

# 'Prophet,' Attorney Probe Asked

By CAROLYN PICKERING  
(Last Of A Series)

A California Baptist Church official has requested the California attorney general to investigate "Prophet" James W. Jones' People's Temple and the conduct of its attorney, Timothy O. Stoen, because of the "atmosphere of terror created by so large and aggressive a group."

THE CLERGYMAN, the Rev. Richard G. Taylor of Oakland, Calif., South Coastal Area minister for the American Baptist Churches of the West, in a letter to the attorney general of California, dated Sept. 19, said a similar request last March to both the sheriff and district attorney in the county where the temple is located resulted in "no action."

The Rev. Mr. Taylor's letter said he was asking for the probe of temple attorney Stoen's conduct after the suicide death of Mrs. Maxine Harp of Ukiah, Calif., a temple member, because "her sister informed me that unidentifiable persons from People's Temple had occupied her sister's house and ransacked it."

THE REV. MR. TAYLOR also declared, in his letter to the attorney

general, that he had counseled with a paroled inmate of a California correctional institution "who was sponsored on parole by People's Temple, but after he had lived for some time in Redwood Valley, he planned to move away . . . a group of men from Peo-

ple's Temple held him incommunicado for four hours, leaving him terrified."

The letter noted that the Rev. Mr. Jones, the 41-year-old former Indianapolis Disciples of Christ minister, "has served as foreman with the Mendocino County (Calif.) grand jury" and "Mr. Stoen's position as a leading law enforcement officer has effectively dissuaded anyone of a mind to complain of the situation."

THE REV. MR. JONES' faith-healing practices and his alleged clout with local law enforcement personnel in Mendocino County have been subjected to published criticism in recent days.

Attorney Stoen, carried on the temple's roster as an "assistant pastor" although he is not an ordained minister, is also the assistant district attorney in the county.

The Rev. Mr. Jones left Indianapolis in 1965 with 145 members of his congregation. They settled in Redwood Valley, where the temple now has vast real estate holdings, a fleet of 11 large buses and a congregation that numbers in excess of 4,000 persons.

SINCE THEN, Rev. Jones has professed to have raised more than 40 from the dead, and to have caused the "passing" of cancerous tumors during services.

The Rev. Mr. Taylor, in his request for an official probe, made reference to the temple's need to employ armed guards, "contending their pastor has been threatened."

"I seriously wonder if they have ever been threatened," the Rev. Mr. Taylor suggested.

One of the temple's attorneys, Eugene B. Chaiken, wrote to the San

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San Francisco Examiner, that paper reported last week, saying:

"OUR LOCAL LAW enforcement agency has requested that we have trained persons carry firearms and we have reluctantly acquiesced to the sheriff's request."

Mendocino County Sheriff Reno Bartolomie emphatically denied Chaiken's statement.

Said Sheriff Bartolomie:

"None of my deputies works out there. I wouldn't permit it.

"Some of their parishioners came in and requested gun permits and I told them absolutely not.

"UNDER CALIFORNIA law, private citizens can carry firearms without a permit so long as the weapon is exposed to public view. But, they should be trained in how to handle them. I don't know whether their people are trained or not."

When queried about whether the Rev. Mr. Taylor had asked Bartolomie to initiate an attorney general's probe of the temple operation, the sheriff replied:

"Yes, Taylor came in to see me. He said something about a man being scared out of his skull out there and the temple wouldn't let him leave.

"BUT, THE MAN who was supposed to be scared never came to see me and I couldn't find any basis for asking the attorney general to step in."

Mendocino County Prosecutor Duncan James, Stoen's boss, couldn't be reached for comment.

Sheriff Bartolomie claimed the Rev. Mr. Taylor had "never mentioned anything to me about Mrs. Harp's death."

Mrs. Harp's body was found hanging from a rope in the garage of her home in early April, 1970.

The sheriff said his officers "sealed

the house as soon as possible and the seals were never broken. I never heard anything about any ransacking."

"That would be a felony," the sheriff declared.

Mrs. Harp had left what purported to be a suicide note on a brown paper bag, the sheriff said.

THE NOTE, he told The Indianapolis Star, read:

"Call Jim. It's very important. If not there try Edith. I'm not at home. Get here right away."

The sheriff said he had "no idea" who either "Jim" or "Edith" was.

Mrs. Harp's body was found, said the sheriff, by a "Mary Candoo." The sheriff said he had "no idea" who the Candoo woman was.

Five other former temple parishioners have told The Star the Candoo woman lived with Mrs. Harp and was an active member of the temple.

A CALIFORNIA woman who has left the church told The Star that temple personnel had gone through Mrs. Harp's belongings "to remove anything that would identify her with the temple."

A recent temple church bulletin read:

"We've had no need to utilize such services (of a funeral home) since 1959. No one who has followed the teachings of Christ working through Pastor Jones has died in all that time."

The same woman who disclosed the alleged ransacking said Temple members were told not to attend Mrs. Harp's funeral or pay their respects at the mortuary at the time of her death.

The Rev. Mr. Taylor, in his letter, said he had conducted the 30-year-old woman's services.

A RELATIVE of Mrs. Harp, who

asked not to be identified, told The Star that Mrs. Harp, a divorcee with three small children, had become involved with the temple two years before her death.

"She met this man who was a temple member and very active," the relative said. She continued:

"This man worked in the Mendocino County Welfare Department and he got her on the welfare rolls. I don't know why because the children's father was providing adequate support.

"Maxine (Mrs. Harp) had some emotional problems and she was grasping at anything that might lead her out of her depressed state.

"SHE BECAME quite involved with this man who'd introduced her to the temple. I have check stubs showing she gave great amounts of money to the temple instead of taking proper care of the children. I thought she was getting psychiatric counseling at the church.

"I know she gave them a check for \$1,000 just a week before she died. The money had come from her share of proceeds from the sale of a house owned by my family."

The woman said a family member had discussed the matter with Stoen after Mrs. Harp's funeral and "Stoen admitted the temple had the check, but said there was nothing we could do—that the money was set up in a trust fund for the children."

"I'M AFRAID the \$1,000 is gone," the woman said.

Both Stoen and the Rev. Mr. Jones have failed to return numerous telephone inquiries from The Star.

The woman said it took her family two days after her sister's death to find her children.

"The head of the welfare department finally took us to the home of a

temple member where the children had been placed," the woman said.

The relative of the deceased woman said the welfare director told her his department had taken custody of the children "because we didn't think any member of the family would show up for the funeral."

A SPOKESMAN in that department refused to discuss the Harp matter or even verify whether Mrs. Harp was on welfare rolls prior to her death.

Although The Star has received several reports of temple members being on Mendocino County welfare rolls, including a 21-year-old Indianapolis girl, now back home, whose mother says she was required to turn over her \$95-a-month benefit to the temple, a Feb. 11 (1972) letter from Stoen to the editor of the San Francisco Examiner, read, in part:

"The church believes in service, practices its own welfare program so as not to impose a burden on government . . ."

THE LETTER also heaped praise on Jones as a "loving father to his interracial family, who wears only used clothes, takes in abandoned animals and works with his hands as needed."

Stoen's letter also pointed with pride to Jones having been named foreman of the Mendocino County grand jury — the lay panel over which his "assistant pastor," deputy district attorney Stoen, has jurisdiction in the handling of criminal prosecutions.