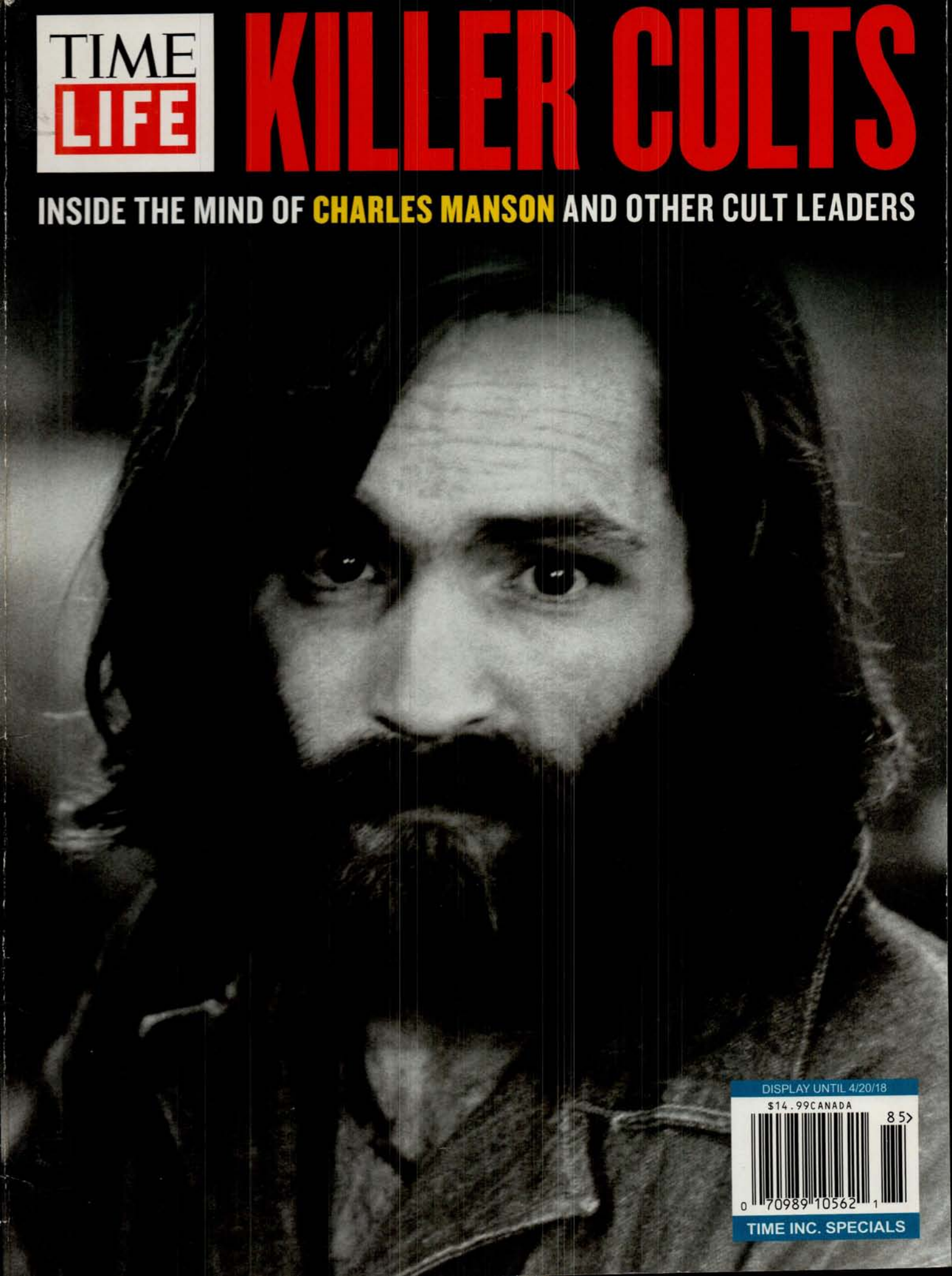
TIME LIFE

KILLER CULTS

INSIDE THE MIND OF CHARLES MANSON AND OTHER CULT LEADERS



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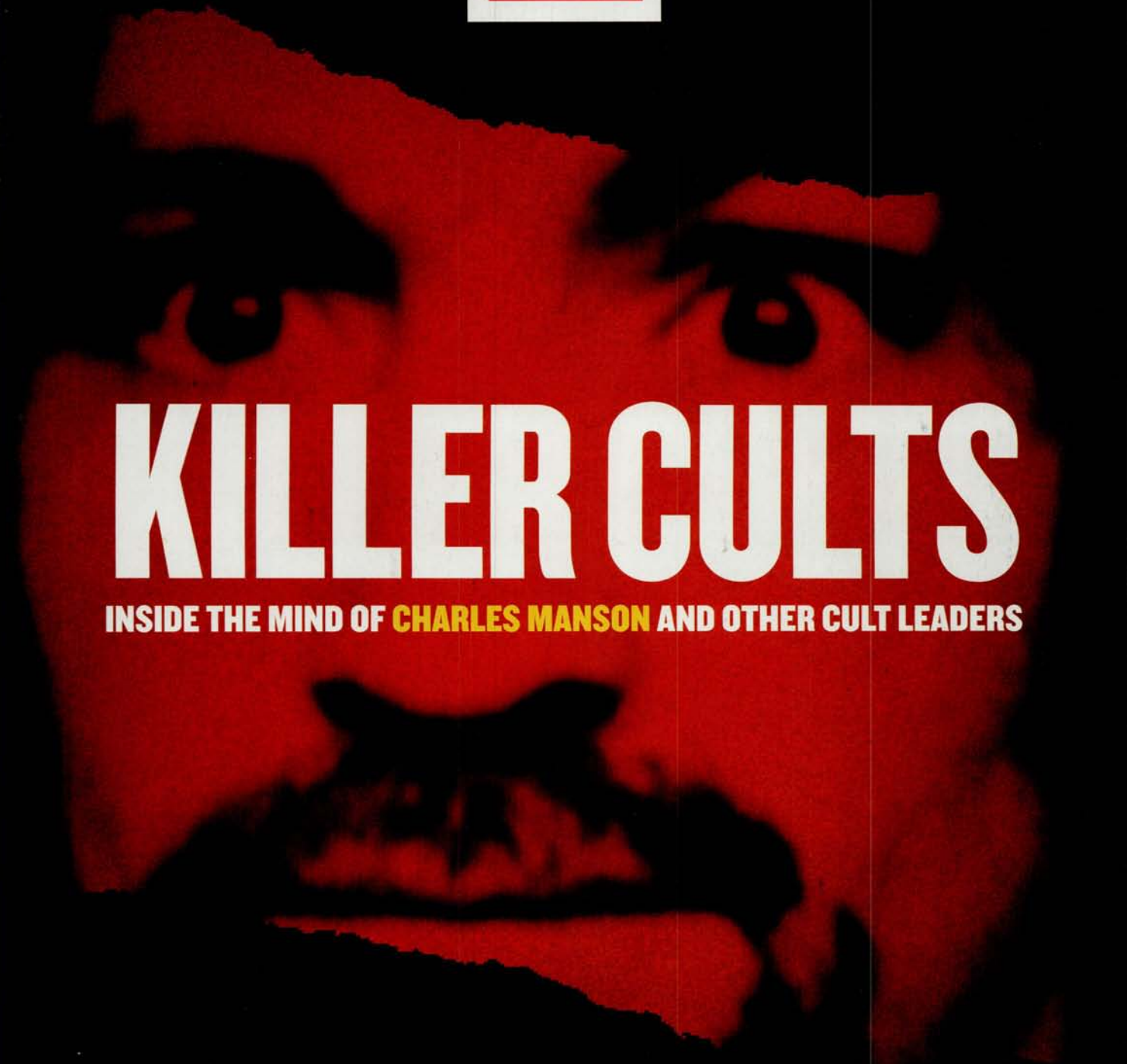

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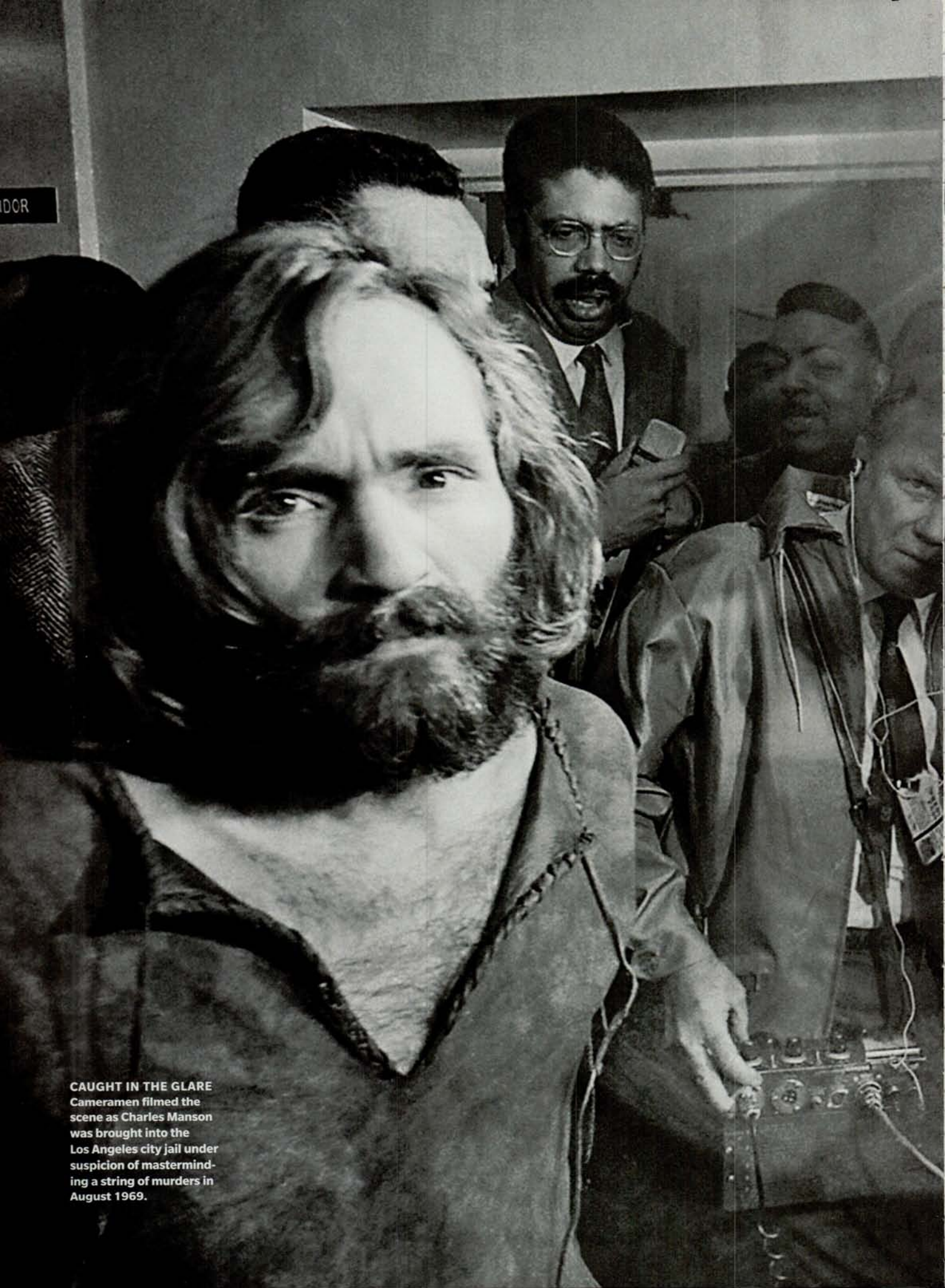

CAUGHT IN THE GLARE
Cameramen filmed the scene as Charles Manson was brought into the Los Angeles city jail under suspicion of masterminding a string of murders in August 1969.

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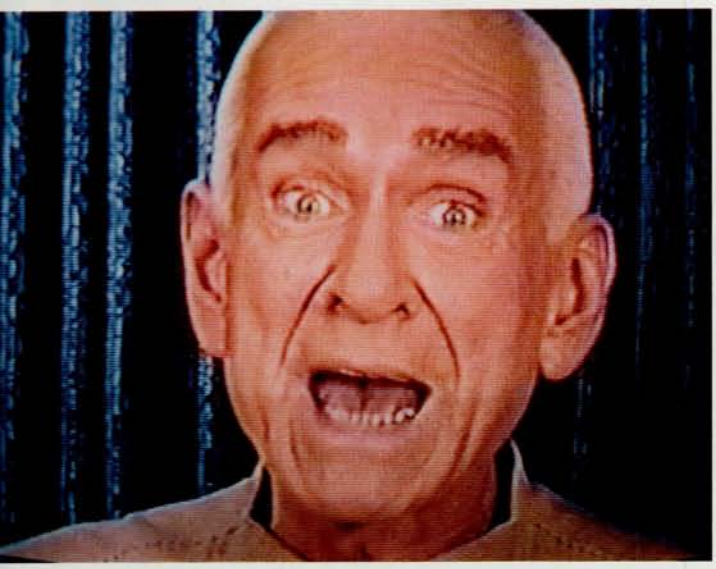
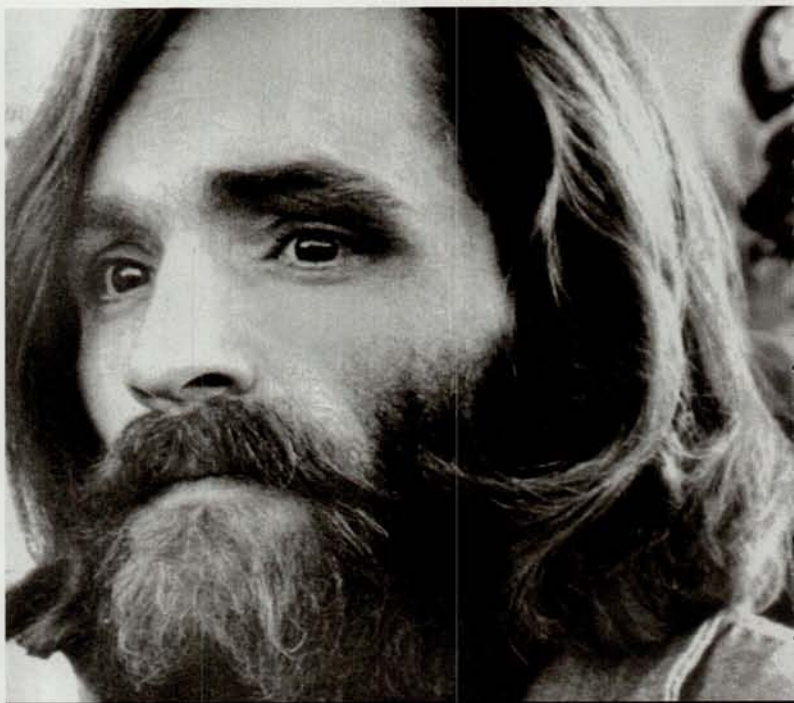




MASTERS OF COERCION Clockwise, from top: Branch Davidian leader David Koresh focused on the coming apocalypse; Charles Manson read *How to Win Friends and Influence People* for tips on manipulation; Rev. Jim Jones of the Peoples Temple was an addict; Shoko Asahara, the leader of Aum Shinrikyo, is on death row in Japan; Marshall Applewhite of Heaven's Gate recruited followers online.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE ALLURE OF THE KILLER CULT?

FOR LOST SOULS, A CHARISMATIC LEADER AND THE PROMISE OF FELLOWSHIP CAN OUTWEIGH DANGER SIGNS.

BY RICHARD JEROME

IN EARLY APRIL OF 2016, RUSSIAN SECURITY forces made sweeping raids in St. Petersburg and Moscow, arresting dozens. The detainees were not, as might be expected, critics of Vladimir Putin or right wing nationalists urging a new Russian revolution. They were alleged followers of Aum Shinrikyo, the apocalyptic Japanese cult known for the nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995.

Outlawed as terrorists in Russia, Aum Shinrikyo has grown surprisingly strong in the country in recent years—officials fear its membership has reached 30,000—and the government has made public its intent to strangle the group. Aum's activities involve "violence against citizens and injury to their health," prosecutors say.

Aum Shinrikyo's staying power speaks to the perversely enduring appeal of cults, not only as magnets for lost souls but as objects of morbid public curiosity—the more bizarre and violent, the better. Indeed "killer cults" are experiencing a pop culture moment. Paramount TV is scheduled to premiere *Waco,* a miniseries focused on Branch Davidian "prophet" David Koresh, who in 1993 met a fiery end with 83 others after a 51-day standoff with federal agents. Jake Gyllenhaal is producing an A&E anthology series about cults; *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan is writing an HBO project on Peoples Temple cult leader Jim Jones, who engineered the 1978 mass killing of more than 900 of his followers in Guyana; and director Quentin Tarantino is working on a film of perhaps the most notorious of all cults, Charles Manson's "Family." To some extent all these productions, along with countless books, scholarly studies and true-crime page-turners, seek to answer the question: Why do seemingly ordinary people join cults, stay in them—and sometimes do terrible things?

"First of all, nobody sets out to join a cult," says social psychologist Richard Ofshe, professor emeritus at the University of California-Berkeley, and an authority on cults and coercion. "People join organizations that appear to be beneficial to them, that they think are offering them something of value." Cults, he adds, differ from political organizations or hate groups. "People join the KKK or put on Nazi uniforms and march in parades in Charlottesville because they're white supremacists, and they affiliate with like-minded other people who hold their extremist ideology. That's not a cult. A cult is typically built around what's euphemistically called a 'charismatic leader.'"

Once people enter into the group, they form attachments and become emotionally or socially dependent. Eventually a skillfully manipulative leader gains control over the most vulnerable members. Anyone who doesn't conform or questions the group's mission meets with coercive pressure. "The power structure has the ability to mobilize people you think are your friends," Ofshe says. "You can lose your community, your way of life. That's a huge cost, and people capitulate."

This scenario played out in Synanon, which began in 1958 as the nation's first self-help drug rehabilitation program and devolved into a violent, abusive cult, says Ofshe, who has written about the Santa Monica, Calif.–based group. Over time, Synanon founder Charles Dederich grew so paranoid, he began demanding that all other males be sterilized and that married members change partners. Anyone who refused, was forced to leave the group, which disbanded in 1991.

Once someone physically leaves a cult, what then? How best to free them from the group's psychological and emotional hold? "It's simply a process of teaching people what exactly they got involved in," Ofshe says, "and how they were manipulated."

ANGUISHED MOMENT
The body of actress Sharon Tate was removed from her rented house on Cielo Drive.

THE MANS

CHARLES MANSON WAS EVIL BUT ALSO DEEPLY MAGNETIC. WHO WAS HE? AND WHO WERE

SON FAMILY

THE FOLLOWERS WHO WERE WILLING TO DO HIS BIDDING—TO BRUTAL AND MURDEROUS ENDS?

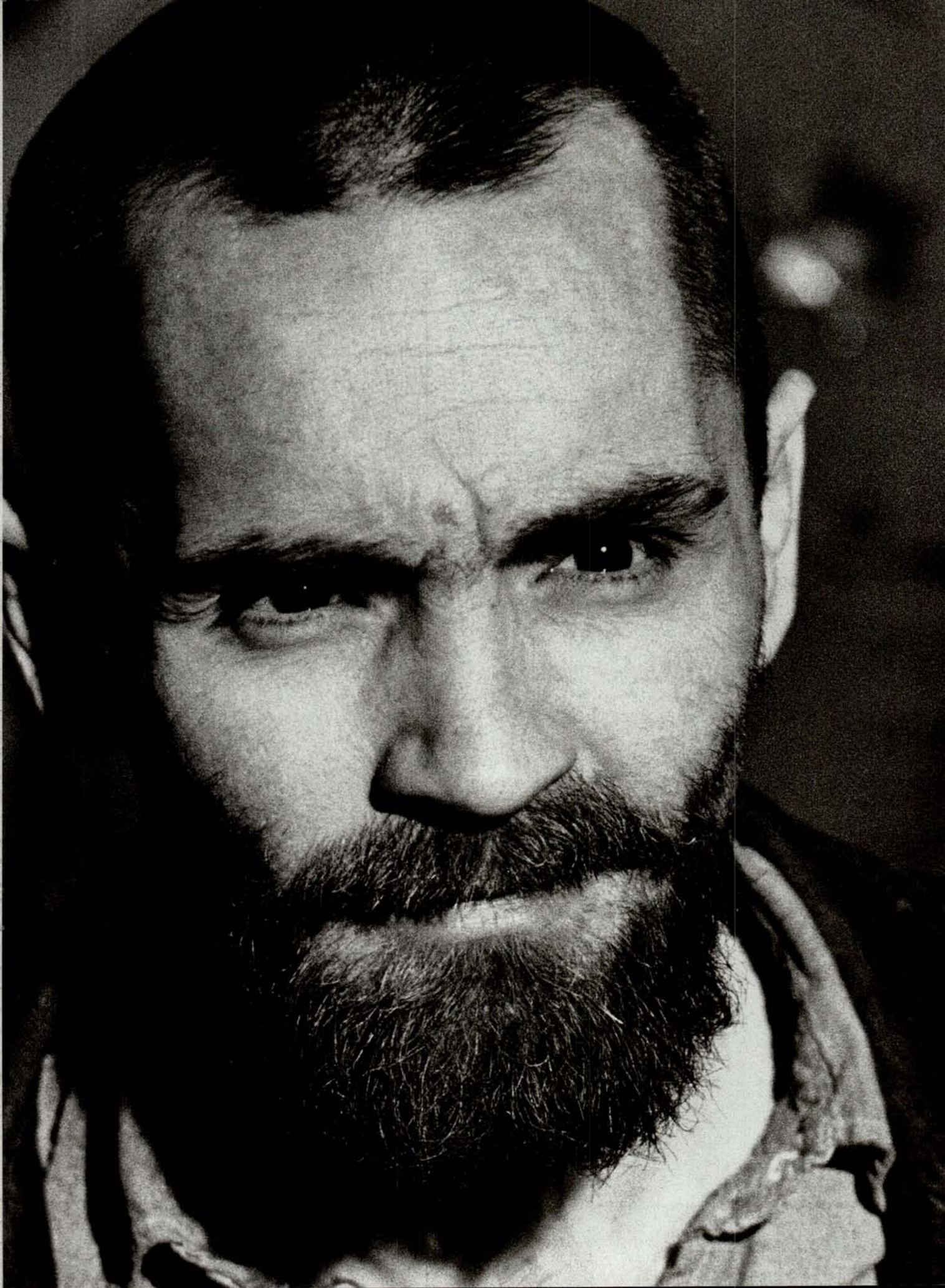
THE DEMON OF DEATH VALLEY

IN DECEMBER 1969, *LIFE* BECAME THE FIRST NATIONAL MAGAZINE TO RUN A COVER STORY ON CULT LEADER CHARLES MANSON, HIS "FAMILY" AND THE GRUESOME MURDERS THEY COMMITTED.

BY PAUL O'NEIL

LONG-HAIRED, BEARDED LITTLE CHARLIE Manson so disturbed America when he was charged in October 1969 with sending four girls and a male acolyte to slaughter strangers in Los Angeles that the victims of his blithe and gory crimes seemed to have played only secondary roles in the final moments of their own lives. The Los Angeles killings struck millions across the country as an inexplicable controversion of everything they wanted to believe about the society and their children—and made Charlie Manson seem to be the very encapsulation of truth about revolt and violence by the young.

ANOTHER NAME
During the time Manson led his "Family," most people who knew him called him Charlie, though as a child in McMechen, W. Va., he went by Charles.



What failure of the human condition could produce a Charlie Manson? What possible aspect of such a creature's example could induce sweet-faced young women and a polite Texas college boy to acts of such numbing cruelty—even though they might have abandoned the social and political precepts of their elders like so many other beaded and bell-bottomed mother's children of 1969? Some of the answers seemed simple enough if one weighed Charlie Manson on the ancient scales of human venality. He attracted and controlled his women through flattery, fear and sexual attention and by loftily granting them a sort of sisterhood of exploitation—methods used by every pimp in history. He sensed something old as a tribal blood ritual which most of us deny in ourselves—that humans can feel enormous fulfillment and enormous relief in the act of killing other humans if some medicine man applauds and condones the deed. But Charlie was able to attune his time-encrusted concepts of villainy to the childish yearnings of his hippie converts—to their weaknesses, their catchwords, their fragmentary sense of religion and their enchantment with drugs and idleness—and to immerse them in his own ego and in idiotic versions of apocalypse.

It's hard not to wince while considering Charlie Manson's childhood. He was born to a teenage prostitute, raised by an aunt and uncle, then farmed out to a series of homes.

EARLY OFFENDER

It is hard not to wince while considering Charlie Manson's childhood. He was born to a teenage prostitute in Cincinnati on Nov. 12, 1934, and was raised until he was 11 by an aunt and uncle in West Virginia. His life thereafter was one of rejection and delinquency. His mother farmed him out to homes and schools until he was taken, as a delinquent of 14, to the last and most permanent of them, the Indiana Boys' School. He "ran"—as juvenile authorities term escape—repeatedly and stole cars and committed burglaries during his periods of freedom. He was released from prison when he was 20 and went back to West Virginia an accomplished car thief. He married a local girl, Rosalie Jean Willis. Rosalie became pregnant and gave birth to a boy. But Manson had already left for Los Angeles in a stolen car and soon found himself behind bars at Terminal Island.

He posed as "producer" when he got out again, ingratiated himself with teenage girls and moonlighted as an occasional procurer. McNeil Island's federal penitentiary took Manson in after that because he cashed some stolen U.S. Treasury checks. He had never gone farther than the seventh grade; now he read the Bible and tracts on the quasi-religion Scientology, decided that the Book of Revelation had predicted the Beatles, learned to play the guitar and assumed he could compose music. One of his lyrics consisted solely of the words "You know, you know, you know..." He left prison in March 1967, ready to give new meaning to the old saw: a little learning is a dangerous thing.

Criminals and ex-cons have discovered a new sort of refuge in the last couple of years: they grow hair, assume beads and sandals, and sink—carnivores moving in with vegetarians—into the life of hippie colonies from the East Village to Big Sur. Charlie Manson went to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury and, with exquisite skill, adopted the local coloration as a means of controlling the impulse-ridden, alienated, drug-directed young women he discovered there. Charlie billed himself as a roving minstrel come to fulfill their dreams with magic, strike off the chains of male chauvinism and lead them to the promised land—although in fact he regarded them as squaws, treated them like cattle and excommunicated those who complained.

