



PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

The Final Months: A Camp of Horrors

By Charles A. Krauser and Leonard Downie Jr.
Washington Post Foreign Service
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GEORGETOWN, GUYANA,

NOV. 22

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By night he forced Jonestown's residents gathered in mass meetings to endure hours-long harangues about distant enemies, invasion threats, retaliatory assassinations and mass suicide.

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The Rev. Jim Jones speaks at a faith-healing service in Jonestown, Guyana. AP photo

This was the picture of Jonestown's final months drawn today by one of its survivors, 17-year-old Tom Bogue, who succeeded in leaving Jonestown with the fact-finding mission of Rep. Leo J. Ryan (D-Calif.) last Saturday only to be ambushed with the congressman and 30 others at a nearby landing strip.

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He and his sister, who also was wounded by the gunfire that killed Rep. Ryan and four others at the air strip, are now under military guard at the sprawling, mostly open-air public hospital here.

In an interview today at the hospital, where he was sitting up in bed, his left leg bandaged and badly scratched, Bogue described how life in Jonestown progressed from an enticing experiment to apocalypse, culminating in Saturday night's forced mass suicide that took the lives of more than 400 Americans.

Rogue said that when he first came to Jonestown from California with other members of his family 2½ years ago, it was a pleasant place where everyone had lots of freedom." But then, just about a year ago, Bogue said, Jim Jones began "acting crazy."

"Everybody had to be in bed by 11 o'clock and then everybody had to be up by 7 in the morning," he said. "We had to go to meetings every night," and two or three times each week those meetings dragged on late into the night as a raving Rev. Jones held force over the loud speaker in the commune's open-air pavilion.

Jones would begin by exhorting the residents to work harder at farming and animal raising, Bogue remembered, and then would move to talking about the threat that critics back in the United States posed for Jonestown.

"He said we had to protect ourselves against invaders," Bogue said, and residents of Jonestown were to own at least 100 guns that had been brought there. "Guyana had cleared [us] to have all those guns, but 'Still don't show your weapons,'" Bogue quoted Jones as saying.

One night, "Jones told everyone in the pavilion, 'Quiet, and you'll hear one of our new weapons.' Then we heard this big boom, like a bazooka." Bogue said he was never able to see this new weapon.

On other nights, Jones told the assembly he wanted to send gunmen from Jonestown to kill his enemies in the United States but then he might be blamed for the murders and arrested as an accessory to the crimes.

As things grew worse, Bogue said, Jones asked rain forest Indians . . . to teach him ways to live in the forest. The Jonestown escapee said he learned from them how to eat and drink in the forest, how to hide from pursuers, and how to keep from getting lost.

He said he was certain that other disheartened young people on Jonestown were plotting to escape but they never discussed such plans with each other because each never knew whom he could trust.

Finally, months ago, Bogue slipped off into the forest but made the mistake of returning to the public road on the way to the Guyana military outpost at Matthews Ridge, 20 miles from Jonestown. There he was caught by Jonestown security guards who were searching for him on tractors. He was returned to Jonestown with

the barrel of a shotgun held against his back the entire journey; he said.

As punishment, Bogue and a friend who also was caught escaping were shackled in chains for three weeks and forced to work in the shackles 18 hours each day chopping wood in the tropical heat.

Others who tried to escape, Bogue said, were placed in solitary confinement in a box six feet long, three feet wide and only three feet high. Each person was usually confined in the dark, hot box for a week at a time and was fed and checked by the Jonestown medical team once a day, according to Bogue.

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Still other troublemakers were forced to dig deep storage pits and 200-foot-long ditches. "Those who didn't work," Bogue said, "didn't eat."

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Bogue said many Jonestown residents could sense toward the end of Ryan's visit there last weekend that the atmosphere had grown more tense than ever. Jones became quite agitated and kept talking about death.

