

THE SOUNDS OF DEATH

Rain splattered noisily on the tin roof of the pavilion. The fronds of the banana bushes rustled in the breeze. Birds twittered in the jungle beyond Jonestown. On the ground were the dead—with the body of the Rev. Jim Jones lying on the pavilion stage. The voices of Jonestown seemed to have been snuffed out forever. But two days after the apocalypse of the Peoples Temple, investigators poking through the killing ground found a tape recorder near the wooden chair that Jones had used as his pulpit and throne. And when they played the reel left on the recorder, they suddenly heard babies wailing, people shrieking and Jones himself calling out from beyond the grave: "Mothers, you must

moned his followers to "a revolutionary suicide council." His first goal was to inform them of the fate of Congressman Leo Ryan and his party. The tape opened with a sonorous burst of church music and the sound of children babbling, then crying. "I tried to give you a good life," Jones said. "In spite of all I tried to do, a handful of our people who are alive have made our lives impossible." Whether Jones was referring to the defectors who had fled with Ryan or the assassins who had set off from the commune to gun down the Ryan party was not clear. "There's no way to detach ourselves from what's happened today," Jones said. "We are sitting on a powder keg. If we can't

everyone to line up for his death trip. When he argued that it was only a matter of time before Guyanese police arrived, some voices on the tape shouted that it would be better to hold their ground and fight the invaders than to take the poison. Another voice asked whether Jones had requested an airplane to fly the communards to the Soviet Union. Jones said he had, but added, "Do you think the Russians are going to want us after this?"

Chant: At one point, officials said, Jones's wife, Marceline, seemed to buck him. The brief revolt led Jones to cry out at her, "Mother, Mother, Mother," the ghostly chant attorneys Mark



Photos by Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

Jonestown victims: A terrible silence after a 45-minute 'suicide' note

keep your children under control. They must die with dignity."

The Jonestown tape was an electronic "suicide" note, fixing in 45 chilling minutes the last spasms of the Peoples Temple. A U.S. State Department officer found it and turned it over to U.S. Ambassador John Burke, who played it four days after the tragedy. Parts of the tape were described to NEWSWEEK, and parts of it appeared in The Washington Post. What is available shows that not all members of the Jonestown commune had been willing to follow their pastor in his last hour. And it strongly suggests that what Jones had called a dignified "revolutionary act" could also be viewed as cold-blooded murder.

Someone flicked on the tape recorder shortly after Jones had sum-

live in peace, let's die in peace."

At first, Jones set out to wheedle his followers into carrying out the death pact. "I propose that we not commit suicide but a revolutionary act," he said. The members were to join him, using the cyanide and Flavour-aide that his "nurses" and "doctor" had brought from the medical shack. "So my opinion is to be good to the children and seniors," he said, apparently an instruction to poison the tots and the old folks first.

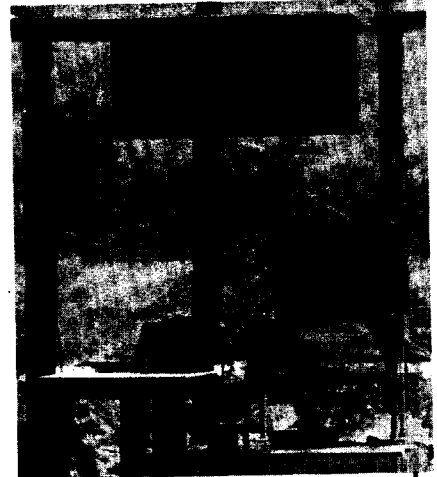
Babies: Jones urged his paramedics to squirt the poison deep into the throats of the babies with syringes. As the children began to cry out, one woman's voice shouted that she was ready to die—if only her son might live. "It tore me to shreds," said one official who heard the tape.

