

IN DEFENSE OF PEOPLES TEMPLE— AND OTHER ESSAYS

Rebecca Moore

Studies in American Religion
Volume 32

The Edwin Mellen Press
Lewiston/Queenston

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Moore, Rebecca, 1951-

In defense of Peoples Temple-- and other essays / by Rebecca Moore.

p. cm. -- (Studies in American religion ; 32)

ISBN 0-88946-676-9

1. Peoples Temple. I. Title. II. Series: Studies in American religion ; v. 32.

BP605.P46M657 1987

289.9--dc19

88-8933

CIP

This is volume 32 in the continuing series
Studies in American Religion
Volume 32 ISBN 0-88946-676-9
Series ISBN 0-88946-992-X

Copyright © 1988 by Rebecca Moore

All rights reserved. For information contact:

The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 450
Lewiston, New York
USA 14092

The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 67
Queenston, Ontario
L0S 1L0 CANADA

Printed in the United States of America

To December and Hillary...
...so they can begin to know
Aunt Carolyn and Aunt Annie

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Actors Take the Stage	1
Survivors	29
November 18, 1978: A Reconstruction	45
Cult is a Four-Letter Word.....	65
Last Rights	89
The Quest for Good, the Acceptance of Evil	113
A Presumption of Guilt	133
In Defense of Peoples Temple.....	155

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go, first of all, to Dr. Herbert Richardson and the staff of the Edwin Mellen Press, for putting together this volume for publication. Secondly, my parents John and Barbara Moore, merit my deep appreciation and gratitude for their assistance with this collection of essays. Maureen Gleason-Shreve reprinted the photographs so they would reproduce well. Finally, my husband, Fielding McGehee, encouraged me in the writing, edited the various drafts, and raised the questions that had to be answered. This is as much his book as it is mine.



Martin and Christa Amos. Kimo Prokes sitting on John Moore's shoulders.
Jonestown, May 1978.

"We live history as if it were a performance by masked actors who trace enigmatic figures on the stage..."

—Octavio Paz

The Actors Take the Stage

On November 18, 1978 over nine hundred Americans died in a remote South American jungle. They belonged to a religious group called Peoples Temple. Their leader was Jim Jones. Their community in the jungle was named Jonestown. Almost all of them died after drinking a mixture of fruit punch and potassium cyanide. At least two others died of gunshot wounds.

The visit of a U.S. Congressman to Jonestown precipitated the mass deaths. The Congressman, Leo Ryan, was shot to death along with four other individuals as they prepared to leave from an airstrip seven miles from the Jonestown settlement.

My two sisters, Carolyn Layton and Annie Moore, and Carolyn's four year-old son Kimo lived in Jonestown, Guyana. They died with the rest of the people there.

Most books about Jonestown either begin or end with the suicides, as though that were the beginning or ending of the story. It was neither.

Jonestown began with the people. Individuals make history, and history makes individuals as well. Often we do not know we are being created, we do not recognize the historical forces that shape us. The Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz writes that:

We live history as if it were a performance by masked actors who trace enigmatic figures on the stage. Despite the fact that we know our actions mean something, say something, we do not know what they say and therefore the meaning of the piece we perform escapes us...

John Moore, my father, acknowledged that role when he wrote a response to a review of some books about Peoples Temple.

Looking backward, I can see many actors playing their parts, making decisions and acting, and all moving inexorably toward destruction. Actors who might have made a difference were not in communication with each other, or when they were, they failed to speak the saving word. The actors were not so different from the rest of us.

In fact, the players in the drama of Jonestown were very much like us. If all the people who died were merely aberrant, then they are of interest only to clinicians. It is their kinship with the rest of humankind that makes their story universal.

But journalists writing the first week following the Jonestown deaths had a simple, demeaning, and ultimately misleading explanation: everyone was crazy. "Some cult observers maintain that it is largely those who are mentally ill or close to it who join the cults," wrote *Washington Post* columnist Henry Allen. He deferred to the experts:

Dr. John Clark, a professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, has estimated from his studies that 58 percent of those who join cults are schizophrenic, either chronic or borderline. But he adds that 42 percent of those he examined were neither ill nor damaged.

Other articles and writers relied on other psychiatrists and psychologists to say the same thing. According to Dr. Leo Rangell, a past president of the American Psychoanalysts Association, "The leaders of these cults are in many cases parent-substitutes who provide their followers with goals, rewards and a form of acceptance they cannot find

outside the cult... Many are tense, anxious, alienated, disappointed in themselves or their parents, and desperately hungry and groping for love, approval and guidance."

The clinical characterization of Peoples Temple members went on for days. "Young, unhappy, unwanted, rootless, unemployed people..." "Lonely and without a group connection..." "the more unstable people are...the more likely they are to be influenced..."

These generalizations do not accurately, or adequately, describe the members of Peoples Temple. Nor are they supported by any analysis which probes beneath the surface, according to Dr. Chris Hatcher, a San Francisco psychologist who has counseled many survivors of the Jonestown tragedy. Cult members are "generally characterized as being unhappy, goal-frustrated, naive young people," he wrote in a paper on "Cults, Society and Government."

This model is not supported...

Ungerleider and Wellisch ['Coercive persuasion (brainwashing), religious cults, and deprogramming.' American Journal of Psychiatry, 1979.] studied 50 cult members or former cult members by interview and psychological testing. No evidence of insanity or mental illness in the legal sense was found.

At this point one cannot comfortably rely upon an explanation of individual mental illness, family pathology, or situational stress to account for the induction of so many people into contemporary cult groups...

Our own experience confirms this. Personal contacts with Temple members over a period of ten years introduced us to a variety of different kinds of people: the elderly, the poor, the well educated, the angry, the

idealistic, the infirm, the troubled, the young. No single word, no simple category encompasses the breadth of diversity we encountered in Peoples Temple.

"Jonestown people were human beings," John told his United Methodist congregation in Reno, Nevada on November 26, 1978. It was a startling declaration after the week of horrifying revelations.

Except for your caring relationship with us, Jonestown would be names, 'cultists,' 'fanatics,' 'kooks.' Our children are real to you, because you know and love us. [My wife] Barbara and I could describe for you many of the dead. You would think that we were describing people whom you know, members of our church. If you can feel this, you can begin to relate to the tragedy.

A former Temple member writing to us after the suicides put it more forcefully. "If there are angels, you can be sure many have been added to the list."

The make-up of the Temple challenges one of Dr. Hatcher's conclusions, that "Most [cult] recruits do tend to be young middle class, well educated, and without a life commitment at the moment of induction." In fact, more than half the residents of Jonestown were either over 65 or under 19. The majority were black.

Over a third of the Jonestown community were children, most of whom had a welfare history. They were poor children, brought into the Temple by parents or guardians living in poverty.

The elderly comprised another third. A number had bought into the church's life care retirement plan, the Apostolic Corporation. Senior citizens signed over their assets, including pensions and social security

payments, although fewer than 200 in Jonestown received the latter. In return, they were provided food, shelter, clothing, and, in contrast to most retirement communities, an inter-generational support group.

The remaining third supported the very old and the very young. Beyond that, this group defies generalization. Some came from the ghetto: tough, violent, criminal. Some came from affluent suburbs. Some were well educated and idealistic. Some came middle-aged and bored with meaningless work. Some were filled with despair and searched for hope. Some were perfectly ordinary, destined for lives of innocuous normality.

Even my own sisters cannot be lumped together in the same category. Carolyn, the eldest, was a political activist. We envision her in different times and different places: with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War; with the Freedom Riders in the South during the 1960's; with the sanctuary movement of our time. If Carolyn had not joined Peoples Temple she would have found another great cause to which she could devote, and perhaps give, her life.

One of her roommates, writing after the suicides, described her this way:

I was immediately drawn to her, as she was both serious and fun...

I remember in all these times I always admired Carolyn for her intellect, her love for people and her purpose in life, to help others. My thoughts have been dominated by Carolyn, my memories of her and the parts of her I didn't know...

Annie, the youngest, was an artist first, and a nurse second. Gentle and funny, she always brought laughter to the most serious situations. After her death a friend wrote of several humorous incidents involving Ann.

At one [church] potluck, we found a toad in the parking lot, snuck it inside and put it in a covered casserole dish in the middle of the table... Once, after church during the postlude, Ann played a disguised version of '99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall...'

Her humor also eased tense situations... I got involved with a disturbed young man who told me he would commit suicide if I didn't go to bed with him. Desperate, I went back to the cabin that Ann and I shared and asked her what to do. She went out and told the guy, 'You don't need sex, you need help!'

...Another time we were in a parked van in Del Paso Heights, returning children to their homes, when a rather drunk-looking man walked up to the car with a sawed-off shotgun, pointing it to my head through the glass. After what was probably only a few seconds, but seemed like eternity, we heard police sirens and the man ran away. Ann's only comment was, 'Gee, Wendy, you sure attract wierdos.'

While news of the suicides and the return of the bodies to the United States filled the newspapers the first week, by the second week journalists had turned to the individuals for copy. Portraits of idealistic Temple members emerged. Jann Gurvich, according to the *New York Times*, "read Shakespeare, studied law and translated Sanskrit. Everyone who knew her described her as brilliant." Maureen, Marlene, and Christine Shannon Talley "had good report cards. They went to church every Sunday--Our Lady of Victory. They always wanted to help the underprivileged," said their aunt Helen Evans.

They talked about how they wanted to live in the country. But the main thing about these kids was that they wanted to act as a family.



(L. to R.) Annie Moore, Patricia Cartmell, Barbara and Carolyn Moore.
Redwood Valley, California. 1973.

Karen Tow Layton, "the petite blond Miss Paradise of 1969, went to a nearby migrant labor camp and fought the bosses until they tore down the tar-paper shacks." Her mother, Lea Tow, observed that "she was vocal about injustices, more outspoken than her friends."

Constance Frohm and Elaine Keeler both viewed Jonestown as the Promised Land. Constance "was a very good student," said one of her high school teachers. "She could finish her work and then start writing these poems. They were all about goodness, God or the bright Hereafter." Elaine Keeler wrote her parents from Jonestown about "how she was taking care of animals and the elderly, what compassion the church had, how beautiful all the brothers and sisters were, no racial barriers, everyone the same," according to her mother.

These were the idealistic young people whom author Steve Rose writes of possessing a Herculean conscience: "an overwhelming desire to do good." In his book *Jesus and Jim Jones*, Rose describes the people "whose consciousness is formed by an existential awareness of major destructive forces in the world and by a strong desire to do something to combat them." He continues his definition:

The concerns of such individuals go far beyond the narrow pockets of self-interest to war and peace, ecological balance, racial justice, and human rights. The Herculean conscience is a product of social and historical forces and is quite different from the Freudian notion of a superego. It recoils at the inequities in the world and is battered by the constant rise in the media of apocalyptic data: oil spills, nuclear leaks, famine, torture, and reminders of individual madness...

Some of the Temple members who shared this kind of conscience also comprised another broad category of membership: blacks who came out of a black religious tradition. This subgroup cut across generational

lines. Peoples Temple drew old and young alike from the black churches in San Francisco. Elaine Keeler's parents, for example, told *New York Times* reporters that Elaine "was the fourth generation of our family to go to the Abyssinian Baptist Church. Our family was never interested in 'off-beat' kinds of religions." Constance Frohm lived with a communal religious group in Houston, and with a Baptist preacher and his wife prior to joining Peoples Temple.

I remember my mother Barbara saying something similar about Carolyn and Annie: "How this could happen to two gals brought up in a liberal tradition in a home where social service is a way of life is beyond me—almost." And yet individuals from both liberal and conservative religious traditions were inspired by Jim Jones and what they found in Peoples Temple. Reggie Major, writing in the December 1979 issue of *Mother Jones* describes the devastating impact Jones and the Temple had upon black churches in the Bay Area.

Most of Jones' parishioners came to him directly from the pews of other religious organizations—primarily black churches... There was hardly a black church in the Western Addition—one of San Francisco's largest black communities—that had not been hard hit by Peoples Temple. Ministers were in a quandary. Substantial numbers of their parishioners had left to follow a white man who sounded stronger than they did about racism...

The facts simply do not support superficial analyses of "cult" members when it comes to Peoples Temple. Members were not largely young, largely well-educated, or predominantly white-skinned. But Peoples Temple did attract one segment of the population usually associated with new religious groups: the disaffected and the disenfranchised. Elsie, an elderly black woman who died in Jonestown, paints a grim picture of her own life in Mark Lane's book *The Strongest Poison*.

I was born in the country. I belonged to my grandmother and my grandad. I had no clothes. Had to make them out of adult underclothes. I was illegitimate; I don't know who my father was... My stepfather began to molest me from the time I was very small. I was made to take care of the other children by my mother. If I let the children cry, my mother would beat me with a buggy whip...I married while pregnant, but my husband kicked me out of the house. I was nine months pregnant when that happened. I walked for weeks with no place to stay. Church people who knew me wouldn't take me in. I was only allowed to stay on the porch. On the night my child was born I walked twenty-five miles to get to a hospital... I had seven children before I was out of my twenties...

Tom Grubbs, a young white teacher who also died in Jonestown, was another for whom life had been difficult. He describes his childhood in *The Strongest Poison*:

We moved to an abandoned itinerant farm worker dwelling. It had no door, furniture, lights, or water. We ate what we could scavenge from its land: lamb's quarters, young tumble weeds, sugar beet greens, field corn we could steal from the fields, stolen fruit, garden produce given by neighbors, and sugar beets that had bounced off passing trucks... I remember that school year sharply because of the hate I still have for the teacher. I had virtually no academic skills, was shy and bashful, insecure, I only had two changes of clothes and there was no washing machine. I can remember sitting through the Christmas party looking down at my desk top because it hurt too, too bad to watch the party the children were having. My religion and finances did not permit me to participate...



Heading for the Promised Land.
The road to Jonestown, May 1978.



(Top left) Maria Karsaris. (r.) Carolyn with cutlass bean plant. Sharon Amos and Jonestown resident. Jonestown, May 1978.

Letters written by Temple members to "Dad," their leader Jim Jones, reveal damaged self-esteem. "I have a very low opinion of myself," one member wrote.

I think my brain suffered damage from not having the right kind of food as a child. You mentioned something about that one time and I think it applies to me.

A Jonestown survivor explained how Peoples Temple literally had saved her family. In May 1979 Deborah Touchette told us that her family was eating out of garbage dumpsters behind grocery stores in Indianapolis when the church helped them get on their feet.

Jim Jones, the charismatic founder and leader of Peoples Temple belonged to this final category of the disaffected and disenfranchised. A shell-shocked father, a working mother, and an impoverished childhood in Lynn, Indiana, created a brooding identification with the underclass, and a strong hatred of both the middle class and the intelligentsia. Outrage and hatred shaped Jim's personality and philosophy. "This world is shit," he often told my parents in their home in Berkeley, California. Early experiences of rejection, coupled with the loss of his adopted Korean daughter when he was a young pastor, fueled his sense of life's basic unfairness.

"Why are there hungry children if there is a God?" he would say from the pulpit. "What's your God ever done?" The only way he could understand the scriptures was to embrace the concept of reincarnation.

Now if it wasn't for reincarnation, then with someone being crippled and someone being poor and someone being rich and someone being a have-not and someone being a have, the scripture could never say that God was no respecter of persons because we know in one lifetime, some people don't

get a fair shake. But if you live five, ten or fifteen lives, maybe you've been a king yesterday, and now you're a common servant because you did not learn... Then you can see at least some shaping up of equality. Without it you might as well shut God off.

Jim Jones rejected the personal wealth that faith healing and charismatic preaching could bring. Instead, he chose a modest woman to be his wife, lived in middle class comfort, and worked long hours at his temple.

He had an energy that allowed him to preach for hours and a charisma that kept his parishioners in the pews. Personal magnetism attracted his flock. In *Raven*, Tim Reiterman and John Jacobs claim that Jones developed these traits early. "He learned at a very early age," they write, "how to attract playmates, keep them entertained and maintain a hold on them. To accomplish it, he shifted modes, from playmate and companion to dominator, pushing his authority then backing off."

Reiterman and Jacobs work from the hypothesis that Jim Jones was a bad seed, and that he was always troubled. "Jim Jones already was playing several roles, a talent he would polish over the years," they write of his childhood. They describe three incidents in which Jones shot a gun at a friend, to illustrate how disturbed and hungry for power he always was.

We don't believe Jim Jones was clinically insane until, perhaps, the final months in Jonestown. However, throughout his life he was always torn, always in conflict with his desire to be accepted, and with his hatred of those who rejected him. This conflict continued in adult life. On the one hand he boasted of his political connections with foreign powers, with Democratic party leaders, with San Francisco city officials, and with the Mafia, for that matter. On the other hand, he identified himself and his group with the powerless: Native Americans, Chilean refugees, South Africans, the poor, the homeless, the hungry. He encouraged a contempt

for intellectuals who joined Peoples Temple, and one of the most cutting epithets anyone could use there was to call someone an "elitist." At the same time, prominent individuals from a variety of intellectual disciplines frequently lectured at the San Francisco Temple headquarters. Well-educated whites were rapidly promoted to leadership positions in Peoples Temple, and then publicly despised because of their elitist skills.

Peoples Temple was not conceived in evil. But Jones and his followers increasingly lived with evil by accepting a series of little compromises, one by one. Until 1961 Jim's career followed an idealistic, uncompromising track. He took principled stands against racism when he refused to be moved from the segregated black ward of the Methodist Hospital of Indianapolis, and when he left the church he was serving because the elders did not welcome all the blacks he was bringing into the congregation. He and his wife Marceline Baldwin, a nurse, adopted children of different races. They ran a soup kitchen. Jones was appointed to the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission, a dangerous post in the early years of the civil rights movement.

In 1961 or 1962, the date is unclear, Jones and his family left America to live in Brazil for two years. Part of the time he worked for an American missionary, the Rev. Edward Malmin. And part of the time is lost to us, although some stories place him with the Central Intelligence Agency, and others place him in a luxurious neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. When he returned to the church he had created in Indianapolis, he was changed. This became more apparent once the group moved to California in 1965.

Jim and his leadership group, the Planning Commission, had adopted the philosophy that the end justifies the means. Jim's demands for discipline, faithfulness, and dedication escalated. And members capitulated. The ones who did not, left Peoples Temple. The ones who remained, acquiesced in their own victimization. Carolyn, for example, divorced her husband Larry Layton and became Jim Jones' primary

mistress. She bore his child, Jim-Jon Prokes, and shared his cabin with Annie and with Maria Katsaris, another mistress.

The leaders in Peoples Temple—not just Jim Jones—began to stage healings and prophecies. They criticized each other for being selfish, or elitist. They punished themselves with boxing matches, spankings, and beatings. They accused each other of lusting after Jim, of being homosexual, of only thinking of sex. "I killed President Kennedy," said one signed confession. "I am a violent revolutionary."

At the time, it didn't seem like victimization to the participants. One older member who kept a diary described several incidents when people were "on the floor" being publicly disciplined by the group. "Glenn Hennington was on the floor for driving without a license for six months," she wrote. "He got a ticket. He had to fight a girl who knocked him out, which exhilarated the feminine portion of the audience." The diarist noted that at the same meeting "The congregation was permitted to yell at [Lorenzo Lindsay] for striking a woman..."

Jim Jones could never have been as one-dimensional as most writers would have us believe, and still maintain the loyalty of his followers. He was good as well as evil, idealistic and cynical, self-assured and filled with self-hatred, kind and cruel.

In the end, power and drugs corrupted him. With power over peoples' comings and goings in the isolated jungle community of Jonestown, Jones could control people absolutely. But increasing dependence on drugs made Jim incapable of leading. A small group of devoted members, including my sister Carolyn, ran the agricultural project, handled Temple finances, made contacts with the government of Guyana and with the governments of other socialist countries, and carried out the day-to-day work of running a community of 900 people.

In an aging, trembling voice Jones continued to read news reports over the project's loudspeaker system. He warned the community of tigers in the jungle and the dangers of the full moon. How could members continue to respect him, to follow him? The answer is, some didn't. Some hated him and longed to leave. Charlie Touchette, who'd been in Jonestown from its beginnings as a remote outpost in 1974, said he couldn't stand the place after 1977. He repeatedly requested a permanent transfer to Georgetown, and finally got it two months before the deaths. A few others were able to leave, including almost three dozen the day of the mass suicide.

But the majority remained, following Jim Jones, even unto death. They remembered the forceful, dynamic leader who railed against racism and injustice, who cared for the aged and the infirm, who poked holes in the elite. It was much the same as remembering aging parents for what they once were, and for disregarding what they have become. In the minds of his followers Jim Jones was not a shell of a man. He was the courageous preacher who stood up to the system, who rescued them from poverty, who led them to the promised land where men and women, black and white, young and old would live together in peace all the days of their lives.

Eventually internal dissension and dissatisfaction might have destroyed Jim Jones' kingdom in the jungle. But external pressure strengthened the community's sense of solidarity, and at the same time increased Jim's determination to resist attempts to liberalize life in Jonestown. Responsibility for fomenting a sense of persecution and paranoia in Jonestown rests in part with a group of individuals who called themselves the Concerned Relatives. Comprised primarily of ex-members, the Concerned Relatives openly orchestrated a negative publicity campaign against Peoples Temple and privately sought the assistance of various government agencies to investigate charges of illegal operations.

The Concerned Relatives numbered, perhaps, three dozen members. Most sincerely worried about their adult children living in Jonestown. Steven Katsaris, for example, made several attempts to visit his daughter Maria. When Dr. Katsaris finally did see his daughter in Guyana's capital city of Georgetown, the visit was cold, brief, and for the father, frightening. Other families shared similar concerns, believing in the horror stories ex-members told. They were unable to comprehend the total rejection of their beliefs, of their values, and of themselves that their children displayed upon joining Peoples Temple.

Other members of the Concerned Relatives had once belonged to Peoples Temple, and for a variety of reasons had left the organization. They included Al and Jeannie Mills, nursing home administrators who left Peoples Temple angry and bitter with the physical and mental abuse they experienced. They included Jim Cobb and Mike Cartmell, young men for whom the Temple had failed to live up to its revolutionary ideals. And they included Tim and Grace Stoen, an estranged couple who re-united to regain custody of their six year-old son, John Victor, who was living in Jonestown.

As early as February 1977, a few individuals in the organization contacted federal law enforcement officials in California with claims of gun-running and smuggling. Throughout the spring of 1977 and into the summer various ex-members of Peoples Temple who had started the organization began talking to reporters investigating the church. In August 1977 *New West Magazine* published an article by Phil Tracy and Marshall Kilduff based largely on critical ex-members' charges of physical and mental abuse within the Temple.

Some members of the Concerned Relatives even hired a private detective named Joe Mazor to investigate Peoples Temple, and, perhaps, to kidnap their children. Mazor, an ex-con who somehow managed to get a license from the state of California, made a good living exploiting the

fears of relatives. Peoples Temple members, posing as Concerned Relatives, learned that "it would cost a lot of money" for Mazon to help them get their children out of Jonestown.

The child custody battle between the Stoens and Jim Jones heated up the same month the *New West* article came out. A California Court ordered Jim to return John Victor Stoen to his mother in August 1977. The Stoen custody case spurred other disaffected parents and relatives to file child custody and conservatorship suits against the Temple. It also revealed one of the more bizarre aspects of Peoples Temple, when the church released an affidavit Tim Stoen signed in which he claimed he had asked Jim Jones to "sire" his son. It's entirely possible Jim Jones was, indeed, John Victor's father. He had fathered Carolyn's son Jim-Jon, or Kimo as he was called. John Victor resembled Jim Jones, but he also resembled his mother Grace.

Regardless of John Victor's true parentage, his case solidified Temple opposition to the Concerned Relatives in the same way it united outsiders against Jim Jones. On several occasions different Temple members said they would die before they gave up the child. Carolyn offered an explanation in a paper she drafted.

Pragmatically the issue of John Stoen is not an isolated custody case to us. From the political perspective we know that if we do not get backing on this issue, how could we ever have confidence in the government backing us on far more controversial issues. We also know that if John Stoen were taken from the collective, it would be number one in a series of similar attempts... It was very much for the good of the collective that we decided as a group to make a stand on the John Stoen issue... No child here would ever again feel secure if we handed over John Stoen...

Throughout 1978 the Concerned Relatives mounted a steady attack against Peoples Temple. The Stoens traveled to Guyana in January and tried to speed up the deliberations of the Guyana court in the custody suit. In April, the group issued its "Accusation of Human Rights Violations by Rev. James Warren Jones..." An accompanying affidavit by ex-member Yolanda Crawford charged that:

Jim Jones said that the United States is the 'most evil' nation in the world, referring to its political and industrial leaders as 'capitalistic pigs.' He said he would rather have his people dead than live in the United States...

Jim Jones said that nobody will be permitted to leave Jonestown and that he was going to keep guards stationed around Jonestown to keep anybody from leaving. He said that he had guns and that if anyone tries to leave they will be killed ('offed') and their bodies will be left in the jungle...

Jim Jones said that black people and their sympathizers were going to be destroyed in the United States, that 'the Ku Klux Klan is marching in the streets of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and cities back east.' There was 'fighting in the streets, and the drought in California is so bad, Los Angeles is being deserted...'

Jim Jones said that 'I will lay my body down for this cause' and asked others to make the same promise, which they did by a show of hands, and also asked them to commit themselves to kill anyone attempting to hurt him...

In May, Debbie Layton Blakey, Larry Layton's sister and a Temple financial secretary, fled Guyana. The next month she too issued an affidavit. Her statement raised the possibility of mass suicide.



Kimo Prokes (standing) and John Victor Stoen.
Jonestown, May 1978.

The publicity campaign against Peoples Temple was thoughtful and organized. The relatives focused their criticism on Jim Jones rather than on Temple members. In August 1978 Tim Stoen attempted to enlist the support of my parents, John and Barbara Moore by asking them to speak out against Jim Jones. That same week a reporter from the *National Enquirer* called and tried to elicit critical comments about Jones and the Temple.

John's notes about the phone calls indicate the problems we had at the time about Stoen and the efforts of the Concerned Relatives.

Tim said that he was calling to urge me to speak out against Jim Jones. He said that our daughters and our grandson would be hurt if I did not speak out.

I replied that I did not understand him...that he had been 100% for Jim, and now he is 100% against Jim...

I had the feeling, or the thought entered my mind, as Tim was talking: 'Am I being threatened?' After the conversation I wondered if I were being blackmailed...

Gordon Lindsay [from the *National Enquirer*] and Tim Stoen are confused... I really have never spoken out for Jim Jones, and here people are trying to get me to speak against him... In my interview with Lindsay the closest I came to praising Jim was when I said that he was in touch with the pain and suffering of people, in my response to the question about 'Is Jim Jones a rational man?'

In a letter to us John wrote "I never believed Jim Jones was God. I don't believe he's now the devil." But this was exactly the belief of the people who had once belonged to Peoples Temple. As true believers, they "would have died for Jim Jones," as Tim Stoen expressed it. Their fanatical

devotion to Jim and to Peoples Temple turned to fanatical hatred. It is a common defense mechanism for ex-cult members to hate with as much virulence what they once loved so passionately. Sociologists have identified a cult of anti-cultists, the people who swap atrocity stories, claim they were brainwashed, and expend the same amount of energy denouncing their old beliefs as they formerly did declaiming them.

So the ex-members, as well as the outsiders—relatives afraid for their family members—continued to press for action. Several filed lawsuits against Peoples Temple: to regain property; to revoke power of attorney; to receive child custody. Others considered kidnapping. Tim Stoen informed officials at the State Department on October 3, 1978 that he was prepared to retrieve John Victor Stoen by force. He repeated the threat three days later in a telegram.

During the year and a half of concerted action, most Concerned Relatives wrote letters to Members of Congress, pleading for intervention. One Congressman, Leo Ryan of San Mateo, responded to a constituent's concern. Sammy Houston believed that his son Bob had been murdered once he decided to quit Peoples Temple. Leo Ryan was receptive to the Concerned Relatives.

Throughout his career Leo Ryan sought causes that helped the underdog and achieved maximum publicity for himself at the same time. His concerns took him to the Watts ghetto, as a public school teacher; to Folsom Prison, as a temporary inmate; and to Newfoundland, as a critic of the baby seal hunters. They ultimately led him to Jonestown.

A November 19, 1978 *New York Times* article, written prior to the confirmation of Ryan's death, characterized the Congressman as a publicity-seeker. "Mr. Ryan enjoys the controversy and drama of the political life," wrote Eric Pace.

