

# THE ONLIEST ONE ALIVE

SURVIVING JONESTOWN, GUYANA



by Catherine (Hyacinth) Thrash  
as told to Marian K. Towne

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by  
Catherine (Hyacinth) Thrash  
as told to Marian K. Towne

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Charcoal portrait of Hyacinth Thrash  
by Alice Cook, Indianapolis

## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of all the innocents, especially the children, who lost their lives in Jonestown, Guyana, on November 18, 1978.

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†

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Photo by Patty Lindley, Partners Photography, 1993



## PREFACE

*The Onliest One Alive; Surviving Jonestown, Guyana* was written at the request of Jonestown survivor Catherine (Hyacinth) Thrash and her grandniece, Catherine Wallace, after Hyacinth returned to Indianapolis, where she had originally joined Jim Jones' Peoples Temple. During the decade following the mass murder-suicide there have been numerous books published about the charismatic Jim Jones himself and the historical events surrounding the tragedy. Only recently have historians and sociologists of religion begun to assess the movement. Unlike other books already published on the phenomenon, *The Onliest One Alive; Surviving Jonestown, Guyana* is the only attempt to explain why one elderly African-American woman survivor (the only one alive on the compound at the conclusion of a brutal series of events) joined and how she survived.

Apart from my interest in Hyacinth, as well as my academic and social interest in religion and the women's movement, I was attracted to this story because of the death in Jonestown of one of the adherents, a man who was the son of a prominent South Dakota Mennonite minister and who was once married to my dear cousin. I had known him from the time he dated my sister. He had

befriended our family after the death of our mother in the 1930s. I knew, therefore, that Jones' movement could not be written off as comprised solely of deranged persons.

Having lived in Indianapolis for twenty years, I knew also that members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which ordained Jones and supported his ministry in Indianapolis in its early days, were serious, sober Christians. Since the horrible events surrounding Jonestown have come to light, I have met many educators and integrationists who knew and worked closely with Jones and his church, believing it to be a credible and much-needed ministry at the time. My experience has made me realize the ambiguity of good and evil and how we may become unwitting participants in evil in an attempt to do good.

Because of my background as an active Christian and a teacher, from nursery school to the collegiate level, I hope that this book will provide for discussions in religious and educational circles about the African-American experience in America, the nature of the church, the lure of cultic movements, and the nature of good and evil. There is a need to try to understand the rise of doomsday cults, which we shall inevitably hear more of as we near the turn of the millenium.

Above all, Hyacinth's is a compelling story that deserves to be told and read.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the days immediately following November 18, 1978, the world was stunned by news reports of the mass murder-suicide of 913 members of Jim Jones' Peoples Temple in Jonestown, Guyana.

Indiana, and Indianapolis in particular, followed with horror the details of the bizarre incidents surrounding the tragedy. Jones had grown up in the Richmond area and had begun his ministry in east central Indiana in the 1950s. Many Indianapolis residents had been touched, in one way or another, by his activism, which ranged from congregate feeding programs for the poor to voter registration drives, from the establishment of nursing homes for elderly poor to demonstrating for the civil rights of racial minorities, primarily African-Americans. Butler University had graduated him, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), headquartered in Indianapolis, had ordained him to a social service ministry.

As the names of the victims began to be published, one extended Indianapolis family braced for the worst. A member of that family, Catherine Wallace, a dear church friend of mine at Fairview Presbyterian Church, told me in hushed tones after worship on the Sunday following the tragedy, "I had two great aunts in Guyana."

The family of Zipporah Edwards and Catherine (Hyacinth) Edwards Thrash had said reluctant good-bye to the elderly sisters in 1967 as they prepared to follow Jones and approximately 150 of his faithful to Ukiah, California. Occasional letters and visits to California had kept the relatives informed of the sisters' welfare. But inquiries during the summer of 1977 had brought only news that the sisters had flown with other People's Temple members to Guyana. For more than a year there had been no communication from "Hy" and "Zip" except for the response, "We're okay; tell them not to worry," relayed via the Committee of Concerned Relatives based in California.

As the published list of victims grew longer, relatives despaired of ever seeing them again. Then a picture of a tiny woman being pushed in a wheel chair to a waiting airplane flashed on their television screens. It was Hyacinth! She had been spared, and she was flying back to California to stay with family there. The Associated Press article printed on the front page of *The Indianapolis Star*, which included the photograph of Hyacinth being pushed in a wheelchair by a Venezuelan consul, confirmed for all who knew her that she was safe though her sister Zipporah had perished.

Subsequently I lost touch with the story. However, when I returned to Indianapolis in the summer of 1982 after a sabbatical year in California, I learned that Hyacinth had returned from California too. My year had been spent reading and writing in the area of women's studies, and I had gained a new appreciation for the rich

le of women's material and a new appreciation of our strength.

When I explained to Catherine Wallace how I had spent the sabbatical year, she said, "I want you to meet Hyacinth."

I visited Hyacinth and found her mentally alert, full of humor, and in good health, despite the trauma she suffered. I wondered to myself: how had she survived? Beyond that, how had she developed into the kind of woman who could survive such an ordeal?

What emerged was an account gained through sixty hours of interviews, resulting mostly in "stream of consciousness" responses which I transcribed immediately from notes and later organized into a sequential pattern. The product was a unique first-person account of a poor, African-American, elderly, disabled woman survivor of Jonestown. It is unique, I believe, because it is the only account of Jonestown (and I have read sixteen myself) which takes seriously the experience of such a survivor, of which there were precious few to begin with.

Yet, it is not primarily a story of Jonestown. It is really the autobiography of an elderly African-American woman who, for various reasons, became attracted to Jones' movement but early enough realized its demonic character and was able to distance herself sufficiently from it psychologically, enabling her to survive physically.

It speaks of her yearning for security and a vital religion in a racially and socially integrated setting. It explains why she followed him and her church friends to California and ultimately to Guyana, despite her growing

suspicion and eventual disaffection. Finally, it is an account of an African-American female survivor and the personal background and qualities that enabled her to survive.

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**Hyacinth Thrash's 80th birthday party in home of James & Catherine Wallace.**

Photo by Catherine Wallace



**Hyacinth Thrash's 85th birthday party, Mount Zion Geriatric Center, Indianapolis. Left to right: Marian Towne, Catherine Wallace, Hyacinth Thrash.**

Photo by Edgar Towne



## Chapter 1.

# Comin' Up In Alabama

I was born Hyacinth Edwards on March 27, 1905, on a small farm in Wilsonville, Alabama, near the Coosa River, what we called the Coosie. (After I got grown, I changed my legal name to Catherine, but folks still called me Hyacinth.) The town was only two stores, a bank, and a depot. That's about fifty miles southeast of Birmingham. It was on the railroad tracks between Atlanta and Birmingham.

Mrs. Weaver, a real nice white lady Mama worked for, named me. Mama did washing and cleaning for her and was carrying me at the time. I don't know why she named me that way. She gave me a real nice quilt I used 'til it wore out. She always was real good to give us a sack of meal or flour or a ham, so we'd always have something to eat.

Mama was Josephine Cross, born in Oxmoor, Alabama, and Papa was Harry Edwards, also from Oxmoor. That was after slavery.

Mama had two families of kids fifteen years apart: first four children—Rosie, Lena, Ada and Alvin; then three more—LaMar, me and Zipporah, seven all told.

LaMar was four years older than me, and Zip was four years younger than me. Zip was the baby, spoiled rotten.

We'd all give in to her, even Mama. Papa just had her spoiled so bad, she'd get away with murder. Lots of times when we had work to do, like sweeping the yard or something like that, she'd say, "Oh, I have the worst headache," and she'd get out of it. She'd just go lay down.

I don't know what happened to Mama—having two families so far apart. I guess she thought she was through having children; then LaMar come along. She had Zip when she was forty two or forty three, when she was going through the change.

Zip was named by John McCrimmon, Lena's husband. He was reading the Bible and saw the name of Moses' wife, Zipporah. The oldest batch of kids had regular, common names. It was the youngest ones that got the strange names.

I was only five months older than my niece Eunice. Zip was five months older than our niece Mildred. We never called each other "aunt" or "niece," though, when we were coming up. We just said we were cousins or friends. We laughed about it. We had a lot of fun that way.

Rosie was fifteen when LaMar was born. She just loved that baby! Then, the next year she married and had a baby of her own to love.

Papa worked as a cook on the train crew. They'd just pull the cook-car off on the siding and he'd do his cooking there. When Papa was working on the railroad, my uncle, John Singleton, ran our farm. The oldest girls helped out. Me and Zip were too little.

On top of working for Mrs. Weaver, Mama kept a big garden. We had black-eye peas, greens, cabbage and beans. We grew peaches, plums, and apples and then dried them on a big scaffold Papa built. And blueberries by the buckets! Only we called them huckleberries. And wild blackberries! They were big as thumbs!

When we got done picking, Mama used to say, "Well, you don't need more fruit now." 'Cause our mouths was blue from eating while picking. Sometimes she accused us of eating more than we picked. And we had mulberries and figs and what they call locusts down South. They had real long pods, hung from trees, and had kernels or seeds. They were mighty good!

Whenever we had colds, Mama gave us what she called catnip tea. And we had poke salad from early spring 'til late summer. We gathered dandelions and wild grasses like wild mustard and pepper grass. She'd make a big pot of boiled greens and give us each a tin cup of pot liquor.

We were never ones for making dandelion wine or anything strong. We thought it was wrong to drink whiskey or beer. We'd read in the Bible about "wine bibbers." Strongest we drank was coffee.

Mama kept turkeys and ducks, but she always cooked a goose for Christmas. Mama was a real good manager. Papa, not so good. Mama made all our clothes. She saved up flour sacks or bought bolts of material or remnants and sewed anything we needed. All she had to do was look at something and she could cut a pattern for it out of newspaper and sew it up. The Lord give her the gift! I

remember when she bought a Singer sewing machine, paid two dollars a week on it.

I wasn't good at sewing. Never could use a thimble. But Zip was good at it. She made most of our wash dresses once we was grown. I could make a good hem, though. Anything I did was done right! I was very particular about that.

As children Zip and I had real nice things; the older girls, not so good. They sometimes had to wash out a dress in order to have something to wear. Times was better when me and Zip come along. Though Zip was younger, she grew faster and taller than me, so Mama dressed us up like twins. She made us the cutest little dresses with aprons edged with lace. She took our head size and went to the store to buy us little hats. (You know, white store keepers wouldn't let colored folks try on hats in the store.) And we had little patent leather shoes with white stockings. Oh, Mama dressed us up real cute!

Once a month a peddler came around. In cool weather he sold beef. But you never bought too much at a time. The meat was kept in a cool well. Hogs we raised and butchered ourselves. We never had to buy pork. They'd salt the pork down in a barrel and then soak it real good to get the salt out before cooking. Hams would sometimes be mouldy on the outside but mighty good on the inside.

We butchered one hog at a time. Everybody got together and shared the work and then shared the meat. Papa had a smoke house and would hickory-smoke the hams. Boy, was that good—ham, biscuits, and red-eye

gravy! Then they'd take the intestines, wash them out real good, and stuff them with sausage to make link sausage.

Mama put up sauerkraut in a crock. Fish we had from the Coosie—catfish, eel, sun perch—whatever and whenever we wanted it. Papa used to smoke wild rabbit too—cottontails. Some ate groundhog, but I never did.

Papa had both a rifle and a double-barrel shotgun. But the whites in the store only sold you twelve or sixteen shells at a time—wouldn't allow stockpiling of ammunition. But there wasn't a revolutionary spirit among the blacks. They just took it easy. They was satisfied, happy-go-lucky.

We used to make syrup—two kinds: ribbon cane and sorghum. Papa took his sugar cane down to the press near where we lived and us kids would just sit and watch the mules go round and round. I liked the cane syrup. Sorghum was too strong for me.

Papa grew corn, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, and cotton. The bigger girls helped hoe and pick cotton. (Me and Zip was too little for that.) They'd bale the cotton and take it to the gin, which sold it for you to a cotton mill in Birmingham.

Our farm was small, but we had two houses on it. We lived in one while my married sister, Rosie, lived in the other. Uncle John, who run the farm when Papa was rail-roading, lived in his own house nearby.

Our Alabama house was a four-room frame house. The outside was weatherboard and the inside had boards with grooves. We had a back and a front porch with grass around the house. Morning glories and honeysuckle grew around it.

We had a fireplace, a rug on the living room floor, and a bed in the living room. Curtains was homemade. The kitchen had a plank floor that Mama scrubbed clean with lye. Papa was always building on it. It never did get finished.

There was only two black families that had big farms, the McClouds and the Garners. Garners also kept beehives. The ones with big farms got to vote, but whites told you how to vote. You couldn't split your ticket.

As early as seven or eight years old, I knew I had a healing hand. If I had a headache, I would put my hand to my forehead and in fifteen minutes the headache would be gone. Same with a stomach ache.

I heard voices when I was little too. Mama hushed me, didn't want me talking about it. If I lost anything, like a needle or pair of scissors, I'd go into the back yard and sit on a chair. Pretty soon I'd hear a voice saying, "Go look . . . (here or there)." Sure enough, I'd find it there. We were ignorant about the movement of the Spirit in those days. But the Lord said, "In the last days I will pour out my Spirit."

I was baptized in the Star of Bethlehem Baptist church in Wilsonville when I was about eleven years old. We had preaching about once a month. Rev. Prentice came from Cleara, over near Birmingham, on Saturday and stayed overnight for Sunday service.

I'll never forget what sister Lena said to Brother Oden, the deacon, who was leading the prayer service before the regular pastor, Rev. Prentice, started. We barely got in the church, barely caught our breath, when he told Lena to pray. Never even gave her time to get her

thoughts together! Well, Lena said right back to him, "Now, you pray yourself." You could hear a pin fall.

They even called on children to pray. In Sunday School, when they called on me, I said the "Lord's Prayer," what I said at home.

My baptism was in a cement pool outside the church. The oldest girls were baptized in the creek, but later our church built a pool. They had a ladder to go down into it. And they had a well to draw water from to fill it.

Baptism was once a year after a revival. Revivals were always in August, followed by a basket dinner. They'd put planks across sawbucks and spread out pies, cakes, chicken, and lemonade. Coffee once in a while. You could get a sack of lemons for ten or fifteen cents.

At the revival they had a mourner's bench where Christians would tarry, praying with sinners. Then when you got the Holy Ghost, you'd testify on how you felt.

I was always a good child, always feared God. The serious one. Never give Mama no trouble. Zip was the mischievous one. But Papa never had to whip either one of us. All he had to do was roll his voice and we'd cry. That was worse than a whipping. Only once do I remember Mama whipping us. She was working at Mrs. Weaver's and while she was gone, the three of us little kids ate up half a jar of cookies. We ate one, then another, and couldn't stop. When she came home, we all started tattling on the other, saying the other one ate the last cookie. Mama said, "Now, don't go blaming the other one. I know you all ate them, and you're *all* going to get a whipping."

They gave us a white robe and tied our hair up before we went down into the pool. Then, after the baptism,

we'd get dried off and get dressed in a little room under the steeple and go back to the service. The baptism was always part of the worship service.

Every Sunday we'd have BYPU, Baptist Young People's Union, at our church. Then we'd walk along the railroad track to the river. They had a ferry there where we used to watch the whites in their big motor boats on the river. I remember once a white boy was in his motor boat when his wife or his mother called for him to come and eat. He hollered back, "I'm eatin' this here boat!" We all laughed at that. Only whites had motor boats; some had real big ones. Blacks used paddle boats.

Then we'd play on an old abandoned sawdust pile. After a rain you could smell and feel the dampness inside. But the top dried off real quick and we slipped and slid off that. Our parents told us not to go, but we went anyhow. Then we'd go home and sit on the porch.

We didn't have a radio but Papa always got the Sunday Birmingham newspaper and read the funnies to us 'til we were old enough to read them ourselves. I remember we liked "Little Orphan Annie."

Since Papa was a railroad man, we had more than most kids. Zip and I had dolls and doll buggies one Christmas. I remember we pushed our doll buggies outside in the mud and got the wheels all clogged with mud. We caught heck for that. At first the dolls' heads were smooth as glass. Later they had hair. Mama put our Christmas presents in front of the fireplace at home since we didn't have a tree at home.

I never did learn to swim 'cause Mama wouldn't allow us to go swimming in the river. She said, "I can't let you



go down there and me not there to watch you.” Besides, she couldn’t swim neither. But we went fishing in the river. And there was always fishing in the cricks and ponds too.

When we went fishing, I used Papa’s big gloves to touch the fish or to bait the hook. I was scared of fish. When I caught one, I’d put my sun hat down on it real hard so it couldn’t get away.

We didn’t have rods and reels in those days, just bamboo poles or sticks with corks at the end of the line. I loved to just sit and watch the cork bob up and down.

Sister Lena liked to hunt. She used Papa’s rifle or shot gun. The first time she used the shot gun, it backfired and knocked her down—like kicking back.

At Christmas the women were in charge of putting together a program in church. Each child said a verse. I still remember part of mine. It ended like this:

My mother told me so,  
And it’s *so*  
If it’s *not* so.

They had dialogues and plays too. Zip would sing a solo. She had a beautiful voice—real high. Lena and LaMar sang too, but I couldn’t carry a tune. I couldn’t cool soup with my voice.

They always passed out bags of oranges and candy at church after the program. They used to hang gifts on the tree at church. Once Mama hung two head scarves on the tree at church for Zip and me, one pink and one blue.

(The tree was cut from the pine woods around the church.)

Once we had a baptism for the chickens. We filled the tin tub with water, caught the chickens, held them under and then hung them on the fence to dry. We never killed any, but they sure was struggling to get their air. We was having a regular camp meeting, with preaching and baptizing. Of course, we was chasing them all over. A lot got away.

We dressed our puppies up like dolls too. Our dog had eight pups, and we played like we was taking them all to church with us.

We had only four months of school down South while whites had nine months. We had whitewashed or painted wooden schoolhouses while the whites had nice painted weatherboard schools.

Our school was over a knoll, about a block from home. We had two rooms and two teachers: Mr. Levi, from Georgia, for the older kids; and Miz Annie Wallace, the assistant teacher, for the primary room. Teachers didn't know much in those days, just a little more than the pupils. Annie probably just went to the eighth grade herself, but she knew enough to help the little ones. Mr. Levi probably went to the teachers' college in Georgia.

Nobody much went on then. Later, after we left Alabama, some may have gone on to boarding high school. We had nothing like a high school. We were out in the sticks.

Miz Annie, the primary teacher, lived across the road from the school and would go home to watch her beans

or greens that she had on her wood stove, cooking for her family. She'd leave Zip to watch the kids in her class.

We played a lot of baseball in school. I was a good ball player. I could really hit. At first we just used a rag ball. Later we got a real baseball. I could catch too. Caught without a glove.

Inside the school we had blackboards and plank walls with no plaster. At least the planks were sealed on the inside so the wind couldn't blow in. Some schools didn't even have their walls sealed. Desks were hand made. We'd sit on benches. There was a pot-bellied stove in the middle of the room. But it didn't get very cold in Alabama, so that was good enough. We ran home for lunch. There was two outdoor toilets, one for boys and one for girls.

Books were cast-offs from the white school. Stories was all about white children. History was all white. I didn't even hear about Africa 'til I was grown. School supplies like tablets, colors and pencils we bought at the white man's store.

In the spring the sharecroppers' kids had to leave school to work in the fields. Since Papa worked on the railroad and owned his own farm, we didn't have to leave school. We were real lucky that way.

It was equal nothing. "Stay in your place" was all. If you pushed somebody, you got in trouble. I remember a little girlfriend of mine pushed a white girl in the street. Mrs. Garner, her mother, was a friend of my mother. Two white men came to Mrs. Garner and said that if she didn't beat the girl, they would.

There'd be school meetings where the blacks would ask for more school. The whites said they didn't have money either and if we wanted more school, we'd just have to pay for it. Daddy paid county tax on his farm, but he couldn't vote. Only those with lots of land—acres and acres of it—got to vote.

I had one year or, rather, nine months of school at what they called Selma University. Selma was about a hundred miles south west of Wilsonville, near Montgomery. My niece Gessie went to Selma University too. It went to the twelfth grade and had college beyond that.

How I got to go was like this: A Dr. Pollack, the superintendent, came and talked to Papa about me going. I was fourteen or fifteen at the time, after I'd finished eighth grade. When I got there, I cried and wanted to go home something turrible 'cause I was so far behind. You know, 'cause we only had four months of school a year. But I stuck it out. I probably would've continued if we hadn't moved to Indianapolis. Kids came there from all kinds of small towns that didn't have high schools—from Texas and all over.

We had different classes like English, arithmetic, grammar, geography, science, and what I call exercise. The preacher's wife taught exercise. We had chapel every Sunday.

It was real pretty there on the outskirts of the city, with trees, lawn and fields. I remember us kids all marched into Selma once. Maybe it was the Armistice Day parade, when the soldiers came home from the

World War in France. I remembered that when Dr. King had his march in Selma. We liked seeing the big city.

It was awful down South. Papa told how it was when he was coming up. They wouldn't even let them go to church sometimes. So Papa's family and other folks took pots and pans into the swamp to beat on and to sing. They prayed a lot. I remember Mama was always whispering. I said, "What you whispering about, Mama?"

