

Findings in Jones Autopsy Called Consistent With Murder or Suicide

By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN

The Rev. Jim Jones and Anne Eliza Beth Moore, a nurse in his cult in Guyana, died of gunshot wounds to the head and their deaths could be consistent with either suicide or murder, a forensic pathologist who was a member of the autopsy team said yesterday.

No bullet wounds or fragments were found in the autopsies on the remains of five other members of the People's Temple whose post-mortem examinations were carried out last Friday at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware by a team of specialists from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

Dr. Rudiger Breitenecker, a civilian member of the team, said in an interview that the cause of death of the five cult members who were not shot may never be known because of the state of decomposition of their bodies.

"We were working with all the handi-caps," Dr. Breitenecker said. "The bodies were so seriously decomposed that you could not tell if they were black or white, and the examination was aggravated by subsequent embalming."

Large Exit Wound Found

Dr. Breitenecker said that a bullet traveled through Mr. Jones's head from left to right. "The bullet wound on the right side of the head was small and the other hole on the left side was very large," he said.

The doctor added: "Generally, the exit wound is larger than the entrance wound, but it is just the opposite when you talk about a contact gunshot wound. So even in the decomposing state of his body and everything else, we could establish with-

out any doubt that it was a contact wound from the left.

"To say whether this was homicide or suicide is speculation because someone could have pushed a gun into his temple and made it appear as a suicide," Dr. Breitenecker said. "Certainly we can say Jones' death was compatible with a suicide."

Mr. Jones had been described as ill with fevers to 103 degrees in the weeks prior to his death, and others said that Mr. Jones had thought he was terminally ill.

No Sign of Chronic Disease

Dr. Breitenecker said the team of pathologists could not detect with their naked eyes any evidence of a chronic disease. He said that specialists at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington would attempt to examine samples of internal organs under the microscope to detect any such disease.

Miss Moore, a nurse at Jonestown, was shot to death, Dr. Breitenecker said, and "Her head had just about been destroyed."

Because of the state of decomposition of her remains, Dr. Breitenecker said the team could not determine the type of weapon used or the distance at which the bullets were fired. "We pretty well established the direction of the shot, right to left, but had more difficulty pinning down the weapon."

Guyana Doctor Suspects Murder

Dr. Leslie Mootoo, a forensic pathologist in Guyana, has told reporters that he performed an autopsy on Mr. Jones and that he suspected that Mr. Jones was murdered. Dr. Mootoo also said he found evidence



Stephan Jones in Georgetown last month with another temple survivor

Associated Press

of needle injections in the bodies of some cultists, indicating that they had been murdered, not suicide, victims. Dr. Breitenecker said the team did not find needle marks in the seven bodies, but that they had not examined the remainder of the more than 900 who died together in Guyana.

Dr. Breitenecker is a pathologist at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center and is on the faculties of the University of Maryland and the University of Louisville.

Other members of the study team, directed by Dr. William R. Cowan, were: Dr. Robert L. Thompson, Dr. Kenneth H. Mueller, Dr. Joseph M. Ballow and Dr. Douglas S. Dixon.

Forensic pathologists examine blood, urine and other tissues for evidence of drugs and chemical substances. However, in the case of the seven bodies that were autopsied last week, Dr. Breitenecker said, there was no blood or urine and the stomach contents had been drained or destroyed by decomposition or the needles with which the embalming fluid had been injected.

Dr. Breitenecker said he was unhappy that a diagnosis of cyanide poisoning was not established in the early stages of the investigation.

"All someone had to do was drain a little urine or blood through a needle, and not even do an autopsy," he said. "If it was worth the expense of several million dollars to fly the bodies back, maybe it would have been worth a needle to establish what happened."