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United Press International

American soldier rests in Guyana after helping in gruesome task of shipping bodies to United States.

GIs Fly Home After Clearing Cult's Camp

By Fred Barbash

Washington Post Staff Writer

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Nov. 26 — The 200 U.S. troops who cleared the bodies of more than 900 participants in a mass suicide ritual from the Jonestown encampment of the Peoples Temple cult began flying home this morning.

Uniforms, boots and tents that had come in contact with the bodies were burned, and the massive concentration of helicopters, forklifts, cargo planes, jeeps and trucks was readied for shipping back to the United States.

The troops also formally concluded their vain search for more survivors of the mass deaths at Jonestown last Saturday.

"We made every effort to locate possible survivors," said Col. William I. Gordon, the commanding officer here. "And if there had been anything alive, I believe we would have found them."

He called the recovery of the bodies "perhaps the most difficult thing we've ever had to do."

The departure of the troops and many of the reporters who were covering the story was the beginning of the end of an abrupt and heavy American presence in this poor South American nation that is no bigger than Idaho.

It began with the assault last Saturday that killed Rep. Leo J. Ryan (D-Calif.) and other members of the party that had come to inspect the Rev. Jim Jones' community about 120 miles northwest of here. It escalated dramatically following the mass suicide ritual led by Jones Saturday evening.

At Jonestown, Guyanese police began setting up a fully equipped police station to control access to the camp site until a decision is made on what to do with it.

Government spokesmen said they had no intention of allowing any more Peoples Temple operations there. Nor would they permit any other foreign group to settle at the site, they announced.

The government was still detaining 70 members of the Peoples Temple cult who either escaped before the deaths at Jonestown or were residing at the Temple's headquarters here in Georgetown, Guyana's capital.

Some of them are expected to be charged with conspiracy in connection with four murders at the cult's headquarters last Saturday. Others are considered material witnesses to that crime and to the attack on Ryan's party.

The number of those who died in this country as a result of the series of events was 918, according to authorities. One Jonestown resident was killed at the Port Kaituma airstrip as she sought to escape with Ryan. Four members of Ryan's party, including the congressman, were killed in the same attack.

Four Peoples Temple members, a mother and her three children, died after their throats were slit at the Georgetown headquarters at about the same time the suicides were occurring in Jonestown. Three persons, including Jones, died of gunshot wounds at the camp.

And 906 men, women and children were said to have died after drinking Kool Aid laced with cyanide and sedatives on Jones' instructions.

See GUYANA, A18, Col. 1



Associated Press

Helicopter is dismantled for shipment home after ferrying bodies in Guyana.

U.S. Troops Return Home After Clearing Jonestown

GUYANA, From A1

A brief but heated dispute broke out last night when Guyanese authorities deposited some of Jones' former top lieutenants at the hotel where people who had attempted to escape Jonestown before the suicides were staying.

Some survivors at the hotel threatened to jump off the balcony before they finally accepted the presence of the newcomers.

As the U.S. soldiers involved in the Jonestown operation marked the end of their gruesome mission here, last night, by drinking beer at their camp near the airport, one was said to have broken into tears.

Generally the soldiers were said to have performed remarkably smoothly under the grim circumstances. Only one or two cases of minor illness were reported by the soldiers as they removed hundreds of bloated and decomposing bodies.

Some said they had done this sort of work after disasters or during wars.

"You get used to it," said Staff Sgt. Glenn Hoover.

One officer said he was struck by the number of troops assigned to other tasks who volunteered when extra assistance was needed with the bodies.

"This operation is completely unprecedented," said military spokesman Capt. John J. Moscatelli. "None of us has ever been involved in something as massive as Jonestown. Obviously, it was a very distasteful task, not pleasant for anybody."

Authorities here would provide no estimate of the cost of the mission. It required the use of 48 C141 cargo jets, 105,000 pounds of fuel, midair refueling equipment, 19 forklifts and three military encampments used as staging points for the transfer of bodies.

