

Guyana tragedy puts lawyer Lane back in the limelight

By Rogers Worthington

MEMPHIS — The lights are burning, the television cameras are moving in, and an owlish-eyed, bearded, and well-coiffed Mark Lane, 51, is coming across amazingly buoyant for a man who only a few weeks before survived one of the most mind-numbing catastrophes in modern history.

It is 9 a.m. and Lane is starting a busy Saturday with a television panel show about the death ory in Jonestown. After that is lunch with several newsmen and another taping session, this one a segment for a French television show. The rest of the day will be consumed by phone calls and a procession of reporters to his modest house on Memphis' south side.

This is the way life is for Mark Lane since returning from Guyana last month. He and fellow attorney Charles Garry represented the Rev. Jim Jones during the tragic visit to Jonestown, Guyana by Rep. Leo Ryan (D., Cal.). While Ryan and four others were being gunned down by Jones' minions at the tiny Port Kaituma airstrip 8 miles away, Lane says he and Garry were being held captive on the edge of Jonestown. And while members of the jungle commune lay dead or convulsing from potassium cyanide poisoning, Lane and Garry were escaping through the bush.

THE REASONS for the buoyant spirit that has characterized him much of the time since his return are, like many things about Mark Lane, complex and contradictory. He is, understandably, almost giddy at having survived, and at the same time at having been one of the few witnesses to the final living hours of Jonestown.

In a macabre way, it is unbelievable good fortune for Lane, whose involvement in most

of the events he writes and lectures about is usually after the fact.

Within a week of returning Lane already was considering how best to capitalize on his unique access to the Jonestown story. He has dropped his former lecture agents and signed up with New Line Cinema, an aggressive firm that has already booked him for more than 30 lectures in the next 3½ months at between \$2,500 and \$3,000 each.

The Los Angeles Times Syndicate is reportedly getting \$40,000 from European magazines for a series of five Lane-written articles. He got a healthy slice of the syndicated TV panel show produced in Memphis and syndicated in several cities across the country. And Lisa Collier, his New York agent, is talking to publishers about a book she expects will command \$100,000. She's talking with filmmakers and television producers about a docu-drama as well.

AND LANE is back in action in one of his favorite roles: the embattled activist lawyer fending off, attacking, and flitting with the press; lambasting the government and its intelligence agencies; traveling about, expressing righteous indignation, and defending the now dim and compromised cause he once saw in Jonestown.

All the while, his name continues to crop up in connection with Jonestown. "Lane Admits He Knew of Cult's Oppression," "Lane Sees 'Master Plan' by Cult for Political Murders," "Mark Lane Fears He Is in Danger Because of Connection With Cult."

One story, proved wrong, had him seeking immunity for himself as well as his client, former top Jones aide Terri Buford. Another story had him and Buford in Switzerland two weeks ago at the same time some Peoples Temple numbered bank accounts were supposedly emptied.



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Mark Lane and fellow attorney Charles Garry (right) talk with cult leader Jim Jones the day before the Guyana killings. Jones had a nervous trait of rubbing his face with his hand when he became tense, as he does here. (This picture was taken by San Francisco photographer Gregory Robinson, who was killed in the airport shooting the next day.)

NEWSPAPER COLUMNISTS who have never considered Mark Lane their favorite guy dropped usually tempered tones to give him a once-and-for-all word lasting. Jimmy Breslin admitted to despising him. Nick Trimmesch called him a "vulture," and the usually measured Anthony Lewis of the New York Times (not Mark Lane's favorite newspaper) called him a "ghoul" whom "it is time for the decent people of the United States to tune out," and suggested newspapers editors and television producers seriously consider blackballing him.

Through it all is the tantalizing hint that Lane knows still more than he is willing to tell. Indeed, there are moments when events connected to Jonestown and the Peoples Temple seem to revolve around Mark Lane.

On one hand he obviously mourns the needless loss of so many lives, and on the other hand he appears to be having the time of his life. He is wary, titillated, cautious, volatile, exhilarated, exhausted, suspicious, indignant, excited, fearful, outraged, ebullient.

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