

ABC News: “Jonestown Massacre”: Interview with Mike and Tim Carter, 12/1/78 (22:21) PART 3

Note: This is the third and final part of an ABC News interview with survivors Mike and Tim Carter in the weeks following the events of November 18. The first part of the interview is currently unreleased and is not listed within the online ABC News VideoSource archive.

The second and final parts of the complete interview may be viewed directly through the ABC VideoSource Archive here:

[ABCNEWS VideoSource](#) (Search 20P679B for Part 2. 20P679C for Part 3.)

Alternatively, it may be viewed on YouTube here:

(1:16:03 - 1:37:10)

 **1978-1982 SPECIAL REPORT: "JONESTOWN AFTERMATH"**

Brothers Mike and Tim Carter, along with Mike Prokes, managed to escape the Jonestown mass suicides after being assigned the task of delivering suitcases filled with money to the Soviet Embassy in Georgetown. This interview continues from Part 2; however, there is footage cut between the two parts. The interview begins with Tim Carter explaining the instructions he and Mike were given in Jonestown.

Tim Carter: He [Mike Carter], Prokes and him were given guns. We were told to kill ourselves if we got caught.

Mike Carter: (Off-camera) — and just to make sure we didn't (Heh) do anything. **(Camera cuts and pans to Mike)**— in this case we had no (Unintelligible) somebody and they started going out and heard that we saw dropped the suitcase or something you know (??).

Reporter: How did you two guys link up anyway?

Mike: Through Maria [Katsaris].

Reporter: She got?

Tim: When I came back down at West House she was there, and Prokes are already there.

Mike: I see— I see, yeah?

Reporter: And what was this about guns?

Mike: We had (Yawns)— Maria had given me and Prokes guns to kill ourselves if we were caught. And uh you know at that point I was like woman you are crazy thinking I'm going to kill myself. (Laughs)

Tim: You gave it to them (??).

Mike: So uh— (Smiling)

Cameraman: (Off-camera) We're rolling, testing. Go ahead.

Mike: So I went— I think almost the first place we stopped, you know, to bury the money. I had taken— I had five rounds.

Reporter: Why did you stop to bury money?

Mike: Because it was getting too heavy and—

Tim: At that point we were running for our lives. We're trying to get out of there.

Mike: You see— it just had just rained.

(Camera pans to Tim)

Tim: See, I told him after we got back down and we had left I said people starting to die back there and apparently Maria told Prokes they're gone after the truck to get Ryan and so— I mean we knew that— somebody was on the loose, you know. I mean somebody, Peoples Temple members were on the loose and also it was a matter of survival at that point

Reporter: So you did what?

Tim: I said it was a matter of survival at that point.

Reporter: So you did what?

Tim: So we ran with like I said with the suitcase. It was heavy. It was awkward. We tried to unload some of the money to make it lighter to— it's not easy running through the mud with a suitcase and everything else at the same time you're trying to run for your life. And when we got to the um— piggery— we dumped the rest of the money and then went to Port Kaituma. And uh— we kept some of the money on us and they kept the guns for two reasons. One, the guns incase we ran into any Temple members who were trying to shoot people up— to defend ourselves and the money incase we ran into any Guyanese or somebody on the way who would impair our progress to try to buy them off so we could (Unintelligible)

Reporter: Somebody thought that Peoples Temple members might try to shoot you?

(Tim lights cigarette and camera pans to Mike)

Mike: You know, we had heard that these guys had gone after Ryan. So we didn't know what to think.

Reporter: What did you hear about that?

Tim: You have to ask Prokes, he'd know.

Mike: Just what Mike [Prokes] had told us that you know. They had gone after Ryan, you know.

Reporter: Do you have any way of knowing whether or not if Jones directed them to do that?

Mike: I have no idea but I would—

Tim: I don't know. I can't believe they did it on their own but I don't know. I mean that's a question—
(**Camera pans to Tim**) that's a good question.

Reporter: How many people was it that went after Ryan?

Tim: I don't know. I mean I read in newspaper accounts that there were six or seven but I don't know.

Reporter: Do you know who the people were who went after Ryan?

Tim: Just what I read in the newspapers. That's all.

Reporter: When— you first came here— to this hotel— many of the survivors from Jonestown— were afraid of you?

