at the airport came about. But I do remember hearing Jones say, following Ryan's departure from Jonestown, something to the effect that the lid was off or he didn't see how he could keep the lid on any longer. (I took ~~his~~ this statement to be in reference to those who always wanted to answer the Temple's problems with violence.)

(W)

When speaking during a service in one of the California Temples, Jones would usually trace the oppression of blacks and other minorities to current times. It was almost like a history lesson. He would give long and specific accounts of how blacks, particularly, have been victimized by racism and capitalist exploitation. He would rattle off relevant statistics and examples in meticulous detail. For many blacks who came with no education to speak of, often blaming themselves for conditions they didn't understand, having little sense of self-worth and actually feeling inferior because they had been beat down by white standards and white institutions for so long-- for them, Jones was a hell of an eye-opening experience. It wasn't brainwashing that Jones was engaged in-- it was more like deprogramming. Jones was educating and the effect was therapeutic for thousands who heard him and whose lives were in a state of confusion from feeling imprisoned in a society they were told was free. He liberated many minds out of their confused states by demonstrating why there are huge ghettos in every large city of America and why those ghettos are populated mostly by blacks. He laid the blame squarely at the feet of white racism and a socio-economic system that clearly puts profit motives above human values, resulting in the lack of opportunity necessary for blacks to enter the mainstream of American life. This was not a demagogic approach Jones was taking, either. He had too much of a grasp of his subject; he was too concerned about minute details-- details that a demagogue need not bother with in order to achieve his objectives. Not that emotion wasn't involved-- it was. But it was aroused by the sheer logic of his presentations which were backed up by an impressive array of facts, statistics and documentation gathered from a massive amount of reading.

There was no way anyone could dispute what Jones said about the social ills of the society and how blacks were the victims. Others, far less progressive than he, were saying the same things. It was Jones' lucidness that made him effective-- what he said made sense. When he would spend hours attempting to show how the system

was to blame for the conditions of blacks in the U.S., he was convincing. He became even more convincing when the government, inspite of itself, gave credibility to his thesis. For example, in 1968 the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, a bi-partisan committee formed by the Johnson Administration, concluded its report with a scering indictment of our system, which declared, "This nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal." It put the basic blame on "white racism" which it said was created, maintained, and condoned by white institutions. Here was a respected commission, made up of respected public leaders who were charged by the President with determining the root causes of civil disorder, and it laid the blame right where it belonged. Not surprisingly, however, its recommendations for remedying the situation were not carried out and thus ^{are} we still left with conditions akin to urban apartheid and the danger of blacks taking to the streets again, as moderate voices (such as Vernon Jordan and Benjamin Hook) warn us. The American system continues to fail its black citizens, and not from any lack of prompting by black leaders. The significant thing is that it is this failure that allowed Jim Jones--no matter what perception one might have of him--to do what he did with Peoples Temple. There is no getting around it-- Jones jumped into the vacuum created by this system's failure to meet the needs of its people. And that ^{well} may be the key lesson to be learned from Jonestown.

(W)

It is with reluctance that I discuss the healing aspect of Jones' ministry because it will doubtless take away from the credibility of things I say about other areas, at least in some people's minds. First of all, some don't believe in the paranormal at all and will automatically use this to discredit other items they choose not to believe. While there are those who believe in its possibilities, they've been so prejudiced by news stories portraying Jones in the worst possible light that they won't allow themselves to be open to this aspect. Thus, I'm left with appealing to perhaps a few persons who can realize that I have nothing to gain by getting into this area. I'm doing so because I don't want to be accused of avoiding it; moreover, I want to tell what I know to be the truth. (4)

The last impression I would want to give anyone was that Jones was some superhuman being because he had the ability to heal. On the contrary, he was only too human. But somehow he was able to utilize a dimension of the mind that most people haven't tapped.

There were times when Jones would request that everyone in the particular service he was conducting, who had some form of crippling affliction, form a line. Usually hundreds of people would respond on such occasions. It wasn't only people who were crippled in some way who got in line, however. People with all kinds of physical problems and infirmities--thinking it might be their only chance--also got in line.

The healing session was usually the last part of the service, coming after Jones had spoken anywhere from two to four hours. But when he called for people to line up for healing, it would usually take at least several hours more to get through the line because he worked with each person individually. After it was over, virtually every person said they had received some measure of relief, if not total healing. It was too much to be denied even by the most hardened skeptic. Some of it was no doubt psychosomatic (which Jones said himself)-- but not all of it. One could observe actual physical transformations take place with hands or

fingers crippled up with arthritis, for example. Elderly persons who were familiar to everyone and who for months and sometimes years had moved painfully slow, suddenly walked at a more brisk pace after Jones had attended to them. There can be no question that Jones possessed a phenomenal ability to heal. Normally, he would call people out from the pulpit, one-by-one, for healing. But on those infrequent occasions that he allowed people to get in line, the visible results would convince the most cynical observer. Also, Tim Carter and Laurie Efrein were among those who handled hundreds of letters a month containing expressions of gratitude and testimony from persons who said they were healed through Jones.