He told an interviewer he had gone from studying Elizabethan drama in college to Congress to the circus.

'It's all the same,' he said with a grin. 'I'm still trying to create an impression, to give people a message.'

Articles that appeared following Ryan's death described him as a martyr and a hero.

Colleagues warned him not to go. When Clement Zablocki, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, insisted that Ryan take another congressman along, the California Democrat lined up Edwin Derwinski. But Derwinski backed out by November first, and another colleague, Rep. Don Edwards, also declined to go. According to news reports, Edwards told Ryan that his trip:

was not the right thing to do. I advised him to work through the State Department and the Attorney General of Guyana... I said congressmen are ill-advised to take such matters into their own hands... I don't want to be critical of Leo—he was very good and he regarded it as his duty to investigate. But I advised him against it.

Two of Ryan's aides claim that no one cautioned the congressman about the trip. Jackie Speier traveled with Ryan to Jonestown and was severely wounded in the gunfire at the airstrip. Joe Holsinger remained in Washington, D.C. Both blame the State Department, in part, for what happened.

Ryan knew of the danger, however, and was determined to go no matter what. He knew of the mass suicide threat and had talked extensively with Debbie Blakey, who accompanied him on one visit to the State Department. Officials there told him about rumors of weapons. Ryan had talked with the Los Angeles District Attorney who was investigating an

alleged extortion attempt. And he carried papers in his briefcase about a 1973 lewd conduct charge against Jim Jones which was supposed to have been expunged from the record. Shortly after the deaths, the *Washington Star* reported that "all sources agreed that Ryan knew he was embarking on a dangerous journey when he ventured out to the Jonestown settlement."

Temple lawyers joined Ryan for the trip. Charles Garry, a long-time defender of liberal and radical causes, had represented the group for years and was leading the defense in several civil suits against Peoples Temple. Mark Lane, who gained notoriety by criticizing the Warren Commission investigation of the John Kennedy assassination and defended the man convicted of shooting Martin Luther King, Jr., represented Temple interests for only a few months. However, Lane was the one who negotiated with Ryan about his visit to Jonestown. And Lane was the one who promised Temple members a lawsuit that would uncover "the conspiracy" against it.

In addition to lawyers, Concerned Relatives, and staff members, Leo Ryan brought along a large media contingent. He believed in the power of the press to protect him. If he couldn't get into Jonestown, cameras would be there to record the denial. He took at least eight journalists with him to the settlement, including four members of an NBC News team, as well as Tim Reiterman, a reporter for the *San Francisco Examiner* who had written many articles critical of Peoples Temple.

Bringing the media just might have been Leo Ryan's worst mistake. Certainly it was his hubris, the belief that the media could protect him from any danger. In the gunfire that erupted as Ryan's group attempted to board small aircraft bound for Georgetown, journalists, not ex-members who were leaving, bore the brunt of the attack. Three were shot at coup de grace range, and several others were wounded. If anything, the media men enraged the gunmen.

There is a final group of people who must be introduced into the cast of characters in the Jonestown drama: the survivors. This group is heterogeneous. It includes Peoples Temple members who happened to escape the suicides simply by being in Georgetown, or San Francisco, instead of Jonestown; defectors or people fleeing Jonestown at the time of the deaths; those injured at the airstrip.

The vast majority of survivors are people such as ourselves whose relatives died suddenly, and shockingly, on November 18, 1978. Some parents did not even know that their children were living in Jonestown until they received word of their deaths. Others lost many relatives at once. One man lost 27. Very few of these survivors had belonged to the Concerned Relatives group.

The survivors have not always survived either. Some, like Mike Prokes and Tyrone Mitchell, killed themselves. Some, like Paula Adams, a Temple member, were killed in family disputes. Some, like Al and Jeannie Mills and their daughter, were killed execution-style, their killer never found.

But the rest of us survived. Some became anti-cult spokesmen. Some went crazy. Some started a new life and tried to forget. And some cannot forget, no matter what.



John, Becky, and Barbara Moore.
South Dakota, 1980.

“If I could make a cosmic deal, who would I put
in my place?”

—Nancy Mairs

Survivors

When we first heard sketchy reports of assassination and mass suicide that came out of Guyana we knew that our lives had changed. We didn't want to be involved in Peoples Temple, but throughout the last 20 years we have been, just as surely as if we had signed on as members. Perhaps even more so. My sisters Carolyn and Annie died after years of commitment to a community they believed in. We live on--and will continue to live--never fully understanding the depth of their commitment, unable to determine what was true and what was false about Peoples Temple.

In spite of our differences in interpreting the past, we do agree that as a family we changed. Our jokes and conversation now include anecdotes about Jonestown, and we share the old familiar stories at various gatherings. My husband Fielding tells of the time that first week when his best friend told his Disciples of Christ pastor that Peoples Temple was a member in good standing of the same denomination. The pastor, who'd planned to preach against the danger of cults, was incredulous. But when he looked up the church in his directory he learned that the Temple had made the largest annual contribution to his denomination. "The minister preached a different sermon," Fielding concludes the story.

Certainly his life changed. He spent years writing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, pestering various government agencies for information about Peoples Temple. He filed a lawsuit bearing his name, *McGehee v. CIA*, which profoundly influenced FOIA law. He also spent years typing and editing and revising manuscripts for books he hadn't planned to write.

My life took a different direction as well. I wrote two books about Peoples Temple, and I didn't author the short stories or novels I'd thought I would. I also filed a lawsuit which ended with less success and less impact

on the law than did Fielding's. I visited a country I'd never heard of before 1977, talked with hundreds of people about the event that involved us all, and tried to make sense of something which appeared, and still appears, senseless.

The events of that one day irrevocably altered our future: what we would do, what we would think, who we really were. Every survivor—whether Peoples Temple member, angry ex-member, frightened relative or bewildered mourner—is profoundly different as a result of Jonestown.

One November Sunday, four years after the suicides, John preached from a text in Genesis. It was the story of Jacob and the stranger. Jacob was returning home, and his brother Esau was coming to meet him with 400 troops. Although a generation had passed since the time he cheated Esau out of his inheritance, Jacob was a little nervous. During the night he woke his wives and children and took them across the ford at Jabbok. When Jacob returned to the campsite, utterly alone, a man came out from nowhere and wrestled with him until daybreak. In spite of a wound in the hip, Jacob would not let the stranger go. "Until you bless me, I will not let you go," said Jacob. The stranger asked him his name and when Jacob responded, he said, "You will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you strove with God and with humans and prevailed."

John found in the story of Jacob and the stranger a metaphor for the struggle with evil, and suffering, that people experience. Jacob struggled alone, with no assurance he would prevail. He was wounded in the encounter, but refused to let go until he was blest. Condemned to the battle, he chose to do more than merely endure. He held on until life brought some good from it. Jacob did not feel sorry for himself. He could not have succeeded if he had been mired in self-pity. Finally, Jacob received a new name: he came away a different person.

Survivors go through a similar experience. We endure alone, no guarantee that we'll survive. Wounded, we still hang on like Jacob, hoping

for some answers. Wounded, we bear the marks of our wounds for the rest of our lives. Certainly we are very different people than we might have been. Each has responded in his and her own unique way

A few survivors talked about it, for awhile, before it became embarrassing to continue. We still talk about it, among ourselves and with others who express interest. It is instructive for those who question Jonestown's meaning for us today. John and Barbara, for example, have led classes and discussions for those whose relatives belong to new religious groups, and those who've fled the cults. To some, however, our writing and lecturing may seem obsessive, a refusal to bury the past. "Do Jews forget the holocaust?" Barbara asks me. We have had little choice but to ask the questions over and over. In reality, the past refused to let go of us.

Our obsession has pushed all of us to pursue the truth in different directions. John views it in theological terms. "We are free to choose whether or not we will work to bring good out of pain, suffering and tragedy," he writes. "God is always working for good. This is resurrection. We can work with God." Fielding and I have worked on books and lawsuits.

Mike Prokes pursued the truth he understood about Jonestown by writing and talking about it before he killed himself. He had escaped the suicides, been detained by the Guyana police, and returned to America full of despair. In the months before he died, he said his good-byes to friends, and tried to impart something of the loss he felt:

No matter what view one takes of the Temple, perhaps the most relevant truth is that it was filled with outcasts and the poor who were looking for something they could not find in our society...

No matter how you cut it, you just can't separate Jonestown from America, because the Peoples Temple was

not born in a vacuum, and despite the attempt to isolate it, neither did it end in one.

Some survivors went crazy. Tyrone Mitchell shot and wounded children at an elementary school in Southern California before killing himself. He had been in Georgetown, Guyana when the suicides occurred. His parents and four sisters died in Jonestown. Several years later, Laurence Mann, Guyana's ambassador to the United States, shot and killed the Peoples Temple member with whom he was living, Paula Adams, and her child—his son—before killing himself.

Some survivors filed lawsuits. Most of these wound up on the desk of Robert Fabian, the court-appointed Receiver of Peoples Temple assets. Fabian searched around the world for Peoples Temple assets, and found quite a few, including a safe deposit box in Panama which contained \$60,050. The deposit box was in Carolyn's name. We could have filed a claim for the cash, or for a \$12,000 piece of property jointly owned by Carolyn and Mike Cartmell, which the two Temple members held for the church. We decided not to. Those who did make a claim, received a small share of a greatly divided pie. A few received a large piece.

Some survivors wrote books, trying to exorcise the demons, turn a profit, make a new point, or reveal some secrets. We wrote two books, published by the Edwin Mellen Press, an academic publisher. This is my third, and Fielding and I are at work on a fourth. Some would say I am, indeed, obsessed.

One survivor remains in prison. Larry Layton was arrested shortly after the murders of Congressman Ryan and his party. A jury in Guyana acquitted him of charges of attempted murder. As one juror remarked afterwards, "a child would have acquitted him." But after two trials in the United States, a jury here convicted him on a conspiracy charge. The

scapegoat for a murder no one can prosecute, Larry Layton pays the price for the crimes committed in Jonestown. He is being punished for belonging to Peoples Temple.

Most of us have tried to start a new life in a new place, some of us with a new name. The one thing that keeps bringing most of us back to Peoples Temple is the thought of the people who died in Jonestown.

How could they be so evil, do such evil? Goodness and evil existed side by side, which makes acceptance of the tragedy difficult. We've heard of some documents, which we have not seen, that allege that Carolyn planned the final day, and that Annie experimented with poison, perhaps even had killed people prior to November 18. There are other documents we haven't seen, thousands of papers in federal possession that might answer some of our questions. Or raise new ones.

Various writers have theorized that the Central Intelligence Agency conducted a mind control experiment in Jonestown; that AIDS was developed there; that the people died of a neutron bomb; that Jim Jones worked for the CIA; that cheese sandwiches contained drugs. Perhaps government documents or repentant spies will show that people in Jonestown really did test drugs on unwilling or unwitting victims. Perhaps, someday, someone will prove that the CIA used Jim Jones to lead, and then destroy, a group of people that was considering a move to the Soviet Union. Perhaps the suicides simply illustrate group hysteria under the influence of a madman.

While any one of these theories might prove true, we must write with the facts available. Those facts reveal that most people in Jonestown lived a more or less decent life, and died more or less willingly. Government papers will never answer the question "what did they die for?" Nor will they address the problem of how decent people can commit great evil.

At bottom it is this struggle with and against the meaninglessness of Jonestown that makes it impossible to come to terms with the event. I imagine it must be like this for Jews and the holocaust. What was it all for? Why? For what purpose? Once the questions begin, it is hard to avoid despair.

Barbara has found solace in the words of poet Rainer Maria Rilke, which a friend shared with her.

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart.

And try to love the questions themselves.

Do not seek the answers that cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Many live with the despair of Jonestown into the present, years after the event. In 1984, Dr. Chris Hatcher, a San Francisco psychologist who counseled many Jonestown survivors—Temple members as well as relatives—told my husband Fielding that he still received calls from all over the country. People eaten away by it still wanted to talk. After reading Dr. Hatcher's name in a five-year anniversary update, one woman called to confess to him that people in the small Texas town in which she lived still didn't know her relatives had died in Jonestown.

It is different from other, purely personal tragedies. A car accident, a lingering death from cancer, even a single murder or suicide appear to have purpose when compared to the unfathomable mystery of Jonestown. And yet, death is the end, not the explanation. The essayist Octavio Paz recognized this when he wrote, "If our deaths lack meaning, our lives also lacked it... Tell me how you die, and I will tell you who you are."

The despair is not something we talk about in my family. We talk about feeling depressed, or feeling crazy, or feeling low, or feeling like having a good cry. But we never discuss the awful despair behind the question: what was it for? We certainly haven't become better people for having suffered. It's draining, debilitating, and demoralizing.

But Barbara feels that we've gained greater insight into suffering and tragedy. "Yes, I am better for it, in that I have more empathy." While we didn't choose this to happen to us, we have been free to choose our response. "I know that fun times, party times, celebrations, all of the joy of life have a bigger place in our lives now," writes John.

During the first week after the deaths, my aunt confided in me, "At least your parents have their faith to sustain them." Jonestown rocked that faith to its foundations.

A United Methodist minister tells a story about my father. At the pre-ordination interview of a divinity student in 1987, the young man said he wanted to discuss theodicy: the vindication of divine justice in allowing the existence of evil. How can an omnipotent and just God allow evil to flourish in the world? The student explained that God wanted people to have freedom, and to use their free will to choose good. John replied that the forces of evil are strong, that God is weak against the great evil in the world.

Explaining his response to me later he wrote as though speaking with the student:

Your resolution to the problem of evil and tragedy may satisfy you and many, but there are others of us who are totally untouched, unimpressed with your rationale. Your answer simply will not do for us, nor for many of the people whom you will meet in your churches.

The message of Jonestown, however, is that there is no message. That's why I find more comfort in the words of a hymn sung at the memorial service for my sisters, "O God, our help in ages past." The two middle verses of the hymn written by poet Isaac Watts strike the right chord of divine distance with me:

A thousand ages, in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night,
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

Watts took inspiration from the ninetieth Psalm, which comments on the transitory nature of life with more directness.

Thou turnest man back to the dust, and sayest,
"Turn back, O children of men!"
For a thousand years in thy sight are but as
yesterday when it is past,
or as a watch in the night.

Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a
dream,
like grass which is renewed in the morning:
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers...

The years of our life are threescore and ten,
or even by reason of strength fourscore;

yet their span is but toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Sometimes, more often now, it does seem like a dream, as though knowing Carolyn and Ann and Kimo, and the rest of them, was hardly real. Fairly recently Barbara was describing something Carolyn did and prefaced her remarks, "You remember Carolyn?"

Of course, the message the Psalmist was trying to convey was repent! Life is an illusion, swiftly gone. "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." That implies, however, that there is something to be learned from suffering. There isn't.

Nancy Mairs, a professor at the University of Arizona at Tucson, and a victim of multiple sclerosis, describes her experience with suffering in a book of essays called *Plain Text*. "A friend who also has MS [multiple sclerosis] startled me once by asking, 'Do you ever say to yourself, "Why me, Lord?"'" she writes.

'No, Michael, I don't,' I told him, because whenever I try, the only response I can think of is 'Why not?' If I could make a cosmic deal, who would I put in my place? What in my life would I give up in exchange for sound limbs and a thrilling rush of energy? No one. Nothing. I might as well do the job myself...

Like Mairs, you have to ask yourself "Why not me?" You wouldn't wish it on someone who might go crazy, or kill himself, or become an alcoholic. When you think about it, we were ideal people for such a tragedy. We have stability, reason, even faith.

About two months after the deaths I wrote John and Barbara that I wished it had been me that died and that Carolyn and Annie survived.

John replied, "I wish it had been me. In a real sense they died for me. They paid the price of my convictions and actions through the years."

It's much easier to be a martyr than a survivor. The pain is rather brief, and the glory, everlasting. At times we're plagued by the guilty feeling that we could have and should have done something to prevent the tragedy. More often, however, the difficulty comes from living the questions.

Rather than dwell on unanswerable questions, one finds that survivors just live through one day to the next. Barbara described a Mother's Day she endured. It fell on the same day as Annie's birthday that year. "The Mother's Day mosaic is full of sense and nonsense, and the pieces are loose, and that's the way it is." Her conclusion fails to organize the pieces into a meaningful whole:

About the best activity now, probably, is a stroll down the Sacramento Mall, a chocolate sundae, or a new pair of sandals.

Many days the best activities may be nothing more than an appearance of normality. The result may be that at the end of the day we'll actually feel normal. When the most important thing that ever happened to you is something you cannot discuss, are not supposed to discuss or encouraged to discuss, it is difficult to remain normal.

Yet the need to discuss it overwhelms us at times. That need has carried me through the writing of thousands of words about Jonestown, Peoples Temple, and my sisters. Outsiders also want to know what happened. After reading so many conflicting stories, they want to know what was true: could it happen to them? to their children? When people learn of our connection to Jonestown they ask questions, lots of them.

Attempts to publish my first book about Peoples Temple met with spectacular failure, however. The rejection notices came from completely contradictory viewpoints. "Unlike you, I don't think the American public wants to hear any more about that event," said one publisher. "I'm afraid we feel that so much has been written about Jonestown at this point—both books and articles—that the market for her story would be limited," said another.

This book will undoubtedly preserve valuable data about the Jonestown disaster, but I am afraid that the author's documentary approach will limit the sale drastically. It's a shame because the success of *Helter Skelter* shows that an episode of that kind can find a bestselling market...

Still another felt just the opposite.

This account, however, strikes us as too sensationalist in nature for us, not the sort of book we can publish profitably...

Fortunately I found the Edwin Mellen Press, and a man who has been called the nation's leading defender of cults, Dr. Herbert Richardson. Dr. Richardson understood our need to study and discuss and dissect Jonestown. After a few conversations he even offered to make me lifetime editor of Jonestown materials at the press, an honor which loses its glitter as the years pass.

But many books remain to be written about the event. Each essay in this volume could be researched and expanded into a complete manuscript. Whole areas—government involvement, the cult of the anti-cultists, First Amendment challenges, for example—need time, attention, and concerted digging. The same facts viewed from new perspectives will provide fresh insights.

'Jonestown is big,' said comedian Dick Gregory after Jonestown.

It's everybody. I don't know if it's going to take a week, 10 years or 20 years for the truth to come out. I don't know how or where it's going to come out, but it's going to come out.

We discovered ourselves caught up in an historical event that is still being written. A family friend told us this is what history is: everyone with a different piece of the puzzle, each piece incomplete by itself. I imagine historians writing about Jonestown twenty years from now and from the distance of a century. I hope they will have more pieces of the puzzle by then.

Shortly after Christmas in 1978, a Peoples Temple member called and asked if we wanted an antique rocking chair and a desk that had belonged to Carolyn. We picked up the furniture, and when it was settled at home I searched the desk for any clues Carolyn may have left for me. I was hoping to find the answer to the question why? Why did they all kill themselves?

The items I found were not full of meaning. There was a cassette tape of a talk show about Peoples Temple, and an unused Tampax. There were some pencils, an air sickness bag, some dustballs, and a little box of messages typed up on small pieces of orange index cards: "FANTASY NO. 3 Women decided spontaneously that they would no longer be competitive and jealous."

Whatever I was looking for—evidence of some heinous crime, or definitive proof of innocence—I didn't find. The desk itself held some meaning as a family piece. I remember that Annie once scratched onto the walnut drawer "Dickie Loves Me" and that my mother erased it with a swipe of Old English furniture polish. And now, after years of writing letters and books on it, it possesses the comfort, and charm, of an old sweater.

In a strange way my sisters' deaths, all the deaths, have given my own life meaning. For the last ten years I have had a purpose: seeking the truth, telling the truth, sharing the truth of the experience. The truth has come in bits and pieces, not as a coherent whole.

The meaning of Jonestown and of the deaths of 900 people still eludes me. I continue to hope for a piece of paper to shake loose from the back of a drawer that will explain it all for me.



Ann Moore at the Medical Bond.
Jonestown, May 1978.

“We died because you would not let us live in peace.”

—Annie Moore

November 18, 1978: A Reconstruction

On October 22, 1978 I had a vivid dream. I had been shot in the head, and I could feel the blood rapidly choking me as I began to lose consciousness. "I watched it flow out," I wrote in my journal. "I felt myself dying." Less than a month later Carolyn, her son Kimo, and Annie were dead. Annie had been shot to death.

It took us several years to piece together what really happened on November 18, 1978. It took news accounts, Freedom of Information Act documents, personal interviews, even a trip to Guyana.

We went to some lengths to find out what seemed to be easily explained in seven days of intensive news coverage, in large part, because so many stories did not ring true with what we knew about Peoples Temple or about our family members. At the very least, we recognized that the accounts conflicted with each other. For example, some stories claimed that Ann had been shot, others that Maria Katsaris was shot. We wanted to know what exactly happened that day. Perhaps the question **why** it happened could then be answered.

The chronology that follows mixes facts and hypotheses. In several instances no one knows for sure what happened exactly, and barring a full-scale government investigation, it's unlikely we ever will. Yet this is what we have come to believe happened the week of November 18, 1978.

"Calif. Rep. Ryan Is Reported Slain in South America,"
The Washington Post, Sunday, November 19, 1978

I was on my way out of the apartment for a jog in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C. when I read the headline. My husband, Fielding McGehee, and I didn't get far before we turned around and headed back

home. I believed Ryan's death was some kind of ruse to explain an attack on Jonestown which I felt sure was coming. The last letter I'd received from my sister Annie described a conspiracy that the group had discovered.

Mom and Dad have probably shown you the latest about the conspiracy information that Mark Lane, the famous attorney in the M.L. King case and Don Freed the other famous author in the Kennedy case have come up with regarding activities planned against us—Peoples Temple...

A lot of new and interesting things should be coming out soon that will show the different attempts to destroy our group...

What's interesting is that it is all coming out before we are all dead, not the case with JFK, RFK, and MLK...

My parents called the Peoples Temple headquarters in San Francisco. They talked with someone they knew there. She said that radio communication with Jonestown was cut off. They hadn't heard from anyone.

By the end of the first day, reports of mass suicides were trickling out of Guyana. I felt sick. Already, I believed it was over. "Annie and Carolyn may be dead," I wrote in my diary that evening.

A Congressman was shot and killed as he was leaving Jonestown. Four others killed. No one knows what happened down there, or what is going on now. Reports of mass suicides...

My parents, on one end of the country, and I on the other managed to remain calm. We waited, trying not to imagine the worst. We weren't sure what the worst was, yet.

"The Jungle Airport Murders--'Firing Erupted, I was Hit'"
San Francisco Chronicle, Monday, November, 20, 1978

Ron Javers, a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, began Monday's front page story with, "Jonestown is every evil thing that everybody thought--and worse." Javers was a member of the group of reporters, ex-Temple members, and relatives of Temple members who accompanied Congressman Leo Ryan to Guyana. Only a handful traveled with the Congressman to Jonestown, where they spent less than 24 hours in the community.

Ryan and his entourage received a mixed welcome in Jonestown. Temple attorney Charles Garry and Jim Jones' wife Marceline persuaded Jones to let the group enter the settlement. There, reporters went on a guided tour, talking with people and taking pictures. The evening's activities included singing, dancing, and speeches, all part of the public entertainment which the group generally provided visitors. Congressman Ryan pleased the crowd when he told them that Jonestown seemed to be the best thing that had happened to many people. *Washington Post* reporter Charles Krause noted a sense of satisfaction in Jonestown when he wrote that "considering everything, this little place was rather pleasant. I could see how someone might want to live here."

After the performance, reporters questioned Jones about charges of drugs, beatings, and mental abuse in Jonestown. He answered them wearily before sending them away. As they were leaving, someone slipped NBC newsman Don Harris a note: "Please help me get out of Jonestown."

The next day, Saturday, Jones was in a better mood. But a scene threatened to erupt when journalists were denied admittance to one of the senior citizen dorms. Jones was persuaded that the denial would look worse than the condition within the dorm itself. In fact, it contained about

two dozen bunks beds, which the reporters duly noted. Some said the quarters resembled a slave ship, and thus justified Jones' reluctance to let them enter.

In the afternoon the news spread that several members were leaving with Ryan. Depression quickly descended upon Jones and on the rest of the community. After spending a night listening to horror stories from Concerned Relatives, the journalists were surprised there weren't more defections. Only fourteen people, most of them members of two families, decided to go. But "Jones went mad," according to Charles Garr. "I tried to tell him that 14 out of 1200 was damn good. But Jones was desolate."

As Ryan and his group were leaving Jonestown around three o'clock on November 18, a man rushed at the Congressman with a knife. Mark Lane, one of the Temple's attorneys who was present, foiled the attack. Skip Roberts, Guyana's Assistant Police Commissioner for Crime, believed that someone manipulated the man into the attack. "You don't attack someone the way he did, from behind," said Roberts, if you intend to kill him.

Ryan had assured Temple leader Jim Jones that as a result of the visit he had decided not to call for a congressional investigation of the Temple. After the attack, Jones asked, "Does this change everything?" Ryan replied, "It doesn't change everything, but it changes things."

The attack on Ryan concerned Richard Dwyer, the Deputy Chief of Mission for the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown, who had traveled with the Congressman to Jonestown. When the group reached the Port Kaituma Airstrip, about seven miles outside of Jonestown, he reported the incident to the local Guyanese administrator. As Dwyer and Neville Annibourne, a Guyanese government official, walked back to rejoin the group, some men from Jonestown arrived in a truck.

They motioned several Guyanese soldiers out of the way, then they opened fire. Fifty to 75 blasts from shotguns, rifles and pistols sprayed the area. The gunfire stopped for a moment. Neville Annibourne reports that Temple members, "both black and white," then aimed guns at the bodies scattered on the ground. The shooting began again.

During the second, shorter barrage, the attackers took special pains to pump *coup de grâce* shots into Ryan, TV cameraman Bob Brown, NBC reporter Don Harris, and *San Francisco Examiner* photographer Greg Robinson. "The assassins carefully selected their victims," according to NBC sound man Steve Sung.

Larry Layton, a Temple member who posed as a defector, had boarded a plane with others who were leaving. Several people leaving expressed concern about Larry, doubting his intentions. He was briefly searched, but managed to conceal a pistol. Some news reports said that firing began inside the plane and then erupted out on the airstrip. But the plane's pilot says the shooting outside began first. It is much more likely that the original plan—downing the plane carrying Ryan over the jungle in a suicide mission—was complicated by the arrival of the men from Jonestown. It is also more likely that Larry began firing inside the plane after he heard the gunfire outside. He squeezed off three shots at defectors, wounding two of them, before his gun jammed and ex-member Dale Parks took it away.

It was all over in less than twenty minutes. One of the two planes on the air strip took off, carrying Monica Bagby and Vern Gosney, two Temple members who'd left Jonestown with Ryan that day. Bagby had been critically wounded, with two bullets in her back. Gosney's injuries were less serious.

Guyana police arrested Larry the next day, Sunday. And for the next ten years the governments of Guyana and the United States would try him on various charges.

Deputy Chief of Mission Dwyer, himself shot in the hip, took charge of the wounded. Some fled into the brush where they would remain overnight. Dwyer and Annibourne placed four seriously injured people in a Guyana Defense Force tent at the eastern end of the airstrip. Three people who had traveled from the U.S. to visit relatives in Jonestown were wounded, as were three members of the press corps. Jackie Speier, Ryan's assistant, was badly hurt.

Dead were Congressman Leo Ryan, NBC cameraman Bob Brown, NBC reporter Don Harris, *San Francisco Examiner* photographer Greg Robinson, and Patricia Parks, a Temple defector.

"Leader Reported Among 300 Dead in an Apparent Mass Suicide Rite at Sect's Guyana Jungle Commune...Most Were Poisoned... About 800 Others Missing--Some Victims Said to Have Been Shot"

The New York Times, Tuesday, November 21, 1978

After Ryan, the reporters, and the defectors left Jonestown, Jim Jones called for a meeting over the loudspeakers. A depressed and quiet group gathered in the central pavilion area. But they didn't think they were going to die, according to Tim Carter. Otherwise his wife wouldn't have gone to get diapers for their infant son. Stanley Clayton said Jones' son Lew ordered kitchen workers to the pavilion. Lew had a gun in his belt. It wasn't drawn.