"I's just praying, Chile," she said.

Papa was born the second year after the Surrender. His Papa died young. Folks didn't live long in those days. All my grandfolks died 'fore I came along.

You could get a good master and then you'd get a mean one who'd beat you for no reason. I remember a man we called Uncle Jake. He was blind in both eyes. His master beat him in the eyes for nothing. He lost both eyes. I saw him!

Things wasn't so bad when I was coming up, but they was bad enough. I remember one ugly incident. A white man hired my oldest sisters, Rosie and Lena, to chop cotton. He didn't pay them and when they went back for their pay, he said he'd given the money to Mama and she'd spent it. Well, Mama cried and said he was telling lies. Mama would never do a thing like that. Mama was scared and went to Mrs. Weaver to tell her what happened. All the people believed Mama 'cause she had a good reputation. Mr. Weaver talked to this man, but he never did pay the girls. He was a drunkard and probably drunk up all the money.

Most white folks was pretty tough towards blacks. There was a man named Frank Pope, who owned a store.

He was a real tough one for blacks to get something from. One man who almost died said, "I been to hell and back, and the first one I seen was Frank Pope."

My mother's father was killed by whites, we think. We don't know the circumstances. Maybe he wandered someplace he wasn't supposed to be. You know, they had those signs up in towns telling blacks to stay out, but blacks couldn't read them. Mama couldn't read nor write.

In Sand Mountain, Alabama, they had this sign:

WE DON'T ALLOW NO NIGGERS IN THIS TOWN.

YOU BETTER GET OUT BEFORE THE SUN GOES  
DOWN.

IF YOU CAN'T READ,  
BETTER GET OUT ANYHOW.

My teacher's son Easton was found dead near Sand Mountain, about a hundred miles from home. He was twenty one or two years old. They found identification on his body.

Papa used to tell what the Klan did around Wilsonville. Once there was a black man, just walking on the Big Road, what we called the highway, when he stopped to tie his shoe lace. He was passing a white woman's house and she called out a crowd of white men 'cause he "insulted" her by stopping in front of her house! That poor man was harassed so that he had to leave his farm, just pack up his belongings and family and leave. There was that much hatred! The Klan caused a lot of men to be lynched.

Lewis, the son of Papa's best friend, was lynched by twenty five white men 'cause he stood up for himself. He was kicked in the rear and he didn't like it. When he rared up, they lynched him. Sister Rosie, when she was fifteen or sixteen, was doing housework in the home of the ring leader. He was dying and suffering terrible. Rosie heard him say, "Don't let Lewis get me. Don't let Lewis get me."

The Klan would even take a cow away from you!

We'd say, "Papa, isn't there a better place we can move to?" Some of our folks were moving up North, but Papa didn't want to move.

He'd say, "We've got our farm here, and it's warm."

You know, old folks was like grounded in the place. You couldn't pull them up.

## Chapter 2.

### “Opportunity” in Indiana

After the Civil War, we was freed but we wasn't free. We was called Niggers and Knot Heads. But God don't intend for you to do evil for evil. So folks started thinking about leaving Alabama. All kinds of blacks folks was moving north for better jobs and better schools. My older brother, Alvin, left Alabama in 1907 already. He died in Indianapolis of too much alcohol.

Sister Lena married John McCrimmon; Rosie married John Wallace. They both went north with their husbands. Ada stayed back and went north later, after the second family of kids left with our parents.

Rosie and Lena were always worrying Papa to move north. Finally, Papa did go to see them in Indianapolis and got him a job working for the city, cleaning. He sent money back to Mama and us little kids in Wilsonville. But Mama was working too, washing and cleaning for Mrs. Weaver. We got along okay 'cause Mrs. Weaver always gave her a little extra food.

After Alvin was buried in Indianapolis, Papa came back to Wilsonville. But in 1918 or 1919 we packed up our clothes and bedclothes and caught the train in Wilsonville for Indianapolis. We didn't take much with us



'cause we didn't have much to take anyway. We had a book on Lincoln and one on the Titanic, I remember.

It was the Atlanta and Pacific Railroad, I think, that ran by our house. There was three trains, the "Fifteen," the "Sixteen," and the "Dude." The "Dude" ran to Atlanta in the morning and came back in the evening. We left on the train that came through in the evening. We couldn't see much at night. We just looked out the window at different signs and things. I remember our train changed engines in Birmingham and then went straight on to Louisville, Kentucky. In Louisville we changed trains for Indianapolis.

We were tickled to death at the ride 'cause we never rode on a train 'til then. It was just our family at first. We didn't know anybody else on the train. The trains were segregated all the way to Kentucky, but after we got on the train to Indianapolis, we could sit anywhere we wanted.

In Indianapolis we rented a house on North Oxford Street somewhere between 25th and 30th Streets from a white man in what was called the Commons in Brightwood. I remember a horse watering fountain on the southeast corner of 25th and Oxford. Rosie and Lena and their families lived next door to us. They were paying on their homes. But at that time, most of the property was owned by whites. It was like living in the country, with no sidewalks. My brother-in-law, John Wallace, kept a cow, a horse, and a pig. Toilets were outdoors. We took baths in a round tin tub called a "Number 3." We heated with coal stoves and cooked on a range that had warming ovens on top and a hot water reservoir to the side.

We had to buy furniture, pots and pans, and dishes when we got to Indianapolis. Later, when Ada came up, she brought a trunk load of Mama's things that the older girls wanted to save, like her rolling pin and her bread making pan.

Papa went back to Alabama to sell our farm less than a year later. Our furniture and stuff we'd given away, but we didn't have much of value anyhow. Papa did bring back some hand tools that he wanted to save.

We were all Baptists in Alabama and Baptists when we came to Indiana. We went to the Mount Carmel Baptist Church on the southwest corner of 25th and Oxford. They had a lovely choir. There was singing and preaching. We had a lovely time at that church.

Later on my oldest sisters went Pentecostal. I didn't understand Pentecostalism. They were carrying on, shouting "Hallelujah," speaking in tongues. They were very strict too, I thought. They had burning lamps and took the shades off and held their hands over the flames to show they wouldn't get burned. We kids would go and stand on the outside and look in the windows of the church. I didn't believe in that. But I was young then and didn't know.

But later they stopped that. It was more like showing off, picking up snakes and all. I tarried at Christ Temple Apostolic in my twenties, before I was married, but I stayed a Baptist 'til I met Jim Jones.

Mama died in Indianapolis in 1925 at the age of fifty six. She'd been very sick with the flu during that big epidemic; it weakened her. She also worked too hard and was a "worry worm." She was always worrying about pay-

ing the bills. Papa gave her a hard time too. She'd work hard and save her money, and then he'd blow it on something. Papa was a hard head and wouldn't listen to her. He just let the money come and go. Mama was the manager in the family, not Papa. Everybody in Wilsonville liked Mama 'cause she tried to keep up with the bills. When we came to Indianapolis, it was even harder to keep up. Mama had no schooling; she lived by "Mother Wit." I loved my mother. She was a lovely woman. She sewed all our clothes, washed on the line, worked the garden.

She always talked to us about the Lord. We had a singing group at home, sang songs every Wednesday night. Mama would get us all together 'cause she'd want us to sing. She had a good voice too.

We kids read between the lines. I told Papa once, "You caused Mama's death."

"Oh, no," he said, "I didn't do that."

She started a bank account and then he'd let his insurance go. They'd fuss a lot, but then make up. They'd be fussing and then get tickled at something the other'd say and fall out laughing. Mama had a keen face with sharp features. One day Papa said, "You look like a possum done sucked your face." That made her laugh, and soon the fuss was over.

Papa was a short man and a real talker, especially about politics. He loved Lincoln and thought the Republican Party was the "Party of the People." He thought you made more money working under Republicans. When black folks started getting on the Democrats' side, he never did. He and brother LaMar used to argue about that. Mama would say, "Oh, I'm so

sick of you talking all the time. Why don't you stand still and quit your squawking?"

Papa was strict, too, and a Bible student. He took lessons through the mail to read and write and taught Sunday School at church.

Mama died of tuberculosis in 1925. She died at home, not at the sanitarium. (I don't know why they didn't take her out to the sanitarium.) We had to be very careful at home, very strict. I waited on her as much as I could, but I was young then. My older sisters waited on her more.

She was buried in white, and they dressed us all up in white too. We sat up front. The pastor that used to be our pastor in Alabama come up and preached the funeral sermon at Mount Carmel Church. She was buried in Crown Hill Cemetery. After the burial, we all went home and they all fixed us dinner.

Mama had told Lena and Rosie to take care of us younger ones. She told me, before she died, that she was going to pass. After she passed, they were all taking care of us real good because we were living close. And Papa was a real good cook because he used to cook for the railroad crew.

I was awful hurt over losing my mother. You think you're going to have your mother with you for a long time. After Mama died, Papa never did remarry. We told him not to bring a steplady into the house or we'd leave. Zip didn't work much 'til after he died. She was the baby, so he just let her do whatever she wanted. Zip said Mama always cared more for me than for her, but that wasn't so.

The main reason Lena and Rosie had always worried Papa to go north was the schools being so much better,

and nine months of it to boot. But when we got to Indianapolis, only Zip took advantage of it. She went to School #25, on Martindale Avenue, but never did go to high school. She was behind too, and the other kids made fun of kids from the South.

When we got to Indiana, I had just finished the ninth grade at Selma University, but I was still behind the other kids. I was 'shamed to go to the lower class and sit with smaller kids.

So, after staying home for a while, I put an ad in the paper for baby sitting jobs. I soon got jobs, working only for white families on the Northside for eight dollars a week. The first job I had was on Boulevard across from Crown Hill Cemetery. I remember I used to be scared to walk past it at night. I washed diapers, made formula and everything. I loved babies! I worked on Washington Boulevard for a Mrs. Tompkins. Another family I worked for was the Hughes family. Their little boy really went for me, called me "Hythie." All the kids liked me. Some of them went to me sooner than to their mamas.

One little girl, all she had to do was hear my voice when I came in the morning, and she let out a squeal. She was always sopping wet when I got there. And she was crying! Her mama never even changed her! When I got her all cleaned up, she'd be so happy. I took her down to the kitchen and put her in the buggy so she could watch me make breakfast. Then we sat up to the table to eat.

I wish I'd kept up with some of the kids I baby sat for. I'd read in the paper when they'd graduate from college or get married, but I never did get in touch with any of them. You know how kids are when they grow up! I als

worked for Mrs. Kip, doing housework. I worked for real nice people. They were always good to me.

It was better in Indiana than in Alabama. You weren't called Nigger every time you turned around. And if you sat down some place, white folks wouldn't get up and run all over everywhere acting like they were scared of you. We felt like we were human beings in Indiana.

I did have some unpleasant experiences riding the street car to and from work, though. Once I wanted to ride and was standing at the head of the line. A white woman raised hell with the conductor for letting me on first. There was a lot of white Southerners coming up for better jobs too when we were. If you sat down in a seat next to a white person and they got up and left, you'd know they was from the South. I always liked to sit in the back, 'cause it was easier to get off that way. I remember one white woman saying, when she saw me moving to the back, "She must be from the South."

When I was riding the streetcar in Indianapolis one day, I sat down aside of a white lady. She jumped up before I got sitting down, got up and used one of the straps. She wouldn't sit beside me. All the people were whispering and laughing. I didn't know then that she wasn't from here in the northern parts. I just sat there and read my book.

I had several other unpleasant experiences when I was looking for a job. This lady put an ad in the paper. When I went to her front door and knocked, she told me, "Don't come in our front door." I stood there a while talking and then left.

Another time I was hired by a lady but then she said, "Oh, I just came here from the South and if my boy calls you Nigger, don't get mad because he is used to that way from the South and he'll get over it after a while."

I told her, "Well, I don't need the job. I'm not a Nigger." Instead I found work at a place where the folks were nice and I never heard that name.

Sometimes people tried you out. When I was nursemaid for little Hughie, his mother was getting eggs and butter from a country man. She gave me a twenty dollar bill to pay for it because they went away that night. I paid the bill and put the change away for her. The next morning she told her mother, and her mother hit the ceiling. I heard it all. "Mama," she said, "I'd go away and leave Hyacinth with a thousand dollars around this house because she's just as honest a person as I ever met."

Some black folks, when they come up from the South, didn't know how to act. I remember a couple of boys up from Mississippi, talking real loud, about how it was so great in the North with no segregation, being able to sit wherever you wanted. Well, they shamed us. Somebody should've told 'em how to act. I would've, but I was scared, too timid to speak up.

I did tell a girl once not to talk so loud. I said, "You just showing yourself!" Both of these incidents made me so mad. I felt like grabbing the boys after they got off the streetcar and telling them, "Do you see? They just talk about you, make all kind of fun of you when you get off the streetcar." You see, they didn't get schooling. Down South, blacks didn't get schooling, and they were just ignorant. Didn't know better. You've got to raise children

to respect everybody and be calm, and they just weren't raised by their parents that way.

Most public places were not segregated in Indianapolis, except for Circle Theatre. Seems that a black woman went downtown to do her shopping, bought a live chicken, and then decided to go to the show. Well, the chicken got loose. That's when they decided blacks would have to sit upstairs. That woman should have known better than to bring a live chicken into the theatre!

Some folks didn't know beans when the bag was open! One woman up from the South went into a store and asked for a "pone" of bread! She had to point to a loaf before she got it. And they said "goober beans" instead of *peanuts* and "gwine" instead of *going*. We almost cracked up when Mr. Davis came around and asked Papa, "Where you gwine?"

Used to be they'd say we should go back to Africa. We are of African descent. We have an African heritage, but we didn't ask to be here. If the British hadn't brought us here on those slave ships, we wouldn't be here today.

I've heard whites say they didn't know why they did blacks folks like they do. A nurse in the hospital told me she heard a white woman praying, "Lord, I'm sorry I done them Niggers like I done 'em."

But times are changing. Even Governor Wallace is sorry for standing in the doorway, keeping black kids out of school. God is working on everybody, and black folks don't hold a grudge. That's why they elected Wallace to a fourth term as governor of Alabama.





## Chapter 3.

### My Life as a Woman

On January 22, 1926, I married John Thrash in the judge's chambers on Delaware Street, near the Court House in downtown Indianapolis. We were young and acting silly. I remember the judge, who was white, asked, "Do you all know what you're doing? This is serious business."

The judge said we ought to go back home and stay with our parents for a while, because we just sat there and giggled. Every time the judge said, "Looky here, you all go home now," I thought it was funny, I guess, and started giggling. He said we weren't ready for marriage, but he married us anyhow.

When we was coming out of the judge's chambers, John asked, "How we gonna act?"

I said, "Well. . . ."

He said, "I'll act like my sister did when she got married."

I said, "I'll act like I acted before we got married." We were just being silly. We acted like everybody else did after being married. We were really on the ball.

The first time we were to be married, I stood John up. I just didn't show. Then we had to decide on a new time. I

was funny about love. I never let myself go overboard for anyone. I just acted unconcerned, so I wouldn't get hurt, I reckon. If a boy was fifteen minutes late, I wouldn't wait.

I dated a few other boys too—Floyd Eubanks and Eric Sutter. Floyd was the first boy I dated. I met him at Douglass Park. We would all be down at the park on Sunday evenings for recreation. We'd walk all the way from Brightwood with patent leather shoes on. It'd be so dusty 'cause we didn't have any streets out there. We had to stop to dust off our shoes before we got to the park

Eric was older—a chauffeur. Eric and I always wanted to go to a show. We'd go to a show and down to the park.

But I don't think I really loved 'til I was married. I wasn't pretty, but attractive enough—small, neat, well-dressed. I was very particular—a feisty little woman. Everything had to be just so. Stockings and shoes just perfect. (I wore a size 3 1/2 shoe.)

The first date I had with John was when he took me home after church. We all went to Mount Carmel Baptist where Rev. Winfrey was pastor. Sunday nights he had special services, when the boys sat with the girls. The boys went to church mainly to meet the girls. It was just a regular preaching service with organ playing and choir. Zip and LaMar sang in the choir.

This one night my niece Ruth, who was going with John's cousin Clarence, and I were sitting in church. Ruth was sitting in the middle and John's cousin was on my side with John sitting next. So John said to Clarence, "Ask Hyacinth can I take her home tonight."

I said, "Well, that's all right."

John's father came to Indianapolis to work as a carpenter building houses. John had three brothers and four sisters. His folks was strict on raising kids. His mother raised him inside the yard. She wouldn't let him get out and roam around.

My niece Ruth and John's niece Eliza were married the same month we were. We all lived together in Brightwood, dated together, and all decided to get married about the same time, in January, 1926. We went around together after we were married, going to shows and baseball games, down to Douglass Park to watch swimming and skating. We didn't go to dances then. We were just one big happy family, so we didn't need too many other friends. (My mother used to tell us we'd get along better if we didn't have too many outside friends.) See, I had a bunch of nieces, and we all come up together. Some liked to play cards, and we didn't go out much at night unless to a show.

We just had a common life. John worked for the city, cleaning and digging holes. He'd come home muddy all the time. I wasn't working right after we married. I quit work. We stayed with Papa for a while. Then we rented a double on Rural Street and later rented a double on the corner of Oxford and 20th Street, a nicer one. We lived upstairs.

I had an easy day when we first married. I got up before John and fixed his breakfast and packed his lunch box. Then I visited my sisters on Oxford Street. After that I went home and started our dinner and would have that all ready when John got home. I'd set a nice table and have our food all sitting in the warmer at the top of the

stove. I made cute little checkered curtains for my kitchen windows and fixed things up pretty nice. I had everything all cleaned up when he got home.

All the men carried lunch boxes at that time. John liked bologna. If I'd baked a ham or roast, I'd give him a slice of that. I'd buy cookies and apples or oranges to put in.

After I started working again, I ate where I worked, in the kitchen. We never ate with the people we worked for, but we always ate the same thing. I think I worked for only one family where we ate together, and that was funny, 'cause I wasn't used to it. I felt odd. I ate all right, but I was bashful. I guess I felt better eating by myself.

The first double we rented cost us eighteen dollars a month. We had a living room, a dining room and a kitchen in between, with a bedroom on the back. That's how all those little doubles were built at that time.

Inside it was mostly wallpapered. It had a toilet. It wasn't a beautiful scene, 'cause we didn't have the money to get things. I washed on a scrub board and hung the clothes out in the sunshine. In winter we picked the days to wash on the outside, but we couldn't hang outside. So we hung up the clothes in the kitchen before we went to bed.

The kitchen had a gas stove sitting on four legs. Papa bought us a light colored kitchen cabinet for a wedding present. It had a place for dishes, a flour bin, and all that—like a Hoosier cupboard. I had a breakfast set too. Somebody gave us a set of dishes and I worked 'til I got us forks and knives and spoons. In the bedroom we had an iron bed and a dresser.

When I went back to work, I was doing private baby sitting. I didn't get much money. Eight dollars a week. But I would always save a penny or two. My niece and I made our own dresses. She could sew pretty good. Then, when I got another job, I'd make a little more money and, if I could, put a dollar or two away in a bank account. I was always trying to save. When I went to the grocery, I always looked for bargains. Nobody had to teach me that. You could get a loaf of bread for a nickel in those days. Prices had to be low 'cause we weren't making much money. But we didn't have much fancy, just plain—you know, meat and potatoes.

I wasn't much of a cook when we married, but John just laughed. I caught myself making apple pie with baking soda and baking powder so that it went to the top of the oven. We laughed about it 'til we cried. I set it on the table. John called me Bob at that time. It tickled me.

"Bob," he said, "will you get mad if I ask you a question?"

"No," I said.

"Will you let my sisters teach you how to cook?"

I said, "Well, I got sisters that can cook. They can teach me."

Really, I couldn't boil water at first. I got to be the best cook, though. I'd ask my sisters and his sisters. Zip cooked real well. Mama had wanted to teach me before she died, but I wanted to clean the house or the yard, do everything but be in the kitchen.

Papa taught me how to make the best biscuits when we was still living with him. He learned that while cooking on the railroad down South.

John was funny. His mother made good light bread. So when I talked about making biscuits, he'd say, "I didn't eat no biscuits much when I was comin' up. I don't think I want any."

"All right," I said, "I'm gonna make me some." So I made them and he ate them. He liked them just fine.

In the morning when I had to go to work early and he worked the evening shift, he'd say, "Bobby, you make up some biscuits. You don't have to roll them out. Just mix them up and I'll roll them out and put them in the stove."

And I said, "No, you don't want no biscuits." We kidded around like that. But he was good. We got along real well at first. He didn't fuss. 'Cause he was raised inside the gate. His people kept him in 'til he was almost grown. He was raised in a good family, good religious people.

On Sundays we went to church, and in summer time we went from town to town with a baseball team John played on. They played in smaller cities like Elkhart and South Bend and Kokomo.

It was an all-black team organized by John's brother-in-law, Mr. Parker, with boys all from Brightwood. It played other black teams in a league. John's friend had a car, so we rode in that. John was 5' 9" and played short stop. He pitched some too. John was nice looking and quiet. I liked that. He wasn't never no loud mouth and rowdy.

My house was always clean. I'd get in the corners with a brush. John complained that I was always rearranging the furniture. When I started that, he'd say, "I'm going. I can't stand you moving the furniture all over."