The final shipment of corpses, the last 184, was flown to Delaware early this morning, Moscatelli said. Because many of those discovered under the mounds of bodies were children, Moscatelli said they were able to fit all 184 into only 86 aluminum boxes.



United Press International

U.S. troops prepare gear for flight back to United States after clearing Jonestown.

Guyana Cultists Bared Feelings

JONESTOWN, Guyana (AP)—Journals of human emotions lie in the rains and mud and stench of lifeless Jonestown.

Letters to "Dad," the Rev. Jim Jones, found outside his cottage after he and more than 900 of his Peoples Temple followers died in a mass suicide-murder, reveal the thoughts of those who lived and met their deaths there.

They are ledgers of self-criticism and evaluation, guilt, feelings of inadequacy and confessions of weakness. Some are rambling and disjointed. Some make unexplained references to torture, short rations, the giving away of children and class distinctions in Jonestown.

In a letter dated Nov. 7, 11 days before the deaths, a woman tells of what turned out to be a limited suicide rehearsal of drinking what she thought was cyanide-laced fruit drink. The drill was called by Jones a few months earlier as a loyalty test.

"A few months back, the time we drank the Kool-Aid, I thought it was real," she wrote. Her son "stood very close to me squeezing my hand tight and never saying anything. I never said anything to him about my being scared to fight. But he probably knows. What can I say? I'm sorry."

When she arrived at Jonestown nearly a year ago, she wrote, "I used to think about the States all the time. I wanted to go back . . . Now I see how important the structure is and am dealing with it. I don't want to go back now or ever."

"I also think I'm a traitor, not a revolutionary because I'm afraid of fighting because I'm sure I will just get shot and not die, captured then tortured. That's what I'm afraid of."

"I couldn't stand to see the children tortured. I still think of mine first. I couldn't watch my baby dropped from a window. I'd probably fall apart. I can't be trusted. That's why I always



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REV. JIM JONES

"I never said anything to him about my being scared to fight. But he probably knows. What can I say?"

voted for revolutionary suicide," the woman wrote.

"I don't ever want to go back and will stay here and die for this great cause if necessary."

Another woman wrote this self-criticism at Jones' request:

"When I got here I really hated working in the fields in the hot sun

and sometimes getting soaked from the rain. When I put in for a job change it was denied although it was explained to me why. Since then I have not put in for a job change because I've adjusted to the field work and enjoy being out in the open. I'm too passive to complain too much about conditions.

"I feel guilty because some of the children had come without their parent or parents and they do not complain about things as we adults do.

"I have a desire to speak out about the injustice of the oppressed people around the world, but if I had to go anyplace it would be back to the States to fight in the streets if necessary for the freedom of black people and would gladly die. Dad, I do not want my living to be in vain.