"I was hitchhiking to San Francisco once with Charlie," says a girl who used to know him, "and we had these two big packs. He wanted me to carry both of them. I refused. I said I'd share, but I wouldn't carry both. He got more and more angry and finally said I had to carry both bags and walk 10 steps behind him. When I wouldn't do that, he took my guitar from me and smashed it into little pieces against a post."

Most of Charlie's girls, in the opinion of a San Francisco psychiatrist who encountered them, where "hysterics, wishful thinkers, seekers after some absolute" who came to regard Charles as a high priest, "all-powerful, all-knowing."

ENTREPRENEUR, NOT A HIPPIE

Charlie was a fast talker with a glittering eye. He initiated new girls by taking them to bed for day-long sexual marathons. He broke down their inhibitions by directing them in erotic group carnivals or ordering them to carnal activity with other men and commanding them to do so in the same

EARLY YEARS As a boy, Manson lived briefly in this house, top, in McMechen, W. Va., with an aunt and uncle. He married Rosalie Jean Willis in 1955, above, and had a son with her before they divorced in '58. At left: After an arrest for burglary, Manson, 13, was sent to Boys Town, a home for wayward youths.


PRIVATE

tones in which he sent them into the streets to panhandle. Charlie was no hippie; the very name made him angry. He was an entrepreneur. He gave people things—drugs, his own shirt—to get things back. He gave girls—often a naked, giggling, caressing gaggle of four or five of them—to men from the "straight" world. He boasted of 3,000 friends. One gave him a grand piano which he traded for a camper truck which he then traded for a bus with which he transported his harem to southern California and their eventual rendezvous with the fruits and fallacies of his delusions.

The delusions seemed to have blossomed in his mind after a trip in the spring of 1968. It was during this trek that he met, sponged on and grew to resent Los Angeles musician Gary Hinman; he also was rejected, in a plea for help

One night, Charlie made Spahn, 80 years old and blind, sit in a chair as he held lighted matches before his eyes.

with his own musical aspiration, by Doris Day's son Terry Melcher, then the occupant of the big house in which actress Sharon Tate and her friends would die. Charlie preached a confused but vehement philosophy. Everything in the world belonged to all of its people—thus there could be redivision of valuables, but no theft. All humans were part of some homogeneous and mystic whole—thus there could be no real death. The varying mob of long-haired girls and ragged young studs who clung around him in southern California were indoctrinated with Charlie's views after they settled at the first of their two outposts, a Western movie location once owned by silent star Bill Bart but now operated as a riding stable called the Spahn Movie Ranch.

Manson's "Family" stayed at the movie ranch for 12 months. Charlie gave its blind old owner, George Spahn, $5,000, a sum perhaps donated by one of his young acolytes, Linda Kasabian. He also terrorized Spahn and got a good deal of the money back. One night, Spahn says, Charlie forced him to sit in a chair for three hours,

ON THE RANCH
Family members, circa 1969. Back row, from left: Danny DeCarlo, Jennifer Gentry, Cathy Gillies, Mary Theresa Brunner, Chuck Lovett and Catherine Share. Front row, from left: Sandra Good, Ruth Ann Moorehouse and Lynette Fromme.

VIEW FROM A PAROLE OFFICER

After serving seven years in prison for abetting prostitution, Manson was released in 1967 and assigned Dr. Roger Smith, a research criminologist, as his parole officer. Smith spoke to LIFE for the December 1969 issue.

Charlie was the most hostile parolee I've ever come across. He told me right off there was no way he could keep the terms of his parole. In another era, Charlie would have been back in prison in short order. But now you have a transient delinquent population and many end up in scenes like this. In a sense, I think Charlie was really shaken by it all—that people were friendly, open and willing to do things with him. The first night he was in the Haight, the chicks were willing to go to bed with him. They didn't care whether he had just gotten out of the joint.

I couldn't get Charlie into a halfway house. I couldn't get him training. The only place he was accepted was Haight-Ashbury, and doesn't that say a hell of a lot about the system.

held lighted matches before his eyes and swung punches within an inch of his face to discover whether he lied about his sightlessness. (After it was all over Spahn heard the door open and close and sat there in the dark for an hour. He couldn't hear a breath. Then he reached around–and put his hand right on Manson's head. "That's right, George, I'm still here.")

Ranch hands remember Manson provided for everybody, though the girls did most of the work. "Their sole purpose was to serve the men," a neighbor said. Sometimes Charlie instructed them to work their families for money. He passed out marijuana if he felt like it. He had a plastic baggie full of LSD tablets; these were for visitors from whom he wanted gifts or favors or recruits he wanted "to capture." In the evening, Charlie played his guitar and led the group in songs he had composed but couldn't sell. There were seldom more than six or seven male members and usually four times as many girls. The boys got girls as

Manson carried a Bowie knife as his scepter. "He used to say, 'Man, everybody in this world is afraid of getting cut,'" recalled an acquaintance.

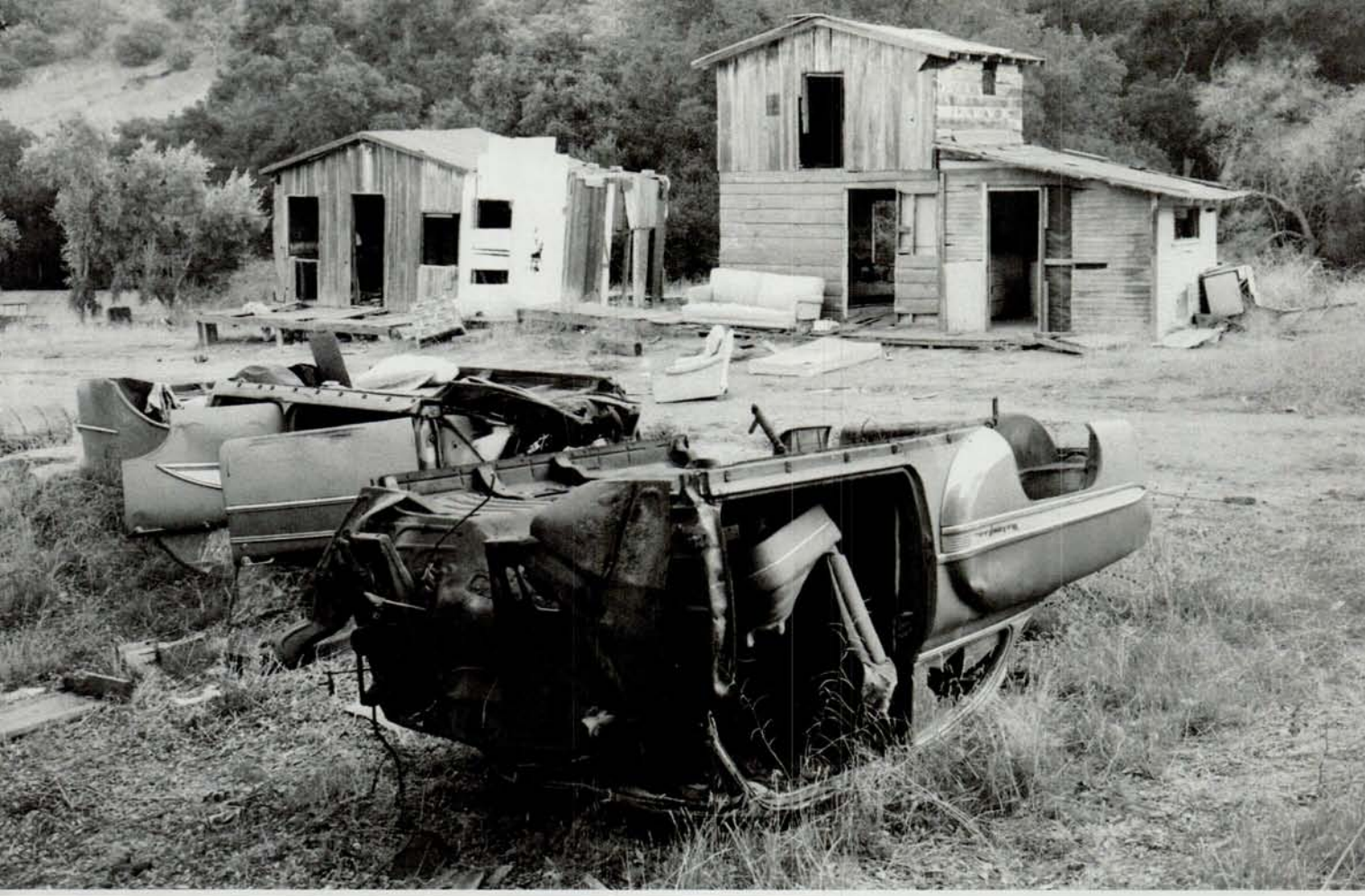
gifts from Charlie. Charlie had any girl he wanted. The family slept on communal mattresses, but Charlie and his choice of the evening slept in a room of their own. Manson's word was law: he carried and fondled a Bowie knife as his scepter. "He really loved knives," recalls an acquaintance. "He used to say, 'Man, everybody in this world is afraid of getting cut.' "

He also collected guns and ammunition. The family, he prophesied, was one day going into Los Angeles to set off the apocalypse foreordained for them in Revelation, Chapter 9: "They were given the power of scorpions...the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots... and they have the kin over them the angel of the bottomless pit." There was no doubt who was king. Charlie Manson talked about it to visitors: "He was going to shoot all the white people he saw, all the established people; then the black people would get enthralled and destroy everybody while he would retreat into the desert." Manson did not just

THE SPAHN MOVIE RANCH

The Spahn Ranch, 20 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, stretched over 500 acres in the Santa Susana Mountains, a parched expanse that crawls with bobcats and rattlesnakes. In the early days of Hollywood, Spahn served as a shooting location for Westerns, those quintessential movies extolling the triumph of good over wickedness. Yet for just over a year in the late 1960s, true evil homesteaded at the ranch in the form of Charles Manson and his so-called Family.

Manson knew the area, having spent time with a nearby cult, and his Family started to move to Spahn in the spring of 1968. By then the ranch was much diminished and the days of film shoots with Roy Rogers and the production crew from *The Lone Ranger* were long gone. Instead, Spahn's ranch hands saddled up city slickers interested in horseback rides, while the Family did chores in return for free board. The acolytes lived in rotting shacks with bare mattresses and cavorted with shared partners "like wood nymphs," as Family member Susan Atkins once described the scene. Twenty-year-old Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, who later attempted to assassinate President Gerald Ford, had a special assignment: she distracted the blind, 80-year-old Spahn with sex, as members stripped stolen cars, took part in mandated orgies and planned their killing spree.



LIFE OF SQUALOR Clockwise, from top: By the time the Family arrived at the Spahn Movie Ranch, it had fallen into disrepair, but they stayed for about a year. In the 1940s and 1950s, the area was home to another cult, Fountain of the World, where Manson is said to have spent time. George Spahn relied on Family girls as seeing-eye guides. With sex open and partners interchangeable, most of the family slept on mattresses clustered together. But Manson's bed "was always separate from the others," one visitor recalled.

TRAGIC SCENES Using Sharon Tate's blood, Susan Atkins wrote "Pig" on the door, top. Psychic Peter Hurkos studied a bloodstain.

talk. He took incredible pains, with the aid of the Family's males, to prepare for the day.

They stole Volkswagens stripped them and turned them into reinforced dune buggies, some with machine gun mounts. The Spahn Movie Ranch lies only a few miles north and west of Burbank, but beyond it are sere, rugged and unpopulated hills and beyond them, eventually, the Mojave Desert. Manson cut the padlocks off fire road gates and substituted locks of his own. He and his dune buggy drivers snarled, skidded and ground their way up the roadless draws and gulches and laid out caches of food, gasoline, tires and sleeping bags. One youth who almost fell under Manson's spell was told that Charlie got two Army half-tracks and burned them out establishing a roadless route, 300 miles long, across the Mojave and into the hills of Death Valley. This was the site of the so-called Barker Ranch, a huddle of abandoned shacks, a last remote hole-up which Charlie had gotten on a sort of loan from a rich Burbank widow.

CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS

There is no knowing yet just what part Manson played in trying to set off his Armageddon in August 1969. Family member Susan Atkins told the grand jury that he planned the attack on the house in which he had been slighted by Terry Melcher, but took no part in murdering Tate and the others who died as a result. Linda Kasabian, on the other hand, told a friend, and may well have told the jury, that he actually led the raid. Either way, however, Manson and his helpers spent 48 hours with a welding machine, "popping bennies" to get on with the job of conditioning the desert buggies. Even though the blacks did not arise to begin the destruction of Los Angeles—rendering his secret desert escape route unnecessary—he loaded up trucks, cars and the bus and took the family on a roundabout trip to the mesquite-dotted hideout above Death Valley.

The Barker Ranch, first settled by a retired L.A. po-

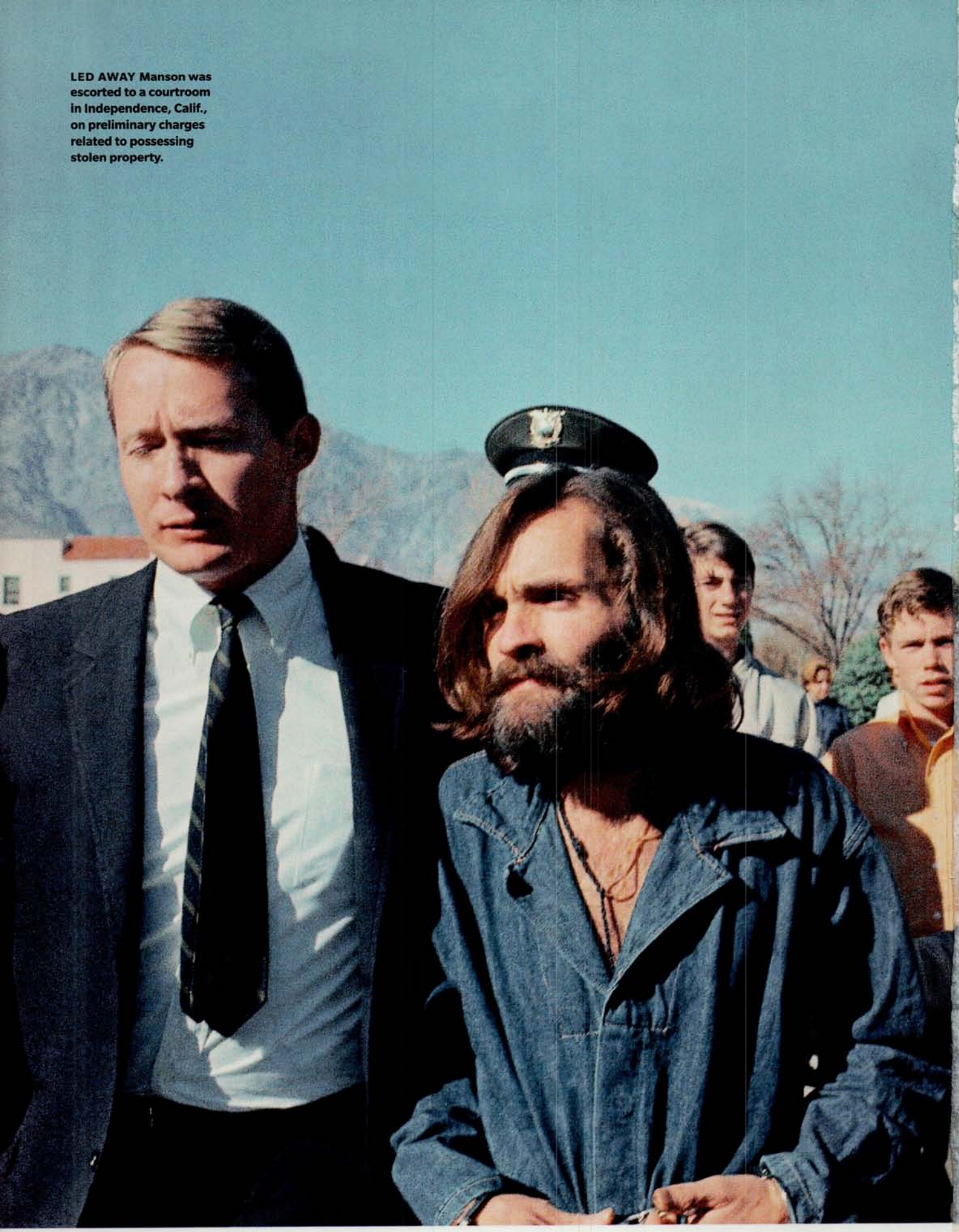
Manson and his helpers spent 48 hours with a welding machine, "popping bennies" to get on with the job of conditioning the dune buggies.

TURNING TO A PSYCHIC DETECTIVE

After the bodies of Sharon Tate, Abigail Folger, Steve Parent, Jay Sebring and Voytek Frykowski were discovered at Cielo Drive, a number of homicide detectives were assigned to the case; but aside from determining the make of the gun used in the killings, the police were slow in turning up leads.

To move the investigation along, director Roman Polanski, the husband of Sharon Tate, decided to bring in Dutch clairvoyant Peter Hurkos. A former house painter who said he became psychic when he fell from a ladder and suffered a brain injury, Hurkos had moved to the United States in 1956 to perform some psychic experiments. He eventually settled in Los Angeles, and before the Manson murders was best known for his work on the Boston Strangler case.

At Cielo Drive, Hurkos walked through the house touching things and sat on the living room floor for 20 minutes. He later told the police that three men had committed the crime while tripping on LSD, that a Satanic ritual had been involved and that there had been a string of debauched parties. After Manson was indicted in December 1969, Hurkos's theories were proved wrong. The victims had been asleep when the Family members broke in, and there had been no wild parties. The murderers were three women and a man, not three men as Hurkos had insisted.



LED AWAY Manson was escorted to a courtroom in Independence, Calif., on preliminary charges related to possessing stolen property.

At first, officers couldn't find Charlie, but then they noticed his hair dangling from under a sink. He had squeezed himself into a 12-by-16-inch cupboard.

lice officer hoping to strike it big mining for gold, is all but inaccessible except for a route in from Nevada. In the 1950s, the cop sold the spread to Jim and Arlene Barker, the grandparents of Manson follower Catherine Gillies. After Charlie gave Arlene a gold record he stole from Beach Boy Dennis Wilson—who had at one point voiced an interest in Manson's music—she allowed his group to live in its stone houses and shed. The Family's encampment in its abandoned shacks, the naked girls' sunbaths by its crude swimming pool, lasted hardly more than a month. They camouflaged the buggies, set up a defense perimeter with two field telephones and put lookouts on watch.

PEANUT BUTTER AND HONEY

But two raids by state police and Death Valley National Monument rangers—instigated by complaints of local car thefts—scooped up 26 of them. At first the officers couldn't find Charlie, but then they noticed his hair dangling from under a sink. He had squeezed himself into the 12-by-16-inch cupboard, but couldn't close the door. The police took the whole bunch of them to Independence, the seat of Inyo County, and put them in jail on charges of theft. The girls, many of whom were later released, did not lose faith in Charlie. They demanded that their jailer supply them with peanut butter and honey for a "purification ceremony" and insisted on going naked.

Forced to wear dresses, they took to raising them over their heads when exercising outside. Charlie did not forget them, either: he yipped like a coyote in his cell, and they yipped back in chorus. But a little time later, as authorities considered the Los Angeles crimes, and police investigated other deaths—a boy killed near the movie ranch, a girl's slashed body found in the Death Valley hills—there seemed scant chance that Charles Manson would ever again put the Family beneath his spell.

A MOST CHILLING MURDER SPREE

IN THE SUMMER OF 1969, THE RANDOM SLAYINGS OF NINE PEOPLE OVER FOUR WEEKS SET LOS ANGELES ON EDGE. SALES OF GUNS, GUARD DOGS AND ALARM SYSTEMS SOARED AS THE CITY PREPARED FOR THE UNIMAGINABLE.

BY VINCENT BUGLIOSI WITH CURT GENTRY

The nine Manson murders unspooled over four weeks in the summer of 1969, with musician Gary Hinman the first to lose his life, on July 27, and stuntman and actor Donald Shea the last, on August 26. The killings, with victims also including actress Sharon Tate, the wife of director Roman Polanski, and coffee heiress Abigail Folger, unhinged and transfixed the city. "A pervasive sense of dread and paranoia settled over the town like smog, shot through with sharp currents of shock and unease," as Peter Biskind wrote in Easy Riders, Raging Bulls. *"The sense that 'it could have been me' haunted the hills." Years later, after Manson and Family members had been convicted and sent to prison, prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi wrote the book* Helter Skelter, *the definitive account of the case, from slaughter to trial. Here, an abridged version of his account of the discovery of seven of the nine bodies, those at 10050 Cielo Drive, home of the Polanskis, and 3301 Waverly Drive, home to Leno and Rosemary LaBianca.*

A HOT NIGHT IN AUGUST

It was so quiet, one of the killers would later say, you could almost hear the sound of ice rattling in cocktail shakers in the homes way down the canyon.

The canyons above Hollywood and Beverly Hills play tricks with sounds. A noise clearly audible a mile away may be indistinguishable at a few hundred feet.

It was hot that night, but not as hot as the night before, when the temperature hadn't dropped below 92 degrees. The three-day heat wave had begun to break a couple of hours before, about 10 p.m. on Friday—to the psychological as well as the physical relief of those Angelenos who recalled that on such a night, just four years ago, Watts had exploded in violence. Many residents slept with their windows open, in hopes of catching a vagrant breeze. All things considered, it's surprising that more people didn't hear something.

But then it was late, just after midnight, and 10050 Cielo Drive was secluded.

Being secluded, it was also vulnerable.

Cielo Drive is a narrow street that abruptly winds upward from Benedict Canyon Road. One of its cul-de-sacs comes to a dead end at the high gate of 10050. Looking through the gate, you could see neither the main residence or the guest house, but you could see a split-rail fence strung with Christmas lights though it

HEARTBREAK
A few days after the murders, photographer Julian Wasser accompanied Roman Polanski and others to Cielo Drive to take pictures for LIFE, including this one of the Polanskis' nightstand.

THE VICTIMS Top row, from left: Voytek Frykowski, the boyfriend of Abigail Folger; Steve Parent, who was earning tuition for junior college; Jay Sebring, Sharon Tate's boyfriend before she married Polanski; Abigail Folger, a volunteer social worker. Second row, from left: Grocer Leno LaBianca; Rosemary LaBianca, a shop owner; actor Donald Shea; and musician Gary Hinman. Opposite: The most famous victim, Tate, with Polanski at their London wedding.

was only August.

The lights had been put up by actress Candice Bergen when she was living with the previous tenant of 10050 Cielo, TV and record producer Terry Melcher. When Melcher, the son of Doris Day, moved to his mother's beach house, the new tenants left the lights up, and on this night, like all others, they were on.

At 10070 Cielo, Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Kott had already gone to bed, their dinner guest having left about midnight, when Mrs. Kott heard what sounded like gunshots. But hearing nothing further, she went to sleep. Down the hill, Tim Ireland was one of five counselors supervising an overnight camp-out for some children at the Westlake School for Girls. At about 12:40 a.m., he heard from what seemed a long distance away a man screaming, "Oh, God, no please don't! Oh, God, no don't, don't, don't." The scream lasted 10 to 15 seconds then stopped.

"Murder, death, bodies, blood," screamed housekeeper Winifred Chapman as she pounded on a neighbor's door.

A HANGING WIRE

By 8 a.m., Winifred Chapman, the housekeeper for 10050 Cielo was late to work, but was able to get a ride from a friend, who dropped her in front of the gate. She noticed a telephone wire hanging over it and it worried her. She thought the electricity might be off, but when she pushed the button, the gate swung open. There was an unfamiliar car, a white Rambler, in the driveway and several others near the garage. Overnight guests weren't uncommon and she didn't think much of it. Someone had left the outside light on all night. Switching it off, she entered the house through the service entrance and walked directly to the kitchen where she picked up the extension phone. The line was dead.

Thinking she should alert someone, Chapman proceeded through the dining room and toward the living room until she saw two large blue steamer trunks splashed with blood. She couldn't see the entire living room because it was blocked by a long couch, but everywhere she could see she saw the red splashes. The front door was ajar and there were pools of blood on the flagstone porch. Farther on, on the lawn, she saw a body.

Screaming, Chapman turned and ran back through the house, the same way she had come in, but on running down the driveway she noticed for the first time that there was a body inside the Rambler, too. She ran down the hill to the first house, 10070, ringing the bell and pounding on the door. When the Kotts didn't answer, Chapman ran to the next house, screaming, "Murder, death, bodies, blood." While resident Ray Asin and his

wife tried to calm the housekeeper, their 15-year-old son, Jim, called the police.

An officer, Jerry DeRosa, arrived and began interviewing Chapman, but had a difficult time of it. She was still hysterical and it was hard to get the names and relationships straight. Polanski. Altobelli. Frykowski. Ray Asin stepped in. The house was owned by Rudi Altobelli. He was in Europe. The main residence had been rented to Roman Polanski, the movie director, and his wife. The Polanskis had gone to Europe in March and while they were away, two of their friends, Abigail Folger and Voytek Frykowski had moved in. Mrs. Polanski had returned less than a month ago, and Frykowski and Folger were staying on until her husband returned. Mrs. Polanksi was a movie actress. Her name was Sharon Tate. Others were added: Jay Sebring, a men's hair stylist and friend of Mrs. Polanski's, and William Garretson, the caretaker hired to watch 10050 while Altobelli was away.

On the porch, an officer noticed three letters had been scrawled on the door in what appeared to be blood: PIG.

As Chapman spoke, other officers arrived, and three of them, DeRosa, William Wisenhunt and Robert Burbridge, proceeded up the Altobelli driveway. The first body was 18 to 20 feet past the front door. The closer they came the worse it looked. Male, Caucasian, probably in his thirties, about five feet 10. He was lying on his side, his left hand clutching the grass. His head and face were horribly battered, his torso and limbs punctured by literally dozens of wounds. It seemed inconceivable that so much savagery could be inflicted on one human being.

The second body was about 25 feet beyond the first. Female, Caucasian, long dark hair, probably in her late twenties. She was lying supine, her arms thrown out. Barefoot, she was wearing a full-length nightgown, which, before the many stab wounds, had probably been white. On the porch, DeRosa noticed that something had been scrawled

on the lower half of the door. Printed in what appeared to be blood were three letters: PIG.

The officers had arrived expecting two bodies, but had already discovered three. Inside the living room, on the other side of the sofa that had blocked Chapman's view, were two more. A woman, young, blonde and very pregnant, was curled in a fetal position. She wore a flowered bra and matching panties, but the pattern was almost indistinguishable because of the blood. A white nylon rope was looped around her neck twice, one end extending over a rafter in the ceiling, the other leading across the floor to still another body, that of a man, which was about four feet away. Although DeRosa, Wisenhunt and Burbridge were patrolmen, not homicide detectives, each at some time in the course of his duties had seen death. But nothing like this. 10050 Cielo Drive was a human slaughterhouse.

