

TIME

VIOLENCE/COVER STORY

THE GIRL WHO ALMOST KILLED FORD

There was about the incident a sense of chilling *déjà vu*; only this time the President was not riding in a limousine. Instead, Gerald Ford was walking through a group of several hundred admirers in a pleasant, sunlit park in front of the California state capitol at Sacramento, shaking hands with people in his amiable, relaxed way. He was as pleased with his reception as John F. Kennedy had been with the crowds that had come out to meet him that day in Dallas in 1963. Once again, precisely at 9:57 a.m. on Friday, the threat suddenly materialized out of nowhere. A movement in the crowd, a raising of a hand, and to his astonishment, Ford found himself looking down the barrel of a loaded .45 Colt automatic pistol scarcely 2 ft. away. There was a brief flurry, and then the Secret Service subdued a social misfit, a psychological cripple, who might have easily assassinated the President of the U.S.

Her name was Lynette Alice Fromme, and she was the first woman ever to attempt to kill a President of the U.S. Her manner was gentle, and while she was pretty in a freckle-faced, red-haired, little-girl sort of way, she would turn few heads on the street. But the 27-year-old woman behind this innocent façade was anything but normal. In her way, Lynette Fromme was as much a social aberration—an amoral freak—as Lee Harvey Oswald, the kill-

er of John F. Kennedy, or Sirhan Sirhan, who shot to death Robert F. Kennedy, or Arthur Bremer, who crippled Alabama Governor George Wallace. She had been—and still was—an ardent follower of Charles Manson, the psychopathic killer who is now serving a sentence of life imprisonment for committing seven murders, including the vicious slaughters in 1969 of Film Actress Sharon Tate and Leno LaBianca, wealthy owner of a grocery chain. Because her voice was so tiny and high-pitched, Manson had nicknamed her "Squeaky" (see box page 10).