

Officials Interrogate Fromme

By Jules Witcover

Washington Post Staff Writer

SACRAMENTO, Sept. 6—On the hot, sticky night after Lynette Alice Fromme was charged with trying to kill the President of the United States, neighbors and police gathered outside her home on a quiet, residential street half a mile from the state Capitol.

In various ways, they asked themselves and each other the same question being heard around the country today:

Why?

Men in open-necked shirts or work shirts and pants, and women in blouses or halters and shorts stood outside the old white frame house at 1725 P St., where Fromme occupied a small attic apartment with Sandra Good, self-styled "nuns" in the Charles Manson mass-murder "family."

"They kept pretty quiet," said George White, manager of 14 furnished apartments in the house next door. "They never made any trouble and I never heard anything from them. It was a surprise to me."

And on the steps of the Fromme's house, Frank Maslowski, a food service worker at a nearby hospital, said "I don't know anything, about them. They were nice girls. They never bothered anybody. No, I never talked to her [Fromme] about politics."

C. F. Quinby, a retired clerk and elevator operator, agreed. "They were very

friendly and never seemed to do anything wrong. They always seemed peaceful and quiet. It certainly surprised me when I heard about it."

"It"—further conversation made clear—referred not only to the alleged assassination attempt by Fromme on President Ford. Neighborhood surprise also stemmed from the association of the two women and a resident of a basement apartment, Susan Murphy, with Manson, convicted of murder in the famed Tate-Labianca Case and imprisoned at San Quentin.

"I saw the Xs on their heads," said Maslowski, "but I never talked to them about it." He referred to small marks apparently cut into the foreheads of Fromme and Good by the women during the Manson trial.

In the wake of Fromme's arrest, federal and local law enforcement officials, armed with a search warrant, were seeking an answer to the obvious question: did the attempt on President Ford's life stem from some conspiracy within the Manson family.

Under the direction of Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald Heller, authorities were conducting what might be one of the most open, well-publicized searches for evidence in the annals of American jurisprudence.

As one team entered the roped-off house to examine Fromme's room and belongings, another lawman smashed the small front

window in her old red Volkswagen and proceeded methodically to examine its contents—as television cameras rolled.

He found a textbook on criminal law, some old clothes and blankets, a pair of tennis racquets and other items. After shaking out the blankets and clothes, he folded each item neatly and replaced it as neighbors and reporters watched.

Presently, Murphy came along, barefoot and dressed in tan corduroy slacks, totting a paper sack full of food. Already questioned once by police and released, she was willing to chat with her neighbors and the press.

"We didn't know anything about it," she said of the alleged assassination attempt. She said that she and Good had talked to Fromme about Mr. Ford. "We discussed it," she said. "He wasn't appointed by the people. He was appointed by Nixon."

The talk turned to Manson.

"I believe in him," she said. "I believe he's honest."

"Is he god?" a reporter asked. She paused, then said:

"Yes, he is."

Shortly afterward, Good came down the street, dressed in a long, red, cotton robe with attached hood and a kind of curved swastika symbol sewn at the neck. She, too, had no reluctance to talk. First neighbors, then reporters, then Heller and another lawman approached and peppered her with questions about

Fromme, about Manson, about talk of politics, and where Fromme might have gotten the handgun wrested from her Friday morning on the state Capitol grounds.

Soft-spoken with fine features and long, light brown hair, the "X" clearly visible on her forehead, Good knelt on the tiny lawn in front of her house and answered questions from Heller and Lt. Robert Waters of the Sacramento police homicide division. Was her friend Fromme troubled, unstable, paranoid? As the questions were asked in this bizarre open-air interrogation into an alleged presidential assassination attempt, hand mikes were thrust into her face, cameras spun and pencils scribbled.

"Lyn is fine," Good said. "She's concerned about the survival of this planet. She's concerned about the children . . . Paranoid? Psychologically, she's fine . . . She's supersane."

Did she act strangely at all the night before, Heller asked.

"Just a little more tired, a little more aware of the problems."

Did she make any threat toward President Ford?

"No."

The lawmen probably had already asked Good these questions in private, but Heller proceeded to ask them again, as the television lights pushed away the approaching dusk and the cameras rolled.

Did she think it wrong to take a life?

Friends Before TV, Neighbors

"I don't believe in killing, myself. You should take the guns out the the hands ..."

"So why did she (Fromme) do it?" Walters asked, squatting next to Good.

"You'll have to talk to her."

"Does Manson believe in killing?"

"Why don't you talk to him?"

"Do you thin killing is a solution?"

"What do you think? Are you going to continue to let them pollute the air?"

The Sacramento Bee reported that Good had told a Canadian reporter shortly after the alleged assassination attempt: "Tell your prime minister to stop killing whales or he will be assassinated. This act is a symptom of many, many problems that are moving across the states. Nixon lied and now Ford is doing the same." The paper reported that she said an the boards of Exxon, Ford "international people's court of retribution" of 2,000 persons will "assassinate the presidents and chairmen of Motor . and DOW Chemical Co. . . . None of these people are safe," she warned, the Bee reported.)

The talk turned to former President Nixon. Good recalled that when Nixon was president, he had called Manson "guilty" before he was tried and convicted, and she deplored Nixon's current freedom. "He's walking around," she said. "Manso'n in prison."

But what, Heller and

Waters asked, did that have to do with President Ford?

"People better not be in those positions if they're not serving the people," she said.

The public interrogation broke up when Waters asked Good to step aside for a few final questions. He apparently inquired about something that had been found in the apartment, because she smiled and replied in a loud voice, "Did you find anything else interesting?" Then she added, "Listen, why did you break in the car? the keys were right on the table."

Good, who said she was "waiting for them to finish ransacking the house," was still game for more questions. Had she been in contact with Manson, a reporter asked. "Yes," she said, "by

mail and thought." She said she usually received a daily letter from him.

Did he ever suggest any action against Mr. Ford?

"No, he didn't. I read every word he writes. I know he's darn mad at Nixon for what he's done to the people."

"Is he mad at Ford?"

"He never said it. He's [Mr. Ford] just a robot. An empty-headed robot."

Good then went over to the lawn, sat next to Murphy and some other friends, and peeled a banana and ate. She took a loaf of bread from the bag of groceries and Murphy drank from a carton of buttermilk as the neighbors and the press continued to gawk at the scene and the television cameras rolled.

A reporter walked over to Waters and asked whether anything of note had been found in the apartment upstairs. In spite of the open interrogation of moments before, Waters said curtly, "We can't comment on what we found up there."