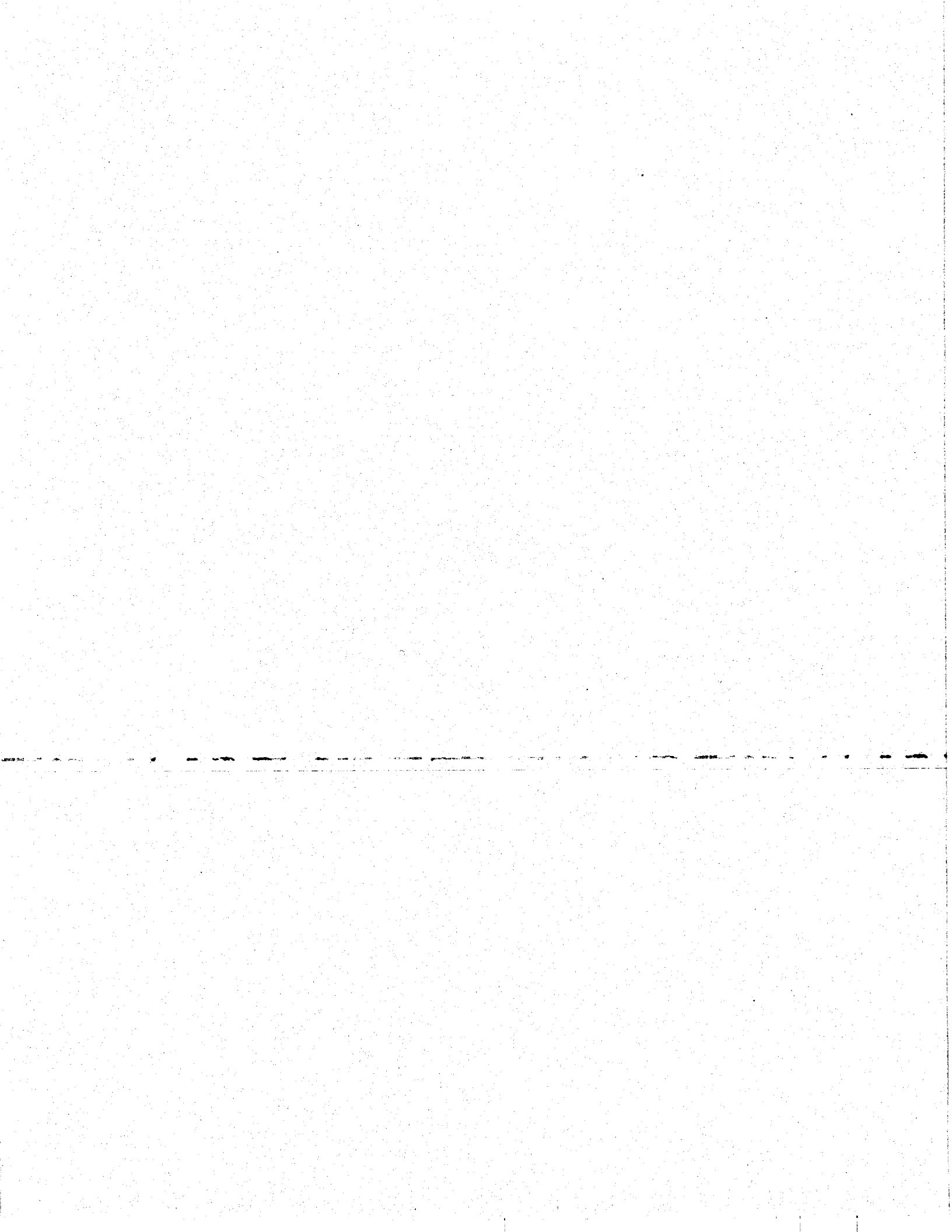
"The thing that I do like here is there is no drugs or crime.

"The last thing that I dislike is that I pass by the kitchen during dinner-time and see people with a nice plate. Then when the field workers get in line there is a limit, meaning a teaspoon of vegetables and maybe two spoons of rice."

A woman wrote: "Turmoil inside these last few years. And felt I should just express it to get it out. I stayed away from him as I did not want to interfere in his life. I still think you are the best parent for him. I am not sorry I gave him to you at all and would do it all over again, but this did cause me some worry. I will never leave you until I breathe my last breath and will work on becoming a better person."

A woman talked of her first "crisis" after arriving in Jonestown.

"During that first crisis, I said, 'I'll never see my brothers and sisters again or my mother.' . . . I was really saying I'm not ready to die yet. It was not that I was scared. I was not willing to take a responsibility to do something good for once. I was not thinking about 'Dad.' I was thinking of self, something that don't mean anything."