Jones told the group that it was all over. The Congressman's plane was going to fall out of the sky, and the Guyana Defense Force would invade the community. Jones had spent months preparing the group for this possibility, and people honestly believed that GDF soldiers would kill the men, rape the women, and torture the children.

Letters written to Jim Jones reveal both the fear of torture and the commitment to suicide he had inculcated in his followers. One woman had written:

I also think I'm a traitor, not a revolutionary because I'm afraid of fighting because I'm sure I will just get shot and not die, captured then tortured. That's what I'm afraid of.

I couldn't stand to see the children tortured. I still think of mine first. I couldn't watch my baby dropped from a window. I'd probably fall apart. I can't be trusted. That's why I always vote for revolutionary suicide...

Larry Schacht, the Jonestown doctor, and two nurses brought out a large vat of fruit punch. Various poisons, including potassium cyanide, as well as tranquilizers had been mixed into the punch. A young woman with a baby stepped up first, and after giving her child the poison, took a drink herself. The suicides had begun.

Accounts differ as to how voluntary the action was. Stanley Clayton says that two security men, Jim McElvane and Bruce Turner, forced two seniors, Freddy Lewis and Nancy Jones, to drink the poison. The doctor and nurses injected others. Security men armed with crossbows surrounded the group.

Odell Rhodes, who, like Clayton, survived the final day by hiding, remembers the suicides differently, and believes most of them were voluntary. Although hysteria rippled throughout the crowd, people willingly said good-bye to their friends and family members and took the cup.

An audiotape of the final hour reveals confusion, but no real resistance. One woman questioned Jones about a pending move to the Soviet Union. Christine Miller asked why they couldn't go there instead of

dying in Guyana. She argued on behalf of the children, saying, "I look at all the babies and I think they deserve to live."

But the crowd shouted her down. One man said:
Christine, you're only standing here because he [Jim Jones]
was here in the first place... Your life has been extended to
the day that you're standing there because of him...

Guyana Crime Commissioner Skip Roberts feels that Jim Jones shrewdly encouraged people to kill their children first so that they would lose their reasons for living. He considers the deaths of almost 300 children to be murders. Although adults lined up before the vat and took the poison willingly, most had already seen their children die. "Who would want to live after that?" he asked.

Roberts also believes that seniors chose to be injected rather than to drink the poison. All of the security guards died of poison, as did the half dozen men who ambushed Congressman Ryan. "Guards weren't necessary at the end," said Roberts, "because people wanted to die" by then.

It was over within an hour after it began. As the cries of the children died down, Jones' exhortations ceased. People hugged each other, exchanged farewells, and vowed to meet on the other side. The babble of voices on the audiotape fades away to a mournful note on the organ.

Initial reports indicated that people had been force-fed the poison. Shirley Field-Ridley, Guyana's spokesperson from the Ministry of Information, said that the bodies "showed signs of violence, including presumed gunshot wounds which were not consistent with suicide." But within the week, U.S. military spokesmen were saying that "there was no evidence that force was used on the newly discovered victims," wrote Fred Barbash in the *Washington Post*. "There were no marks of violence, no blood," said *Time Magazine's* New York Bureau Chief.

"Many of them had a peaceful look, as if they were sleeping," wrote a reporter from the *Guyana Chronicle*. "The impression was reinforced by the fact that for the most part they were lying down in family groups, in many cases mothers with children, couples with their arms around each other, and several with bedsheets pulled over them as in slumber."

Saturday night civil forces as well as the Guyana Defense Force were dispatched to Matthews Ridge. They traveled by foot and by rail to Port Kaituma, about 30 miles away, and reached the small village at daybreak. Deputy Prime Minister Ptolemy Reid reported to the Guyana parliament that troops secured Jonestown by Sunday night. The crime chief and senior officials also arrived that evening, and early Monday additional police were flown in.

The GDF found several hundred bodies—at first count, 383—heaped in mounds. The circumstances of the deaths seemed unnatural. The bodies ringed a vat of fruit punch, and the odor of almonds, characteristic of cyanide, permeated the air. Empty bottles of poison and tranquilizers, and discarded syringes were scattered about.

By the time the Guyanese police got to Jonestown on Monday, the GDF had disturbed what evidence there might have been. A gun which presumably killed Jones was 25 feet from his body. Looting had occurred. Clothes and papers lay strewn along muddy paths.

On Sunday and Monday survivors began to emerge from hiding. Odell Rhodes made it to Port Kaituma, a nearby settlement, during Jonestown's final hours. Stanley Clayton fled while the suicides were in progress. Mark Lane and Charles Garry persuaded an armed guard to let them go. They promised to tell the Jonestown story once they got out. The two lawyers hid in the jungle overnight and surfaced on Monday.

Two elderly residents of Jonestown also turned up. Hyacinth Thrush slept through the suicides, and probably escaped because she was believed dead. She stumbled out of her sleeping quarters at about eleven o'clock Sunday morning. "Not a living soul was in view," she said.

I struggled along the path to the pavilion and was surprised no one was around. I was looking for the senior citizens center and I managed to pull myself up the stairs. It was then that I saw all my people.

That afternoon she met Grover Davis, another senior, who escaped death by hiding in a ditch during the last hours of Jonestown.

According to Skip Roberts and Neville Annibourne, the Guyanese official who accompanied Ryan's party, the first report of the suicides came from Odell Rhodes in Port Kaituma. However, the official Guyanese spokeswoman said that a survivor who reached Matthews Ridge, 30 miles from Jonestown, in the early hours of Sunday morning was the first to report the deaths.

Defense Department documents show that the CIA first relayed the news to American authorities. Nicholas M. Horrock of the *New York Times* described how the news got to the U.S.:

In the pre-dawn hours of Sunday, November 19, survivors reached the Guyanese army post at Matthews Ridge, a few miles from the Jonestown camp [sic], with the story of the deaths.

A police officer relayed this immediately to his superiors in Georgetown, the capital [government sources and intelligence sources] said. A Guyanese police official who acts as an agent for the CIA in turn reported it to agency personnel.

We couldn't imagine Carolyn and Annie committing suicide or killing Kimo either. Yet newspapers reported that a nurse helped Larry Schacht administer the poison, and Annie was a nurse. The picture of Annie giving poison to children was horrifying. If she had in fact done that, I hoped she was dead. At the same time, I was convinced that if Jim had escaped, Carolyn and Annie had also. And that if Jim were dead, they were too.

On Monday, November 20, Barbara wrote in her journal "I am hanging onto hope by a tenuous thread..." The next day the words to an old hymn came to her mind: "Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life..." The words came to her as she

recalled the carnage, the TV revelations of the hundreds of bodies strewn about the main building of the Peoples Temple compound and the description of the tragedy and vast stench of decomposing bodies--many in family groups, their arms about each other...

Wherever we looked we saw pictures of bodies lying in stiff embraces, bloated in the sun and filling their clothes with the gases and fluids of decomposition. We got chills, shivers whenever we saw them.

I believed that John and Barbara were "incredibly optimistic." By Tuesday I felt sure they were all dead, even the 700 who were missing.

"Fleeing Cultists Elude Soldiers for Third Day in Guyanese Jungle"
Arizona Republic, Wednesday, November 22, 1978

The initial bodycount was about 400. The Guyanese government insisted that over 900 Americans had entered the country and were living in Jonestown or in the Temple's Guyana headquarters in Georgetown. Almost a thousand passports filled a trunk in Jim Jones' cabin. But the

Guyana Defense Force counted fewer than a third of those as dead. American and Guyanese troops searched the jungles on foot and with helicopters.

Slightly more than thirty survivors eventually emerged from the jungle. They included a family who left Jonestown on Saturday morning and walked thirty miles along the railroad tracks connecting Matthews Ridge and Port Kaituma; an elderly woman who slept through the suicides; an old man who hid in a ditch; Odell Rhodes and Stanley Clayton, who escaped through some quick thinking; and three Jonestown leaders who were dispatched with two million dollars for the Embassy of the Soviet Union in Georgetown.

Tim and Mike Carter, and Mike Prokes left Jonestown as the suicides were occurring. They took with them a suitcase full of cash. Tim Carter says his wife and 15 month-old son were dying as he left. The trio stashed the heavy suitcase and made their way to Port Kaituma. There the police picked them up, along with three pistols, and held them for questioning for several days.

In Georgetown, about 70 Temple members were crowded into the church's house in Lamaha Gardens. Members of the basketball team and people who'd been in Georgetown for doctor and dentist appointments survived simply by chance. But one of the most zealous Temple members, Sharon Amos, was dead. On Saturday night she killed her two adopted children and biological daughter, and then killed herself.

Charles Beikman was charged with murder. It's unlikely that Beikman, a simple and unlettered member of Peoples Temple, instigated the Lamaha Garden killings. Although a Guyana court eventually found him guilty of attempted murder—one child had escaped—most believe he was innocent of the charges. He would not have helped Sharon kill her

children and herself unless she had so ordered. When my father John visited him in the Georgetown Gaol in late 1979, Beikman asked: "How could I have done it? There was no blood on me..."

"Survivor Tells of 'Concentration Camp'"

San Francisco Chronicle, Thursday, November 23, 1978

Thursday was Thanksgiving. With no word but the confirmation of Jim Jones' death, we sat down to a full table. A reporter called in the middle of dinner to ask if Carolyn were Jim Jones' mistress. John told him we didn't discuss people's private lives.

"Officials Think Most Accounted For
Missing Cultists in Doubt"

Washington Post, Friday, November 24, 1978

Friday morning the body count remained at 410. Throughout the week the governments of Guyana and the United States negotiated over disposition of the bodies. Early Monday morning Hamilton Green, Guyana's Minister of Health, Housing and Labor, asked the U.S. ambassador what the U.S. intended to do with the bodies. They were meeting with other Guyanese and American officials as an emergency task force suggested by U.S. Ambassador John Burke. At that time, Guyana officials, as well as Embassy staff, assumed the bodies would be returned to the U.S. The ambassador described some rough plans for evacuation.

The representatives of the two governments also considered autopsies at the first meeting. Ambassador Burke cabled the State Department that the

Government of Guyana has in mind to separate poison victims from gunshot victims and perform spot autopsies on randomly selected bodies in each group for purposes of their

investigation. Obviously there is no intention to perform autopsies on all bodies.

The very next day, however, U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance ordered immediate burial of the bodies in a mass grave in Guyana. In his cable to the U.S. Ambassador, Vance cited health and cost as the reasons for his decision. "We felt that local burial would be the most sanitary and humane way of dealing with the problem," said an Embassy advisor after visiting Jonestown. Vance agreed.

But Guyana balked at Vance's suggestion. The country insisted that the bodies be returned to the U.S. To facilitate the removal, Guyana waived its requirement that victims of non-natural death receive autopsies.

On Tuesday afternoon, November 21, Secretary of State Vance and Defense Secretary Harold Brown finally announced the decision to get the bodies out of Guyana. The announcement cleared the way for a U.S. Army graves registration team to enter the country. The first detail arrived on Wednesday morning.

The military detail included over 25 specialists who were supposed to identify the bodies before placing them in bags for removal. They didn't. Odell Rhodes made the last visual identifications on Monday. The rapidly decomposing bodies, lying in sun and rain for four days before the U.S. Army began its job, were unrecognizable. They had to be removed quickly before they contaminated water and food for the neighboring village of Port Kaituma.

"Death Toll in Jonestown Climbs to 775

Smaller bodies found under larger"

Washington Post, Saturday, November 25, 1978

It wasn't until Friday, a week after the deaths, that the Army realized the initial body count was wrong. Soldiers had begun to clear out what

they thought was the final group of bodies. According to Air Force Captain John Moscatelli, "We got into an area on a different side of the Temple pavilion and found more and more bodies... and we found more and more and more." Accounts differed as to how the bodies were situated. Lt. Col. Keyes said:

The best way I can describe it is similar to people sitting on the hillside of a rock concert and then everyone decides to sprawl out. It was just a couple of football fields full of people just laid out.

U.S. Army Major Tim Hickman explained it this way:

When they committed suicide, they stood in nice, neat little circles, children in front of them, and as they died, they folded into the interior of the circle. And there were mounds of people. And as we pulled out the circle's cover, ...there were children in front of the parents. The parents were on top of them.

It's hard to see how the GDF and the U.S. Army could have been so wrong in their initial figures. Perhaps the numbers of children—about 260 as opposed to the first count of 83—as well as the advanced state of decomposition explain the discrepancy. In the brightly colored tangle of bodies, the GDF couldn't distinguish individuals. Even so, aerial photographs show more than the 410 counted on Monday.

"Toll Reaches 910 As U.S. Clears Jonestown Camp"

Washington Post, Sunday, November 26, 1978

Throughout the long week we had not received confirmation of the deaths of Carolyn, Annie or Kimo. By Sunday it seemed moot. It was obvious that they were all dead.

With that knowledge, and the beginning of acceptance, John preached a sermon that day. "We have shared the same vision," he told the congregation packed into the sanctuary in Reno, Nevada.

...the vision of justice rolling down like a mighty stream, and swords forged into plows. We have shared the same hope. We have shared the same commitment. Carolyn and Annie and Kimo served on a different field. We have wished that they had chosen ours, but they didn't. And they have fallen. We will carry on in the same struggle until we fall upon our fields...

The next morning an article about the sermon appeared in the *Nevada State Journal* under an Associated Press byline. Within two weeks newspapers across the country—from the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Wichita Beacon* to the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Dover Evening Journal*—picked up the sermon and reprinted excerpts or ran it in full. In early January, 1979, *The New York Times* ran brief excerpts on its editorial page. By May, over 2000 copies had been distributed to Presbyterian, Methodist and United Church of Christ pastors in Oregon. Ultimately the sermon was published in Steve Rose's book, *Jesus and Jim Jones*, as well as in the two books we published on Peoples Temple through Edwin Mellen Press.

People around the country hungered to go beyond the headlines and understand what happened in religious, rather than sociological terms. They wrote us letters, seeking reassurance. "Not Annie," one protested, "Not Annie."

"Pastor's daughter reported shot to death"

Reno Evening Gazette, Monday, November 27, 1978

Monday morning I awoke to the sound of my mother weeping. A friend had called to tell us that the *Sacramento Bee* reported that Ann Moore had died of bullet wounds. We had thought it couldn't get worse.

We nourished the weak hope that Ann was killed trying to escape. "Maybe Annie knew," I wrote in my journal.

Maybe she didn't poison people, maybe she refused. So she was shot. I hope she and Carolyn refused.

That same day, at 4:30 in the afternoon the State Department confirmed the death of Carolyn. We hounded the Department because of the reports about Annie. At first we were told that the files on Carolyn, Ann, and Kimo were missing. Then they found Carolyn's clipped to the others. She was officially dead.

It took months to determine what happened to Annie. On the day of a memorial service, December 12, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that half of her face had been blown away by an exploding dum-dum bullet. A few days later we read that Guyana's chief forensic pathologist believed she was murdered. "This could not have been a self-inflicted wound," he told a coroner's jury convened in Matthews Ridge, Guyana.

Initially three people were believed to be shot: Annie, Jim Jones, and Don Sly, the man who attacked Congressman Ryan with a knife. But the red stain under Sly's body was fluid leaking from his body. Only two were shot: Annie and Jones. Then the coroner's jury ruled that everyone but Annie and Jones had been murdered. Autopsies in the U.S. were inconclusive: the wounds were consistent with suicide but pathologists could not rule out murder.

My husband Fielding and I traveled to Guyana in May of 1979 and talked with the man who seemed to know the most about it: Skip Roberts. At the December inquest, Roberts advanced the theory that Ann was the last to die. He said Stanley Clayton reported hearing six shots, five in a relatively short period of time, and then, several hours later, one final shot.

Roberts told the jury that he thought Annie shot Jim Jones first, before shooting a dog, Mr. Muggs the chimpanzee—twice—then another dog, and finally, late that night, herself.

When we talked to him five months later, Roberts had a slightly different theory. He then believed that Mr. Muggs' owner, Albert Touchette, fired the first two shots into the chimpanzee. The next two, in rapid succession, he shot at the dogs. The fifth shot was for Jim Jones. Roberts no longer claimed that Annie had shot Jim, although he conceded that it was possible. The final shot in late evening, he still believed, killed Annie. And he believed she had killed herself. "Would you want to live after you had seen what she'd seen?" he asked us.

A notebook she wrote seemed to begin during the suicides and conclude when they were over. She started the book with the words:

I am 24 years of age right now and don't expect to live through the end of this book.

I thought I should at least make some attempt to let the world know what Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple is—
OR WAS—all about...

At the end of several pages she had added, in different colored ink, "We died because you would not let us live in peace."



Sebastian McMurry, Ann and Barbara Moore. Kimo Prokes on Sebastian's shoulders. Jonestown, May 1978

“There were literally hundreds of journalists from at least five continents in Georgetown. It was madness.”

—Tim Cahill

Cult is a Four-Letter Word

If you were to believe the news reports about Jonestown in the week following the suicides, you might think that automatic weapon fire sprayed over everyone in the settlement and that whoever wasn't shot was forcibly injected with poison. You might think that Jonestown was a concentration camp, surrounded by barbed wire with armed guards patrolling the perimeter. You might well wonder why anyone would have wanted to live there.

Truth was elusive that first week. Some reporters never did catch up to it. Part of the problem stemmed from the ambiguity of Peoples Temple. The contradictory nature of the group and its leader proved difficult not only to explain and report, but to understand as well.

Reports the very first day bore the earmarks of what would continue for weeks. The *Washington Post* incorrectly identified California House Assembly Speaker Willie Brown as Willie Jones. In the same article, the paper noted that a Temple attorney also "represented Black Panther Huey Newton and other radicals." It was a characterization guaranteed to offend everyone. Peoples Temple was instantly connected with "other radicals." The Black Panthers were lumped together with Peoples Temple, a mistake the Panthers took pains to correct in their own publication. The *Post* didn't even get the Temple attorney's name right: Charles Garry became Charles Gary, at least for the day.

An Associated Press report picked up by the *Arizona Republic* continued the radical theme by quoting a church news release: "Jones founded the People's Temple in California on a belief he could erase oppression of the poor, eradicate class distinctions and prove that people from various backgrounds could live together."

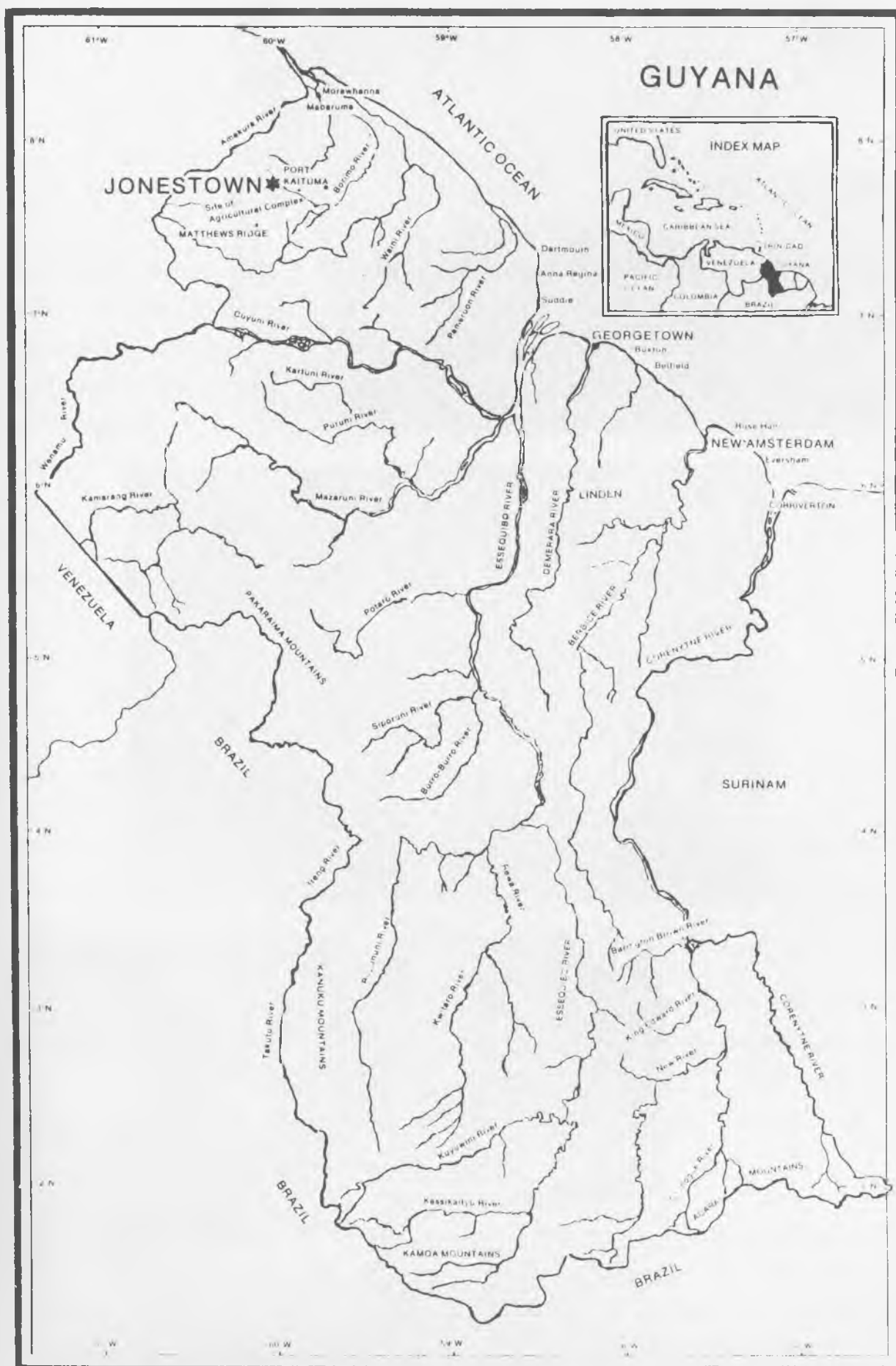
On the first day, United Press International reported that twenty people were killed at the Port Kaituma airstrip. The *Washington Star* said that four members of the NBC News team were presumed dead, including producer Bob Flick. Taped footage from the airstrip that was broadcast that very night, however, had been hand-carried by Flick to the U.S. naval base in Puerto Rico.

By Monday, November 20, with only one day—and a Sunday at that—to rustle up some copy, journalists printed and broadcast every known fact, every innuendo, every lie and numerous mistakes about Peoples Temple. The *Washington Post* had moved from a rehash of the 1977 *New West* article in its Sunday edition—"Temple's Founder Said to Intimidate his Followers"--to "Rev. Jones became a west coast power."

The *Post* also ran an article about that crazy country, Guyana, and helped to explain how Jonestown could happen there: "Country of Tropical Jungle and Barren Range is Among South America's Poorest." By the next day, the Latin Affairs editor for the *Arizona Republic* furthered the explanation under the headline "Violence was common in Guyana before weekend attack." "The nature of Guyana political life before and since its independence," wrote Harold K. Mills, "seemed to create violence."

The small English-speaking nation at the southern edge of the Caribbean came in for more criticism, and ridicule, as the days passed. Laurence Stern, in the *Post*, described the media's encounter with the nation in several anecdotes:

Within the first 24 hours of the great press descent, several reporters had encountered a quaint welcome on the streets of the city. These are described as 'choke-and-rob' in which the new visitor has his arm grabbed suddenly from behind or his windpipe given a sharp blow while he is separated from





Georgetown, Guyana street scenes. May 1979.

his watch or wallet. Eventually the Guyanese government issued warnings to the press as part of its formal indoctrination to the country.

Quoting Caribbean writer V.S. Naipaul, Stern continued his humorous critique of the Guyanese. "I was told that it is dangerous to leave a Guianese in charge of a surveying station in the bush," wrote Naipaul. "The surveyor will return to find the hut collapsed, instruments rusted, and the Guianese mad."

A mystique also surrounded Jim Jones: "They Called Jim Jones 'Father';" "'Father' of Phony Miracles Used Fear as His Tool." The most flamboyant copy came from Art Harris in the *Washington Post*:

From a three-story gothic temple on San Francisco's Geary Boulevard, exerting an almost mystical hold over an army of followers estimated in the thousands, the charismatic Rev. Jim Jones worked his political magic.

Jim Jones, like his successor in two years, Ayatollah Khomeini, ruled a theocracy in which mindless followers would do anything for the holy cause. At least according to the press.

Other stories were simply inaccurate. Ron Javers in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Peoples Temple defectors "talked about stores of weapons in the so-called peaceful jungle mission." Mark Lane claimed he heard 85 bursts of semi-automatic weapon fire. Lane fled the suicides "amid further gunfire and screaming."

Mark Lane created quite a bit of trouble for the Guyana Defense Force with that story, according to Guyana Police Commissioner Skip Roberts. Lane told Guyanese soldiers he saw guards take out "many, many automatic rifles." Then, after believing he heard Jim Jones say "mother, mother, mother," Lane says he heard automatic rifle fire. As a

result, the GDF expected to be attacked when entering Jonestown. They crept through the jungle along the road into the settlement, and carefully took each house, as though it were a war, said Roberts. The police expected to find numerous gunshot victims, but "apparently the shots Lane heard—he counted 85—were fired at successful escapees," reported the *San Francisco Chronicle* on November 21.

The *Chronicle* noted that "The Guyanese forces found, to no one's surprise, a store of arms and ammunition in the deserted settlement." It would have been less dramatic had the story simply enumerated the contents of the arsenal found by the Guyana Police: seven shotguns, fourteen rifles, ten pistols, and a flare-launcher. Without automatic weapons, there was, of course, no automatic fire.

The misspellings, and mis-identifications continued on that second day. The difference was that they reached into our family. In the days and weeks which followed, my sister Ann was identified as Anne, Annie Jane MacGowan—an elderly woman in Jonestown—as a financial secretary, and as Jones' mistress. She was none of those.

Some of the mistakes about Ann cut deeper than a misspelled name. A young woman was found dead of a gunshot wound in Jones' cabin. Some reports identified the woman as Maria Katsaris, the Temple financial secretary. Others identified the gunshot victim as Ann. *Newsweek Magazine* decided the body was that of Maria, while *Time* insisted it was Annie. It wasn't for another several months, following an autopsy we struggled to get, that we learned for certain that Ann had indeed been shot.

Perhaps these seem picky, niggling concerns. To family members they were devastating. For one thing, we didn't know what we could believe. We didn't know if a mistake had been made, or if the awful stories actually referred to people we knew. Additionally, however, the small errors as well as the big mistakes revealed a climate of sloppiness among

those reporting the news. They simply did not care if they were accurate, if they were describing the right person, if they could substantiate a claim made by someone who hated Peoples Temple and Jim Jones.

More than anything else, the "missing cultists" aroused suspicions and bred speculation as to their whereabouts. Tuesday, November 21 the *New York Times* stated with some restraint that "About 800 others missing—some victims said to have been shot." The *Washington Star* ran the most interesting item under the head "Authorities speculate they were killed before suicides." An anonymous source noted the discrepancy between the number of passports, the number of bodies, and the number of younger people dead.

This set of facts, said the source, who asked not to be identified, has led police to speculate about a grisly possibility: Perhaps the older and less productive and less sexually attractive cultists were killed and their bodies secretly disposed of in the jungle over the past four years since the founding of Jonestown...

The next day the *Washington Post* repeated the theory that people had been killed prior to the suicides.

This hypothesis, aside from being disproved in a few days, displays one of the many contradictory statements about Peoples Temple that created problems for us, as relatives, but not for the media. Instead, the theory that "less sexually attractive" people might have been killed offered a smooth transition into the many articles and stories which focused on sexual practices within Peoples Temple. "Sex Boasts, Lust for Power also marked his [Jones'] ministry," said the *Los Angeles Times*. And, according to an offhand remark in the *Washington Star*, "Jones and [Charles] Manson did their recruiting in California," both using sex to control members. "Jones reportedly used sex for domination," led an article in the November 24 *Nevada State Journal*.

Other accounts, however, describe a sexually-repressive atmosphere in Jonestown. According to Jonestown survivor, Stanley Clayton, "Jones frequently railed against sex in marathon meetings," wrote Tim Cahill in *Rolling Stone*. "He said it was unhealthy and shortened the life span." Others say that Jones separated married couples and did not encourage relations.

With an insatiable appetite for news about Peoples Temple in the first weeks, we found ourselves confused by conflicting accounts, unsure of which incredible story to believe. Whatever the truth was—and sex in Jonestown was probably a mixture of guilt, repression, and freedom—it was too complicated, too ambiguous for journalists to handle.