I worked for a Mrs. Kip on Meridian Street, who always came to pick me up. One day she asked could she come in and look at my house. She looked in every room, even the basement. I heard her tell one woman, "You could sit in her basement with a white dress on and not get it dirty."

My mother was like that too. She was a real fanatic about dirt. She washed on a scrub board, and if she saw a speck of dirt on clothes hanging on the line, she'd take them down and wash them over again.

I was a good manager too, just like Mama. John used to complain, "Hyacinth can hold a dollar 'til the eagle squawks." (Jim Jones used to say he never saw such good managers as Zip and me. And I was better than Zip.) I'm so glad Mama raised me like that, to be clean and intelligent.

All our friends were having children after we got married, and every month I'd be looking to get pregnant. I was a member of a Young Mothers Club in Brightwood 'cause all my friends were. It didn't matter that I didn't have children. Finally I went to a doctor on Martindale Avenue, and he told me I couldn't have children 'cause my womb wasn't developed beyond that of a nine-year-old. He said the child would die 'fore it got birthed. Why, when I heard that, I cried for a month.

John always wanted a girl, and I wanted a boy. I wanted five children all together: four boys and one girl, for John. My oldest sister, Ada, had fourteen children; Rosie had nine; and Lena, seven. And I didn't have any!

John and I separated after we'd been married for nine or ten years. He started running around with a gang and



another woman. I wouldn't take that. You know, the Devil's in all men. I don't know why a man wants to step out. His man friend was single and a bad influence.

I think I would've stayed married to John if we'd had children and if Mama hadn't died. She would've counseled me. You could always bring your troubles home to Mama. But I was young and hot-headed at the time. My pride was hurt.

Mama always said, "Try to stay with your husband unless he really beats you. Things'll smooth out after a while. You may think there'll be greener pastures on the other side, but 'taint so. The second one'll be worse than the first!"

We were going to Rev. Winfrey's church at the time, but I didn't tell him about the separation. In those days pastors didn't counsel much. They preached on Sunday and had jobs during the week. I told my oldest sisters, and they thought it was awful. They tried to talk me out of it, but I was stout-hearted and couldn't forgive and forget.

I could've been a mother, though, if John and I hadn't separated. When John's sister died, we took her daughter Catherine to raise. She was about five at the time. She called me Mother. I dressed her up real cute and kept her about two years. But when we separated, she went to live with her grandma. I felt bad about that. I should've kept her and her little brother too. That way I'd had two children of my own.

After we separated, John started drinking. He got married again, but that marriage didn't work out either.

He ended up living with different women and died of lung cancer. Smoked something awful!

He still came around after our separation,<sup>r</sup> and we talked. He said his friends called him henpecked 'cause he helped me with dishes, but it wasn't so. When I bought my house on Graceland Avenue, he helped me clean up the back yard. (He was three or four years younger than me.)

We planned to remarry in 1956, but then, after he got cancer, we just hemmed and hawed about it. His oldest sister had insurance on him. I think she didn't want him to remarry 'cause she thought she'd have to give up the insurance to me. But I wouldn't have got it anyhow, if she was named the beneficiary.

I didn't go to see him in the hospital when he was dying, but I went to the funeral and sent flowers. A woman he was living with had the nerve to go to his employer, the Big Four, and ask for his pension. "Well," they said, "if you can bring a license to prove you were married." Of course, she couldn't do that.

I wish we had got married again. John and I always did love each other. Then I'd at least have something, like a home, insurance, and pension from the Big Four. (It was over in Brightwood, where the freight trains came in. He cleaned engines. It was a good job for that time.)

I'm sorry he died before I met Jim Jones. I know Jim would have remarried us. Maybe Jim could have healed him of cancer. I think he would've gone to Jim's church too.

After I was divorced from John, I married Clifford Hughes in 1947, before Papa died. We were living at the

time in a duplex at 624 1/2 Eugene Street, across from my sister Lena. Clifford came to live with us—Papa, Zip and me—'til we could buy a house. Cliff and I were planning to buy a house because I was working at Lane Bryant at the time and he had a good job at Kingan's, the meat packing plant. During the war he sent some of his check home to me to save up for the house. In those days you didn't need a huge down payment.

But my marriage to Clifford lasted only a month. I don't even call it a marriage; it wasn't a marriage, no way. I could've had it annulled. 'Cause he was adulterous. He was running 'round with another woman that he'd had before, and I didn't know about it. Then, after we were married, he wouldn't give her up.

I really messed up, marrying him. I should've stayed with John. Of course, you always have better hindsight. If I'd had religion and prayed, I could've stayed with him, I think. But the least little thing set me off.

Men are just the same all over. What you don't know won't hurt you. Isn't many a man that'll break up a home for another woman. They'll stray, but they won't leave. I think a man is weaker than a woman in that respect.

We women are at fault too. Some don't like this or that in a man. One does something a little fancier than another. Some women just see a man, like him and want him, and'll do anything to get him. But, like I say, all men are made the same and look the same.

Some people have asked me was I attracted to Jim Jones. I wouldn't have had him if he was the last man alive.

I'll tell you what attracts me in a man—intelligence, trying to be somebody, holding a conversation. And I hate drinkers! I am not attracted to men who drink. ♣

I don't know why I kept *Thrash* for my name. After I divorced Clifford Hughes, I could have taken *Edwards*, my maiden name, back. I don't know why I didn't. Maybe I thought I'd marry John again.

After John died and Clifford died, I had a dream which said, "Now you're free. Both husbands are dead." You see, the Bible says you're not supposed to remarry if your first husband is living. When they were both dead, I didn't have to worry about living in adultery.

Papa died in 1947 at the age of eighty nine, real sudden like. He was living with me and Zip at the time, after Clifford left. He was blind, but I think he knew Clifford and I were separated, 'cause he didn't hear him 'round the house any more.

It's a good thing he was living with me when he died 'cause nobody else would've buried him. Papa was not a good manager like Mama was. I told him once before he died, "If it wasn't for your children, you'd be in the poor house." But I never would've let that happen.

Brother LaMar was working at the Big Four when Papa got sick, and I called him home to help me and Zip take care of Papa, to shave and bathe him. Zip and I didn't like to do that, but we did when LaMar couldn't, just like nurses do, bathing male patients.

Papa died while sitting at the table. The day before he said "Pheenie" had been there. You see, Mama's name was Josephine, but he called her "Pheenie." When he said

she'd called, I told Zip, "Oh, oh, that means she's come to get him." Sure enough, the next day he was gone.

I never voted before I married John. Never cared much about politics. Then, around 1930, John's brother-in-law, Mr. Parker, was the Republican precinct committeeman on Oxford Street. At that time all the blacks in Indianapolis seemed to be Republicans. In fact, if you wanted to get into a fight with Papa, all you had to say was you were leaving the Republican Party. He died a Republican, though one of his favorite sayings was "Trust no live thing and walk careful 'round the dead." And the worst thing he could say about someone was "He'd even steal a nickel off a dead man's eye."

Mr. Parker said to me, "You'd better get yourself active in the Party, 'cause I can get you a job down to the State House that'll pay you better than any private duty job you got." Mr. Parker was head of the maintenance department at the Capitol building.

He offered me a job running elevators for \$18 a week, big money for that time. I'd never run an elevator, but he said he'd teach me. Was I scared! But while one elevator was in service, he used the other one to teach me. For fifteen minutes we took that thing up and down. Then he said, "It's all yours." Oh, I started sweating like crazy.

But then I got mad and said, "I'm gonna run this thing if it rips right out of the State House!" I took the controls and had not a bit of trouble. By evening I was calm as ever. Everybody said I did real well with only fifteen minutes of teaching.

I had lots of fun working there. I'd take the judges up and down. They bought me candy. I always got along fine 'cause I was kind and polite to the public. One spring day a white woman brought me a big flowerpot of hyacinths!

During World War II, when all the men were gone, I worked cleaning cars for the street car company. I went down to headquarters three times before I got the job. They were looking for a "man" woman. I was small, but I could get around cleaning those cars just fine. Finally the foreman said, "Well, if you're so persistent, we'll give you a try." It was hard work, really a man's job. But the foreman said, "You're doing such a good job; maybe we should hire all small women." I worked there for four years 'til I had to quit because of a nervous breakdown.

You see, it was just too hard! I had an overactive thyroid too. I was sick in bed for seven months. Couldn't go out. My leg shook, I was so nervous. I was scared to go out. The doctor came every other day. Zip quit her day job and stayed home to take care of me and fixed my food (after I could eat).

We were living on Ethel Street at the time, paying \$75 a month rent. Lena and her children lived with us too, so we were pooling together. Lena's daughters Mary and Mabel both had good jobs. I got sick pay and insurance, so I made it okay.

The doctor gave me nerve pills at first, but then he said he wasn't gonna give me more pills. I'd just have to get along somehow. So some nights I stayed awake all night.

Before my job with the street car company I did maid work in the Severin Hotel near Union Station. I did real

good work, was neat as a pin. Even got a certificate for bed making. I could've gone to work any place, but I didn't like maid work in a hotel.

One day a man came in with a big Texas hat and started complaining about the room. I just couldn't clean the room to suit him. My supervisor said, "Don't pay any attention to him." From the linen room we could hear him calling us names.

People from down South expected a lot of "Yes, Sir," and "No, Sir," but I didn't give it to them. One day I was finishing cleaning a double room when a woman came in and said, "Monin'."

I said, "Good monin'."

She said, "Why, you must be a Yankee."

I said, "No, we jus' say '*good monin'*' up here."

Whites always treated us kinda snarly, so we j. stayed away and didn't bother them. I said, "God know best. He doesn't intend for people to live like that. He working on them." And you know, things *have* changed!

When I was working for Lane Bryant, there was a difference in wages paid blacks and whites. One day a white girl, who'd been workin' there only a month as an order clerk, said to me, "Look at my check. I'm making as much as you are."

I'd been working there for three or four years. My was harder work, too, cleaning and running the elevator. So I talked to the straw boss, Harry Borenstein, about it. He chewed out that white girl for telling me what she made. Mr. Bagel, the head man, was a Jew too. When they wrote nasty things about "Niggers" in the bathroom, he

came to the assembly line and said, "We don't have 'Niggers' working here." He was a nice man on that score.

Sometimes I think whites didn't want to come close to us 'cause they'd find out we weren't so bad. God made us too, for some purpose. One day one of the Big Four workers said to my brother that blacks were created to be slaves for whites!

When the Civil Rights Act passed, a girl at work was scared we were gonna take over. I said, "We don't want to come to your house, eat at your table, or sleep in your bed." I never cursed, just told them the facts.

Mexicans worked at Lane Bryant too. One girl who was brown as me went with a white boy, and that upset everybody. But Bill (the white boy) married her.

One day the personnel officer came out of his office bemoaning the fact that a black Hollywood starlet married a white man. "What a shame," he said, "tsk, tsk, tsk."

W

After Papa died I stayed with my niece, Mildred Wallace, at 42nd and Boulevard. I bought my house at 40th and Graceland in 1951 or '52. It was a double, and I got it for \$12,000. I bought the whole house and took in boomers, all men. They were real nice men with good jobs, and I was real strict. I gave them the rules: no liquor and no women.

When I moved there, there was only one white couple living on the block, and they were next door. But they wouldn't talk to us. (Zip, who never married, was living with me at the time.) This white couple wouldn't sit on their porch. They went inside when we came out.



Most of the whites left the neighborhood before I got my house. That's how I got it! A black couple (teachers) were the first to buy in the neighborhood. Soon there was a "FOR SALE" sign in front of every other house. I know some people suffered 'cause they couldn't sell their places, but they wouldn't stay there with us!

When I was living on Graceland, I asked a white man why whites hated blacks so much. He couldn't tell me. He said, "You tell me! We hate ya for nothin'!"

Once, when I was working as a nursemaid in a home and staying in, the man of the house came into my room one night, grabbed my toe, and said he wanted to get in bed with me. I told him that if he didn't get out, I'd tell his wife the next morning. That got rid of him!

Another time, when I was doing private duty, the man of the house brushed his hand 'cross my breast. I looked at him real hard!

One night the lady wanted to go to a party to go dancing but the man didn't want to go. She announced she was going anyway. I knew she was courting with another man 'cause I caught her kissing him one day. So the man of the house, he figured he had to go. He asked me to help him button up his tuxedo. He was just trying me out.

Working at the hotel was real bad. In the Severin Hotel every other male customer was after you. One day one said his wife was out to breakfast and did I know anything about "Frenching."

I said, "I know lots of Frenchmens."

He said, "You could make a lot of money. . . ."

I said, "I'm earning my money by the sweat of my brow." You just had to talk right back to those men and mind your own business.

Another time a white man said, "Pack your suitcase and come away with me to Cincinnati. You'll have your own apartment and won't have to work."

I said, "Find somebody else!"

I never had any sexual harassment at Lane Bryant. It was a nice place to work at on that score.

You don't have to go to bed with a man just 'cause he asks you. In Texas, they say, the white men were always after the colored women. That's why there are so many light-colored babies. Since slavery, there were more white babies born to dark women!

Whites used to say they were against mixed marriages. Well, we don't believe in them either, 'cause the kids always have a hard time. There's resentment against light ones 'cause whites favor them over dark ones. I say, "Don't put it on the black man! Your forefathers started it all with slavery!"

At the Athenaeum Club on Massachusetts Avenue, where I worked in the kitchen, there was a Frenchman who was fry cook. He wanted me to marry him and go back to France with him.

Willie, Emma, and Gertrude were Germans working there. Folks say Germans don't like blacks, but they treated me fine. They was teaching me German at the time.

I remember a sign in Brooks Drug Store near Monument Circle downtown. It read:

WANTED: WAITRESS FOR COUNTER  
LIGHT COMPLEXION  
NO OTHER NEED APPLY

All the girls there were real light. That was in the 1920s—1924 or '25. I was too dark. But I didn't want a job waiting tables no way. Never did like that.

When I was doing private duty housekeeping, I bought a red sweater for my husband 'cause he liked red. He was light too. The lady where I worked said, "It'll look good on your husband."

There is a bias that all blacks like red, like monkeys like red too! I always picked my own clothes and really resented it at Morrison's being brought a blood red dress. The clerk said, "Here's a dress you'd like." I *hate* red! Whites make fun of blacks wearing red!

I remember once a black woman downtown was wearing a red wig and two white men were laughing at her. They laughed 'til they cried! She had no business wearing that wig in the first place!

I wear what *becomes* me! People from the South are darker 'cause they worked in the fields. Northern blacks are lighter.

I always wanted to be a designer—of houses or clothes. I never had any training, but I had a real good eye for planning out rooms and matching things up. I liked unique things.

I never was a member of a Ladies Aid at church 'cause I worked. But I did volunteer at Central State Hospital with a group of twelve other ladies. There was Mildred, my niece; Zip and me, all from around 30th and

Northwestern Avenue and farther north. We worked with eighty six male mental patients.

The auxiliary was organized before we went to Jim's church, and we were active 'til we left for California. We collected clothes and had picnics for the men. Zip and I collected money for the picnic at Lane Bryant or sold candy to make money.

Doctors and nurses at Central State started slapping their hands when they saw us coming 'cause they knew they were gonna have a Hallelujah time! We served iced tea, potato salad, ham, ice cream, whatever. Folks donated the hams.

Both Zip and I liked to help out and do for others—got a thrill out of it. Zip was a real good worker when it came to helping out other folks. She did housekeeping, baby sitting, and stayed home with Papa for five years when he was blind and needed care. Then I got her a job at Lane Bryant too. We sometimes called her lazy, but when she liked something, she could work hard. Zip was more happy-go-lucky with her money. I could wait and save up for something I wanted.

We'd been going to Rev. Carter's church, the 25th Street Baptist Church, for five years when a new pastor came. I did not like him right away 'cause he started asking for more money. He had to have \$125 a week and travel overseas. That just put me out so! I just decided, after he'd been there just one Sunday, that I wasn't going back. I just decided he wasn't getting any more of my money!

I can still remember the Sunday I decided I wasn't going there any more. I can remember each step, putting my foot on each step going down, and the dust rising from the step.

Later I heard he wanted a larger parsonage, so he got one for \$20,000. Then he wanted a maid, then someone to cut the grass. The deacons just let him rule the roost.

So I just stayed home and listened to religious programs on the radio. That was 1945. I didn't feel right about not being in church 'cause we were raised up in the church. But I wanted to be satisfied in choosing a church. I thought a pastor should act like the Bible says. He should be the head of the church and act just so.

Friends asked us to visit their churches, but we just drifted away, got turned off, I guess. There were things bothered me 'bout the churches. I thought ministers should be godly persons to lead their flock. It bothered me they were doing things they told others not to do. One was carrying on with another woman and we knew it! Oh, that hurt me. We saw him going in with one of the sisters in the church, saw him going in with her in the morning and coming out at noon.

Zip, Mildred and I visited a few churches but not much. Mostly we just watched TV church. That's where we first saw Jim Jones.

## Chapter 4.

### With Jim Jones in Indianapolis

I hadn't been going to church for about ten years when I saw Jim on TV. Actually, Zip saw him first. She came running in from the other room, shouting, "I've found my church!" She saw the integrated choir on TV and Jim standing so handsome, and wanted to go.

Zip was living with me at the time at 40th and Graceland in the home I bought in the Butler-Tarkington neighborhood. Zip liked what she saw on TV. It was like Jim was just pulling her. Jim was saying God is no respecter of persons, that all minorities were welcome.

As it turned out, my niece Aileen and I went to Jim's church first to check it out. Aileen never joined; in fact, she never joined up with any church. She's different that way. But Zip, Mildred and I all joined at the same time in 1957.

Jim's first church was called "Wings of Deliverance." It was at 15th and New Jersey, and was all white at the time. When he announced he was going to integrate the church, all but ninety five left.

We were impressed with Jim and the church. He invited us back. A month passed. Then one day a flyer appeared on the door step. It said Jim and twelve of his

members would be on our block Wednesday night, calling. Well, he came, held our hands, and had prayer. It was wonderful.

Jim started out real good, doing for folks. We'd buy canned goods and fix up baskets, helping the underprivileged, like Mexicans and blacks, as Jim called us. I guess that's when we started using the word *blacks*. *Negro* wasn't my name. We always used to say *colored folks*. Really, we should've been called Afro-Americans.

The church was still small when Mildred, Zip and I joined in 1957, but it had quite a few black families. Membership was more than a hundred.

Jim integrated Methodist Hospital too. He was going to a black doctor, so the hospital assumed he was black and put him in a black ward. It caused such a ruckus they had to change their policy.

I was baptized first in Alabama, but I was baptized again in Jesus' name in the Holiness church at 10th and Delaware, the church Jim bought. It used to be the Jewish temple. Jim talked them into giving him an interest-free loan and paid it off within a year! He was really something!

Jim was a Pentecostal Holiness preacher, really. He got ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at the Broadway Christian Center, and he tried to explain that to us, but I never paid much attention to it. He was still Pentecostal Holiness 'cause he kept healing and speaking in tongues.

I believe in speaking in tongues, like the Bible says. Some folks think it's foolishness, but I spoke in tongues

when I come up out of the water on my second baptism. It's evidence of the Holy Ghost.

I have premonitions too. One night I saw a man lying across my bed. He looked me straight in the face, took a hanky, and wiped his face. There was light enough from a street lamp, so I didn't need a lamp on at night. But when I went to raise the shade, the man disappeared. The next day I got a call saying that my nephew, John Dexter, had just passed. It was a premonition of his death I had, I believe.

Another time I saw something dark like a turtle slip under my bed. That time I got a call that my niece Lorraine was found dead in her apartment and had been dead three days.

Every time somebody got sick and ready to die, it used to worry me something awful, like a house sitting on my head, an awful feeling, an oppression. I just wished I could shake it off.

I have an inner ear or feeling about things. Once in the 1940s I was planning to go to Chicago with some strangers. I put on my clothes, took them off, then put them on again. Finally, I said I wasn't going. I think it was a warning to me.

Jim had a real good church program going in Indianapolis, and Zip and I helped him. Zip was a real good church worker, real faithful. But I always believed in doing my part too. I wasn't a slacker.

Jim took Zip, Mildred and me to Human Rights Commission meetings when he was appointed the first full-time director, in 1961, by Mayor Charles Boswell. Some in the church put out that he took us 'cause we



were well dressed and acted intelligent. He didn't take many blacks. A lot of whites didn't like what he was doing in the city, stirring things up. They called him a trouble maker.

I helped with feeding and healing, mostly. I worked in the kitchen, preparing meals and giving out baskets. We fed two hundred people at a time on Sundays for dinner at 10th and Delaware, what he called Peoples Temple. Everybody came—street people, alcoholics, transients. Archie Ijames and Rheaviana Beam were real good at procuring food stuff with the station wagon. They got over-ripe produce from the Farmers' Market or meat that would spoil if held over the weekend.

I always had a healing hand. God laid his hand on mine when I was seven years old, but I just didn't cultivate my gift. A woman evangelist that came up from Texas to help Jim in his crusade told me she'd give anything to have my gift. She took my hand in hers and said, "Look at that hand, how oily it is." I always liked to help people, old people especially. I was crazy 'bout old people!

I participated in healing services here and in other cities. We'd travel to cities like Springfield or Cincinnati, Ohio, for services. Jim would swap pulpits with other men from there. There wasn't jealousy between preachers 'cause if Jim healed someone in their churches, they stayed in their own church.

