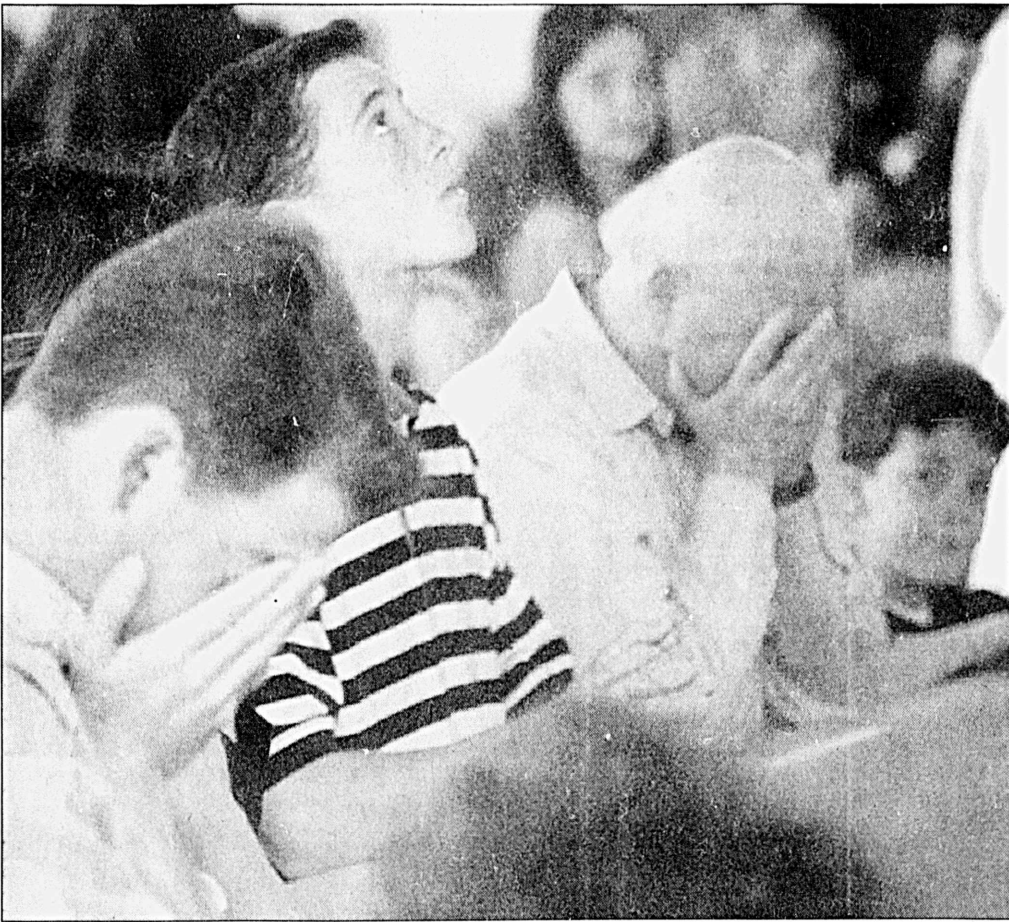


WORLD



Kevin Donahoe, left, prays with his brother John, centre, his father Tom, second from right, and brother Michael, far right, during Good Friday services at The Church of the Nativity in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., where 39 victims of an apparent mass suicide were found in a mansion on Wednesday.

Castration discovered in some cult members

SAN DIEGO (CP) — Some male members of a suicide cult — including the leader — had been castrated in apparent pursuit of the group's ideal of androgynous immortality, officials said Friday as details of the group's life and death trickled out.

The castrations were performed long before the deaths of 39 men and women in a million-dollar mansion north of San Diego, said county medical examiner Dr. Brian Blackbourne.

He also said that most of the victims died of suffocation rather than the cocktail of barbiturates, booze and applesauce or pudding that they ate after meticulous directions from the cult's leaders.

Only three of the dead had lethal levels of phenobarbital in their systems, Blackbourne said.

That, and written set of instructions found at the scene, suggest the cultists sedated themselves in groups, put bags over their heads and died peacefully.

Their bodies were arranged in ritual fashion, lying on their backs, arms at their sides, face and chest draped in diamond-shaped purple shrouds.

Cult members have said leader Marshall Applewhite preached celibacy, apparently as a way of reinforcing that the body was a disposable "container."

"Some of the men have been castrated," Blackbourne said. "Not all but some."

The castrations were done surgically and the incisions had healed, indicating the operation was not part of the suicide.

In the house, investigators found pictures of an idealized, dome-headed alien that the group's writings suggest they believed represents a higher plane of existence they could attain through suicide.

"It's the head of an alien, like you see in The X-Files, the medical examiner said.

Families of all but nine of the dead have been notified, Blackbourne said, releasing details of the lives of eight of those nine in hopes of prompting calls from families.