THE VICTIMS MOUNT

About nine that same Saturday night, August 9, 1969, Leno and Rosemary LaBianca and Susan Struthers, Rosemary's 21-year-old daughter by a previous marriage, left Lake Isabella, a popular resort area where they had been vacationing, for the long drive, some 150 miles, back to Los Angeles. Leno, the president of a chain of L.A. supermarkets, was 44, Italian, and at 220 pounds, somewhat overweight. Rosemary, a trim, attractive brunette of 38, was a former carhop who after a bad marriage had opened her own dress shop, the Boutique Carriage, on North Figueroa in Los Angeles, and made a big success of it. She and Leno had been married since 1959.

Because they were towing their boat back from Lake Isabella, the couple had to drive slowly and fell behind freeway traffic that was speeding toward L.A. Like many other travelers that night, the LaBiancas had the radio on and heard the news of the Tate murders. According to Susan, it seemed particularly to

SHOCKING DISCOVERY
Opposite, County Corner Thomas Noguchi (left) takes notes outside 10050 Cielo Drive, as assistants shield one of the bodies. Above, housekeeper Winifred Chapman was surrounded by reporters as she arrived to testify before the grand jury.

disturb Rosemary, who, a few weeks earlier had told a close friend, "Someone is coming in our house while we're away. Things have been gone through and the dogs are outside the house when they should be inside."

It was about 8:30 p.m. when Frank Struthers, Rosemary's 15-year-old son, returned home to 3301 Waverly Drive in L.A.'s Los Feliz neighborhood. Frank, too, had been at Lake Isabella but was having so much fun with a friend, and he had stayed an extra day. Lugging his suitcase up the driveway, the boy noticed that the speedboat was still on the trailer behind Leno's Thunderbird. That seemed odd; his stepfather didn't like to leave the boat out overnight. When he got to the front door, Frank noticed that all the shades had been pulled down. He couldn't recall ever seeing them

GRIEF STRICKEN
Roman Polanski, who was in London when the murders occurred, gave an emotional press conference in Beverly Hills. He had been married to Tate, who was 8 ½ months pregnant, for just a year.

Frank noticed that all the shades had been pulled down. He couldn't recall ever seeing them that way before and it frightened him. He knocked on the door. There was no response.

that way before and it frightened him. The light was on in the kitchen, and he knocked on the door. There was no response. He called out. Again no answer.

After walking to the nearest pay phone, Frank called his sister, Susan, who hadn't heard from their mother and stepfather since they dropped her off the previous night. She called her boyfriend, Joe Dorgan, and they drove to pick up Frank and then proceeded to 3301 Waverly. Using house keys that Rosemary often left in her own car, the three entered through the back door, with Joe suggesting that Susan remain in the kitchen while he and Frank checked out the house.

When they got to the living room, they saw Leno. He was sprawled on his back between the couch and a chair. There was a throw pillow over his head, some kind of cord

THE EVIDENCE
Deputy District Attorney Vincent Bugliosi displayed a photo of the 43-foot nylon cord found looped around the neck of Sharon Tate.

around his neck and the tops of his pajamas were torn open so his stomach was bare. Something was protruding from his stomach. Leno was so still they knew he was dead. Afraid Susan would follow and see what they had, they returned to the kitchen. Joe picked up the phone to call the police, then, worried that he might be disturbing evidence, put it back down, telling Susan, "Everything's okay, let's get out of here." But Susan knew everything was not okay. On the refrigerator door someone had written something in what looked like red paint.

PATROLMEN ARRIVE

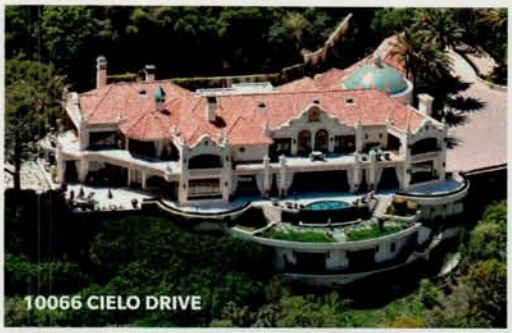
Hurrying back down the driveway, they stopped at a duplex across the street to called the police, but they were so upset that the neighbor had to complete the call. When the patrolmen arrived, they found Leno's body; in addition to what Frank and Joe had seen, there was a bloody pillowcase over his head and a cord around his neck. Then came a backup unit, a supervisor and an ambulance. The backup unit 6L40, manned by Sergeant Edward L. Cline, arrived just after the ambulance. Leno was declared dead, and Cline, a veteran of 16 years, took charge, obtaining a pink DOA slip from two attendants before they left. The pair were already on their way down the driveway when the first officer on the scene called them back. Cline had found another body, in the master bedroom.

Rosemary LaBianca was lying face down on the bedroom floor, parallel to the bed and dresser, in a large pool of blood. She was wearing a short pink nightgown and, over it, an expensive dress, blue with white stripes, which Susan would later identify as one of her favorites. Both nightgown and dress were bunched up over her head. Her hands were not tied, but there was a cord around her neck. There were so many stab wounds, Cline did not attempt to count them.

A second pink DOA slip was filled out, for Mrs. Rosemary LaBianca. Joe Dorgan had to tell Susan and Frank.

There was writing, in what appeared to be blood, in three places in the residence. High up on the north wall in the living room, above several paintings, were printed the words DEATH TO PIGS. On the south wall, to the left of the front door, even higher up, was the single word RISE. There were two words on the refrigerator door in the kitchen, the first of which was misspelled.

They read HEALTER SKELTER.



10066 CIELO DRIVE

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HOUSES?

A few weeks after the Tate-LaBianca murders, the owner of 10050 Cielo Drive, Rudi Altobelli, moved in and lived there for almost two decades before selling the house in 1989. The final resident was musician Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, who began renting the property in 1992. Reznor said his decision to move in stemmed from an interest in American folklore, but eventually the past proved too haunting and he left in 1993. The house was torn down the following year and a 16,323 square foot Mediterranean estate has replaced it. The address is now 10066 Cielo Drive.

The LaBianca house on Waverly Drive was owned for a number of years by a couple that reportedly was friends with Imelda Marcos, according to *Helter Skelter.* The address has been changed from 3301 to 3311 and there have been some renovations, including the addition of a pool and a carport. According to a local Los Angeles paper, the house was sold in 1998 for $375,000.

THE FAMILY GOES ON TRIAL

BRINGING MANSON AND HIS FOLLOWERS TO JUSTICE WAS A COMPLICATED PROCESS THAT STRETCHED OUT OVER TWO YEARS. THROUGH IT ALL, THE CULT LEADER REMAINED SO MENACING, WITNESSES FEARED TESTIFYING AND THE JUDGE BEGAN PACKING HEAT.

BY EILEEN DASPIN

THE TRIAL STARTED WITH A COLLECTIVE GASP. When Charles Manson walked into Los Angeles Superior Court on the morning of July 24, 1970, a bloody X was cut into his forehead. The mark had been carved there the night before, and if the reaction from onlookers was audible, the cult leader's unspoken message was equally so: accused along with three acolytes of seven brutal murders, Manson could wrest control of the narrative—even before opening arguments.

"I have X'd myself from your world," the cult leader wrote in a statement distributed by followers outside the court building where the Tate-LaBianca trial was starting. "You have created the monster...My faith in me is stronger than all of your armies, governments, gas chambers, or anything you may want to do to me. I know what I have done. Your courtroom is a man's game. Love is my judge."

SPECTACLE CONTROL, THEN JUSTICE

For the state of California, prosecuting Charles Manson and his Family for their chilling murder spree was as much about spectacle control as it was about delivering justice. Each successive day brought new offenses to the court, from the accused turning their backs on the judge to shouted threats and delusional monologues. The district attorney's office, juggling seven defendants, nine murders and five trials struggled to keep up with Manson's theatrics, while judges in the various cases aimed to keep the accused killer in line. The most notorious trial, Tate-LaBianca, was especially fraught because Manson and followers Susan Atkins, Leslie Van Houten and Patricia Krenwinkel were tried as co-defendants, which served to quadruple the tension. Witness Terry Melcher, an acquaintance of Manson's, was so afraid of the cult leader, he would testify only after taking a tranquilizer. Judge Charles Older began carrying a gun under his robe.

Yet the Tate-LaBianca case was only one installment of what has often been described as a 24-month judicial circus. There were also the two trials of Family member Robert Beausoleil, for the murder of musician Gary Hinman (one ended in a hung jury and had to be retried), and the case against Manson, his deputy Bruce Davis and Family member Steve Grogan for the death of stuntman/actor Donald Shea. The fifth proceeding was against Manson henchman Tex Watson, who was prosecuted separately for his role in the Tate-LaBianca slaughters because he had been arrested in Texas and fought extradition for nine months. When California finally brought Watson to the state in May 1970, he stopped eating, lost 55 pounds and fell into a catatonic state. His trial had to be delayed until August 1971, when he had recovered enough to appear in court.

For the public, the labyrinthine sagas added up to a gruesome amo-

GLEEFUL GIRLS Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel and Leslie Van Houten, co-defendants in the Tate-LaBianca trial, sang merrily as they marched into court for an early hearing in front of Judge William Keene.

rality play where all standards of normalcy were perverted. Manson and his girls and his boys personified America's fears, but they both horrified and titillated. Those girls and boys might have been anyone's daughters and sons. Those victims might have been their neighbors, friends, families, themselves. In Los Angeles, sales of guns and guard dogs soared. Locksmiths had weeks-long waiting lists. Newspapers and magazines, splashed with coverage of the trials, flew off the stands. The long-simmering unease of a divided city was laid bare, as Joan Didion famously wrote in *The White Album,* her collection of essays about the 1960s. "The paranoia was fulfilled."

CELEBRITY VICTIMS

From the time Family members were first arrested and charged, it was clear the star show was going to be the Tate-LaBianca trial, with its well-known victims: actress Sharon Tate, the pregnant wife of movie director Roman Polanski; coffee heiress Abigail Folger; her boyfriend, Voytek Frykowski; celebrity hairdresser Jay Sebring; and Steve Parent, a student and friend of the caretaker at Cielo Drive. The participants did not disappoint.

Atkins gave grand jury testimony to indict Manson, then recanted it. Manson refused to enter a guilty plea or a not-guilty plea. Krenwinkel refused to provide the prosecution with a sample of her handwriting to see if it matched the writing on the LaBianca refrigerator. Jury selection for the trial dragged on for five weeks because prospective panelists either had strong opinions about the murders, were opposed to the death penalty, balked at serving for six months or longer or feared being sequestered.

Attempting to contain the media frenzy, Judge William Keene barred the lawyers and witnesses from speaking to the press about matters not entered as evidence. He also forbade stenographers from giving or selling transcripts of the case.

Not that it did much good. Information started to leak out even before the trial stage: In December 1969, Atkins and her lawyer produced a quickie book of her story, sold it to a European publisher and the *Los Angeles Times* printed excerpts. Manson in February 1970 gave a lengthy interview that later ran in *Rolling Stone,* in which he declared among other things, that "death is psychosomatic." Then, when Keene refused to allow Manson to represent himself, the cult leader used a California rule that allowed for the removal of a judge deemed to be prejudiced against a defendant. In April, Keene stepped aside and Judge Charles Older took his place.

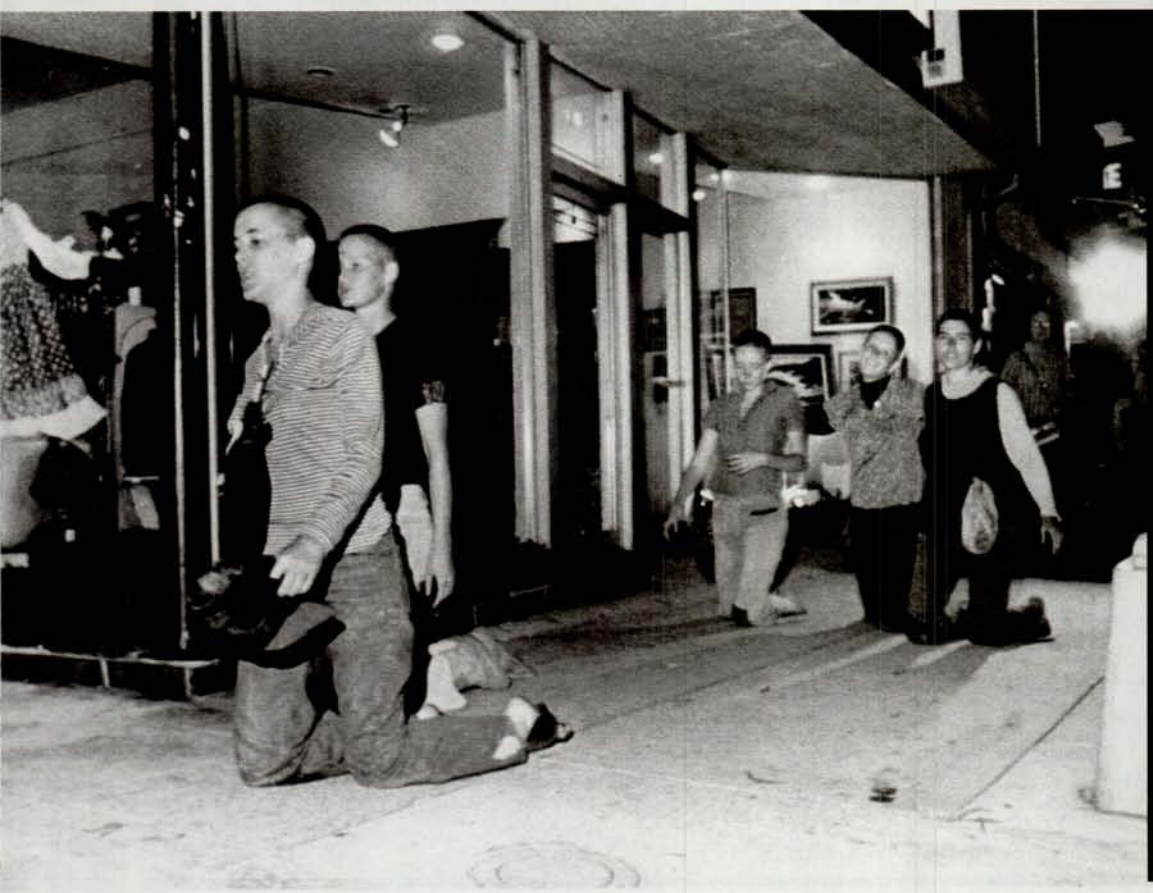
In fact, it was Manson, not Judge Older, the defense team or the prosecutors, who dominated the courtroom. He concluded the first day of trial attempting to bribe the bailiff with $100,000 to allow him to escape. He hurled insults and threats willy-nilly and coordinated outbursts by Atkins, Van Houten and Krenwinkel. When Older warned that the antics might influence the jury in unexpected ways, Manson threw his arms out to mimic the crucifixion. "You leave me nothing," he declared. "You can kill me now." Atkins, Krenwinkel and Van Houten followed suit, chanting, "Kill us," as they were escorted from the court. After yet another outburst, when Older again ordered Manson out of the room, the cult leader yelled, "In the name of Christian justice, someone should cut your head off!" which is when Older began carrying a .38-caliber revolver under his robe, according to *Manson: The Life and Times of Charles Manson,* by Jeff Guinn.

Family members not on trial shaved their heads in solidarity with Manson and his co-defendants and gathered daily in front of the courthouse.

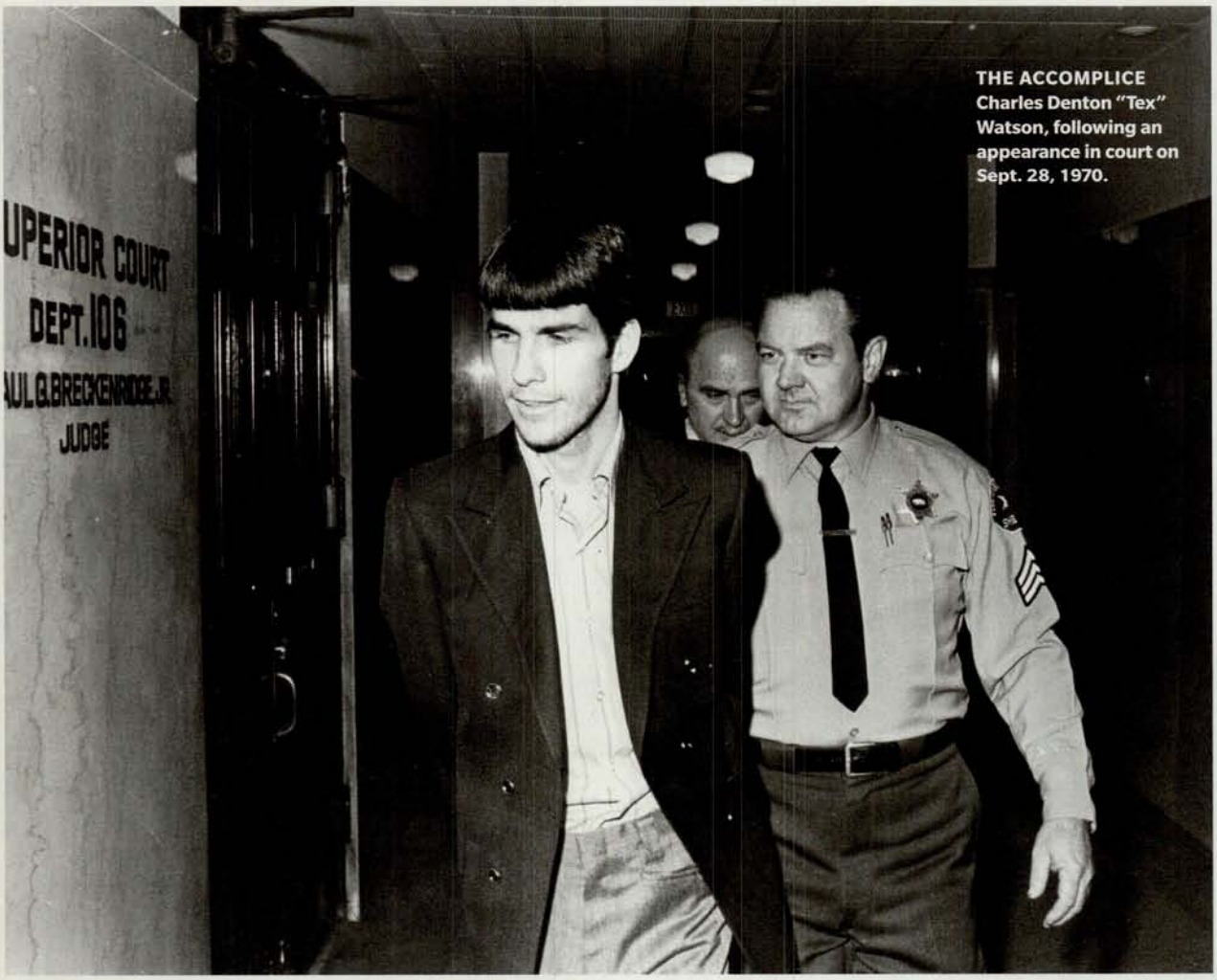
Outside the Hall of Justice, scenes were equally bizarre. Family members not on trial, their heads shaved in solidarity with Manson and his co-defendants, gathered daily in front of the courthouse. They chanted, sang and sometimes blocked the entrance. Even the personal lives of some parties were disrupted. Early in the trial, Paul Fitzgerald, a defense lawyer who had clashed with Manson, came home to find Family member Squeaky Fromme in his bed. Fromme offered Fitzgerald a choice, according to Guinn. The lawyer could either "have fun" with her and do Charlie's bidding, or the next time, a less friendly Family member would be waiting between his sheets.

A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

All along, with each new drama, the senselessness inside the courtroom seemed to mirror life on the outside. In December 1969, as Atkins testified in front of the grand jury, news arrived about the Altamont Speedway Free Festival, the notorious rock concert that ended with the stabbing death of a fan. In March 1970, as the defense and prosecution readied for trial, the militant group the Weather Underground accidentally



CHAOS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE COURT
Early in the proceedings, Manson demanded his immediate release because he was being deprived of "spiritual, mental and physical liberty in an unconstitutional manner not in harmony with man's or God's law." The judge denied the request, commenting, "Disappoint all these people? Never, Mr. Manson." Starting June 23, 1971, five of Manson's followers made a 15-mile walk on their knees, from Sunset Strip to the Hall of Justice, "in witness to the second coming of Manson."



THE ACCOMPLICE Charles Denton "Tex" Watson, following an appearance in court on Sept. 28, 1970.

blew up a townhouse in Greenwich Village killing three of its members. In June, just weeks before opening arguments, police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City, prompting riots. In August, after Linda Kasabian was granted immunity for testifying against Manson, antiwar protesters at the University of Wisconsin set off a bomb, prompting an international manhunt.

"All that remains are the bare, stark facts of seven senseless murders," concluded Judge Older.

GUILTY VERDICTS

After almost two years, the various trials finally ran their course. When the jury announced it had reached a verdict in the Tate-LaBianca case in January 1971, after 10 days of deliberations, it was clear the world had had enough. All four defendants were given the death penalty. In April, Judge Older made it formal, sentencing Manson, Atkins, Krenwinkel and Van Houten to the gas chamber. "After nine and a half months of trial, all of the superlatives had been used, all of the hyperbole has been indulged in, and all that remains are the bare, stark facts of seven senseless murders, seven people whose lives were snuffed out by total strangers," Older pronounced. "I have carefully looked in considering this action for mitigating circumstances, and I have been unable to find any."

In the months to come, Atkins additionally would plead guilty to the murder of Gary Hinman. In August 1971, Tex Watson went on trial for his role in the Tate-LaBianca murders and pled not guilty by reason of insanity. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. Family member Steve Grogan was convicted of the murder of Donald Shea, and Bruce Davis, Manson's second in command, was sentenced to life for Hinman-Shea. None of the convicts in the case was executed because in 1972, California suspended the death penalty.

FAMILY ALBUM

MANSON MANIPULATED HIS YOUNG FOLLOWERS WITH THE CURRENCY OF THE DAY: SEX AND DRUGS

When Charles Manson began to form his following in 1967, he was an unemployed former convict on the fringe of the Los Angeles music scene preaching about the coming race war. But the 33-year-old was such a charismatic speaker, he was able to attract a small clique that was "unlike any other commune I've ever known," Dr. David Smith told LIFE in 1969. Members—mostly young women—seemed to be devoted unconditionally, as if under a spell. Many were in their twenties, lost, vulnerable or with criminal records. Those who arrived with middle class values were stripped of them by Manson, said Smith, the founder of a clinic the Family frequented. His tools of choice: intimidation, sex and drugs. Eventually the Family would include dozens of Manson acolytes, but only a handful participated in the killing spree. Here are five involved in the Tate-LaBianca murders.

SUSAN ATKINS
May 7, 1948–Sept. 24, 2009
Atkins grew up in San Jose, Calif., where she sang in her school's glee club and church choir, but left home at 18, in part to escape alcoholism in her family. Not long after, she met Manson, who named her "Sexy Sadie." Convicted of murdering Gary Hinman, Atkins implicated herself in the killing of Sharon Tate, telling cellmates that she had stabbed the pregnant actress and used her blood to write "Pig" on the house door. In prison, Atkins became a born again Christian, was denied parole 13 times and died a year after being diagnosed with brain cancer.

PATRICIA KRENWINKEL
Dec. 3, 1947–
When Krenwinkel met Manson at a party, she was a 19-year-old secretary living in Los Angeles. Days later, she quit her job—never


VAN HOUTEN

picking up her paycheck—and abandoned life as she knew it to follow him. Manson changed her name to "Katie" and gave her a job at the ranch on the "garbage run," picking through refuse from nearby stores for food for the family. Krenwinkel killed Abigail Folger, the coffee heiress, and assisted in the murders of Leno and Rosemary LaBianca.

In a 2004 parole hearing, Krenwinkel said she placed herself at the top of the list of people she harmed. At 71, she is the longest-serving female inmate in the state of California.

LESLIE VAN HOUTEN
Aug. 23, 1949–
Van Houten, from Monrovia, Calif., was 19 and the youngest Manson follower to partake in the Family's murder sprees. She stabbed Rosemary LaBianca multiple times in the abdomen. During the trial Van Houten blamed her actions on the influence of LSD and showed little remorse, describing how she helped herself to chocolate milk from the refrigerator before leaving the LaBianca home. During her time in prison, Van Houten became a model inmate and completed multiple college degrees. She was denied parole at least 20 times before finally getting a recommendation to be released; Gov. Jerry Brown must still approve the move.

LINDA KASABIAN
June 21, 1949–
After two failed marriages and the birth of her daughter, Kasabian, then 20, joined the Manson commune in July 1969. She claimed to have not participated in the killings but to have served as a watchman on both nights. In exchange for her testimony, Kasabian was given immunity and became the prosecution's


WATSON

star witness. She told jurors Manson's women did "anything and everything" for him, that he was "the Devil," but that she had not reported him because she feared for her daughter's safety. Today, Kasabian is thought to be living in New Hampshire.

CHARLES WATSON
Dec. 2, 1945–
A good-looking Texan and high school athlete who earned As and Bs, Watson fell off the rails during college and dropped out. He is said to have led the killing sprees as Manson's aide. Following the murders, Watson fled to Texas and was arrested, but fought extradition for so long that he was tried separately from the others. He has been denied parole 17 times and remains incarcerated at Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, Calif.

LIFE IN PRISON

AFTER CALIFORNIA OUTLAWED THE DEATH PENALTY, MANSON SPENT ANOTHER 45 YEARS BEHIND BARS, PLAYING GUITAR AND THREATENING GUARDS. HE ALSO GOT ENGAGED.

BY RICHARD JEROME

SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT HE CANNOT BE described as a model prisoner," California corrections department official Terry Thornton said of Charles Manson.

After being convicted in January 1971 of murdering Sharon Tate and her friends, and Leno and Rosemary LaBianca, the strangely charismatic cult leader was sentenced to die in the gas chamber. The judge on the case, Charles Older, refused to consider anything less harsh, declaring there were no mitigating circumstances. Yet Manson's life was spared by a 1972 California Supreme Court decision outlawing capital punishment, so he remained a guest of the state for a total of 46 years—at a cost of roughly $1 million to taxpayers—until his death in 2017.