Tim: That's right. We were afraid of them. (Smile)

Reporter: They said you were a part of Jones' inner group.

Tim: Not true.

Reporter: You've been given guns (Tim Nods) by Jones' inner group?

Tim: Yeah right. To kill ourselves if we were caught. That were the instructions. I mean it was— I think— I mean that's all it resolved (??). We understood their paranoia and I don't think they understood. They didn't know the circumstances surroundings our— believing our— and um I mean it was an understandable reaction I think on their part and I think they're came to realize we were as afraid of them as they were of us.

Reporter: Why were you afraid of them?

Tim: Well for a number of reasons. We had been considered leadership. We represented Jim Jones to them— uh mainly cause there was twenty of them and you know one of them said I can't guarantee that one of these people won't try to strangle you in the middle of the night. I mean there's only three of us, there's twenty of them right? So, I mean it's another reason. And uh— we didn't want any trouble at all. Like I said we wanted just to survive and they were saying a lot of outrageous things at the time. I mean

it's been worked out. I think it was just a trauma. I mean everybody's been through a trauma and it was a sudden— we were thrown together totally. We asked— first not to come to this hotel because they were here and we knew that they were paranoid of us and we didn't want to upset them. So they brought us here anyway. Then we asked once we got to the desk: do not take us on the same floor where they are, please, because we do not want to upset them.

So not only they take us to the same floor, they took us right into the bedroom which immediately caused, you know, a panic reaction on their part and it was just a matter of talking things out. But that conflict has been resolved. I mean, there's no tension. We're all talking with each other.

Reporter: Did you intend to harm anyone?

Tim: I do not intend to harm anyone. I mean I was in Vietnam. I do not believe in violence. I—

Reporter: Do you have any knowledge of a plan for (Tim smokes cigarette) Peoples Temple survivors to— harm other people?

Tim: No. I think that's just a lot of bunk. I mean I think Jones used to talk a lot of that I think to keep fear in people's hearts, you know. But I can say I am as afraid for my life right now I think as anybody is.

(Camera pans to Mike)

Mike: It's a way of keeping people in the Temple. You know the fear that if you left you would have this grave (??) hit squad going after you or whatever, you know. But I think it was he's para— I mean you know, his paranoia showed here when we saw each other that you know, that afternoon. We're both paranoid of each other thinking you know— you know they thought we were going after them and we thought you know, since we represented that, that they would go after us and— I'm so afraid in the States you know. You know maybe there really is. I— I agree with Tim I think there's this thing he had you know— cause he didn't trust people— at all.

Tim: Didn't trust anybody. He said that he didn't trust anybody. (Mike shakes head)

Reporter: What kind of a— an organization did you think you were a part of living here in Guyana— working for a man who said if— you ever want out I've got a hit squad that will kill you.

Mike: Hm— (Thinking)

(Camera pans to Tim)

Tim: Well one thing I didn't believe in a lot of what Jim Jones said—

Reporter: But what do you think about the fact that here's this man that invited you to come to Guyana and live and build a better world and he says: and if you don't like it here anymore, I'll see to it that you're assassinated when you leave. Now what did you think about that?

Tim: Like I said I thought it was a lot of bunk. I thought it was— intimidation. Um—

Reporter: But why— why would this man be intimidating you and why would you continue to participate in a community (Tim smokes cigarette)— the leader of whom— is trying to intimidate you?

Tim: You see, that's a very complex question. I mean it's a good question. It's a rational question. But like I said, there's a lot of things that enter into it. You could talk about mind control. You could talk about um— I was here because my wife and son were here. And um— I was not just going to abandon my son.

Reporter: Why couldn't you just all get up and leave and say: hey, this guy is talking about assassinating us if we want to leave. I don't—

Tim: Well, you see he kept families apart. Like I said I wasn't going to leave without my wife or my son. When I was in Georgetown, my wife and son were never here. It was a— he divided and conquered. He deliberately kept families apart from each other just so that kind of thing wouldn't happen.

Reporter: There were strange forms of brutality used against children who had misbehaved. We understand that they were tied up, left in the jungle, that they were dropped down into wells until they screamed that (Tim smokes cigarette) they would be good and not do whatever (Tim appears to wave hand) it was that Jim Jones didn't like. And parents stood by— and let this kind of thing be done to their children.

