

In Guyana, the mystery still grows

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MATTHEWS RIDGE, Guyana — There was the money, \$7 million in Peoples Temple funds, to be withdrawn from Swiss bank accounts and forwarded to the Soviet Union after the self-destruction of Jonestown.

There were the cheers and six gunshots, heard long after the cyanide sacraments had ended by a man who said he escaped the ritual by cowering in the bush.

And there was the final epistle, written in defense of Jim Jones and his socialistic promised land by a 24-year-old woman believed to be one of the last to die.

Despite the mass of evidence that emerged during five days of testimony at a coroner's inquest, exactly what transpired and why in the final hours of the settlement remain a mystery. Almost certain to be left unanswered Wednesday, when a jury of five returns to render a decision in this case, are these questions:

- Who killed Jim Jones? If it was suicide, why was the snub-nosed .38 believed to be the death weapon found some 25 yards from his body? If it was murder, then why?

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- Was there a plot for Jones, and perhaps some of his top aides, to flee after the "white night?" Why was the temple boat, the Cudjoe, dispatched out of Port Kaituma the morning of the last day with instructions to return the following morning?

- Was the attack on Rep. Leo Ryan and his fact-finding party a spontaneous outburst by crazed loyalists, or were the congressman and the people of Jonestown doomed long before the fateful Nov. 18?

"There are still a lot of things I don't feel comfortable about," C.A. Roberts, the chief investigator for the Guyana police, conceded yesterday after he testified. Roberts' testimony, which provided by far the most startling information to come out of the inquest, followed a series of statements made by the handful of Jonestown dwellers who survived the murder-suicide of 913 of their neighbors.

The inquest is a formality needed before death certificates can be issued for the more than 900 bodies in cold storage at Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Del.

Until the certificates are provided by the Guyanese government, the bodies technically cannot

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be released. Coroner Haroon Bacchus, the magistrate in the case, and government prosecutor Mannie Rawao had hoped to finish the inquest yesterday. But after Roberts testified, the prosecutor instructed the five jurors to go home and contemplate the new developments for three days before making any decision.

In his two hours on the stand, Roberts disclosed that key Jonestown aides had dispatched couriers to the Russian Embassy in Georgetown with letters instructing bank officials in Panama and Venezuela to place more than \$7 million in temple money with the Soviet consul in Georgetown.

He also read a four-page handwritten letter by Jones' nurse, Annie Moore. Roberts said he believes the letter — a paean to Jones and his mission — was written shortly before Moore took her life with a .357-caliber Magnum pistol that was found lying next to her shattered head. Earlier, a government pathologist testified that he thought Moore was shot by somebody else.

Roberts said that he was at a loss to determine if Jones had killed himself or had been murdered, primarily because the Guyanese police force lacks the ballistics expertise needed to match guns, bullets and wounds.

In addition, he said, when the Guyanese Defense Force (GDF) secured Jonestown the morning after the killings, some evidence was moved about and rendered useless.

"This was a military operation, not detectives securing a crime scene," Roberts said.

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Stanley Clayton, a 35-year-old former Oakland resident who worked as a cook at Jonestown, said that he was in the compound until there were about only 100 persons left alive.

He said that when he realized what was happening he approached one of the security guards who surrounded the temple pavilion and said he wanted to say goodbye to a friend.

Once he got beyond the security perimeter, Clayton said, he kept on walking into the jungle.

After about 30 or 45 minutes, he said, "I heard what I would say was three cheers. I heard a lot of people yelling. It sounded like a lot of people, a lot of voices."

Clayton said he spent about one more hour in the bush, and then returned to within about 75 yards from the pavilion.

"I heard one shot, and another shot, and a double one, and then I heard another one," Clayton said. "I ran back into the bush."

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Herbert Newell, a temple member from San Francisco, said that about 9:30 a.m. on the day of the Port Kaituma airstrip murders, he was sent to the Cudjoe.

"We were just told to take the boat up and down the river," Newell said. Newell said they took the Cudjoe north to Kumako, near the Venezuelan border, docked the boat there and had planned to leave the next day. But about midnight, he said, they were arrested by Guyanese police.

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Tim and Michael Carter and Michael Prokes, three temple aides who escaped with a suitcase full of money and documents, told how they left just as the Jonestown killings were beginning.

According to them, Maria Katsaris, one of Jones' top aides, told the Carter brothers Prokes would need help in carrying the suitcase.

Tim Carter said he picked up the suitcase at his cabin, and took it to the complex where Jones lived.

She went back into the house, Tim Carter said, and later emerged with the suitcase, which by then weighed about 40 pounds.

The Carters and Prokes testified that Katsaris told them to take the suitcase to the Soviet embassy, gave them two .38-caliber revolvers, and instructed them to shoot themselves if they got caught.

Shortly before Tim Carter showed up with the suitcase, Prokes testified, "Maria Katsaris came rushing up to me and said, 'A bunch have gone after the congressman. They're going to get Ryan. It's out of control.'"

Prokes said that after Katsaris had handed over the suitcase, the two revolvers and their passports, "She was very frantic. She said there was a lot of money here and letters and said, 'Give it to the embassy, fast, and if you get caught shoot yourselves.'"

All three testified that after they had made their way out into a field, they found the suitcase too heavy to lug through the mud, so they stopped and buried about several packets of currency along with two envelopes addressed to the Soviet embassy and two passports. They were stopped by police at Port Kaituma.

Police testified the trio led officers to the burial spot the following day, and that they found \$634,867 in U.S. currency and \$137,661 in Guyanese money.

The Carters and Prokes said they followed railroad tracks into Port Kaituma. Police said they found \$296,500 in U.S. money and \$11,898 in Guyanese currency near the tracks. The Carters and Prokes denied leaving any money there.

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Clayton, during his testimony, gave this account of the "white night" of murder and suicide:

"There were mothers there who were crying. People all started crying. Jones said, 'Shut up. Don't be scaring the babies like that.' After the babies were killed, people realized it was for real, and people started shouting, 'Hurry, hurry, the GDF will be here.' Jones had a long cord on the mike, and he kept walking among the crowd, pulling people from their seats, saying they must go. The security people also were assisting people to the line. Jones was telling them, 'I love you.' On one occasion he said, 'It's nothing but a deep sleep. It won't hurt you.'"