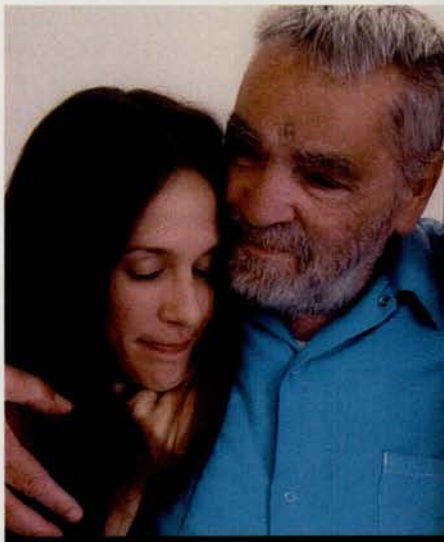
Over time, the killer attemped to win parole a dozen times but was always denied. He was incorrigible and unrepentant, cited for more than 100 infractions—assaults, making threats to guards and fellow prisoners, and a range of other misbehavior that included smuggling in drugs and weapons and plotting an escape.

Manson whiled away the years in a series of penitentiaries, playing guitar, performing menial chores and doing crafts, including weaving scorpions and spiders out of thread from his socks. Retired prison counselor Edward George, who struck up a kind of friendship with the convict in the late 1970s, recalled him as volatile and manipulative. "He could be sweet and kind, then a raging maniac," George told the San Jose *Mercury News*. "He knew how to play people, how to set them up. He was the devil reincarnated. But he was bright."

Manson's dark side frequently revealed itself. He routinely hurled verbal abuse at guards—especially women—spat in their faces and threw hot coffee on one staffer. Manson also mixed it up with other prisoners. In the 1980s he threatened an inmate whose Hare Krishna chants got on his nerves. The man retaliated by dousing Manson with paint thinner and setting him ablaze, causing second- and third-degree burns to his scalp, hair and beard. In 1982, guards at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville found a stash of marijuana and LSD in Manson's cell, as well as an array of objects suggesting he'd plotted a spectacular escape: A hacksaw blade, nylon rope and a catalog for ordering hot-air balloons. Manson was repeatedly disciplined for possessing weapons, some of them manufactured—in 2011 he earned a year in solitary when authorities discovered a sharpened eyeglass stem.

Other times, Manson paced in his cell, napped and watched television—according to a 2013 *Rolling Stone* profile, he especially liked *Barney Miller, Gunsmoke* and *Sesame Street* in Spanish. Music remained a passion; in 1983, he recorded 13 acoustic tracks that were released a decade later as *Live at San Quentin* by Grey Matter Records. Toward the end of his life, it seemed Manson—who once bragged "All women love me"—had found passion, of a sort. More than 50 years his junior, Afton Elaine Burton was essentially a Manson groupie who visited regularly for almost a decade. In November 2014 they actually took out a marriage license, but Manson broke it off. Apparently, he learned Burton had an ulterior motive: to someday display his corpse—under glass, like Lenin's—as a tourist attraction.

She might have made a fortune. Even in death, Manson's bizarrely hypnotic appeal hasn't dimmed. "He could have been a senator for crying out loud," said George. "He had that kind of ability, but he chose to be a crook, a robber and a murderer." Manson, however, maintained his innocence to the end, telling *Rolling Stone* the government owed him $50 million "and Hearst Castle, for 45 years of bulls--t."

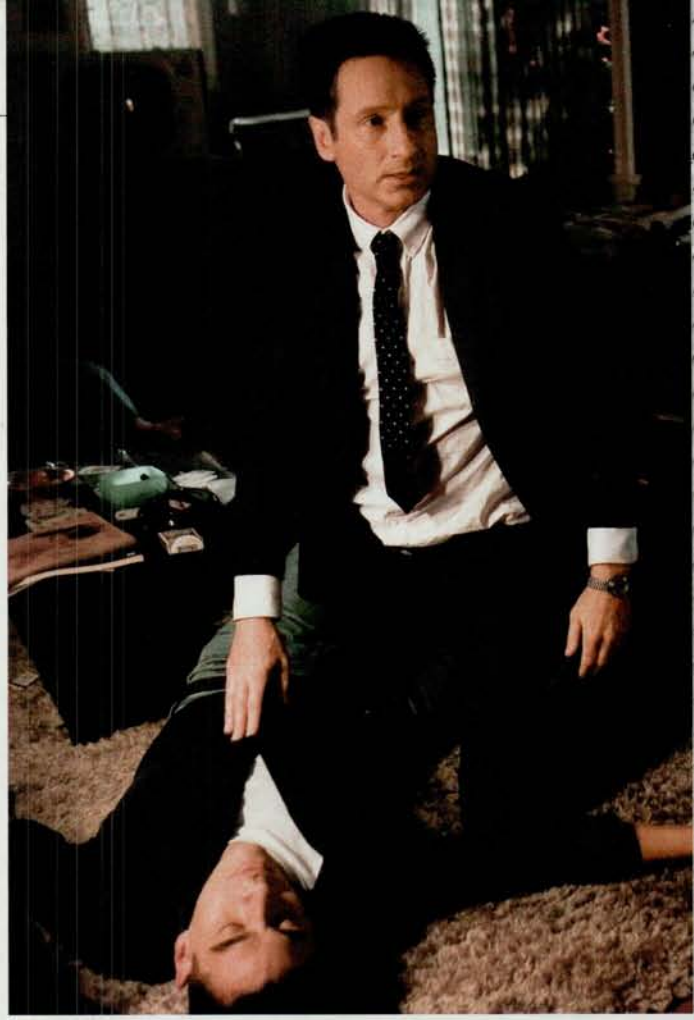


AN AFTERLIFE From top, clockwise: Manson in his cell at the California Medical Facility; with fiancée Afton Elaine Burton (the couple took out a marriage license but never wed); playing the guitar in the prison chapel.

EXPLAINING THE FASCINATION

DECADES LATER, MANSON'S NAME STILL PRODUCES SHUDDERS: WHY HIS GRUESOME CRIMES HAVE A HOLD ON US.

BY RICHARD JEROME

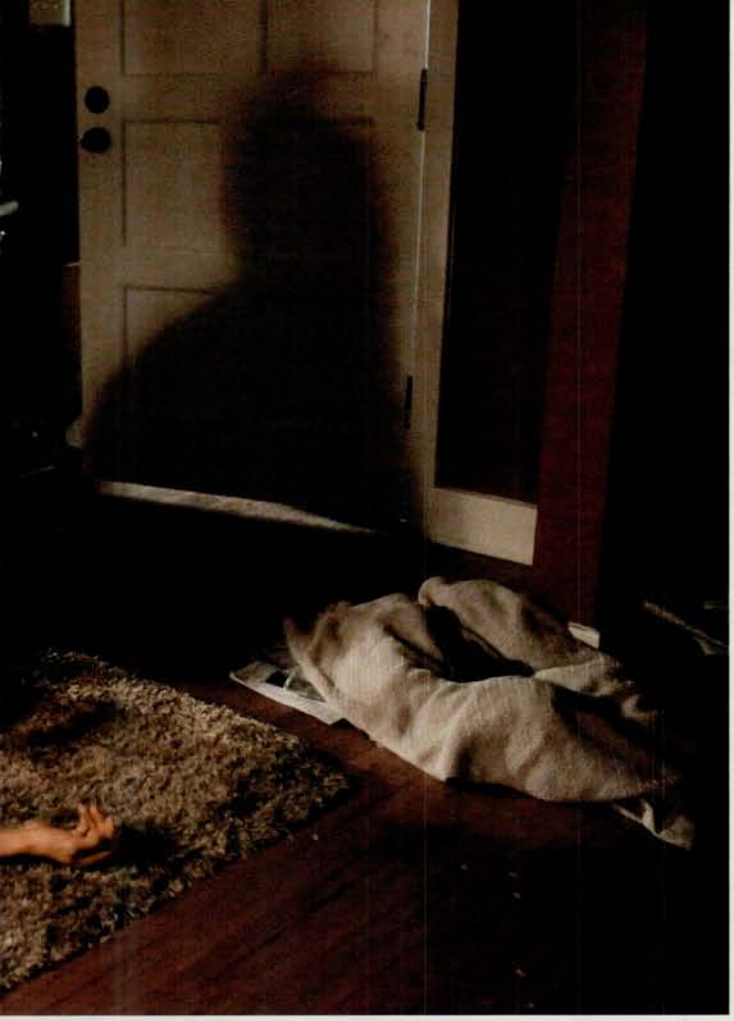


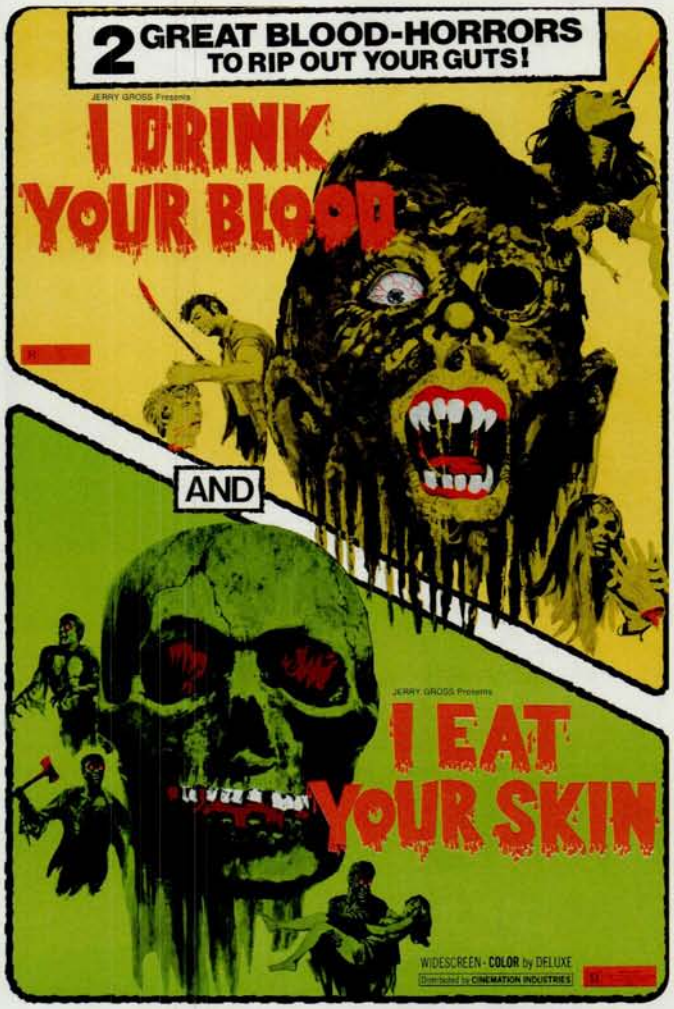
A HALF CENTURY AFTER THE CARNAGE AT 10050 Cielo Drive, the Manson family murders still frighten and fascinate, exerting a hold on our collective imagination and an enduring influence on popular culture. Yet, in a country that has had more than its share of grisly bloodbaths, what gives these particular crimes such staying power?

To begin with, the murders unfolded in a glamorous setting—the star-studded Hollywood Hills—while encompassing several of Americans' abiding obsessions, including violence, sex, celebrity and unfathomable evil. Marquee victim Sharon Tate was an archetypal '60s golden girl, married to one of cinema's hottest directors. Her ghastly death—butchered while begging for the life of her unborn child—recalled the shower scene from *Psycho,* with an added layer of pathos.

Then of course, there was the compelling figure of Manson, a mad and mesmerizing Svengali of slaughter, a virulent racist whose black button eyes were like windows into the abyss. He was straight out of Hollywood's horror factory, a real-life fiend as riveting as Hannibal Lecter. "Manson still holds a fascination because it's often hard for those of us who are not sociopaths to fathom that level of evil behavior," psychiatrist Gail Saltz told Vice.com. "It is human nature to have a fascination with the dark." It helped, perhaps, that Manson stuck around, in the flesh, for almost a half-century. Thanks to the California Supreme Court, which nullified his death sentence, he persisted into ripe old age, occasionally surfacing for feverishly incoherent interviews, though it's unclear how much of his psycho-babbling was performance art.

Doubtless some of the Manson mystique derives from the time when the murders took place—the psychedelic





STRANGE IDOL Clockwise, from above: ***I Drink Your Blood***, about a hippie satanist cult; David Bowie's "Sweet Thing," which refers to Manson; the musical ***Charles Manson: Summer of Hate; The Manson Family: An Opera***; David Duchovny in ***Aquarius***.

'60s, one of the most turbulent periods in U.S. history. It was the age of anti–Vietnam War protests and seething racial strife; when Richard M. Nixon ushered in a doomed presidency after a bitterly contested campaign, as the nation reeled from the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. And of course, it was the era of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, all of which Manson and his family embodied, albeit in grotesquely warped form. Indeed, at first some held up the failed musician as some kind of counterculture hero. *Rolling Stone* writer David Dalton recalled how he was assigned a cover story predicated on the notion that Manson was an innocent victim, set up by The Man. "He looked just like one of us," Dalton later wrote. "We knew that anyone who looked like that could never have done these horrible things they were saying he did. It was just the pigs picking on some poor hippie guru." (Dalton and *Rolling Stone* eventually became convinced of their subject's guilt.) Manson "managed to exploit the

hippie subculture brilliantly," Daniel Kane, a lecturer at Sussex University in England, said in an interview with BBC News, noting that he "took on all those signs—LSD, music, free love, communal lifestyles—and reframed them as tools for apocalyptic mass murder."

Almost inevitably, Manson's bloody work spilled into pop culture. For instance, the murders fueled a string of exploitation films. As critic Alexis Petridis observed, a number of them picked up on the counterculture theme, featuring "acid-befuddled commune-dwellers on killing sprees" under the spell of a diabolical leader. Consider *I Drink Your Blood* (1970), about a band of hippie satanists who turn cannibals after eating some rabies-spiked meat pies; *The Night God Screamed* (1971), in which the malefactors are Jesus freaks; or *Deathmaster* (1972), in which long-haired cultists fall under the spell of a vampire. But Manson's legacy far outlasted hippie-dippydom—as recently as 2016, David Duchovny starred in NBC's period drama *Aquarius* as an L.A. cop investigating the murders. Manson's

Manson's genius? He reframed hippie subculture—LSD, music, free love, communal lifestyles—as a tool for apocalyptic mass murder.

life and crimes have inspired some 30 books, and references to the killings crop up frequently in music. His own songs have been covered by the likes of Guns n' Roses and he's been referenced in Sonic Youth's "Death Valley 69," David Bowie's "Sweet Thing" and Ozzy Osbourne's "Bloodbath in Paradise," among many other tunes. What's more, composer John Moran's 1990 opera, *The Manson Family,* starred Iggy Pop as prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi.

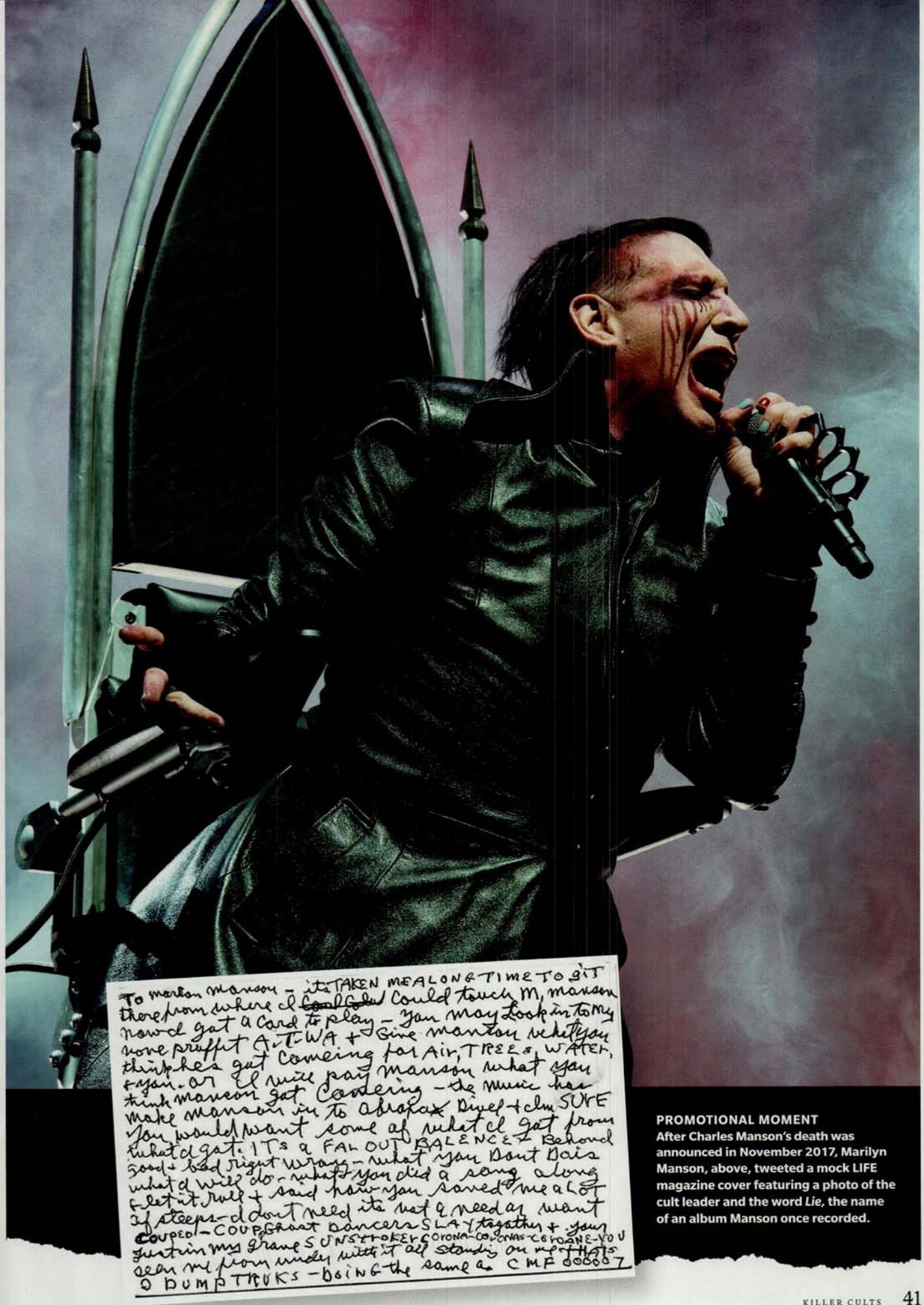
To the end, Manson himself continued to attract "followers," even if they weren't murderous ones. Websites, some proclaiming his innocence, have cropped up all over the Internet. He received more fan mail than any inmate in California history, according to the state's department of corrections—an unsettling thought, perhaps. "We have developed a very dysfunctional and perverse segment of culture, which focuses on violence and the unstable fools who undertake it," criminologist Brian Levin told Vice. "Manson is celebrated. And he should be in the dustbin of history."

MANSON TO MANSON: A KILLER WRITES HIS NAMESAKE

Shock rocker Marilyn Manson, born Brian Warner, got his stage name by twinning two of the 1960's most iconic personalities—actress Marilyn Monroe and cult leader Charles Manson—and in 2000 released a cover of Charles's song "Sick City." Manson the killer seems to have returned the interest. In 2012, Charles wrote Marilyn a letter from prison, shown at right and printed here, verbatim, odd syntax and all.

To Marilyn Manson –
It's taken me a long time to get there from where I could touch M. Manson. Now I got a card to play—you may look into my non-profit, ATWA, and give Manson what you think he's got coming for Air, Trees, Water, and you. Or I will pay Manson what you think Manson got coming – the music has make Manson into Abraxas Devil, and I'm SURE you would want some of what I got from what I got. It's a far out balance. Beyond good and bad, right, wrong. What you don't do is what I will do – what you did a sing-along, and let it roll and said how you saved me a lot of steps – I don't need, it's not a need or a want. Couped – coup. Ghost dancers slay together and you're just in my grave Sunstroker Corona-coronas-coronae – you seen me from under with it all standing on me. That's 2 dump trucks – doing the same as CMF 000007

Charles Manson



PROMOTIONAL MOMENT
After Charles Manson's death was announced in November 2017, Marilyn Manson, above, tweeted a mock LIFE magazine cover featuring a photo of the cult leader and the word *Lie*, the name of an album Manson once recorded.

FROM ABOVE Bodies lay in piles at the Peoples Temple compound in Jonestown, Guyana. More than 900 perished in a mass suicide on Nov. 18, 1978, after drinking a cyanide-laced drink.

JO

JIM JONES PROMISED HIS FOLLOWERS A

NESTOWN

UTOPIA IN SOUTH AMERICA. THE JOURNEY LED MORE THAN 900 OF THEM TO THEIR DEATHS.

MASSACRE IN JONESTOWN

ON NOVEMBER 18, 1978, MORE THAN 900 FOLLOWERS OF THE PEOPLES TEMPLE DIED, ALMOST ALL FROM CYANIDE POISONING. *TIME* WAS ONE OF THE FIRST NEWS OUTLETS ON THE SCENE.

BY DONALD NEFF

FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE AIRPLANE passengers descending into the Guyanese jungle on the northern coast of South America, it was a scene of almost unimaginable carnage. The large central building was ringed by bright colors. It looked like a parking lot filled with cars. When the plane dipped lower, the cars turned out to be bodies. Scores and scores of bodies—hundreds of bodies—wearing red dresses, blue T-shirts, green blouses, pink slacks, children's polka-dotted jumpers. The fields were freshly plowed. Banana trees and grape vines were flourishing. The Rev. Jim Jones, 47, a social activist who had degenerated into egomania and paranoia, lay dead, surrounded by some 900 members of his California-based Peoples Temple. Nothing moved.

THE REVEREND
Before relocating to Guyana, Jones courted the political elite of San Francisco, offering votes and money. Here he is in a photograph taken by the *San Francisco Chronicle* on March 22, 1976.

For weeks to come, a horrified world would absorb details about Jones, his benighted followers, their lives and deaths. Though Peoples Temple members originally had retreated to Guyana to build an agrarian socialist utopia, things had gone terribly wrong. The cultists had been treated as prisoners, beaten and forbidden to leave. What appeared at first to be mass suicide was instead found to be coerced slaughter. Temple adherents had been threatened by armed guards and lulled with sedatives until they downed a concoction of potassium cyanide and potassium chloride. Adults and young children had been made to sip the poison, mixed into grape-flavored punch, from paper cups. Nurses had used syringes to squirt the mixture onto the tongues of babies.

As the bodies were flown home to loved ones, psychiatrists offered explanations of how humans could be conditioned to commit such irrational acts. But the stories told by survivors were ultimately inexplicable. Why would such idealistic, if naive, people have set out to build a haven from modern society's many pressures, only to turn it into a hellish colony of death?

THE MINISTER

The story of Jonestown started with Jim Jones, a progressive-minded minister who opened his first church in 1953 in Indianapolis. In a city known for its Ku Klux Klan activity, Jones preached against racism, served free meals to the indigent, fought for civil rights—and then, discouraged by community antagonism, became a missionary in Brazil. By 1963, Jones had returned and formed his first Peoples Temple, a Christian sect, ultimately moving to San Francisco, where he acquired several homes for juvenile delinquents, a fleet of buses, a parsonage for himself and thousands of followers. Most were poor blacks whose loyalty was based on Jones's warning of nuclear holocaust or fascist takeover in which all blacks would be herded into concentration camps.

But after moving his flock to Guyana, east of Venezuela, Jones began to change. He became increasingly irrational, claiming at various times to be the reincarnation of Jesus or Lenin. He forced his most trusted aides to sign self-incriminating statements to ensure their loyalty, and stepped up the suicide drills he had begun in San Francisco. Reports filtered back to the States of abuse and blackmail rather than brotherly love.

Jones began to change. He became increasingly irrational, claiming at times to be the reincarnation of Jesus or Lenin.

In the spring of 1977, California congressman Leo Ryan was approached by a longtime friend, Robert Houston, a photographer with the Associated Press. Houston told Ryan that his 33-year-old son Bob had been found dead in the San Francisco railroad yards where he worked, just one day after he had quit the Peoples Temple. Though authorities said Bob died as the result of an accidental fall, Houston claimed the cult had long threatened defectors with death.

A loner who liked investigating constituents' concerns on his own, Leo Ryan began inquiring about Jones and his followers. Other unhappy relatives of temple members, as well as a few people who had fearfully left the cult, came forward to speak to Ryan. Articles in *New West* magazine and the *San Francisco Examiner* in August 1977 further documented the temple's increasing use of violence to enforce conformity to its rigid rules of conduct. Members were routinely scolded by Jones before the assembled community and then whipped or beaten with paddles for such infractions as smoking or failing to pay attention during a Jones "sermon." Everyone was ordered to call Jones "Father."

The congressman repeatedly asked the State Department to check into reports about the mistreatment of Americans in Guyana. The U.S. embassy in Georgetown, Guyana, sent staff members to the colony, called Jonestown, some 140 miles northwest of the capital. They reported they had separately interviewed at least 75 of the cultists. Not one, the embassy reported, said he wanted to leave.

Unsatisfied, Ryan decided to find out what was happening in Jonestown in person. He wrote Jones that some of his constituents had "expressed anxiety" about their relatives in the colony and that he would like to come visit. Back came a testy letter, not from Jones but from Mark Lane, an attorney who had built a career on his theories of conspiracies behind the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. Lane, representing Jones, maintained that members of the Peoples Temple had to flee the U.S. because of "religious persecution" by the government and implied that Ryan was engaged in a "witch hunt." If this continued, he said, the temple might move to either of two countries that do not have "friendly relations" with the U.S. (presumably Russia and Cuba), and this would prove

A UTOPIA
Jones with his wife, Marceline, who died along with the others in Guyana (above). Taken during happier times, this picture was found in a pink photo album at Jonestown. The night before she departed for Guyana, Marceline had told her mother not to try to dissuade her from leaving. "I want you to know this. This has been my decision. Never blame yourself." Left, a scene in the daycare center in Jonestown, where teachers and children gathered for community building exercises.

"most embarrassing" for the U.S. Lane asked that the trip be postponed until he was free to accompany Ryan. Ryan refused. Lane then found the time to go along.

For his excursion to Guyana, Ryan took along eight newsmen as well as several relatives of temple members who hoped to persuade their kin to leave the colony. The visitors arrived in a chartered 18-seat De Havilland Otter aircraft at an airstrip in Port Kaituma, six miles from Jonestown, and at Jonestown all were greeted warmly by a smiling Jones.

The members of the Peoples Temple put on an impressive performance for the delegation. Reporters were led past the central open-air pavilion, used as both a school and an assembly hall. The visitors saw the newly completed sawmill, the 10,000-volume library, the neat nursery, where mosquito netting protected babies sleeping peacefully on pallets. The colony hospital had delivered 33 babies without a single death, the tour guides said.

