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EXCLUSIVE



THE
SUICIDE
CULT

THE INSIDE STORY
OF THE PEOPLES TEMPLE
SECT AND THE
MASSACRE IN GUYANA

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San Francisco Chronicle

EXTRA: SPECIAL PICTURE SECTION.

central pavilion area. "There was no physical confrontation, but the situation was certainly emotionally charged," he said. He was frightened.

"We went back to Georgetown, where the court process just stopped," Haas related. "We tried to get an arrest warrant for Jones, but the court clerk refused to sign it, and he was the only one who could. We heard that there was interference by government officials." Haas succeeded in getting an American consular official to write a letter to the government complaining of the court's glacial pace. But Jonestown responded with an affidavit accusing Grace Stoen of being an unfit mother.

Haas came home. A hearing on the case was set for January 1978. Haas went back to Georgetown, along with Grace and Tim Stoen. But the judge sitting on the case said his life had been threatened because of the case and disqualified himself, and the case had to begin again with a new judge. While in Guyana, the Stoens say, they were threatened with death by Temple members if they did not drop the proceedings. They were never allowed to see their son.

Steven A. Katsaris, a Mendocino County psychologist, who directs a treatment center for children with severe behavior problems, struggled for months to get to see his daughter Maria, who lived in Jones's cabin at Jonestown and was the leader's mistress. When he finally succeeded, she was a changed woman.

According to an affidavit signed by Katsaris, his twenty-five-year-old daughter told him in

July 1977 that she was leaving San Francisco for Jonestown. She said she would be there only for a few weeks, but later telephoned to say she would stay several weeks longer. Around the same time, Katsaris read newspaper accounts of "psychological and physical coercion" at Jonestown, and became concerned. His daughter told him by phone not to worry, that she was fine. Katsaris told Maria he wanted to visit Jonestown, and she "appeared enthusiastic and receptive to this idea," the psychologist said.

Maria sent her father letters that brimmed with her enthusiasm for Jonestown. "Coming down the Kaituma River is one of my most favorite things," she wrote in one. "It is hard to describe how beautiful it is. It is so peaceful. I like to sit out on the deck and watch all the scenery, all the animals and birds plus all the different kinds of tropical plants." She wrote extensively about the food the settlers ate at Jonestown, and especially liked a strain of beans they cultivated called the cutlass bean. "They came up with a way to fix it so it tastes just like sausage patties," Maria Katsaris wrote her father. "I wouldn't care if I never ate meat again if I had my cutlass patties."

"One last thing," she wrote. "Please, please, please do not get disturbed by the bad publicity the church has gotten. It is absolutely incredible that the press can print such a filthy bunch of lies and are allowed to get by with it . . . I am not surprised though. A society that is based on economic inequality and classism is certainly not going to let an organization advocating economic and racial equality exist too

child in Guyanese courts. On Grace Stoen's behalf he retained a local attorney, Clarence Hughes. The first step was to serve Jones with papers ordering him to bring the child to court.

"I had to hire a plane to Jonestown so we could serve the papers," Haas said. Haas flew to the outpost and tried to serve Jones with the court summons.

"When we got there we asked for Jones, but Maria Katsaris [Jones's mistress] intervened. She said Jones hadn't been there for two days." Haas said he and his party stayed at Jonestown only about thirty minutes and saw no sign of the leader. He asked to be allowed to wander around the compound, but was refused permission.

But Haas said that on the way back to the airstrip from Jonestown, his party overtook two Guyanese immigration officials, who had been to the settlement and talked to Jones only forty-five minutes earlier. Haas thought better of going back to Jonestown for a confrontation, deciding instead to return to Georgetown and the next stage of the court battle.

He and Hughes received permission from the Guyanese court to waive a requirement that Jones personally receive the summons. Several days later, he and Tony London, a Guyanese law enforcement official for the Jonestown area, returned to the camp to post notices informing Jones that he had to bring the boy to court. "This time," he said, "the people were very hostile."

As fast as Haas and London could post the court notices, church members tore them down, he said. "They said they would not accept the

summons, on the advice of their attorney." Once again, Jones was nowhere to be found.

"While we were talking to them a bunch of young boys gathered around us. It was a threatening situation, but there was nothing overt."

Haas said Temple members told London, whose position was roughly that of an undersheriff, that three days earlier two men had tried to assassinate Jones at Jonestown—the same day Haas had been told that Jones was not there.

Haas said London pointed out the discrepancy, and the Temple members replied that the attempted assassination "must have happened the day before." But London reminded church members that they had told Haas they hadn't seen Jones for two days before the attorney's first visit.

"Then things got a little heated," Haas said. "Tony London asked me to go sit in our jeep while he investigated the purported assassination attempt." While he was waiting, Haas said, a man came walking down the road carrying a 12-gauge shotgun.

"At that point, I didn't know what the hell was happening," Haas said. "I jumped out and dove behind the jeep."

It turned out, the attorney said, that London had asked to see all the guns in the camp. The settlers had brought him two—the shotgun and a pistol.

On this visit, Haas spent about forty-five minutes at Jonestown. Again, he was not allowed to roam unescorted, though he did get to see the

Hunter said that on her arrival in the Guyanese capital she was told the invitation was a hoax. Meanwhile, she said, she was harassed by "a squad of interrogators" from the jungle settlement, who shadowed her at her Georgetown hotel and bugged her telephone.

For seven of the nine days Hunter spent in Guyana, she was confined to her hotel room in "protective custody" by the authorities, she said. She finally returned to the United States shaken but unharmed—and she had never made it to Jonestown.

An even more chilling report came from Jeff Haas, a San Francisco attorney. Haas represented Grace Stoen, former Temple lieutenant Tim Stoen's wife, in a custody battle with Jim Jones over the Stoen's six-year-old son, John Victor. Jones claimed the Stoens agreed to have him sire the boy, and once said the main reason he would never return to the United States was that he might be forced to surrender custody of the child. By September 1977 both the Stoens had left the church and Grace Stoen wanted her son back. So Haas went to Guyana.

"We had a court order from here in California compelling Jones to surrender custody of Grace's boy," Haas said. He said he had hoped his arrival would surprise Jones, but State Department officials had already informed church members that Haas was on his way.

Haas arrived in Georgetown. "We had hoped the Guyanese officials would simply recognize the California court order and enforce it, but they said they couldn't do that." This meant Haas would have to fight for custody of the