Jones's pitch did not persuade ev-



Greg Robinson—© 1978, San Francisco Examiner

Jones: 'Let's die in peace'



Jones's pulpit: A vote for 'Dad'

Lane and Charles Garry heard as they fled into the jungle beyond Jonestown. Jones got some help from armed guards and the zealots of Jonestown in putting down lesser dissenters. "Dad has brought us this far. My vote is to go with Dad," shouted one voice. And in the end, Father Jones took most of his flock with him.

—TOM MATHEWS with CHRIS J. HARPER in Washington

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Panama in 1975. He claims that Buford and Carolyn Layton, a cult member who apparently died at Jonestown last month, then took over the group's financial affairs, setting up similar accounts in Switzerland that now contain most of the Temple's money.

Hit Squad: Those funds, says Stoen, may never be returned to the U.S. He claims that Jones may have wanted to funnel the money to a leftist group such as the Palestine Liberation Organization—and that Buford returned to carry out the transfer. Stoen further contends that Buford would be a likely candidate to organize a hit squad if Jones did in fact order the assassination of journalists and political leaders. "Whatever Jones wanted done, Terri would know—he trusted her implicitly," says Stoen.

Investigators are also questioning Richard McCoy, 44, a former U.S. consular officer in Guyana. Earlier this month, Temple memos turned up in Georgetown alleging that McCoy, now head of the State Department's Guyana desk, could be relied on not to probe too deeply into charges of abuse at the camp. But Jones's followers have been known to write false documents to please their leader, and some cult survivors say that McCoy made a genuine effort to find out if any Jonestown residents were being kept at the camp against their will. He interviewed them privately and invited them to leave with him. McCoy may be asked to testify this week before staff investigators of the House International Relations Committee, which is looking into the entire affair. The State Department's internal investigators have cleared him of any misconduct, but McCoy, in an effort to remove any doubts, has asked the inspector general of the Foreign Service to investigate him personally.

Drug Supplies: Finally, there are the survivors and their stories. But it is unclear how much information they will be able to provide. The handful still being held by local authorities at the Park Hotel in Georgetown are growing gloomier by the day. Most of the reporters who had hung on their every word are gone now, and many of the ex-cultists spend nearly all their time sleeping or staring into space. Though some had been given prescriptions for anti-depressants or tranquilizers, drug supplies are running out. One man, 36-year-old Odell Rhodes, collapsed last week from hypoglycemia. Several others are suffering from recurrent nightmares. "When you have nothing to do, you keep reliving everything," says Tim Carter, 30. "I keep seeing my son dying in my wife's arms." Because they may be needed as witnesses in the various investigations, it could be months before they are allowed to go home—and try to put the horrors of Jonestown behind them at last.

—KENNETH LABICH with CHRIS J. HARPER in Memphis, TIMOTHY NATER in Georgetown, GERALD C. LUBENOW in San Francisco and bureau reports

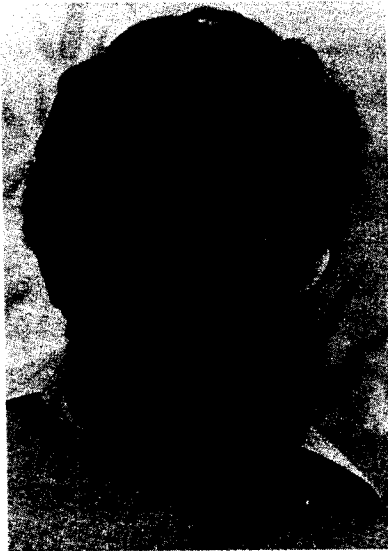
Conspiracy Addict

At Memphis International Airport, United Flight 537 for Los Angeles was getting set to depart. TV lights flashed on in the boarding area as a lanky man with owlsh eyes and a black-and-silver beard walked up. Ignoring the lights and TV crew, he reached into his pocket and handed his boarding pass to the flight attendant. "Welcome aboard, Mr. Ferguson," she said politely, glancing down at the name on the ticket. Then she chuckled as she watched the familiar figure duck aboard the plane: attorney Mark Lane, 51, whose latest cause is telling the world about Jim Jones's cult and whose newest client is Terri Buford, 26, a top lieutenant of Jones in Jonestown.