I saw Jim heal people! He was so good. He'd give a man the shoes off his own feet if the man needed a pair of shoes. He was called of God. I don't know what went wrong.

Jim wanted folks to respect and love one another. That's why we visited other churches on Sunday mornings. We'd have our own services, and then go to other people's services to witness to integration.

White folks did Jim real bad when he tried to integrate the churches. In one north side white church the preacher started singing "Old Black Joe." That really hurt me. In another church they raised the windows and tried to freeze us out. In another church a man said, "Why didn't you tell us you were coming? We'd have roped off an area for you." Roped off! Like cattle!

In a south side church a man got up and said the church was gonna be bombed. So we left and Jim started preaching in the field. I was afraid, so I took the street car home. I told Jim I couldn't take it any more, that we couldn't do anything about integrating the churches, that God would take care of it. And He has! It's lots better now. I just wanted to be treated like a human.

In 1964 I had my annual check-up with Dr. Dill. He found a knot in my breast and said, "Hyacinth, you have cancer." I felt it. It was hard, like a table top. Why, I thought I was gonna die! I told my sisters not to worry, but I was worrying plenty!

That Sunday, at service, Jim said, "Hyacinth, you've had bad news. Don't worry. I've been fasting all day. We'll pray." He laid his hands on me, another person laid her hands on me, and another. Monday I felt the tumor. Tuesday I felt the tumor. On Wednesday my breast was loose. The knot was gone!

Seven doctors at St. Vincent Hospital examined me, and the tumor was gone! I had X-rays and everything. The

tumor was gone! The doctors said, "How do you explain that?"

I said, "Divine healing."

They just smiled, didn't say *yes*, didn't say *no*. When they left, Dr. Mueller said, "It's a miracle." A nurse danced with me in the hall. And I haven't had a knot since.

A close friend of mine, Essie Clay, also had cancer. When Jim prayed over her, the cancer left and hasn't bothered her since. Essie wanted to follow Jim to California but her husband wouldn't go. "He was so good," Essie said about Jim. "He knew all about my life."

Jim had psychic powers. One day he told me what my nephew Herman had in his room. That's when Herman was living with me and Zip. Herman had a terrible chest pain. Jim told me to get a certain kind of towel from Herman's room, to wet it with hot water, and put it on his chest. I rushed home and did exactly what Jim said. Then I prayed. Well, Herman's pain went away. Jim knew the furniture arrangement and everything, though he'd never been in Herman's room. There are *discernments*!

One day Jim was driving and said to Eva Pugh, next to him, "Take the wheel. Mrs. Wallace is in trouble. I have to go see about it. She's over in front of Crown Hill Cemetery."

When they got to the scene, Mildred [Mrs. Wallace] said, "How'd you know I was here and needed you?" Mildred's brother had crashed her car and telephoned her to come. Jim talked to the police and got it straightened out.

One night in a meeting Jim said, "I'm gonna be needed. There's gonna be an accident." He went out of the

meeting, threw up his hands, and prevented an accident. The car stopped so short, it tilted. People in church later testified to what happened.

Jim was *in* there! He could've been a prophet! He could have done a lot of wonderful things!

When we were trying to decide whether to go to California, we were sitting in the car, talking and crying. Wouldn't you know! The next day he told us every word we said.

He did wonderful things, so we hung on to him. He knew everything about my past—my mother, the way she died, my brother Alvin. How could he know all that?

I've heard voices and I believe in spirits. You really do live on! When I was living on Graceland, my brother LaMar was dying, but he wasn't worried. The day after he died, I felt him grab me from behind. After my husband John died, he'd come to my back door and say, "Open up this back door!"

I used to see things when I was little, as young as seven or eight. When I got married, I saw Mama standing at the foot of our bed. I used to be scared. But then she went away and I wasn't scared any more.

I had to stop work at Lane Bryant, where I was running the elevator and cleaning, in 1965 because of my operation. I had a tumor on the spine. You see, when I was about twenty, I fell out of a truck I was riding in. It was a joy ride, and I didn't want to tell anybody about my fall, 'cause they'd say I shouldn't have been in that truck in the first place. I fell on my back and must've bruised my spine because a tumor grew over it.

When I got a lame leg, they took me to a neurosurgeon. He did a spinal tap on me and found an embedded tumor. When they took out the tumor, they hit a main nerve. So I was paralyzed as a result of the operation.

Crossroads Rehabilitation Center came and started me in therapy. I made real good progress. They worked with me and I worked with them. If I'd stayed in Indianapolis instead of going to California, I believe I'd be walking today.

That operation was after Jim left for California. Zip called him and told him I was going to have it and he said he'd pray. But I think he was losing out already by that time. He was losing his gift. Somehow he got off on the wrong track.

Archie Ijames was trying to keep the church going here in Indianapolis after Jim left, but it wasn't the same with Jim gone. Archie left for California a year before we did. Winberg was here in the church, but he was a prophet, not a healer.

Jim left Indianapolis in 1965. Zip and I left in 1967. Mildred was planning to leave but she got sugar diabetes. Jim kept calling her, telling her to come out or something terrible would happen. She was dead in two months, with diabetes.

Jim said he left Indiana 'cause it was racist and trying to kill him. They put gas in his coal bin, he said. Finally, I thought he should move 'cause he might get killed here. There was a lot of unrest in Indianapolis during the 1960s.

After President Kennedy was shot, a white girl at work blamed the blacks. She said Kennedy was shot

‘cause he was helping blacks. “All we want is jobs and to live like humans,” I told her.

We checked out California first in 1965 before we moved there. But we flew to Los Angeles instead of to San Francisco. We had relatives in Los Angeles and wanted to visit them. We could’ve asked Jim to come down to get us, but California is an awful big state and I had to get back to work at Lane Bryant. So I never saw Redwood Valley before we moved there. Zip did, though. She drove out at a later time with our nephew Harold. She said, “I don’t know if you’re going to like it. It’s pretty, but out in the country.” She didn’t know how much I liked the country. I think she was wondering if she’d like it in the country since she was used to being in the city.

After my spine operation, I couldn’t work any more. I retired on disability, about \$240 a month. I didn’t get a full pension.

Zip kept worrying me to go to California. It wouldn’t have been a bad move, either, if we’d stayed in Redwood Valley.

Our family in Indianapolis was sorry to see us move so far away. Sister Rosie begged me not to go, but they couldn’t do anything about it. After all, we were grown. We weren’t children! Looking back now, I see we made a mistake. But we couldn’t see that at the time.

Jim guaranteed us jobs if we moved out there. He was setting up care homes for mental patients released from Mendocino State Hospital. I couldn’t work at Lane Bryant any more, and I loved helping others, ‘specially old folks.

Jim was so devoted to his wife when they were here in Indianapolis. You just wouldn’t believe! I knew

Marceline when she was pregnant with their only natural son, Stephan. Jim always preached 'bout men being faithful to their wives. How could we know he was gonna turn out different?

One incident almost put me out of the church when Jim was still in Indianapolis. It was after the Korean War and there was lots of orphans fathered by American soldiers over there. My grandniece, Catherine Wallace, adopted two children of mixed blood, and I thought I might like to do that too. That was in 1961. My friend, Mary Tschetter, adopted one too.

Jim was always saying people should adopt rather than have children of their own. Since I didn't have any children, I thought I'd like to adopt. I don't know if they'd let me, since I didn't have a husband. But I had a good job. So I asked Jim about it. Right away he said, "You can't get the white ones."

Then he realized that he spoke before he thought, and he tried to straighten it out. I told him I didn't want white ones; I wanted blacks, those fathered by blacks. I knew there was plenty. You can tell a lot about a person by a slip of the tongue. I should have left the church right there.

At the time there was a lot of talk 'bout whites adopting black children. Archie Ijames, one of Jim's assistants, said that to be consistent, blacks should adopt whites too. (Archie wanted to adopt Becky Beikman. It caused quite a stir 'cause Becky was an adult and already married. Some put out that it was unnatural.)

We thought sometimes Jim told us stuff to get us to go along with him. And he seemed to go for the blacks that

were gullible. Of course, we always did believe whatever the white man told us, from slavery on up. We just did what the white man said! I remember one black girl, Vicky Moore, told me Jim was making fools of black folks.

He went for those with property too. Between Zip and me, he got \$150,000 off us before it was all over, counting our two homes, both of them income-producing (one a double and one a care home)—plus bank accounts, insurance, pensions, Social Security checks, and our tithes for twenty one years, which he increased from 10% to 25%. He got everything we made in California.

I just don't know what happened to him! He started out so good and had a real good wife. I think it all started when he went to visit Father Divine in New York. That was after Jim got into the bus ministry.

Archie Ijames *pleaded* with Jim not to visit Father Divine. "He's crooked. He takes folks' money!" Archie said.

After that visit to New York, Jim was a changed man. He changed! I saw him change before my very eyes! He got mad, for power and riches. You know, there's an Evil Spirit as well as a Good Spirit. The Devil will do anything to get a man. Jim just got the wrong Spirit. It's a gift, the Spirit, and it can be used for good or evil. Jim got out so far he couldn't go back. He tried to heal people, but he didn't have the power any more. God just took the gift away from him.

Jim wanted to take over for Father Divine. He put out that Father Divine's wife tried to seduce him. Later he said Father Divine had come back and was living in him,



in Jim! Jim did get a couple dozen or so of Divine's flock, but Divine got the better of Jim in that one! I had to laugh about that!

Jim thought he'd get whatever Father Divine had willed to his members. But Divine took them out of his will. All they had was their Social Security.

Divine's members rebuked the idea that Jim was Divine reincarnated. I remember Love Joy and Life Everlasting (their "angel" names) rebuking that idea! I went with Love Joy to the Social Security office, and she told me Divine was too slick for Jim. It was quite a "come down" for those ladies to move from Father Divine, where they had silver and cut glass all over the house, to Jim.

But Jim was pretty shrewd, too, to get whatever he could. When he came back from Brazil, where he went for his health and to check if it would be safe from nuclear attack, Jim told how he lay with a rich white woman to get money to feed the street orphans. He told how he made her walk about the streets where the begging children were, made her walk wearing her fine white clothes. Oh, Jim had his ways!

Jim predicted the nuclear holocaust would come June 15, 1967, but I didn't believe it. Some older people did. They were so afraid. Poor people, they were so ignorant, they couldn't even write their names.

We didn't want Jim to go to Brazil in 1962. I didn't send him money either for the orphans. Maybe he got it through our tithes to the churches. Ijames and Winberg were in charge.

I should have stayed out of the church then. We quit when Jim was gone. The church almost split up. But Zip worried me to go back. It would've been good if our eyes were opened then.

Jim asked Castro to take us in too, but he refused. He'd only take Jim and Marceline, not the rest of us, Jim reported.

While Jim was still in Indianapolis, he was preaching over WIBC radio. Zip and I went and sat in the studio on Illinois Street. He had his choir along. Not long after that they took him off the air. Jim made it sound like it was 'cause he was getting too far out. I know he praised Gandhi, called him a Communist.

Lots of people have asked me about Jim's ordination by the Disciples. I heard about it but didn't go. Not many from our church went. It was no big deal. No issue was made of it. See, Jim wasn't one for big celebrations or making a fuss over things. He never wanted a birthday party or pastor's day like some churches have celebrating the anniversary of when the pastor came.

Most of the people in our church followed Jim and his family to California in 1965. There was about 150 that went. Zip and I didn't go out for two years. Our friends, Alfred and Mary Tschetter, left before we did.

## Chapter 5.

### Following Jim to California

Jim picked Redwood Valley in northern California 'cause it was supposed to be safe from nuclear attack. He said he had a secret cave off Highway 101, but I never seen it. The men in the church said it was big enough to store food and supplies and hold all our members we had in Redwood Valley at that time. But after Jim started churches in San Francisco and Los Angeles, he quit talking about nuclear holocaust. Who knows what he had in mind? Maybe he planned to kill us all in the cave.

I had all our furniture sent from Indianapolis to California by moving van. We took everything—rakes, pictures—for \$919. I gave some things away, like figurines, instead of moving them.

We drove out on Route 66. We picked it up in St. Louis and went through Tulsa, Oklahoma. We wanted to see Oral Roberts, the faith healer, in Tulsa, but we missed him.

We had a fine time going 'cross country. My niece Aileen and her son were along. We took a cooler with all kinds of food and stopped along the way to make coffee and eat cake. We made some travelers hungry along the

way! Oh, it was a fine time! We visited family in southern California before heading north.

Zip and I stayed with the Ijames family for a week 'til we got our two-bedroom apartment in Ukiah. Our nephew Herman was with us since he was living with us in Indianapolis when we decided to move. Herman got a good job in a hospital in Ukiah. Jim probably helped him get it.

Ukiah was in grape-growing territory. At that time Ukiah was more southern in its attitude toward blacks. Before our church moved there, there was only one black family in the whole town. Zip and I were the only blacks in our apartment building.

Our porch was always full of people in Ukiah. Mary and Alfred Tschetter were some of our best friends there. They'd come over to watch TV or eat something. We'd sit on the porch, just like kinfolks. Mary and Alfred had three children, two girls and a boy. Later they got divorced and he married another woman in the church who was from Willits, California, and they had a girl. But they all got to be good friends.

Our neighbors were all sorry when we moved out of the apartment and into our ranch-style home. They all said our place was the cleanest one. Nephew Herman kept the grass clipped real nice. People were afraid they'd get bad neighbors when we left. We didn't know we were dark 'til we looked in the glass.

Actually, we got along better with our white neighbors in Ukiah than we did in Indianapolis. Mrs. Landini, an Italian lady, was real nice. She gave us some herbs

from her garden. Jim asked her how we were doing. Were we causing her any trouble? She said, "No."

The Parks family lived in the apartment next to us in Ukiah. We'd known them in Indianapolis. They'd come over from Springfield, Ohio, where they'd heard Jim preach. In Ukiah one night Zip and I were in bed already when there was a knock on the door. It was Dale Parks, seeing if he could study his lesson in our apartment 'cause there was too much noise in their apartment. He was about seventeen at the time, in high school.

When Zip and I got the Hong Kong flu in 1967, Dale came over and kept the fire going in the fireplace. We were both so sick! Jim was away, across the water somewhere and he called back to see how we were. He said for Dale to keep the fires burning and he'd be praying for us and soon everything would be all right. And you know, pretty soon I got up and went about my business. But Zip was really laid low by it.

The reason Zip and I moved from Ukiah to Redwood Valley, a suburb of Ukiah, was to buy a care home from retirees who'd been taking mental patients from Mendocino State Hospital. This was when Governor Reagan started closing down big hospitals and putting patients out in the community if they were well enough to live on the outside.

We bought a lovely four-bedroom ranch house on one and a quarter acres of land and took in four lovely ladies as "care" patients. I was just crazy 'bout our home. It was off the road and had its own well and pump. Mr. Britton, who sold it to us, built it for his wife. The kitchen had cabinets all around and lights just where you needed

them. It was just what I wanted. We used to drive by it on the way to church when we were living in the apartment in Ukiah, and I said, "Lord, that's my house!" And I got it myself!

This is how it happened: I told Mrs. Anderson, the real estate lady, what I wanted in a house. She was the one helping Jim find houses for all his people in the Valley. One day she called me up and said, "I got a house I want to show you." She never said which one it was 'til we were almost there. I squealed when I saw it. It was just the one I wanted!

Jim said, "What you gonna do, Hyacinth?"

I said, "Now, don't rush me, Jim."

Mr. Britton wanted \$15,500 for it. I said I'd give him \$15,000. He said he couldn't sell for that, that that would be highway robbery. But he came around and sold it for \$15,000. That was in 1970. I had \$3,500 for the down payment, it went through escrow (when they check for termites), and I paid \$100 a month on it. (When it sold later for \$37,000, all the money went to Jim.)

We loved it in the Valley. The boys picked grapes in the vineyards. We had our own grape arbor by the house. And pears! Zip and I put up 150 quarts of pear stuff—pear preserves, pear butter, pear sauce.

A man across the street had three acres of pear trees. You never saw such a pretty sight! When he was done picking, he said to Jim, "Your people can get the rest." So Zip and I canned and canned. The pears were so white, just like you buy in a can in the store. We canned them all nice and straight and lined them up real pretty in a row on the shelf.

And we canned peaches, pretty as a picture. We even made zucchini pickles! And they were good! I never even knew you could make pickles from zucchini 'til we moved to California. And corn! We canned corn and froze corn. Got so we never even cold-packed string beans anymore. We just froze them in large plastic bags. They tasted just like fresh beans. We had tomatoes too, and made our own chili sauce.

We all helped each other can. It was so much fun. I don't know what was wrong with Jim, to leave such a place! It was like heaven! But I guess he just wanted to get rich! And he did, too. I don't believe they've found all the money yet. He had it stashed all over, in foreign countries.

Most people lived independently, running care homes, like we did. But some lived communally. Father Divine's people and the nurses did.

When we got to California, Jim was using a church with another man between Redwood Valley and Willits. Then he built his own church, a Holiness church, right down the road from our house in Redwood Valley. It had a steeple, a kitchen and a swimming pool. He had his grape arbor leveled and built the church on that spot. Everybody pitched in to help. Archie Ijames was a carpenter. Mary Tschetter drove a tractor with a scoop shovel. They planted shrubs and rose bushes. Jim blacktopped an area for parking.

Jim was buying up property all over the Valley. I remember one white woman didn't want to sell. She didn't like darkies moving in, she said. Then she had a stroke

and couldn't keep her care home. That's when Jim said, "See how God fixes some people."

Since we lived so close, Zip and I helped out by folding and stamping bulletins to send 'round the country, raising money for the church. Even our relatives in Indianapolis got them.

To run my care home, I got \$270 from the state each month for each patient I kept. Some of our members kept as high as thirteen or fourteen patients. Edith Pugh took over six patients from the people she bought her house from. The state let you do that. There was a boys' home, too, with fifteen boys from broken homes or boys in trouble with the law.

I had four lovely ladies in my home—Ruth, Virginia, Rosalyn, and Marian. They all had minor mental problems. One had a baby out of wedlock and her parents gave her such a hard time it drove her crazy. Another laughed or cried a lot. But most of the time they acted normal. You wouldn't know anything was wrong with them.

We taught them how to make their beds and how to keep themselves and their rooms neat and clean. One, poor soul, smelled so bad when she came. I took her aside and told her that we women have to change our panties every day. We had a big stack of panties and a heavy-duty washer to do all the wash.

Virginia, one of my ladies, had a relative come to visit one day. He looked at her room and all over the house. "Well," he said, "I don't have to worry about her here."

I believe in doing things right! When I got my ladies, I opened a bank account for each one. I guess I got some



white folks in Redwood Valley in trouble on account of it. Ruth came with \$1,000 and left with \$2,000, from her allowances each month. I just did it like I 'sposed to. Jerry, my social worker, said, "If Jim Jones took over this valley, I'd go out of business." Everything was running so smooth.

One day a man came to inspect. I had just cleaned the ice box, covered all the food like you 'sposed to. He looked in the ice box, in the bathrooms. I showed him the garage where I had two freezers. "I don't need to come back here," he said.

I can't stand filth no way! My little Portuguese, Rosalyn, I taught how to wash morning and night. We gave the ladies deodorant, powder, perfume—whatever they wanted. And we didn't have any bad smells!

Nephew Herman was living with us and I liked him. He was a real good worker, but he never talked much. (He just likes to do his own thing. If he gets tired of something, he just walks away from it.) Well, Herman never got a praise from Jim. So I told Jim straight out, that Herman was my blood nephew and he should get a praise. (Herman was getting dissatisfied with the place and wanting to leave. Jim was fixing to send him to Guyana on the early team to get the place ready. But Herman hid so he wouldn't have to go.)

Jim talked to me about Herman, thought I was paying too much attention to him. See, Jim was trying to break down family ties. But I just told Jim that Herman had had a hard life. His parents separated and then, when his parents remarried, the stepparents treated him like a dog.

Finally Herman fell out with Jim and left the church. Jim said, "If he quits the church, he can't live on our property." So Herman got his own apartment. I think Jim was scared Herman would convince us to leave with him. I wish he had.

I'm glad Herman quit the church. He's alive now, working in Indianapolis. When he left California, he went to live with his mother. I told him not to say anything about Jim in Indianapolis. I don't think he did. Otherwise he might've come up missing.

When I was dissatisfied with something 'bout Jim, I talked it over with Godshalk and his wife, Viola. She had a mind too. I could be frank with her.

I had a hard time talking 'bout problems with Zip. She was sold on Jim. She threatened to tell Jim I was taking up for Herman. She really trusted in Jim. She used to praise him up and down, and Jim praised her too. She did little things for him and got praises for that. She told me that Jim said, "Hyacinth will never make a revolutionary." I wasn't sure what he meant by that.

Harold, Jr., my nephew Harold's son, stayed with us for a while. He wasn't good with books and it looked like he couldn't graduate from the eighth grade in Los Angeles. So my nephew asked Jim if he could finish in Ukiah and live with Zip and me. Harold paid for his room and board while he finished one semester. I don't know what Jim did to him, but he passed!

Harold wanted him to stay longer, but Harold, Jr., didn't want to. I'm glad he didn't. He's married now, has a good job, and owns his own home. Harold's glad he didn't stay either!