Tim: (Nods) That's true. I said— your questions are rational but you're talking about an irrational situation and the word mind control is not just um—

Reporter: But what was going on in your mind?

Tim: I didn't believe it. You know what I actually thought was— I knew in San Francisco that— what they would do sometimes is they would take a child off into a room and say alright, when you go out, scream and yell and everything else for effect you know. And— and I honestly that's what I thought was being done— that they were taking these children away and they were coming back screaming and yelling but— they had told them to do that for effect on you know, the other children. I didn't honestly believe that kind of brutality and—

Reporter: Didn't this all sound kind of freaky to you?

Tim: (Thinking) Sound freaky?

Reporter: Yeah, I mean here you are—

Tim: I told you what—

Reporter: Putting yourself and your family into an organization in which people are encouraged to deceive other members of the group for whatever effect it was taking them off and pretending to torture them and bringing them back so that they'd scream and make other people think they'd been tortured.

Tim: You got to remember— you're— you're not thinking— thinking rationally. Your mind has been controlled. You've been um— I say it's a very complex question.

(Camera pans to Mike)

Mike: We were made to believe that it's the right thing to do. You know, you see what I'm saying.

Tim: You would have to talk to— there's a psychiatrist here that's a specialist in cults and he can answer your question.¹

Reporter: But wait, what was Mike going to say?

Mike: I'm just saying we were made to believe that that's the right way to do, you know. Made to believe that— that's the right type of uh you know, discipline— for the children. I mean there were some kids who— who were I mean, obviously problem children, you know from their backgrounds— whatever they were. And just when— obey the rules of, you know, stay into—

(Camera pans to Tim)

Tim: You say isn't that sort of freaky behavior but child beating is one of the biggest crimes in the United States right now. You know what goes on in prisons in the United States?

Reporter: Yeah, but you didn't beat your child?

Tim: No, I didn't beat my child. I never spanked my child.

Reporter: But you were willing to let Jim Jones beat your child?

Tim: Well, I don't know. That situation never arose. My son was only fifteen months old.

Reporter: But you were willing to let Jim Jones beat other children?

Tim: One thing is that— since May— all physical violence had stopped. There was no more beatings, there was no more of that sort of thing— well he [Mike] can tell you he was there.

Mike: Yeah.

¹ Tim is possibly referring to Guyanese psychiatrist Dr. Hardat Sukhdeo, a proclaimed "cult" specialist who arrived in Georgetown in the days following November 18th to personally counsel and meet with survivors.

Reporter: Why did you continue to participate in a community in which child beating and psychological torture if you will—

Mike: Can you please— one thing you need to understand **(Camera pans to Mike)**— all this time that was our whole life. I've— I've seen exaggerations in this week's Newsweek on some of the things that did happen. I mean some things did happen but like I said—

Reporter: But what happened that you saw? What did you see happen?

Mike: The last— beating I had seen or— you know, like you say was a guy who had molested children of twelve years under and he was I mean— in that— one of these children—

Tim: That particular person had a history of molesting children and he had been given— **(Camera pans to Tim)** he had been talked to, he had been given psychiatric counseling, he had been— I wasn't there when it happened but I mean that was a last resort.

Reporter: From what we read, those of you who were moving in Jonestown would of assembled in a group and— and you would see people be punished. Supposedly one woman who had sex with somebody she wasn't supposed to was forced to have sex with somebody else—

(Camera pans to Mike)

Mike: Can I say that is a lie? Cause I mean maybe it happened when I was in Georgetown but I never saw that.

Reporter: What did you see? What kinds of things?

Mike: Like I said I'm telling you now about that one guy who was molesting children. He had a history of doing it and then what happened is that one child had molested an even younger child. One of the twelve or eleven-year-olds had molested a younger child. In fact one of my cousins. And— you know a couple of guys got really upset and went up and hit him, you know. And a couple more people hit him and uh— he was just giving all these excuses why he had no way to control himself and things like that and it wasn't like every single person who was brought up you know for whatever things they've done wrong were beat. You know I think (Unintelligible)—

Reporter: Did— did you see people who were small forced to box people who were big? We heard about that.

Mike: In San Francisco. That happened in San Francisco, yeah.

