

# Guyanese Panel Rules All but 2 Were Murdered

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By Charles A. Krause

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**MATTHEWS RIDGE, Guyana, Dec. 22** — A coroner's jury ruled here today that all but two of the more than 900 persons who died at Jonestown Nov. 18 were murdered because they were coerced into taking poison by cult leader Jim Jones and his henchmen.

The jury's rejection of the notion that his followers committed mass suicide by drinking the poison voluntarily was based on its conclusion that "Jim Jones masterminded the situation," according to the jury's foreman, Albert Graham.

"The man made people believe he was a god," Graham said of Jones, "and naturally they moved to his command."

After some confusion, the jury, composed of five laborers from this mining outpost about 35 miles from Jonestown in remote northwestern Guyana, also ruled that Jones was murdered by "some person or persons unknown."

The jury first announced that it had decided that Jones had committed suicide, apparently basing its conclusion on testimony by Dr. Leslie Mootoo, a pathologist, that Jones was shot from very close range in the "suicide area" of the brain, above and slightly behind his ear.

But Magistrate Haroon Bacchus shouted at the jurors, asking them, "What evidence do you have to support suicide?"

Bacchus told the jurors that Mootoo had stated that the gun was found 20 yards away from Jones' body, and that was inconsistent with a finding of suicide. What the jurors did not know was that the first police officials who reached Jonestown after the mass killings had told reporters that the gun was found no more than five or ten feet from Jones' body on the podium of Jonestown's central pavillion.

In any event, the jurors filed back out, deliberated for 10 more minutes and returned to announce that "some person or persons unknown is clearly responsible for the death of James Warren Jones."

Magistrate Bacchus and the jurors agreed that two of Jones' mistresses, Anne Elizabeth Moore and Maria Katsaris, were the only ones to have com-

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mitted suicide of their free will. Moore fired a shot into her own head and Katsaris swallowed poison, evidence showed.

The jury's finding that the rest were, in effect, victims of murder was not based, however, on unconfirmed news reports of the past week that many of those found dead at Jonestown had apparently been killed by poison injected into them by the Jonestown medical staff after they refused to drink the poison.

The only evidence introduced during the 10-day inquest that indicated that anyone might have been injected with the cyanide poison came from Dr. Mootoo, who is the Guyanese government's official pathologist.

In a letter that was introduced to augment his oral testimony, Mootoo said "several" of the 39 bodies he had examined on the ground in Jonestown had needle marks on their arms. He drew no conclusions from this finding in his letter.

Other officials have said privately that these victims could have chosen to be injected rather than drink the poison because it is difficult to hold a person still enough for an injection if the person is resisting violently.

It is also possible that the needle marks could have been made by injections prior to the "white night," of death. Some Jonestown survivors have told of injections of tranquilizers that were given to troublemakers and old people.

Today's ruling has the practical effect of clearing the way for authorities in the United States to issue death certificates for the 914 bodies airlifted by the U.S. military from Jonestown to Dover.

The coroner's jury found that cyanide poisoning was responsible for the deaths of all but three of those who died inside Jonestown. Besides the gunshot deaths of Jones and Moore, another unidentified victim found in the Jonestown psychiatric ward in a pool of blood may have been killed by a bullet rather than poison.

A Guyanese police official testified today that neither he nor U.S. authorities are certain about how that man died. The jury left the cause of his death open.

The jurors deliberated a total of 17 minutes before reaching their findings, which were clearly influenced by Magistrate Bacchus. At times, he berated the jurors and made strong suggestions to them of what he thought happened during the final hours at Jonestown.

Jury foreman Graham expressed displeasure both with Bacchus and his own jury's findings after the inquest ended. Asked about testimony by Odell Rhodes, one of the Jonestown survivors, that at the beginning, at

least, many Peoples Temple members seemed to take the poison voluntarily, Graham said: "I was not there, so how will I ever know?"

But Graham went on to explain the jurors had reasoned that even if some of those who lived at the agricultural commune drank the poison of grape drink, cyanide and tranquilizers, "they were under the influence of Jones at the time."

Since Jones clearly ordered the deaths and armed guards were there to enforce his order, the jurors reasoned, he was criminally responsible.

To some extent, the debate over whether members of the Peoples Temple committed suicide or were murdered depends on how suicide and murder are defined. The hundreds of children who died at Jonestown were clearly murdered, whether or not their mothers gave them their poison, because they did not have the mental ability to choose to live or to die.