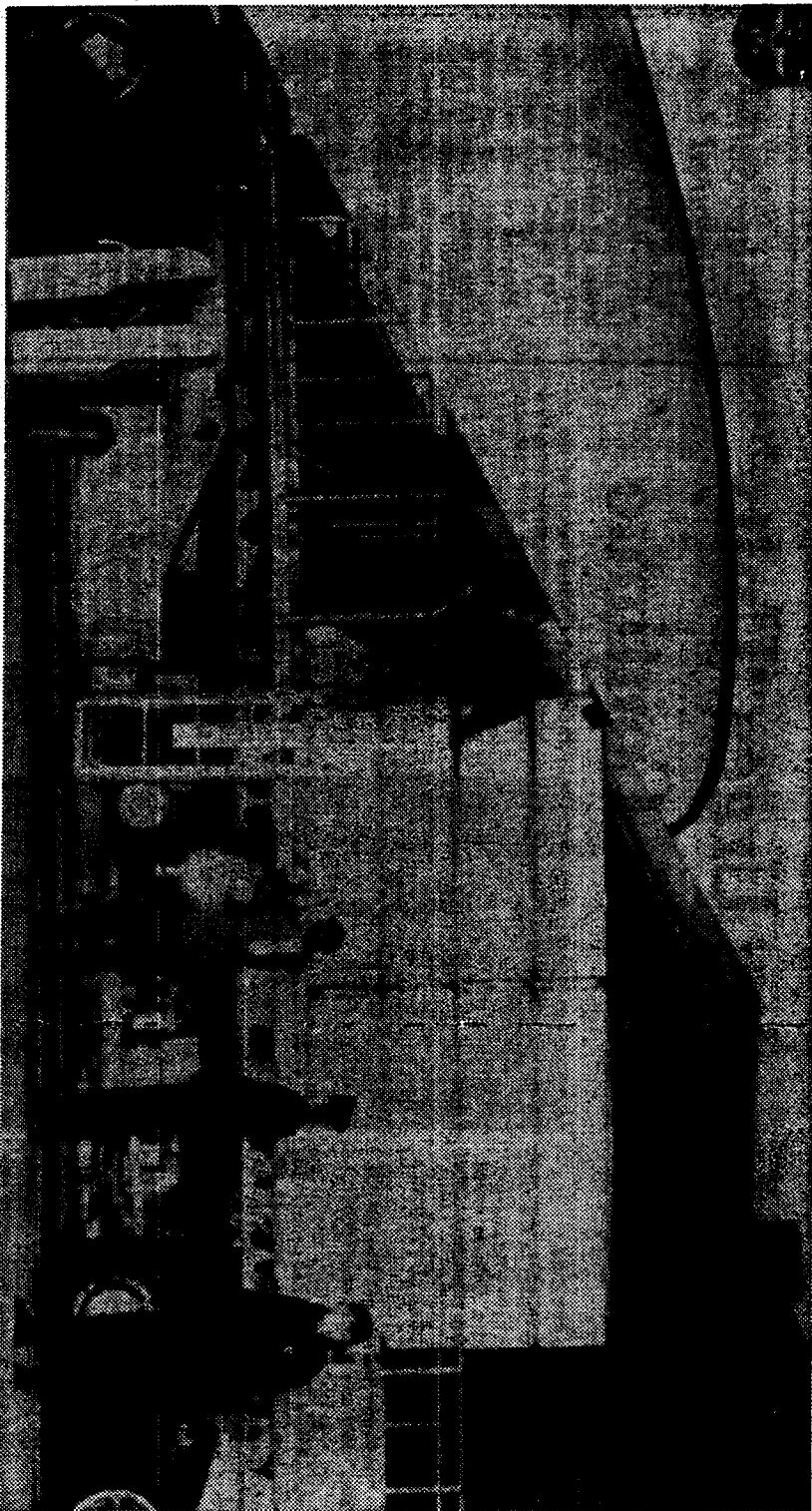


to Jones in Letters to 'Dad'



Associated Press

Papers of the Rev. Jim Jones, leader of the Peoples Temple cult, are scattered outside his Jonestown home.



Unloading begins on bodies of 133 persons—the last of the victims of the Jonestown, Guyana, mass suicide—at Dover Air Force Base yesterday morning.

Associated Press

Airlift of Victims' Bodies To Dover Is Completed

By Alice Bonner

Washington Post Staff Writer

By the time the ninth and final airlift flight from Guyana landed at Dover Air Force Base about 3 a.m. yesterday, 912 bodies from the Nov. 18 mass suicide and murder were stacked around the military installation awaiting identification.

Near the end, the teams packing the plastic-bagged remains in South America ran out of aluminum body carriers. The last flight, with 183 bodies aboard, included several blue-and-brown metal caskets. The 82 containers, some containing two or three bodies, were placed four high on the plane for easier unloading, bonded together in dozens.

