

By George Lardner Jr.
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The Rev. Jim Jones apparently committed suicide at his Peoples Temple camp in Guyana last month although murder could not be ruled out, according to one of the pathologists who conducted an autopsy on Jones body.

Jones died of a contact gunshot wound to the head. A "fairly large caliber" bullet from a handgun entered on the left side and exited on the right, a team of specialists organized by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology found in the examination at Dove Air Force Base last Friday.

"It looks like a suicide," said Dr. Rudiger Breitnecker, a member of the team. But he added, "obviously somebody can put a gun against your head and it looks the same."

Jones was reportedly left-handed, a attribute consistent with the entry wound, Dr. Breitnecker said.

Breitnecker, a former member of the Maryland medical examiner's office in Baltimore and now a pathologist at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center, was critical of the "totally faulty" original examinations of the Jonestown dead and of the three-week delay in the ordering of autopsies by the federal government.

By then, the pathologist said, the bodies of the more than 900 who died in the mass suicide-murders last Nov. 18 were badly decayed and embalmed, making it impossible to conduct complete and conclusive autopsies.

Breitnecker said it may also be impossible to determine whether anyone died of cyanide poisoning, apparently because no urine or blood samples were taken from any of the victims at Jonestown. While the government spent large amounts of money flying the bodies back to the United States, no one bothered to invest "a few dollars to fly someone down with a needle and syringe" to help establish the causes of death, the pathologist protested.

The Armed Forces Institute's medical team, headed by Dr. William R. Cowan, conducted autopsies on the bodies of Jones and six other members of the Peoples Temple cult, including Anne Elizabeth Moore, a nurse who had been shot to death.

Moore's "head had been just about destroyed," meaning it was even more difficult to tell whether she committed suicide or whether she was murdered.

"I can't rule out the possibility that she was shot by a rifle," Breitnecker said. "In (Jones') case, the odds favor suicide. In her case, the odds are either no odds, or 50-50."

No bullets or bullet fragments were found in the seven bodies examined. There were no blood or urine samples available because the stomach contents destroyed by decay or drained in the embalming process, Breitnecker said. Toxicologists can still test for cyanide, although embalming fluid can destroy it, he said.

Last week's autopsy uncovered no immediate evidence of any chronic disease from which Jones might have been suffering. Microscopic examinations of tissue samples from his body are still to be conducted, but Breitnecker doubted they would be productive.

The official report of the autopsy team and the results of any microscopic tests, will be turned over to the Justice Department which is still investigating the murder of Rep. Leo Ryan (D-Calif.) and four others before the carnage at the Peoples Temple camp.

Jones left behind millions of dollars in numbered Swiss bank accounts in Panama City and in Switzerland. Justice Department sources yesterday discounted reports that one of Jones' former top aides, Terry Buford, might still have access to the money.

Jones assigned the accounts to several other Peoples Temple members before his death, these sources said. In any case, the funds have been frozen by Swiss banking authorities at U.S. government request.

THE WASHINGTON POST

Wednesday, December 20, 1978

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Jones Apparently Committed Suicide, Pathologist Says

Jones' Son Is Charged With 4 Murder Counts In Cult Throat-Slashing

By Charles A. Krause

Washington Post Foreign Service

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Dec. 19—Looking haggard and contrite after a night in police custody, the late Rev. Jim Jones' 19-year-old son Stepehn was charged with murder today in the throat-slashings of four Peoples Temple members hours after the mass suicide-murder at Jonestown.

In one more unexpected episode of the Nov. 18 Jonestown tragedy, Jones confessed yesterday to the murders during a tense courtroom confrontation Carlton Weithers, government prosecutor. Jones was testifying during an inquest to determine whether Charles E. Beigman, a member of the Peoples Temple, will stand trial on charges of actually carrying out the four killings.

Guyanese police have determined Jones was not at the scene of the murder and therefore do not believe he wielded the knife himself. But under Guyanese law, they say, ordering the killings makes him liable to the murder charges.

During Weithers' reexamination yesterday, obviously angered Jones blurted out: "I killed those people and am trying to put it off on Chuck Beikman."

Magistrate Desmond Christian then asked Jones twice whether he meant what he had said, and both times Jones said he did, according to Weithers and a diplomatic observer in the courtroom yesterday when the statement was made.

Christian recessed the hearing and ordered a police investigation. It was understood here today that the police, who already had cleared Jones of involvement in the actual slayings, did not find any additional evidence to support his admission.

Nonetheless, Weithers said before the charges were formally lodged against Jones this morning that the fact that Jones recanted his admission and was obviously agitated when he blurted out his statement does not negate the legal validity of the confession.

Despite Jones' statement, the prosecutor did not dismiss the four counts of murder and one count of attempted murder against Beikman. They simply added Jones as a defendant, charged both with attempting to slash the throat of 8-year-old Stephanie Jones, Jones' niece; and with slashing the throats of Lianne Harris, 22; Martin Amos, 9; Christine Amos, 10, and Linda Sharon Amos, about 42.

Stephanie Jones escaped but the other four, Linda Sharon Amos and her three children, died in the lavatory of a Georgetown house belonging to the Peoples Temple. Linda Sharon Amos was a top aide to the elder Jones before the Jonestown tragedy in which more than 900 persons died.

"I told them (the police) I was mad. It was absurd. I wasn't even there," Jones told reporters today before being taken off to jail.

Christian scheduled the next hearing in the case for Jan. 10.

Hee Ingram, a Peoples Temple leader outside the courtroom, characterized lengthy questioning of Temple survivors by Guyanese police as harassment. At the same time, Ingram said discussions are under way between temple lawyer Rex McKay, a confidant of Guyana's Prime Minister L. F. Burnham, to allow several Peoples Temple members to remain in Guyana rather than return to the United States, where they will undoubtedly be called before a federal grand jury in San Francisco investigating the temple's operations.