Charles Manson

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Charles Manson	
 Manson in 2014	
Born	Charles Milles Maddox November 12, 1934 Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.
Criminal charge	Murder, conspiracy
Criminal penalty	Death, reduced by abolition of death penalty to life in prison
Spouse(s)	Rosalie Jean Willis (1955–1958) Leona "Candy" Stevens (1959–1963)
Children	Charles Milles Manson, Jr., (mother Rosalie Willis) Charles Luther Manson (mother Leona Stevens) Valentine Michael "Pooh Bear" Manson (mother Mary Brunner) Matthew Roberts (biological)
Parent(s)	Kathleen Maddox (mother) Walker Scott (father) William Manson (stepfather)
Imprisoned at	Corcoran State Prison
Musical career	
Genres	Contemporary folk, psychedelic folk, freak folk
Occupation(s)	Singer-songwriter
Instruments	Vocals, guitar
Years active	1968–1970
Labels	Awareness
Associated acts	Phil Kaufman

Charles Milles Manson (born **Charles Milles Maddox**, November 12, 1934) is an American criminal who led what became known as the **Manson Family**, a quasi-commune that arose in the California desert in the late 1960s. In 1971 he was found guilty of conspiracy to commit the murders of seven people: actress Sharon Tate and four other people at Tate's home; and the next day, a married couple, Leno and Rosemary LaBianca; all carried out by members of the group at his instruction. He was convicted of the murders through the joint-responsibility rule, which makes each member of a conspiracy guilty of crimes his fellow conspirators commit in furtherance of the conspiracy's objective.[1][2] His followers also murdered several other people at other times and locations, and Manson was also convicted for two of these other murders (of Gary Hinman and Donald "Shorty" Shea).

Manson believed in what he called "Helter Skelter", a term he took from the song of the same name by the Beatles. Manson believed Helter Skelter to be an impending apocalyptic race war, which he described in his own version of the lyrics to the Beatles' song. He believed the murders would help precipitate that war. From the beginning of his notoriety, a pop culture arose around him in which he ultimately became an emblem of insanity, violence and the macabre. The term "helter skelter" was later used by Manson prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi as the title of a book that he wrote about the Manson murders.

At the time the Family began to form, Manson was an unemployed former convict, who had spent half of his life in correctional institutions for a variety of offenses. Before the murders, he was a singer-songwriter on the fringe of the Los Angeles music industry, chiefly through a chance association with Dennis Wilson, a founding member and the drummer of the Beach Boys. After Manson was charged with the crimes of which he was later convicted, recordings of songs written and performed by him were released commercially. Various musicians, including Guns N' Roses, White Zombie and Marilyn Manson, have covered some of his songs.

Manson's death sentence was automatically commuted to life imprisonment when a 1972 decision by the Supreme Court of California temporarily eliminated the state's death penalty.[3] California's eventual reinstatement of capital punishment did not affect Manson, who is currently incarcerated at Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, California.

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Early life

Childhood

Born to an unmarried 16-year-old named Kathleen Maddox (1918–1973),[4] in the General Hospital, in Cincinnati, Ohio, Manson was first named "no name Maddox".[5]:136–7[6][7] Within weeks, he was called *Charles Milles Maddox*.[5]:136–7[8][9] For a period after his birth, his mother was married to a laborer named William Manson (1910–?),[9] whose last name the boy was given. His biological father appears to have been Colonel Walker Scott (May 11, 1910 – December 30, 1954)[10] against whom Kathleen Maddox filed a paternity suit that resulted in an agreed judgment in 1937. Possibly, Charles Manson never really knew his biological father.[5]:136–7[7]

Several statements in Manson's 1951 case file from the seven months he would later spend at the National Training School for Boys in Washington, D.C., allude to the possibility that "Colonel Scott" was African-American.[5]:555 These include the first two sentences of his family background section, which read: "Father: unknown. He is alleged to have been a colored cook by the name of Scott, with whom Charles's mother had been promiscuous at the time of pregnancy."[5]:556 When asked about these official records by attorney Vincent Bugliosi in 1971, Manson emphatically denied that his biological father had African American ancestry.[5]:588 In addition, the 1920 and 1930 census list Colonel Scott and his father as white.