Reporter: What did you think about that?

Mike: Hm.

Tim: I thought it was a way of disciplining—

Mike: Yeah.

(Camera pans to Tim)

Tim: But— parents signed legal consent forms before any of that happened. Even some people who were out of the organization or been out for a long time signed consent forms. Like you— you're talking about something— you're asking rational questions and you're talking about an irrational situation.

Reporter: What was in your mind at the time?

Tim: I thought it was a form of structure that was necessary.

Reporter: Beating?

Tim: You say beating? Have you ever spanked your child?

Reporter: (Whispering) I don't have a child.

Tim: You don't have a child? Well I got spanked when I was a son. I'd like to ask any parent— I'd like to know—

Reporter: We're not talking about spanking, we're talking about—

Tim: [Intelligible, both the Reporter and Tim are speaking] —you're talking about spanking. You're talking about spanking. But when it comes out in the media, I don't want to be put in a role of trying to defend this because I don't agree with it but still, you're asking a question that's trying to put us on the spot. But when you're talking about spanking— children spanked their parents. Child beating is— is— one of the worst crimes that is going on in the United States. Not just in the United States but I mean all over the world. But it manifests itself a lot in the United States.

Reporter: You saw— in San Francisco you saw— people who had violated some rule or other of Jim Jones, put into a boxing ring and forced to box somebody that they had no chance against?

Tim: Well—

Reporter: They were in a fight, beaten up by this other guy—

Tim: Mhm.

Reporter: And you saw that?

Tim: Mhm. I saw that and so did several thousand other people.

Reporter: And you thought that was okay?

Tim: Yeah.

(Camera pans to Mike)

Mike: That was maybe that might change a person because a person who's so hard-headed to— you know just— I mean usually— I mean I don't know it went different times, different things would happen but the— you know— it was a way to um— at that time is what I thought it was a way to make structure for a person cause nothing else went through their heads and maybe that might go through their head.

Reporter: And what has this person done that was an appropriate punishment?

Mike: Violence of some sort. (Unintelligible)

Tim: One person had stolen something once from a store.

(Camera pans to Tim)

Reporter: So in the Peoples Temple— whatever punishment Jim Jones decided was appropriate for the crime— (Tim lights a cigarette) you thought was okay?

Tim: You didn't argue with the leader.

Reporter: So if Jim Jones wanted to beat somebody up?

Tim: I mean if you had an argument with the leader then you took your argument to him. You never argued publically. I had a lot of complaints and hostilities and arguments that I took (Camera glitches) to him.

Reporter: You watched Jim Jones supervising the beating of children, the beating of people, the uh dropping of children into well and forced to scream—

Tim: I never saw any children— (Unintelligible)

Mike: I never saw that either.

Reporter: You didn't see that?

Mike: No.

Tim: Like I told you what I thought was happening.

Reporter: Oh that's right, I'm sorry you did. But you thought all of these were appropriate if Jones felt that this was the way to achieve whatever he wanted and if it would work, that was the only thing that mattered to you— would the punishment accomplish the purpose?

Tim: Generally yeah.

(Camera pans to Mike)

Mike: Can I just ask a— I mean— one thing that he especially in the States would say a lot— I mean which would you rather have— you know us discipling— you know this organization discipling your children or juvenile hall.

Reporter: So any discipline that Jim Jones decided was good for your child was okay with you?

Mike: (Laughs) While my child wasn't quite old enough to be uh— be disciplined. I mean that being a baby. But um—

Reporter: We understand some babies were spanked.

Mike: (Laughs) I've never seen it. I mean I don't know what you consider to be— but I've never seen it.

(Camera pans to Tim)

Tim: You know you say something like this— I don't want to be in the position of defending— Jim Jones or that— I mean you ask misleading questions. We understand some babies were spanked, I don't know if any parent in America hasn't spanked their child one time I mean if— if your father— of your child—

Reporter: You don't spank—

Tim: If your child—

Reporter: —If your child is a few months old?

Tim: No, no, no. I never saw any child a few months old spanked. I never—

Reporter: So, so the only discipline you saw and that you had first-hand knowledge of, was the beating in San Francisco of someone who had stolen something?

Tim: Yeah and public confrontation. I mean the thing that was used most was humiliation, not beatings. It was public humiliation.

