

3 Who Escaped Say They Had to Abandon Money

BY LEONARD GREENWOOD and JERRY BELCHER

Times Staff Writers

GEORGETOWN, Guyana—Three of cult leader Jim Jones' closest aides said Saturday they fled into the jungle outside the Peoples Temple commune while hundreds of people were dying, taking with them a suitcase so heavy with money that they had to abandon it after a few hundred yards.

They said they were given the suitcase by Maria Katsaris, Jones' reputed mistress, before she drank her poison and told them to take it to the Soviet Embassy in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana.

"We got rid of the money because it was too heavy," said Michael Prokes, 31, who had been a purchasing officer for the Jonestown settlement. "We were running for our lives. We just wanted to get out."

The men said the money came from donations and contributions from people in the United States.

They added that they did not know how much money had been in the

suitcase, but that it was now in the hands of the Guyanese authorities.

Before they left, both the other two men, Tim Carter, 31, who had been Jones' public relations officer, and his brother Mike, 20, who had been the radio officer, watched their wives and babies die of poison, they said in interviews.

Tim Carter said that he saw his wife kneeling on the ground with the dead baby in her arms and he told her, "I love you, I love you." Her body twitched as he held her and, Carter said, "I was terribly scared and took off."

As they fled through the settlement, they could hear the cries and screams of the dying, the men said.

They said they got only as far as the chicken runs at the edge of the compound and could carry the suitcase no farther, so they dropped it and fled.

Please Turn to Page 33, Col. 1