In the biography, *Manson in His Own Words*, Colonel Scott is said to have been "a young drugstore cowboy ... a transient laborer working on a nearby dam project." It is not clear what "nearby" means. The description is in a paragraph that indicates Kathleen Maddox gave birth to Manson "while living in Cincinnati", after she had run away from her own home, in Ashland, Kentucky.[11]

There is much about Manson's early life that is in dispute because of the variety of different stories he has offered to interviewers, many of which were untrue. Manson's mother was allegedly a heavy drinker.[5]:136–7 According to Manson, she once sold her son for a pitcher of beer to a childless waitress, from whom his uncle retrieved him some days later.[12]

When Manson's mother and her brother were sentenced to five years' imprisonment for robbing a Charleston, West Virginia, service station in 1939, Manson was placed in the home of an aunt and uncle in McMechen, West Virginia. Upon her 1942 parole, Manson's mother retrieved her son and lived with him in a series of run-down hotel rooms.[5]:136–7 Manson himself later characterized her physical embrace of him on the day she returned from prison as his sole happy childhood memory.[12] In 1947, Kathleen Maddox tried to have her son placed in a foster home but failed because no such home was available. The court placed Manson in Gibault School for Boys in Terre Haute, Indiana. After 10 months, he fled from there to his mother, who rejected him.[5]:136–7

First offenses

By burgling a grocery store, Manson obtained money that enabled him to rent a room.[5]:136–7 He committed a string of burglaries of other stores, including one from which he stole a bicycle, but was eventually caught in the act and sent to an Indianapolis juvenile center. He escaped after one day, but was recaptured and placed in Boys Town. Four days after his arrival there, he escaped with another boy. The pair committed two armed robberies on their way to the home of the other boy's uncle.[5]:137–146

Caught during the second of two subsequent break-ins of grocery stores, Manson was sent, at age 13, to the Indiana Boys School, where, he would later claim, he was brutalized sexually and otherwise.[12] After many failed attempts, he escaped with two other boys in 1951.[5]:137–146

In Utah, the three were caught driving to California in cars they had stolen. They had burgled several filling stations along the way. For the federal crime of taking a stolen car across a state line, Manson was sent to Washington, D.C.'s National Training School for Boys. Despite four years of schooling and an I.Q. of 109 (later tested at age 21),[5]:137–146 he was illiterate. A caseworker deemed him aggressively antisocial.[5]:137–146

First imprisonment

In October 1951, on a psychiatrist's recommendation, Manson was transferred to Natural Bridge Honor Camp, a minimum security institution. Less than a month before a scheduled February 1952 parole hearing, one of the boys there "took a razor blade and held it against another boy's throat while Manson sodomized him."[5]:137–146[12] Manson was transferred to the Federal Reformatory, Petersburg, Virginia, where he was considered "dangerous."[5]:137–146 In September 1952, a number of other serious disciplinary offenses resulted in his transfer to the Federal Reformatory at Chillicothe, Ohio, a more secure institution.[5]:137–146 About a month after the transfer, he became almost a model resident. Good work habits and a rise in his educational level from the lower fourth to the upper seventh grade won him a May 1954 parole.[5]:137–146

After temporarily honoring a parole condition that he live with his aunt and uncle in West Virginia, Manson moved in with his mother in that same state. In January 1955, he married a hospital waitress named Rosalie Jean Willis, with whom, by his own account, he found genuine, if short-lived, marital happiness.[12] He supported their marriage via small-time jobs and auto theft.[5]:137–146

Around October, about three months after he and his pregnant wife arrived in Los Angeles in a car he had stolen in Ohio, Manson was again charged with a federal crime for taking the vehicle across state lines. After a psychiatric evaluation, he was given five years' probation. His subsequent failure to appear at a Los Angeles hearing on an identical charge filed in Florida resulted in his March 1956 arrest in Indianapolis. His probation was revoked; he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment at Terminal Island, San Pedro, California.[5]:137–146

