

Inquest Tour Makes Coroner III

Guyana Jurors Hustled Through Massacre Site

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JONESTOWN, Guyana—The cans of diet Dr. Pepper were still lined up with the vitamin pills in Jim Jones' cabin and Haroon Bacchus, the coroner, was in no mood to linger as he led five solemn jurors from the bushlands of Guyana through his on-the-scene inquest here Thursday.

"Now move along," he said in his nervous sing-song voice. "Let's step along. That's quite enough. My goodness now, this is awful, let's move along."

The jurors, four men and a woman from the remote area of Matthews Ridge in western Guyana who were chosen to sit in an official inquiry into the cause of death of the Americans whose lives ended here, were not reluctant to move on themselves, but it was not easy to move quickly through the muck that remains in Jonestown.

It was the second day of the inquest, in which coroner Bacchus, chief public prosecutor Emanuel Ramao and other key personnel were flown from Georgetown on a grueling

two-hour helicopter ride to Matthews Ridge. The settlement is the site of a played out manganese mine, a small government service center and a short blacktop air strip. About 4,000 settlers are said to live in the region on widely scattered farms.

The trip to Jonestown, now guarded by about 30 ununiformed Guyanese police officers and prowled by a legion of hungry cats, was requested by the jurors themselves after they had spent the first day of the inquest listening to testimony from three Guyanese officials.

They were told that tests performed on 54 victims in Guyana—before the bodies were removed to the U.S.—indicated they died from cyanide poisoning, and that two other persons, including Peoples Temple leader Jim Jones, died of gunshot wounds.

Government bacteriologist Dr. Leslie Mootoo told the jurors that Jones had died of a bullet wound to the head, fired at close range, but he could not tell if the shot was fired by Jones himself.

He said another Peoples Temple

member, Elizabeth Ann Moore, was shot in the head from some distance with a high powered weapon.

To begin Thursday's proceedings, the two U.S. Army helicopters, piloted by American crews based in Panama, landed in a light rain on a lumpy clearing where Jonestown residents once played softball. The settlement was quiet, except for the buzz of insects and the sounds from the surrounding jungle. The Guyanese officers who had been left to guard the place seemed to materialize from nowhere.

The jurors, ranging in age from 37 to 66, disembarked with grave faces and great dignity. Some of them, like Prince Albert Glasgow, a 53-year-old metal worker, carried briefcases and note pads and pencils. They set out solemnly, trailing the voices of prosecutor Ramao and coroner Bacchus, the two East Indian officials who seemed to be looking forward to a long day full of opportunities to correct each other.

"If I were you," Ramao said, as the party came to a fork in the path, "I would go this way."

"Follow me," the oblivious Bacchus said.

One of the first stops, as the group entered the cluster of cabins that served as living quarters for Jonestown residents, was a trash barrel. The group fell silent as Bacchus picked through the garbage. The sun had come out. Clouds of gnats hung in

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the oppressive air.

"And what is this?" Bacchus asked, holding a diet cola can. He looked at it closely, then handed it to a nearby witness for further inspection.

"And where was it made?" Bacchus asked.

"San Francisco," came the answer.

"Aha," Bacchus said, "make a note of this. San Francisco."

There were some in the group, eyes closed, who smiled quietly, but the smiles faded as they advanced up the pathway, past the altar of St. Aid that left rain-soaked red stains on the clay mud, past heaps of clothing, shoes, and numberless black-and-white shoes scattered there in the grass, always in pairs.

ers away from it, and, after lengthy debate and consultation with prosecutor Ramao, ordered the chart covered and brought away by a policeman.

"I feel sick," said Bacchus. "I suggest we move on. I feel quite ill."

The group moved on, through the kitchen, with its rotting dishpans full of cheese sandwiches, the uneaten last supper of the Peoples Temple.

Finally, the jurors insisted, they wanted to see the house where Jim Jones himself had lived.

"I must see his house," said Albert Graham, the jury's foreman. "I must see the place where the man himself lived."

Coroner Bacchus pressed on. It was not a pleasant site. Thirteen people had died there. There were bloodstains on the mattresses. The odor was heavy. The tour filed through in the choking heat. Feet scraped on the board floors. The jurors looked on, their faces set.

"Let's move on," said Bacchus, and the group continued out of the dimness of the cabins and into the stunning, brilliant sunlight.

The inquest will continue Friday and possibly through the weekend at Matthews Ridge.