Lane's flights and fantasies over the past fifteen years have made him the country's most controversial legal gadfly. His clients have run from Jane Fonda to James Earl Ray. He has made his way from the grassy knoll in Dallas to the Lorraine Motel in Memphis to the jungles of Guyana in a self-promoted quest for the truth about John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Rev. Jim Jones. His critics call him "a vulture" and "the chief ghoul of American assassinations." Some of his legal colleagues wonder whether his behavior deserves disbarment. And his rivals say he's a riddle they find hard to understand. "He's a very able man," says investigator Harold Weisberg, another assassination buff. "But he's totally amoral."

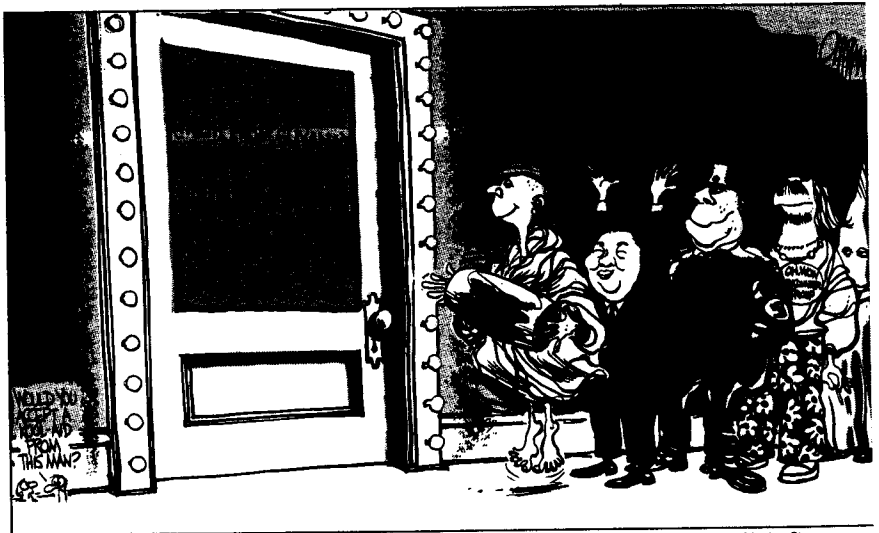
Lane's foes charge that, as the Peoples Temple's lawyer, he misrepresented Jonestown as a pearl of socialism when he knew all along about Jones's guns, drugs and suicide drills; that he failed to warn Congressman Leo Ryan properly; that he is now out to make a bundle off the best-seller lists. Lane replies angrily that several defectors warned the FBI, CIA and State Department about the potential for trouble at Jonestown but that they did nothing—and were unlikely to heed his warnings either. He says he is now trying to warn people about the possibility of still more violence to come. As Lane tells it, from information apparently provided by Buford, Jones had a plan, called "The Last Stand," to kill defectors, American officials and hostile newsmen. Mark Lane, in short, has a new conspiracy theory.

Ping Pong: Lane has been a professional outsider most of his life. Born in the Bronx and raised in Brooklyn, he got his law degree from Brooklyn Law School, where he developed an interest in social issues. One night over the law school



Leonard Attkins—Commercial Appeal

Lane: A knack for headlines



Gilphart © 1978 Washington Star



Lane on the wing: In London at a mock-up of JFK's shooting, in court with Jane Fonda, in Congress with Ray



AP photo

Ping Pong table he played Kenny Harris, a black with a clubfoot. Lane poured on the heat anyway—and lost. "You're the only person who treated me as an equal," Harris told him. Influenced by Harris, Lane set up a storefront law office in Spanish Harlem. "Mark took the cases that would make headlines," recalls former law partner Seymour Ostrow. "He was a hustler who got very self-righteous when you would call him on it."

Some of Lane's early headlines were impressive—some a bit embarrassing. He won a seat in the New York State Assembly in 1960 and promptly launched a futile and brash campaign accusing GOP Assembly Speaker Joseph Carlino of conflict of interest. During the Freedom Rides in the South, he accompanied the then NAACP official Percy Sutton, a black, through the door of the white men's room in Jackson, Miss., and was arrested.