While Manson was in prison, Rosalie gave birth to their son, Charles Manson, Jr. During his first year at Terminal Island, Manson received visits from Rosalie and his mother, who were now living together in Los Angeles. In March 1957, when the visits from his wife ceased, his mother informed him Rosalie was living with another man. Less than two weeks before a scheduled parole hearing, Manson tried to escape by stealing a car. He was subsequently given five years probation, and his parole was denied.[5]:137–146

Second imprisonment

Manson received five years' parole in September 1958, the same year in which Rosalie received a decree of divorce. By November, he was pimping a 16-year-old girl and was receiving additional support from a girl with wealthy parents. In September 1959, he pleaded guilty to a charge of attempting to cash a forged U.S. Treasury check. He received a 10-year suspended sentence and probation after a young woman with an arrest record for prostitution made a "tearful plea" before the court that she and Manson were "deeply in love ... and would marry if Charlie were freed."[5]:137–146 Before the year's end, the woman did marry Manson, possibly so testimony against him would not be required of her.[5]:137–146

The woman's name was Leona; as a prostitute, she had used the name Candy Stevens. After Manson took her and another woman from California to New Mexico for purposes of prostitution, he was held and questioned for violation of the Mann Act. Though he was released, he evidently suspected, rightly, that the investigation had not ended. When he disappeared, in violation of his probation, a bench warrant was issued; an April 1960 indictment for violation of the Mann Act followed.[5]:137–146 Arrested in Laredo, Texas, in June, when one of the women was arrested for prostitution, Manson was returned to Los Angeles. For violation of his probation on the check-cashing charge, he was ordered to serve his 10-year sentence.[5]:137–146

In July 1961, after a year spent unsuccessfully appealing the revocation of his probation, Manson was transferred from the Los Angeles County Jail to the United States Penitentiary at McNeil Island. There, he took guitar lessons from Barker-Karpis gang leader Alvin "Creepy" Karpis, and obtained a contact name of someone at Universal Studios in Hollywood from another inmate, Phil Kaufman (who, after release, befriended Gram Parsons and after Parsons's death, hijacked the body and cremated it in the Joshua Tree desert).[13] According to Jeff Guinn's 2013 biography of Manson, Charlie's mother Kathleen moved from California to Washington state to be closer to him during his McNeil Island incarceration, working nearby as a waitress.[14]

Although the Mann Act charge had been dropped, the attempt to cash the Treasury check was still a federal offense. His September 1961 annual review noted he had a "tremendous drive to call attention to himself", an observation echoed in September 1964.[5]:137–146 In 1963, Leona was granted a divorce, in the pursuit of which she alleged that she and Manson had had a son, Charles Luther Manson.[5]:137–146

In June 1966, Manson was sent for the second time in his life, to Terminal Island, in preparation for early release. By March 21, 1967, his release day, he had spent more than half of his 32 years in prisons and other institutions.[5]:137–146 Telling the authorities that prison had become his home, he requested permission to stay.[5]:137–146 a fact touched on in a 1981 television interview with Tom Snyder.[15]

Manson Family

On his release day Manson received permission to move to San Francisco, where, with the help of a prison acquaintance, he moved into an apartment in Berkeley. In prison, bank robber Alvin Karpis had taught him to play the steel guitar.[5]:137–146[16][16] Now, living mostly by panhandling, he soon got to know Mary Brunner, a 23-year-old graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Brunner was working as a library assistant at University of California, Berkeley, and Manson moved in with her. According to a second-hand account, he overcame her resistance to his bringing other women in to live with them. Before long, they were sharing Brunner's residence with 18 other women.[5]:163–174

Manson established himself as a guru in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, which during 1967's "Summer of Love", was emerging as the signature hippie locale. Bugliosi said in his book *Helter Skelter* that Manson appeared to have borrowed philosophically from the Process Church, whose members believed Satan would become reconciled to Christ, and they would come together at the end of the world to judge humanity. Expounding a philosophy that included some of the Scientology he had studied in prison,[5]:163–164 he soon had the first of his groups of followers, which have been called the *Manson Family*, most of them female.[5]:136–146 Upon a staff evaluation of Manson when he entered prison in July 1961 at the U.S. Penitentiary at McNeil Island, Washington, Manson entered "Scientologist" as his religion.[5]:143–144