At least five younger Jonestown residents who Bogue knew slipped out of the commune Saturday morning and later made their way to safety. Bogue, his sister Tina, 22, Chris O'Neil, 20, and Brenda and Tracy Parks, 18 and 13, respectively, joined about 10 others who decided to leave Jonestown with Rep. Ryan late Saturday afternoon.

Bogue was already inside one of the two planes when Ryan's group was ambushed by six gunmen Bogue recognized from Jonestown. He said they fired rifle, shotguns and automatic weapons. He was hit in the leg when he tried to close the plane door

When he heard people shouting that the gunmen might come back and finish them off, Bogue said, he took his sister, the Parks sisters and O'Neil and fled into the forest. Because they kept hearing what they thought were people chasing them, Bogue said he used the tricks the Indians had taught him, leading the others in big circles and crossbacks through the forest and walking into rivers to break their trail.

As that night stretched into another day and another day after that, Bogue and his sister were slowed by their wounds. He finally sent the other three on ahead and they found the landing strip again.

There the Parks sisters spotted their father, Tom Parks, another Jonestown defector who had returned with the police to search for his daughters and help identify the dead in Jonestown.

As the Parks sisters were reunited with their father, the police followed their directions and rescued Bogue and his sister.

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Survivor: 'They Started With the Babies'

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Washington Post Foreign Service
November 21, 1978

W

JONESTOWN, GUYANA

hen the Rev. Jim Jones learned Saturday that Rep. Ryan had been killed but that some members of his party had survived, Jones called his followers together and told them that the time had come to commit the mass suicide they had rehearsed several times before.

"They started with the babies," administering a potion of Kool-aid mixed with cyanide, Odell Rhodes recalled yesterday when I revisited Jonestown to view the horrifying sight of 409 bodies — men, women, and children, most of them grouped around the altar where Jones himself lay dead.

Rhodes is the only known survivor of Jonestown who witnessed a part of the suicide rite before managing to escape. He was helping Guyanese authorities identify the dead yesterday.

Most of those who drank the deadly potion served to them by a Jonestown doctor, Lawrence Schacht, and by nurses, did so willingly, Rhodes said. Mothers would often give the cyanide to their own children before taking it themselves, he said.

But others who tried to escape were turned back by armed guards who ringed the central pavilion where the rite was carried out, Rhodes said. They were then forced to drink the poisoned Kool-aid and shortly after the mass killings began, Rhodes said, "it just got all out of order. Babies were screaming, children were screaming and there was mass confusion."

It took about five minutes for the liquid to take its final effect. Young and old, black and white, grouped themselves, usually near family members, often with their arms around each other, waiting for the cyanide to kill them.

They would go into convulsions, their eyes would roll upward, they would gasp for breath and then



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and his wife, Marceline.
UPI photo

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A home owned by the People's Temple in Georgetown, Guyana.
AP photo

fall dead, Rhodes said.

All the while, Jones was talking to them, urging them on, explaining that they would "meet in another place." Near the end, Rhodes said, Jones began chanting, "mother, mother, mother" — an apparent reference to his wife who lay dead not far from the altar.

Yesterday, a stilled Jonestown looked much as it must have moments after the mass suicide ended two days earlier. The bodies were where they had fallen, the half-empty vat of cyanide-laced Kool-aid was still on the table near the altar in the open air pavilion. The faces of the dead bore the anguished expressions of their terrible deaths.

More than 390 of the bodies were grouped around the altar, many of them arm-in-arm. They were so thickly bunched together that it was impossible to see the ground beneath them.

Even the dogs that lived in Jonestown had been poisoned and now lay dead on sidewalks near the pavilion. The Peoples Temple's pet chimpanzee, Mr. Muggs, had been shot dead.

In Jones' house, approximately 10 others lay dead. C.A. Roberts, the Guyanese police commissioner in charge of investigating the killings, said his men were "finding new bodies in isolated places" throughout the Jonestown property.

It was a gruesome scene.