Sex Fling: Lane made a bid for Congress in 1962 as a social reformer, only to run afoul of a steamy rumor: that he had been photographed during a sex fling with two prostitutes (a story he still denies). He also denied receiving nineteen traffic tickets, only to be hit with a \$415 scoff-



law conviction. Still, he developed a political following of young liberals. "To prove it wasn't an elitist campaign, he'd turn the first crank on the Ditto machine, then the rest of us would spend the whole night

finishing the chores," complains feminist Susan Brownmiller, a former aide.

Lane was arguing a case in court the day JFK was shot. As he left the courthouse, he recalls, a judge happened to say to him: "I don't think Lee Harvey Oswald could have done it; the doctor said Kennedy was shot in the throat from the front, but Oswald was behind him." Lane went home that night and started phoning eyewitnesses. He set up the Citizens Committee of Inquiry; he became the lawyer for Oswald's mother, Marguerite; he hit the lecture circuit with a rifle in his hand arguing that Oswald had been framed. And he wrote "Rush to Judgment," a scattershot attack on the Warren Commission that stayed on the best-seller list for months.

A year ago, Lane turned up with a startling new client: James Earl Ray, confessed assassin of Martin Luther King Jr. Ray's former lawyer, James Lesar, said last week that, without consulting him, Lane went to Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee in 1977 to talk to Ray about filing a Freedom of Information Act suit against the government. Lane's pet theory in the King case is that a squad of off-duty FBI agents under the

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

personal direction of J. Edgar Hoover murdered King. "He will make any charge, call into question any person's character and crassly exploit any situation in pursuit of his own ends," exploded Rep. Walter Fauntroy of the House Assassinations Committee, after Lane accused him of sitting on evidence supporting the Hoover-did-it theory.

'Unethical': Lane has won few friends on the committee. One day, a staffer said, Lane demanded a two-hour lunch break to read documents, only to turn up on a TV talk show. He was ejected from a session when he tried to represent Jerry Ray, James Earl's brother. (Committee rules bar a lawyer from representing more than one witness if a conflict of interest seems likely.) "He's just been totally unprincipled and unethical," says one committee source. Lane is equally critical. "You have violated ordinary standards of decent behavior," he told the committee recently.

Lane's assorted views did catch the eye of one admirer: the Rev. Jim Jones. Last September, he hired Lane to file a Freedom of Information suit designed to smoke out government spies in Jonestown. Lane also worked up a ten-page public-relations "counteroffensive." It recommended that the commune set up a Jonestown embassy in Washington, to be run out of Lane's own shop, to sell Jonestown's good points and to report some government plots against the commune. Lane claimed that the FCC disrupted Jonestown's radio communications, that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms had stopped a shipment of medicine, and the U.S. Postal Service had, for a time, cut off a flow of social-security checks. For these services, Lane says his office received at least \$10,000.

Kool-Aid: Lane may now have a conspiracy closer to home to worry about: that someone out there might be after him. The night after the murder-suicides in Jonestown, his office in Washington was burgled. Four half-empty packets of Kool-Aid also turned up on the steps of the \$37,000 house he shares in Memphis with a friend named April Ferguson. Police tested them but found no cyanide. Lane now has a burglar-alarm system, floodlights and a German shepherd.

Lane does not intend to let any threats deter him. He gave 200 lectures in 1976 (some free of charge, others for fees of \$1,500 or higher), and poured most of the \$80,000 he earned into his Washington-based citizen's committee. He will undoubtedly keep on pushing his Jonestown conspiracy theory. But unless Lane can produce solid documentary evidence, he is unlikely to persuade Federal authorities. In their view, Mark Lane has simply cried wolf too often before.

—TOM MATHEWS with CHRIS J. HARPER in Memphis, SUSAN AGREST in New York and DIANE CAMPER in Washington