I remember the day Jim announced that Tim and Grace Stoen had a baby boy. Boys were it! It was Sunday, and we were having baptism in our swimming pool in church.

I remember one night Jim and Tim Stoen, who was District Attorney and Jim's private lawyer at the same time, came up to our house. It was about 2 a.m. We were asleep. Jim said they wanted to do some long-distance telephoning and could they use our bedroom. Jim said how nice we were, cooperative and all. Herman was gone, so we gave them our bedroom, and Zip and I went to sleep in Herman's room. He said he'd reimburse us for the phone calls.

When the phone bill came, there were no long-distance calls on it. Maybe they made all local calls. Who knows, maybe they were up to dirty tricks already at that time. I could've eavesdropped and found out all kinds of things, but I'm not that kind. Maybe they were having a homosexual relationship in our bed. Later Jim called Tim a homosexual.

Some blacks were real close to Jim, but most of his higher-ups were whites. He never talked to me real close. He knew I'd never put him on a pedestal.

He had power over his children too. His sons *must've* known how he was doing their mother! Oh, oh, oh, it hurt me so bad, how he was doing Marceline.

It wasn't 'til Jonestown that he put out that he had fathered the Stoen boy, John-John. That was after Tim and Grace defected and wanted their boy back. I didn't believe it then and I still don't, that Jim fathered that boy. Grace never cared for Jim.

Tim and Grace were both dark-skinned and had black hair like Jim, but I never thought the child favored Jim. He favored *Tim*. Jim lied so. He could've said anything. He was just trying to scare Tim and Grace for defecting. Jim was scared they were going to spill the beans about what he was up to. He sat on his pulpit, had all his "children" and "grandchildren" 'round him. He made out it was all Grace's fault—that she needed him and needed to have him father the child. I looked at Zipporah in the pavilion when he said that and told her, "That's *Tim*'s boy up there!"

Jim made out that Tim dressed in women's clothes in Ukiah and Jim had to bail him out of trouble all the time—for being homosexual and all.

Grace Stoen came to Georgetown, trying to get her boy out of Jonestown. But Prime Minister Burnham sided with Jim, so she never got him. "Over my dead body," Jim said.

Sometimes we went on the bus to Los Angeles or San Francisco for services, but usually I stayed home to care for our mental patients. Zip rode on Jim's bus and served as a counselor in services. She thought of it as an honor. It meant Jim trusted her.

When we both went to services in Los Angeles or San Francisco, Jim got other people to stay with our patients. But when they started raiding the place, eating up all our food, and making a shambles of the place, I complained.

I was so sad to leave our patients when we moved to San Francisco. First I told my social worker, Jerry. He said, "Well, you'll have to tell your patients." They all stayed in Ukiah when we left. I could've kept them forev-

er, or at least as long as we could get about. That was one job I really enjoyed! We were like one family. ♣

I kept Virginia for five years. Jerry said that was the longest anyone kept her. When I first got her, she used to break things in order to go back to the hospital, which she liked. At first I watched her break things. Then I said, "Virginia, the next time you break something, it's gonna cost you five dollars." That did it.

Virginia was Zipporah's road buddy. We had to have a car in order to keep patients, so Zip learned to drive and Virginia went all over with her. (I bought a used Dodge from my nephew for \$650. It was a nice, clean car.)

Zip and I worked with ten other women to raise money for the church through rummage and bake sales. We made up to \$200 a week selling baked goods from the back of a station wagon on Saturday mornings in San Francisco, Oakland, or Berkeley. Zip's original Cranberry Sauce Cake sold for six or seven dollars all over California. (Californians buy like crazy.) It had raisins, nuts and cranberries in it, like a regular fruit cake. And pink icing! It was real pretty. One of Zip's cakes was delivered to a judge in Redwood Valley. Jim used cakes to thank folks for favors or to express sympathy.

We took our patients shopping or out to dinner in Santa Rosa. But big supplies we bought in bulk (a two months' supply) with other members in San Francisco. We'd go to a place where they sold dented cans of food and stock up. Freezer meat we got in Ukiah. I had a garden and a store house behind the garage. The patients used to say, "We don't know when it's a holiday around here 'cause we eat like it's a holiday every day."

Viola Godschalk and I took acupuncture treatments in Berkeley. The doctor put me on a table and stuck needles in me all over—legs, ears. It helped me walk better. But Jim made me stop it. I don't know why, because I paid for it myself. I reckon he didn't want us to get too attached to one place.

He was never satisfied. He put out that white folks in Redwood Valley were bad, but I don't believe it. They liked us. He used to preach on the text, "Do my prophet no harm."

Mrs. Anderson, the real estate lady, tried to get us to talk about Jim and the church, but she never got anything out of us. She said we were two of the tightest-lipped people she'd ever seen. (Jim gave us a praise for that.) It was either keeping mum or coming up missing!

Mrs. Anderson joined the church herself, but she never followed Jim to San Francisco. She believed in reincarnation, like Jim did. She begged Jim not to leave, but it didn't do any good.

I took physical therapy in Ukiah from a little Jew who joined the church. He and his bride were in their eighties—so sweet, just like babies. He died a mysterious death—real funny. One day he was going strong and the next day he was gone. I wonder. . . . did Jim plan it? I'm not saying. Jim said he had a rapid cancer. His wife left the church.

It was in Redwood Valley that Jim adopted the policy of church membership by invitation only. I guess he was going crazy then already. He thought people were coming into the church to spy on it, so he had to check out the people first. He had an answer for everything. He knew

he'd lose his members if we found out what he was really up to.

Whenever somebody defected, Jim got real mad. Oooowee! He cursed them, swore revenge. He said, "They'll be sorry." It scared me! Some people had strange accidents. He must've done them in because they defected. Anybody he hated, he said something would happen to them. He predicted how some would die.

I remember one Sunday morning in Redwood Valley, Zip and I looked at each other in surprise when he said, "If any of the young people want to marry one of another race, they should." I think Jim accused others of prejudice to clear himself. He must've adopted a black kid for outside show.

It seems he never did anything straight, but always for some other reason, like he was trying to prove something. I believe he wanted to go down in history. And he will! People will write books about him.

He had a "thing" about molesting boys. He beat up one boy for molesting another. Maybe he had tendencies like that himself. He always wanted boys. He talked like he knew he would have boys. He put out that his sperm was so strong, he could only have boys.

When we got to San Francisco, he got on the Housing Commission. But he only took the big shots in his Planning Commission with him. They were mostly white. He never invited Zip and me to go, like we did in Indianapolis.

I wish I hadn't sold my house in Redwood Valley. I remember the real estate man coming to my house and

saying, "What's going on? You could as soon stay here as move all over."

I started two or three times to tell Jim I wasn't moving, but I never did. I could have said I'd send my tithes to the mission in Guyana. (We thought we were going on a mission for one year.)

Jim explained to us real careful that he was going to build communal senior citizen housing for us in Redwood Valley. He had the land for it. We would be taken care of by doctors and nurses. We wouldn't have to worry.

Since I didn't have children and Zip never married, we didn't have anyone to look after us, except for our nieces and nephews. And they had their own families to look after. We didn't want to be a burden on anybody, and I didn't want to go to a nursing home.

I was considering having my niece come, turning the property over to her in return for taking care of us. I don't know what Zip would've done since she was so wrapped up in Jim. She might've followed Jim to Guyana and left me there alone in Redwood Valley. After the church left the Valley, there'd be only a couple black families left. I just didn't know what to do! I just wanted a place of my own.

In my mind I was wondering how I was going to drag around with my cane in the jungles of Guyana, being crippled and all. If I stayed in San Francisco, I could get therapy. My home was almost paid for. I only had \$8,000 left to pay on it.

It got so we were scared to talk to others. Christine Miller said Jim called from San Francisco with checks to



cash. One check was made out to her for \$7,000. We wondered where it came from. He must've cleaned out a bank.

One night he said, "Come to church and see God at work." Ten and twenty dollar bills was flying in the doors.

I said, "Well, Jim is so wrapped up in Jesus! Jim and Jesus," I used to say. "Miracles do happen!"

Just a few in the inner circle knew everything that was going on. Most of us poor black folks didn't know anything.

Back in 1968 Jim was threatening to put Marceline away in a mental hospital. Her mother, Mrs. Baldwin, came from Indiana. Jim told us Marceline was threatening to leave him. We felt so sorry for him! But he blocked it by setting the children against her.

Marceline had back problems and was very nervous. I wish she had left him and gone back to Indiana with her mother. Because people really liked Marcie, and the church would've collapsed if she'd left and the truth about Jim had come out. But Jim had her over the barrel with the children. She loved those children and couldn't leave them.

Jim was walking up and down, all worked up in Redwood Valley. I think it was because he had all that property to sell before going to San Francisco. He was easily upset. He was making frequent trips back and forth to Guyana. Where all else he went, I don't know.

I had deeded my property over to Jim earlier when he said he was going to build communal senior housing for us on land at Willits. Tim Stoen did all the paper work. We were all sitting at tables at the meeting at church, about

twenty five of us. Herman had signed off when he went back to Indianapolis. But Zip's name was on it. Jim had sweet-talked me into having Zip's name on the house, since she was my sister and all. I think he knew he could twist Zip around his finger.

I wonder now if that was legal, how Tim Stoen did it, him being District Attorney and all. I kept hoping nobody would buy my house, but it was one of the first sold.

Zip went on cross-country trips with the Peoples Temple, but I stayed home. She went to Washington, D. C. and talked to senators. She went to Atlanta, Pittsburgh, New York. I stayed home to take care of the patients. I don't like people telling me what to do. I like to be on my own, have the freedom to do what I want. Besides, my being crippled might create the wrong impression. Folks might wonder why, if I was in Jim's church so long, I wasn't healed.

Jim had a survival march in the vineyard next to the church along the Russian River. I didn't go. He was always scaring folks, saying the U. S. was after us. I couldn't see it. He talked a lot about communism, but I knew he couldn't get it going. He wanted everybody to swap clothes. I told him flat out I wouldn't go along with it. If they wore my clothes, they could keep them. Some people don't wash and have terrible body odor.

He talked a lot about survival, said we might have to eat each other or dead mules. He tortured Tommy Moore, Vicky's son, with his own vomit. He said we might have to survive on our own vomit.

We stayed in San Francisco about a year before going to Guyana. We lived on Geary Street, in a nice apartment near the Peoples Temple. Buses picked us up to go to church on Sundays. In the service it was my job to sit with visitors and tell them what a nice place the church was, the wonderful things it did.

We were supported by Jim. The church paid the rent. We bought our own groceries with money Jim gave us. The only dinner we ate at the church was Sunday dinner. He said we were to get a hundred dollars out of our Social Security checks, but we never did.

Our apartment had two bedrooms. Zip and I took in two blind people, the Mercers, a couple who joined after a revival in Pittsburgh. Jim sent for them. Jim knew we'd take good care of them, and we did. "You're better to us than our own people," they said.

It wasn't 'til we got to San Francisco that I heard Jim talk 'bout throwing the Bible away. He might have said it earlier but I didn't hear it. He said he didn't believe in the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection or Noah's Ark. I said, "God is mysterious, and He can do things men can't understand."

I never heard him talk like that in Indianapolis. He was a Holy Ghost man in Indianapolis.

I did hear him get down on families earlier. He was saying the church was our family, and we should eat holiday dinners with the church family, not our blood relatives. But Zip and I always had dinners with our blood kinfolk. Mildred and other nieces always had picnics or pitch-ins.

But in California lots of folks were down on their families, 'specially the young people. I think Jim was doing that to make it easier to convince people to do what he wanted. Like if they forgot their families, their families would forget them and wouldn't be after Jim to get their relatives out.

In California we could write anything to our families we wanted to. I wrote my older nieces, not the younger ones. None of them knew we were moving to Guyana, though. I called my nephew Harold in Los Angeles and told him I'd be leaving soon, but the date was indefinite. When he called back, we'd already left, he was told.

Jim told folks to get rid of pictures of their relatives who'd died. But we never did. Zip and I refused! People wouldn't break all ties, no matter what he said.

Only Jim's Planning Commission knew what all was going on. Jim got arrested once in San Francisco on a morals charge. He said he "pushed" the wrong man in a rest room of a movie theatre. He explained that to us. I believe he bought off the police. You know, he was a powerful man in San Francisco at the time.

It leaked out about the chicken livers in San Francisco, just before we left for Guyana. Rose Shelton knew it, that Jim faked cancer healings, saying people had passed cancers when they were really chicken livers. But you couldn't make me believe they weren't cancers! I thought he was a godly man. But we were deceived! He was of the Devil!

Rose Shelton was a big shot with Jim in the U. S., but in Guyana she got pushed aside. Why, she was so crazy to

ride with Jim in his bus, she'd run over people to get on the bus. She'd fix all Jim's special lunches in her kitchen.

She was keeper of the "cancers" too! How could she do that? Jim knew he could never get me to go along with something like that. I think Zip would've hit the ceiling too. She was that kind of person. She would have laid him out.

I knew Jim when he could heal. He healed me of breast cancer in Indianapolis and of a burned leg in Redwood Valley when I got too close to the space heater. Another person in my family, my niece Mary Watkins, passed a uterus tumor after Jim's healing service in Los Angeles.

Jim used to have special powers. He had eyes like Jesus. That's why he wore sunglasses—you couldn't stand to look at them. Jim sold all kinds of healing stuff in the church—pictures of Jim, prayer cloths, healing oil from the Holy Land. I bought many a bottle of that—for \$5 a bottle. Cured my cat Skeeter with it.

People were getting dissatisfied in the church in San Francisco. But any time they started complaining, Jim cut them down. Got so people were scared to open their mouths.

He had people to beg in the streets of San Francisco. They stood on street corners with cups 'til the authorities stopped it. Brought in up to \$200 a day. Zip did it, but I never did, being crippled. Then Jim showed me how a crippled girl did it from her car. But he couldn't get me to do it.



**Public Forum at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, IN, April 22, 1983.**

Photo by Robert Coalson.



**Marian Towne, left, and Hyacinth Thrash at public forum, Christian Theological Seminary, April 22, 1983, Indianapolis, IN.**

Photo by Robert Coalson.

## Chapter 6.

### End Times in Jonestown, Guyana

We were supposed to be in Guyana just one year, to help the Guyanese get on their feet. They couldn't get loans or anything from the British after they got their independence in 1966. Jim brought some pretty smart people with him—farmers, carpenters, some “old warrior” farmers from down South. Chuck Beikman from Indianapolis was a shoemaker and taught natives to make shoes from scratch.

Zip and I were the only ones who left on our plane from Oakland, California, during July of 1977. We landed in New York to change planes and there met up with twins from the Peoples Temple who'd come in on another plane. Jim had everybody to leave from different airports, I reckon, so people wouldn't get suspicious. Some flew to Georgetown from Florida.

I never saw my passport. Jim took a bunch of us at a time to get our passports in San Francisco, but he kept them. We only got them when we got on the plane. We never saw our plane ticket 'til we were in the airport. I reckon he didn't want folks getting away.

We got into Georgetown about 11 p.m. Since it was so late, they said we could go through Immigration the next

day. Georgetown itself was a pretty nice place—houses in pastel shades, some on stilts because of the dampness, some with nice wrought iron gates and grill work.

Jim was at Headquarters at Lamaha Gardens when we arrived. He asked how I liked Guyana. I told him I hadn't seen enough of it to say. Headquarters were nice. I slept in an upstairs bedroom.

Immigration the next morning was real makeshift. They searched our luggage. We didn't bring any money in because we never had any to bring in. There was a health exam—X-rays, blood test, urine test. There wasn't a reading test. The only question they asked me was, "What kind of work will you be doing? Will you be a nanny?"

I said, "Why, yes, I reckon I will." Jim must have answered for all of us. It's pitiful to fool folks like that, and Guyana such a struggling nation!

When we got through Immigration, it started raining so hard, and no place to get shelter. Zip cried, "I never seen a place like this!" But in half an hour the rain quit and the sun came out. We dried off in the hot sun.

We never saw Georgetown again after we got on the boat for Jonestown. Only the higher-ups, the basketball team, and the young people in a show group had any contact with city folks.

It was a slow boat to Jonestown, from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., and then by dump truck about two miles to the compound. Jim picked the place, I reckon, where he thought nobody could get out.

At first Jim talked about self sufficiency, feeding ourselves and feeding the poor Guyanese. But he had to ship all kinds of stuff over there—lumber, machinery, tools



and eventually food. He must've been in cahoots with lots of different people, including the Guyanese, to get all that stuff.

Because they were still building on our cottage, we first stayed in a long house made of thatch and set on blocks. It leaked terrible. Jim kept saying he'd roof it, but he never did. We had pans sitting all around to catch the water. We were just sick and disgusted! But we never complained, so he gave us praises.

One lady put out that the inside of the dorm looked like a slave ship. It had triple-decker beds. Bates' cousin fell out of the top bunk and reported it to one of the Concerned Relatives inspecting the place. Jim cursed her out for that! Ooh, ooh! She was trembling. All his henchmen were shoving fists in her face. So I knew better than to complain. I knew when they got done with me, there'd be nothing left.

Our cottage slept four—Esther Mueller, who'd been Jim's cook and housekeeper for years; Ruth, who had a stroke in California but could still type; Zip and me. I felt so sorry for Ruth. Though terribly crippled, she still typed medical records for the nurses. About six weeks before the end, she got an awful crying spell. She wondered why she couldn't get healed. She said, "I thought Jim was a different man. He brought us here like slaves. I left my family in the U.S. and haven't got my healing." Did she have a premonition of the end? I tried to soothe her. I said she'd be healed yet.

Our cottage was wooden, made from lumber shipped in from the U. S., though we had a sawmill and a jungle full of trees. I guess people were coming so fast, they

couldn't keep up. It was about sixteen by sixteen feet, unpainted. Shutters and windows were prepainted green, pink or blue. We had four beds, one in each corner, with windows on three sides for cross ventilation. We had no screens or glass in the windows. When it rained, we closed the shutters. Flies were real bad. Most of my day's work was swatting flies. The roof was made of tin. The sound of rain on the roof was nice but it made the cottage real hot during the day.

Jim's place had screens and glass, though. Air conditioning too. Marceline's porch was screened. They had separate places. Our cottages were all at the far north end of the compound. We could look down to Jim's from our place, and we could talk to Marcie on her porch from ours. Some people was jealous because they figured we were Jim's picked since we'd been with him so long, from his early days in Indianapolis.

All the new cottages had porches with a chair and bench. And four wooden steps with a railing to hang on to. We kept our cottage real clean. A man came once a week to mop the floor. Beds were hand-made, just a mattress on boards, no springs. We pressed our clothes by putting them under the mattress. We had hand-made chairs too. Pop Jackson made mine. It was padded, and we slip-covered it. Zip crocheted nice throw rugs to put on the plank floor.

Grass and weeds grew so fast, you'd cut them down and two or three days later they'd be tall as you again. The jungle had real pretty flowers, blood red. They brought some out of the jungle to plant along our fence. They got high as my waist and bloomed all year.

Most of the trees lost their leaves, but they grew right back again. Lots of things you could get two crops of—peanuts, potatoes. Bananas they brought out of the jungle and planted. Before we left California, Jim said, “You’ll have so many bananas, you’ll get sick of them.” But we never did, because he sold them up and down the river. Chickens too! At first we had chicken, but he later stopped that.

Jim started classes on black history and Africa. I named twenty five African countries on a test we seniors took, and he praised me for that when folks complained about how hard it was to learn African names. It was just something to keep our minds occupied. Nobody wanted to return to Africa. We just wanted to find out where we came from. (Most of us didn’t know anything about our heritage. All we knew was what the white man told us.)

We had exercise class close to the pavilion—bending and stretching. Women like nurses taught us. Then we just sat around, did hand work and read. At first I helped in the shop by sanding rough edges off wooden toys for sale. Seniors made the nicest crafts! They sold them up and down the river and in Georgetown. They made real nice dolls—different races. Called them Jonestown dolls. They were twelve inches long and sold for \$25 to \$35, all cloth.

At first Zip worked in the radio room, but finally she told Jim she didn’t want anything to do with the place because they were coming in and out with mud on their shoes, messing up the place. Then she worked at the commissary, handing out clothes.

Maybe Zip got tired of what was going on at the radio room. Jim trusted her not to butt into his business. Of course, if she ever thought of it, she was probably scared to do it because of people coming and going at all hours.

Jim got followers because he convinced them he was the only white man who cared about blacks. I knew he wasn't what he said, but Zip was more gullible. She didn't have a mind like mine. I have an inner self to guide me.

Jewelry they sold up and down the river too. Zip gave Jim her watch to sell, but I got my watch now, right here!

They sold our good clothes in San Francisco. When we flew to Guyana, the nurses moved into our apartment and got it. We waited for our stuff to come, but it never did. They just sold it or passed it out to other people. Zip pitched a lizard that time! She really told Jim off about that. When she saw her sheets drying on someone else's line, she snatched them off! I brought my sheets back with me from Guyana.

A typical day for me in Jonestown at the beginning was like this: get up around half past six or seven, straighten up, wash out my clothes, and do my exercises. Then I waited for breakfast. They brought our breakfast on a tray; we didn't go down to the mess hall to eat.