The significance of all this to me, however, is not that Jones could heal, but rather that if he had wanted power in terms of gaining the largest number of worshippers and raising the maximum amount of money, he knew that all he had to do was limit his ministry to healing. This is ^{an area} where those who have accused Jones of being power-hungry are misguided. He could have had hundreds of thousands of followers and raised many more millions of dollars than he did, because the vast majority came to Jones' services to get healed, not to hear his social-political message. If he had just stuck to healing alone, he could have had tens of thousands of people in idolatrous worship of him, and he knew it. But his main thrust was ^{socialist} politics and the struggle for civil rights and social justice, and when he got into it, most of the healing crowd was turned off. His message was what kept people from returning, but he kept on with it knowing full well the effect it was having. He would often say, "If I would just keep my mouth shut and stick to healing, I could pack out the largest auditoriums."

People didn't want to hear Jones' message because it required something of them. It made them feel responsible to do something; ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ to help improve or correct the conditions they were hearing about. They didn't want to hear ^{the} ~~the~~ message because it upset their lives by pricking their consciences, particularly

those who were living rather well off and were looking for ways to feel good about themselves. But they came to the wrong place to feel good because Jones always spoke about a world filled with inequities and the myriad injustices that created them. He spoke in a manner that compelled people to face themselves in terms of viewing their lives in relation to such a world (populated by "have" and "have-not" nations and peoples). That's no doubt why few people of means (or those who aspired to it) stayed with the Temple. The only thing they understood about equality was that it meant sacrifice-- something they were not prepared to do.

Misc. Reflections

If you can believe anything anyone says about Jonestown, you can believe this: For an integrated community, populated by a virtual cross-section of the human race, it was the most racially harmonious I've ever seen or heard about. It's value system was different. It was based on a code of consideration, respect and concern for people, and the progress being made along these lines was remarkable considering the number of so-called misfits and outcasts that were there. The children were learning how to share and to be concerned as much about the welfare of others as they were about their own welfare.

The vast majority of the people (well over 90% I would estimate) loved Jonestown, and there was a tremendous will for it to succeed, against all the odds. And it was succeeding. It was an incredibly productive and creative community that was viewed as a co-operative model by virtually everyone who visited. Not that it was without faults; however, its bad points were nothing compared to the way it was portrayed by those who left the Temple-- individuals who simply did not like living in the jungle under an extremely structured program, most of which was essential in dealing with the various types of people there.

It is important to realize that Jonestown had ex-cons, former drug addicts, individuals who were classified as social deviants, youth who came or were brought to the Temple as emotionally disturbed, maladjusted, and hyper-active, (not to mention those who were physically handicapped and mentally retarded)-- you name it and they were there. Why did they end up in Peoples Temple? Obviously, because U.S. society and its institutions had failed them. With these types of persons there had to be a tight structure. Sure there were some excesses, but nothing like the fabrications and exaggerations made up by those who decided to leave because they considered it too much of a sacrifice to make. (The vast majority of them were selfish whites.) They had to justify to themselves why they were leaving, in order to be able to live with their consciences. That's why they made Jonestown out to be something it was not. Well, it may not have been paradise to them, but it was paradise to those who suffered the day-to-day struggle of life in America's slums.

Misc. reflections

All kinds of people came to Peoples Temple and with every kind of problem. For many it was their last resort. Seeing their problems made my worst ones seem petty. I became conscience-stricken and, realizing there was nothing more worthwhile that I could do with my life, I decided to stay on indefinitely. Somehow, as difficult as it may be to believe, I don't regret that decision. The experience made me a realist about life and about people. It gave me as much insight into myself as I had the courage to face. (I know the same is true of others, as I have heard different ones make similar statements). Beyond that, it gave me about as accurate a picture as a white person can hope to get of what it means to be black in America. It also gave me a unique perspective and insight into the nature of the American system, and how that system functions.

Except for the first few months in the Temple, I never really liked Jim Jones. I guess it was his authority that bothered me, although I often saw the necessity for it. I recognize that my dislike for him stems from feelings that are purely subjective and which I don't want to color my portrayal of him. One thing about the man that I had to respect was that he did practice what he preached. Despite how some have portrayed him, he really didn't live above the people. (Maybe he did in minor ways but he always had a very modest lifestyle, even in the U.S.) In Jonestown, he spent most of his time in his quarters which consisted of one, approximately 12' x 18' room. Basically the same thing was true of him in San Francisco where he lived in a small apartment inside the Temple. And, in fairness, I know that the vast majority of Temple members did not feel the dislike for Jones that I felt.

the aftermath of the tragedy out of concern that Jonestown represented a failure of American churches to meet the needs of the "hopeless." After visiting the project and interviewing a number of survivors, he concluded that it was "dignity-creating programs" that drew the people to Guyana, and he expressed surprise at the "incredible progress" Temple members had made in developing the project.