The highlight was an evening of entertainment in the pavilion. As a lively band beat out a variety of tunes, from rock to disco to jazz, the colonists burst into song, including a rousing chorus of "America the Beautiful." Even the skeptical Ryan was impressed. He rose to tell his assembled hosts: "From what I've seen, there are a lot of people here who think this is the best thing that has happened in their whole lives." The audience applauded loudly.

While no one had yet expressed any dissatisfaction with life at Jonestown, Ryan privately had reservations. He found some of the people he interviewed unnaturally animated and the next day, when NBC correspondent Don Harris asked Jones about reports that his colony was heavily armed, Jones, who had been swallowing lots of pills, blew up. "A bold-faced lie!" he cried. "It seems like we are defeated by lies. I'm defeated. I might as well die!"

"WE WANT TO LEAVE"

Then, one Jonestown resident pushed a note into Harris's hand. "Four of us want to leave," it said. Ryan received other furtive pleas from cultists asking to return to the U.S. with him. Jones was asked about the defectors. "Anyone is free to come and go," the leader said. "I want to hug them before they leave."

As divided families argued over whether to stay or go, Jones saw part of his congregation slipping away. Al Simon, father of three, wanted to take his children back

SUICIDE NOTE
Annie Moore, a registered nurse and one of the leaders of the Peoples Temple in Guyana, signed and dated her goodbye letter. "This is quick as we leave this world," she wrote.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

A tape recording of the Peoples Temple members' final 43 minutes in Jonestown captured the anguish of members as they prepared to die. In it, Rev. Jim Jones could be heard pleading with his followers to sip a cyanide-laced drink. Some cultists protested, but others applauded or penned their own suicide notes as Jones implored in an agitated voice: "Please, for God's sake, let's get on with it." The tape ended in a long period of silence broken only by mournful music that was made more eerie as the device's batteries seem to run down. Here, an excerpt from that tape.

JONES: We tried to find a new beginning. But it's too late. I don't know who killed the congressman. But as far as I'm concerned I killed him. He had no business coming.

Lay down your life with dignity. Don't lay down with tears and agony. It's just stepping over into another plane. [Crying and screaming are heard in the background.] Stop this hysterics. This is not the way for people who are socialistic communists to die. Children, it's just something to put you to rest. Oh, God. [Continued crying.] Mother, mother, please. Don't do this.

Lay down your life with your child. Free at last. Keep your emotions down. Children, it will not hurt. If you be quiet. [Music in background. Children still crying.] I don't care how many screams you hear; death is a million times preferable to spend more days in this life.

Someone can perhaps find the symbolic, the eternal in this moment — the meaning of a people, a struggle — I wish I had time to put it all together, that I had done it. I did not do it. I failed to write the book. Someone else, others, will have to do this. Please study the movement, from the very origin of the time in the rural poverty of Indiana, but from the heart of [illegible] the America that we loved was to stand against for its betrayal of its ideals.

These are a beautiful people, a brave people, not afraid.

There is quiet as we leave this world. The sky is gray. People file in slowly and take the ~~somewhat~~ bitter drink. Many more must drink. Our destiny. It is sad that we could not let our light shine in truth, unclouded by the

to America. "No! No! No!" screamed his wife. Someone whispered to her: "Don't worry, we're going to take care of everything." Indeed, as reporters learned later from survivors, Jones had a plan to plant one or more fake defectors among the departing group in order to attack them. He told some of his people that the congressman's plane "will fall out of the sky."

The first incident of violence occurred as Ryan conferred with Jones about taking those who wished to return to the U.S. Lane and Jones's longtime attorney, Charles Garry, sat in a room inside the pavilion. Suddenly a cultist later identified as Don Sly ran up to Ryan from behind, grabbed him around his throat with one arm and brandished a knife with the other. "I'm going to kill you!" Sly shouted. Lane and Garry wrestled the knife away from Sly, accidentally cutting the assailant. The blood spattered Ryan's clothes. Jones watched impassively.

Though visiting newsmen and relatives were alarmed, Ryan, at least outwardly, seemed to shrug off the attack, and plans for departure proceeded. The party headed down the road to Port Kaituma. Lane and Garry stayed behind at Jonestown, knowing that the two aircraft would be overcrowded. They expected to be picked up the next day.

At the landing strip, the party split up as its leaders tried to decide how to get everyone in the Otter and a smaller five-passenger Cessna brought in to help take the defectors out. A slim youth boarded the Cessna. "Watch him," one of the defectors warned Ryan. The congressman, the newsmen and most of the fleeing cultists prepared to get into the larger craft. Then a tractor pulling a long trailer with three men standing in the trailer approached the field.

The tractor crossed the airstrip. When it did, the men in it suddenly picked up guns and began firing at the people near the Otter. Before he could seek cover, Ron Javers of the *San Francisco Chronicle* was hit in the left shoulder. NBC cameraman Bob Brown stayed on his feet, filming the approaching riflemen. "He was incredibly tenacious," Javers said. "Then I saw him go down. And I saw one of the attackers stick a shotgun right into his face—inches away, if that. Bob's brain was blown out of his head."

Inside the Cessna, the young man, later identified as Larry Layton, 32, proved that he should indeed have been watched. He opened fire with a pistol, wounding a woman who was seated beside the pilot, then ran from the plane. After the assailants withdrew, the Otter was found to be too damaged to fly. Its crew rushed over to the Cessna and managed to take off with five survivors. Ryan, Harris and Brown lay dead on the runway. Killed, too, were Greg Robinson, 27, a photographer for the *Examiner,* and Patricia Park, one of the cultists who had hoped to find freedom back in the United Sates. At least 10 others were wounded.

AFTER THE SMOKE CLEARED

The survivors spent the night in a small bar near the Port Kaituma airstrip, fearing that the Jonestown gunmen would return any moment to finish their deadly task. The defectors described how far their community had fallen from their utopian ideal. They recalled the "white night" exercises in which loudspeakers would summon all Jonestown residents from their sleep. They would convene in the central pavilion, and Jones would harangue them about "the beauty of dying." All would line up and be given a drink described as poison. They would take it. Then Jones would tell them the liquid was not poisonous; they had passed his "loyalty test."

Jones would harangue them about the 'beauty of dying.' All would line up and be given a drink described as poison. They would take it.

The survivors of the landing strip massacre had no way of knowing that the ultimate white night had already taken place back in the Jonestown commune. Equally unaware of the murders at the airfield, lawyers Lane and Garry witnessed signs of the impending disaster. Recalled Garry: "When 14 of his people decided to go out with Ryan, Jim Jones went mad. He thought it was a repudiation of his work. I tried to tell him that 14 out of 1,200 was damn good. But Jones was desolate."

After the Ryan party left for the airstrip, the two lawyers took a walk. When they returned to the center of the village, they found all its residents assembled in the meeting hall. The attorneys became frightened when they saw eight men run toward a nearby building and take out rifles and boxes of ammunition. "Then two young men whom I knew very well came to us with rifles at the semi-ready," remembered Garry. "They were smiling, very happy." They said they were going to die for the battle against fascism and racism." Garry and Lane talked their way past the gunmen, escaping into the jungle, and as they fled, they heard Jones shouting:

VISIONS OF DEATH Bodies lay on the Port Kaituma airstrip beside the plane intended to carry Congressman Leo Ryan and his party back to Georgetown (above). Left, Ryan in a photo made just minutes before the shooting attack that ended his life. The photographer, Greg Robinson of the *Examiner*, was also killed. Below, Ryan at Jonestown with the Houston family, who lived and died in Guyana.

THE PUNCH
Surrounded by the bodies of the deceased sat a vat of cyanide-laced punch. This photo ran on the cover of TIME on December 4, 1978.

"Mother, mother, mother!" They heard shots and screams, then nothing.

The outer world would not get an accurate accounting of what had happened for nearly two days. But later reports, as well as an audio tape recovered from the scene, revealed that there was more coercion and fear than loyal devotion when the final test came. Once the call to assemble was sounded, "a security guard came into the kitchen, pointed a pistol at everybody and told us all to go to the pavilion," remembered survivor Stanley Clayton.

One woman, Christine Miller, was protesting. Continued Clayton: "She was telling Jones she had a right to do what she wanted with her own life. Guards with guns and bows and arrows pressed in on her, and Jones tried to make her understand that she had to do it."

Then a truck drove up to the pavilion. Said Clayton: "The people in the truck rushed up to Jones. He announced that Congressman Ryan was dead and we had to do what we had

Later reports, as well as an audio tape, revealed that there was more coercion and fear than loyal devotion when the final test came.

to do. He told the nurses to hurry with the potion. He told them to take care of the babies. He said any survivors would be castrated and tortured by the Guyanese army.

"The nurses started taking the babies from the mothers. Jones kept saying, 'Hurry, hurry!' But the people were not responding. The guards then moved in and started pulling people, trying to get them to take the potion."

Another survivor, Odell Rhodes, agreed that the armed guards helped persuade the cultists to kill themselves. But many, Rhodes reported, had taken their lives willingly. When Christine Miller challenged Jones's claim that "we've all got to kill ourselves," Rhodes said, "the crowd shouted her down." Many mothers, he added, voluntarily gave the cyanide to their children, then swallowed the poison themselves. Seated on the high wicker chair that served as his throne, Jones kept urging the crowd on. The scene quickly turned chaotic.

Cultists filled their cups from a metal vat on a table at the

THE PRICE OF TRAGEDY

The grisly remains of Jonestown's dead were brought to the U.S. and stacked tidily in coffin-like aluminum transfer cases in a huge gray hangar at Delaware's Dover Air Force Base.

But the tragic saga of Jonestown was far from over. While teams of military pathologists, FBI technicians and civilian embalmers worked to identify the corpses and prepare them for burial or cremation, the condition of the remains and the lack of fingerprint records for many victims meant the process was slow—and in many cases futile.

Politics and money also came into play. At least two fiscally conservative congressmen—Illinois Republican Philip Crane and Rhode Island Democrat Edward Beard—protested the use of public funds, roughly $8 million, according to early estimates, to pay for the repatriation. "[T]he responsibility to bring the loved ones back to the United States rests with the families, not the federal government," said Crane.

One suggestion: seize the cash, property and other assets of the cult. In 1978, the temple's longtime lawyer, Charles Garry, said assets in Guyana might be used for this purpose but not those in the U.S. "I don't intend to let them get away with that," said Garry, "It's an ongoing church." The posturing was moot: the temple declared bankruptcy toward the end of 1978. With several pending lawsuits, Gerry petitioned to dissolve the People's Temple on Dec. 4, 1978.

center of the pavilion, then wandered off to die, often in family groups, their arms wrapped around one another. The tranquilizers in the liquid concocted by the temple's doctor, Larry Schacht, 30, may have dulled their senses; it took about five minutes for them to die.

No known survivor had witnessed the entire ritual of death. Jones was found at the foot of his pavilion chair with a bullet wound in his head, an apparent suicide. A pistol lay near by. An autopsy disclosed that Jones had not consumed the poison and had not been dying of cancer, as he had often told his followers.

Jones was found at the foot of his pavilion chair with a bullet wound in his head, an apparent suicide.

The first searchers reported finding $500,000 in cash, many U.S. Treasury checks, an unspecified quantity of gold—and about 870 U.S. passports. The fact that Jones was rumored to keep some $3 million in cash at his commune raised a mystery as to whether large amounts of money were missing. The passports far exceeded the number of bodies first reported to have been found in Jonestown, promoting belief that hundreds more of the cultists had survived and fled into the jungle.

But bad news lay ahead. At week's end, Guyanese authorities reported that they had miscounted the bodies. Instead of 409, the count was about 900, later updated to 918. U.S. embassy officials confirmed the discrepancy, attributing it at first to the finding of many children's bodies underneath the piles of others.

In San Francisco, outside Jones's remaining temple, a crowd gathered despite a chilly rain. Some were anguished—and angry—relatives of those who died in Jonestown. Inside the temple, Guy Young, 43, said he had "one son and a son-in-law that I know are alive." Then he sobbed, and another member explained: "His wife, four daughters, son and two grandchildren have been reported dead."

Young recovered and added: "I don't regret one moment they were there. That was the most happy and most rewarding days of their lives."

SHIPPING THE DEAD
U.S. troops packed up coffins for return to the states at Georgetown, Guyana, on Nov. 23, 1977.

OMINOUS WELCOME The entrance to the Jonestown compound in Guyana was marked by a simple sign.

INSIDE A CULTIST'S MIND

WHO IS VULNERABLE? IN THE WAKE OF JONESTOWN, FLO CONWAY AND JIM SIEGELMAN, AUTHORS OF *SNAPPING*, TALKED ABOUT THE VICTIMS.

What is snapping?
It is a sudden, drastic personality change. In our opinion it represents a new form of mental and emotional disorder, a growing phenomenon unlike anything this country has witnessed.

Were you surprised at the mass suicides in Guyana?
No. The people in this group were totally suggestible, and they totally identified with their leader. When he gave the order, for most there was no question of rejecting or doubting; they simply complied.

Why didn't they question his command?
The cult was backed into a corner and believed they had no other way out. They were isolated and indoctrinated. The surviving members may be insane or in shock from coming out of that rigid a structure with nothing to guide them.

What sort of behavior accompanies snapping?
Many exhibit bizarre states of disorientation, delusion, withdrawal and profound hallucinations. One rather vivid example of delusion is in the Church of Scientology, where some of the higher-ups are firmly convinced that they lived trillions of years ago on other planets.

What is your definition of a cult?
Any group that cuts its individuals off from society, severs their personal and family relationships and appears to have as its primary function the recruitment of new members, the solicitation of funds and the aggrandizement of its leader.

Who is most susceptible to this sort of mind control?
In general, it's the younger population, middle and upper-middle class and from very good homes. They tend to be the best, most imaginative students, the people actively searching for answers or purpose in their lives. They're sitting ducks for recruiters, who do most of their proselytizing on college campuses.

What causes people to snap?
Simply put, it is caused by a sudden intense, overwhelming experience. Some participants feel it's a new form of enlightenment or revelation. But when others confront their whole lives, they are not prepared to cope with it. Instead of enlightenment, it's like falling off a cliff.

Once a person has snapped, is the process reversible?
It's quite beyond the power of parents or loved ones to get people out of these groups by talking to them. The whole process of mind control has gone too far. It requires the direct intervention of a psychiatrist or skilled deprogrammer who knows how cults work.

Do cult converts pose any threat?
Most are victims, many are slaves. We've got a total spiritual and psychological free-for-all going on right now. The danger is that members may so identify with their leaders and become so vulnerable to suggestion that if they're given any command, they will execute it.

When [Rev. Jim Jones] gave the order, for most, there was no question of rejecting or doubting; they simply complied.

THE SURVIVORS

A YEAR AFTER THE JONESTOWN TRAGEDY, *PEOPLE* INTERVIEWED MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLES TEMPLE WHO HAD BEEN ABLE TO ESCAPE.

MANY OF THE VICTIMS WHO MADE the name Jonestown a synonym for death left families that mourned them, questioned their fate and struggled to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the tragedy. Here are some of their stories.

Grace Stoen: Stoen is the mother of John Victor Stoen, a 6-year-old who was buried in a mass grave in an Oakland cemetery along with 200 other unidentified victims, most, children like himself. When John was only 2 years old, his father, Tim Stoen, once an assistant district attorney in San Francisco and Jim Jones's legal adviser, stood up at a Peoples Temple Commission meeting. He announced that his son had been "acting up" and proposed that he be removed from his home and turned over to another family. Grace reluctantly agreed. Eventually she, and later her husband, broke with the Peoples Temple, but Jones refused to surrender the child. When the Stoens sought custody through the Guyanese courts, Jones publicly threatened the mass suicides he later commanded. The Stoens flew to Guyana with Congressman Ryan, and were waiting in Georgetown when the final violence began.

Grace vividly remembered the last time she saw her son, when Jones allowed her to visit the boy in L.A. in 1976. "He said, 'Mom, please take me with you,' but there were all these hostile people around me, and I said, 'John, I can't.'" Two months later he was sent to Guyana. It is a memory Grace can barely tolerate. "Sometimes I dream that John is alive," she said softly.

Richard Clark: Clark, a former member of the Temple, launched his long-planned escape from Jonestown on the morning of the massacre. "I can't say I'm psychic, but I can always feel danger," said Clark. Quietly he told his companion, Diane Louie, that "something definite is going to happen, and I want to be out of here when it does." Diane passed the word to seven others. Hacking through the jungle with a machete, the little group found the path to the railroad. Then, by foot and train, they made their way to Matthew's Ridge some 30 miles away. That was where they learned of the tragedy.

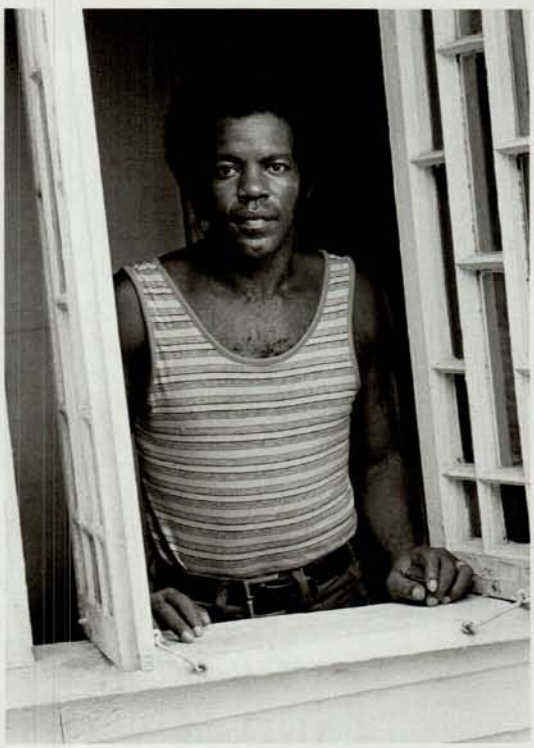
Before they came to Guyana, Clark and Louie had envisioned Jonestown as a tropical paradise. Their disillusionment began during the 24-hour boat trip from Georgetown to the Peoples Temple community in May 1978. Hot and overcrowded, the fishing boat was crawling with "huge roaches with eyes as big as mine," Clark remembered. Both were chilled to hear Jones's voice greeting them on the loudspeaker when they arrived. "It sounded like Boris Karloff welcoming us to his castle," Clark recalled.

Odell Rhodes: Rhodes was still within the Jonestown walls when the mass suicide began. While many of the victims took poison willingly, "there was mass confusion," Rhodes said. He saw an opportunity to escape by offering his assistance to a nurse. When the armed guards let Rhodes through with the nurse, he found a hiding spot in the chaos.

Jacqueline Speier: An aide to Rep. Leo Ryan, Speier accompanied the congressman to Jonestown; she was shot at the airport and left for dead. A year later, Speier was still recovering and enumerated her wounds matter-of-factly. "I have an eight-by-eight-inch chunk gone from my right thigh, one hole in my right forearm and another in my upper arm," she said. "I also have a bullet in my pelvis they don't intend to take out, so I hold my breath going through metal detectors at airports." When Speier found a lump under her right arm, her doctor, fearing cancer, took X-rays. "I happened to see the results before he did," she said, "and I realized a bullet was in there."

"It sounded like Boris Karloff welcoming us to his castle," recalled survivor Richard Clark. "There was no longer the love."

THE FEW Among those who survived were the Evans family (above), who left the compound to go on a picnic in the morning. Below, Jacqueline Speier, an aide to Rep. Ryan, testifying at an unofficial congressional hearing on cults in 1979. Right, Odell Rhodes witnessed the mass suicide's start and fled.



BRANCH DA

LEADER DAVID KORESH PREACHED AN APOCALYPTIC THEOLOGY THAT CONVERGED WITH

FIRE AND RAIN
To try to drive the Branch Davidians from their compound before violence broke out, the FBI played annoying music through loudspeakers, including Tibetan chants, Christmas carols, and Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made for Walking."

VIDIANS

SECULAR SURVIVALISM. FOLLOWERS HUNKERED DOWN TO ENDURE A NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST.

DAVID KORESH / BRANCH DAVIDIANS

SHOWDOWN IN WACO

FOR 51 DAYS IN THE SPRING OF 1993, ARMED FEDERAL AGENTS FACED OFF AGAINST THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS. WHEN THE SIEGE WAS OVER, THE SECT'S COMPOUND HAD BEEN BURNED TO THE GROUND AND 84 PEOPLE WERE DEAD, INCLUDING FOUR GOVERNMENT AGENTS. THE FIERY EPISODE LEFT A LOT OF QUESTIONS.

BY NANCY GIBBS

FEDERAL AGENTS ARRIVED AT THE SITE outside of Waco, Texas, on Feb. 28, 1993, to serve two warrants. The first was for the group's leader, David Koresh, on charges of child abuse: he had taken "spiritual wives" as young as 11. The second was a search warrant, so that agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) could sweep the compound for suspected illegally stockpiled weapons.

They were met with gunfire, and when the smoke cleared from that initial clash, four government officials and five Branch Davidians had perished. The situation quickly escalated: the ATF brought in armored tanks. Their

CLASSICAL REFERENCE
David Koresh, right, was born Vernon Howell. He changed his name to evoke King David and Cyrus the Great.

siege continued for 51 days, until the events of April 19, when the Mount Carmel compound was destroyed by fire and 75 additional Branch Davidians, many of them children, died.

In the aftermath of the tragic raid, the government, and especially Attorney General Janet Reno, faced sharp criticism. But while a 1995 investigation later cataloged a comedy of errors committed by the ATF, in some ways, the tragedy began with a rift within the Branch Davidians, an obscure offshoot of the Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Davidian's leader, Benjamin Roden, styled himself as the literal successor to King David of Israel, and in the early 1980s clashed with a newcomer to the sect, David Koresh, born Vernon Howell.

In 1985, Howell was chased from the group at gunpoint, but when Roden was sent to a mental hospital, Howell assumed leadership. In 1990, Howell took the name Koresh and began preaching an apocalyptic theology that converged with secular survivalism. Followers hunkered down amid stockpiles of food and ammo to endure a nuclear holocaust or social collapse and began to ready themselves for a final battle with unbelievers.

Fleeing the gas, women and children clustered in the center of the second floor, from which there was no exit.

By the time the ATF showed up in February 1993, armed with warrants, Koresh and his sect were ready for them.

APRIL 19, 1993

That morning, the sun didn't blacken, nor did the moon turn red, but the world of the Branch Davidians did come to an end.

Before the sun came up, state troopers went door to door to the houses near the compound, telling people to stay inside, there might be some noise. Over their loudspeakers, negotiators called one last time for David Koresh and his followers to surrender peacefully. Then they got on the phone and told him exactly where the tear gas was coming, so he could move the children away.

The pounding began a few minutes after 6 a.m., when an armored combat engineer vehicle started prodding a corner of the building. Shots rang out from the windows

the moment agents began pumping in tear gas. "This is not an assault!" agent Byron Sage cried over the loudspeakers. Ambulances waited a mile back.

Once the shooting started, the agents abandoned their plan to target the gas where it was least likely to hurt the children. Fleeing the gas, women and children clustered in the center of the second floor, from which there was no exit. Then suddenly the noise stopped, and a white flag emerged from the front door. But the firing began again.

A few minutes past noon, FBI snipers say they saw a man in a gas mask cupping his hands, as though lighting something. Sage grabbed the microphone. "Don't do this to those people," he pleaded over the loudspeaker. An explosion rocked the compound, then another and another as ammunition stores blew up. The building shuddered, like the earthquake Koresh foretold.

The phone rang in the command center: No one is coming out. Then one or two people were spotted; agents left the safety of their armored vehicles to go after them.

FOLLOW ME
Koresh with sect members, opposite, in January 1992. Above, agents approached the Branch Davidian compound to serve a warrant on Feb. 28, 1993.

By now 30-mph prairie winds had sent the flames gulping through the compound. The fire raced through the big parlor, feeding on the wooden benches and the stacks of Bibles kept by the door. The chapel crackled as flames consumed the building. It burned fast.

By the time the firefighters went into the compound, only ashes and bones were left. And questions. Did it have to end this way? Were the Davidians in fact intending to come out? Above all, did the cult members really set out to burn themselves and their children alive? Or did the tanks knock down their camp lanterns? Was it a mass suicide? A mass homicide? A ghastly accident?

JANET RENO'S CHOICE

In the days and long nights before the finale, the questions belonged to Attorney General Janet Reno, who was only a month into her new job. The initial search and arrest warrant was served while she waited in the wings for the Senate's confirmation. When the FBI came to Reno with their plan, it started a week of meetings, briefings and phone calls.

Officials had come to believe that time was no longer on their side. Members of the Hostage Rescue Team (HRT),

especially the snipers, had been on constant alert and were wearing down. They stood shifts around the clock at observation posts that were well within the range of Koresh's .50-caliber sharpshooting rifles and M-60 machine guns. "I don't know if anybody has ever spent any time staring through a scope," says one agent, "but I did it for 15 or 20 minutes, and it is terribly disorienting. These people had been there for 50 days."

The cult leader had broken one deal after another, officials reminded Reno. Negotiators had learned that Koresh had a particular dread of jail. "Inside, he's God," said Danny Coulson, who had founded the HRT. "Outside, he's an inmate on trial for his life. What was he going to do?" They had tried to break him down, switching tactics midway through the siege. At first they were respectful. That approach got 37 people out, including 21 children, before it stopped working. Then their tone switched, and a harassment campaign of lights and noises was begun.

Intelligence from inside the compound was spotty. While the ATF had an undercover agent inside, his shooting skills on the target range aroused suspicion. They tucked in tiny listening devices into food deliveries, but cult members were said to have found the bugs and destroyed them.

So instead they had to rely more on the hours of conversations and the letters Koresh occasionally dictated, like those he sent over the weekend of April 10. Neatly penned on lavender notepaper by one of his 19 wives, it read: "I AM your God, and you will bow under my feet. Do you think you have the power to stop my will?" The FBI brought these to a team of experts who drew a psychological portrait of a figure who believed himself invincible. "It is hard to believe that Koresh will abdicate his godhood," the experts concluded, "for a limited notoriety and time behind bars."

A frontal assault was out of the question. They suspected that the entire place was booby-trapped; they knew the sect had powerful weapons and night-vision scopes, and whenever agents approached in tanks, cult members held up the children in the windows. The idea, instead, was to pump in the gas and create enough chaos to distract anyone intent on either firing back or orchestrating a mass suicide.

That was the plan FBI director William Sessions and his top deputies put together for Reno on Monday morning. She wanted to see everything, asked hundreds of questions: Why go now? Is this the best way to go? On Wednesday night she called in members of the Army's elite Delta Force to ask their opinions. Her questions always came back to the children. FBI officials explained that the longer the siege lasted, the more the children would suffer.