Reporter: Like what?

Tim: Well you get brought up front of the entire congregation for whatever it is you might of done— why did you do this— it was peer pressure sort of thing. It's a thing that's used in— in most uh— well I know it's used in China. I've never been to China but from what I've read it's used in China where a person is humiliated in front of the community and because of that it's a peer pressure— sort of thing. It's called group catharsis. Group therapy.

Reporter: I understand— I understand that women used to stand up and talk about having sex with Jim Jones and how great it was.

Tim: Mhm. (Nods)

Reporter: You saw that?

Tim: Mhm. (Nods)

Reporter: You were in the audience?

Tim: Yeah.

Reporter: And women stood up?

Tim: Well most of it was done in— at least in the States. I never saw it here in Guyana. But I wasn't in Jonestown that much. In the States it was mostly done in a group called the Planning Commission, which was a group of about hundred-twenty people who made most of the business decisions for the organization. See Jones emasculated— he had to maintain the image of the leader. The leader had to be the great lover— the best lover, you know. And um for the most part these people were (Unintelligible) told what to say. You know I mean I don't have any first-hand knowledge of what he was like because I never went to bed with the man. Uh but it— it was all part of a show. It was all part of a stage.

Reporter: But what did you think when you were a party of a group and you're all around and women are standing up and saying I had uh sex with Jim Jones and it was the best sex I ever had. And did you think this was the way to run an organization? (Tim smokes cigarette)

Tim: Well I understood from the point that the leader has to seem— there's always competition between males, you know. And that's one way of emasculating the males.

Reporter: If it made Jim Jones— if it made Jim Jones look bigger, it was okay with you?

Tim: (Nods) Yeah. I thought the image of the leader should be maintained whether or not I believed it, you know. It was irrelevant.

Reporter: Whether or not you believed the sex had really taken place you thought?

Tim: Or whether or not it was all that you know, good.

Reporter: You thought it was a good thing that— this sort of thing was being perpetuated? (Camera glitches)

(Camera pans to Mike)

Mike: Can I just say one thing before we go? I mean and you must understand that's what we did believe. We're telling you what we're thinking that— (Unintelligible from Tim) so I don't want this used against cause you know, obviously we were fools to stay in that organization. I realize it more I was a fool. And I hope none of this is going to be held against us. I mean I'm sure it will follow us—

Tim: It will be.

Mike: —for the rest of our lives, you know.

Tim: It will be. Don't worry it will be.

Mike: But I mean cause we're going to have to start a change somewhere and unfortunately it had to start now. But that's you know, that's just unfortunate the way it goes.

Reporter: (Muffled) What would you like to— what would you like to add to anything that I've asked you that you think is important?

Mike: (Laughs) There's so much to this story of Peoples Temple. I mean it's uh— it's as much of a dream as a nightmare in some sense you know. I—

(Camera pans to Tim)

Tim: I think what happened was monstrous. It was— a horror— I don't think there's any words that in the English language to— describe the um— the crime that took place in Jonestown and I'll have guilt for the rest of my life that I didn't do something to stop it— or maybe I could of.

Reporter: And yet as you try now to understand the way you were (Tim nods) thinking, the way you were feeling at that time—

Tim: Mhm.

Reporter: You didn't try to stop it— because?

Tim: See— it's a very complex thing. Again you did know that there were these rehearsals. I never went through one and the last time somebody left— when uh Debbie Layton left— I guess I wasn't there, but I guess they had a White Night. I had a wife and a son who I was concerned about. No way to get them out. And then you always had the specter of— of if you left— what happened, if what did happened, what if that happened, then you'd be responsible for all these people. It was a way of controlling a person.

(Camera glitches) So you had a lot of— I mean continual conflict going on. I mean I think while if I leave— first I wouldn't of left without my son and my wife, I mean to begin with. If I'd ever had the chance I would of. But then after that you think while what happens if you're the one that triggers this insanity that did happen.

Reporter: Did you expect this thing to happen?

Tim: No I didn't. Like I said if I did I would of gotten my wife and my son out of there a long—

Mike: I'd never thought. I'd never thought—

Tim: You see you have to understand the condition that your mind is in. It— it's a fear— it's a fear mechanism that's used to keep people in place.

Tape speeds up and cuts.