Breakfast was mostly white rice and gravy. I don't like gravy, so I had my rice with milk. One woman got an impacted bowel from all that white rice and had to go to the hospital! At first we had a little juice and coffee, but that didn't last long. I can remember twice we had bacon. My, we carried on—slapped our hands, hooted and

hollered. Jim must've sold the pork up and down the river, or the people working in the kitchen got it. We had to pass the kitchen to go to the privy, about a block from our cottage. I know they had freezers to keep the pork in when they butchered hogs, but we never got any. (I could see the freezers on my way to the privy.)

Now, you know you need some protein. A little meat, some cheese and eggs. We did get some black Cuban beans which they raised. The cooks made a good dish out of the beans. But most vegetables were greens.

Besides hogs they raised chickens, big ones! When they butchered, we figured we'd get a little liver or heart or gizzards that you can't sell so easy, but we never did. Sweet potatoes they raised two crops of because of the climate, but we old folks hardly got any. And bananas! He wouldn't let us eat them! Maybe he was trying to starve his seniors.

Once we got something like a grapefruit, but in two weeks that ran out and we never saw it again. I saw no lettuce or Jello, only once when Agnes brought a tray of leftovers from Jim and his henchmen, who were having a meeting. (Agnes was Jim's adopted daughter.) One evening she came to our cottage and asked, hush-hush like, "Do y'all want some food?"

Were we *surprised* at the food! There was Jello and coffee, salad and meat! First Jello I saw since California, and here it was leftovers from the staff's food. The kitchen help ate well too. They got the pie, I expect.

I only went down to the mess hall two or three times 'cause it was outdoors, with no sides, just a roof. Flies were real bad. Mosquitos so big they could walk away

with you. One night I stayed awake all night, swatting mosquitos. The medical people finally gave me some oil to rub on to keep them away.

They had a bakery around the corner from us. Sundays we got doughnuts and rolls. They were *good!* Those boys baked night and day. I don't know why we didn't get more baked goods, since they were baking all the time. They must've sold that up and down the river too.

I know they sold sheets to the natives. For twenty five dollars each! Jim had people to write home to their folks to send sheets. Zip was going to write our people, but I said, "No! Don't you do it! We already give him all we owned. I don't want my family sending him no more!" (They were nice sheets, floral prints and all, but twenty five dollars! He was just trying to get rich quick!)

One thing you can say for Jim—he didn't deny people medical care when they needed it. Or maybe that was Marceline's doing, because she was a nurse. Larry Schacht, the doctor, and the nurses was always good to me. They had their hands full, treating folks for bites and foot diseases and accidents on the job.

We had a little hospital on the grounds. It was fixed up real neat. Jim got all kinds of equipment from the States—X-ray machines, examining tables, blood test machines. We all had our blood pressure checked regular, Indians too. They came in to our mission for medical care. Jim was real good to them. Alfred Tschetter ran the X-ray machine. He was a trained technician—did hospital work in the States. Larry Layton helped him.

Jim had real caring nurses too, both black and white. I got along fine with all of them. Some nurses survived because they stayed in San Francisco to work. They had such good-paying jobs there that Jim had them to stay and send their tithes.

(I could've done that too. I could've stayed in Redwood Valley, kept my job taking care of mental patients, and sent my tithes to Jim in Guyana.)

I didn't walk around the grounds much because it was so rough. It was hard for me to get around with my cane. We had plank walks around the house, and it was easy to trip on them. So I stayed in my cottage most of the time.

I needed some dental work done. In California I had SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and Medi-Cal, a state program like Medicare. In Guyana I was supposed to get my lower plate, but we didn't have anybody in Jonestown that could make dentures. We did have a girl who pulled and cleaned teeth, an apprentice to a dentist who came out from Georgetown. But most of the people I knew had false teeth.

I didn't have to work in the fields 'cause I was crippled. One time a bunch of old women stood up for themselves. There were about twenty five who went to the fields and then came back, saying, "We didn't come out here to work in the hot sun!" They were too old for that anyhow. Zip refused too! She told Jim off about that! (She did help out picking feathers off chickens, though, when they butchered.)

The heat was something fierce! Most of the women weren't used to it. They didn't even know what a field was! They came from cities like Detroit and San

Francisco. Most had never lived on a farm or done field work.

My forehead peeled, it was so hot. Usually the workers went out early in the morning. At noon he'd let some come in. Marceline got after him one time, to let the women come in. I felt so sorry for them. They went from nice homes in the States to working in the hot sun in jeans!

We were brainwashed! Programmed, like with dope! Promises, promises! Jim picked people that had something wrong with them to do his work. Some laughed out loud in church!

Zip was an easy-type person, easily led, like having a ring in your nose. I don't know whether Zip ever signed a confession or not. I know she signed something! Some wrote about their boyfriends, the diseases they got, and all. It was pitiful. Finally, Jim had such a big stack of letters, he quit asking. He just wanted to get things on people so he could make them do things.

I was just going to stay in Guyana one year—to do mission work. As it turned out, I was there sixteen months. The place had potential, if Jim had done right. But Jim started ranting and raving about the FBI and the CIA coming to get us. At the end the medicine ran out, vitamins ran out, and food ran out. I guess Jim knew he was going to do something else and didn't bother to keep up his supplies.

Jim lied when he said he was eating same as us. When some old people complained, he laid them out. He gave alibis like "We'll get things" or "It's been a bad year."



When I heard that, I just took a book and read, didn't pay any attention to him.

When one old lady complained of the heat and asked for a fan, he said, "I don't know why you can't take the heat. I'm Father here, and I'm taking it." (But we knew he had a fan and air conditioner both.)

Then some others said, "Oh, they're worrying Father so. They shouldn't bother him when he has so much to think about."

We had people there lots older than me. One woman was 108. Pops was 103 and his wife ninety some. In another year, everyone of them would've been dead. I'd been gone in six months myself. I was just 89 pounds when they found me.

I just decided I had to go along with the program. You know, when you got your hand in the lion's mouth, you got to ease it out. *Then* you sock him!

Once Jim got on the P. A. system and said, "You all ought to be like Hyacinth and Zip. They never complain." That made some folks mad, but I just kept my mouth closed and I'm glad I did. The sweat was just running off me, but I didn't complain.

You see, it didn't do any good to complain. Complainers came up missing. Besides, I'm not a complainer. I always try to do my part. I was just hoping one day I'd get out of there. I was just hoping some way out would come along. I was praying God would get me out.

Jim wasn't talking about God any more. He was God, so don't mention anything about prayer! I believe we'd all have gotten out of there alive if we'd had secret prayer

meetings. His bodyguards were so wrapped up in Jim, we couldn't have had an uprising.

When Jim started acting up, I had double feelings. Sometimes I thought I'd never get out, sometimes I did. I was ready to walk through the jungles to escape; then I'd get resigned to dying there.

Teenagers got disciplined real rough. He had a black box he put kids in when they didn't obey. I heard about it but didn't see it. He beat them too. I saw the kids shaking like leaves on the trees! We tried to ask them what was going on when we saw them on the path. They just looked like they'd been drug through the mill.

Sometimes he tried to encourage the boys. He'd say, "This is Black Town. You might be Prime Minister some day." The boys was all tickled to hear that. So he made promises to get the kids to do things.

There was one girl who had a nervous breakdown. Her husband was in Guyana first. Then she came. She didn't like it, cried all the time, and fought like crazy. Then, after a month she changed completely and stuck up for Jim, did whatever he wanted. She died there. Her husband was one of those that escaped through the jungle. I don't know what Jim did to make her come around. Was she drugged?

The only news we had of the outside was from Jim over the loudspeaker. He'd tell about the movie stars who died, said the U. S. was going under. "Be glad you're out of there," he said. With me, it went in one ear and out the other. He was just trying to get folks down on the U. S. He called on people to tell what a hard life they had in the U. S. and how Jim saved them. He never called on me. I

think he could read the minds of folks he could ask. Poor old senior citizens!

One time when we were short of meat and Jim was talking about mercenaries coming to get us, there was this shot. Later we all ate a good stew. He asked how we liked it. "Oh, it was good," they all said, 'cause we had no meat for a long time. Then he said it was a mercenary we ate.

That was just bull stuff! I believe he shot into the air.

Concerned Relatives in California was contacting their folks in Guyana. If you wrote out complaining, Jim destroyed the letters or they'd beat you. Zip was writing out good stuff and never mentioned me. My family thought I was dead because I quit writing.

One sixty-year-old lady was accused of complaining about Jim. So his henchmen slapped her and Jim called her a *B-I-T*. (Jim never laid his hands on the people. He had his henchmen do the dirty work.) Then Jim made her take off all her clothes and walk up and down the aisles of the pavilion nude. And the pavilion was full of people—nine hundred of them! I couldn't look. I just sat at the back and held my head down with my hand. The next day I met her on the path, and she turned her face from me. I said, "Don't you turn your face!" We hugged and kissed right there on the path. I told her I felt sorry for her and not to be ashamed, since she couldn't help it.

We had these nights when old people stood guard with sticks up and down the river, for three or four hours at a stretch. Already in Redwood Valley and in Indianapolis before that, he said people threatened to kill us. Got so folks said they'd just as soon take their

chances with the enemy. Folks were getting more scared of Jim than the enemy. I was thinking the enemy might as well come and get it over with, because it couldn't get worse!

He had these old people to get picks and shovels, whatever they could find, and stand guard 'cause the U. S. Army was coming to get us! Huh! The U. S. wasn't even *thinking* of us! They didn't even know who we were or where we were! It was terrifying. Somedays I just wouldn't get out of bed. Once I started saying, "Maybe we'd be better off dead," but I didn't say it.

It was like Hitler's camp. I had a bladder infection, so I had to go to the toilet a lot—and the only place an outdoor privy about a block away!

One night I sat up all night in the pavilion. The next night I just got up and went back to bed. Some said, "What, aren't you going to stay?"

I said, "If the mercenaries come, they'll just have to kill me. I'm going to bed." And we'd be so *hungry*! And sitting on the hard benches! Got so folks were falling asleep and falling off the benches.

People were getting awful restless and dissatisfied. They knew he was lying, that he'd have to do something drastic pretty soon. That's when he came up with his poison strategy, I expect.

I never did go through a suicide drill. I heard Jim talk about suicide only one time while I was still going to the pavilion. The other times Zip told me about it. But I never did believe he'd go through with it. He was popping pills and eating peanuts at the same time—acting crazy. But I didn't believe they were real drugs he was taking. Zip told

me how they drank Kool-Aid in the drill. It was more of a "pretend" thing, she said. We laughed about it and at him.

I did find out about the cyanide coming, though. One day, Wanda, the girl who washed my hair, said, "You know what I saw being unloaded?"

I said, "No, what?"

"Promise you won't tell another person?"

I said, "I'm telling no *body*, and you better be careful who you talk to."

"Cyanide," she said. "I saw cyanide, a big barrel full."

"Why, that's deadly poison," I said. I thought it was for the rats in the barn. We had these open drainage ditches and sanitation was not too good.

She dropped the talk when I dismissed it. I was just keeping everything to myself.

Next time she came back, I said, "Wanda, I'm walking awful good now with my cane. Pretty soon I might be able to throw my cane away. 'Specially if I don't get some new rubber tips. These rocks are rubbing off the rubber."

"You might not need your cane at all," she said.

"You mean I'm gonna get healed?" I said.

But she didn't say more.

Poor Bates! On those "White Nights," when we were supposed to guard the compound, she was like a wild woman. She had a real hoarse, gravelly voice. She was gonna "kill the enemy" before they got to Jim. She said she was ready to lay down her life before they got to Jim.

One night an old lady fell in the water. Jim had a cabin cruiser down at the dock, a real nice one, with bunk beds and a little kitchen. They used it to bring people into the jungle and to go to market in Georgetown—a real slow

process. Well, we were on the cruiser that night, guarding with machetes or cutters, "cutlasses," as Jim called them. They had a narrow gangway with a railing on only one side. I was knocked down but not into the water. This one lady fell in and broke her pelvis bone. She was taken to the Georgetown Hospital.

Another woman, during a "White Night," said she wished she could die and get it over with. I thought it, but didn't say it. One night I said, "I'm tired of this—running out of bed at 2 or 3 a.m., getting dressed." So, the next night I just stayed in my cottage. I said, "If they're going to kill me anyhow, I'll be here and they can do it here."

There was a lot of stealing. Jim talked a lot about communal living and sharing. He wanted to be a communist and wanted us to be communists too. He said God was a communist. He wanted everybody to help each other. It worked in China. I used to think communism was something pretty special.

Being communist doesn't mean you don't have private property. The Russians and Chinese still had their own homes and personal possessions.

You couldn't lock your things up. So I got a lot of things stolen from me, like a nice slip, a hair brush, and some jewelry. I finally told Jim I was tired of the stealing, so he got on the loud speaker and told the people that everything they stole, they should bring it back. But you know people wouldn't do that!

I told Marceline about all the things they stole from me, and she gave me two nice robes. She was real sweet. She didn't want a mess coming up.

When we came back from those “White Nights,” we’d sometimes be locked out of our cottage. One night we were out on the boat ‘til about 4 a.m. It was hot and we were sweating. Finally we gave up and went back home. But we couldn’t get in! People were sleeping in our beds and all over the floor! They’d been snooping through our personal belongings and stealing our stuff!

After a while I stopped taking showers and just gave myself a sponge bath. I had arthritis so bad, I couldn’t stand the cold showers. They were ‘sposed to put barrels on top of the shower stations so the sun could heat the water. But they never got around to that. Or maybe they just got tired and gave up. The showers were open at the top, so you could get a draft blowing in on you. Some just put a bucket of water out for the sun to warm, and that worked pretty good. You better believe Jim had hot and cold running water, though!

Now, I don’t mind giving, if there’s real need. I’d give the last piece of clothing I had if someone really needed it. I don’t know what the Bible means, about holding all goods in common. I’m not deep enough into the Bible to know. But I think what Jim was doing was crazy! He’d take every last thing you had!

If I’d had the time and strength, I bet I could’ve found everything they took off me. I just would’ve gone around to all the cabins and collected my stuff! You know, if you dig a ditch for your brother, you’ll fall in it. (They didn’t get to wear my stuff, either, in the end. You just have to be careful how you do other people!)

I wonder what Jim's thinking, if he has a conscience about what he did. 'Cause I believe he's conscious, that you don't have to wait 'til Resurrection Day to know.

Already in San Francisco Jim started talking about being God, saying he was the Father and God. Well, I knew he wasn't God, 'cause God is a Spirit, but you couldn't tell him that. You could say that only to a few.

I never called him Father, just Jim. I suppose it was all right for the little children to call him Father, 'specially the orphans. But I never called him Father.

He said he was the Comforter too. The Gospel of John says, "I am leaving now, but I shall send a Comforter." Well, Jim said he was it! A lot of people said they believed it, because what did God ever do for us, anyhow? Zip believed he was. Rosie Ijames and some others didn't believe it. I said, "We'll see." I guess I wanted to believe he was.

At first I talked to Zip about what Jim was saying. She said, "What did Jesus ever do for us anyway? It was Jim who did for us."

I said, "Why, it's a mystery. You know Jim didn't create the universe. It was some supernatural being did that, not Jim."

I kept thinking on Bible things. Jim would say, "Your people were slaves." That's true. But it didn't matter they couldn't read or write. They could pray, and God heard their prayers, just like God spoke to Moses, who brought his people out. The prayers of our people brought us out of slavery. Whites believed in the power of prayer too; otherwise they wouldn't have been scared of black folks praying. That's why they forbid black folks to have



church early on. 'Cause they knew God could hear the prayers of black folks!

I never did get down on my knees and pray in my cottage with three others in the room, for fear of what they might say to Jim. But I prayed in bed. Mostly I was worrying how I could get away. I just racked my mind coming and going: how could I get away? I was just hoping someone would come forth with a way. Some were working on it. Larry Layton's sister was, and that man who came to interview us.

One time in a meeting in the pavilion Jim looked at me real hard, just stared at me. I wondered what he was thinking. Could he read my mind?

He was praising Zip a lot at that time, but he never gave me any praises. Jim must've thought Zip was safe, wouldn't give him any trouble. That time somebody came from Los Angeles, the Concerned Relatives organization, to interview me, nobody interviewed Zip. My nephew Harold was contacted by a defector. Jim was throwing off about me.

This man asked was I okay. I said, "I'm fine. Tell my family not to worry." The man looked at me so hard.

Another woman was dragging so slow, "W-e-l-l, . . ." Then he knew.

Bates' aunt, the one that fell out of the top bunk, almost got killed for reporting that to the man. She said she didn't mean it tell it; it just came out.

But I believe she meant to tell. She was very unhappy she came to Guyana and wanted to go home. She had to go to the hospital. "I'm tired," she told the man from Concerned Relatives.

Jim moved the seniors to lower bunks then!

Finally Jim stopped the visits from Concerned Relatives. He'd say, "They don't care about you!" Jim had Prime Minister Burnham to stop the people in Georgetown.

Jim had a pistol and would shoot it up into the trees during the meeting. I wonder if he was planning to shoot us then already. One night he said, "I ought to kill every last one of you!"

Viola Goldshalk, a white lady, and I used to talk about what he meant. We had the same thoughts and would sit together. She was sorry she came. Oh, we loved each other. She used to say, "I feel like we've known each other in another life." But we never thought we were in danger then. We used to laugh at Jim, thought he was crazy!

One day Esther Mueller, one of our roommates that used to be Jones' housekeeper, told me Jim and Marceline were separated. I couldn't believe it! She said they'd been separated for months already, that Marcie had her own place.

Esther, Zip and I were puzzled over their separation. We thought maybe it meant the program might break up and we could all go home. We would've been tickled to go home! We'd started from scratch and could start from scratch again!

We could look down at Jim's place from our cottage. Once we saw him in his room with four nurses waiting on him. They had only their bikinis on! Nothing on top and nothing on the bottom! He was cursing his nurses!

In Guyana we had what I called "church sex." Jim was always bragging about how good he was at it. One girl got up and testified, "You ain't been - - - - - 'til you been - - - - - by Jim." Marcie just hung her head. Then a homosexual said the same thing. One night they made the bed right up on stage to punish a boy for doing something he wasn't supposed to, probably having sex with someone not authorized. Poor boy couldn't perform.

Jim always had young white women. He didn't fool with older women. People just laughed. They knew he was sick but couldn't do a thing about it. If I'd been Marcie, I'd called the authorities and had him put away in the nut home to get straightened out.

One night, about 11 or 12 p.m., I couldn't sleep. There was noise outside my window, so I looked out. There was Marceline and two of her sons, just struggling! She said, "I'm good and tired. I've taken this for fourteen years and I'm not going to take it any longer." She was cursing! Her sons had to hold her down and carry her back. They told her to be quiet or everybody in the camp would hear. I believe, if they'd let her, she would've killed Jim that night. I think I would have. They both had guns, for their own protection, they said.

I don't know exactly what she was referring to, what she took for fourteen years. But it turned out he'd taken mistresses. He'd quit Carolyn Moore Layton and Karen Layton by then, both of which had been Larry's wives. There was only Annie left. I wonder what would've happened, if he'd taken Annie and made his escape to Russia or someplace like that. I wonder what would've become of all of us.

No one would've *dreamed* in Indianapolis, when we were all still there, that he would've even *looked* at another woman, the way he preached. He was always bragging about his marriage, about their relationship. At the end she just looked pitiful. She was a a real nice person. It hurt me so bad how he did her. I know he's in hell!

One day before the end, Zip said she dreamed Jim was dead, as if he was sailing up off the ground. He was standing up, tall, but not touching the ground. I knew then he wouldn't escape, but I didn't tell my interpretation to Zip.

In Indianapolis he was always preaching against fornication, that men should stay with their wives. He'd say, "I know there's a man and woman here tonight who are fornicating. If they don't stop it, I'll put them out of the church."

When we got to Guyana, all he talked about was sex, sex, sex. I said, "Jesus, what have I got myself into?"

In San Francisco already he started throwing the Bible away. He threw away the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, Noah's Ark. He had me to sell our big family Bible. Said it cost too much to ship to Guyana. The old people, some of them, kept their Bibles but didn't take them to the pavilion once we got to Jonestown, for fear Jim'd take them away.

Jim did get a shipment of Gideon Bibles in Guyana. But when the toilet paper ran out, he told us to use the leaves of the Bible. But I couldn't do it! Not God's Word! I hunted up little pieces of paper and stored up bits of rags to use.

Jim *changed*! Some say he was always like that, but he *changed*! I knew him when he was good, when he was called of God. I reckon he just got hungry<sup>r</sup> for money and lost his gift of healing. God struck him down!

I remember once in California he said, "The money's really coming in—two and a half million," he said. Then he stopped saying how many millions. We should've wondered what he was doing with all that money. But he did tell us! He said he was going to fix up a place for us seniors.

Everything he touched turned to money. He was a schemer, could've made all the money he wanted. He didn't have to do what he did in the end.

I wish Marceline had left him in 1968 in Redwood Valley when he put out that she was a mental case with suicidal tendencies. Oh, we felt so sorry for him! Her parents, the Baldwins, came from Richmond, Indiana, to visit. If Marcie had left him then, the beans would've been spilt and we could've come back to Indianapolis. But I reckon he threatened to kill the children if she left him, and she loved those children!