The media stirred in the money angle on top of sex to spice up the headlines. On November 21, the *Washington Star* latched onto the Temple millions story. As with most of the articles which followed, the *Star* was more interested in the size of the bank accounts—and the greed they had to represent—than in examining church expenses:

These revelations have led police to add speculation to speculation and come up with what under almost any other circumstance would be considered a wild possibility a small band within the commune had plotted to kill Jim Jones and abscond with the cult's money.

Or [the source] added, Jones may have been in collusion with a few others to divvy up the riches after nearly all the members were dead, and then at the last moment was betrayed.

The one thing we are sure of is that Jim Jones was not in it for the money. Anyone who knew him would agree. He didn't mind being comfortable, in a middle class sort of way, but the millions of dollars he amassed for the Temple largely went to the support of the Temple. The

ten million dollars stashed in various banks around the world would have vanished quickly, if the church ever needed to draw upon it for total support of 900 people.

Still, the image of the high-flying, big spending preacher fleecing his flock persisted. *The Washington Star*, working from interviews with ex-members, observed that:

Jones reportedly sent his children to private schools, kept a fleet of nine cars, and opened numerous bank accounts to spread the flow of contributions coming from his followers.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* hedged one positive statement--"In 1972, the church *claimed* [italics added] to operate a children's home, three convalescent centers, and three college dormitories,"--but didn't need to. The physical facilities in Redwood Valley were there to see, and easy to find. Verifying their operation and licensing with the State of California would have been almost a easy. In the rush to print, though, few reporters bothered to check out any of the facts. The claims, allegations, and rumors were simpler to publish as is.

After a brief respite on Wednesday, atrocity stories once again filled the papers on Thanksgiving. Tommy Bogue, who left Jonestown with Ryan and fled into the jungle when Temple gunmen opened fire at the airstrip, described long hours, poor food and physical and mental abuse at the community. Tommy tried to escape once before and had been singled out for some of the project's harshest discipline. Ryan knew of Tommy Bogue before he left for Guyana. Yolanda Crawford, an ex-member and Concerned Relative, mentioned him in an affidavit that described one occasion on which Tommy had been forced to eat hot peppers.

An interview with Tommy Bogue by Charles Krause and Leonard Downie of the *Washington Post* appeared in papers across the country under a variety of headlines. "Torture, toil, trepidation turned 'utopia' into a

nightmare," read the *Arizona Republic*. The *Los Angeles Times* began more modestly, "Youth Describes Dream Changed Into a Nightmare." And the *Post* itself ran the story under "The Final Months: A Camp of Horrors."

All of the headlines proclaimed far more titillating revelations than Tommy Bogue actually voiced. "Everybody had to be in bed by 11 o'clock and then everybody had to be up by 7 in the morning," he revealed. "We had to go to meetings every night." There they listened to Jim Jones exhort them to work harder. They had to protect themselves from invaders, Jim would say, showing them the commune's guns. According to Bogue, troublemakers were either confined to a box, forced to dig deep storage pits or 200 foot-long ditches. "Those who didn't work didn't eat," said Bogue.

Stephan Jones, Jim Jones' son, confirmed the existence of what reporters called "a portable torture shack." According to a UPI report from December 7, 1978, Stephan Jones:

described it as 'humane punishment' and said it was a simple wooden structure big enough for a tall man to stand or sit on the floor.

But the shack completely cut off light and air except for a small slot near the base of the door through which food was shoved. Jones said a doctor visited the prisoner regularly.

Prisoners were kept in the shack for one to three days, Jones said.

However, Stephan Jones emphatically denies that people were beaten. In fact, in the last eight months of life in Jonestown "there was no violence... You didn't even spank children—that was a taboo."

Stories carrying charges of physical and mental abuse at Peoples Temple were nothing new. Over a year earlier Marshall Kilduff and Phil

Tracy published the first exposé—"Inside Peoples Temple"—in *New West Magazine*. They interviewed ten ex-members and, "based on what these people told us, life inside Peoples Temple was a mixture of Spartan regimentation, fear and self-imposed humiliation." The article describes beatings and boxing matches, fraudulent faith healings, late hours at long meetings, and large amounts of money collected at offerings or turned over by church members.

Still it's not my purpose here to analyze what happened within Peoples Temple, but instead to describe how the media reported it. Surely public criticism and discipline—including spankings and boxing matches—occurred, just as certainly as chicken parts were used as evidence of cancers healed. And even Kilduff and Tracy recognize some need to examine the context in which these events occurred: why did people remain if it was as terrible as they said it was? The writers put the question "why" to their interviews and report that "their answers were the same—they feared reprisal."

That is the easy answer. The real answer comes from two unlikely defenders. Deanna and Elmer Mertle changed their names to Jeannie and Al Mills after they left Peoples Temple. They were among the most vocal critics of Jim Jones and the Temple. Yet Jeannie acknowledged her opinion that the beatings were administered "for generally acceptable reasons—drinking, smoking, or stealing," according to an article in the November 21, 1978 *San Francisco Chronicle*. Al agreed, and reflected on the belief within the group which fostered that acceptance. "In our minds we rationalized...that Jim must be doing the right thing because these people were testifying that the beatings had caused their life to make a reversal in the right direction."

Tracy and Kilduff's double standards—their unwillingness to challenge the critics of Peoples Temple as strenuously as they did its defenders—are more important than their general failure to examine the context of events. A single follow-up question in an interview with Grace

Stoen would have been as interesting as the ex-member's accusations. Stoen was head counselor for the Temple, who "would pass to [Jim] Jones the names of members to be disciplined." What was her responsibility for the beatings the article describes, and how does that color her account after she left? It was a question that was never asked.

Finally, the writers attempted to smear Peoples Temple politically by juxtaposing various atrocity stories and the fact that the Temple supported liberal and radical causes. The connection between the two was unmistakable. A paragraph from the 1977 article ties the whole thing up neatly:

Peoples Temple has two sets of locked doors, guards patrolling the aisles during services and a policy of barring passersby from dropping by unannounced on Sunday mornings. His bimonthly newspaper, *Peoples Forum*, regularly exalts socialism, praises Huey Newton and Angela Davis, and forecasts a government take-over by American Nazis...

The *New West* article, written over a year before Jonestown's final day, set the tone for all that was to follow in Temple media coverage. The deaths of over 900 "cultists" justified the abandonment of objectivity and fairness among those pursuing the story.

For example, conservative columnists re-established Kilduff and Tracy's political themes immediately following the Jonestown deaths. M. Stanton Evans of the *National Review*, noted that Jones' "house in Jonestown was found to be stuffed with Marxist and other left-wing literature, including the literary journal *Novy Mir* and other publications from the Soviet Union." Under the heading "Jonestown: Socialism at Work," Michael Novak wrote "The techniques of indoctrination used at Jonestown were not original but borrowed from those of other socialist experiments..." In the next day's column he added, "Jonestown was a lesson in socialist extremism. It was a cult of suffocation of the individual,

even unto death." Morton Kondracke, believed that "To blame Jones for the events in Jonestown...is to absolve both religion and socialism." And George Will concluded that "the hegira of the Peoples Temple of Guyana was a quintessentially radical undertaking."

Of course, left-wing columnists just as assiduously tried to distance the left from Jones and Jonestown. David Moberg wrote for *In These Times* that "Reverend Jim Jones did not bring the world closer to communism in his 47 years. But...he did bring his agricultural colony in Jonestown, Guyana close to...the most diehard anti-communist vision of a socialist future." And Morris Wright, commenting in *The Guardian*, wrote that "Jones' occasional talk about socialism or 'Marxism' was meaningless... There was communal living at Jonestown, but nothing resembling socialism." An article by Barbara Easton, Michael Kazin and David Plotke in *Socialist Review* sadly noted:

...The Peoples Temple was in some sense a substitute for a left that did not exist in the [San Francisco] Bay Area (or in the rest of the country)... It is a sad indication of the isolation of the left from most Americans that the Temple could claim, without challenge, to be not just part of the socialistic left, but its leading force.

Peoples Temple was guilty by association. Connections with socialist countries, literature, people, made the organization suspect. What else could you expect from a group that praised Huey Newton or read *Novy Mir*? By providing an easy explanation, columnists ultimately clouded any kind of meaningful analysis.

But reporters, as well as columnists, couldn't help but cloud the issues because the only people they talked to were critical of Peoples Temple. Ex-members and Concerned Relatives communicated their fears and anxieties to the FBI and the news media. Stories about Social Security

fraud, hit squads, and voting irregularities quickly filled the newspapers. Many Concerned Relatives were convinced they were next to be killed.

These were the people reporters talked to. They believed that ex-members and critics of Peoples Temple made the most credible witnesses. Tim Cahill, writing for *Rolling Stone*, observed the behavior of the journalists covering the Jonestown story:

There were literally hundreds of journalists from at least five continents in Georgetown. It was madness. Virulent lunacy. And when you tried to assemble bits and pieces of the story, none of it fit together.

And so we assaulted the survivors... There were three distinct groups. First came the voices of dissent: those who had gone with Congressman Ryan and survived the shoot-out at Port Kaituma. This group included the Bogue family, the Parks family and Harold Cordell. They hated Jones and Jonestown. The press counted them as the most reliable sources.

The second group consisted of those who had escaped the carnage. Odell Rhodes and Stanley Clayton made up half of the total number. Both were articulate, both had witnessed the final moments.

Cahill's third group comprised three Temple leaders: Tim and Mike Carter, and Mike Prokes, the organization's press liaison. They had escaped by being sent away with half a million dollars to deliver to the Soviet Embassy in Georgetown. After journalists interviewed the three survivors, Cahill noted that one reporter labeled his tape "Punks."

The media suspected anyone who did not unequivocally condemn Peoples Temple. In part this was understandable. Reporters felt used. They had published favorable articles about Peoples Temple during its stay

in San Francisco. After November 18 they wondered if they had merely been manipulated.

The Temple gave money to various news organizations, picketed the jail in which four reporters were held, and contributed funds to highly visible causes: \$2000 to the Patty Hearst ransom fund; \$20,000 bail to the wife of American Indian Movement leader Dennis Banks; \$500 to the wife of a slain California Highway Patrolman. "For five years between 1972 and 1977," wrote Jerry Burns, *San Francisco Chronicle* political correspondent, "the only stories to appear in the press about Peoples Temple were reports on the generosity of the church and Jim Jones."

Burns spoke with reporters who had talked with Jones and had been asked advice on how to handle other reporters.

'Jim asked me what kind of article Marshall [Kilduff] was going to write,' said the reporter. 'I told him to relax and just tell the truth, but I felt very compromised and very upset about being asked questions about a fellow reporter...'

Bob Levering of the *Bay Guardian* recalled that Jim Jones frequently asked advice, adding that other people he knew did the same thing. "Yes, I felt it compromised me," said Levering, who had written a glowing feature article about Peoples Temple. *San Francisco Examiner* reporter Jim Schermerhorn says Temple members tried to manipulate the media, but they were "much too obvious, naive and unsophisticated to fool anyone."

The longer lasting residue from reporters' sense of betrayal and manipulation was an endless stream of articles about "cults." These stories heightened the sense of the bizarre and lessened the sense of the tragic. "Bizarre cults have cast bloody spell through history," headlined the Associated Press story in the *Arizona Republic* on November 25. "One need not look far to discover an unbroken chain of bizarre cults that have

left a bloody, bewildering trail throughout history. Mass suicide has been only one of the horrors of these fanatical causes..."

Cult, a pejorative term as it's most commonly used, appeared in almost every headline. From a single day's paper, November 22, the *Arizona Republic*:

Fleeing cultists elude soldiers...
 Defectors from cult fear hit squads...
 Probe failed to find abuse at cult's camp...
 Mass suicide creates outcry for research on
 cults...
 Cultists' former home is up for sale...
 Cult's leader suffered persecution complex...

We complained about the word "cult" and about the coverage in general to the ombudsman at the *Washington Star*. "Here you have the most sensational story of the decade," my husband Fielding McGehee told William Beveridge. "If you simply reported the facts, it would still be bizarre enough to sell lots of papers." Fielding pointed out that Peoples Temple was a member in good standing of the Disciples of Christ denomination and could not be accurately classified as a cult. "Well," Beveridge responded, "cult is a short, four-letter word that fits well in the headlines."

A few others noted problems with press coverage in letters to the editor, and wondered what its contribution to the tragedy might have been. Writing to the *Washington Post*, Jo Pierce noted that Ryan had been warned not to take the press. "The visit was a 'media event' with microphones, tape recorders and cameras and an obnoxious probing that ultimately pushed Jones to the limits of his paranoia and to mass destruction."

Blaming the Jonestown deaths on the media seems extreme. And yet the underlying insensitivity, the pursuit of an award-winning story,

characterized much of the Jonestown reporting. Charles Seib, ombudsman for the *Washington Post* raised the same question as Ms. Pierce: "Was it the presence of the press that drove the paranoid Jim Jones to his final madness?" He wrote December 1 that Jonestown "was what we call in this business a hell of a story. And that is the way we covered it." Seib described what the media did:

Acres of newsprint, hours of air time were devoted to it. All the shocking developments—the airport murders, the nightmare of mass suicide at the Jonestown pavilion, the escalating body counts, the sickening task of removing the dead—were reported at length.

But Seib also believed that "the hype level was mercifully low." He admitted there were "a few attempts" at sensationalization, and used the heading "Reporters Visit 'City of the Dead'" as an example.

Certainly there were many more examples from which to choose. We would include the following in a list of sensational headlines:

"I was in the ambush"

"The jungle airport murders--'Firing erupted, I was hit'" (in large type) — *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 20, 1978

"It was evil and worse, then, they opened fire" — *Washington Star*, November 20, 1978

"The jungle death ritual" — *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 21, 1978

"Peoples Temple Cult: Violent, outer fringe" — *Nevada State Journal*, November 21, 1978

"Cult Leader Jim Jones: A Man Obsessed with Death" — *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1978

"Sex boasts, lust for power also marked his ministry" — *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1978

"Jim Jones: A Modern Day Pied Piper" – *San Francisco Examiner*, November 26, 1978

"Cult of Death," "The Lure of Doomsday," – *Time Magazine*, December 4, 1978

"The Cult of Death," "The Cult that killed itself," "The Emperor Jones," "How they bend minds" – *Newsweek Magazine*, December 4, 1978

There will always be a problem with objective reporting when the reporters themselves are involved in the incident. From George Orwell's involvement in the Spanish Civil War, to ABC reporter Charles Glass' experiences as a hostage in Lebanon, once a reporter becomes involved, he or she becomes partisan. The murder of journalists at the Port Kaituma airstrip shocked reporters. The presence of others as eyewitnesses heightened the drama. The normal rules of balance and perspective were suspended. "I remember thinking this is crazy," *Washington Post* reporter Charles Krause began his eyewitness account. He reports that he was hit by gunfire. Ron Javers, from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, wrote "I was knocked to the ground by a slug in the left shoulder, apparently from the .38-caliber weapon."

When reporters at the *San Francisco Examiner* learned that an unidentified photographer had been killed, they presumed it was *Examiner* staff member Greg Robinson. "That's when the first real chill set in," said assistant city editor Fran Dauth. When KCBS radio announced Robinson's death, people at the paper began to cry.

Journalists' sympathy fell to their colleagues, killed in a senseless act. That sympathy colored subsequent coverage to the extent that most reporting concentrated on the victims of the attack rather than on the victims in Jonestown. A very few readers noted this. "I think the worst feature of the Jim Jones tragedy has been the complete absence of compassion for the dead and their relatives," Charles Unwin wrote to the *Christian Science Monitor*. "No mourning. No funeral service. No statement of sympathy from those on high in government or church."

Unwin blamed the Democrats who "sold themselves to this devil." But the fact is, the lack of compassion at all levels of government was well reflected by the press.

On November 23, 1978, five days after the deaths in Jonestown and at Port Kaituma, the *Washington Star* announced that two books about Jonestown would soon be out. The instant paperbacks hit the news stands a week later: *Suicide Cult: The Untold Story of the Peoples Temple Sect and the Massacre in Guyana* by Marshall Kilduff and Ron Javers; and *Guyana Massacre: The Eyewitness Account* by Charles Krause and *Washington Post* National Editor Laurence Stern. Two days later the *Post* ran excerpts from the Krause/Stern book in its Sunday "Outlook" section in which Stern revealed that journalists in Georgetown were promised substantial advances for instant books. The excerpts of the book he had written and published appeared less than two weeks after the suicides were confirmed.

The truth has to suffer when reporters and their newspapers have a vested interest in a marketable product. Such books are written in haste and a flurry of "wild rumor," which Stern graphically describes. "You can make an industry off this," admitted Marshall Kilduff. "I've gotten offers to do lectures, movies, everything including T-shirts almost." The *Washington Post* expected to make \$100,000 from the TV movie based on *Guyana Massacre*.

Less than six months later "Guyana Tragedy: The Story of Jim Jones" aired on CBS. The two-part TV movie won an Emmy award for Powers Boothe's portrayal of Jim Jones. Inaccuracies ranged from depicting gunmen firing automatic weapons, to having a late-model luxury car pull up to the community: an impossibility in an area where roads were passable only to four-wheel drive vehicles.

Subsequent news stories have reinforced the initial lies. With the help of James Reston, Jr., National Public Radio edited together the most

lurid excerpts of audiotapes made by people in Jonestown. With a somber-voiced Noah Adams, mixed together with eerie music, jungle noises, and a demented-sounding Jim Jones, the program was so sensationalistic, I felt compelled to call in afterwards to complain. I remarked to the NPR panel assembled to take questions, including Mr. Reston, that I had listened to other tapes also collected by the FBI in Jonestown. Not only was Reston's compilation unrepresentative of life within the community, I said, the program didn't even reflect what was on the overwhelming majority of Jonestown's recorded legacy. Agricultural reports and planning meetings and laughter did not fit nicely into the picture which Reston wanted to paint.

Now the falsehoods are set in concrete. People believe Jonestown was an armed camp, that the individuals who lived there were all crazy, that Leo Ryan was a saint, that Jim Jones could do no right and the Concerned Relatives could do no wrong. My purpose in writing this book, and others, is to begin chipping away at the concrete.

Anyone who's not a relative must wonder if it matters. Does it matter if one account says people in Jonestown gave Congressman Ryan a five-minute standing ovation and another says it was 20 minutes? Does it matter if one adds the letter "e" to the name Ann? Does it matter if mistakes are made in pursuit of "a hell of a story?"

It has to matter because the truth of what happened, and why, has been obscured, perhaps permanently. The lies and distortions continue to plague stories about Jonestown. As recently as 1987 National Public Radio noted in an unrelated aside that "over 900 people were either shot or committed suicide" in Jonestown. One would think from that statement that the majority of people were shot. The reality: two people in Jonestown were shot, Jim Jones and Ann Moore; and five people were fatally shot at the Port Kaituma air strip.

If it doesn't matter, if a single letter or name or age or number doesn't count, then there's no point deluding ourselves that news is anything more than a very rough approximation of reality. And maybe that is the truth.



Carolyn Moore Layton and her son, Kimo Prokes.
Jonestown, May 1978.

**“The name ‘C. Layton’ is printed on the panties
found in place on the body.”**

—Autopsy report

Last Rights

If you're a cultist, you don't have the same civil rights ordinary Americans enjoy. If you die, the government doesn't have to perform an autopsy, or investigate your death. It can entertain the notion of dumping you into a mass grave. It can destroy evidence of the cause of your death, frustrate your family's efforts to secure your remains, stick you in an airport hangar on a military base 3000 miles from home for weeks on end, and depend upon public apathy to get away with it.

This is exactly what happened to the people who died in Jonestown. In spite of the shock waves that rippled around the world from the jungle community in Guyana, the U.S. government failed to determine precisely how the people in Jonestown died. The Carter Administration characterized the suicides as an aberration lacking relevance to American society. As a result, the government agencies responsible for handling the bodies resolved the problems they presented by ignoring routine investigative procedures. They simply abandoned civilized treatment of the dead.

The people of Jonestown were treated as so many pieces of meat. They were dumped in bags, shipped to a place in the U.S. far from most relatives, embalmed, frozen until a non-governmental organization forced a court in San Francisco to pay for interment, and forgotten. Although 900 people died, only seven were autopsied. Two of the seven were my sisters.

The official attitude towards these cultists pervaded American society as well. Few questioned the hands-off policy taken by the State Department, the Justice Department, and the state of Delaware, where the bodies were warehoused over the Christmas holidays of 1978. Only a handful of forensic pathologists challenged the assault on our sense of justice implicit in the failure to perform meaningful postmortem

examinations. "This was not garbage to be picked up," said Cyril Wecht, the medical examiner for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

It shouldn't matter what we thought of cults or whether these people deserved to die. There should be no moral, ethical or philosophical decisions. We should behave like a responsible country or agency.

Perhaps the magnitude of the tragedy explains why the government mishandled what was essentially a criminal investigation. Nine hundred people don't commit suicide en masse every day. In a philosophical sense, Jonestown was a cataclysmic event that raised unanswerable questions about the human spirit. In a more mundane sense, however, it was simply a case of 900 suspicious deaths.

For our family, concern centered on the deaths of Carolyn, Annie, and Carolyn's son Kimo, as well as many other people we knew and liked. Despite the shock during the first week of indescribable horror, we still wanted to know exactly how they died: in what manner and form, and when and where. The very few eyewitness accounts were contradictory, and said little about our relatives.

Our concern took on a note of uneasiness when newspapers reported that Annie had been found in Temple leader Jim Jones' cabin, half her head blown away by a gunshot wound. Out of 900 people, only two were shot: Jim Jones and Annie Moore. We wanted to know what distinguished those two deaths from all the others.

In addition, news accounts reported the existence of a Peoples Temple hit squad. Several ex-members named Carolyn as a leader of such a squad and voiced the suspicion that she was not really dead.

Autopsies seemed imperative. With a lot of bad press about Peoples Temple in general, and about Carolyn in particular, we felt we had

to establish records about their deaths while we had the chance. If something were to come up later, we would have no protection against possible legal actions. A misidentification could have repercussions we could barely imagine. What if, for example, Annie had not been shot? What if the rumors of Carolyn's survival persisted? We felt we had to be sure we had the right bodies, with manner and means of death legally confirmed. The U.S. government did not make it easy. Persuading the Justice Department to perform autopsies on my sisters proved time-consuming, exhausting, and demoralizing. Getting the State Department and Delaware to release the bodies turned out to be another problem. Everyone who had relatives to bury faced the same situation: unimaginable insensitivity and arrogance.

"When anyone dies by violence, or suspicion of violence," wrote the late Dr. Milton Helpern, chief medical examiner for New York City, "regardless of whether violence is suicidal, accidental, or undetermined, it is an ancient responsibility of government to officially inquire into the death. This is of paramount importance to the administration of justice."

Quite simply, our government did not do justice to the people who died in Jonestown. By failing to take on the "ancient responsibility" of investigating the deaths of its citizens, our government denied some people—mostly black, mostly poor, mostly idealistic—due process. Our government said it was doing us a big favor by giving my sisters autopsies. But after the "big favor," we still didn't know how they died.

Dr. Leslie Mootoo, Guyana's chief pathologist, along with an American forensic pathologist sent by the Defense Department, performed brief examinations on Congressman Ryan and the others who died at the airstrip. Mootoo also visually examined over 200 bodies in Jonestown. He later told a Guyana coroner's jury that he saw needle marks on at least 70. With the help of American pathologist Dr. Lynn Crook, Mootoo concluded that cyanide was present in some of the bodies. An analysis of the

contents of the vat revealed several tranquilizers as well as two strong poisons: potassium cyanide and potassium chloride.

While the Guyana Defense Force searched the jungle for survivors November 19th, Assistant Police Commissioner Skip Roberts and Jonestown survivor Odell Rhodes attached cardboard tags to 183 bodies Rhodes could identify by name. He recognized many, but frequently knew only a nickname or first name. Other survivors who came to help were stunned, and unable to assist.

Guyana waived its requirement for autopsies in the case of unnatural death, to expedite removal of the corpses. Some American pathologists blamed the lack of adequate on-site examination of the bodies on Guyana's haste to be rid of them. Dr. William Cowan, deputy director of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, said "the Government of Guyana just wanted the bodies out of there." He felt the government was extremely hostile. Dr. Crook said Guyana police allowed him to look at the bodies, but not to touch anything.

However, Guyana cannot be held totally responsible for the American failure to take field samples. Col. William Gordon, who was in charge of the body recovery operation, said he wasn't aware of the importance of postmortem examinations. "I don't know of any discussions that took place... No one mentioned it to me as being critical or necessary."

The confusion and antagonism among federal agencies rivaled that between the U.S. and Guyana. The State Department, the Defense Department, the Justice Department and the Office of Management and Budget eventually established a Federal Task Force to coordinate activities. State organized the Task Force since American deaths occurring outside the U.S. come under its jurisdiction. It supervised the whole operation and took charge of notifying kin and releasing bodies. The Defense Department handled logistics: body removal, clean-up and

storage. The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, along with the FBI, worked on identification. The Justice Department investigated Ryan's death under the statute which makes it a federal crime to assassinate a Member of Congress anywhere in the world. It also went after Temple assets to reimburse the government for the cost of recovering the bodies. OMB monitored the cost of the airlift and subsequent identification.

The division of labor immediately created jurisdictional problems. For that reason we never learned who exactly made the decision to send the bodies to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, although perhaps the State and Defense Departments collaborated on that as well. We were puzzled that the Air Force didn't take the victims to Oakland Army Base in California, site of a large military mortuary which had processed bodies during the Vietnam War. Most of the victims' families lived in California, where Peoples Temple was headquartered. It would have been easy to request, and obtain, medical records, especially from San Francisco. Finally, the bodies would not have had to be shipped across country for burial, an impossible expense for many relatives. Moving the bodies from one distant place to another--Guyana to Delaware--continued to alienate relatives from their dead.

Newspapers and officials gave two reasons for taking the bodies to Dover. First, it was closer to Guyana. Transporting them to Oakland, or to Travis Air Force Base fifty miles north, would have required the planes to stop en route for refueling. Second, the Dover mortuary was supposed to be better equipped to handle a large number of dead people. A few years earlier it had processed 327 bodies of Americans killed in an air crash at Tenerife, Canary Islands.

As it turned out, the Dover mortuary could not handle the Jonestown job by itself. Volunteers from the air base supplemented the mortuary's small full-time staff. Thirty-five pathologists and specialists from Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., 29 graves registration experts from Fort Lee, Virginia, and FBI fingerprint technicians also worked on the

remains. Additionally, a local funeral director who had an annual contract with the mortuary received about a quarter million dollars for his participation in the processing. He charged the federal government \$413 for each adult and \$232 for each child.

The government's stated reasons for choosing Delaware are totally fabricated, since most of the people working on the Jonestown bodies did not normally work at the Dover mortuary. The volunteers and specialists could have worked anywhere.

We believe the bodies went to Dover simply because they would be close to government bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. who might have to travel there. We also believe the Air Force flew the victims to Delaware rather than California because the government didn't want to be hassled by relatives. NBC Nightly News reported that Dover was selected because of its "distance from California, thus reducing chances of families crowding the scene."

As far as we were concerned, dumping the bodies at Dover—3000 miles from the Temple's headquarters—demonstrated extreme callousness on the part of the U.S. government. Coupled with the State Department's desire to bury everyone in Guyana, we felt the government forgot that the bodies had once been people, with kin who still loved them.

People in San Francisco and California were more sympathetic than the people of Delaware. The Temple was a California institution. Unlike Delaware, the San Francisco bay area has a large black population. If the move to Dover was calculated to dilute sympathy for the victims, it worked.

Early Thursday morning, November 23, the first bodies arrived in Dover. That same day, the mortuary staff announced that all bodies would be cleaned and embalmed. But they were not routinely embalmed at first, according to Dr. Cowan. The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology apparently hesitated two or three days while the Justice and State

Departments haggled over the question of autopsies. With no resolution to the issue imminent, AFIP then decided to proceed with the embalming.

New York Times reported corroborate this time frame. The *Times* noted that five bodies were embalmed on Friday, November 24. By the following Monday, Dover morticians had embalmed only 70 bodies. Since all the bodies had arrived by then, they were not automatically embalmed. However, a news article on Wednesday, November 29, reported that after all the bodies were finger-printed, embalming would begin "in earnest."