Before the summer ended, Manson and eight or nine of his enthusiasts piled into an old school bus they had re-wrought in hippie style, with colored rugs and pillows in place of the many seats they had removed. They roamed as far north as Washington state, then southward through Los Angeles, Mexico, and the southwest. Returning to the Los Angeles area, they lived in Topanga Canyon, Malibu, and Venice—western parts of the city and county.[5]:163–174

In 1967, Brunner became pregnant by Manson and on April 15, 1968, gave birth to a son she named Valentine Michael (nicknamed "Pooh Bear")[17] in a condemned house in Topanga Canyon and was assisted during the birth by several of the young women from the Family. Brunner (like most members of the group) acquired a number of aliases and nicknames, including: "Marioche", "Och", "Mother Mary", "Mary Manson", "Linda Dee Manson" and "Christine Marie Euchts".[18] It was November when the school bus set out from San Francisco with the enlarged group.[19]

Manson's presentation of himself

Actor Al Lewis, who had Manson babysit his children on a couple of occasions, described him as 'A nice guy when I knew him'.[20] Through Phil Kaufman, Manson got an introduction to young Universal Studios producer, Gary Stromberg, then working on a film adaptation of the life of Jesus set in modern America with a black Jesus and southern redneck 'Romans'. Stromberg thought Manson made interesting suggestions about what Jesus might do in a situation, seeming strangely attuned to the role; to illustrate the place of women he had one of his women kiss his feet, but then kissed hers in return. At the beach one day, Stromberg watched while Manson preached against a materialistic outlook only to be questioned about his well-furnished bus. Nonchalant, he tossed the bus keys to the doubter who promptly drove it away, while Manson watched apparently unconcerned.[21] According to Stromberg, Manson had a dynamic personality with an ability to read a person's weakness and 'play' them.[20] Trying to co-opt an influential individual from a motorcycle gang by granting him access to 'Family' women, Manson claimed to be sexually pathetic, and convinced the biker that his outsized endowment was all that kept the 'Family' females at Spahn ranch.[22] On one occasion, the enraged father of a runaway girl, who had joined the 'Family', pointed a shotgun at Manson and told him he was about to die. Manson quietly invited him to shoot before talking to the man about love and, with the aid of LSD, persuaded him to accept the situation.[23]

Involvement with Wilson, Melcher, *et al.*

The events that would culminate in the murders were set in motion in late spring 1968, when (by some accounts) Dennis Wilson of The Beach Boys picked up two hitchhiking Manson women, Patricia Krenwinkel and Ella Jo Bailey,[24] and brought them to his Pacific Palisades house for a few hours. Returning home in the early hours of the following morning from a night recording session, Wilson was greeted in the driveway of his own residence by Manson, who emerged from the house. Uncomfortable, Wilson asked the stranger whether he intended to hurt him. Assuring him he had no such intent, Manson began kissing Wilson's feet.[5]:250–253[25]

Inside the house, Wilson discovered 12 strangers, mostly women.[5]:250–253[25] Over the next few months, as their number doubled, the Family members who had made themselves part of Wilson's Sunset Boulevard household cost him approximately $100,000. This included a large medical bill for treatment of their gonorrhea and $21,000 for the accidental destruction of his uninsured car, which they borrowed.[26] Wilson would sing and talk with Manson, while the women were treated as servants to them both.[5]:250–253

Wilson paid for studio time to record songs written and performed by Manson, and he introduced Manson to acquaintances of his with roles in the entertainment business. These included Gregg Jakobson, Terry Melcher, and Rudi Altobelli (the last of whom owned a house he would soon rent to actress Sharon Tate and her husband, director Roman Polanski).[5]:250–253 Jakobson, who was impressed by "the whole Charlie Manson package" of artist/lifestylist/philosopher, also paid to record Manson material.[5]:155–161, 185–188, 214–219[27]