Jim was sick! The reason he went to Brazil from Indianapolis before they went to California was 'cause he was sick. He came back, saying the doctors gave him a clean bill of health. But he just got worse in Guyana. His family, doctor and lawyer were all trying to get him to go away for a rest. His family talked to him for half a day once about leaving to go to a hospital.

In Guyana he had fainting spells. He'd collapse and everybody'd break their necks to get something for him.

“Father’s dying, Father’s dying,” they’d say. But I noticed he got all right pretty quick.

You never saw such happy folks when Jim announced one day he was going to go away and take a rest. ‘Cause folks thought they could get out and back to the States. He said Mother Marceline was taking over. Oh, there was singing and clapping! But then the next day he changed his mind, cursed like a sailor!

Some folks were practicing voodoo, like they got in Haiti. Jim used to preach against it. Folks had these dolls they stuck pins in. I never got into it. One day I found straw all over my bed, and I confronted the woman who did it. Folks were just desperate to try anything they could think of.

Jim had different escape plans. We were all going to Russia, he said, and everybody was studying communism. Some was learning Russian too, but I never did. Then one day he announced the Russians wouldn’t accept all nine hundred of us, only his family. Oh, folks were heart sick! ‘Cause we figured if we ever got to Russia, we’d get home alive.

Besides the guest house in Georgetown and the cabin cruiser, Jim had a big ocean-going vessel. I never saw it, but Helen Swainey, who cleaned it and fixed it up nice inside for Jim, told me about it. I think Jim was planning his escape on that liner.

Near the end Jim stopped by our cottage. We were all sitting there—Esther, Ruth, Zip and me. His hair was wind-blown, and he asked for a comb. Zip gave him hers. He said he was going to meet with some big shots in Georgetown. He looked fat as could be and asked how

we were getting along. He never said a word about me not going down to the pavilion any more. He probably had too much on his mind to miss me.

Jim's mother, Lynetta, died on the compound before the end. She knew what Jim was like. She said he was strange as a child, holding church services and taming animals. Lynetta was a smoker and got emphysema. Doctors didn't want Jim to take her to Guyana, but he did anyhow. Her death was real mysterious. We couldn't visit her. One day she was all right; the next day they announced she died during the night. Real strange! When Jim didn't send her body back to the States, that verified he wasn't going back himself. He sure had enough money to send her body back.

The dogs howled when Lynetta died. Dogs can smell death. After she died, we kept her little dog in our cottage. Well, when it saw Zip, it just started cutting up terrible. It smelled death on Zip, I think. That was about one week before the end. That worried me, how it carried on with Zip and not with me, but I didn't say anything about it to Zip.

A week or so before the end, Marceline's parents came from Indiana to visit her. Zip and I knew them from our early days with Jim in Indianapolis. Well, they didn't stay long in Jonestown. I could hardly believe it when they came to say good-bye. They were leaving the next day. They kissed us all good-bye. I guess Jim wanted them out of there if Representative Leo Ryan of California was coming.

Folks were getting agitated about Ryan's visit. Jim was saying the Stoens would never get John-John alive. See, Jim was just furious with Tim and Grace for defecting. Grace got stopped in Georgetown when she came to visit John-John. Jim said Grace would get the boy "over my dead body." (That's what Zip reported to me.)

The people were hearing things but scared to talk open and frank. I heard Rose Shelton wanted to talk to me, but she never came. You only met people on the path going to the toilet or water fountain. They were too scared to stop and talk. They were always in a rush to go someplace or do something.

That last day, Saturday, November 18, 1978, Zip was working in the commissary all day, distributing clothes. Congressman Ryan had been there all day, interviewing folks to see if any wanted to leave. Most of them were saying they liked it in Jonestown just fine.

See, relatives came to Georgetown trying to get their people out. But Jim phoned his henchmen, Sharon Amos and them at Lamaha Gardens, to tell the relatives to go back to the States. Some were trying to get their relatives out through Venezuela. The border was just about fifty miles from Jonestown, but Jim fixed it with the government to prevent that. One man defected and walked all the way to Venezuela. Jim had men combing the jungles.

The day of Ryan's visit, I remember a plane buzzing the compound. We all thought it was a Guyanese plane. Some stood out waving. I never saw Ryan myself, 'cause I didn't go to the pavilion, but Zip, Esther and Ruth did. Zip



came back and said Ryan was satisfied none wanted to leave, that all were happy to stay, when Edith Bogue stepped up. She stirred up the hornet's nest! Ryan was just getting his bags ready to put in the truck to take off for the Port Kaituma air strip when Edith said she wanted to leave with her whole family, the whole blood unit. That's when all hell broke loose.

Ryan said anybody who wanted to leave could leave. He'd take them out. And if there wasn't enough room for all, he'd come back again and again to get any who wanted out.

When Zip came back to the cottage and reported that, I said, "That so?" See, I wanted to leave myself, but wasn't going to tell Zip, for fear she'd tell Jim. (I had this plan to go to Georgetown to get my bottom plate fixed. I planned to go to the American Embassy and ask for a place to hide.)

Jim had people out with cutters, sickles, or scythes, whatever they could find, hollering, "Come and get us!"

Jim would say, "The mercenaries are out in the jungle. That's the only way they can reach us." Some folks whooped like Indians. Bates let out a real war whoop.

When Zip came back from the pavilion, she said, "Jim's going to be awful mad at you if you don't come down to the pavilion." (Jim was on the loudspeaker, hollering, "Alert! Alert!")

I said, "He'll just have to come and drag me down. 'Cause I ain't going on my own!"

Zip seemed awful worried. She looked at me, as if to tell me something. "Jim has some important news for everybody." Then she said, "I believe I'll wear my red

sweater tonight." That was strange because she never talked about what she was wearing.

Esther put a lot of food out on the porch for the cat. I thought that was too much food for one cat. Then she said, "Ryan's come and something's happened over at the Port Kaituma air strip. Jim's not telling what it is. We'll tell you tonight when we get back."

I didn't say anything and they left. Jim was blaring over the loudspeaker: "Lay down your tools. Quit cooking and come to the pavilion." Nobody ate that night. The kitchen stopped for good that night.

When I heard the first shooting, I hid under the bed. They were calling for Rheaviana Beam outside my cottage. I figured she was hiding 'cause she didn't want to go down to the pavilion either. I figured they fired the gun to scare her into going.

My bed was behind the door, and I had a wide bedspread that hung down to the floor on both sides. So I scrunched down in the far corner under the bed. I was real thin then. (I weighed only eighty nine pounds when they found me.)

Then I got to thinking: "Maybe the mercenaries *have* come!" But I was so tired, after a while I crawled out from under and went into the bed and covered up with the spread. Next thing I knew, it was Sunday morning, November 19, 1978.

I woke up about half past six or seven and looked around. "That's funny," I said, "Jim must still be carrying

on, 'cause the girls haven't come back yet." So I turned over and went back to sleep.

About eight o'clock I *had* to get up to go to the toilet. I was hungry too, 'cause I didn't have supper the night before, and it was late for breakfast. So I got dressed to go out.

When I got outside, it was like a ghost town. I didn't see or hear anybody. I went over to another senior citizen building where my friend Birdy lived. When I got to the door, I saw Birdy sitting in the chair, draped in a sheet. I could tell it was Birdy by her shoes. I says, "Birdy, Birdy, what's wrong?" But she didn't move. Then I looked behind Birdy and saw Sister Lavina. She was covered up too. I pulled the sheet back to look at her. She was dead.

I looked down the row of beds and all the people were either sitting up or laying in bed. They were all covered with sheets. I called, "Bates! Bates!" but she didn't answer. I said, "Oh, my God, they came and killed them all, and I's the onliest one alive! Why didn't they take me too?"

I started screaming! I thought maybe I was dead too. I pinched myself. Was I alive? I couldn't believe it. I just stood there. I thought of Zip, and Esther, and Ruth. They must be dead too.

I could see down to the kitchen. The light was on. Sandwiches were on the table, some covered and some not, like they'd just been left. I started shaking all over, crying, and wringing my hands. I was standing there, seeing all those bodies covered with sheets. And I heard a voice, just as plain, like a radio playing behind you in the distance, saying, "Fear not; I am with you." I believe it

was the Spirit of the Lord. I looked around, dropped my hands, and the fear left me.

I went back to my cottage, climbed up the steps, and sat down in my chair. I sat there a long time. Then I thought I'd better call for help. So I took a big white towel and went outside and waved it real hard. But there was nobody to see it. There wasn't a sound.

We kept powdered milk and a plastic jug of water in our cottage, so I mixed up some milk and drank it. That's all I had all day, that and some water.

It rained real hard during the night, Saturday. You could tell by the sand washed up on the plank pathways. But Sunday was bright and clear. Jungle birds were singing so pretty. So I just sat there, listening to the birds.

Late Sunday I got up and thought I might try to escape through the jungle. But there was a real steep cliff and vines were hanging low. I was scared I might fall with my cane and pass out. And nobody there to find me.

So I went to the outhouse and sat down. I always had a problem from all that white rice. I must've dozed off. When I woke up, it was getting day light. So I just sat there and watched the sun come up. It was so pretty. Then, when the sun started beating down real hot, I went back to my cottage. That's when the soldiers from Georgetown came in.

Were they ever surprised to see me! Their eyes were big as moons. They said, "Lady, what you doing here?" When I told them, they said not to be scared, that nothing would happen to me now. Then they took me out and walked me down to the pavilion to show me what hap-

pened. It was like a battlefield—bodies strewn all over. Dead people and dead dogs.

They wanted me to help identify bodies, but I told them I couldn't do it. It's awful hard looking at dead folks when you talked to them just a couple days before. Awful hard seeing your friends dead.

I identified my sister, though, from a distance. She was laying straight, on her back, about two feet from a white lady, just outside the pavilion on the dirt floor. Her left arm was over her waist, with her thumb up. Her right arm was straight by her side. Odell Rhodes pinned her name to her dress. I couldn't go close to touch her, for all the bodies laying around. But I didn't want to touch her.

Pictures in the newspaper later made it look like everybody was linking arms to show they were all in it together. But I don't believe it. I think the bodies were placed that way. Cyanide poisoning is a horrible way to die, and I don't believe they all would've linked arms when they was suffering so. I saw Patty Cartmell too. She was one of Jim's henchmen from the early days in Indianapolis. She was laying in the drainage ditch. Her hair was floating. I think she tried to run away.

My old friend, Grover Smith, came back out of the jungle where he'd been hiding. Was he surprised to see me! He had snuck back the day before to get bananas from the banana shack to take back to the jungle. And he didn't know I was still alive all that time! He kept telling me, "Hyacinth, don't say nothing 'bout Jim!" (See, he believed Jim still had powers, though he was dead.)

They wanted me to go down and see Jim, where he was laying with his head on his throne pillow, but I didn't

want to. They said his eyes were open, like he was seeing something horrible. I believe he is in torment.

When the Guyanese soldiers came in, it was about two days after what happened. Stephan Jones, Jim's only natural son, was there. He was saved 'cause he was in Georgetown with the basketball team. Dale Parks and Odell Rhodes were there too. The grounds was covered with reporters. I just said, "No comment." I didn't feel like talking. I was weak, tired, and just wanted to be alone with my thoughts. I was thinking about going back to the States, what my people would think, and about all the people that died. See, I didn't know Ryan was dead and what caused the murders and suicides 'til they found me and told me.

We would've gotten out if Ryan hadn't come, I think. They told him not to come! Larry Layton's sister Debbie and Teri Buford were in the States trying to convince Ryan not to come then, that it was too dangerous to come at that time. The authorities and some of the defectors and families had a plan to get us all out. But Ryan was bullheaded. He had to play politics and be the big hero. There might've been a battle 'cause Jim had all those guns, but some would've gotten out alive. I hated it that Congressman Ryan got killed, though.

After it was all over, I tried not to dwell on it. I was trying to forget. There were all of those dead being put in bags, 913 in all, people I'd known and loved. I wasn't ashamed of what happened, 'cause it wasn't my fault. God knows I never wanted to be there in the first place. I

never wanted to go to Guyana to die. I couldn't have prevented it. I wasn't scared either. But I was sorry and hurt. I didn't think Jim would do a thing like that. He let us down.

When the Guyanese came, they started cooking. I hadn't eaten for a long time, so I was hungry. But I couldn't eat much—some rice, a hamburger, and a can of 7-Up. They set up a tent to cook. I don't know if they brought their own water supply or not. Jim had four wells on the place, but he could've poisoned the water supply too when he was killing all the people and animals. I knew the water in the plastic jugs in our cottage was good 'cause we'd drawn that from the faucet outside our place in the morning, before the Congressman came. All that time I was on the compound alone, I was thinking, "If nobody comes, I'll die of starvation." 'Cause I wasn't going to drink any of that water on the compound after I saw all the dead bodies.

The night before they found me, it rained. The rain running off my face tasted bitter to me, so I just wiped the rain away from my mouth with my hand. But maybe it was just my thoughts that were bitter to me.

I looked in the tub they used to mix the cyanide poison, and it was all gone. Either they emptied it or they used it all up, killing folks.

Grover ate the bananas. I reckon he figured they didn't stop to poison the bananas. The Guyanese found him and thirty one others in the jungle and brought them back. Grover had been in line to get the poison but kept going to the back of the line and then ran.

Monday morning, when Grover came back, we saw guns stacked on a long table. I said to Grover, "Did the Guyanese bring all those guns?"

"Guyanese? Those guns belong to us!"

Was Jim preparing for a battle? How did he get all the guns? He must've had a lot of side-kicks in the States sending him guns. Who allowed him to do that? How'd he get them past the Guyanese authorities? How was he paying for them? With our Social Security checks?

Grover and I talked 'til about 4 p.m. 'til I got ready to go into Port Kaituma. We talked about how it all happened and how Jim turned out. (Grover had met Jim in Los Angeles and come to Ukiah, where he had a big garden and sold vegetables. He was seventy nine at the time but looked fifty. Grover thought he was getting into something real nice. Two of his sons and their wives joined too, but they defected earlier. Jim was too strict for them—against drinking, going to restaurants, and nightclubs. Lots of folks left when he raised the tithe from 10 to 25%.)

The compound was overrun with people—reporters, doctors, Army and State Department people. The U. S. man in charge stayed in Jim's apartment. There were plenty of clean beds for the people to sleep in. And there was plenty of water, too, after they tested the wells, to clean up the place. They used hoses to clean and spray.

It still worries me, how Zip died. Did she drink the poison? I can't believe it! I pray over it. I wish I'd asked Odell about it. I was in shock, I guess.

I saw needles all over the pavilion, all around the empty tub. They must've shot them with needles when



they tried to get away. Those that ran they killed with guns. I believe Zip would've run. I don't believe she would've submitted willingly. It looked to me like she was dragged where she was laying next to the white woman.

I'm sorry now that I didn't examine her for needle marks, but I was so weak, I couldn't do it, walking among all the dead bodies.

The Guyanese found Mike Prokes in the jungle and brought him back too. He had half a million dollars with him. I saw it with my own eyes! When he saw Grover and me there, his eyes got big as moons. He almost dropped the bag. It was all paper money. Later he shot himself in a motel in Modesto, California. He called a press conference and left a statement saying he'd lost all his black friends and supposed he wasn't to live either. I wouldn't kill myself for anybody. Blacks are not for suicide!

Jim had all kinds of money stashed away, uncashed checks in the safe. I got four checks myself from the American Embassy totaling \$1,030.38, that Jim hadn't cashed. All the way home in the plane I was sitting on my checks in a little plastic bag, since I'd lost my purse. Two white men chaperones on the plane were sitting close to me, so when I went to the rest room, I asked them to watch the bag for me.

There was terrible looting by the Guyanese after they came on the compound. Things were even stolen out of my suitcase. Or maybe it was the reporters prowling all over the place. My pictures were strewn all over. I couldn't pick them all up before I left because of my arthritis and the fact they hurried me so. I thought I'd have more

time to get my things together. But then the bodies started smelling. I guess they wanted to get us out of there.

Operation headquarters was less than a block from my cottage, in the school tent. I stayed up there, talking to Grover. I never slept in my cottage after the Guyanese came in.

I didn't look at Jim's body, though I was only about thirty feet from it. I would've had to walk 'round so many, people I knew and loved. And I was very unsteady on my feet. One lady fell outside her wheelchair and was just laying there.

The first thing I thought of when they told me somebody killed Jim is what he always said, "Nobody'll take my life. I'll lay it down."

Babies were so badly decomposed they couldn't identify them, just had to put them all in one sack in one basket. They were buried like that in Oakland, California. I feel so bad when I think about those babies!

Dake Parks, Odell Rhodes and Stephan Jones were helping the authorities on the compound. They were washing and spraying, wearing masks, identifying the bodies.

They took us by helicopter Monday evening to Port Kaituma, where we spent the first night. It was just eight miles south of Jonestown. There's an awful lot of poor people there. I saw some I'd like to send clothes to.

I stayed in a lady's house with an eating place attached to it. She fixed chicken and rice for supper. There was Edith Bogue and her three grandchildren and her son in one room. I slept in a bed, and Grover and Jim Bogue slept on a pallet on the floor in the same room. I

was sorry I didn't have any money to give her. Grover said he'd send her \$50 from California. I don't know if he did or not.

From Port Kaituma we flew the next day to Georgetown, about 150 miles southeast of Jonestown. It was in a small plane holding about ten passengers. While we were parked on the strip, I scrunched down between the seats. I wasn't going to let anyone shoot me through the window. That's where Ryan and the newspapermen got killed. Other passengers laughed at me, but I said, "I made it this far. I want to get home!"

They took us to a hotel next to the American Embassy where we talked in the lobby. There was Dale Parks and Edith Parks, Dale's grandmother; Odell Rhodes and me. We talked about how people looked after they died, how the babies died in Odell's arms. He'd have to hold them, he said. There was twenty eight babies, and they were having convulsions. Odell said he cried 'til he had no more tears. He said Jim was hurrying the people up, telling them to be brave. Some were running around, saying they didn't want to die. It was pitiful, to hear Odell tell it. Bodyguards were saying, "Every G-d— one of you is going to die." Some tried to run away, but got shot down or clubbed down with sticks, he said. One girl tried again and again to give the poison to her baby. Finally she did it, then gave it to herself and went to the river bank to die. One eleven or twelve-year-old girl told Odell, "I'm too young to die." Odell fooled Larry Schacht and the nurses by offering to go for a stethoscope. But then he lit out for the jungle.

Dale told us a lot when we were waiting in Georgetown, how Jim fooled the people. I said, "Dale, if you knew what was going on, why didn't you tell us?"

He told how he held the pitcher pouring wine for Jim behind a shirt to make it look like Jim was turning water into wine. "Dale," I cried, "now your Mama is in the morgue 'cause you didn't tell us. You caused her death 'cause you didn't tell us!" He just looked. I believe that if all those who knew what Jim was up to had told Burnham, he would've done something. But I guess they were too far gone themselves to know right from wrong. Maybe they were drugged.

Dale Parks had quit the church in San Francisco, but Jim sent Marceline back three or four times to get him. They threatened to kill him if he left. They were afraid he'd spill the beans in California. It was a miracle he wasn't killed too on the Port Kaituma air strip with the others. See, Larry Layton, who was posing as a defector, came on the plane. But when he fired at Dale, the gun jammed and there was no shot. Then Dale struggled for the gun and knocked Larry down. It was the work of the Lord, I think, so no more were killed. If the gun hadn't jammed, he could've killed everybody on that plane. I felt so terrible that Patty was killed; we were so close, I called her my daughter.

I told Dale that the gun jamming was a sign that he was meant to live. The Lord spared him. I told him to make something of his life since the Lord laid His hand on him.

One woman member of the church had stayed in California to phase out her care home for boys. She

arrived in Georgetown the night of the murders. She was shocked! I saw her later in the hotel lobby and she said, "Why didn't you tell me what was happening?" Her husband escaped 'cause he was in Georgetown at the time on business. But she lost her two children, a girl and a boy, about eleven or twelve.

Dead, for nothing! There was one six-year-old girl who made it through the jungle with her family. In the hotel she asked me about one of the senior citizens. "Did you see Sister So-and-so?" she asked. She was crazy 'bout that lady! She wept, just like a grandmother. She combed my hair and put a scarf 'round my head. She's in San Francisco now. Her father was a medical student. I wonder if he ever went back to it. Her mother was a nurse.

You see, her family was with a young man who'd been working in the fields near the jungle. He just gradually cut the brush a little farther each day, so he finally had a way cut and knew his way out. Otherwise, you could go in circles in that jungle. They knew there was going to be trouble since Congressman Ryan was coming, so they got permission to go on a picnic that day. And Jim forgot 'bout them being on a picnic!

One family that survived—Leslie Wilson and her three children ages three, five and six—walked through to Matthews Ridge. They followed the railroad tracks. Now, you *know* that little three-year-old would have to be carried! Jakari was his name. Leslie's husband, one of Jim's henchmen, died there.

Poor little babies. I went through a lot, thinking 'bout those little babies laying dead out there. Toddlers, so cute. They paraded them 'round sometimes past our cottage

‘cause they were so cute. Something was awful wrong with Jim to kill the babies! I try not to think of it too much anymore. I remember those babies marching past our place with little paper hats on, wearing sandals, sun suits and matching shorts and tops. It’s enough to make you scream your lungs out, thinking of those babies dead.