The bodies, which had been on the ground for almost three days in the muggy climate here, were beginning to bloat. A Guyanese doctor was sent in yesterday to puncture them because it was feared many would burst open before today, when U.S. Army medical teams are scheduled to arrive at Jonestown to begin identifying and shipping them back to the United States.

Of the 405 members of the community who died, Jones and two others were shot rather than poisoned, according to C.A. Robert, the chief Guyanese police official at Jonestown yesterday.

Another who was shot was Maria Katsaris, whose brother, Anthony, had come with Ryan Friday to try to persuade their sister to leave Jonestown. Anthony Katsaris was one of those badly wounded during the Saturday massacre that left five dead and approximately 12 wounded.

Rhodes said he managed to escape when the doctor said he needed a stethoscope. Rhodes volunteered to go with a nurse to the infirmary, about 300 feet from the open-air pavilion where the suicides were being carried out.

Rhodes said the armed guards let him through with the nurse and he hid under a building when she went into the doctor's office for the stethoscope. At 7 p.m., when it seemed that the mass suicide had ended, he left his hiding place and walked through the jungle to Port Kaituma, five miles away.

It was Rhodes, according to Roberts, who gave the first hint to Guyanese authorities

that hundreds had died in a mass suicide. Rhodes said he had hoped to reach Guyanese officials in time to stop more people from being killed.

Rhodes also recalled yesterday that shortly after Ryan and his party left Jonestown, Jones told his followers that Ryan's plane was going to "fall out of the sky."

The plan, according to Rhodes and other information made available late yesterday, was that one of the defectors, who really was a plant acting on Jones' orders, would shoot the pilot of Ryan's plane after it left the Port Kaituma airstrip.

The person apparently chosen for the task, however, boarded the wrong plane and started shooting before it was off the ground. Two passengers on that plane were badly wounded.

According to Dale Parks, a bona fide defector from Jonestown who was aboard that plane, the man who did the shooting was Larry Layton, a U.S. citizen who is so far the only person under arrest here in connection with any of the violence.

In addition to the man sent to infiltrate the defectors and shoot the pilot, Jones took the extra precaution of ordering a group of his followers to go to the airstrip in a tractor and trailer loaded with guns, apparently to shoot whoever was not aboard the congressman's plane. The clear intent was that everyone who had gone to Jonestown with Ryan was to be killed.

The assailants returned to Jonestown and reported, out of the hearing of lawyers Mark Lane and Charles Garry, who had stayed behind, that the congressman was dead but others had lived. It was then that Jones announced that all his followers must come immediately to Jonestown's open-air pavilion. There he told them Ryan had been killed and that there would be "trouble."

"We've all got to kill ourselves," Jones told everyone, according to Rhodes. One woman, Christine Miller, protested, Rhodes said, "but the crowd shouted her down."

Roberts said that so far the only non-Americans found among the more than 400 known dead were seven Guyanese children adopted by the Jonestown community.

As Guyanese police officials continued their search of Jonestown yesterday they discovered more than 800 American passports loaded in a trunk. They found cash, checks and valuable jewelry and metals, including gold.

The most perplexing question left to be answered was the whereabouts of the approximately 400 Jonestown residents whose bodies have not been found.

There was speculation that hundreds of people fled to the jungle and simply have not yet found their way out. But there was also another theory that some of the Jonestown security men took hundreds of the commune's residents to a remote area possibly to be shot.

Lending some support to that theory was the fact that Tom Kice, one of those believed to have been among the gunmen who attacked Ryan's party, has not been found.

Also, lawyers Lane and Garry, who escaped into the forest when the killing began,

reported yesterday that they heard scattered screaming and shooting in the forest while they were in hiding.

According to several of the Jonestown residents who left with Ryan on Saturday and survived the attack at the airstrip, residents of Jonestown had gone through several rehearsals for a mass suicide.

The procedure even had a name. When Jones decided that his church was finished, he had told followers here he would send a coded message to his church's other headquarters in Georgetown, Guyana, and San Francisco that they should join the Jonestown faithful in taking their lives.

They were to wait for the words "white nights."

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