The account given in *Manson in His Own Words* is that Manson first met Wilson at a friend's San Francisco house where Manson had gone to obtain cannabis. The drummer supposedly gave Manson his Sunset Boulevard address and invited him to stop by when he would be in Los Angeles.[12]

Spahn Ranch

Manson established a base for the group at Spahn's Movie Ranch, not far from Topanga Canyon Boulevard, in August 1968 after Wilson's manager told the Family to move out of Wilson's home.[28][29] The entire Family then relocated to the ranch.[5]:250–253

The ranch had been a television and movie set for Western productions. However, by the late 1960s, the buildings had deteriorated and the ranch was earning money primarily by selling horseback rides.

Family members did helpful work around the grounds. Also, Manson ordered the Family's women, including Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, to occasionally have sex with the nearly blind, 80-year-old owner, George Spahn. The women also acted as seeing-eye guides for Spahn. In exchange, Spahn allowed Manson and his group to live at the ranch for free.[5]:99–113[30] Squeaky acquired her nickname because she often squeaked when Spahn pinched her thigh.[5]:163–174[26]

Charles Watson soon joined the group at Spahn's ranch. Watson, a small-town Texan who had quit college and moved to California,[31] met Manson at Dennis Wilson's house. Watson gave Wilson a ride while Wilson was hitchhiking after his car had been wrecked.[28]

Spahn nicknamed Watson "Tex" because of his pronounced Texan drawl.[29]

Helter Skelter

In the first days of November 1968, Manson established the Family at alternative headquarters in Death Valley's environs, where they occupied two unused or little-used ranches, Myers and Barker.[27][32] The former, to which the group had initially headed, was owned by the grandmother of a new woman in the Family. The latter was owned by an elderly, local woman to whom Manson presented himself and a male Family member as musicians in need of a place congenial to their work. When the woman agreed to let them stay there if they'd fix up things, Manson honored her with one of the Beach Boys' gold records,[32] several of which he had been given by Dennis Wilson.[33]

While back at Spahn Ranch, no later than December, Manson and Watson visited a Topanga Canyon acquaintance who played them the Beatles' *White Album*, then recently released.[27][34][35] Manson became obsessed with the group.[36] At McNeil, he had told fellow inmates, including Alvin Karpis, that he could surpass the group in fame;[5]:200–202, 265[37] to the Family, he spoke of the group as "the soul" and "part of 'the hole in the infinite'."[35]

For some time, Manson had been saying that racial tension between blacks and whites was growing and that blacks would soon rise up in rebellion in America's cities.[38][39] He had emphasized Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, which had taken place on April 4, 1968.[32] On a bitterly cold New Year's Eve at Myers Ranch, the Family members gathered outside around a large fire, listened as Manson explained that the social turmoil he had been predicting had also been predicted by the Beatles.[35] The *White Album* songs, he declared, told it all, although in code. In fact, he maintained (or would soon maintain), the album was directed at the Family itself, an elect group that was being instructed to preserve the worthy from the impending disaster.[38][39]

In early January 1969, the Family escaped the desert's cold and positioned itself to monitor L.A.'s supposed tensions by moving to a canary-yellow home in Canoga Park, not far from the Spahn Ranch.[5]:244–247[35][40] Because this locale would allow the group to remain "submerged beneath the awareness of the outside world",[5]:244–247[41] Manson called it the Yellow Submarine, another Beatles reference. There, Family members prepared for the impending apocalypse,[42][43] which around the campfire, Manson had termed "Helter Skelter", after the song of that name.