AFIP's decision to embalm—replacing bodily fluids with a preservative—was critical. It precluded any meaningful postmortem examinations by destroying physical evidence within the bodies. The pathologists knew that when they made the decision. Which means someone consciously decided that there would be no autopsies. Although AFIP could have saved the fluids for later testing, it didn't. "We didn't have any authority," Dr. Cowan claimed four months after the fact.

Morticians at the air base justified the embalming because it arrested decomposition and allowed the FBI to fingerprint and identify the remains. One mortician told us, "Our main concern was to preserve the bodies." The rationale rings false, though. By Saturday night, FBI identification experts had taken fingerprints from 374 bodies. Few of them had been embalmed.

With or without the embalming, identification proved to be a difficult task. The names Odell Rhodes and Skip Roberts carefully wrote onto cardboard tags, had washed off in the rain and humidity. People in Jonestown wore each others' clothes, so the name tags sewn into collars and waistbands were of no help. One man wore the clothes of several different people. None, it turned out, were his own. The kerosene used to kill maggots made it difficult to get good fingerprints.

The State Department was supposed to help in getting records and then, once a positive identification was made, to notify next of kin. It publicly requested medical and dental records from relatives. We noticed the request by chance in a two-paragraph article buried in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. ABC News announced a phone number which State had provided for information—and displayed a different number on the screen during the announcement. It's amazing the Air Force got as many as 100 records by December 1, considering how little the State Department did to help.

Dental and fingerprint records also arrived from Guyana by the first of December. Over 700 adults had been fingerprinted upon entering the country, and the records helped the stalled identification process. According to the FBI, it would have been impossible to identify more than 100 victims without Guyana's records.

Morticians from Dover, AFIP pathologists, the FBI, and air base volunteers worked around the clock in eight-hour shifts, printing, x-raying, cleaning and embalming the bodies. Wearing blue baseball caps with white FBI letters on them, the workers looked like a baseball team, according to one report.

Two and a half weeks after the deaths, the workers had positively identified 521 bodies. The remains, bagged and kept in refrigerated trucks until processing, were placed in caskets and stored in Bays 3, 4, and 5 on the Air Force Base. All information about an individual was keyed to the number assigned in Jonestown.

Army volunteers had numbered the bodies in no apparent order. Ann was number A001, while Carolyn was number 2A. They lay ten feet apart in Jones' cabin. Skip Roberts claimed the Army assigned numbers one through 22 to bodies found in outlying houses. He believed the first thirteen referred to bodies in Jones' cabin. However, Dr. Cowan told us that a woman found in Jones' cabin was numbered in the "B" series.

In theory, Carolyn's son Kimo should have been among the first thirteen counted. Several news articles quoted individuals who saw him there alive while the suicides were in progress. We believe Odell Rhodes identified Kimo and another child in the cabin, since the first bodylift included Jones and two children "he was believed to have fathered," according to the *Washington Post*. We knew Kimo was Jones' son before he was born.

Roberts told us there were three children in Jones' cabin, two boys on bunk beds and an infant lying between a couple on Jones' bed. We could see the two boys in a photograph Roberts showed us, and he pointed out John Victor Stoen, a child Jim Jones claimed to have sired. Dr. Cowan implied that he knew the other boy was Kimo, but the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology failed to give either of the boys a positive identification.

Carolyn was one of the first people to be identified, ten days after the deaths. The State Department gave out the phone numbers of Dover morticians at random. After several phone calls and a late night trip to Dover, 120 miles from our home in Washington, we contracted the services of the Minus Funeral Home. The owner and his wife were like many members of the Temple itself: concerned, friendly, and black. They listened to us explain our need for autopsies and agreed to help us find a pathologist somewhere in the state who would perform them. The Justice Department had already announced it was not going to authorize autopsies.

Two days later, Justice reversed its decision—at least partially—and announced it would autopsy Jim Jones, Maria Katsaris, Larry Schacht, and four randomly selected bodies. We also heard that the Air Force would perform autopsies on request, so my parents sent a telegram authorizing examinations for Carolyn and Ann. We also called Justice to ask what its autopsy policy was.

Mike Abbell, head of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department, told reporters that public criticism prompted the agency to reconsider its earlier decision not to perform any autopsies.

We're better off to put things to rest at an early date and make sure that all questions are reasonably answered rather than face second guesses in ten to fifteen years... We thought a full pathological investigation, at least of selected individuals, would be desirable to put questions to rest.

Abbell's announcement was a bit more modest than that of Assistant Attorney General Philip Heymann, who declared that the Justice Department intended to "find out exactly how and why more than 900 Americans died in the jungle of Guyana."

We called Abbell and requested two autopsies. He said Ann could be one of the four randomly selected victims, but he thought Carolyn's close relationship to Ann made it difficult for both of them to be considered "random" choices.

With little encouragement from Abbell, we continued to try to find a private pathologist. Again we met with frustration. After checking around the state, Mr. Minus told us no pathologist in Delaware would touch the Jonestown bodies. There was an unofficial hands-off policy.

The state medical examiner, Dr. Ali Z. Hameli, seemed more encouraging. Several news stories quoted his offer to perform post-mortems. Apparently he had received no requests. My husband Fielding McGehee phoned with a request and an offer to reimburse the state for its expenses. Dr. Hameli said he'd get back to us.

Since Delaware looked unpromising, we began to call pathologists in the Washington area. We reached one in the District of Columbia

medical examiner's office who criticized U.S. handling of the bodies. "If they'd really been interested in how those people died," Dr. Leroy Riddick said, "the State Department should have sent fifteen pathologists to Guyana." Dr. Riddick seemed curious and concerned. Others were not.

Our countless phone calls had one goal: to make sure nothing happened to Ann's or Carolyn's body. It seems paranoid now that time has passed. At the time, however, we were scared and skeptical. We believed anything could happen.

On Saturday, December 2, a State Department employee called at 1 p.m. to confirm Ann's death. He gave no cause.

On Monday, December 4, Dr. Hameli told us he couldn't perform any autopsies, but would forward our request to the FBI. Even though he acknowledged ours was the only family to request autopsies, he felt the two on Carolyn and Annie could open the door to 900. Delaware would not issue death certificates since the bodies would just be passing through "in transit." In a bizarre catch, he said the Attorney General of Delaware would not approve any cremations because the deaths had been of suspicious causes.

I wrote Dr. Hameli an angry letter that night.

I have to say I am greatly disappointed by your performance. Your own refusal to assist my family in obtaining autopsies for my two sisters—in the face of confirmed reports by the Guyana police that at least one of them died of gunshot wounds—indicates a profound disrespect for truth and justice. Your state's refusal to cremate or bury any of the victims is insensitive to their families, at the very least, and quite possibly racist, at the worst.

By return mail Dr. Hameli explained that it wasn't his responsibility.

I fully understand your concern and sympathize with your problem. However, I would like to advise you that your letter of concern should have been addressed to the federal authorities, specifically, the officials of the U.S. Departments of State and Justice who took custody of the bodies in Guyana, transported them to a federal zone, which happens to be located in the territory of the State of Delaware, and still have the jurisdiction over and possession of the remains...

Once the Federal Government decides on a final course of action and the State of Delaware is the recipient of the vacated responsibilities of the Federal Government, then I, as the Official Medicolegal Officer of the State, will exercise my duties in the appropriate manner.

As Medical Examiner for the State of Delaware, Dr. Hameli could have ordered autopsies in spite of the fact that the bodies came under federal jurisdiction. He could have stipulated that bodies buried in Delaware had to undergo forensic examination. But the governor, and the people of Delaware, wanted the bodies out of the state.

The state's eagerness to get rid of the Jonestown victims created a merry-go-round of confusion which ultimately delayed release of the bodies. In the beginning Governor Pierre DuPont's press aide announced Delaware's policy this way: "Claimed and identified bodies, for which there are requests to bury them in Delaware, cannot be removed from the Air Force Base in the absence of death certificates." But neither the state's attorney general nor the medical examiner would issue death certificates. Next, Delaware funeral directors could remove bodies from the air base only by signing a statement swearing they would transport the remains out of state. But the funeral homes we contacted in Washington D.C. said they could not perform cremations without death certificates. Which brought us back to the beginning.

Delaware prevailed because the State Department could not cope with the situation. Although responsible for overseeing this part of the bodylift, State's lack of coordination led to missed—and contradictory—communications. For example, we called the State Department liaison in Dover to find out if Carolyn and Ann had been embalmed, since we had learned it would adversely affect the autopsies. The liaison, Mike White, told us to call the base mortuary. The mortuary told us to call Mike White. We went back and forth several times before we finally learned from the mortuary that my sisters had been embalmed.

The State Department could have ordered the mortuary to retain blood and urine samples for future analysis. State could have kept the bodies on ice for several weeks. But the State Department would not act. It viewed Jonestown as a political, rather than a criminal case. The suicides were an international embarrassment. Better to leave the bodies in Guyana, or dump them in a mass grave in Delaware, or get rid of them quickly somehow, than think of them as people.

State defended its conduct by asserting it had no authority to investigate deaths of U.S. citizens in foreign countries. But it wouldn't tell us who did have authority. In fact, no one from any state or federal governmental agency we spoke with ever admitted anything but the most limited responsibility. When the Justice Department finally decided to authorize autopsies, in response to public criticism, it was too late for the examinations to be meaningful.

On Wednesday, December 6, an FBI agent named Lou Stevens called to tell us the FBI wanted to autopsy Carolyn and Ann. In our initial request for autopsies, we'd asked that an independent pathologist be present at the examinations. I mentioned that to Stevens. He said fine. Doctors from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology would actually do the procedure, however.

Stevens called back within a couple of hours to tell me he'd learned that my parents, John and Barbara Moore, had requested an independent pathologist in their earlier telegram to the Air Force Base—exactly what I'd told him in our first conversation. Now he said that it'd be a big inconvenience. The AFIP was doing the autopsies as a favor to us. It was unnecessary anyway. "There is no government plot to hide or cover-up anything," he said angrily. Besides, he added, it would be a "prodigious hemorrhoid" to get the AFIP to agree to our request.

On December 15, almost a month after the suicides, AFIP examined the remains of Carolyn and Ann, as well as Jim Jones, Dr. Larry Schacht, Maria Katsaris, Richard Castillo and Violet Dillard. Our family and Dr. Schacht's were the only two to request the examinations. A few days later, we learned that the Air Force had allowed Dr. Rudiger Breitenecker, a Baltimore forensic pathologist, to witness the proceedings. It was an ironic twist, since Dr. Breitenecker was the independent pathologist we wanted to be present in the first place.

Breitenecker told the *New York Times* that Jones and Annie had died of gunshot wounds to the head, consistent with either suicide or murder. In Jones' case, however, the contact wound made him a likely suicide. Breitenecker felt the cause of death of the other five people might never be known because of advanced decomposition and embalming. "We were working with all the handicaps," he said.

The bodies were so seriously decomposed that you could not tell if they were black or white, and the examination was aggravated by subsequent embalming. This was two strikes against a proper medical-legal autopsy, because toxicologic tests in such a situation are hit or miss. You can hope by some miracle you can come up with something, but it's not very likely.

No miracle occurred. It took almost four months to complete several experimental toxicologies. As AFIP labored to complete the tests, we decided it was time to inter the remains of my sisters despite the lack of a full report.

At one point during the delays, I called Dr. Breitenecker, looking for someone outside the government who could give me a sympathetic ear instead of a bureaucratic runaround. Breitenecker repeated what he'd told the press. He could not determine from the wound if Ann had been murdered or had committed suicide. He seemed to think, however, that Jones had shot himself since the "wounds he had were easily compatible with suicide. But," he added, "you can't really exclude the possibility that he had a gun pressed against his head."

Finally, in April 1979, the FBI had the reports. Lou Stevens believed Ann was murdered because of an injection mark in her shoulder. He thought it was possible, however, that she'd chosen multiple suicide: poison and gunshot. There was no evidence of cyanide in Carolyn.

The reports were good enough for Lou Stevens and the FBI. As far as they were concerned, the case was closed. "Your sisters are dead," Stevens said in parting, "and you can't do anything to bring them back."

We couldn't bring them back, but we could still try to find out how they died. Our family doctor explained the medical terminology in the reports and concluded that Ann had been cut on the face. We also talked with Dr. William Cowan, who supervised the examinations. His answers surprised us.

Ann hadn't been injected. The marks on her shoulders were bruises which might have occurred at any time prior to death. The pathologists couldn't observe any injections except for those made by embalmers. Any injections administered in Jonestown would have been

erased by decomposition anyway. All incisions on her face had been made by pathologists.

The reason for the four-month delay, Dr. Cowan told us, was that they tried to develop a whole new set of tests to compensate for the embalming. The entire thing had become "a research project," he said. "The embalming fluid was a nightmare."

It was a nightmare the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology itself had precipitated when it decided to embalm the remains. Nevertheless, the Justice and State Departments must bear ultimate responsibility for initially refusing to consider autopsies.

We asked if AFIP had made any policy changes for coping with similar disasters in the future. Ideally, Dr. Cowan responded, the bodies are processed at the site of the disaster. This happened when a DC-10 crashed outside of Chicago. He felt that the military was better equipped to process large numbers of bodies than were communities, because it had wartime experience.

Dr. Cowan said AFIP was preparing a report to help the Pentagon deal with disasters more effectively in the future. In 1981 we learned it had never been written.

Our arduous efforts to obtain autopsies and our four-month wait produced inconclusive results. For Annie:

Cause of Death: Acute Cyanide Poisoning; Gunshot wound of the head, laceration of brain.

Manner of Death: Undetermined.

For Carolyn:

Cause of death: Probably cyanide poisoning.

Manner of death: Undetermined.

Lou Stevens was right: the autopsies wouldn't bring Carolyn or Annie back. But they were necessary, first of all, to determine if Ann had been shot, and second, to establish some records, however paltry, on how some of the Jonestown people died.

Grisly details filled the reports: maggots; fingers amputated to obtain prints and then tossed back into the body bag; decomposition making them unrecognizable; incisions made to compare teeth with dental records; and of course the horror of Ann's mutilation by a gunshot wound. We dealt with these horrors by compartmentalizing them. They had nothing to do with the persons we knew as Carolyn and Ann. The autopsies were scientific procedures performed on human flesh, not human beings.

A rather ordinary detail affected me more than any physiological description in the report. Annie wore a pair of blue tennis shoes with her name written on the outside of each: "Annie Moore."

Kimo, like 234 other children, was never identified. The photos we sent to the FBI were of no use.

Metal coffins containing the bodies of unidentified, and some identified but unclaimed victims, were stacked in hangars at Dover Air Force Base. They sat there while the State Department pondered a decision. On January 19, 1979, the day we buried Carolyn and Ann in California, State suggested dumping the remaining bodies in West Virginia.

Delaware had already refused to accept the bodies, although State Senator W. Lee Littleton offered to bury 30 to 40 Peoples Temple children in his backyard so he could "watch their bodies rise on Judgment Day." In December, Governor DuPont asked President Carter to fly the bodies to

California, but the State Department insisted the government had neither the authority nor the money to release the bodies.

Religious workers and churches in San Francisco had been talking and working together on the Peoples Temple problem since November 19. They canceled an ecumenical memorial service they'd planned because they feared the publicity would create an "incident." In December, the ad hoc group, called the Emergency Relief Committee, urged the courts to set aside one million dollars of Temple assets for burial costs. "Somewhere the courts have to find the key so that people can bury their families and life in this city can return to normal," their statement read.

Over a month elapsed before the State Department agreed to work with the 27-member committee. This time, the committee went to court with a proposal that asked for \$215,850 to reimburse next of kin, and \$55,000 to pay for the cost of transporting the bodies to the west coast. This time, they succeeded.

On March 30, 1979, a San Francisco Superior Court judge awarded the committee \$300,000 out of Temple assets to pay for the operation. It was another month, though, before the bodies left Delaware. The problem was a lack of destination. Various communities in California resisted the idea of having a mass grave in neighboring cemeteries.

Skyline Memorial Park in San Mateo originally agreed to accept the bodies—at a cost of \$349.10 for a single interment, and \$560.70 for double depth interment in the same space. The cemetery backed out after nearby residents complained. Marin County's Daphne Fernwood Cemetery was willing to bury the remains, but the Marin County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution asking that the bodies be interred in several counties. Vandals spray-painted the cemetery walls with epithets and convinced Robert Fabian, the Receiver of Peoples Temple assets, to change the site once again. "I decided I was not going to send them to a place that doesn't want them," Fabian told reporters. Finally, Evergreen Cemetery,

located in a predominantly black neighborhood near Mills College in Oakland, accepted the bodies.

In late April 1979, the bodies finally made it to the West Coast, transported on tractor-trailers by a Delaware moving company. One hundred identified remains went to Fort MacArthur in Los Angeles, while another 201 went to Oakland Army Base. The 234 bodies which were still unidentified--mostly of children--went directly to Evergreen Cemetery. After months of organizing, including filing a lawsuit, the Emergency Relief Committee anticipated that many relatives would come forward.

"The reaction was just the opposite of what we expected," Donetter Lane, the president of the San Francisco Council of Churches, told us. "We expected lots of calls, lots of interest. We'd been working on this a long time. But when the bodies arrived, nothing. No response."

One reason the committee wasn't flooded with calls was a court order that required relatives to file a statement of destitution before any bodies could be released to them. This discouraged many who were not poor, but who could not afford the extraordinary costs associated with moving bodies across country and burying them. The fact that many lost more than one relative added to the burden.

Evergreen Cemetery buried the unclaimed and the unidentified in a mass grave on a steeply sloping hillside. It was May 11, 1979, almost six months after they died. Kimo, we believe, is buried there.

We never thanked the Emergency Relief Committee or the individuals who did the dirty work of handling and processing the bodies. At the time it never occurred to us. But we appreciated their efforts, both then and now.

Not everyone felt that way. "Delaware might be the 'First State,'" said Sgt. Lardizzone, a friendly voice on the phone at Dover Air Force Base

who gave us miscellaneous bits of information. "But it's last in the hearts of its countrymen." Lardizzone told us the callers on a local talk show expressed no sympathy for the people of Jonestown. According to the base's public information officer, Lt. Joe Saxon, the commanding officer received only two letters of support. The rest criticized the military for transporting the bodies. Several Members of Congress objected to the government financing the airlift. The outcry was so great that both the Justice and State Departments announced they would attempt to recover expenses from Temple assets. Responding to the announcement, the *Arizona Republic* editorialized:

We commend the attorney general to the task [of recovering money] with every effort bent toward recovering whatever he can on behalf of taxpayers who do not begrudge charity but are outraged by having to pay for the deranged behavior at Jonestown.

At the end of November 1978, the federal government claimed its Jonestown expenses ran to \$9 million. When the Justice Department finally filed a civil suit against Peoples Temple in January 1979, the figure shrank by half, to \$4.2 million. And in May 1979, the General Accounting Office calculated a cost of \$4800 per body, or close to \$4.4 million for the entire operation. At the time, the U.S. Agency for International Development picked up the tab. When the Justice Department suit finally concluded in May 1981, the judge awarded only \$1.7 million, retaining the rest of the Temple's assets for survivors and other claimants.

This doesn't seem like too much to spend on "the proper and decent thing to do," White House Press Secretary Jody Powell said of the airlift. In fact, the government could have done much more for the people who died in Jonestown. It could have followed routine forensic procedures to accurately determine how 900 people actually met their deaths. The fact that it didn't shocked medical examiners across the country. "Once [the U.S. government] assumed responsibility," said Cyril Wecht, the medical

examiner for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, "the medical/legal work was inequitable, ridiculous, inadequate, and negligent."

The President of the National Association of Medical Examiners, William Sturmer, described the U.S. investigation as "badly botched," and called the follow-up "chaotic."

Family members will never know how their loved ones died and will be nagged for years by unanswered questions. Insurance claims and other matters of adjudication will be mired in doubt for years to come.

The United States government wronged the victims of Jonestown and their families when it removed the bodies from Guyana without making any tests at the scene of the crime. It wronged them, and us, when it took the bodies to Dover, Delaware. It wronged us when it embalmed the bodies before conducting postmortem examinations.

By failing to follow routine medico-legal procedures, the government raised questions about its own performance and motives regarding Peoples Temple. More important, however, it obscured the true cause of the deaths in Jonestown, irrevocably.

"All someone had to do was drain a little urine or blood through a needle, and not even do an autopsy," Dr. Breitenecker said after the autopsies. "If it was worth the expense of several million dollars to fly the bodies back, maybe it would have been worth a needle to establish what happened."



The Rev. James Jones.
San Francisco, mid -70's.

"The only happiness you ever found was with me..."

—Jim Jones

The Quest for Good, the Acceptance of Evil

"For every good thing you learn about Peoples Temple," one of the church's attorneys told us in 1979, "you'll find something bad." Evil existed alongside righteousness. People signed confessions saying they staged assassinations, and they provided free blood pressure tests the next day. Members arranged phony faith healings, and gave all that they had to the church. They boxed each other in public humiliation sessions and offered stinging criticisms, and stood on the picket line, and worked the precincts to get out the vote.

Critics and ex-members never could admit that good existed in Peoples Temple. In fact, it was the good which attracted them in the first place. When my father, John Moore, met with a group of clergy two months after the deaths, Al and Jeannie Mills—vocal opponents of the Temple—disrupted the meeting. "They criticized me for saying anything positive about Peoples Temple," he wrote about the incident. "If they were members for six years why did they join? Why did they continue as a part of Peoples Temple for six years?" he wondered.

Surely something else must have been present in Peoples Temple than what they say now. Why don't they or other members ever speak of anything positive they experienced in Peoples Temple...?

All of us—critics and family members alike—shared a common difficulty: we could not accept the ambiguity of Peoples Temple. This failure continues to inhibit understanding of the group and its actions. Only by embracing the ambiguity wholly, the evil along with the good, can we begin to make sense of what went on. Only by accepting the fact that each

of us could get caught up in the momentum of history—and that each of us is capable of the greatest nobility and the blackest corruption—will Peoples Temple make sense.

After the deaths, many wrote us and told us how the suicides scared them. "It could have been me," one friend wrote, pinpointing the anxiety many admitted.

My daughter said 'This could be me.' My husband answered, 'Yes, and it could be me.' Were the time right, the age right, and the charismatic leader charismatic enough—it could be any of us.

Many point to brainwashing to explain this possibility, and deny the hard truth: we're all capable of inhumanity. The deprogrammers and the anti-cult cultists cannot understand how otherwise sane and ordinary people can believe that a yogi can levitate or think that not being allowed to urinate builds character. They must be brainwashed to reject modern society, to reject parental values and life styles, to say no to what is, in search of what might be. From the outsiders' viewpoint, brainwashing and persuasive coercion provide the only logical explanations.

Many Peoples Temple critics point to Jim Jones, the charismatic and unpredictable leader of the group, to explain what they consider mass psychosis. Only the brainwashed could possibly believe that junk, or do that stuff. In small part they are correct about Jones: his sense of doom, of outrage, of despair, and his immense ego shaped the church.

The Temple's dogma came directly from his soul. The world's injustice angered him. It inspired him as well. He claimed he "wept 'til those goddamn sheets were soaked" at the execution of the Rosenbergs in the early 1950's. The death of his adopted daughter in a car accident in

1959 ate away at him. "We lowered her into a goddamn hole that looked like a pool," he said of her burial in a segregated cemetery. "It was cruel, cruel. That fucking vault, the water half filling it..."

Hatred of bigotry and racism burned within Jim Jones, much as it infected the abolitionist John Brown. He and his wife Marceline created a rainbow family by adopting children of all races. He worked among the poor and the black in Indianapolis and established his own church when the church where he worked discouraged his evangelism among the town's poor blacks. He became the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission Chairman, a dangerous, almost radical position, in the Midwest during the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Although hypocrisy colored his later actions, his commitment to fighting racism continued into the 1970's. He brought blacks and whites together in both a religious and political environment. He encouraged intermarriage. Some observers in Guyana believed he was trying to create a super race of the strong and the beautiful by fostering marriages between blacks and whites. My sister Annie's companion in Jonestown, for example, was a young black man named Sebastian, a zealot like herself.

But Jim's assault on racism only went so far. He challenged its presence in American society, but was blind to its existence within his own organization. When Jim and his leadership group gave me the hard sell on Peoples Temple, I noticed only one black among the leaders. The people in power—the ones who ran the print shop, the media, the bus barn, the children's homes, the nursing homes—were white, not black.

I remembered this observation when I read a letter to Jim written by eight Temple defectors. "You said that the revolutionary focal point at present is in the black people," they wrote him.



John and Barbara Moore with Jim Jones at an award ceremony.
San Francisco, mid -1970's.



Jim with children of many races.
From a photograph in the early 1970's.



Jim Jones.
Date unknown.

Yet where is the black leadership, where is the black staff and black attitude? There's no black people with any discontent for today's evilness that will listen or follow any of them...

Does it mean anything or warrant respect and camaraderie if a black person proves loyal to the Peoples Temple as long as 7, 8, 9, 10 years? There are black Peoples Temple members who have proven themselves through the years. Still they participate in Peoples Temple from the same capacity as when they joined...

New white upper middle class folk seem to be trusted and treated better than black people who have proven their loyalties through the years...

Jim Jones lived with an apocalyptic view that infected his followers. He led them from Indiana to California in the 1960's. He selected Redwood Valley—about 100 miles north of San Francisco—because a magazine article reported it was one of the few places in the U.S. that might survive a nuclear war. He looked at the future through a pair of binoculars: what appeared remote to most of us, seemed imminent to him.

Jim Jones was an atheist. He frequently said that God did not exist, that He could not possibly exist. His sense of injustice, of life's basic unfairness, convinced him of this. "What's your god ever done," he demanded to know from his followers in the Redwood Valley Church.

He never heard your prayers
 He never gave you food
 He never gave you a bed
 He never gave you a home...

And he concluded, "The only happiness you ever found was with me."

Jim Jones replaced the God of the Bible as an object of worship. "Ye are all gods," he told the congregation on several occasions. Another time he assured them:

When your god has failed you
I'll still be with you.
I will never leave you.
I will never forsake you.
I will never let you down, not once...

As he tore down the divinity of God and Jesus, he built up the divinity of each human being. "I'm a god and I'm going to stay a god until you recognize that you're a god."

In spite of his atheism, Jim believed deeply in the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ. "I had my religious heritage in Pentecostalism," he admitted to followers, "deep rooted emotions in the Christian tradition and a deep love which I share to this day for the practical teachings of Jesus Christ." For years Peoples Temple stationery carried the biblical imperatives to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned. When members began establishing contact with communist countries, they removed the quotation that came from the book of Matthew.

Jim's hatred of inequality led him to an unsophisticated type of communism. He praised the heroism of the Soviet people during World War II and uncritically rationalized Stalin and totalitarian behavior. At the same time, he saw communism as the only way to combat injustice. "It seemed gross to me that one human being would have so much more than another," he said. Comparing communism to the Pentecostal tradition, "I saw that where the early believers stay together, they sold all their possessions and had all things in common."

He claimed he developed his "own brand of Marxism" through contacts and friendships with American communists during the 1950's. He says he consciously decided to infiltrate the church and "in the early years I approached Christendom from a communal standpoint with only intermittent mention of my Marxist views. However," he continued:

in later years there was not ever a person who attended my meetings that did not hear me say I was a Communist.

The communism of Peoples Temple was in reality a primitive communalism. It neglected the working class, shunned class issues except as propaganda, and ignored other leftist movements. Certainly it failed to impress representatives of the Cuban Embassy. One told Temple leaders that Jonestown was utopian, and hence, not truly revolutionary. Daniel Salas explained his reservations to a delegation of Temple visitors.

One should not engage in such a closed range approach to a political environment... This is not exactly the way the society should be changed. We should not just include ourselves. We should try to get involved with the real contradictions that are in society.

San Francisco Temple members also tried to build contacts with the Communist Party USA. CPUSA members left one meeting in disgust, after witnessing Temple adulation of Jim Jones. Jim realized the worship he'd encouraged for so long had become a liability in dealing with real Marxists and Communists. In Jonestown he coached the community before visitors from the Soviet Embassy descended. "Call me Jim," he instructed. "Don't say Father or Dad..."

Cut off that aura shit, you see. They won't understand it... Never Pastor, never Father, never Dad, you know what I mean?