In Georgetown a woman came from the American Embassy and asked if I needed any medicine. A man from Venezuela took me to the airport. He was called a consul. His picture was on the front page of the *Indianapolis Star* with me, pushing me in the wheelchair. I told him I could walk, but he was real nice and wanted to push me.

In New York they met us at the airport. We had to change planes. That’s when they gave us warmer clothes. I got a real nice leather coat, with a collar and a belt. It fit me just perfect, but I went and left it on the plane! I was so disgusted with myself!

The FBIs asked me on the plane if I ever heard Jim talking ‘bout overthrowing the government. “I never heard him say it in my presence,” I told them. “He could’ve said it, but I didn’t hear it.” I told them that Jim told us to vote for Jimmy Carter. Jim was big with Mrs. Carter too; he went to dinner with her in San Francisco during the election campaign. Mayor Moscone, too, the one that got shot. But he never fazed me about it.

The FBIs asked me, “What happened to your pastor?” I said that after Ryan was killed, before he’d let the authorities get *him*, Jim decided to kill all his followers, so they couldn’t tell the world ‘bout all the bad things he did. That was it. The FBI never interviewed me in the States.

The U. S. government brought the caskets back to Dover, Delaware. That made a lot of people mad, spending millions of dollars to bring them back. The caskets were beautiful—beige with silver-colored handles. All were sealed shut. The morgue in Dover could keep bodies a long time. Finally black pastors and churches in Oakland raised the money to bring the bodies back to the Oakland Cemetery, those that weren't claimed by relatives.

Zip's remains were sent from Oakland to Los Angeles, where I was staying with my nephew. We had a graveside service, very nice. I paid \$77 to bring her body from Oakland to Los Angeles. My nephew Harold might have put in some money too. The service only took about forty five minutes. I paid for the grave and hearse. It cost \$600, I think, for the burial. My nephew bought two graves, one for Zip and one for me, but he shouldn't have. I wasn't ready to be buried yet. I used a total of \$677 from the uncashed Social Security checks they found belonging to me in Jonestown.

Some put out that the caskets were empty or that the people were mixed up in them. But I don't believe that. They had silver name plates on each one. All the folks in Jonestown knew Zip. Odell and Dale both knew her. I believe we buried Zip's remains.

## Chapter 7.

### Back in California and Indiana

I've prayed a thousand times that God would forgive me for going in with Jim. How could a man kill babies and seniors? I've quit trying to figure it out! But Jim caught it in the end. You can run away from God only so long. God wins in the end.

My nephew by marriage, Malvern Grubbs, told me he came near joining up too. Jim said to him, "We can use a man like you." Malvern was a mail carrier, very respected. But something about Jim told him to stay away, Malvern said.

I stayed in Georgetown a little more than a week. I was one of the last to leave. They had to process all those people they found in the jungle. I guess they were trying to build me up. We ate well. They brought meals to our hotel room.

We were all on the same floor of the hotel so we could talk to each other. We didn't have anybody like doctors or counselors to talk to us. We just talked among ourselves.

When our plane landed in Los Angeles, there were so many reporters, you couldn't see anything else. I stayed on the plane. They didn't know what to do with us.



Some people had to go to a psychiatrist. They just fell apart. But I didn't. When I got to thinking 'bout Jim, I just told myself, "It's either prayer or a psychiatrist." The reporters said they'd never seen anybody bear up the way I did.

I had prayer and the church, though not right away. When my relatives met me at the airport, I cried and they cried. We hugged. We didn't stay in the airport and didn't allow reporters near. When we got to Harold's house, Harold didn't allow many people to come, but people did call on the phone.

It was about a year before I talked and about seven or eight months before I went to church. I joined the Baptist church where my nephew went in Carson. Rev. Buggs was my pastor. Being good won't cut it; you got to go to church.

As soon as I got back to California, Harold called the hospital and I went in for tests and to get built up again. I was only eighty nine pounds when they found me, down from 122 pounds in California. I had a bladder infection too. I went to Harold's for Christmas, but then after Christmas I went back to the hospital for a small operation on my bladder.

In the hospital there was always people coming in to look at me and ask me questions. One white nurse hugged and hugged me. "I'm so glad you're back," she said. She kept bringing me milk and orange juice. Another nurse wanted to tape everything I said. Once I woke up from a nap and seen two young men standing over me. I told the nurses what was happening, and they

moved me to a room closer to the nurses' station, where they could watch me better.

See, the men that killed Ryan could still be living. They don't know for sure who did it. Jeannie Mills and her husband, who defected and wrote that book, *Six Years with God*, were killed in Berkeley. She set up a convalescent home and called my nephew inviting me to come and stay with her. I'm sorry now I didn't call her back.

Oh, Jim hated her for defecting. She was in his Planning Commission, the inner circle, when she defected. He said he'd kill her outright. He cussed her up and down.

Harold said he got a few crank calls when I was staying there, but nothing bad. Just what kids do, calling for pranks. They'd hang up on him. Most people didn't know where I was. Still don't.

I'm glad I didn't have to die. I couldn't have watched the babies having convulsions. I told Odell I couldn't have stood there, holding the babies while they squirted poison to the back of their mouths. The Bible says, "If you do it to the least of these, . . ."

The Holiness church held me up in prayer too. One lady came by and just prayed over me. My, how she prayed! I didn't need psychiatry. I still get depressed sometimes and have a nervous stomach when I think about what happened too much. My doctor prescribed some pills to relax me.

Sometimes when I think about what happened, I start singing, and the Lord takes the burden away. I watch religious television, and I have a favorite radio station where they only play religious music and have preaching.

My friend Grover was scared Jim could do things after he was dead. But God wouldn't allow him to do more after death. He did his dirt on earth. I've been asked, "Is he dead?" They took his fingerprints. They got pictures of him. They all knew it was him.

He did as bad as Hitler, killing the Jews. Maybe he thought he was going to be big, like Hitler. Maybe it preyed on his mind—to get written up in history books.

Thinking about Zip still worries me. When I was staying with Harold, my room had twin beds. Sometimes I felt she was in the other bed beside me. I often wished she'd talk to me.

She did call to me, just as clear! "Hyacinth, Hyacinth," she said. Another time she called three times and then groaned, like she probably groaned when she died, being twisted and burned by the cyanide.

I dream about her often, like we were still together, talking and doing things. Two of my nieces heard her calling, like she wants to them tell something. I wish she would. I look for her to come to me again and tell me.

She'd probably tell me not to worry. Not to get mixed up with another Anti-Christ. I miss her so much. We used to have such good times together.

Some people were real good to me in California when I got back. Barbara Synes, whose boy and girl died in Jonestown, came to see me. She brought a bouquet of roses and took me to dinner. She wanted to buy me a wheelchair. I said, "Barbara, don't you do that!" Then one day a man in our church died and his widow offered me his chair for \$25. I called Barbara, and the check was in the mail the next day.

There was a bunch of nurses in San Francisco that wanted to have a reunion for all the survivors of Jonestown. They survived 'cause Jim had them to keep their jobs and send tithes to Guyana. But after Jeannie Mills was murdered in Berkeley, nothing came of the reunion. I guess everybody just got scared and went hush-hush. People wanted to put Jonestown behind them, most likely.

Lots of people asked me, when I got back, how I could have slept through the shootings and wailings and all. I told them I don't know. I'm a light sleeper and usually have to get up during the night to go to the bathroom. My light was off. If I'd heard something, I might've run out and been killed.

I wasn't taking medicine or anything to drug me. I just think the Lord had it fixed so they couldn't get me, because He knew I was praying to get out. The angels were just camped round about me that night. It was more than luck. All the senior citizens were killed on the hospital side. Lots of people knew I wasn't at the pavilion. It was a miracle! I was saved by the grace of God. God was in the plan!

The nurses or Jim's henchmen would've had to give the poison to the seniors in the hospital and in the other senior citizen building. They would've had to pass right by my door! I tell you, guardian angels were looking out for me that night! The door wasn't locked 'cause we never did lock our doors. (Jim told us never to lock our doors; only when a storm blew up did we slip the bolt.) Besides, I was waiting for the girls to come back from the pavilion to tell me what Jim had to say 'bout what hap-

pened down on the Port Kaituma air strip. The door was just closed, maybe slightly ajar. It's a good thing that it wasn't locked, too! 'Cause if it'd been locked, then they'd known somebody was in there!

I was in bed, covered with a spread, my head uncovered. They went right by me, killed them on one side and on the other, and they thought they had them all, I expect. The doors were standing open, where they'd done the killing. And they knew I wasn't there, at the pavilion! I tell you, it was angels that kept me!

I dreamed of Jim once after I got back to California. It was on a boat and he was real mean, sitting opposite me. He never cracked a smile. I sat at the end, facing him. He stayed still and just looked at me. I was glad when I woke up. I didn't want any more contact with him.

I thank the Lord that in the twenty one years I was with Jim I never called him Father. I thank the Lord I got out of that mess and am still living.

Some thought Jim did more for them than God did. They were brainwashed! I think God will forgive some of them 'cause they were so ignorant. They hadn't read their Bibles. I own up I haven't read mine enough. It'll change your life around if you let it.

Where is Jim now? Tormented, restless, I suppose. I don't know. According to the Word, Jim is in a tormented place 'til Jesus comes again. But I can't judge. It's not my place to judge, according to the Word. I leave that to God.

In August of 1981 one of my grandnieces from Indianapolis, Catherine Wallace, flew out to California to take me back to Indianapolis. First I stayed with my niece Josephine on Guilford Avenue in her care home. She had

five residents, with me. I stayed there for six months. I had quite a bit of company. By the time I got to Indianapolis, I was all cried out. Visitors came by one's and two's. We didn't talk 'bout Jonestown at first. It was a long time before we talked 'bout it.

Folks didn't blame me for getting mixed up with Jim. I didn't feel 'shamed either. Anybody can be fooled. Well, to tell the truth, at first I did feel 'shamed. But then I thought, "You're the only one of more than nine hundred people who refused to go down to the pavilion, and you lived!"

Next I stayed with another grandniece, Joyce Brown, who had two small children, Eunice and Wesley, at the time and stayed home during the day. I love children! Eunice spent a lot of time in my room. She brought her dolls and toys and spread everything out on my bed. We talked a lot. Sometimes, when I wanted privacy or to read my Bible, I said, "Run along, Chile," and she did.

Joyce and I joined the Deliverance Temple, a Holiness church. Rev. Vera O'Dell and her husband were the pastors. They had an adult Sunday School class I liked, taught by a man. One time, when the lesson was on the Book of Job, I told them I felt like Job myself, that the whole package was taken away from me at the same time. But I believe God will bring it all back to me.

The Sunday I joined, they prayed for me, to get my leg straightened out. You know, I haven't given up hope. I still think I'll get my healing. I listen to healing evangelists on TV. I went to the Convention Center with my niece Irene once to hear a healing evangelist and when we went to the bathroom we found a white woman crying! Her friend

asked us to pray for her. So Irene laid her hands on her shoulders and prayed. She can really pray, Irene can!

One time in San Francisco a woman asked me why, if I'd been with Jim so long, I wasn't healed yet. I said, "Don't put it on the pastor." You know, God didn't heal all the cripples on earth. But I believed all along I'd be healed. It just wasn't my time yet.

It didn't bother me that Jim was white, though sometimes I thought he took advantage of ignorant blacks. I don't hold a grudge 'bout color, if folks treat me right. Blacks are not ones to hold a grudge. They've even forgiven George Wallace for standing in the schoolhouse door.

People have changed, even in Alabama. Our old house is still standing, and somebody's living in it in Wilsonville. I have a friend, Blanche Bush, who stayed all her life there, near where I was born. She wrote to say she was coming to visit me if her health holds up. She's about my age. She's the only one left in her family, just like I'm the only one left in my family. She says white folks have changed quite a bit in Alabama.

I forgive them, and the Lord will forgive them, if they do right. That's what my church, the Holiness church, teaches. It's Pentecostal, Apostolic. Getting the Holy Ghost and talking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is evidence of the Holy Ghost—that you got it. You can't understand tongues, but God can. You need interpreters—man or woman. The Spirit leads them and tells them. I got inner words, just as plain! That's discernment!

Jim told me once, "You'd make a good evangelist." But I just didn't get into it.

People ask me, "How could Jim go so wrong?" Well, we have freedom to choose good or evil. God doesn't force us to follow Him. Jim knew what was good but turned away. You got to rebuke the Devil. If you ain't strong-minded, he'll take you over.

I got a check for a "settlement" from the sale of Peoples Temple assets, so I could pay for my grave in Crown Hill Cemetery. That was early in 1983, almost five years after what happened. I didn't know whether or not to accept it, but I needed some burial money so my relatives wouldn't be saddled with that. Everything's so high now, and Jim got my insurance and everything.

The first check was for \$2,715.30—out of everything we gave Jim—two homes, one selling for \$37,000 and one for \$12,000; my Lane Bryant pension, my Metropolitan Life insurance policy, \$2500 savings in the bank, our Social Security checks, our furnishings, and the tithes we give Jim all the time we was earning, first 10% and then 25%. I figure Zip and I gave him \$150,000 all together.

This is how the "settlement" went: On November 22, 1982, I got a letter from Robert Fabian, the court-appointed receiver, offering me \$4351, if I'd "compromise" my claim. He said if I'd take this "Receiver's Certificate," I'd be entitled "to share in the assets of the Receivership estate on a pro-rata basis with other successful claimants." That was hard to understand, but it made me think there was still more to come.

Then he said if I accepted his offer of \$4351, he'd send me a check for 62.4% of it. That's how he came up with \$2,715.30, I guess. Then he said I'd get another 2% later. Why 2%? Why not 37.6%?



I didn't know what to do. My grandniece Catherine said I'd have to decide for myself. She wasn't going to tell me what to do, but if that offer had been made to her, she wouldn't accept it, that it was an insult. But I didn't have a job or a house or a husband or children. All I have is Social Security and Medicaid.

Fabian kept worrying me to take that settlement. I remember when he phoned me. He said, "Is that you, Miz Thrash?" He couldn't believe how strong my voice was. (They all believe I'm senile, you know. People have tried to take advantage of me 'cause they think I'm senile!)

I told Fabian I couldn't figure out why he was offering me so little, considering what Zip and I gave up, that we only had each other, the fact that Zip died over there and I was the only one of the Temple members on the compound who lived through the tragedy and woke up to see all the trouble.

He said they were paying according to age, on a scale like insurance companies use. They don't expect me to live long. I said that was strange and unfair, 'cause I might live to be 116 and would need that money! "Mr. Fabian," I said, "my father lived 'til he was eighty nine; my sister died in her nineties. It's not for you to decide how long I might live; that's for God to decide."

He didn't know what to say to that!

Age has nothing to do with it. I told him that if I won the Sweepstakes, they wouldn't take it away from me on account of my age.

Another thing, in April, 1983, a news report came out that Fabian had given some of the money to other churches. What right did he have to do that? That was

Temple money and should have gone to Temple members, who contributed it!

How he came up with his formula is a mystery to me. The second check was for \$54.83. One woman got \$29. I guess I should feel lucky.

Now that I think about it, I shouldn't have agreed to that settlement. But I was worried about paying for my grave in Crown Hill.

I'd probably got more if I'd stayed in California 'til it was all settled. Having a California lawyer on the spot would have helped me too. I've had bad luck with lawyers. The first one I filed my claim with in California was a good lawyer but he went on a drinking spree and got disbarred. The California Bar took over his office, closed it up.

Then a woman lawyer was recommended. She had an accident and never did anything on my case. We had a terrible time getting my papers back. Finally got them back almost five years later. My grandniece, Catherine Wallace, helped me with that.

A lawyer in Indianapolis looked over my material to see about the possibility of a larger settlement. He suggested I settle for \$4351, 'cause it was probably all I could get.

Stephan Jones, Jim's natural son, went on TV with Jimmy, Jr., and asked for them to give the survivors back their money. He said his dad was sick, that he lost his mind or something.

The things I feel worst about losing in Jonestown are all our family pictures. After the mass murder-suicide, our pictures was strewn around the cottage so bad that I

could only pick up a few. I wrote a letter to the Guyanese government, requesting they send me the pictures C. O. D., since it's such a poor country. I wrote the American Embassy too, asking them to send the five albums under my bed. But I never heard a word from them.

My niece Aileen did get a letter eventually. It was a letter Zip wrote in 1978. The authorities found it and mailed it to her. It was like hearing from another world, she said.

After a while it got too hard for my family to take care of me in their homes, so I went to Mount Zion Geriatric Center on Boulevard, near where I had my first baby sitting job after we moved to Indianapolis from Alabama. I had lots of friends there and lots of company. We used to get together in my room for good times, singing and praying. The Mount Zion Baptist Church pastor would visit me often. Ladies from the church brought me gifts.

Then I had some set backs and had to go to the hospital. Since then I've been to different nursing homes—Windsor Village on the south side, Alpha Home, and now Cambridge Health Services on Township Line Road west of Saint Vincent Hospital. It was hard for my people to visit me on the south side, so I'm glad I'm back on the north side of Indianapolis again. I'm lucky I've had good people to take care of me. There've always been caring people, despite some problems some places.

I haven't given up hope. I still think I'm gonna get my healing.

I'll be 90 years old on March 27, 1995. Hallelujah! The Lord's been good to me.

## POSTSCRIPT:

# WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM JONESTOWN AND HYACINTH'S EXPERIENCE

Religious leaders need to grow and be nurtured in the community of faith. "Lone rangers" can be dangerous to themselves and their followers. Once ordained and installed, pastors need the fellowship and review of their peers and oversight by the larger body of Christ. Though Jones was ordained by the Disciples of Christ, "he never made much of it," according to Hyacinth Thrash.

Freedom of religion is a First Amendment right in the United States. People have a right to believe and practice what they believe to be true, even if it seems bizarre to us. The only exception is abuse of the defenseless, such as elders and children, in my opinion.

In our zeal to protect our children from exploitation, we may be quick to label any group a cult simply because its beliefs and practices are different from "standard brand" Christianity. "Difference" does not make a cult. For example, Mormons and Amish, though "different," are not members of cults.

If those we love are involved with a religious group we are uncomfortable with, we must keep communication lines open. We must avoid attempts to kidnap, for example. Such efforts will only alienate our loved ones and strengthen their resolve in their newly-found faith.

We should avoid making martyrs out of those who would precipitate us into action we might later regret. Jim Jones was able to convince his followers to plan for mass suicide because he had brainwashed them into believing that the U. S. government, including the FBI and the CIA, were "out to get" the Peoples Temple.

The church (and the dominant society) must not allow cultic groups to put us in a defensive posture so that we react violently when attacked. We must not let persons like Jones force us to react in a way calculated to further their purposes. Jones was able to exploit the guilt of white Americans because of the racist actions of the predominant white culture. The only real solution is to try to overcome racism in our own lives and institutions.

The church must take more seriously its mission of Christian education, including the study of the Bible and its implication for living today. Cultic leaders are able to find gullible followers because the latter have not been properly schooled in the Bible and its interpretation. Jones called himself, at various times, a prophet, "The Comforter," and "Father." As early as during his ministry in Indianapolis, according to Mrs. Urbia McClusky, an early member of Jones' flock, he was throwing the Bible to the floor and exclaiming that his people were putting too much trust in the book and not enough in him. He staged "miracles" and the "discernment" of so-called psy-

chic phenomena. Education can help students to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate teachers and teachings.

The church must continue to minister to the needs of the larger society and to become advocates for justice. Jones found many of his followers among the lonely, the dispossessed, the unemployed, the undereducated, the addicted, and the victims of discrimination. Vulnerable individuals are easy prey to false teaching and false hope.

The church must proclaim the goodness of God and the good news in Christ while being aware of the ambiguity of life. (Good people can sometimes go wrong.) Young people sometimes see evil triumphing over good and are tempted to believe that Satan, or the power of evil, is stronger than God. Cults often fill a vacuum in people's lives. The church must seek to fill that vacuum by preaching and showing the love of Christ.

Gunpowder and religion do not mix. The church and civil authorities must be concerned about the stockpiling of weapons by religious groups who feel the need for an arsenal to defend themselves. Furthermore, the church should be involved in ratcheting down the level of violence in our society. Churches may begin by teaching conflict resolution in home and school.

The love of money and power corrupts, even religious persons. As Hyacinth Thrash puts it, "Jim got hungry—for power and money. He thought he was God. He didn't need God." Beware the charismatic leader whose focus is more on self-aggrandizement than on Christ.

Beware the religious leader who attempts to control your everyday life—your sexuality, your family relation-

ships, what you do with your money, and what you eat and drink. Hyacinth Thrash says it started with Jon telling his flock they should observe holidays with church members instead of with their families. It ended with Jones deciding who would marry whom and, finally, who would take the poison.

(by Marian K. Towne, revision of an essay first published in *Disciple Magazine*, July, 1993, reprinted with permission of Christian Board of Publication, 1995)

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Marian K. Towne was born and reared in a Mennonite community in South Dakota and has been an active church woman most of her adult life, serving on the national boards of Church Women United and Bread for the World. She was a founding director of Gleaners Food Bank, The Caring Community, Inc., and Citizens Concerned About Gun Violence, all in Indianapolis.

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