Koresh treated the children as hostages. When negotiators asked him to send out videotapes to show the youngsters were safe, he was happy to oblige. "Are you coming to kill me?" a tiny voice would ask.

The idea, officials said, was not to provoke one major showdown, but to gradually increase pressure. Even as Reno asked questions, the Hostage Rescue Team was sending in Abrams tanks to the compound, closer and closer.

"I AM your God, and you will bow under my feet. Do you think you have the power to stop my will?"
—DAVID KORESH

Above all Reno needed to know how Koresh would react to being pushed. Koresh held over his followers all the power of the Apocalypse; he was the Lamb of Revelation, who alone could open the seven seals and foresee the end of the world. FBI agents made some effort to get a handle on the theology at work. Among those they

SHOWDOWN Tanks deployed by ATF stood at the ready, left, on March 1. Above, a woman stood next to a cross erected in an attempt to send a message to cultists inside.

consulted was Phillip Arnold, a specialist in apocalyptic faiths whom Koresh respected.

In the crucial sixth chapter of Revelation, Koresh found his timetable, Arnold explained. The bloody raid on Feb. 28 signaled the opening of the fifth seal. The Bible instructed that they "rest a little longer," and then their time to die would be upon them. Arnold and his colleague James Tabor from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte worked to sell Koresh on a less threatening interpretation, trying to persuade Koresh that the prophecy had not yet been fulfilled.

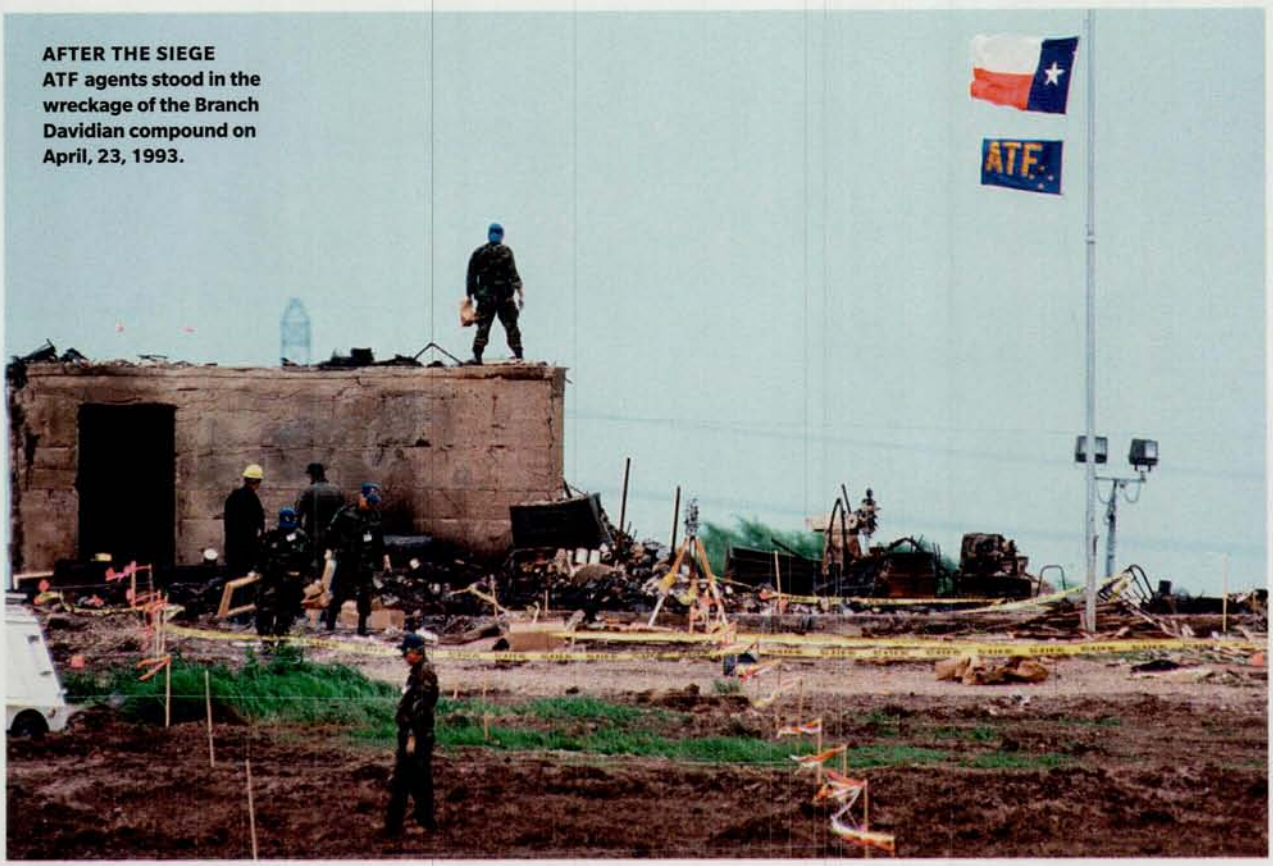
There was plenty of evidence showing Koresh did not mean to end his life. Four times negotiators asked if Koresh planned to kill himself, and four times he denied them. "If I wanted to commit suicide," he told them, "I would have done that a long time ago." But a lot of information pointed the other way. Fully a year earlier the U.S. embassy in Australia, where many cult members had lived, sent Washington a cable, warning that the Davidians would never allow themselves to be taken alive. As members came out of Ranch Apocalypse, they confirmed the planning; a 12-year-old girl told the audience on the Phil Donahue show how they were taught to put the barrel of a gun in their mouths.

Reno finally reached her decision on Saturday night. The attorney general convened top aides in her fifth-floor conference room and demanded that the FBI once again justify its operation. "Is this the best way," she asked, to prod Koresh without aggravating the situation? "What would happen if we don't do it?" At around 7:15 p.m. she approved the operation. By 7:40 Saturday night Reno went home. The following night she called President Bill Clinton and briefed him on the plan. They talked for about 15 minutes.

THE AFTERMATH

In the morning, as the assault began, reporters asked Clinton if he knew what was happening. Clinton had been briefed periodically on the progress in Waco from the start, by Reno's predecessor Stuart Gerson and by her deputy Webster Hubbell. "I was aware of it," he said. "I think the attorney general made the decision."

Then he vanished. At about 1 p.m., after the fire broke out, White House communications director George Stephanopoulos kept a safe distance from the issue at his regular daily briefing for reporters: "It's a decision by the attorney general and the FBI."



AFTER THE SIEGE
ATF agents stood in the wreckage of the Branch Davidian compound on April, 23, 1993.

While a normal politician's instinct, as disaster burns around them, is to run for cover, Reno went on national television to say, The buck stops with me, I take full responsibility, it was my decision, I approved the plans, until journalists and pundits and pols were breathless at the audacity of her act of political self-immolation. She lost her temper only when reporters suggested that she was covering for the President. "I don't do spin stuff," she said.

But by the time Larry King came round, she still hadn't heard from her boss. "They kept missing each other," was the official White House explanation. The next day Clinton rejected calls for Reno to resign just because "some religious fanatics murdered themselves," and called for investigations into the tragedy.

Throughout the week family members issued scorching assessments of the FBI's performance. "There were law-abiding, God-fearing people in there," said Koresh's mother Bonnie Haldeman. The most damaging blasts came from those who had made it out of the compound. "There was never any suicide plan," protested Renos Avraam, a 28-year-old London native who had lived in the compound for more than a year. The FBI had to back off certain claims: that they had fresh evidence of child abuse, that they had actually seen a cult member lighting the fire, that some victims were shot by fellow Davidians for fleeing.

Theologian Arnold laments that the FBI did not take the underlying religious issues more seriously. The pull of faith was so strong that some Branch Davidians who escaped wished they had instead been consumed by the flames. "They took that to be a big joke," he says. Jeffrey Jamar, the FBI agent in charge on the ground, and other agents scoff at the notion that either scholars or family members could have succeeded in getting anyone out. "You going to talk someone out of being the Messiah? It's a lot to give up."

The pull of faith was so strong that some Branch Davidians who escaped wished they had instead been consumed by the flames.

In the end, even the fiercest critics could not deny that it was Koresh who placed 25 children in harm's way, who preyed on people who were weak and lonely and hungry for certainty. Certainty he gave them, and abundantly. He was very certain of his vision of good and evil, certain of an afterlife that promised glory for those who had suffered for their souls. And tragically, his followers believed him.

SMALL VICTIMS Children were escorted away from the Branch Davidian compound on March 1, 1993.

THE DAVIDIAN CHILDREN

SURVIVORS OF "RANCH APOCALYPSE" OFFERED SHOCKING DETAILS OF LIFE IN THE COMPOUND WITH DAVID KORESH

The new home looked warm and welcoming enough to the young Branch Davidian girl, a survivor of the conflagration at Waco. She was fascinated with the hot running water, the flush toilets, the heated food. The Branch Davidian compound in Waco had provided no such comforts. But upon passing a door leading to the basement, the youngster froze. "Do you have a whipping room down there?" she asked her new guardians. "No," answered the woman who now cared for her, "do you have one?" "Yes," said the little girl. "When they don't want everyone to hear us, they take us down there."

With the sect consumed by fire, the tales of life at the compound came mostly from children. As stories from survivors, former sect members and a psychiatric report attested, the experience of Davidians was one of deprivation and fear. Denied traditional family bonds and exposed to Koresh's warped teachings, the children became compliant playthings.

When young Davidians strayed from Koresh's commands, their punishment was severe. Disobedience frequently brought out the "helper," a paddle often wielded by Koresh's "mighty men" in the "whipping room" just off the first floor. The instrument left circle-shaped lesions, an inch across, on the children's buttocks.

By age 12, children were usually split off from their mothers. Brothers and sisters were separated to live with other same-sex companions. They ate fruit and vegetables, but rarely warm food. Chocolate was prohibited, and ice cream, which Koresh enjoyed regularly, was granted only occasionally to the children.

The boys were awakened at 5:30 a.m. for "gym," a series of paramilitary marching and drills; in addition, fights between the boys were staged possibly in preparation for man-to-man combat in an apocalyptic war. Girls were spared the training and could sleep as late as they wanted, but they did have to help empty human waste from the white plastic pails used as toilets by sect members.

Education consisted of home schooling and hours-long twice-daily biblical lessons taught by a rambling Koresh. Sometimes he jumped from the chapel stage to paddle young ones who were crying or being disruptive. "You never knew what he was going to be," said Kiri Jewell, then 12, who was taken from the compound by her natural father in 1991.

Girls were singled out early as Koresh's sex-partners-to-be. Some as young as 11 wore a plastic Star of David around their neck, while others wore a thin gold band on their finger. Koresh spoke openly about the details of sex to prepare them for intercourse. Long after the siege, Koresh loomed as an ambivalent shadow. In the children's drawings, the compound was both riddled with bullet holes and depicted as the kingdom of heaven. Sometimes they surrounded the words I LOVE DAVID with hearts. "They learned to substitute the word *love* for *fear*," Bruce Perry, a Baylor College of Medicine psychiatrist who studied the children after the raid, told the *New York Times*. Going forward, living a normal life would be a challenge. "We were all waiting for the end to happen," said Kiri Jewell. It did—and now life must go on.

—by Sophfronia Scott Gregory

Disobedience brought out the "helper," a paddle wielded by Koresh's mighty men in the whipping room just off the first floor.

PROFILE OF A PSYCHOPATH

AN AUTHORITARIAN LEADER WITH A PATHOLOGICAL EDGE, DAVID KORESH FASHIONED A TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY THAT SAW ITSELF AT DESPERATE ODDS WITH THE WORLD OUTSIDE. HE ASSIGNED LIEUTENANTS TO CARRY OUT HIS WILL AND, EVENTUALLY, LED HIS FOLLOWERS TO THEIR DOOM.

BY RICHARD LACAYO

THERE WERE OCCASIONS WHEN DAVID Koresh enforced discipline among his followers the hard way. One of his handpicked lieutenants would paddle the rule breakers with an oar on which were inscribed the words IT IS WRITTEN. Most of the time that wasn't necessary. In the manner of cult leaders before him, Koresh held sway largely through means that were both more subtle and more degrading. Food was rationed in unpredictable ways. Newcomers were gradually relieved of their bank accounts and personal possessions. And while the men were subjected to an uneasy celibacy, Koresh took their wives and daughters as his concubines.

Equipped with both a creamy charm and a cold-blooded

willingness to manipulate those drawn to him, Koresh was a type well known to students of cult practices. Psychologists are inclined to classify Koresh as a psychopath, always with the reminder that such people can be nothing short of enchanting on a first encounter. "The psychopath is often charming, bright, very persuasive," explained Louis West, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California at Los Angeles medical school. "He quickly wins people's trust and is uncannily adept at manipulating and conning people."

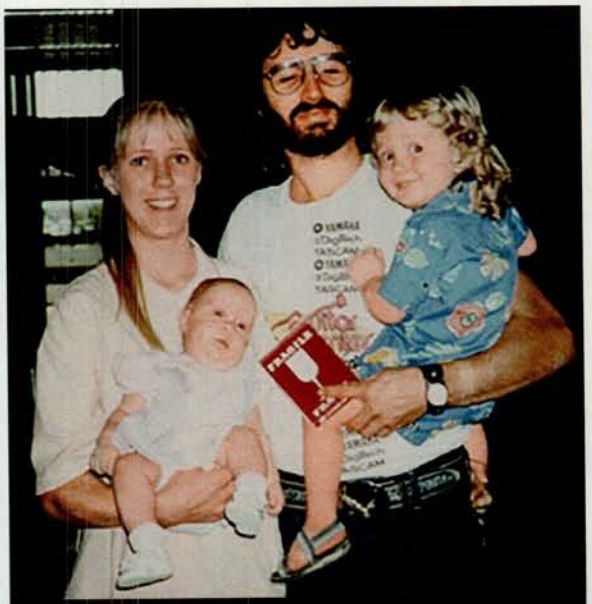
Once in the cult, Davidians surrendered all the material means of personal independence, like money and belongings, while Koresh seemed to have unlimited funds, much of the money apparently from his followers' nest eggs. The grounds around the compound were littered with old automobiles that the faithful cannibalized for parts to keep their clunkers running while Koresh drove a black Camaro muscle car.

At lengthy sessions of biblical preaching that cult members attended twice a day, Koresh underlined his authority by impressing upon them that he alone understood the Scriptures. He changed his interpretations at will, while his unsteady flock struggled to keep up. In a tactic common to cult leaders, Koresh made food a tool for ensuring obedience. The compound diet was often insufficient, varying according to the leader's whim. Sometimes dinner was stew or chicken; at other times it might be nothing but popcorn. On their infrequent trips to Waco, cultists could be seen wolfing down packaged cheese in convenience stores. Dietary rules at the compound were as changeable as the theology.

Having convinced his followers that he was the messiah, Koresh went on to persuade them that because his seed was divine, only he had the right to procreate. Even as Koresh bedded their wives and daughters—some as young as 11—in his comfortable private bedroom on the second floor, the men were confined to their dormitory downstairs. Behind the mind games and psychological sadism lay the threat of physical force. In addition to the paddlings, administered in a utility area called the spanking room, offenders could be forced down into a pit of raw sewage, then not allowed to bathe. No amount of adulation seemed to satisfy Koresh, whose egomania disguised an emptiness at his center.

As the Davidians stockpiled guns and ammunition, Koresh's theology centered more obsessively upon the coming apocalypse, binding Koresh and his followers in a vision of shared catastrophe in order to maintain their focus and resist the overtures of the authorities outside the compound. "Koresh would say we would have to suffer, that we were going to be persecuted and some of us would be killed and tortured," recalled David Bunds, who left the compound in 1989.

As Koresh and his followers heightened the melodrama, their ties with the outside world became irretrievably broken. "The adulation of this confined group works on this charismatic leader so that he in turn spirals into greater and greater paranoia," said Murray Miron, a psychologist who advised the FBI during the standoff. "He's playing a role that his followers have cast him in." In the end, Koresh and his flock may have magnified one another's needs. He looked to them to confirm his belief that he was God's appointed one, destined for a martyr's death. They looked to him to bring their spiritual wanderings to a close. In the flames of the compound, they all may have found what they were searching for.



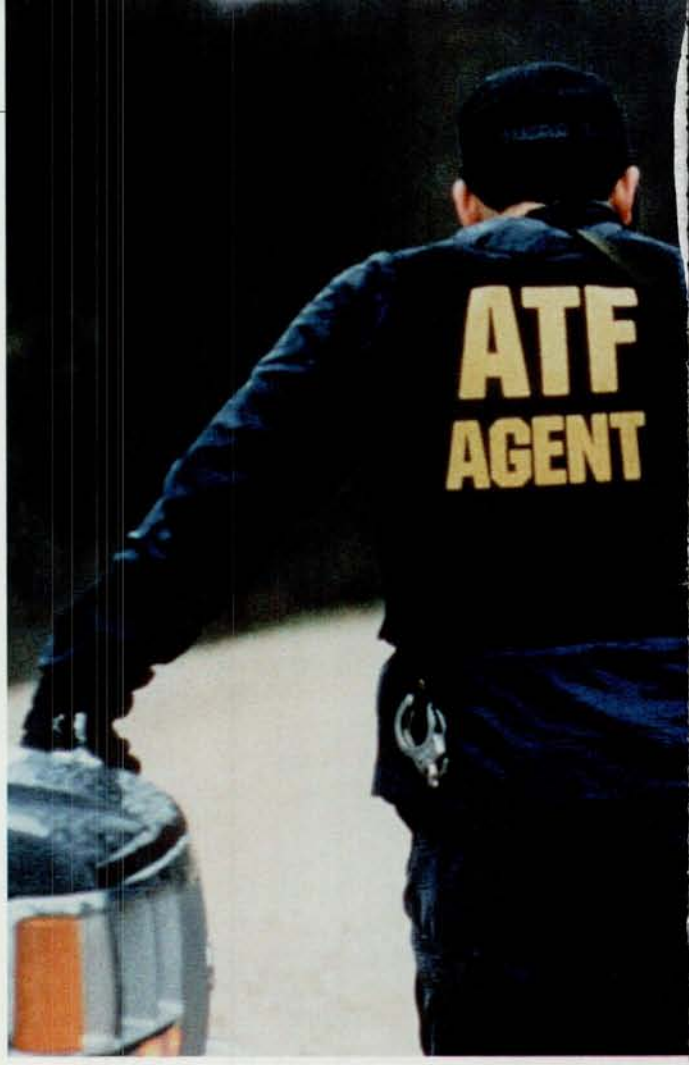
TOO YOUNG Rachel Koresh was 14 when she married David, then 24. Pictured here at the Honolulu International Airport, Rachel held their daughter, Star, in her arms; David held their son, Cyrus.

While Koresh seemed to have unlimited funds, much of the money apparently came from his followers' nest eggs.

AFTER IT WAS OVER

A TRAMPLING OF CIVIL RIGHTS OR A SIEGE OVERDUE? TWO VIEWS AND A LEGACY OF GOVERNMENT MISTRUST.

BY LILY ROTHMAN



IN THE SPRING OF 1993, AFTER TWO BOTCHED government raids on the Waco, Texas, compound where David Koresh and his Branch Davidian followers were suspected of stockpiling weapons, TIME ran a special report on those events and how they led to the deaths of several government agents and nearly 100 compound residents. But, while the cover's declaration that what happened was a "tragedy" proved uncontroversial, it quickly became clear that Waco meant different things to different people.

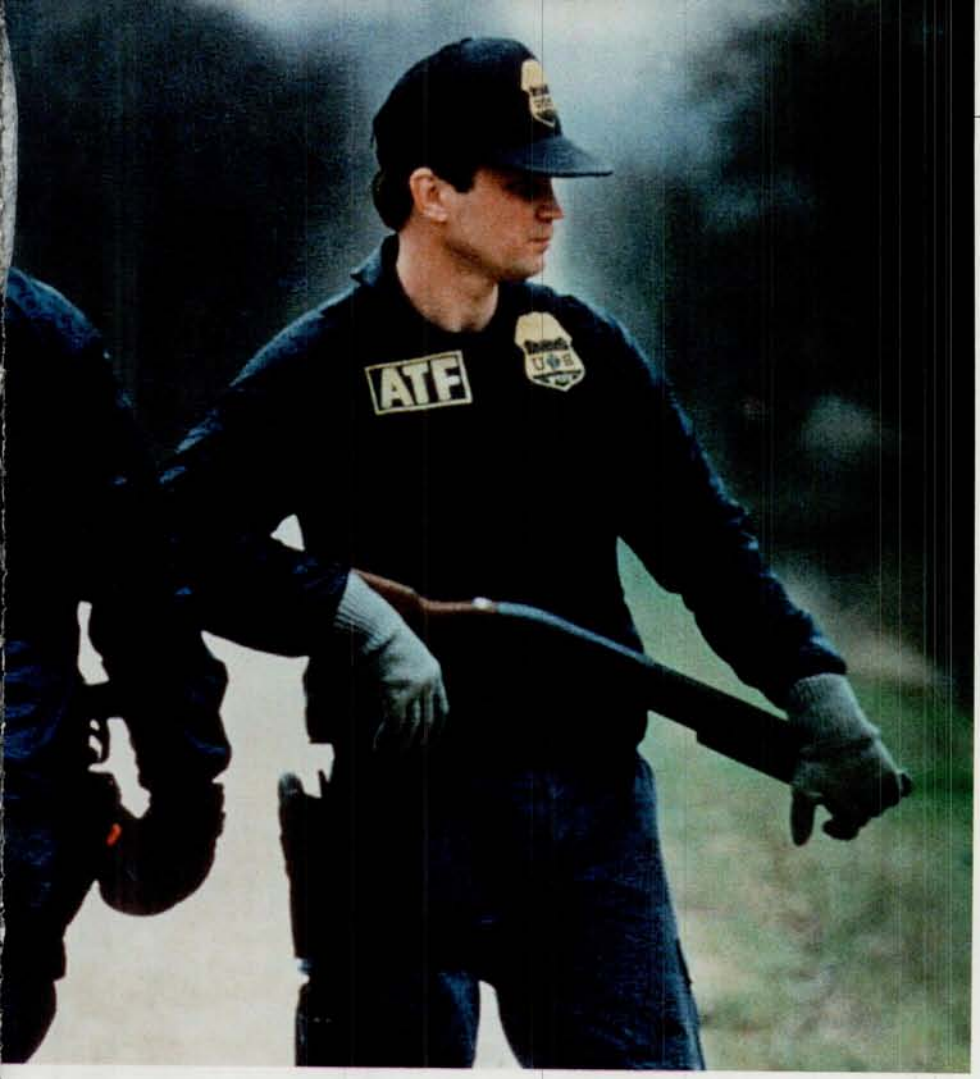
After the story ran, one letter to the editor expressed the idea that the raid that ended a siege on the compound was long overdue, while another called the events a demonstration of government's "trampling of civil rights." Yet another noted presciently that, while Koresh and his followers had done terrible things, their actions would be "overshadowed" by what federal agents had done in response.

That reader's prediction would, in many respects, come true. Especially as evidence emerged that federal actions during both raids had been miscalculated, some people wondered not why the agents hadn't done a better job, but how far the government would go to subdue its own citizens.

"The Waco thing really woke me up," one Montana man told TIME in 1994, emphasizing that he saw Waco as a story of the government's killing women and children.

A young man named Timothy McVeigh had driven from Michigan to Waco during the siege, telling a student journalist that he didn't think federal agents had any business being there. On the second anniversary of the siege's end, McVeigh and accomplice Terry Nichols set off a bomb at a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing more than 150 people, including 19 children in a daycare center there.

By choosing the Waco anniversary to commit his act of terror, "McVeigh made sure that the mass media would dig into his and like-minded people's causes and grievances against the federal government," writes political scientist Brigitte L. Nacos in her book *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*. Even as the nation condemned McVeigh, that message found an audience: Nacos cites surveys showing that in the immediate aftermath of Oklahoma City nearly three quarters of Americans approved of what the feds had done in Waco; three months later, half disapproved. And Attorney General Janet Reno, who at first won some praise for taking responsibility for the FBI's actions there, would go on to carry the baggage



of Waco for the rest of her career.

Though McVeigh's case was extreme, he was not alone in feeling driven to act by the events in Waco, which became a key factor in the growth of the modern militia movement. To some, the need for armed self-defense against their own government suddenly seemed like a necessity.

"Waco is a wake-up call for people in the sense that they saw their government work against citizens, perhaps for the first time," one survivor of the episode—Clive Doyle, who remained a Branch Davidian after the blaze—said in the wake of Oklahoma City.

Years later, in 2016, Waco would once again be summoned to mind when brothers Ammon and Ryan Bundy and their followers occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, in protest of federal land-management policies. For more than a month, observers across the country worried that Malheur could become the next Waco if government agents didn't act carefully.

That standoff was resolved relatively peacefully but, 25 years later, the specter of Waco still haunts federal law enforcement—just as it haunts those who see in its legacy a warning to be prepared to go down in a blaze of their own.

GUNS READY
The bureau prepared for the biggest raid in its history, giving little consideration to arresting David Koresh outside his Mount Carmel compound. Below, Attorney General Janet Reno.

ATF REPORT

In 1993, following the Waco raid, the Treasury Department issued a 500-page report enumerating the errors committed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). Among them:

- ATF established an undercover house adjacent to the compound and installed eight agents there posing as students at Texas State Technical College. They were too old to be convincing, carried briefcases and drove expensive cars.
- The raid planners chose a direct assault in part because they believed Koresh never left the Branch Davidian compound. Koresh did in fact leave the compound, including in late 1992.
- Faulty intelligence led ATF to believe the Branch Davidians kept their guns under lock and key in a central location. Guns were distributed and readily available. They also erroneously reported no sentries at the compound.
- Eleven days before the raid, ATF ended surveillance of the compound. The bureau's tactical planners said they didn't learn of this gap until after the raid.

GRIM EXIT
Bodies of Heaven's Gate cult members were loaded into an ambulance at the cult's compound outside San Diego, on March 27, 1997.

HEAV

THE INCREDIBLE SAGA OF HOW A CHARISMATIC FORMER MUSIC TEACHER

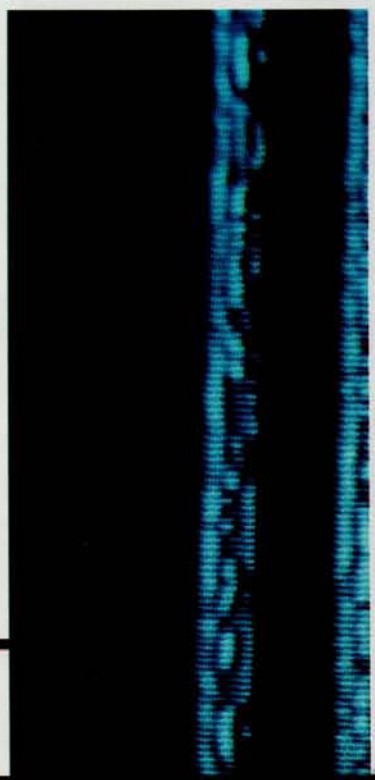
EN'S GATE

AND 38 FOLLOWERS KILLED THEMSELVES TO ASCEND TO SPACE AND ENTER GOD'S KINGDOM.