As the airlift to Delaware ended, Charleston Air Force Base in South Carolina was preparing to receive approximately 80 Peoples Temple members who survived the incidents in Guyana. Their arrival time was not definite.

Nearly 40 federal officials were Charleston yesterday, among them 30 FBI investigators who will interview the survivors for possible involvement in the slayings of Rep. Leo J. Ryan (D-Calif.) and four others at the Port Kaituma airstrip Nov. 18. That incident preceded the mass suicides at Jonestown.

FBI spokesman Charles Devic said the agents will investigate under a law making it a federal crime to kill a member of Congress. Devic said the probe will extend to temple members in the United States.

If the survivors are not believed to be involved in the "murder or conspiracy to murder," they will pass on to

nine Department of Health, Education and Welfare officials detailed here from the Atlanta regional office.

The HEW officials, three of them doctors, will give physical examinations and issue airline tickets and up to \$55 in emergency cash to get the temple members to their homes, a department spokesman said. The assistance will be loaned and must be repaid, he said.

At Dover, the Defense Department, which is primarily responsible for shipment and identification of the bodies, yesterday augmented the mortuary staff of nearly 60 with 35 pathologists from Walter Reed Army Medical Center and 29 graves registration experts from Fort Lee.

It could take a month for the workers to fingerprint and identify the bodies before they are released to relatives, according to Maj. Brigham Shuler, a Pentagon spokesman.

The presence of the remains, which are loaded on freight trailers parked in empty hangars or stored in refrigerated vans until they are sent to the mortuary for processing by volunteers, has raised concern among some Dover residents about the potential for spread of disease.

A Delaware public health official yesterday inspected the mortuary, one of the two largest such facilities on U.S. military bases, and "gave it a clean bill of health," according to Shuler.

With the airlift completed, the base shut down its reception center for victims' relatives, only a few of whom had come to Dover. Survivors were urged to contact the State Department for information about relatives.

Staff writer Warren Brown contributed to this article.

Puzzlement, Frustration for Remnants

By Alice Bonner

Washington Post Staff Writer

California survivors of a family that had six members in Jonestown, Guyana, puzzled this weekend over their apparent deaths while relatives on the East Coast tried in vain to arrange funerals for the six, who represented four generations.

Mary Cottingham, 83; her daughter, Florence Heath, 53; her son, Grover Washington, 50; her granddaughter, Mary Morton, 33; her grandson, Michael Heath, 14, and her great-granddaughter, Vickie Morton, 8, are believed to be among the more than 900 members of Peoples Temple who died in the mass suicide in Jonestown Nov. 18.

Cottingham's daughter, Essie Flynn of Pittsburg, Calif., said her relatives "wanted to go so bad . . . And they said they were happy, but I don't know what happened after they got there." She said her mother and sister had tried unsuccessfully to draw her into the cult, but she concluded it was "not religious."

In New York, Flynn's brother, Timothy Washington, loaded his station wagon with family members Saturday and drove to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, where he hoped to find remains of his kin. The air base is processing the victims' bodies.

Officials told him only that it might take weeks to fingerprint and identify the bodies. Washington gave the officials some pictures and medical records that might help in identifying his relations.

Relatives on both coasts said it was Florence Heath, a longtime follower of temple leader Jim Jones, who introduced other family members to Jones and the cult, persuading her mother and Flynn to move to California to join it in 1975.

"She said she had been going from church to church looking for something, and when she found this man she had found it," Flynn said of her sister.

Flynn said she "came out here because my sister told me he was a mighty great healer, but he didn't heal my asthma and epilepsy," or her painful bursts. Her mother and sister continued trying to draw her into the

organization until they left for Guyana earlier this year, she said.

"My mother said she was going to the Promised Land" when she left California for the group's South American settlement, Washington said at the Dover base. "They felt that man was like a god."

