

A CULT MOTHER LED CHILDREN TO DEATH

Witnesses, Initially Unaware of
Plans for Suicides, Tell of
the Guyana Deaths

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GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Dec. 4 — Moments after she finished what is believed to be the last radio conversation with Jonestown, Sharon Amos walked briskly through the living room of the People's Temple headquarters here with a knife in her hand, witnesses said today.

She led her children — Martin, 8 years old; Christa, 10, and Leanne, 22 — into a bathroom, and motioned to Charles Beikman, a 43-year-old former marine, to follow.

Then others in the living room heard a child cry "Oh, Mama," and then a scream. They ran to the bathroom. Mrs. Amos and the children lay bleeding to death, their throats cut, and Mr. Beikman stood trembling nearby.

Forty-six persons were in the headquarters that evening, unaware until later, they say, that as Sharon Amos and her family died, the Jonestown commune was destroying itself in a frenzy of murder and suicide.



Associated Press

Charles Beikman, facing camera, embraces his son, Thomas, before entering courthouse in Georgetown, Guyana. He has been charged with killing Sharon Amos, a spokesman for the People's Temple, and her three children.

Man Accused of Killing

After several days of questioning, the police charged Mr. Beikman with killing the Amoses and attempting to kill Stephany Jones, the 9-year-old granddaughter of Jim Jones, who had apparently arrived from the bathroom earlier.

Today, as a preliminary hearing began, Carlton Weithers, the man assigned to prosecute the case, told reporters that he was convinced Mr. Beikman had helped Mrs. Amos, a public relations officer for the cult who was in her 40's, to kill her children, and that he had then killed her.

Mr. Beikman is the first of the cultists to be taken into court for testimony. A hearing for Larry Layton, the cultist who is accused of killing Representative Leo J. Ryan and four other Americans, is scheduled for Jan. 15.

Talking with reporters in a breezeway of the magistrates court in a recess today, Mr. Weithers said of Mrs. Amos: "I feel she wanted to commit suicide. But certainly not the children. They were screaming. And she couldn't have done it alone."

Written Statement Cited

Mr. Weithers, a small, slender man in a dark business suit, said that Mr. Beikman had contended in a written statement to the police that he had watched the Amoses die, but that he had not had a hand in their deaths.

"In essence, he told the police he was invited to assist her in slitting the throats of her children, but he said he couldn't do it," Mr. Weithers continued. "Then he

said Sharon Amos did it and invited him to slit her throat. He said he couldn't do that, either."

Mr. Weithers said that Mr. Beikman admitted in his statement that he had attempted to kill the Jones girl, but that "he couldn't do that, either."

Before the hearing began, Tom Beikman, the 21-year-old son of the accused man, who was part of a group of cultists released from house arrest at the head-

quarters yesterday, said that he thought his father was getting "a very dirty deal."

The son, who lost his mother and brother at Jonestown, pictured his father as a gentle, easy-going person who "never used to go hunting because he didn't like to kill animals."

'Uneducated Loudmouth

Other survivors, however, have less fond memories of the Charles Beikman they knew in Jonestown. "He was an uneducated loudmouth who didn't give a damn about anybody," said Jerry Parks, a defector who fled the commune with the help of Representative Ryan and saw his wife and Mr. Ryan killed at the jungle airstrip a short time later.

At the hearing today, Mr. Beikman, a husky man with a shock of blond hair combed back in a wave, sat woodenly in the dock, his face in repose, hands clasped loosely before him, as the prosecutor, his lawyers and the magistrate spent hours in the steamy room jousting over procedure.