THE MARKER WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

WHEN THE MEMBERS OF HEAVEN'S GATE COMMITTED MASS SUICIDE IN 1997, THEY BELIEVED THEIR SOULS WOULD BE SPIRITED AWAY BY ALIENS ARRIVING WITH THE HALE-BOPP COMET

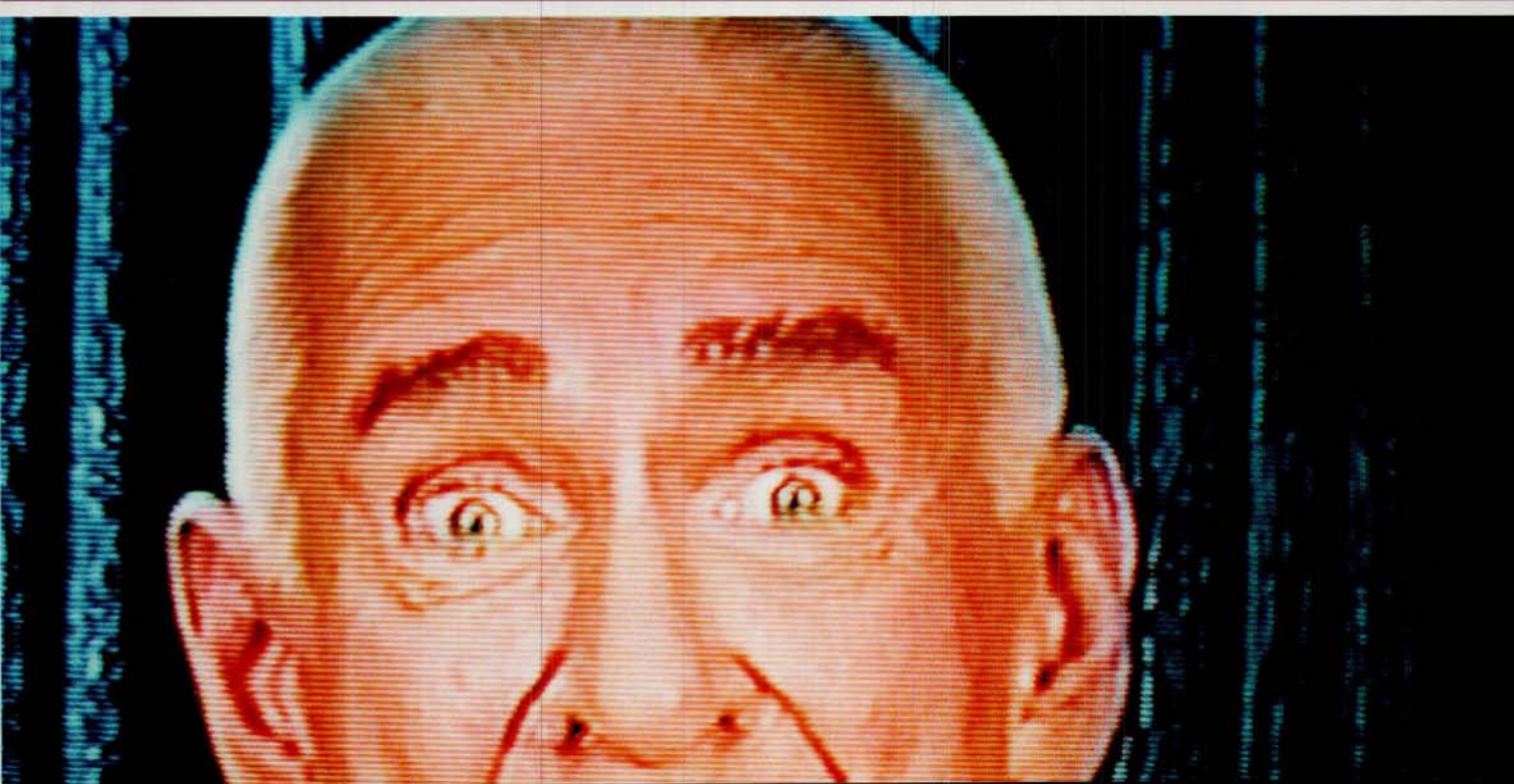
BY ELIZABETH GLEICK

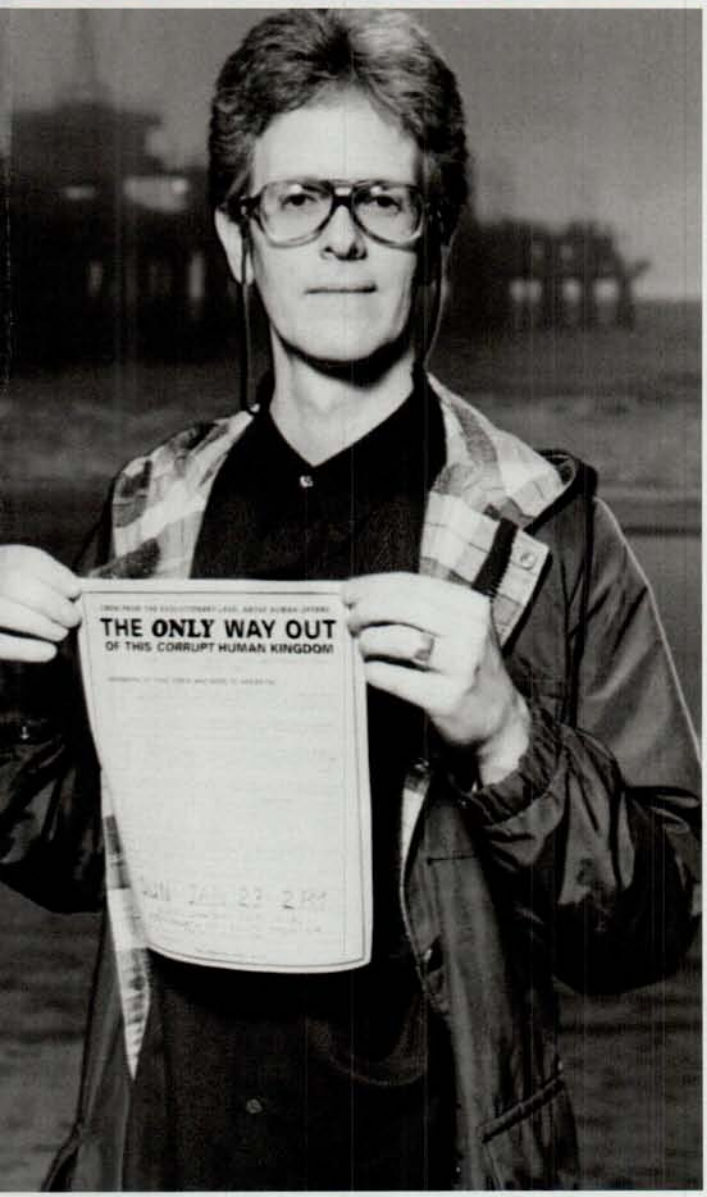


IF THE MASS SUICIDE–MURDER IN JONESTOWN, Guyana, of the 900-plus followers of cult leader Jim Jones in 1978 unspooled as a paranoid, avoidable, chaotic tragedy, its sister mass suicide, by members of Heaven's Gate almost two decades later, was shockingly well-choreographed, almost gracious.

On March 22, 1997, in a spacious Rancho Santa Fe mansion, with the bougainvillea in full bloom outside, 38 devotees of Marshall Herff Applewhite, a onetime choirmaster from Texas, killed themselves in three groups: a first round of 15, then the

A DIFFERENT VISION Marshall Applewhite founded Heaven's Gate, the first well-known cult of the Internet era, and recruited members online.





BAD ACTORS
Applewhite and his wife, Bonnie Nettles, were arrested in 1974 for car theft and credit card fraud; an aerial view of the cult's compound, which rented for $7,000 a month; a member of Heaven's Gate in Santa Monica.

When the cult members were discovered, their bodies were laid out on their backs, all dressed in black pants, flowing black shirt and spanking-new black Nikes.

next 15, then seven, all apparently by ingesting phenobarbital mixed with a bit of applesauce or pudding, kicked by a shot of vodka, then helped along by the asphyxiating effect of a plastic bag over the head. Applewhite, 65, who had convinced his flock that extraterrestrials would give their bodies new souls after they died, consumed his death potion apart from the group, in the master bedroom. All believed that the passing of the comet Hale-Bopp on April 1, 1997, would bring with it a spaceship that would usher their spirits to another planet.

UNIFORM LOOK

When the cult members were discovered four days later, their bodies were laid out on their backs on bunk beds and mattresses, looking like so many laboratory specimens pinned neatly to a board. Each was dressed in black pants, flowing black shirt, spanking-new black Nikes. Their faces were hidden by purple cloths, shrouds the purple of Christian penance. Those who wore glasses had them neatly folded next to their bodies, and all had identification papers for the authorities to find. The house, more than one awed witness noted, was immaculate, tidier even than before the victims had moved in. It was as if, in preparing for their death, the members of the Heaven's Gate cult were heeding the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

It was a remarkably methodical departure, made more astonishing by the rich trail of video and Internet information the victims left behind. But the largest mass suicide in U.S. history blasted the doors wide open onto a considerably less tidy world—a dense and jumbled universe of UFOs and ex-

traterrestrials careening smack into unusual astronomical happenings, apocalyptic Christian prophecies and end-is-nigh paranoia.

Students of the millennium and historians of the bizarre had long predicted such a catastrophic event in the twilight years of the 20th century, noting the rise in the number of obscure cults and the increasingly fevered pitch of their rantings. And it was not just that time of the century; it was that time of year too, with Holy Week, the vernal equinox and a partial lunar eclipse converging, all heated up by the extraordinary Hale-Bopp comet lighting the night skies. For those who went in for cosmological conjunctions, it was a perfect week for an apocalypse. For those who sought more human motives, there was the intriguing report on ABC's *Nightline* that Applewhite had intimated to a friend that he was dying of cancer.

"These people rather calmly followed suicide as their exit, in a very positive way, to a higher level of existence," said James Tabor, a religion teacher at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte who had been involved with last-minute attempts to communicate with Branch Davidian leader David Koresh. "They define death not as the enemy of life but as life itself."

The leaders, a couple, went by the nicknames Bo and Peep and claimed to be extraterrestrial representatives of another dimension.

IN THE BEGINNING

Heaven's Gate first came together in the spring of 1975 in Los Angeles, where Applewhite and his partner, Bonnie Lu Nettles, a former nurse, regaled a group of meditation enthusiasts with their belief that spaceships would someday arrive to carry away their spirits. The couple, who went by the nicknames Bo and Peep, claimed to be extraterrestrial representatives of the "Kingdom Level Above Human" and railed against oppression by nonbelievers, evil "Luciferians," whom they said would be "plowed under" in the apocalypse. The couple's beliefs evolved over time, but they told disciples that by renouncing sex, drugs, alcohol, their birth names and all relationships with family and friends, they could become ready to ascend to space, shedding their "containers," or bodies, and entering God's Kingdom. "If you cling to this life, will you not lose it?" Bo asked in the Heaven's Gate manifesto.

The group first set up headquarters on the Rogue River in Oregon, with 20 to 30 followers who brought only a few personal belongings. Within a few weeks, they began to wander around Wyoming, either camping in the countryside or settling for a time in towns where cult members earned money working as waitresses or store clerks. Sometimes they would seek support from local churches. Over time the group adopted the name Heaven's Gate and it peaked in popularity in the late '70s, with several hundred members.

Applewhite was strict in enforcing group discipline. Members had to sign out to get their driver's license and car keys before they could leave the compound. For a while, Applewhite and Nettles would impose something known as "tomb time," during which members could not speak to each other for days on end. Occasionally, tuning forks would be tapped on cultists' heads in an effort to dispel human thoughts.

Bo had recruits follow detailed schedules—waking for prayer at precise times, taking vitamins at, say, 7:22 p.m., consuming yeast rolls and liquid protein—and had them do mental and physical drills to prepare for outer space. According to a man named Michael who was with the cult for more than a decade, recruits experimented with their sleeping patterns and their diets, trying to break down their bodies so they would be "under control."

In 1985, Nettles died of cancer at 57 and Applewhite continued without her, his recruitment efforts waxing and waning with the times. Suicide apparently arose as an option around 1994, and after Applewhite became captivated by the comet Hale-Bopp, he determined that the time to exit earth had arrived. He rented a 9,200 square foot mansion in the gated community of Rancho Santa Fe, 30 miles north of San Diego, in October 1996 and began to prepare his flock for their next journey. A "Red Alert" announcement on the group's website hailed the Hale-Bopp comet as the "marker" the members were waiting for.

Sometime in March 1997, cult members sent out what might be described less as suicide notes than suicide press kits. One of the first to receive the materials was a former cult member using the name Rio D'Angelo (police say he is really Richard Ford), who got a Federal Express package containing two videotapes, a letter and two

GOING VIRAL
Hale-Bopp caused a sensation beyond Heaven's Gate. For a time, a NASA homepage on the comet (which won't pass again for 4,000 years) attracted 1.2 million views daily.

computer discs. D'Angelo took the tape home and watched it, stunned by cult members who looked like they were attending a garden party of the apocalypse.

With the California sun shining and the trees in the mansion's backyard blowing in a gentle breeze, speakers talked as if they were looking forward to a holiday, not a lethal vodka-phenobarb cocktail. "I've been looking forward to this for so long," said a man in his forties. A woman, laughing slightly, said: "People in the world who thought I'd completely lost my marbles—they're not right. I couldn't have made a better choice."

The next day, D'Angelo went to work and told his boss, Nick Matzorkis, that he was convinced his former associates were all dead. D'Angelo and Matzorkis drove to the house, and D'Angelo went inside. When he came out, says Matzorkis, he was "white as a sheet" and the men notified the San Diego sheriff's office.

DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY

The 21 women and 18 men inside the house ranged in age from 26 to 72 and were in varying stages of decomposition; the smell permeating the house was so putrid that two sickened officers went to the hospital to be sure they had not inhaled poisonous fumes. In some cases, it was difficult for the deputies to tell the victims apart: all with close-cropped hair and unlined skin, the officers initially thought all the dead were young men. But shedding any signs of sexuality was integral to the cult, and six of the men, including Applewhite, had even been castrated, which may have helped explain the odd passivity or gentleness the victims exhibited. "In order to be a member of that Kingdom, one had to overcome his humanness, which included his sexuality," said a former cult member, Michael.

When the computer discs were scanned later they were found to contain messages from cult members intended to be posted on the group's website—in effect, suicide notes. One, from a woman who signed herself "Goldenody," seemed to support the notion that their leader was terminally ill. "Once He is gone," she wrote, "there is nothing left here on the face of the earth for me."

Survivors and family members began coming forward in their grief. Mary Ann Craig, whose husband John, 62, left her and their six children in Durango, Colorado, in 1975 to join the cult, said she had been waiting for the news of his death for 22 years. "How can you explain something like this?" she asked. Nichelle Nichols, who played Lieutenant Uhura on the original *Star Trek,* went on CNN's *Larry King Live* to discuss the death of her brother Thomas Nichols. Nichelle said that her brother "made his choices, and we respect those choices."

The presence among the dead of the brother of a Trekkie demigoddess was only one instance of Heaven's Gate blending reality and science fiction. The cult's workspace in Rancho Santa Fe was decorated with posters of alien beings from *The X-Files* and *E.T.* On the farewell tape, a cultist even brought up Nichols' oeuvre in explaining his decision to leave behind his human "container": "We watch a lot of *Star Trek,* a lot of *Star Wars,* it's just, to us, it's just like going on a holodeck. We've been training on a holodeck...[and] now it's time to stop. The game's over. It's time to put into practice what we've learned. We take off the virtual-reality helmet...go back out of the holodeck to reality to be with, you know, the other members on the craft in the heavens."

The presence among the dead of the brother of a Trekkie demigoddess was only one instance of Heaven's Gate mixing reality and science fiction.

Most surviving families, however, felt differently, not quite able to see the new dimension their loved ones had vanished into. "We are going through a tough time," said a relative of Yvonne McCurdy-Hill, a 39-year-old Cincinnati woman who left her five children (the youngest of whom were infant twins) to join the cult in August of 1996. "It's not the closure we wanted," said Alice Maeder, whose daughter, Gail, 28, started following the cult in 1994 after her Santa Cruz, Calif., T-shirt shop failed, "but now we know where she is." Added Gail's father, "She's finally coming home."

Cult experts warned that the public should not be taken in by the cheerful departures, nor by the notion that it was a small number of people exercising their own free will. "I don't consider it suicide. I consider it murder," said Janja Lalich, a cult expert who started monitoring Heaven's Gate in 1994, when several parents contacted her with worries about their missing children. Applewhite "controlled it, these people were pawns in his personal fantasy."

BUNK MATES
Dead Heaven's Gate members discovered inside the Rancho Santa Fe estate. At its peak in the late 1970s, the cult had several hundred members; they were expected to leave their families behind.

THE LIVES LOST

THERE WAS AN ENVIRONMENTALIST, A NURSE, A REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER. MOST OF THE HEAVEN'S GATE VICTIMS SEEMED JUST LIKE THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES.

Sorting through the lives of the 38 people who committed suicide with Marshall Herff Applewhite at the Rancho Santa Fe mansion, what stands out the most is how disarmingly ordinary the members seemed. "Many of these people weren't losers with low self-esteem," says Joan Culpepper, an original recruit of the cult who later became an outspoken foe. "Applewhite's message connected to some belief in them."

It was, to be sure, a very strange message. Applewhite told his acolytes that he was the second coming of Jesus Christ, that God was an alien and that they were living in the end times. Discipline was a central tenet. Followers were assigned partners with whom to eat, sleep and work, and to ensure that no one got too friendly, buddies were rotated regularly. What members ate, how men shaved their faces and even entertainment options were also tightly regulated,

Yet Heaven's Gate avoided the crudest methods of mind control. Once, when several members failed to attend a meeting, Applewhite and his co-founder, Bonnie Nettles, announced, sadly, that they were going to leave the group for a time to meditate on their failure in leadership. When they returned hours later, members wept with both shame and relief. "There was a bonding with them," said Dick Joslyn, who was a cult member from 1975 to 1990. "It wasn't like a commander saying, 'You'll do this' or 'You'll do that.'"

Here is a look at some of the members who gave up their lives for Heaven's Gate.

MARSHALL HERFF APPLEWHITE, 65, music teacher turned cult leader

Missouri prosecutor Tim Braun never forgot the car-theft case that came his way in 1974, when he was a novice St. Louis County public defender. "Very seldom do we see a statement that 'a force from beyond the earth has made me keep this car,'" he says. The defendant: Marshall Herff Applewhite. The sentence: four months in jail.

Applewhite's early life offers few hints of what led this son of a Presbyterian preacher and his wife to abandon his career as a music professor for a life chasing alien spacecraft. Married with two children, he seemed the devoted family man. But his marriage broke up in the mid-'60s, and he moved to Houston where he ran a small Catholic college's music department and often sang with the Houston Grand Opera.

Back then, Applewhite was a sharp dresser whose taste in cars ran to convertibles, and in liquor to vodka gimlets. He became a fixture of Houston's arts scene—and, less overtly, its gay community. "Everybody knew Herff," said Houston gay activist and radio host Ray Hill. But in 1970, Applewhite left the college, apparently after allegations of an affair with a male student.

Soon afterward, Applewhite claimed to have had a vision during a walk on the beach in Galveston, Texas. "He said he suddenly had knowledge about the world," recalled Houston artist Hayes Parker. Around that time he met nurse Bonnie Nettles, with whom he formed an instant bond that became the basis of a 25-year cult odyssey. They wandered the country, gathering followers and attracting so much curiosity that by the mid-'70s he had been interviewed by the *New York Times*. "Some people are like lemmings who rush in a pack into the sea," Applewhite said of other alternative lifestyles. "Some people will try anything."

DAVID VAN SINDEREN, 48, environmentalist

"When I was 4, he saved me from drowning," said publicist Sylvia Abbate of her big brother David Van Sinderen, the son of a former telephone company CEO."'Don't be hurt, I'm not doing this to you,'" Abbate said he told his family after he joined the cult in 1976. "'It's something I have to do for me.'" Visiting his sister in '87, David puzzled her with his backseat driving, then apologized, explaining that cult members drove with a partner so they could have an extra set of eyes. Said Abbate, "That's the kind of care they had for one another."

MARGARET BULL, 54, farm girl

Peggy Bull, among the cult's first adherents in the mid-'70s, grew up on a farm outside little Ellensburg, Wash. Though shy, she was in the high school pep club and a member of the Wranglerettes, a riding drill team. Later "she belonged to all the intellectual-type

groups," said Brenda McIntosh, a roommate at the University of Washington, where Bull earned her B.A. in 1966. "It was sometimes hard to talk to her because she was so smart." Recalled English professor Roger Sale: "She was all open and ready intellectually." Her father, Jack, died less than three weeks before Bull's suicide, said Margaret's childhood friend Iris Rominger, who assumed that Bull had left the cult. "I guess it's kind of a blessing."

CHERYL BUTCHER, 42, computer trainer

Cheryl Butcher was a shy, bright, self-taught computer expert who spent half her life in Applewhite's orbit. Growing up in Springfield, Mo., she was "the perfect daughter," said her father, Jasper, a retired federal corrections officer. "She was a good student. She did charity work, candy striper stuff." But according to Virginia Norton, her mother, Butcher was also "a loner. She watched a lot of TV and read. Making friends was hard for her." That was, until she joined the cult in 1976. "She wrote me a letter once," said Norton, "that said, 'Mother, be happy that I'm happy.' Another time she ended a letter with 'Look higher.'"

JULIE LAMONTAGNE, 45, nurse

Shortly after Julie LaMontagne graduated from nursing school, her best friend drowned and her birth father succumbed to cancer. The deaths "just made her collapse," said her brother. "We could never get her back after that." She drifted, eventually becoming Applewhite's personal nurse.

GAIL MAEDER, 27, boutique owner

However far Gail Maeder wandered from the home where she had grown up in Sag Harbor, N.Y., her parents always hoped she would find her way back. "We hoped she'd marry and settle down, give us some grandchildren," said her father, Robert, a design engineer for a manufacturing company. But Gail had never done the expected thing. Even as a skinny teenager she had gone her own way at Pierson High School. "I hate to say she was a hippie," said her mother, Alice, a homemaker. "She was more a bohemian."

Before she could complete her fashion-design degree at a local community college, Gail moved to California in 1991 with her boyfriend Chad. They settled in a forest cabin outside Santa Cruz, where, with $5,000 from her father, she opened a small boutique selling clothing and jewelry. But in 1993 she broke up with her boyfriend—"Chad said she seemed to be searching for something," Robert recalled—and soon afterward traveled with a friend to the Southwest. There she started chatting with some friendly people in a passing van—members, it turned out, of the Heaven's Gate cult. "Gail wasn't street smart," said Robert. "She just got sucked in and couldn't get out."From then on the Maeders would hear from their daughter only occasionally, mostly in cryptic letters.

THOMAS NICHOLS, 58, dreamer

Long ago, Thomas Nichols confided to his older sister Nichelle that he was awaiting a rendezvous with a comet. Ironically, actor Nichelle Nichols was *Star Trek*'s Lieutenant Uhura, the communications officer torn between earthbound domesticity and a career on the starship *Enterprise*. On *Larry King Live*, the actress said that until their mother died in 1992, "we hadn't heard from [my brother] in 20 years."

JOHN CRAIG, 62, developer

Born in Evanston, Ill., John Craig moved to Albuquerque with his parents when he was 15. There, he acquired an outdoorsman's skills and, by the mid-'60s, was running one of Colorado's premier dude ranches. He so looked the part that he was cast as an extra in the movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

When Craig's University of New Mexico fraternity brother Dale Mackey visited in 1975 and talked about his recent immersion in a UFO cult, Mary Ann, the high school sweetheart Craig had married in 1954, paid little heed. But a week after Mackey left, Craig was gone.

At first Mary Ann believed Craig would grow disillusioned. Instead he became the ethereal Brother Logan, the cult's second-in-command. The Craigs divorced in 1977 without ever speaking again.

THE PARADE Members of Aum Shinrikyo sported masks of the doomsday cult's leader, Shoko Asahara, in the Tokyo streets on Jan. 27, 1990.

AUM SHI

THE JAPANESE CULT STARTED AS A YOGA SCHOOL, BUT ITS MEMBERS FELL UNDER THE

NRIKYO

SPELL OF A LONG-HAIRED CHARISMATIC WHO BELIEVED THE END OF THE WORLD WAS NIGH.

SHOKO ASAHARA / AUM SHINRIKYO

THE PROPHET OF POISON

IN A COORDINATED ACT OF CHEMICAL TERRORISM, AN APOCALYPTIC CULT STRUCK THE TOKYO SUBWAY SYSTEM IN MARCH 1995 KILLING TWELVE AND SICKENING THOUSANDS MORE.

BY DAVID VAN BIEMA

WHEN THE TOKYO SUBWAY WAS crippled, it was not by natural disaster, but by the most synthetic of catastrophes: a poison created by man, and a madness that was strictly human. On March 20, 1995, in a carefully coordinated, painstakingly planned atrocity, an apparently diluted form of a nerve gas called sarin—a weapon of mass killing originally concocted by the Nazis—was placed simultaneously in five subway cars at morning rush hour.

The Japanese government did not immediately name a perpetrator. But within days, under another pretext, it responded with a morning raid on 25 branches of a

PORTRAIT OF THE PROPHET Shoko Asahara, photographed during a visit to Moscow on Feb. 17, 1994. The sect remains active there today.

theretofore obscure sect called Aum Shinrikyo, which translated as Aum Supreme Truth. And they sent the canaries in first—literally. Policemen in protective suits bore the cages before them as they entered one of the locations of the suspected apocalyptic cult. When the birds lived, the siege was on. Day after day investigators emerged from the headquarters carrying ton after ton of chemicals—sodium cyanide, sodium fluoride, phosphorus trichloride, isopropyl alcohol, acetonitrile—some benign but others deadly, and still others that if mixed together might create something deadlier still. Enough to kill 4.2 million people, guessed one newspaper at the time; another topped it with an estimate of 10 million.