Even though Jim took a cynical, and opportunistic, tack regarding Marxism, his followers studied socialism with diligence and with hope. Temple attorney Charles Garry told us that during his visit to Jonestown, an older black man discussed the labor theory of value with him. Community members practiced Russian and eagerly discussed plans for a move to the Soviet Union. Delegations of Temple leaders met regularly with representatives of the Cuban, Yugoslavian, North Korean, and Soviet Embassies in Georgetown. Children learned a geography that included the Marxist states of Yemen and Albania. In a spelling test, one young girl wrote that Malcolm X was a "revisionist."

Many Temple members, however, lacked a formal ideology beyond the Christian teachings of caring for the poor, the hungry, and the oppressed. Annie expressed this best when she described her commitment to the church after joining in 1972.

The reason that the Temple is great is not just because Jim Jones can make people cough up cancers but because there is the largest group of people I have ever seen who are concerned about the world and are fighting for truth and justice for the world. And all the people have come from such different backgrounds, every color, every age, every income group... So anyway it's the only place I have seen real true Christianity being practiced. Well, I can't explain all of why I want to go there; I guess I kind of want to be a follower because I sure can't try to change the world all by myself.

My older sister Carolyn, much more than Annie, based her work and life on a radical ideology. Jonestown allowed her to express that ideology. She described the classes she taught in Jonestown, classes that included "Third World Politics, Caribbean politics and socialist concepts, general theory, plus socialist economic concepts." The community developed five year plans and set production goals. They discussed plans

in large group meetings and reported progress on cassava cultivation and hog births.

"I have been a Communist since I was 15" Carolyn wrote from Jonestown,

If you can recall my many many discussions with Dad on the subject of socialized medicine, the dialectic and other related topics. So at this point I certainly don't want any questions on decisions I have made. In fact in the 20th Century it seems obvious that one either chooses a 'refined' technological fascism or a democratic communism in this world. You cannot learn democracy until you learn sharing and sharing is communism. Sixty percent of the world is hungry and it will take some sort of communism to solve the problem.

Others in Peoples Temples shared an ideological, rather than Christian, acceptance of communist principles. In fact, the eight defectors who criticized Jim Jones' racism also chastised him for his lack of revolutionary fervor.

Why are there no black men or women with a revolutionary attitude coming into Peoples Temple? For the past six years all staff have concern [sic] themselves with—have been the castrating of people, calling them homosexual, sex, sex, sex. What about socialism? Why isn't it top priority? If you say it is, how does 99 1/2% of Peoples Temple manage to know zero about socialism?

Jim and other leaders criticized the eight individuals publicly. In a letter sent to Members of Congress, they dismissed the defectors by calling them Trotskyites.

The issue of sex refused to go away. Jim called people homosexual and encouraged them to confess to homosexual feelings in order to control them. Carolyn wrote me that her husband Larry Layton said he wanted a sexual relationship with Jim, "Jim being in the male role, of course," according to Carolyn. Annie frequently complained that everyone was homosexual, and men especially really only wanted mother-son relationships, not real intimacy. A nurse herself, she believed that many women involved in nursing were homosexual, and added, "I'm not imagining this either." The church, and Jim, discouraged her from thinking about marriage in particular, and relationships in general. In 1972, within a few months of joining Peoples Temple, she wrote a letter reflecting Temple views.

I'm not worrying about getting married anymore because no matter what the cover-up is, people don't act like their marriages are all happy and fulfilling like the big romantic story is. Anyway, the dudes around here are real creepy and I think they're a bunch of queers anyway. So are girls queers too, but it seems like dudes are worse off, so I don't want to hassle with it.

By demanding that Temple leaders, male and female, have sex with him, Jim developed and maintained a hold on them. Men could be blackmailed into silence, and cooperation, once they allowed Jim to have intercourse with them. Women could be dominated by letting them sleep with the father, a privilege for anyone who believed Jim was truly God.

Jim boasted of his own exploits and criticized his people for theirs. At one point during a lecture he angrily denounced his followers by claiming, "There can be no sex before the revolution." Another time he spoke against companionship.

The thing that disturbs me most is companionship. What in the hell commitment is it that the moment you go wrong in your sex life, you turn against socialism?

During one long and brutal criticism session in Jonestown, Jones tore into Janice Johnson and Stanley Clayton. "If you don't give a damn about him, why do you give pussy to him?" he asked Janice in front of the entire group. "You better tell me 'cause we got ways of knowing." Later that evening he said "We ought to cut the pricks off so we could have fried sausage at night. We'd be better off."

Jim's attitude towards sex, his obsession with it, again illustrates the ambiguity of the man, and of the organization he headed. He castigated members for their interest in sex, arranged marriages, kept people apart and celibate, encouraged interracial partnerships and companions, promoted abortions within the congregation, condoned homosexual behavior among young boys, and boasted of the children born in Jonestown. His cabin in Jonestown contained the only double bed in the entire community, and reflected Jim's ultimate vanity. He was the absolute and only sex object allowed. "It's been said I am a good lover," he told his congregation during one meeting. Certainly Carolyn considered him "the ideal man in every way." She wrote me in 1970 that:

I realize that I was always bored by men until I met Jim. Whatever interest I'd have in all men before him faded... sex was never fulfilling. I can't express how completely every need for companionship and romance is fulfilled by him... Jim is the only man I've ever respected, because he is consistently loving.

She concluded her letter with more praise.

Perhaps you wonder why I talk so much about Jim. He is everything to me. He has given my life meaning and purpose and most importantly love. I would trust no other as I trust him.

Annie, the nurse, worshiped Jim in a manner distinct from Carolyn, the lover. She wrote letters comparing him to Jesus Christ, describing his healing miracles, extolling his compassion. As his personal nurse in Jonestown, she continued to care for the man, in spite of his physical and mental disabilities. One reporter found an undated note in Jonestown that she wrote to Jim:

I just wanted for you to know that I do not mind being your nurse and there is nothing more I would rather be. You should not feel guilty for having me watch you. I would rather be around you than anyone else in the world. I like to be here, it is not a burden. I will do everything I can think of to help keep you going. You have given everything to me so anything I can do for you is only right for me to do and I do not resent anything.

Her last letter to the world, after she had seen the end, and knew what Jim had destroyed, continued to praise him. "I want you who read this to know Jim was the most honest, loving, caring, concerned person whom I ever met and knew."

We neither liked nor trusted Jim when we first met him. Carolyn announced during a visit with her in Redwood Valley that she and Larry were divorced, and that Jim was her lover. John immediately thought "another Elmer Gantry," the minister with feet and soul of clay drawn by Sinclair Lewis. I had suspicions about Carolyn's black eye, which she explained she got teaching a P.E. class. Now, in 1988 with 20-20

hindsight, we recognize that women with bruises and black eyes are abused or battered. But nearly twenty years ago the symptoms weren't well publicized, at least not for middle-class Americans.

My mother Barbara wept, and continued to weep for many nights throughout the years that Carolyn, and then Annie, belonged to Peoples Temple. She wrote of good times they had together and of the depression she felt over losing her daughters to a religious group. "I am trying to feel all happy and hunky-dory after being cut off from all relatives," she wrote me in 1972. She could not understand how Carolyn and Annie could become zealous evangelicals. "It's the primitive beliefs of Jim Jones that aggravate," she continued.

The way our two dears swallow that reincarnation blap is amazing... Why can't they sift out, weigh and accept or reject some of the concepts and carry on without this kind of Jehovah's Witness-type zeal to save us and the world for reincarnation. And of course their way is the true and 'right' way.

For Barbara, Jim Jones' hate and anger were demonic, and destructive. "It was Jim Jones who was so full of hatred and neurotic fears," she wrote me in 1987. "Gad, he used to drive me right up the wall during his periodic visits every week or so to our Berkeley home." In the mid-1970's he would spend the time in Berkeley visiting Carolyn, taking a brief respite from his church across the San Francisco Bay, and talking endlessly to John and Barbara about the world's evil and injustice. Even to non-believers he was a powerful and compelling man.

It should have been easy, then, to leave the Temple once his mental deterioration became evident. But members gave their loyalty to each other, to their group, as well as to Jim Jones, when they joined Peoples Temple. They became part of a community of caring.

When Carolyn and Annie joined the Temple they committed themselves to the life of the community. They rejected the outside world and lived one hundred per cent for the ideals in which they believed. Annie quoted Jesus' words about forsaking family and following him, to John and Barbara: "If you love me less than your family, you are not worthy of me." Led by the biblical mandate, "sell all you have to the poor," she sold her records and would have sold her guitar had not Temple leaders told her to keep it. "She entered Peoples Temple in the same way a woman might enter a religious order," John said.

They believed they were living for a cause greater than themselves. In 1973, Annie wrote me that "I want to be in on changing the world to be a better place... I am the gladdest I have ever been, to be in this church working for social justice and brotherhood. There's no place else that I would rather be because I know I am doing what my conscience says is right to do." After negative publicity about the Temple came out in August 1977, Carolyn wrote John and Barbara about her own commitment:

You surely know that I have to be firmly committed because the media has been grossly irresponsible... You should have enough faith in Annie and me to know we have excellent rational minds and have chosen what we firmly believe in because for years we have seen first-hand its rightness. I guess I will have to be cliché-ish and say that probably only history will vindicate us...

The total dedication that led Temple members to their deaths was to a cause, and to a group of people, not merely to a charismatic leader. Throughout the years in Indianapolis, California, and Guyana, individuals within the organization sought justice on a variety of social issues: housing, freedom of the press, Native American rights, racial equality, apartheid. One woman we spoke with said they were the single most involved group on the Chilean refugee issue in San Francisco during the mid-1970's. Press reports credit the George Moscone mayoral win to a

Peoples Temple drive to get voters out to the polls. Health care for seniors, day care for children, and thousands of dollars bail for Native American leader Dennis Banks all came from the money gathered in the chrome collection buckets at Peoples Temple. Some credit the Temple with pressuring California Governor Jerry Brown to refuse to extradite Banks to South Dakota for trial.

In addition, the Temple drew the dispossessed into its ranks. It straightened out young people on drugs and troubled middle-aged parents. It dealt with personal problems within the community. Many were punished in public humiliation sessions for crimes which could have led them to jail or, in some cases, back to prison.

Individually, church members demonstrated a dedicated commitment to social change. Some ran church homes for retarded children and adults. Some ran a home for displaced elderly men who had spent their adult lives in the state mental hospital. Some, like Carolyn, worked for the San Francisco Housing Authority, and tried to organize it to better serve the poor. Others, like Annie, worked in hospitals and convalescent centers, serving the lost and the forgotten.

Certainly the final day—the final hours during which parents killed their children, and children killed their aging parents—epitomizes all that was ghastly and terrifying in Peoples Temple. How can one find any good in what happened in the days and years leading up to the end?

This question takes us back to the initial problem of ambiguity: individuals are never totally pure, and never absolutely evil. The yin-yang symbol accurately characterizes people in Jonestown, and everywhere for that matter. In the white half, or pure side, is a spot of black; in the black half, a spot of white.

Our motives and intentions are always ambiguous. We're often unaware of just how mixed our impulses are. The self is always looking

over our shoulder, even in our most gracious and magnanimous actions. "I don't know anyone whose motives and actions are pure," John wrote in 1987. "There may be some who are absolutely evil, but I have not known them." Aside from the sociopaths and psychopaths for whom good and evil have no meaning, most people have a conscience that suffers under corrupting influences.

The people in Jonestown had consciences, and knew the difference between right and wrong. In fact, it was their sensitivity to injustice, their anger over privilege and wealth that perverted their good impulses. Their rage turned inward, to self-destruction.

They accepted, little by little, the withdrawal of small freedoms, the use of deception, the madness of Jim Jones. It happened over a period of twenty-five years, not overnight. It's much easier to handle one lie at a time, than a number of lies all at once. This is what happened to the individuals in Peoples Temple. Their freedom and their judgment eroded a piece at a time. With the conviction of the justice of their cause, the members lost detachment and perspective. They lost their ability to poke fun at themselves, to laugh at their leaders. This is how evil flourishes. Not by deciding to live with a horror, but by accepting small atrocities bit by bit.

It's far easier to dismiss Temple members as a bunch of crazy cultists. "It makes the night less frightening," *Newsweek* columnist Meg Greefield wrote, "if we can attribute grotesque behavior to ordinary, manageable causes." By distancing ourselves from the people in Jonestown, we forget the fact that, contrary to popular opinion, we are very much like them. When we ignore this, we run the risk of making their mistakes. The irony of history is that Peoples Temple prominently displayed a quotation by historian George Santayana: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The handpainted wooden sign formed the backdrop of many press photographs of the bodies.

As we look back, we ask ourselves what we could have done differently. My aunt asked us if we would have kidnapped Carolyn and Annie. Barbara says yes, we would have done anything. "If we'd known of the potential suicide," John wrote me, "we would have done something, probably have returned to Jonestown." John doubts he would have tried kidnapping, however, "my hope was that, in time, the movement and they would change, as movements always change."

But kidnapping, like deprogramming and brainwashing, negates the concept of free will, and refutes the notion that individuals must take responsibility for their actions and their lives. People in Jonestown accepted evil, as they performed good. Perhaps it didn't seem evil to them. They had already made so many compromises, one more didn't matter.

I've talked to many who believe that people mindlessly obeyed Jim Jones, like robots programmed to till the soil, cultivate the gardens and the farms. But robots don't draw pictures. They don't make dolls or plant flowers along the walkways. They don't paint signs or put posters on the walls. They don't argue in community meetings or dance to an electric organ.

No one overturned the vat of poison. Even though it was soon apparent that this was not a rehearsal and that death lay directly ahead, no one rebelled enough to stop it. They had personal responsibility and they chose to die. They were decent people, and they killed themselves and each other.

That's the tragedy of Jonestown. And perhaps its lesson. Decent people do wrong, they do evil, even as they rationalize and explain it. And sometimes their arguments even make sense.



Carolyn Moore Layton, Ann and John Moore.
Jonestown, May 1978.

“Instead of searching itself and its conscience,
the world is persecuting the Temple, even in
death.”

—Mohamet Hamaludin

A Presumption of Guilt

Even before November 18, 1978 U.S. officials denied rumors of government interest and involvement in the affairs of Peoples Temple. Prior to the suicides they refused to tell Temple members the full extent of ongoing investigations performed by a range of federal agencies. After the suicides they tried to absolve, or hide, the performance of government institutions regarding Peoples Temple. Those efforts generally failed, and, more importantly, could not substantiate the charges ex-members and other critics made against the Temple. Despite hundreds of hours spent in separate and independent probes by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the State Department, the General Accounting Office and the Social Security Administration, the researchers could find no proof to support allegations of child abuse, voter fraud, smuggling, Social Security fraud, or other criminal acts.

The reports following the suicides characterized government contacts prior to November 18, 1978 as routine, standard, and incidental. But for a year and a half before the fatal day, a number of federal, state, and local agencies had scrutinized almost every single activity of Peoples Temple. Much of this scrutiny evolved into agency actions against the church. These actions ranged from the Social Security Administration going to "extraordinary lengths" to halt the forwarding of Social Security payments to legitimate recipients who moved to Guyana, according to Joseph Califano, then-Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare; to the Federal Communications Commission monitoring and taping Temple radio communications and moving to rescind the licenses of Temple ham operators; to the U.S. Customs Service inspecting shipments bound for Guyana; to the Internal Revenue Service initiating an examination of the church's tax-exempt status.

Peoples Temple members and its leaders lived in a constant state of paranoia. The interest of various agencies in the group's activities merely

heightened an already exaggerated sense of persecution. The people in the Temple believed that ex-members, the government, the press, the Nazis—in short, the world—were out to destroy them. Most new religious groups, as well as splinter political parties and utopian experimentalists, foster a sense of fear and alienation to distance members from the outside world and bind them to the group. Jim Jones, the group's leader, fed this fear by talking about a conspiracy against the Temple, and against himself. The irony of Jones' paranoia was that a conspiracy of sorts really did exist.

A group of Concerned Relatives, comprised of critical ex-members and disgruntled relatives, developed a plan of attack in which they contacted, or encouraged others to contact, a variety of people in government and in the media, from the Mendocino County sheriff's office to the U.S. Customs Service to reporters at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Investigations conducted by many agencies, coupled with extensive, negative press coverage of Peoples Temple tightened a vise around the people living in Jonestown. And it was this vise that finally drove Jim Jones into madness.

Although the first known government investigation began in February 1977, an article published six months later by *New West Magazine* concentrated regulatory attention on the Temple. We found copies of the article, or references to it, in a variety of government investigations. Even so, three months after publication of the exposé, the San Francisco District Attorney's Office reported that it had "insufficient evidence" to prosecute on any of the magazine's claims. As a result of a second *New West* article, a Los Angeles coroner's jury re-investigated the death of a Temple member, and confirmed the initial finding of death by suicide.

Shortly after the *New West* article appeared in August 1977, a journalist at the San Francisco Press Club said to Phil Tracy, the article's co-author, "Hot story, but where's the smoking gun?" Tracy replied that Jim Jones' resignation from the San Francisco Housing Authority "justified

the entire article." *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Herb Caen reported the incident noting that Jones had tried to resign his post in June, but remained at the request of Mayor George Moscone. "So far, lots of smoke, but no gun," Caen concluded.

About the same time, the California state social services bureaucracy launched an eight-month investigation into the Temple. Reading stories of child abuse and mental cruelty, various officials prompted the State Department of Health to look into the charges. The study ended inconclusively in June, 1978. When the state Attorney General investigated the investigation after Jonestown, though, he uncovered some interesting details.

One reason welfare officials in California failed to pursue their own investigation was because federal agencies—specifically the FBI and the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms—were already on the Temple's trail. In the areas where the state had jurisdiction, it found nothing. For example, a consultant with the Department of Social Services said she received no complaints of child abuse in Peoples Temple. If she had, she claims, she would have followed up on them. The San Francisco Department of Social Services conducted an on-site inspection of the Temple's San Francisco facility shortly after the *New West* article came out, but did not uncover any licensing violations. Finally, in the areas where state and federal agencies would have to cooperate on an investigation, no one felt the need to initiate one. As the California Attorney General learned, the U.S. State Department's Director of Emergency Services in the Overseas Consular Services office "insisted that neither he nor anyone else in his office was requested by California officials to investigate the welfare of children in Jonestown nor to take any corrective action."

The *New West* article also spurred the San Francisco District Attorney's office to study charges of voter fraud involving Peoples Temple. In 1976 San Francisco Mayor George Moscone won a close election race

by only a few hundred votes. Temple members had run an aggressive vote-getting campaign, and helped transport voters to the polls. After interviewing 70 people, Robert Graham, chief of the D.A.'s special prosecuting unit, said he couldn't find any evidence of criminal activity. "We put thousands of hours into the damn thing," he said of the investigation, "and came up with nothing."

The pressure on Peoples Temple started several months before *New West* ran its exposé. As early as February 1977 a few Concerned Relatives told an agent from the U.S. Customs Service that Jim Jones was amassing an arsenal of weapons. Customs inaugurated a year-long investigation that included inspecting at least one Temple shipment bound for Guyana.

In August, the same month as the *New West* article, Customs forwarded the report of its investigation—which primarily consisted of rumors circulated by ex-members—to a variety of law enforcement agencies. These included the San Francisco District Attorney; the Mendocino County Sheriff; the Sonoma County Sheriff; the California State Department of Justice; the U.S. State Department; the Secret Service; the FBI; Interpol; and via Interpol, to the Guyana police.

Guyana Police showed the Customs/Interpol report to Temple leaders, including my sister Carolyn, in December 1977. The document enraged her, and she wrote us an angry letter about it.

They are accusing us of the most absurd things—trafficking in weapons and currencies. This I saw with my own eyes and as you know Interpol is closely related to high-ranking and wealthy Nazis...

At about the same time that Customs began its investigation of Peoples Temple, the Federal Communications Commission received a complaint from a ham radio operator in San Francisco. The informant

reported misuse of the short-wave frequency in April of 1977 and provided FCC engineers the name and address of Peoples Temple.

Peoples Temple members used short-wave radio to conduct church business between San Francisco and Guyana, and they often shifted out-of-band, to an unauthorized frequency, to do so. They also spoke in code, at times, and failed to identify their call numbers at regular intervals. Church leaders, believing in the rightness of their cause, justified these infractions on the grounds that they were conducting non-profit business for humanitarian purposes.

The FCC monitored Temple radio transactions from April 1977 to November 1978, at which time it was no longer necessary. The Enforcement Division issued warnings to two of the four Temple members who held ham radio operators' licenses, and threatened revocation. Temple members considered this a serious problem, since it could have shut down rapid communication between Guyana and the U.S.

Beginning in September 1977—a month after the *New West* article—ham radio operators from around the country began to notify the FCC of Temple radio contacts. One wrote to Barry Goldwater, and the Senator—an avid ham himself—also contacted the FCC. A year later, in September 1978, one man from Florida sent the *New West* exposé to the FCC and included more recent articles from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Complaints continued to reach the FCC, even into 1979.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) documents released to Peoples Temple prior to November 18—and withheld from reporters afterwards—show the attitude FCC engineers had towards the group during the year of the most intensive surveillance. From September 12, 1977:

About two weeks ago I heard a talk show on KNBR San Francisco concerning the Peoples Temple... It was brought out on the program about public whippings of children in the

church. Most of the program time was used by members of the Peoples Temple calling in to waste time and say how good the church was...

Later in the same conversation the same engineer observed:

I can realize this group seems very offensive, very much like the Church of Scientology... We are not allowed to approach this case from the viewpoint that this is a bad 'church' and should get its due, only as to whether they are violating the rules and regs of this commission.

And nine months later, in May 1978:

Would like to cross these guys on a pin head if I could... need a lot of gunpowder to go for revocation.

One note included in these documents indicated FBI interest in the Temple. Dated September 11, 1977 an FCC note says "Mr. Freeman called here and requested we monitor. (FBI had requested we monitor.)" We tracked down Jerry Freeman, the FCC engineer in charge of the Norfolk, Virginia office, who explained that the Duty Clerk at the Norfolk FBI called to report a complaint he received from an irate amateur radio operator.

But a lawyer in the FCC general counsel's office insisted that the FBI had indeed asked the FCC to monitor Temple radio communications. "We told the FBI to take a powder," said Norman Blumenthal, adding that the FCC could not keep track of any communications for another agency. Besides, as Blumenthal noted, the FBI had its own surveillance equipment that was far more sophisticated than anything the FCC used.

The FBI contact with the FCC is included in a memo in FBI files. Dated October 18, 1977 the item refers to the Norfolk communication. The

writer suggests that the FBI contact the Customs Service office in San Francisco since it "had conducted an investigation regarding Reverend JIM JONES, an associate of the subject." The name of the subject was deleted from the copy of the memo we obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

Other information that the FBI collected on Peoples Temple prior to November 18, 1978 includes numerous news clippings on Jim Jones and the Temple. But there were also reports of several investigations the agency conducted into the group. One set of papers interested us in particular: the FBI's file on my sister, Carolyn Moore Layton.

The heavily-deleted documents—excising even the date on some—made us decide to challenge the FBI in a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit in *Moore v. FBI*. The agency defended its deletions under the national security exemption of the law. Both the U.S. District Court, and the Court of Appeals found no fault with the FBI's use of the exemption, with one exception. District Court Judge John H. Pratt ordered the dates released.

Carolyn had made a Privacy Act request for files on herself which resulted in the FBI initiating an investigation of her. But the FBI did not appear to endanger the survival of the organization as directly as did the Social Security Administration. Once again, it was *New West Magazine* and the subsequent fallout of negative publicity from other sources which moved government officials into action. On orders from SSA, the Postal Service in San Francisco stopped forwarding Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks to beneficiaries living in Guyana. With Social Security income ranging from \$21,000 to \$40,000 a month, depending on which set of figures released by SSA one uses, the loss of those checks substantially cut into Temple income.

The threat was not subtle or hard to understand. A September 9, 1977 memo sent by a Postal Service official spelled it out: "This is to advise you that the Department of H.E.W. (Social Security Administration) has

instructed us to return all SSI (gold checks) and Social Security checks (green) to them where we have a forwarding order for Guyana." This order violated established Social Security policy, and when Peoples Temple members learned of it, they contacted their Congressman, the late Phillip Burton, to ask for help. Burton quickly resolved the problem, but another one mushroomed in its place when Social Security officials returned Social Security forms to 13 Temple members instead of routinely forwarding them to the proper office.

That same fall the SSA Division of International Operations also took the unusual step of asking U.S. Embassy staff in Guyana to verify that Social Security recipients were not illegally, or involuntarily, assigning their benefits to Peoples Temple. Embassy staff visited the 13 beneficiaries in January of 1978 and convinced Social Security officials that no problems existed. But a June 1978 article about Debbie Blakey's escape from Jonestown stirred the agency to request another round of interviews with all beneficiaries living in Jonestown. The first of these interviews was planned for early November.

The vise squeezing Peoples Temple tightened another turn when the church's San Francisco headquarters received a letter from the Internal Revenue Service. "Gentlemen," the February 1978 letter began:

An examination of your organization is being considered to determine whether it is organized and operated as provided by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and to determine if it receives income from any activity which may be subject to income tax as provided by Section 511 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Leaders met with a regional IRS official who admitted that "Publicity gave rise to our inquiry about the church." In August of 1978 the IRS notified the Temple that it was dropping the examination, but after the suicides the

agency revoked the Temple's tax-exempt status and filed a claim with the Peoples Temple Receiver for 30-months' worth of back taxes.

Towards the end, during the summer and fall of 1978, members of the Concerned Relatives besieged the Temple with civil suits. They wanted the return of the money and property they had donated to the church while they were members. The suddenness and ferocity of the suits, combined with a move to open sealed court records relating to Jim Jones' 1973 lewd conduct arrest, the continuing bad publicity, the IRS investigation and numerous problems with other government agencies, supported Temple leaders' belief that a conspiracy truly existed. Attorney Mark Lane fostered this belief and, in the minds of Temple leaders, proved the existence of the conspiracy when he presented Joe Mazor, a private investigator working for the Concerned Relatives. Mazor, an ex-convict with a California P.I. license, confirmed their worst fears: Tim Stoen, an ex-member, was orchestrating the publicity against them, and some relatives had considered invading Jonestown to retrieve family members by force.

The threat to financial security posed by the IRS and the Social Security Administration, the challenge to internal stability posed by lawsuits, and the potential loss of inter-continental communications posed by the FCC frightened the leadership in Jonestown. They viewed these actions with alarm. In part, this encouraged the Temple's consideration of a second emigration, from Guyana to the Soviet Union. They had considered going to Cuba, closer in culture, climate, and outlook to Guyana, but the representative of the Cuban Embassy expressed dismay at the adulation of Jim Jones. He felt that a utopian collective such as Jonestown was not correct, socialistically speaking. Temple leaders also met with the North Koreans, who were polite but distant. Soviet representatives came to visit Jonestown, however, and the contacts in Georgetown were cordial and frequent. Temple members studied the geography of the Soviet Union with an eye towards a move in the future.



Man mending a net at Matthews Ridge court building.
Guyana, May 1979.



Lawyers talking on a Georgetown street.
Guyana, May 1979.

And then Leo Ryan decided to come. The Temple considered him hostile, and rightly so. The Concerned Relatives had written to every Member of Congress, and had personally visited many members in the California delegation. Ryan, susceptible to the glamour and rightness of this cause, agreed to travel to Jonestown to investigate. As though to mock his claims of detachment and objectivity, Leo Ryan was carrying the sealed records of Jones' 1973 arrest in his briefcase when he was gunned down.

Right from the start, Ryan had planned a media event rather than an investigation, taking along reporters and Concerned Relatives. Little else could have angered the people of Jonestown more. They viewed the visit as an affront, and had no faith in the impartiality of Ryan and his entourage. Indeed, Ryan's investigation had as much, or as little, substance as subsequent investigations would have.

Prejudice, half-truths and lies form the core of the post-suicide investigations. Some critics claim a massive cover-up has hidden the full extent of federal involvement. Thousands of official documents, as well as internal documents from Peoples Temple confiscated by the FBI, have been withheld pending the outcome of Larry Layton's appeals. The CIA has refused to release documents, claiming that they contain national security information. One of the documents is from the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives.

Certainly as family members we had, and continue to have, a vested interest in all the investigations. We wanted them to find the members of Peoples Temple innocent—if not of the final day, then of everything leading up to it. Although there would never be a trial, we hoped that the evidence would acquit individuals, especially my sisters, of wrongdoing.