Mary Cottingham moved to Brooklyn after she was widowed in the 1960s to be near several of the eight children she had raised on a farm in Florence County, S.C. She was active in the Baptist Church and senior citizens' groups in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

She took with her to California — and later to Guyana — her youngest son, Grover, 40, who was retarded, according to Flynn.

"We have peace here in this land . . . I wish your children would have come along," Heath wrote to her sister in February, shortly after arriving in Guyana. "Grover has learned to work, to do something for himself for the first time."

Joanne Washington said her mother-in-law wrote "friendly letters" and "seemed happy." The last letter was in April or May.

"I can't thank Father [Jones] enough for what he done for us, for bringing us out of the mire and clay and giving us this beautiful home," Cottingham wrote in her last letter to Flynn.

Flynn said Heath, who had sold her Pittsburgh home and parted with her husband, dividing the money between him and Jones, asked in her last letter for a pair of shoes.

"I was going to send them to her," Flynn said yesterday. Of her relatives, she added, "I tried to talk them out of going there."

Gibsons Gave Little Hope Cousins Are Still Alive

For Jack and Kathleen Griffin of Herndon, the wait is almost over.

The Fairfax couple heard yesterday that one of their nine cousins who were members of the Peoples Temple in Guyana, Maureen Talley Fitch, 29, of California had been tentatively identified by the State Department as one of those who died in last week's mass suicide-murder in Guyana. Jack

Griffin said he has little hope the others are alive.

The Griffins sent descriptions of their nine cousins, ranging in age from 6 to 35, to authorities in Dover, Del., where identifications of the Temple members are being made.

"Certainly, I'm frustrated about it," Griffin said yesterday. "With the

of a Family

greater number of bodies found, the chances of the rest of the cousins found alive is a lot slimmer. In fact, the most likely situation is that they're all dead."

The couple's proximity to Washington made them the focal point of their family's struggle to determine the fate of the nine relatives.

William Raspberry

'Some Tragedies Cannot be Prevented'

With the same simple trust with which his hundreds of followers turned to Jim Jones, we are now turning to our high priests of the mind—the psychiatrists and the psychologists—to explain to us the carnage in Jonestown, Guyana.

It is a ritual we perform after every major, inexplicable tragedy. And now, as always, the priest-experts tell us everything—and nothing.

What we want, of course, is justice, a restoration of order and equilibrium. We want to set the scales right, to get things back into kilter.

Under ordinary circumstances, the balancing mechanism operates more or less automatically. We send thieves to jail, we pack murderers off to prison for long stretches or, if their crimes are sufficiently heinous, we condemn them to death. Balance is restored.

But now and then the scales are wrenched so far out of equilibrium that the normal mechanisms no longer satisfy. Brutal assaults on small children or old people, assassinations of revered

leaders, senseless mass murders. Nothing we can do to individual perpetrators suffices to restore the balance.

It does nothing for our sense of justice to read that a half-dozen suspects have been arrested in the Guyana killings. The suspects are too unimportant, no weightless to balance the scales, no matter if they are convicted, executed, or even torn limb from limb.

At such times, we look for other means for redressing the balance. Sometimes we artificially inflate the importance of perpetrator either by signing him membership in a group against which we can then have our vengeance or by making him a member of a worthy conspiracy.

Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray are too small to counter our sense of loss in the murders of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. We will have our conspiracy no matter what the facts indicate.

Conspiracy theories won't do for the Guyana madness, so we do our other thing. We look for explanations, as if to

say that if we understand enough about how these things come to happen, we can prevent their recurrence. With the journalistic equivalent of "Why, oh Lord?" we turn to our experts.

The answers seldom help.

"They [members of Jones' Peoples Temple] see the world as a hostile one in which they are rejected," says Dr. Art Klev, the Cornell University psychiatrist.

"This group gives them a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose in the world. When the group is threatened, as they apparently thought they were, the only thing they have in life appears to be caving in."

"When people are facing dislocations of rapid social change and the present looks frightening," adds Dr. Robert J. Lifton of Yale, "there is often a cry for a return to absolute simplicity in the rules of living." Suicide, he said, may be a way of immortalizing these fundamentalist principles when they are under attack by outsiders.