A Canadian was among the dead. CBC Radio said the Canadian was a woman from Calgary.

In Ottawa, a Foreign Affairs spokesman said: "We are aware of the possibility of the involvement of a Canadian citizen. The Canadian consulate general in Los Angeles is investigating at the moment."

The families began arranging for return of the bodies of 21 women and 18 men, which were discovered Wednesday in the nine-bedroom mansion.

For Nancie Brown, the grieving began when her teenage son went to his first cult meeting at a park in the San Francisco Bay area. That was 21 years ago.

Cosby suspect pleads innocent

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The 18-year-old man charged with murdering Bill Cosby's son pleaded not guilty Friday in a hearing where cameras were not permitted to photograph the suspect because of unspecified "identity issues."

Mikhail Markhasev, a tall, clean-cut, slender man with dark, slicked-back hair, entered the plea through his lawyer, Charles Lindner.

In addition to murder, Markhasev is charged with attempted robbery and use of a firearm during a crime. Prosecutors also allege a special circumstance of murder during attempted robbery, which could allow the death penalty.

Markhasev stood in a corner of a glass-shielded area of the courtroom with two sheriff's deputies standing close by.

He spoke only once when Municipal Court Judge Jacob Adajian asked if he understood his right to a speedy

preliminary hearing and his attorneys' decision to waive the 10-day limit to obtain more information in the case.

"Yes, sir," Markhasev said clearly. Neither Markhasev's relatives nor Bill Cosby or members of his family attended the brief hearing.

Markhasev agreed to delay further proceedings until April 18, when a preliminary hearing date will be set.

Media lawyer Kelli Sager argued in vain to allow cameras to photograph Markhasev, noting that police released a picture when he was arrested. But the judge refused, saying there are "identity issues in this case."

"For reasons that I cannot go into at this time, counsel for both sides do not want pictures taken," the judge said.

Ennis Cosby, 27, was shot to death Jan. 16 while changing a flat tire on his luxury convertible on a lonely road. Police have said it was a random robbery attempt.

The West Bank security chief rejected any implied criticism from Ross.

"We have been trying to calm the streets, and we have succeeded in Bethlehem, Hebron and Ramallah," Jebril Rajoab declared.

Israel has accused Arafat of orchestrating the rioting and of giving the go-ahead for terror attacks, including a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv last week that killed three Israeli women. Palestinians say Israel bears full blame for provoking violence by breaking ground on a new Jewish neighborhood in Arab east Jerusalem, which Palestinians want as a future capital.

Ross started his peace mission Thursday with talks with Arafat in Morocco, where Islamic leaders convened to discuss east Jerusalem. Leaders at the summit urged closing of Israel's diplomatic missions abroad, the London-based Saudi newspaper Al Hayat reported.

On Friday, Ross met separately with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat.

Manson denied parole

CORCORAN, Calif. (AP) — Charles Manson, grey with time but unrepentant as ever, kept his customary bravado after learning he will remain in prison for at least five more years.

A three-member panel of the California Board of Corrections decided that Manson, 62, is still too dangerous for society, denying him parole for the ninth time.

"I accept this decision. That's cool," Manson said.

"I'm involved in too many things. I have a web site I'm working on."

Manson is serving a life sentence for orchestrating the deaths of actress Sharon Tate and six others in 1969. The hearing opened with a parole board member describing the grisly killings. Manson appeared tearful but then rambled for an hour.

"I've killed a lot of people in my life," he said. "I have. But I was convicted for things I didn't do and I was let loose for things I did."

Manson also showed he kept up with the news,

mentioning the mass-suicide of 39 people in San Diego a day earlier.

"These monks that just took their heads in San Diego — they're way behind the times," he said.

Prosecutor Stephen Kay argued against Manson's release as he has done at the original trial and every parole hearing. Kay pointed out a prison report that said Manson has trafficked in drugs and threatened to kill guards.

The prosecutor said Manson "believes he is a law unto himself. The guy's in love with himself."

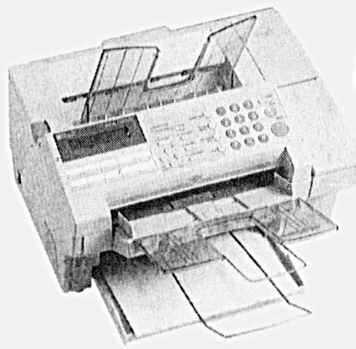
"He can manipulate others. . . Finding Charles Manson unsuitable for parole is the easiest decision you will have this year."

Manson chimed in: "I really wouldn't take a parole. I've got to go back to court and get my rights."

Manson contends he did not have a fair trial because he was tried along with three women followers. They ultimately admitted their roles in the killings but said Manson killed no one.

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