The countless probes of Peoples Temple after November 18, 1978 did not vindicate Peoples Temple. At the same time, the investigations tried to substantiate some of the various claims against the Temple, or tried

to absolve government agencies and officials of malfeasance and negligence. They did not succeed at either.

Allegations of gun-running, for example, proved groundless. The Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) succeeded in tracing most of the 35 weapons found in Jonestown. Less than two months after the suicides, ATF admitted: "There was no evidence to date of any violation of laws under ATF jurisdiction." Nor could ATF uncover any conspiracy to supply arms illegally to "extremist groups."

Besides, fourteen rifles, seven shotguns, thirteen pistols and a flare-launcher could not be considered para-military weapons. "It was hardly an arsenal," said Skip Roberts, Guyana's Assistant Police Commissioner for Crime. Any town in this country the size of Jonestown—with a population of a thousand people—would feel defenseless with 35 guns. And yet most Americans believe that Jonestown was an armed camp.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) deflated another part of the Jonestown legend by debunking the stories of widespread welfare fraud. Of the approximately 200 Social Security recipients living in Jonestown, the department concluded only one was ineligible for benefits.

HHS did send Supplemental Security Income checks to 28 individuals after they moved to Guyana, and this constituted an overpayment of \$17,000. But this instance was unique. Only one or two of the checks turned up in Jonestown, while Temple members in San Francisco returned another 102 after November 18.

Since those conclusions did not reinforce the Jonestown mystique, the California Attorney General authorized his own study to learn how the Temple cheated state and county welfare departments. The Investigative Report issued in April 1980 couldn't make the allegations stick either. "All cases of welfare fraud uncovered by counties," the report said, "were

frauds perpetrated by individuals for personal gain and were not part of any conspiracy by Peoples Temple to finance its operations by fraudulently obtaining public monies."

Other investigations were supposed to nail Peoples Temple as well. They couldn't. There were no death squads, no hit lists, according to the FBI. There were no customs violations, according to the U.S. Customs Service. There were no children in foster care who died in Jonestown, according to the Government Accounting Office.

And yet the mud still clings to Peoples Temple. That's because the people in Jonestown were in fact guilty of two crimes. They killed their children, and they killed themselves.

The mud clings to U.S. officials, too. Three studies—including one that was never released to the public—raise serious questions about the U.S. government's treatment of Peoples Temple.

Faced with criticism from both the Temple's detractors and defenders, the State Department summoned two Foreign Service Officers—John Hugh Crimmins and Stanley S. Carpenter—out of retirement to study the department's relationship with Peoples Temple. "The Performance of the Department of State and the American Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana" examined two main areas of interest: the U.S. Embassy's management of the John Victor Stoen custody fight; and the department's handling of Leo Ryan's visit.

Six-year-old John Victor lived in Jonestown with Jim Jones, who claimed to be the boy's father. Tim and Grace Stoen, listed as the parents on John's birth certificate, left the boy behind when they defected from the church. Although estranged from each other as well, the Stoens later reunited in an attempt to regain custody of the child. A judge in California awarded John to the Stoens, but they quickly found out that an American court order had little weight in Guyana.

The U.S. Embassy was supposed to play a neutral role in this custody battle, mediating impartially between the two groups of American citizens. However, the Crimmins Report perceived "a 'tilt' towards the Stoens' position in early official actions." Even that characterization seems modest. A diplomatic note from the Embassy of Guyana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs which we obtained under the Freedom of Information Act showed that the Embassy was coming down on the side of the Stoens. "It would seem appropriate," the writer advised, "that the California court would be the proper authority to decide custody questions."

Other documents show that the embassy actively followed the case, and regularly cabled progress reports to the State Department. The U.S. Consul waited outside the judge's chambers when the Guyana court held hearings *in camera*. And one memo suggested a meeting with Guyanese Ambassador Laurence E. Mann "urging expeditious handling of child custody matters by the Government of Guyana."

While the State Department, and the U.S. Embassy in particular, took great interest in the Stoen case, neither seemed to know what to do about Leo Ryan. The Crimmins Report said the department's briefings prior to the Congressman's trip to Guyana were "quite thorough in content and scope." Ryan's aides disagree. They claim that State failed to share with Ryan any of the 900 documents it had compiled on Peoples Temple. The Crimmins Report did not indicate how many, or what, documents Ryan did in fact see.

The report made other, equally serious omissions. It stated that embassy relations with Peoples Temple "declined" with the arrival of Deputy Chief of Mission Richard Dwyer in May 1978, but didn't explain why. It did not mention the embassy's knowledge of the content of Temple radio communications. It neglected to discuss the embassy's additional intelligence about church members' contacts with foreign governments.

Finally, it failed to review the conduct of embassy officials after November 18.

The report found little to fault in the State Department's performance, directing most of its criticism instead at American Ambassador John Burke. In June 1978, Burke asked the State Department for authorization to approach the Guyana government about Jonestown. Officials at the Office of Special Consular Services denied the ambassador's request, saying it could be construed as an attempt to interfere in Guyana's internal affairs. Although Burke had the opportunity to express his concerns directly when he traveled to Washington, D.C. the next month, he did not.

The ambassador sent a second telegram two months later when he learned of Ryan's impending visit. His September 26 message asked the Caribbean Area Director to "review" the June exchange carefully. Since the director remembered the "tenor" of the exchange, he did not actually look at the telegrams. Nevertheless, the Crimmins Report said, if Burke felt as strongly about Jonestown as his cables indicated, he should have done more than merely ask for a "review." It was Burke's responsibility to force a more substantive response, if that's what he wanted. He did not.

The most well-known government document on Peoples Temple is the House Foreign Affairs Committee report on "The Assassination of Representative Leo Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy." The 782-page report, which came out in May 1979 at the same time as the Crimmins Report, devoted only 37 pages to actual analysis and recommendation. Reprints of newspaper articles, copies of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts as well as other federal regulations, and legal opinions justifying the investigation of cults formed the bulk of the report. Correspondence between the committee and various federal agencies, and those agencies' reports, took up a small percentage of the document.

The committee classified most of its 12-volume investigation, releasing only a single book to the public. Even the aides to Rep. Bill Royer, Ryan's successor in Congress, could not read the secret documents except under strict committee supervision. While classification protected the privacy of witnesses, a Foreign Affairs staff member admitted that it also prevented critics from "second-guessing the investigation, and second-guessing the kinds of questions we asked." After reading the documents, Royer's aides felt the staff member had reason for concern.

The published volume listed the sections of the report under classification, and many of them are fairly provocative. What exactly appears under the heading, "Conspiracy against Jim Jones and Peoples Temple"? Or under "Awareness of danger, predicting the degree of violence"? The Foreign Affairs Committee set a release date of January 1, 1985, but when the time came, it reclassified the document. Information in the report on the Central Intelligence Agency had a higher classification, and may never be released.

The House report contains only a single paragraph about the CIA, which concludes: "No conclusive evidence is available to indicate that the CIA was acquiring information on Mr. Jones or Peoples Temple." The statement begs the question: does that mean inconclusive evidence was available? Allegations about CIA involvement had surfaced within days of the suicides. If the Foreign Affairs Committee could exonerate the CIA, its report was the place to do so. The committee did not. In fact, one of the report's authors later told us that the "conclusive evidence" statement had been "crafted with excruciating care" and was "accurate and truthful on its face, to the extent we did review this whole question."

Congress had another opportunity to answer the CIA question, and again it refused. Less than a year after the report came out, one of Leo Ryan's aides charged that the CIA had conducted a covert action in Guyana and that Jonestown was part of it.

The subcommittee which heard the allegations forwarded them to the Foreign Affairs Committee. The same men who wrote the original House report compiled a list of accusations against the CIA for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to investigate. The subjects ranged from: "The contention that the CIA may have violated the Hughes-Ryan Act by failing to report a covert operation in Guyana;" to "The contention that the CIA made a conscious decision to allow the tragic events of November 18, 1978 to occur in order to avoid disclosure of CIA covert activities in Guyana."

On the second anniversary of the Jonestown deaths, the Intelligence Committee issued its response. In a letter little more than a page long, the committee said there was "no evidence at all" of CIA involvement. The agency had neither foreknowledge of the suicides nor any connections with Jim Jones.

But there is some question about how doggedly the Intelligence Committee pursued these questions. Our own investigation turned up one important witness who disputed the CIA's claims of innocence. The committee never interviewed him. Nor did it bother to explain Defense Department accounts which reported that the CIA provided the first word of the suicides.

Because of the sensitive information disclosed in its investigation, the Intelligence Committee announced it would not make a report to the public or to the Foreign Affairs Committee, which requested it. As far as the Intelligence Committee was concerned, the case was closed.

In August 1977, Carolyn tried to analyze the negative publicity coming out about Peoples Temple at that time. "It's odd," she wrote, "now their bent is on Guyana, which makes me wonder if we have tampered with someone's master plan. We certainly would be hard to reach if the CIA did have plans to destabilize [Guyana] and they know we would never stand for it."

In her last letter to me, Annie wrote that "Mom and Dad have probably shown you the latest about the conspiracy information that Mark Lane, the famous attorney in the [Martin Luther] King case, and Don Freed, the other famous author in the [John F.] Kennedy case have come up with regarding activities planned against us—Peoples Temple." A few weeks later she was dead. So on December 6, 1978, my husband filed an FOIA request with the CIA asking for documents on Jonestown, Peoples Temple, Jim Jones, as well as on my sister Carolyn.

Two years later, we filed suit in U.S. District court to force the CIA to release its files on the Temple. *McGehee v. CIA* failed to turn up the number of documents we believed, and still believe, the CIA had on Jonestown. In response to several court orders, the agency released about one hundred documents, most of them with substantial portions deleted. Over 26 were withheld entirely.

We learned more from the exemptions themselves than from the heavily-deleted pages. First, the CIA did have agents working in Guyana in 1978. One document, for example, "consists of three paragraphs containing information which identifies at least two sources providing this intelligence," according to an affidavit filed by the CIA. In this instance, and many others, the agency used the FOIA's national security exemption because "release of this information would identify the particular intelligence methods and sources used and enable hostile entities to take measures to counter or neutralize them."

Second, it's likely the CIA had at least one, and possibly two bases of operation in Guyana. The agency repeatedly deleted material "which identifies the location of a CIA field installation."

Finally, the CIA frequently denied us files because of the jigsaw theory: if the agency thinks disclosure might provide a piece missing from a larger intelligence puzzle, it will withhold a document. Thus, the CIA told

us: "This information includes such specific detail that its release would make the identity of the source evident to a participant to the described events or enable a knowledgeable reader to discern or deduce the identity of the source."

We also learned that the CIA had a file on "Jimmie Jones." The papers showed that in 1960, someone—we don't know who because of the deletions—suggested an interview between Jim Jones and the CIA. Jones' application for a passport, in which he listed Finland, Poland and the Soviet Union as possible destinations, may have triggered the contact. Later, the CIA's Directorate of Operations informed a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee staff that it had no records on the Rev. Jim Jones.

Our last hope for congressional action on Peoples Temple came at the end of 1981. A House Foreign Affairs subcommittee scheduled two days of hearings on consular services provided to Americans abroad. The witness list included State Department officials who had handled Jonestown affairs. At the last minute, the subcommittee chairman canceled the hearings because of a lawsuit pending against those officials.

Congress remains unwilling to conduct any meaningful, systematic study of how the U.S. government treated U.S. citizens before and after they died. The record revealed by documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, however, shows that our government maintained a high level of interest in Peoples Temple. The information disclosed by *McGehee v. CIA* raises other questions.

The Jonestown tragedy continues because the government will not examine its role in the affair, beginning in the 1970s in San Francisco, and continuing into the 1980s in Guyana. Over 900 American citizens, including members of the press and a U.S. Congressman, died in Jonestown. No matter how horrible their deaths, they deserved some measure of justice. They still do.



Kimo Prokes on Sebastian McMurry's shoulders.
Jonestown, May 1978.

**"A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous
with the state of reality in which it occurs."**

—Karl Mannheim

In Defense of Peoples Temple

Individuals joined Peoples Temple because they wanted to do something good for the world, to be part of something greater than themselves. They did not join to participate in fake healings, to belittle one another in public confessions, or to commit suicide in the jungle of a foreign country. Bad things, evil things, happened within the organization and in Jonestown in spite of decent intentions. And the final act seemed to negate all of those intentions.

The enormity of collective suicide both repelled and titillated the public. The reasons members of Peoples Temple might have for choosing to die as a group eluded most writers in the post-massacre hysteria. Ex-members described suicide drills and the mental preparation required to die for the cause. My sister Annie wrote me several letters saying she was willing to die for what she believed. So the analysts picked up on the conditioning, the preparation and concluded that everyone was brainwashed. There were corollaries to this basic theory: members thought it was another drill and took the poison in ignorance; their spirit had been so broken that they had no will to resist; armed guards forced the poison upon them.

None of these reasons adequately explains why many people shouted down the lone voice of dissent during the last collective moments. Viewed from the confines of life in Middle America, the suicides could only be called aberrant, bizarre and irrational. Viewed from within a utopian commune, however, in which daily life was a collective rather than private endeavor, they begin to make sense.

Karl Mannheim, a German sociologist writing in the 1920's, observed that the utopian mind is "incongruous" with the state of reality. Certainly the agricultural project in Jonestown fits this definition. It fits

others as well. "Almost every utopia is an implicit criticism of the civilization that served as its background," wrote Lewis Mumford in *The Story of Utopias*.

Likewise it is an attempt to uncover potentialities that the existing institutions either ignored or buried beneath an ancient crust of custom and habit...

Temple members rejected American society. They rejected materialism and the cult of the individual. They went so far as to flee America, an even greater criticism of life in this country than most domestic utopian experiments.

For the most part, the individuals who made up Peoples Temple came from the margin of society: the elderly, the young, the black, the poor. Out of this group sprang a well of deep yearning: for justice, for opportunity, for peace. When my parents John and Barbara Moore visited Jonestown in May of 1978 they found people looking forward to life in the promised land.

While we were in Georgetown, an older woman with a speech impediment, perhaps from a stroke, was waiting eagerly to go to Jonestown. She flew in with us. That night during the entertainment she was keeping time to the music with her cane and swaying. A boy of nine or ten flew in with us. He had been in Georgetown while his artificial leg was lengthened. We met his brother in Jonestown. He is bent with a disfigured spine. In the States, he knew ridicule of his playmates. Here there's a different sensitivity.

The strength of Peoples Temple came from the profound hunger its members had for a better life than what they had known. Although members desired material improvements, they also longed for spiritual

Scenes from Jonestown.

The community's truck
for hauling, May 1978.



The Jonestown nursery, and the settlement's houses, May, 1979.

growth. "They act[ed] from an overwhelming desire to possess and serve a transcendent ideal," historian Theodore Roszak wrote shortly after the suicides.

The pursuit of transcendent meaning manifests an authentic vocation that is as real a part of the world as any physical object...

Like all new religious movements, the existence of Peoples Temple in and of itself was a criticism of mainline religion as well as of American society. Roszak felt that we shouldn't criticize people for following false prophets because they seek meaning in their lives. Instead, we must direct our critique at the religion that leaves people hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

Carolyn, my older sister, joined Peoples Temple in part because she experienced coldness and unfriendliness at the mainline Protestant church she attended in Ukiah. In the late 1960's, a time of social upheaval and a re-examination of traditional values, Carolyn also expected the church to lead the revolution against oppression and injustice. She was disappointed when it did not.

Like Carolyn, Annie found that Peoples Temple embodied religious practices which other churches ignored. She believed that Peoples Temple was "the only place I have seen real true Christianity being practiced." She felt their leader, Jim Jones, was the incarnation of Jesus: hard-working, self-sacrificing, caring. She accepted the "socialism" of the group—"the kind of society Jesus was talking about."

Others experienced similar feelings about Peoples Temple. Substantial numbers of black parishioners left black churches "to follow a white man," Reggie Major wrote in *Mother Jones*. Compared to black

preachers, Major noted, Jim Jones "sounded stronger than they did about racism." One Temple member wrote us after the suicides that Jim Jones "made Jesus Christ real for us." She described the emotion:

Before that, everything I read and tried to grasp was just a myth. But only then did I understand the followers of Jesus Christ. When I became angry with Jim and decided to leave the Temple, I would immediately have a vision of Christ on the cross and everyone deserting him, so on I would trudge.

This kind of commitment, in spite of disenchantment, seems anachronistic these days. With our middle class allegiances to materialism and individualism, a commitment that rejects the foundation of our own beliefs is, in a word, crazy. Looking at it from the perspective of a membership that had never enjoyed the benefits of either "ism," there was little to reject. Indeed, the advantages of buying into the Peoples Temple program outweighed the disadvantages.

Depending upon the amount of tithe and the amount of need—from each according to ability to each according to need—members received food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and, when necessary, bus fare. Carolyn and Annie donated most, if not all, of their salaries to Peoples Temple when they lived in Temple apartments on Page Street in San Francisco. They ate communally. They spent Thanksgiving and Christmas with their church family. They helped buy Christmas presents for the children in the church, and spent the same amount on each.

For Ann and Carolyn, the regimen of Temple life meant a reduction in comfort, in freedom and independence. And for other well-educated, middle-class members Temple life reduced their circumstances. It didn't matter, however, since rich and poor, black and white, they all chose to die together. Over two dozen young whites, for example, from the upper middle class California community of Burlingame joined the Temple and died in Jonestown.

For many others, though, the Temple offered material improvement. For senior citizens, for the children in foster care or living in guardianships, for single parents, life in Peoples Temple provided shelter, security and structure. "The members of the Peoples Temple responded to Jim Jones," three writers observed in *Socialist Review*, "because he had a program for their lives."

In the 1980's such programs seem old-fashioned. But in the late 1960's and early 1970's people sought change in a spirit of empiricism. They would try anything. After all, the civil rights movement had changed laws, but not people. Black liberation and women's liberation had not significantly altered the lives of people living in cities. By the mid-1970's despair replaced both the anger and optimism of the 1960's.

Society can either free people or bind them. Peoples Temple members felt tied to a hateful system they could not change. Karl Mannheim identified the difficulty of trying to live a just life in an unjust world when he wrote: "To live life consistently, in the light of Christian brotherly love, in a society which is not organized on the same principle is impossible." To remedy the problem of living in a racist country, Peoples Temple withdrew.

"Both Annie and I do not wish to live in the U.S. any more," Carolyn wrote my parents in 1977.

The time of our effectiveness there is over. The Jews, many of them, waited too long thinking things weren't that bad in Germany...

A year later she wrote them that "What the real truth is--we are just out of due season. We are a community that is just too caring and has just too much conscience for the 20th Century."



The Jonestown piggery, May 1978.



Houses in Jonestown, May 1979.

A more ideologically correct, or consistently leftist, position would have been to turn outward beyond the group's boundaries, to broaden the base by uniting labor, students and intellectuals in the California Bay Area. It has always been fertile ground. Under Jones' guidance, however, the group turned inward, and tried to establish the new society from within.

"In the move to Guyana," wrote sociologist John R. Hall, "the Peoples Temple began to concertedly exhibit many dynamics of other-worldly sects." Hall continued his comparison with historical American religious groups.

...Indeed, the Temple bears a more than casual (and somewhat uncomfortable) resemblance to the various Protestant sects which emigrated to the wilderness of North America beginning in the seventeenth century. The Puritans, Moravians, Rappites, Shakers, Lutherans and many others like them sought to escape religious persecution in Europe in order to set up theocracies where they could live out their own visions of the earthly millennial community. So it was with Jonestown. In this light, neither disciplinary practices, the daily round of life, nor the community of goods at Jonestown seem so unusual.

All communities struggle with crime and punishment. Jonestown—like Salem, Massachusetts and Fanshen, China—faced it directly. The Puritans used stocks, dunkings, imprisonment, and in case of witchcraft, death by hanging. The post-revolutionary Chinese engaged in criticism sessions, and publicly humiliated liars, thieves, and bullies. Many faced the death sentence. Unlike a large, impersonal society in which we assign responsibility for peace-keeping and discipline to police, courts and jails, communal societies discipline criminals collectively. Everyone in Jonestown, just as everyone in Salem Village, and everyone in Fanshen, knew when someone stole some lumber, or when someone went after

another with a knife, or when someone was fooling around. In a tightly-knit community, the crime is committed against the group, not just an individual in the group.

Before the group migrated to Jonestown, individuals who broke church and society rules—from smoking to stealing, to striking a woman, to having elitist feelings—faced public criticism, boxing matches, and even public spankings. Some reports claim corporal punishment was severe. In Jonestown, time spent in hard labor on the Learning Crew replaced spankings and boxing matches. The group also used drugs to control the behavior of some community members: whether or not these were violent or dangerous individuals, or merely dissidents, is not entirely clear. Some individuals in the group had histories of violence. In addition, Jonestown had a solitary confinement cell—essentially a sensory deprivation box—apparently used for a few individuals.

All of these methods seem extreme when compared to discipline used in churches or organizations. But religious or organizational comparisons are unfair. Jonestown was a society unto itself, removed and remote. As such it had to deal with the issue of discipline. Punishment might be considered enlightened when contrasted to the brutality of law enforcement officials, homosexual rape in jail, and dehumanizing prison conditions. "Practices at Jonestown may well seem restrained," observed John R. Hall,

in comparison to practices of, say, seventeenth-century American Puritans who, among other things, were willing to execute 'witches' on the testimony of respected churchgoers or even children...

The leaders of Peoples Temple, not just Jim Jones but the community as a whole, tried to mold members to fit into a new society. The process is as difficult as childrearing, since people must develop new assumptions about themselves and their world. And the leadership of

Peoples Temple could not choose its followers. As Upton Sinclair wrote of his utopian colony in Englewood, New Jersey, "Many people came: some of them serious, some of them cranks, some of them both. The process of sorting them out was a difficult one, and was not accomplished without heart-burning."

The new society in Jonestown encouraged group decision-making and participation in the life of the community. At group meetings individuals tried to root out racism and sexism: what you thought was as important as what you did. They punished thieves; they discouraged smoking, drinking, drugs. All of these crimes represented some aspect of self-indulgence, and whatever else they did, members of Peoples Temple had few opportunities to indulge themselves.

People in Jonestown worked for the good of all, not for wages or even self-satisfaction. Critics made much of the long hours and grueling work put in by the people of Jonestown. The daily round of activities, followed by a night of meetings or entertainment, certainly took its toll. This was no eight-hour day, 40-hour-a-week time-card job. Barbara remarked that many of the women in Jonestown whom she'd known in San Francisco looked exhausted and worn-out.

Previous utopian communities in America had failed because freeloaders refused to put in the extra effort, refused even to pull their own weight. The relatively successful ones—like Amana in Iowa and Oneida in New York—succeeded through an industrious commitment.

People in Jonestown cleared thousands of acres and amazed Guyanese officials who were trying to induce native Guyanese to settle farms in the jungle interior. "They carved a town out of naked jungle," a Guyanese Embassy official told me in Washington, D.C. John wrote of his 1978 visit: "There is no way they could have done what they have done apart from hard work on the part of many men and women."



The road to Jonestown, May 1979.



Jonestown basketball court, May 1979.

Yet morale remained fairly high, especially in the beginning when church pioneers first established the settlement in 1974. They believed in something, and felt they were working to build something new and wonderful. It would be a new society, a "paradise," as Temple attorney Charles Garry called it after a visit.

Paradise means different things to different people, however Flush toilets and a car in every driveway may not necessarily epitomize the highest ideal to which humans can aspire. Certainly others before Peoples Temple tried to create a new life that at first seemed unattractive to friends and family. In the 1920's, for example, the Borsodi family fled New York City and bought a small plot of land in the country. In *Flight From the City*, Ralph Borsodi described a paradise that most would consider primitive:

[The property] included a small frame house, one and a half stories high, containing not a single modern improvement—there was no plumbing, no running water, no gas, no electricity, no steam heat. There were an old barn, and a chicken-house which was on the verge of collapse, and a little over seven acres of land.

If we value material comfort, then the Jonestown model sorely lacks a resemblance to any sort of paradise we can imagine. But the Jonestown project valued people, and some ideals.

The new society in Guyana had only a few brief imperatives. The first was that blacks and whites should live together in peace and harmony. They should intermarry, have children, tear down the walls between the races. We knew several inter-racial couples who belonged to Peoples Temple. Mike Touchette married Deborah Ijames. Mike admitted to us that for him and his family marrying a black woman was a tremendous step forward. Annie's companion in Jonestown was Sebastian, a tall black youth. "All of Annie's male friends were handsome and charming and

smart," according to Barbara. Guyana's Police Commissioner for Crime Skip Roberts observed, "All the women were beautiful. All the men were strong. They were a very attractive people."

They were attractive in spite of, or perhaps because of, a large senior citizen population. This group indicates the second imperative at work in Jonestown: the strong should care for the weak. Seniors belong to a community as much as babies; handicapped individuals have a place in the new society. "I have never been anyplace where I saw the older people so much a part of the community," John told us.

One woman was out hoeing her own little garden. Others had picket fences around their houses... When I saw the woman hoeing, I thought of Micah's words, '...they shall sit every one under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid...'

Seniors who could work made dolls to sell in Georgetown. In fact, a major department store in Georgetown had placed a large order for dolls to sell during Christmas 1978. Other seniors tended gardens, or planted and cultivated pineapples along the walkways.

People in Jonestown saw it as a land of possibility. Tapes and letters reveal money-making schemes, new beginnings, big plans: a spice farm, a citrus orchard, a cassava processing plant, a papaya ointment to cure acne, a bulk food storage system. One youth designed a clothes drying system that vented heat from the kitchen to the open-air laundry. Annie painted postcards to sell in Georgetown. Young men who had known only an urban environment ran the piggery, the chickery, the agricultural program. At community meetings everyone cheered the birth of a piglet.

Community spirit embodied the final imperative of Jonestown: collective consciousness must replace selfish individualism. One of the

most stinging criticisms a person could make was to call someone else selfish, self-centered. That meant an individual was putting himself, or herself, before the group.

Jonestown sanctioned no privacy. When we visited in 1979, six months after the tragedy, we were struck by the fact that everything happened communally: sleeping in dorms; eating in the open-air; urinating in three-stall lavatories; watching movies; listening to the news; attending meetings. Mike Touchette told us he would take the bulldozer he was using to clear the jungle, park it in the dense brush on the perimeter, and read a book in solitude. Others must have sought, and found, a similar privacy even in the midst of a group setting. We found posters on the walls of cabins near some of the beds; a couple of Annie's paintings; a set of hand-made wind chimes in the open-air woodshop.

This lack of privacy weakened the rugged individualism we so value in America. The total participation in corporate life strengthened the corporate mentality. The lack of a sense of self made suicide possible. "For a society to be able thus to compel some of its members to kill themselves, the individual personality can have little value," wrote French sociologist Emile Durkheim in the 19th Century. His discussion of altruistic suicide in his book *Suicide* eerily describes life in Jonestown:

For the individual to occupy so little place in collective life he must be almost completely absorbed in the group and the latter, accordingly, very highly integrated... Everyone leads the same life; everything is common to all, ideas, feelings, occupations. Also, because of the small size of the group it is close to everyone and loses no one from sight; consequently collective supervision is constant, extending to everything, and thus more readily prevents divergences...

Durkheim adds that this characterizes primitive societies, rather than more evolved Western culture. He goes on to provide statistics on a form of



The community's pet anteater, May 1978.



A house in Jonestown, May 1979.

altruistic suicide highly prevalent at the time: voluntary deaths within the army. He notes the tight construction of the military hierarchy, and the impersonality of its component parts, i.e., soldiers become part of the military machine. A soldier "must be trained to set little value upon himself, since he must be prepared to sacrifice himself upon being ordered to do so."

We find this honorable in war, a selfless act demonstrating the highest devotion to others. In peace we find this commitment aberrant, compulsive, even disgusting. We can understand self-sacrifice in war; in peace, commitment is the sordid antithesis to freedom, flexibility, and self-fulfillment.

The deaths in Jonestown run headlong against the cult of the individual which sprouted in the late seventies and blossomed fully in the decade of the 1980's. The philosophy of the 1960's—"do your own thing"—became "if it feels good, do it" in the 1970's. The young people who sided with the poor and the powerless in the 1960's, became part of the once-despised establishment in the 1980's as they began to identify more and more with wealth and power.