All true, no doubt. Yet these explanations tell us no more about Jones' followers than they tell us about kamikaze pilots, Catholic martyrs or Baptists.

And since they fail to give us meaningful insights into the origins of tragedy, they cannot teach us how to prevent its reoccurrence.

Maybe we would be better off simply accepting the fact that some tragedies cannot be prevented.

I don't mean that there should be no effort to understand the dynamics of cultism, of alienation, or of group suicide. These are all worthy of scientific inquiry.

But I do make a distinction between scientific inquiry aimed at discovering truth and ritual questioning calculated to restore our sense of equilibrium.

The latter strikes me as an attempt to find order, certainty and security in a disorderly, uncertain world. That's what Jim Jones' followers were searching for, and we labeled them "fanatics."

Suicides Called 'Punishment'

By Karen DeYoung
and Paul Grabowicz

Special to The Washington Post

Fear of widespread defections from his Peoples Temple, and particularly the threatened loss of one 8-year-old child to two disillusioned former members, was one of the catalysts that drove the Rev. Jim Jones to order the mass suicide of his congregation 10 days ago, according to a well-informed source close to the temple.

The source, who has been in close contact with Jones and the temple over the last several years, says Jones was convinced the defections would fuel growing public criticism of his cult and bring on the demise of his 20-year-old movement. He ordered the destruction of his church, this source believes, as a final collective "punishment" for the "sins" of defectors who had "betrayed" him and turned against the church.

A central figure in this unfolding drama, according to this source, was John Victor Stoen, 6, whom Jones claimed he had fathered.

Stoen's parents, Grace and Timothy Stoen, had been highly respected

members of the Peoples Temple. Jones considered Tim one of the most knowledgeable people about the inner workings of the church. After they left the temple in 1976 and 1977, the Stoens waged a bitter custody fight to regain their son from Jones, and were a major factor in prompting Rep. Leo Ryan's ill-fated fact-finding mission to Guyana this month.

For Jones the battle with the Stoens for custody of the child apparently became the ultimate symbol of his life-and-death struggle against defectors, with the very existence of his congregation hanging in the balance.

It was Jones' fear over a year ago that he was in danger of losing John and the exposure that the Stoens' efforts to win him back would bring on the church—that prompted Jones' first threat to order mass suicide in his Guyana congregation, according to a former temple member and to temple attorney Charles Garry.

And 10 days ago, according to the source close to the temple, it was the Stoens' renewed attempts to win their



GRACE STOEN
sought to regain son

See TEMPLE, A17, Col. 1

Cult Mass Suicide Viewed as 'Punishment'

TEMPLE, From A1

child back that played a key role in triggering Jones' decision to self-destruct his church.

According to this source, a church doctrine required "group punishment" for the "sins" of those who threatened the cohesion of the group. (Errors deserving punishment committed by any member were considered errors committed by, and against, the congregation as a whole. To symbolize punishment of the group, Jones would sometimes be beaten before the individual offender.)

During Ryan's visit, it appeared that a number of church members, including young John Stoen, would commit the ultimate sin of defection.

The ultimate punishment of the group was therefore deemed necessary by Jones who, according to this source, proclaimed the mass suicide the "will of the people" to self-destruct.

The Stoen family role in the evolution of the Peoples Temple dates to 1970 when Grace Stoen joined her husband as member of Jones' congregation in Ukiah, Calif. Timothy Stoen, then in his early 30s, rose quickly in the ranks, becoming the temple's prime legal counsel and a trusted adviser to Jones.

"I did nothing either with respect to the church or with respect to my own personal legal affairs without first consulting" Tim Stoen, Jones stated in a court affidavit unrelated to the custody issue early this year. "I am sure over the years he . . . gained more confidential information about Peoples Temple and its members than any other living person."

Grace Stoen, who was only 19 when she joined the church, also rapidly assumed a position of importance. She became a close confidante of Jones, and as the temple's "bookkeeper" gained an intimate knowledge of the complicated financial operations.