It is true, the Temple had lost all hope and faith in America. Jones saw no hope for changing the basic profit-greed system. Capitalism was too entrenched, there was no strong socialist movement, and the working-class consciousness was misdirected. Additionally, in light of what was happening to other progressive groups and organizations, Jones knew that Peoples Temple would come under increasing scrutiny and harassment, particularly in view of the way the Temple was operated. Its activism brought too much notoriety. And already the Temple had suffered damaging publicity; already the phones had been tapped; already the San Francisco headquarters had been destroyed by arson; and already a number of persons had left who had shown themselves to be active enemies. It was obvious to Jones that his organization would not be allowed to survive in the U.S. as a socialist entity. He saw no choice but to build an alternative community in another country.

Jones didn't think it would be possible to move everyone en masse to the Soviet Union, which he would have preferred doing particularly for reasons of collective security and protection from U.S.-based enemies. The information that he was given from persons supposedly knowledgeable about Soviet affairs was that the Soviets would not take in such a large group directly from the U.S. Thus, Jones concluded that he would have to establish in some other country first, and Guyana was it.



u

In 1975, a push toward communal living began in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The Redwood Valley Temple already had most of the members in that area of the state living communally, as it was the original headquarters of Peoples Temple in California. After S.F. became the headquarters, approximately 70 communal residences were organized in that city alone. Virtually everyone who lived communally planned on moving to Guyana. Actually, communal living was an understood requirement for those who wanted make the move to Jonestown. The members understood that becoming a communal member meant, by its very concept, turning over all of one's financial assets, including homes and property. The Temple, in turn, would then provide for the person's housing, food, medical-dental and educational needs, and living expenses, such as transportation, clothes, toiletries, etc. (W)

It was through the communal process that the Temple ended up with so much property. It wasn't a matter of coercing people into giving it, as has been charged. It was something the members knew was a requirement if they expected to stay in the Temple and go to Guyana. Many people stayed in the Temple, right to the end, who never titled, much less went communal. And most people who did go communal had no property or savings to give. The ones who did turn over assets were given no special privileges. Once communal, everyone lived on the same basic level. *(The finances were being kept in reserve in preparation for another move, which would have meant starting all over again after Guyana.)*

In Jonestown, the vast majority of the people loved their new life. They were building their own community, their own future and their children's, with their own hands. They took great pride in the fact that the Guyana government considered it a model co-operative project in line with the country's own goals.

Although living conditions were crowded, the people were reasonably comfortable, particularly when you consider that this was truly a pioneering effort. A sawmill had been built for lumber production, and some 70,000 board measurement of lumber was on its way from Georgetown for use in the construction of over 100 new houses.

Although the food was limited in variety and consisted mainly of vegetables, cassava (the main crop), and rice mixed with pork, chicken or fish, it was adequate in meeting the nutritional needs of the community. Anyone having a special dietary need (e.g., protein deficiency, diabetes, pregnant mothers etc.), was put on an appropriate diet. I, personally, was ordering 1000 chickens every three weeks, a process that was to continue until there was enough production for everyone to be served ^{daily} eggs for breakfast. In addition, the diet was supplemented regularly with pork from the piggery and fish which was brought in every two or three weeks on the Temple's boat. Temple agriculturalists said that we would have been self-sufficient in food production within a year to a year and a half from last October. Thus, despite what some press reports have stated, the land was productive-- it just took some trial and error to learn how to farm in a tropical climate. Guyanese agriculturalists who were familiar with the area, including visitors from the government Ministry of Agriculture, were surprised to see the farming achievement in Jonestown. Information and techniques were exchanged regularly. Visitors were particularly amazed at the amount of land that had been cleared and either developed with facilities or put into agricultural-livestock production, in light of the fact that the project was entirely covered by dense jungle growth when it was begun. More than one visitor referred to the project as a "labor of love", which is perhaps the most apt description given to it.

~~However~~ On only one day of the total time period I was in Guyana (which was a year and three months), did a fight break out in the community, which I find remarkable considering the number of members who had been violence prone. (Ironically, it was two ^{fight} fights that broke out in that same day-- one of them was between two young men who were friends, and the other was between two girls over some petty difference. The participants, incidentally, were all of the same race.) During the last five months of Jonestown's existence, violence was totally banned from the meetings, where it had been used on occasion and in extreme cases, as a last resort. However, not once did I witness any brutality, nor did I hear of any.

It is sadness beyond tears to think of my brothers and sisters from Jonestown, hundreds of them, not only unidentified, but still unburied. It is significant and tragically symbolic that they have laid for so long, in coffins piled-up like so many matchboxes, waiting for a final resting place. They are back in their homeland, but they have no home. Peoples Temple was their only home, their only family, their only life. They are nameless and alone-- forgotten by America. They died courageously--as one of their sisters wrote--because outside forces wouldn't let them live in peace. Is it any wonder that officials didn't want them all buried together, fearing their place of interment would become a shrine-- and an all too painful reminder of a tragic American failure. Though I'm white, when I die, I belong with them, for their struggle was mine also.