If the Jonestown suicides had occurred in 1968 rather than 1978, the public would have reacted differently. People might have recognized commitment, loyalty, and dedication. Charges of harassment, spying, and infiltration might have been believed, and investigated. But by the late 1970's popular acceptance of personal commitment and political involvement had passed away.

I'm sorry that the people in Jonestown did not continue the struggle, sorry that they gave up so easily. The simple imperatives they followed embody noble, and ancient, principles: live in racial harmony, help the weak, and share what you have. They tried to live up to these imperatives and failed, and felt they couldn't live with the defeat. The years of selflessness concluded in an hour of the deepest selfishness. Their deaths

ended all doubts and fears about what path to take next. It's much harder to continue the struggle from one day to the next, with victory as elusive as hope. When Annie wrote that she would die for what she believed in, I thought she meant she would die fighting, not give up before she'd even begun.

Nowadays the idea of dying for a cause seems archaic and over-dramatic. In the 1960's and early 1970's death was an ever-present part of life. For one thing, the Vietnam years made war real for millions of American young people. For another, riots and killings on college campuses made us all feel vulnerable. The death toll from race riots in the 1960's numbers in the hundreds. Kent State, Jackson State, and People's Park made the vulnerability of students real to young adults. The FBI systematically decimated the Black Panther Party, and murdered, or framed for murder, its leaders. In short, dying for a cause seemed a reality, even an eventuality, during the time of Peoples Temple's greatest strength.

"We died because you would not let us live in peace," wrote Annie on the final day. Being a survivor means you continue to wrestle with history long after everyone else has given up and gone home. That is where I would argue with Carolyn and Annie, argue all night that they surrendered before they even lost the war. The concept of revolutionary suicide, as espoused by Huey Newton, did not mean laying down your weapons and giving up. It meant accepting death as a possibility when struggling against oppression. No one would call the deaths of Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King, Jr. suicide. Yet the challenge to a racist system which led to their deaths could be considered a form of revolutionary suicide. They knew they were risking their lives.

It is difficult for outsiders to understand that people in Jonestown felt they risked their lives in the same way. They saw an oppressive bureaucracy that threatened their very existence. The machinery grinding against them included a child custody suit, an IRS investigation, a

congressional investigation, numerous civil lawsuits and a criminal proceeding, the potential loss of radio communications, the failure of the project to become self-sufficient quickly enough, and the defection of several top Temple leaders. The *National Enquirer* planned to run an exposé of the Temple that would spill the bile and hatred of ex-members. A group of harsh critics planned a visit—an invasion, Jim Jones called it—and said they would retrieve relatives by force if they felt it necessary.

People in Jonestown believed these actions jeopardized the survival of the community. Cut off from the rest of the world by impassable jungle, these threats loomed very large indeed. They couldn't laugh about their predicament. Their anxiety was too high. Annie's last letter to the world summarizes the extreme fear and despair people felt in the final days of Jonestown.

It seems that some people and perhaps the majority of people would like to destroy the best thing that ever happened to the 1,200 or so of us who have followed Jim.

I am at a point right now so embittered against the world that I don't know why I am writing this. Someone who finds it will believe I am crazy or believe in the barbed wire that does NOT exist in Jonestown.

It seems that everything good that happens to the world is under constant attack. When I write this, I can expect some mentally deranged fascist person to find it and decide it should be thrown in the trash before anyone gets a chance to hear the truth...

All utopian communities share this experience of societal suspicion and disapproval. Upton Sinclair described public sentiment towards his experimental colony, Helicon Hall, with more humor, but a similar disgust.

It was generally taken for granted among the newspapermen of New York that the purpose for which I had

started this colony was to have plenty of mistresses handy. They wrote us up on that basis—not in plain words, for that would have been libel—but by innuendo easily understood. So it was with our socialist colony with the old-time New England colonies—there were Indians hiding in the bushes, seeking to pierce us with sharp arrows of wit. Reporters came in disguise, and went off and wrote false reports; others came as guests, and went off and ridiculed us because we had beans for lunch.

Sinclair's remarks about beans for lunch have a familiar ring. Jim Jones warned people not to mention rice to visiting reporters because one defector had told the press that was all they ate in Jonestown.

Peoples Temple shared many similarities with prior utopian experiments in America, but its differences were what led to its tragic collapse. The membership's departure from the U.S. in 1977, accelerated by the negative publicity of the *New West* article, contributed to a sense of persecution which the leadership did nothing to discourage. Compounding that was a sense that there was no place left for them. They had lived in the two extremes of human existence—crowded in the inner city, and isolated on an agricultural project in a country they'd never heard of—and found that life was still too difficult.

All the news that reached community members filtered through Jim Jones, and his sensibility. His paranoid and apocalyptic vision shaped the philosophy of community members. Very real dangers that threatened the existence of the project were always present, causing an early sense of defiance to deteriorate into inconsolable despair. Finally, organized belief or doctrine, the glue which keeps diverse individuals working together, simply did not exist.

The imperatives I've noted here are ones I deduced from tapes, letters, conversations and observations. No formal creed or constitution or

set of by-laws existed to govern Jonestown. We found a sample life-care contract that stipulates community rules, but no membership papers or list of community goals. This lack ultimately left the community without a rudder to steer through the shoals of human nature and adversity.

Even without a formal plan or statement of organization, however, people in Jonestown believed they were working for something that would improve the world. They gave of themselves unselfishly. They tried to handle the weaknesses in each other, and supported a leader who grew extremely ill before their eyes. They chose to die with each other rather than face separation. Their courage and strength, as well as foolhardiness and evil, reveal the extraordinary depths of which humans are capable.

"The most simpleminded utopia that has yet been written still possesses notable human qualities that are entirely lacking in the plans of the scientific 'supermen' and moral imbeciles who have devised the current Russo-American military strategy of total extermination," wrote Lewis Mumford almost twenty years before Jonestown. The juxtaposition of Jonestown with nuclear annihilation is inescapable. In a sermon he preached that first Sunday after the suicides John asked how the failure of anyone to overturn the vat of poison was any different from our failure to stop the arms race.

Are there people free enough and strong enough who will throw themselves against the vats of nuclear stockpiles for the sake of the world? Without such people, hundreds of millions of human beings will consume the nuclear cyanide, and it will be murder. Our acquiescence in our own death will make it suicide.

Mumford noted that the mad accumulation of nuclear weapons had become an ideal in and of itself. "This is utopianism with a vengeance: the nihilistic perfection of nothingness."

Writing forty years before Mumford, Mannheim mourned the disappearance of utopia, the search for the ideal. He noted the paradox of the highly rational man, "left without any ideals," who had become a thing.

Thus, after a long, torturous, but heroic development, just at the highest stage of awareness, when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more and more man's own creation, with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it...

We need extremists and fanatics, people willing to live what they believe, people willing to lay down their lives. We need the John Browns and Mother Teresas and Eugene Debs who cannot live quietly with injustice and poverty but instead lash out against it. We need the fury of a Jim Jones, so sickened by racism--and driven crazy by outrage--that he could not live without doing something about it.

We wish they hadn't done it. We wish they were alive now. "I wished that it had been me," John wrote me shortly after the suicides. "In a real sense they died for me. They paid the price of my convictions and actions through the years." They died for all of us, though too soon. We need those nine hundred committed people, need their rage, laughter, pain, and hope. We need them today.

Index

"A"

ABC News, 98
Abbell, Mike, 100
Adams, Noah, 86
Adams, Paula, 28, 34
Agency for International Development, U.S., 110
Air Force, U.S., 95-96, 98-99
Albania, 123
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Bureau of,
 see Treasury Department, U.S.
American Psychoanalysts Association, 4
Amos, Sharon, 58-59
Annibourne, Neville, 50-52, 56
Arizona Republic, 57, 67, 68, 76, 81, 82, 110
Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP), 94-99, 103-106
Army, U.S. 60-61
 graves registration team, 60
Associated Press, 62, 67, 81
Autopsies, 59-60, 63, 91-111

"B"

Bagby, Monica, 51
Baldwin, Marceline, 17, 49, 117
Banks, Dennis, 81, 130
Bay Guardian, 81
Beikman, Charles 58-59
Beveridge, William, 82
Black Panthers, 67, 173
Black religions, and Peoples Temple Members, 10-11, 160-61
Blakey, Debbie Layton, 22, 26, 142
Blumenthal, Norman, 140
Bogue, Tommy, 75-76
Bogue family, 80
Borsodi, Ralph, 168
Brainwashing, 116, 132
Breitenecker, Dr. Rudiger, 104, 105, 111
Brown, Bob, 51-52
Brown, Harold, 60
Brown, Jerry, 130
Brown, John, 177
Burke, Ambassador John, 59, 149
Burns, Jerry, 81
Burton, Rep. Phillip, 142

"C"

CBS, 85
 Caen, Herb, 137
 Cahill, Tim, 74, 80
 Califano, Joseph, 135
 California, State of
 Attorney, General, 137, 146-47
 Department of Health, 137
 Department of Justice, 138
 Carpenter, Stanley S., 147
 Carter, Mike, 58, 80
 Carter, President Jimmy, 107
 Carter, Tim, 52, 58, 80
 Cartmell, Mike, 20, 34
 Castillo, Richard, 104
 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 35, 56, 145, 150-53
Chicago Sun-Times, 62
Christian Science Monitor, 84
 Clark, Dr. John, 4
 Clayton, Stanley, 52-53, 55, 58, 63, 74, 80, 126
 Cobb, Jim, 20
 Communist Party, USA, 122
 Concerned Relatives, 19-22, 24-25, 27-28, 50, 75, 79-80, 86, 136, 138, 143, 145
 Cordell, Harold, 80
 Cowan, Dr. William, 94, 96-99, 105-106
 Crawford, Yolanda, 22, 75
 Crimmins, John Hugh, 147
 Crimmins Report, 148-49
 Crook, Dr. Lynn, 93-94
 Cuban Embassy, 122-23, 143
 Cultists, 5-6, 11, 25, 91
 Cults, 81-82
 Customs Service, U.S., 135, 136, 138, 141, 147

"D"

Daphne Fernwood Cemetery, 108
 Davis, Angela, 78
 Davis, Grover, 56
 Debs, Eugene, 177
 Defense Department, U.S., 93-95, 151
 Delaware, State of, 91, 93, 95-96, 100-103, 109
 Derwinski, Rep. Edwin, 26
 Dillard, Violet, 104
 Disciples of Christ, 31, 82
 Downie, Leonard, 75
 Dover Air Force Base, 95-96, 98, 107, 109

Dover Evening Journal, 62
 DuPont, Governor Pierre, 102, 107
 Durkheim, Emile, 170, 172
 Dwyer, Richard, 50, 52, 148

"E"

Edwards, Rep. Don, 26
 Edwin Mellen Press, 41, 62
 Emergency Relief Committee, 108-109
 Evans, M. Stanton, 78
 Evergreen Cemetery, 108-109
 Evers, Medgar, 173

"F"

Fabian, Robert, 34, 108
 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 95, 97-98, 101, 103, 105, 107, 137, 138, 140-41, 145, 147, 173
 Federal Communications Commission (FCC), 135, 138-40, 143
 Field-Ridley, Shirley, 54
 Flick, Bob, 68
Flight from the City, 168
 Fort MacArthur, 109
 Freed, Don, 48, 152
 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 31, 139, 141, 148, 149, 152-53
 Freeman, Jerry, 140
 Frohm, Constance, 10, 11

"G"

Garry, Charles, 27, 49-50, 55, 67, 123, 168
 General Accounting Office (GAO), 110, 135, 147
 Goldwater, Barry, 139
 Gordon, Col. William, 94
 Gosney, Vern, 51
 Graham, Robert, 138
 Gregory, Dick, 41-42
 Green, Hamilton, 59
 Greenfield, Meg, 131
 Gurvich, Jann, 8
Guardian, The, 79
 Guyana, 48
 and Jonestown, 149, 166
 and Stoen custody case, 148
 Central Intelligence Agency destabilization of, 151
 Coroner's Jury, 63, 93
 Defense Force, 52, 55-56, 58, 61, 71, 94

- Disposition of bodies, 59-60, 94, 98
- Map of, 69
- Media coverage of, 68, 71
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 148
- Police, 50, 54, 56, 63-64, 71-72, 94, 97, 98, 99, 138, 146, 169
- Reports of suicide, 48, 56

Guyana Chronicle, 55

Guyana Massacre, 85

Guyana Tragedy, 85

"H"

- Hall, Dr. John R., 164, 165
- Ham radio operators, 139
- Hamaludin, Mohamet, 133
- Hameli, Dr. Ali Z., 100, 101-102
- Harris, Don, 49, 51-52
- Hatcher, Dr. Chris, 5-6, 36
- Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of, 135, 141, 146
- Health, Education and Welfare, U.S. Department of,
 - see Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of
- Hearst, Patty, 81
- Helpern, Dr. Milton, 93
- Herculean conscience, 10
- Heymann, Philip, 100
- Hickman, Tim, 61
- Holsinger, Joe, 26
- House Foreign Affairs Committee, 135, 145, 149-51, 153
- House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 151
- Houston, Robert, 25
- Houston, Sammy, 25
- Hughes-Ryan Act, 151

"I"

- Ijames, Deborah, see Deborah Touchette
- In These Times*, 79
- Internal Revenue Service, U.S., 135, 142-43, 173
- Interpol, 138

"J"

- Jacobs, John 16
- Javers, Ron, 49, 71, 84, 85
- Jesus and Jim Jones*, 10, 62
- Johnson, Janice, 126
- Jones, Jim, 3, 14, 132, 161
 - and CIA, 35, 150-53

- and Leo Ryan, 49-50
- autopsy of, 99, 104-105
- background, 15-18, 116-17
- beliefs of, 15-17, 22, 116-17, 120-23, 128, 175
- children of, 99, 116-17
- communism of, 121-23
- control of members, 18, 136
- death of, 59, 63-64, 92
- death of adopted daughter, 116-17
- FBI interest in, 140-41
- in Jonestown, 18-22
- lewd conduct charge, 27, 143, 145
- leading suicides, 52-54
- media accounts of, 67, 71
- members views on, 160-61
- racism of, 117, 120
- relations with reporters, 49-50, 81
- resignation from San Francisco Housing Authority, 136-37
- sanity of, 16, 18, 131
- sexual practices, 73-74, 125-26

Jones, Lew, 52

Jones, Marceline, see Marceline Baldwin

Jones, Nancy, 53

Jones, Stephan, 76

Jonestown, 3

- as mind control experiment, 35
- as socialist experiment, 78-79
- as utopian experiment, 157-77
- body count, 57-61
- body disposal, 91-111
- body identification, 94-95, 98
- defectors leaving, 50
- discipline in, 75-76, 164-66
- dissension in, 19
- Leo Ryan's visit to, 47-50
- life in, 49
- mass suicides in, 48, 52-56, 157
- media coverage of, 67-87
- philosophy of, 168-70, 172, 175-76
- sexual practices in, 73-74
- suicide rehearsals, 53, 157
- survivors of, 5, 28, 31-43, 58
- use of shortwave radio, 138-40
- weapons in, 71-72, 138, 146

Justice Department, U.S., 91, 93-95, 99, 100, 102-103, 106, 110
 see also Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

"K"

Katsaris, Maria, 18, 20, 47, 72, 99, 104

Katsaris, Steven, 20
 Keeler, Elaine, 10, 11
 Kilduff, Marshall, 76-78, 81, 85
 King, Martin Luther Jr., 27, 48, 152, 173
 Kondracke, Morton, 79
 Krause, Charles, 49, 75, 84, 85

"L"

Lamaha Gardens, 58
 Lane, Donetter, 109
 Lane, Mark, 11, 27, 48, 50, 55, 71-72, 143, 152
 Layton, Debbie, see Blakey, Debbie
 Layton, Carolyn, 3, 7, 34, 57, 61, 63, 89, 92, 98, 99, 130, 138, 151, 160, 161, 173
 as Jones' mistress, 17, 59, 125-27
 and John Victor Stoen, 21
 and son Kimo, 18, 61-62
 autopsy of, 100, 103-107
 beliefs of, 7, 11, 62, 101, 123-24, 128-29, 162
 death of, 63
 evil plans of, 35
 FBI file on, 141
 safety deposit box in name of, 34
 Layton, Karen Tow, 10
 Layton, Kimo, 18, 21, 63, 89, 92, 99, 107, 109, 155
 Layton, Larry, 17, 22, 34-35, 125, 127
 as Port Kaituma airstrip, 51
 arrest in Guyana of, 51
 trials of, 34-35, 145
 Levering, Bob, 81
 Lewis, Freddie, 53
 Lindsay, Gordon, 24
 Littleton, W. Lee, 107
Los Angeles Times, 62, 73, 76, 83

"M"

MacGowan, Annie Jane, 72
 Mairs, Nancy, 29, 39
 Major, Reggie, 11, 160
 Malcolm X, 123
 Mann, Laurence, 34, 148
 Mannheim, Karl, 155, 157, 162, 177
 Manson, Charles, 73
 Matthews Ridge, 55-56, 58, 63
 Mazor, Joe, 20-21, 143
 McElvane, Jim, 53

- McGehee, Fielding, III, 63, 82, 100
 life changes after Jonestown, 31
 trip to Guyana, 63
McGehee v. CIA, 31, 152-53
 Mertle, Elm er and Deanna, see Mills, Al and Jeannie
 Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis, 17
 Miller, Christine, 53-54
 Mills, Al and Jeannie, 20, 28, 77
 Minus Funeral Home, 99, 100
 Mitchell, Tyrone, 28, 34
 Moberg, David, 79
 Moore, Annie, 3, 7, 57, 61, 72, 92, 98, 117, 152, 160, 161, 162, 168, 173, 174
 autopsy of, 99, 100, 103-107
 beliefs of, 7-8, 11, 62, 123, 125, 128-30, 157
 conspiracy charge by, 48
 death of, 47, 62-64, 92, 101
 evil plans of, 35
 view of Jim Jones, 127
 Moore, Barbara, 11, 33, 104, 169
 daughters' beliefs, 11
 reaction to daughters' involvement in Peoples Temple, 128, 132
 reaction to tragedy, 33, 36-37, 39-40, 57
 visit to Jonestown, 158, 166
 Moore, John, 4, 6, 24, 33, 37, 59, 104, 131, 132
 reaction to Concerned Relatives, 24, 115
 reaction to Jim Jones, 127
 reaction to suicides, 33, 37, 40, 57, 177
 sermons of, 32, 62, 176
 visit to Jonestown, 158, 166, 169
 Moore, Rebecca, 47
 attempts to publish, 41
 learning the news of Jonestown, 47-48
 life changes after Jonestown, 31-32, 38-39, 41-43
 trip to Guyana, 63
Moore v. FBI, 31-32, 141
 Mootoo, Dr. Leslie, 93
 Moscatelli, John, 61
 Moscone, Mayor George, 129, 137
Mother Jones, 11, 160
 Mother Teresa, 177
 Mumford, Lewis, 158, 176

"N"

- NBC News, 27, 49, 51, 68, 96
 Naipaul, V.S., 71
 National Association of Medical Examiners, 111
National Enquirer, 24, 174
 National Public Radio, 85-86
National Review, 78

Nazis, American, 78
Nevada State Journal, 62, 73, 83
New West Magazine, 20-21, 68, 77-78, 136-37, 138, 139, 141, 175
New York Times, 8, 11, 25, 52, 56, 62, 73, 97, 104
Newsweek, 72, 84, 131
 Newton, Huey, 67, 78, 79, 173
 North Korea, Embassy of, 123, 143
 Novak, Michael, 78
Novy Mir, 78-79

"O"

Oakland Army Base, 95, 109
 Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 94-95

"P"

Parks, Dale, 51
 Parks, Patricia, 52
 Parks family, 80
 Paz, Octavio, 1, 3, 36
Peoples Forum, 78
 Peoples Temple
 activism of, 129-30
 ambiguity of, 115-32
 as "cultists," 5-6
 assets of, 34, 74-75, 108
 campaign against by Concerned Relatives, 20-22, 24, 136
 charges of voter fraud, 137-38
 CIA interest in, 150-53
 communism of, 122-24
 conspiracy against, 48, 136, 143, 150, 152
 discipline in, 76-77
 effect on black churches, 11
 ex-members, 19-22, 24-25, 27-28, 50, 75, 79-80, 86, 136, 138, 143, 145
 FBI interest in, 140-41
 generosity of, 81
 hit squad, 80, 92, 146
 investigations of, 135-53
 lawsuits against, 25, 34, 143
 media coverage of, 67-87
 member of Disciples of Christ, 31
 members of, 7-8, 10-15, 158, 160-62
 move to California, 17
 move to Soviet Union, 123, 143
 Planning Commission of, 17
 religious beliefs, 17

- sense of persecution, 135-36
- sex in, 18, 73, 124-26
- use of shortwave radio, 138-40
- Pierce, Jo, 82
- Plain Text*, 39
- Port Kaituma, 55-56, 58, 60, 68, 80, 84
 - airstrip shootings, 50-51, 86
- Postal Service, U.S., 141-42
- Powell, Jody, 110
- Pratt, Judge John H., 141
- Prokes, Jim-Jon, see Kimo Layton
- Prokes, Mike, 28, 33-34, 58, 80

"R"

- Rangell, Dr. Leo, 4
- Raven*, 16
- Reid, Ptolemy, 55
- Reiterman, Tim, 16, 27
- Reno Evening Gazette*, 62
- Reston, James, Jr. 85-86
- Rhodes, Odell, 53, 55-56, 58, 60, 80, 94, 97, 99
- Richardson, Dr. Herbert, 41
- Riddick, Dr. Leroy, 101
- Rilke, Rainer Maria, 36
- Roberts, Skip, 50, 54, 56, 63-64, 71-72, 94, 97, 98, 99, 146, 169
- Robinson, Greg, 51-52
- Rolling Stone*, 74, 80
- Rose, Steve, 10, 62
- Roszak, Theodore, 160
- Royer, Rep. Bill, 150
- Ryan, Rep. Leo, 3, 25-27, 34, 54, 75, 80, 86, 93, 95, 145, 147-48
 - assassination of, 47, 51-52
 - congressional investigation of death, 149-51
 - trip to Jonestown, 49-50, 63
 - warned against going to Jonestown, 26, 27, 82

"S"

- Sacramento Bee*, 62
- Salas, Daniel, 122
- San Francisco Chronicle*, 49, 63, 71-72, 75, 77, 81, 83, 84, 98, 136-37, 139
- San Francisco Department of Social Services, 137
- San Francisco District Attorney, 136, 137-38
- San Francisco Examiner*, 27, 81, 84
- Santayana, George, 131
- Saxon, Lt. Joe, 110
- Schacht, Larry, 53, 57, 99, 104
- Schermerhorn, Jim 81

Secret Service, U.S., 138
 Seib, Charles, 83
 Sinclair, Upton, 166, 174
 Skyline Memorial Park, 108
 Sly, Don, 63
 Social Security Administration, U.S., 135, 141-42, 143, 146
Socialist Review, 79, 162
 Soviet Union, 58, 78, 122-23
 move to, 53, 143
 Speier, Jackie, 26, 52
 State Department, U.S., 26, 59-60, 63, 91, 93-96, 98-99, 101-103, 106-108, 110, 135, 137, 138, 147-49, 153
 U.S. Embassy in Guyana, 142, 147-49
 Stern, Laurence, 68, 71, 85
 Stevens, Lou, 103-105, 107
 Stoen, Grace, 20-22, 77-78, 147-48
 Stoen, John Victor, 20, 99, 147
 child custody battle for, 21, 147-48
 Stoen, Tim, 20-22, 24, 143, 147-48
Story of Utopias, The, 158
Strongest Poison, The, 11
 Sturner, William, 111
Suicide, 170
Suicide Cult, The, 85
 Sung, Steve, 51

"T"

Talley, Christine Shannon, 8
 Talley, Marlene, 8
 Talley, Maureen, 8
 Tenerife, air crash in, 95
 Thrush, Hyacinth, 56
Time Magazine, 54, 72, 84
 Touchette, Albert, 64
 Touchette, Charlie, 19
 Touchette, Deborah, 15, 168
 Touchette, Mike, 168, 170
 Tracy, Phil, 76-78, 136-37
 Treasury Department, U.S., Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), 137, 146
 Turner, Bruce, 53

"U"

UPI, 68, 76
 Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) see Soviet Union
 United States, agencies of, see agency names

"V"

Vance, Cyrus, 60

"W"

Washington Post, 4, 47, 54, 60, 61, 67-68, 71, 73, 75, 76, 82-85, 99

Washington Star, 68, 73-74, 75, 82, 83, 85

Watts, Isaac, 38

Wecht, Cyrill, 92, 110-11

Wichita Beacon, 62

Will, George, 79

Wright, Morris, 79

"Y"

Yemen, 123

Yugoslavia, Embassy of, 123

"Z"

Zablocki, Rep. Clement, 26

STUDIES IN AMERICAN RELIGION

1. Suzanne Geissler, **Jonathan Edwards to Aaron Burr, Jr.: From the Great Awakening to Democratic Politics**
2. Ervin Smith, **The Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.**
3. Nancy Manspeaker, **Jonathan Edwards: Bibliographical Synopses**
4. Erling Jorstad, **Evangelicals in the White House: The Cultural Maturation of Born Again Christianity**
5. Anson Shupe and William A. Stacey, **Born Again Politics and the Moral Majority: What Social Surveys Really Show**
6. Edward Tabor Linenthal, **Changing Images of the Warrior Hero in America: A History of Popular Symbolism**
7. Philip Jordan, **The Evangelical Alliance for the United States of America, 1847-1900: Ecumenism, Identity and the Religion of the Republic**
8. Jon Alexander, **American Personal Religious Accounts, 1600-1980: Toward an Inner History of America's Faiths**
9. Richard Libowitz, **Mordecai M. Kaplan and the Development of Reconstructionism**
10. David Rausch, **Arno C. Gaebeleln, 1861-1945: Irenic Fundamentalist and Scholar**
11. Ralph Luker, **A Southern Tradition in Theology and Social Criticism 1830-1930: The Religious Liberalism and Social Conservatism of James Warley Miles, William Porcher Dubose and Edgar Gardner Murphy**
12. Barry Jay Seltser, **The Principles and Practice of Political Compromise: A Case Study of the United States Senate**
13. Kathleen Margaret Dugan, **The Vision Quest of the Plains Indians: Its Spiritual Significance**
14. Peter C. Erb, **Johann Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Community: Mystical and Historical Texts**
15. William L. Portier, **Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council Including Hecker's "Notes in Italy, 1869-1870"**
16. Paula M. Cooley, **Jonathan Edwards on Nature and Destiny: A Systematic Analysis**

17. Helen Westra, **The Minister's Task and Calling in the Sermons of Jonathan Edwards**
18. D. G. Paz, **The Priesthoods and Apostasies of Pierce Connelly: A Study of Victorian Conversion and Anticatholicism**
19. **The Agricultural Social Gospel In America: *The Gospel of the Farm* by Jenkin Lloyd Jones**, Edited with an Introduction by Thomas E. Graham
20. Jane Rasmussen, **Musical Taste as a Religious Question In Nineteenth-Century America: The Development of Episcopal Church Hymnody**
21. Edward H. McKinley, **Somebody's Brother: A History of The Salvation Army Men's Social Service Department 1891-1985**
22. Stafford Poole and Douglas J. Slawson, **Church and Slave In Perry County, Missouri, 1818-1865**
23. Rebecca Moore, **The Jonestown Letters: Correspondence of the Moore Family 1970-1985**
24. Lawrence H. Williams, **Black Higher Education In Kentucky 1879-1930**
25. Erling Jorstad, **The New Christian Right, 1981-1988: Prospects for the Post-Reagan Decade**
26. Joseph H. Hall, **Presbyterian Conflict and Resolution on the Missouri Frontier.**
27. Jonathan Wells, **Charles Hodge's Critique of Darwinism: An Historical-Critical Analysis of Concepts Basic to the 19th Century Debate**
28. Donald R. Tuck, **Buddhist Churches of America: Jodo Shinshu**
29. Suzanne Geissler, **Lutheranism and Anglicanism In Colonial New Jersey: An Early Ecumenical Experiment In New Sweden**
30. David Hein, **A Student's View of The College of St. James on the Eve of the Civil War: The Letters of W. Wilkins Davis (1842-1866)**
31. Char Miller, **Selected Writings of Hiram Bingham (1814-1869) Missionary To The Hawaiian Islands: To Raise The Lord's Banner**
32. Rebecca Moore, **In Defense of People's Temple**