According to Rhodes and Stanley Clayton, another survivor who witnessed much of the killing before he escaped, others made no move to drink the poison and were escorted to their deaths by the armed guards. Most did not actively protest, but neither did they choose death willingly, Rhodes and Clayton said.

But a large number of those who died did so according to both of the living witnesses without having to be forced in any way. Jones exhorted them "to die with dignity," and they approached the vat of poison without further persuasion.

The jurors concluded that this Jones, who convinced them that enemies of the Peoples Temple were set to destroy it—especially after Rep. Leo J. Ryan and four others were

killed by gunmen sent from Jonestown. These Peoples Temple members may well have believed they would be tortured and killed as Jones had told them, and so chose poison instead.

Others believe that this group of persons simply took the poison because they believed in Jones and believed for political or religious reasons that those who lived at Jonestown, would, after death, "meet in another place," as they were told. Although a certain mass hysteria occurred at the time, it can be argued that these people chose to die voluntarily, in effect committing suicide.

## 12 Jonestown Survivors Arrive in United States

**NEW YORK (AP)**—A dozen members of the Peoples Temple who left Jonestown weeks ago with Rep. Leo J. Ryan and survived an ambush that killed Ryan and four others have finally arrived in the United States.

The 12 arrived here from Guyana Thursday night and were questioned briefly by Secret Service and FBI agents before clearing customs.

# Some Cult Ex-Members Suspicious of 'Defector'

By Paul Grabowica

Special to The Washington Post

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 22—Recent efforts by Terri Buford, one of the Rev. Jim Jones' former top aides, to blame others for alleged illegal activities by the Peoples Temple, may indicate that she is still loyal to the dead temple leader and is carrying out his orders to discredit defectors from the church, according to several temple ex-members.

The former church members claim that Jones had instructed his top aides to destroy the reputations of any "traitors" to the temple should anything happen to him or his congregation. At the top of his list of enemies, according to the ex-members, was former temple attorney Timothy Stoen, whom Buford is now blaming for most of the church's questionable activities.

Buford appeared Wednesday before a federal grand jury in San Francisco investigation the Peoples Temple and the murder of Rep. Leo J. Ryan (D-Calif.). At a news conference the next day Buford charged that Stoen was the central figure in many alleged church activities, including plans to poison the water supply in Washington, D.C., store weapons at Stoen's California home and set up the church's complicated overseas network of secret accounts.

Buford, accompanied at the news conference by her attorney, Mark Lane, claimed she had defected from the temple Oct. 27, and said her role in the temple's affairs was secondary to that of Stoen. She and Lane also charged that former temple attorney Charles Garry knew about the smuggling and stockpiling of weapons by the temple.

Buford's attempt to downplay her role in the temple, and particularly her attacks on Stoen, have lead several temple ex-members to say they

fear she may still be wedded to Jones's philosophy.

A spokesman for the Berkeley-based Human Freedom Center (HFC), run by several temple ex-members, expressed extreme skepticism about her defection from the temples. "Just the way they (Buford and Lane) are attacking Tim Stoen, it's like a final salute to Jim Jones."

"It was pretty well known by the entire congregation that Tim Stoen was going to be slandered" by Jones' loyalists if the temple collapsed, the HFC spokesman added.

The temple ex-members are particularly distrustful of Buford because she sought out Mark Lane when she defected from the church in October. They point out that Lane at the time was one of the attorneys for the temple and subsequently went back to Guyana and conferred with Jones.

"The last place in the world she would have gone," says Patrick Hallinan, Stoen's attorney in San Francisco, "was to Mark Lane. . . into the jaws of a possible trap."

Meanwhile, the federal grand jury impaneled in San Francisco is continuing its investigation into the temple's affairs. According to one source close to the inquiry, federal officials are viewing the statements made by all the former temple members thus far with extreme skepticism.

The U.S. attorney's office, according to this source, has no immediate plans to grant immunity to any of them, and recently turned down a request by Buford for immunity from prosecution.

The federal investigators are trying to obtain documents from Guyana in an effort to weigh the truth of the testimony of the temple ex-members. "There is certainly some truth in what they're saying about each other," the source explained. "But they're just not telling the whole truth, particularly about their own involvements."