On Jan. 25, 1972, Grace Stoen gave birth to a son, John Victor Stoen was brought up in the temple, and raised by Grace, Jim Jones and other members of the congregation. In 1974 and early 1976, Grace Stoen signed documents, later ruled invalid, turning custody of her son over to the temple. Grace, however, became increasingly disenchanted with Jones' operation of the church. In a court declaration in 1977 she charged that members were subjected to "hearings" and "public humiliation," and that Jones became consumed by a "paranoid world vision" and "claimed at various times to be the reincarnation of Buddha, Jesus Christ and Lenin."

"Thoroughly disillusioned," she stated, she "secretly departed" from the church in July 1976, leaving behind her son and husband. Four months later, Jones sent the child to Guyana.

After what she said were repeated unsuccessful efforts to persuade her husband and Jones to give back her son, Grace Stoen filed for divorce and custody of the child in San Francisco Superior Court in February 1977.

It was in the course of protracted legal wrangling over the case, according to Grace's attorney, Jeffrey Haas, that Jones first made the allegation that he was the actual father of John Victor. The claim was heatedly denied by the Stoens, however, and was never made an issue in the custody proceedings.

On Aug. 26, 1977, Grace Stoen obtained a preliminary ruling from Superior Court Judge Donald King in San Francisco granting her custody of the child and ordering Jones' appearance in the court. Armed with a judge's order, attorney Haas says, he flew to Guyana within days to launch court proceedings there and secure John Victor's release from Jonestown. It was Haas' appearance and initial success in the Guyanese courts in Sep-

tember 1977 that reportedly led Jones to issue his first threat to self-destruct his church.

Temple attorney Garry said in a recent interview that he was contacted at the time by the San Francisco temple office and was told that Jones had threatened mass suicide if the Stoens were not stopped. Garry said he linked up with Jones' wife, Marcie, in Chicago and "made a telephone radio patch to Jonestown."

"I told Jones it was madness," Garry recalled. "He said the people had demanded [suicide] and that he as their leader, had to give in."

Supporting Garry's account is a June 1978 sworn affidavit of Deborah Layton Blakey, the temple's former "finance secretary." Blakey, who was in the San Francisco temple office during the September "crisis," said Jones was bitter over Grace Stoen's defection and fearful of what Timothy, who was then also defecting, might say about the church. Jones "believed that he would be able to stop Timothy Stoen," Blakey said, "from speaking against the temple as long as the child was being held in Guyana."

With the arrival of attorney Haas at Jonestown, Blakey recalled, "the radio messages from Guyana were frenzied and hysterical." She and another temple member "were instructed to place a telephone call to a high-ranking Guyanese official who was visiting the U.S. and deliver the following threat: Unless the government of Guyana took immediate steps to stall the Guyanese court action regarding John Stoen's custody, the entire population of Jonestown would extinguish itself in a mass suicide by 5:30 p.m. that day."

Both Garry and Blakey stated that after the suicide threat they tried to contact Guyanese officials to stop the court action. "Basically at that point,"

according to attorney Haas, "the court process shut down" and the Stoens' legal efforts to regain John Victor came to a standstill.

The Stoens turned to the State Department and members of Congress to put pressure on the Guyanese government and get the proceedings moving. Their efforts bore no fruit until August 1978 when Grace found a receptive ear in Congressman Ryan.

Haas says that Grace Stoen "met with Leo Ryan two or three times" to plead her case and describe her experiences inside Jones' church. She was "one of the central figures" in the California Democrat's ultimate decision to lead this fateful fact-finding mission to Jonestown, according to Haas. The Stoens also traveled separately to Guyana during Ryan's visit.

According to the source close to the temple, the threat that Ryan's mission would reopen the custody proceedings and force the release of John, plus Jones' fear of other defections to Ryan's contingent, triggered the "punishing mechanism" and the collective suicide in Jonestown.

Six-year-old John Victor Stoen is believed to have been among the victims of the mass poisoning. Grace and Timothy Stoen, according to Haas, are now in the San Francisco Bay area. They could not be reached for comment.