MAGNETIC MISFIT

The sect, which started as a yoga school, focused on the apocalypse to come—perhaps as soon as 1997. Its members insisted it merely practiced a form of Buddhism; but in reality it was a cult revolving around a long-haired, charismatic mystic, Shoko Asahara, a magnetic misfit who preached that government efforts to obliterate his movement would coincide with the beginning of the end of the world. Throughout the week after the attack, the hidden guru pleaded his innocence via radio broadcast and videotape, then made a run for it, leaving behind three luxury cars in a Tokyo hotel parking lot and a $300,000 lawsuit seeking compensation for the police raids.

The subway attack itself occurred on a sunny Monday, the day before a holiday celebrating the first day of spring. Because of that, the eight-car B711T train on Tokyo's Hibiya line was less crowded than usual. The perpetrator (masked, but a lot of people wore surgical masks during hay-fever season) boarded the train at Nakameguro station and easily found a seat. According to a witness quoted anonymously in the Tokyo papers, the man almost immediately began fiddling with a foot-long rectangular object wrapped in newspapers. At the next stop he set the package on the floor and strode briskly from the train. By then, says a witness, a moist spot had appeared on the wrapping.

Michael Kennedy, an Irishman in Tokyo for work, boarded the B711T at Roppongi station and saw that the spot had turned into "a pool of oily water on the floor. I noticed this quite offensive smell that I can't really describe." Others smelled it too and edged away. By the time the train reached Kamiyacho station, 11 minutes after the strange man had boarded, commuters panicked. Said Matthias Vukovich, an Austrian student who was in the car: "Everyone just ran off, and I didn't know what was going on. Someone yelled, 'It's gas!'" Looking back, Vukovich, whose eyes and head were beginning to hurt, glimpsed the puddle. Next to it sat an immobile old man. Named Shunkichi Watanabe, he was a retired cobbler. And he was already dying.

"I saw several dozen people on the platform who had either collapsed or were on their knees unable to stand up," recalled Nobuo Serizawa, a photographer. "One man was thrashing around on the floor like a fish out of water." Those who could walk staggered up three flights of stairs to the clean, fresh air. Some vomited; others lay rigid. Kennedy emerged, but he couldn't see; the gas had temporarily blinded him. Three young women clung together like small birds in a nest, trembling and crying. Yet they made no sound; the gas had silenced their voices.

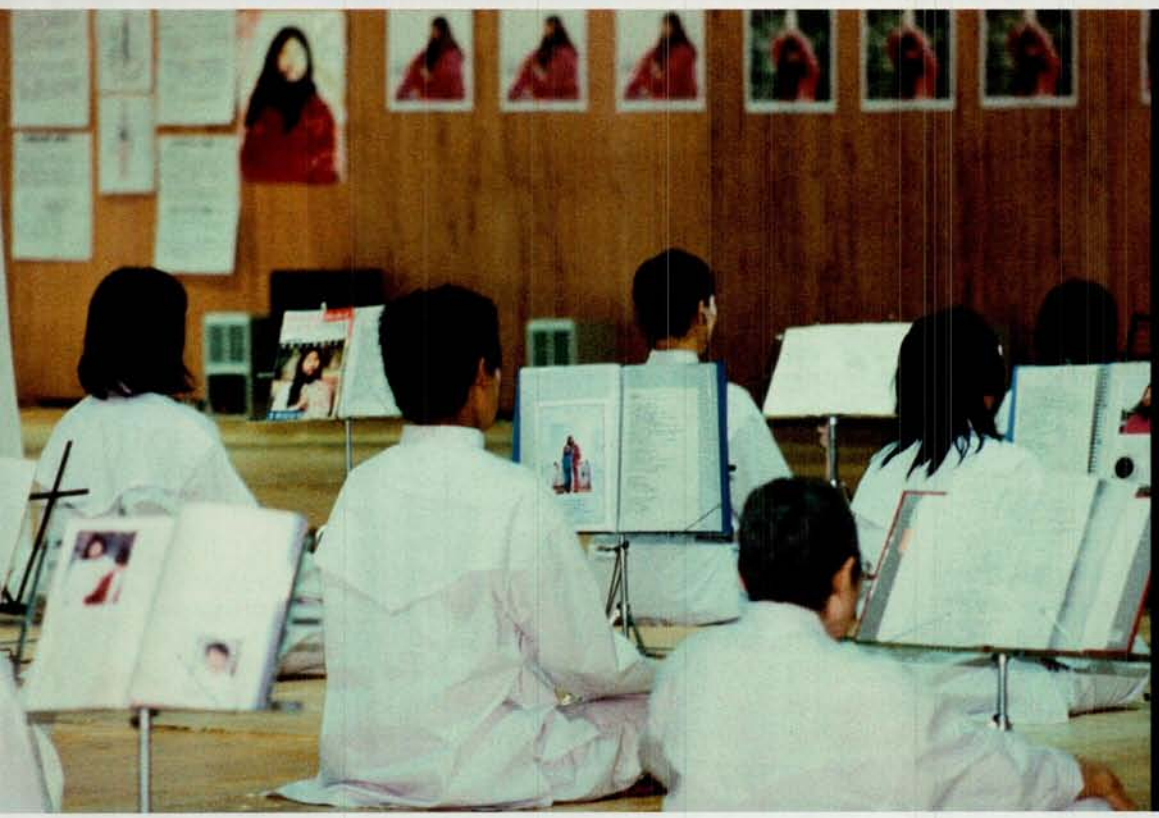
Several dozen people on the platform had either collapsed or were on their knees unable to stand up.

Within half an hour, similar scenes had unfolded at five other subway stops on three lines. Police arrived within minutes, administered some first aid and took thousands to hospitals, where doctors who suspected what had happened administered atropine, a sarin antidote. But for some it was too late. Kazumasa Takahashi, an assistant station manager at the Kasumigaseki stop, overstayed his shift to mop up the mystery liquid and dispose of the package that leaked it. He died a few hours later, and a colleague who helped him perished the next day.

The thousands of surviving victims of the gas attack were understandably bewildered. Said Kiyo Arai, a 22-year-old government employee who was stricken at the Kodenmacho station: "We're just innocent, ordinary people. It frightens me to think how vulnerable we are."

It was not lost on authorities that the three poisoned train lines converge at Kasumigaseki, the hub for top government offices, including the national police. If the trains had continued on schedule, all three would have arrived at that station between 8:09 a.m. and 8:14 a.m., the apex of rush hour. Said Atsuyuki Sassa, former director general of the Cabinet Security Affairs Office: "This is a declaration of war against the Japanese government."

The government took two days to plan its counterattack. Early Wednesday morning, observed on television by a



THE COMPOUND One of the main locations of Aum Shinrikyo sat at the foot of Mount Fuji (above). Inside, a production center for the creation of gases, including sarin, was discovered. On May 16, 1995, Shoko Asahara was arrested in his quarters there. Left, followers inside the compound of Kamikuishiki in early 1995. The tiny village, with fewer than 2,000 people, is located in the Nishiyatsushiro District. New members were recruited initially through a yoga and meditation class known as Oumu Shinsen no Kai.

transfixed public, Japan's national police deployed 2,500 troops to the doors of 25 Aum Shinrikyo offices around the country. Officially they were investigating the February kidnapping of the 68-year-old manager of a notary public office suspected of having been spirited away by the cult. But the gas masks and the birds betrayed their real concerns.

As it turned out, those precautions were not necessary. Cult members appeared to know the police were coming. Before the troops approached the main compound at Kamikuishiki, 110 miles west of Tokyo, the faithful swept searchlights over the grounds. When the siege force reached a makeshift barricade at the entrance, a young man shouted, "The Aum Supreme Truth has nothing to hide! It is an unjust search, but we will cooperate!"

What the investigators found first was bizarre. Inside the compound were 50 small cubicles, each containing a cult member lying on a blanket. All were suffering from malnutrition, but most claimed they were fasting voluntarily, and only six of the most seriously wasted were hospitalized. Another young woman was reportedly lifted from inside a small windowless container in which she had been confined since mid-January. The only arrests the police made were of three doctors on the premises and a cult official, on suspicion of unlawful confinement.

"The time to awaken and help me is upon you. Let's carry out the salvation plan and face death without regrets."

—SHOKO ASAHARA

POTTERY CHEMICALS

Then the police made a yet more dramatic discovery. In a warehouse down a hill from the group's living quarters, they uncovered vast quantities of toxic chemicals, among them many of the constituent ingredients of sarin. Cult members insisted the chemicals were for such legitimate purposes as making pottery and processing semiconductors for a cult-owned business. Says Kenji Mori, a professor of organic chemistry at the University of Tokyo who has visited the compound: "Logically that may be so, but the volume of ingredients makes the place look more like a chemical factory than a religious compound."

By now Aum Shinrikyo's lawyers were in full outcry. One day after the attack, Asahara had released two radio messages through intermediaries. In one he repeated, "I didn't do it. I'm innocent" over and over again in a singsong voice. In the other he exhorted, "Disciples, the time to awaken and help me is upon you. Let's carry out the salvation plan and face death without regrets." His attorney Yoshinobu Aoyama was less cosmic in his approach. "We practice our religion on the basis of Buddhist doctrines such as no killing," he said, "so it is impossible that we are responsible. In my personal view, sarin could not be made by those other than special persons like those in the U.S. military. I speculate that someone in the military and state authorities may have been involved." He called the raids "unprecedented religious persecution."

The huge burst of "new religions" in Japan's postwar years may have had its primary impulse in the end of the God-Emperor. But it also owed quite a bit to the fact that the new legal system made it very simple to receive official recognition as a religious movement, and the tax-free status accompanying recognition was attractive to many whose motives were as much financial as holy. In the mid-1990s, nearly 200,000 such groups were registered, and according to Robert Marra, executive director of the National Association of Japan-America Societies, most of the groups are made up of "very gentle, harmless people." But as in the U.S., which saw a similar flowering in the 1960s, gentle did not always stay that way.

When Shoko Asahara founded Aum Shinrikyo in 1987, he synthesized an amalgam of Buddhist and Hindu theology around the practice of yoga. Devotion to his teachings, he claimed in his writings, could lead adherents not only to a state of enlightenment but also to superhuman feats like levitation.

With the passage of time his vision grew darker. He spoke ever more frequently about an imminent apocalypse. In his book *Disaster Approaches the Land of the Rising Sun*, published in 1995, Armageddon arrives in a gas cloud from the United States, which is said to be ruled by Freemasons (elsewhere he has added those other stock villains, the Jews). The world's end, placed variously in the years 1997, 1999 and 2000, would leave behind enlightened followers of Aum and 10 percent of everyone else.

The increasing grandiosity of Asahara's doctrine, as well as its increasing paranoia, may have been prompted by the changing fortunes of his temporal empire. Recruiting heavily at universities and attracting a wealthy and educated membership, the cult had a meteoric rise. It became rich, bankroll-

THE VICTIMS
A passenger of the attack of March 20, 1995, received treatment on the subway platform. Twelve died and more than 5,500 were injured.

ing chains of discount stores, coffee shops and a personal-computer assembly factory. Aum was wealthy enough to survive an estimated $1 million loss on a foolhardy hunt for Australian gold in 1993.

By 1994 Aum boasted 36 Japanese branches with 10,000 members and a raft of international offices. Some, like the one in midtown Manhattan, offered little more than cheap videotapes of the master's lectures to fewer than 100 members. But in Russia, it flourished—and still does today, in 2018.

BRAINWASHING AND COERCION

Almost from the beginning, there were complaints that Asahara engaged in psychological manipulation, brainwashing and even coercion. Former group members describe fairly standard indoctrination practices like banning sex and limiting reading matter to Asahara's books, as well as real rigors: self-starvation, immersion in hot or cold water and drug ingestion, some of it involuntary. Acolytes wearing helmets equipped with electrodes, supposedly to increase their alpha waves, were sighted during the Kamikuishiki raid.

Questions remain about those who joined Asahara or found meaning in his words. There is a sort of person he attracted, of the lost generation.

Aum also appeared to engage in the classic—and lucrative—cult practice of taking over its members' financial assets. One 35-year-old who has since left the group said that when he became a devout follower, he was required to surrender his passport to the group and donate all his cash and belongings. He also recounted working under near slave-labor conditions at a sect project on the southern island of Kyushu. "Their strategy is to wear you down and take control of your mind," he said. "They promise you heaven, but they make you live in hell."

That speaker, who would not give his name, had worked with the Lawyers' Group on Behalf of the Victims of Aum Shinrikyo, one of the organizations founded to oppose the cult. It was formed in memory of the first people Aum may have kidnapped. In June 1989, an attorney named Tsutsumi Sakamoto took on the case of a family trying to locate their child, who had joined the cult. Five months later Sakamoto, his wife and infant son disappeared.

The case was never solved, but it cast a shadow over the organization. In February 1995, 68-year-old Kiyoshi Kariya tried to prevent his cult-member sister, a wealthy widow, from giving Aum the building in which his office was located. The sister disappeared, and shortly afterward an Aum member questioned Kariya on her whereabouts. On Feb. 28, four young men jumped out of a van and grabbed the 68-year-old. When police found a similar van with traces of Kariya's blood in it and the fingerprints of sect members, they issued a warrant for the arrest of a high-ranking cultist, Makoto Hirata. Kariya died while being held by Aum; years later, in 2014, Hirata was sentenced to nine years in prison for the kidnapping and two other crimes.

The cult's disquieting fascination with sarin stretched back to the early 1990s. In 1991 Aum was involved in a land dispute in the city of Matsumoto. In June of 1994, the hearings had been completed, and a three-judge panel was about to rule; but three weeks before their decision was due, someone released a cloud of sarin, a substance more usually associated with national arsenals and weapons treaties, into the Matsumoto night. Seven people were killed and 200 injured; of the three judges, all of whom were sleeping in the affected area, all required treatment, and one was hospitalized.

While police named a suspect in the Matsumoto sarin case in 1994, no one was charged. After the Tokyo subway attack, the blame was shifted onto the Aum Shinrikyo and the police chief, on behalf of the department, apologized to their original suspect.

Meanwhile, the cultists got off entirely. The villagers were furious, especially when the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper disclosed that police samples of the soil around the compound contained organic phosphorus compounds that are potential residues of sarin, matching residues in Matsumoto—and now those found in the Tokyo subway.

Even before the Matsumoto poisonings, sarin had become a staple of Asahara's rhetoric. A cult publication quoted a March 1994 sermon to his chapter in Kochi: "The law in an emergency is to kill one's opponent in a single blow, for instance the way research was conducted on soman [another Nazi gas] and sarin during World War II." He regularly charged that the United States was using the toxic chemical against himself and his followers.

That was the state of affairs on March 19, a day before the subway attack in 1995. That day, the Osaka police broke into one of the cult's offices and freed a student they claimed was being held there against his will. The raid had been a long time in the planning, both in order to assemble

evidence and because the Japanese authorities were particularly sensitive to charges that they were persecuting religious groups.

During the week after the attack, the guru himself laid low. He released a videotape answering questions posed by the NHK television network in which he echoed his lawyers' earlier line, denying involvement in Kiyoshi Kariya's kidnapping and providing innocent household explanations for the seized chemicals. "I don't understand," he concluded, "why it's said that these can be used to make sarin." A second video was recorded for cult followers and played at 36 local chapters. In it Asahara claimed that Aum members, including himself, had been the object of a poison-gas attack. The origin was "unmistakably" the United States.

Shoko Asahara was eventually arrested and tried on 27 counts of murder. Some of his disciples testified against him in what the Japanese media called the "trial of the century." In February of 2004, the would-be prophet was sentenced to death by hanging, and today sits in a Tokyo prison awaiting his execution.

UNDER ARREST
Shoko Asahara was pulled in for questioning at the Tokyo District Court on Sept. 25, 1995. He was formally charged with murder two weeks later.

Questions remain in Japan about those who joined him or found meaning in his words. There is a sort of person Asahara once attracted, of the lost generation: children who grew up in an era for whom family life barely exists. The father is always at work, and the child is at cram school, preparing for the next exam. Sometimes the system works and turns out efficient next-generation salarymen. But as some of these children reach adulthood, they begin to ask questions for which this narrowest of training provides no answers.

Those in search of meaning sometimes find their way to those like Shoko Ashara. They grasp at any world vision they are offered: perhaps fortune telling, channeling, yoga or mind control. Once lured, they pursue their new faith with the stupendous energy of the lost.

—Reporting by Edward W. Desmond and Irene M. Kunii/ Tokyo, with other bureaus

AUM SHINRIKYO LIVES ON

MOSCOW AND ST. PETERSBURG ARE JUST TWO CITIES WHERE THE DOOMSDAY CULT HAS FOUND NEW ADHERENTS

BY EILEEN DASPIN

SHOKO ASAHARA, THE FOUNDER OF AUM Shinrikyo, is on death row and his doomsday cult is designated a terrorist organization in many nations. His once 40,000-strong following in Japan has been decimated and bankrupt. But Aum is far from defunct. On the contrary: The apocalyptic militants appear to have put down roots a few thousand miles to the west, among the citizens of post-Soviet Russia.

The migration took some time. Immediately after the 1995 subway attacks, Aum, which was structured around Buddhism, Hinduism and yoga, retreated from sight. But eventually, three successors emerged, all under Asahara's influence. First there was Aleph, named for the initial letter of the Hebrew alphabet and meant to signify renewal; then came Hikari no Wa (Circle of Rainbow Light), a smaller offshoot that was formed in 2007 and was headed by Aum's former spokesman, Fumihiro Joyu; and a third faction that more recently split from Aleph called Yamada-ra no Shudan.

But the real hotbed of Aum or Aum-related groups appears to have shifted to Russia, where religion has rebounded since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, and where cult membership has grown to as many as 30,000. Though Aum is illegal in the country, organizers have been actively recruiting locals and pressuring converts for donations. In April 2016, Russian officials conducted more than two dozen raids in cities including Moscow and St. Petersburg to ferret out Aum affiliates, and they opened a criminal investigation.

Just a month earlier, almost 50 Russians were expelled from Montenegro, the former Yugoslav state, where they had come together with a handful of other believers for a conference in the town of Danilovgrad. Hotel staff grew suspicious when some of the guests showed what they described as "signs of ritualistic injury" and malnourishment, according to press reports.

The guests appeared to worship Asahara, who required members to reject materialism when they joined the group and prove it by handing over all of their wealth to him. When the authorities arrived at the Danilovgrad hotel, they found more than $62,000 in one room; some of the faithful were watching motivational videos of Asahara via laptop while others were practicing yoga in their pajamas.

"We're not sure of the activities of Aum Shinrikyo overseas," one official in Japan, where the ban on Aum has been lifted, told the Daily Beast at the time. "The Russian sect became semi-independent years ago and their links to Japan are tenuous. The group in Montenegro seems to be an offshoot of the Russian group. They do believe that Matsumoto [Asahara] is a messiah, but are they terrorists? Difficult to say."

MELDING BELIEFS Russian followers of Aum Shinrikyo meditate, a practice common to Hinduism and Buddhism.

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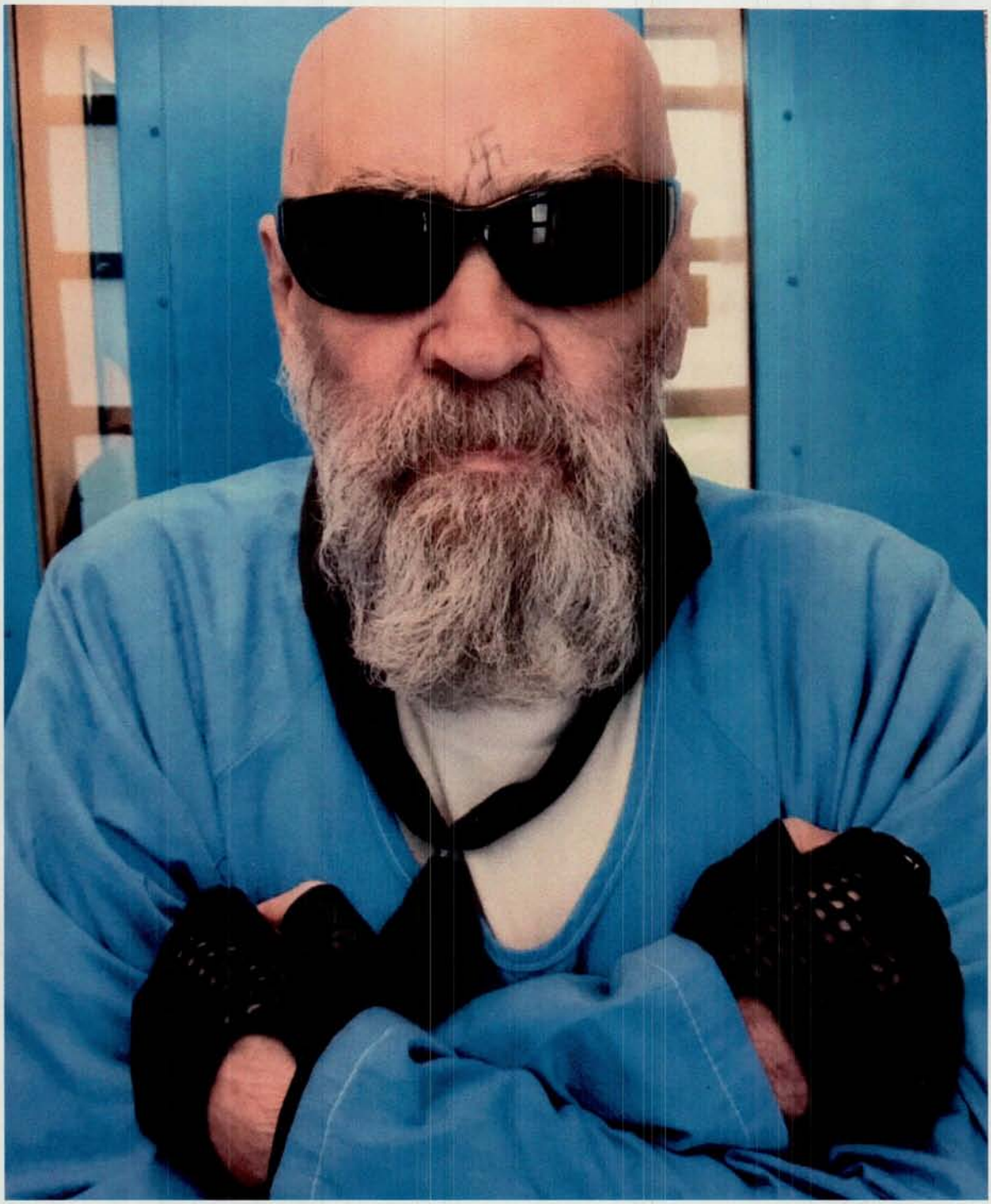
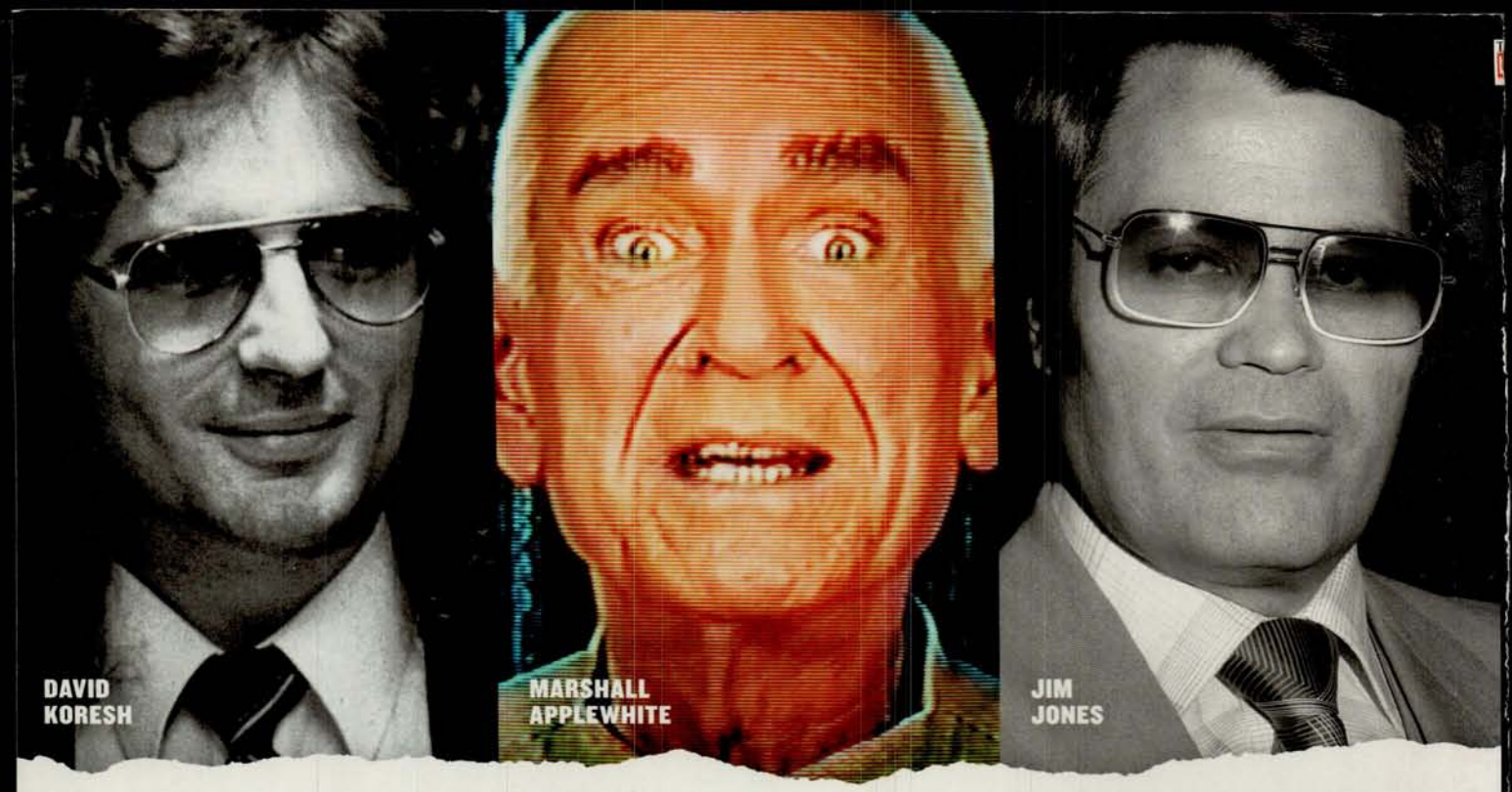
EVIL TILL THE END



CHARLES MANSON, 1934–2017
In January 2017, Manson, suffering from gastrointestinal problems, was briefly hospitalized but on his return to prison felt well enough to pose for a portrait. He died November 19, having served nine life terms.



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