By February, Manson's vision was complete. The Family would create an album whose songs, as subtle as those of the Beatles, would trigger the predicted chaos. Ghastly murders of whites by blacks would be met with retaliation, and a split between racist and non-racist whites would yield whites' self-annihilation. Blacks' triumph, as it were, would merely precede their being ruled by the Family, which would ride out the conflict in "the bottomless pit", a secret city beneath Death Valley.[39] At the Canoga Park house, while Family members worked on vehicles and pored over maps to prepare for their desert escape, they also worked on songs for their world-changing album. When they were told Terry Melcher was to come to the house to hear the material, the women prepared a meal and cleaned the place; but Melcher never arrived.[38][42]

Encounter with Tate

On March 23, 1969,[5]:228–233 Manson, uninvited, entered 10050 Cielo Drive, which he had known as Melcher's residence.[5]:155–161 This was Rudi Altobelli's property; Melcher was no longer the tenant. As of that February,[5]:28–38 the tenants were Sharon Tate and Roman Polanski.

Manson was met by Shahrokh Hatami, a photographer and Tate's friend. Hatami was there to photograph Tate in advance of her departure for Rome the next day. Having seen Manson through a window as Manson approached the main house, Hatami had gone onto the front porch to ask him what he wanted.[5]:228–233

When Manson told Hatami he was looking for someone whose name Hatami did not recognize, Hatami informed him the place was the Polanski residence. Hatami advised him to try "the back alley", by which he meant the path to the guest house, beyond the main house.[5]:228–233 Concerned about the stranger on the property, Hatami went down to the front walk, to confront Manson. Appearing behind Hatami, in the house's front door, Tate asked him who was calling. Hatami said a man was looking for someone. Hatami and Tate maintained their positions while Manson, without a word, went back to the guest house, returned a minute or two later, and left.[5]:228–233

That evening, Manson returned to the property and again went back to the guest house. Presuming to enter the enclosed porch, he spoke with Rudi Altobelli, who was just coming out of the shower. Although Manson asked for Melcher, Altobelli felt Manson had come looking for him.[5]:226 This is consistent with prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi's later discovery that Manson had apparently been to the place on earlier occasions after Melcher's departure from it.[5]:228–233, 369–377

Speaking through the inner screen door, Altobelli told Manson that Melcher had moved to Malibu. He lied and said that he did not know Melcher's new address. In response to a question from Manson, Altobelli said he himself was in the entertainment business, although, having met Manson the previous year, at Dennis Wilson's home, he was sure Manson already knew that. At Wilson's, Altobelli had complimented Manson lukewarmly on

some of his musical recordings that Wilson had been playing.[5]:228–233

When Altobelli informed Manson he was going out of the country the next day, Manson said he'd like to speak with him upon his return; Altobelli lied that he would be gone for more than a year. In response to a direct question from Altobelli, Manson explained that he had been directed to the guest house by the persons in the main house; Altobelli expressed the wish that Manson not disturb his tenants.[5]:228–233

Manson left. As Altobelli flew with Tate to Rome the next day, Tate asked him whether "that creepy-looking guy" had gone back to the guest house the day before.[5]:228–233

Family crimes

Crowe shooting

On May 18, 1969, Terry Melcher visited Spahn Ranch to hear Manson and the women sing. Melcher arranged a subsequent visit, not long thereafter, on which he brought a friend who possessed a mobile recording unit; but he himself did not record the group.[5]:156,185[44]

By June, Manson was telling the Family they might have to show blacks how to start "Helter Skelter".[5]:244–247[43][45] When Manson tasked Watson with obtaining money supposedly intended to help the Family prepare for the conflict, Watson defrauded a black drug dealer named Bernard "Lotsapoppa" Crowe. Crowe responded with a threat to wipe out everyone at Spahn Ranch. Manson countered on July 1, 1969, by shooting Crowe at his Hollywood apartment.[5]:99–113[5]:91–96[46][47]

Manson's mistaken belief that he had killed Crowe was seemingly confirmed by a news report of the discovery of the dumped body of a Black Panther in Los Angeles. Although Crowe was not a member of the Black Panthers, Manson concluded he had and expected retaliation from the Panthers. He turned Spahn Ranch into a defensive camp, with night patrols of armed guards.[46][48] "If we'd needed any more proof that Helter Skelter was coming down very soon, this was it," Tex Watson would later write, "[B]lackie was trying to get at the chosen ones."[46]

Hinman murder

On July 25, 1969, Manson sent sometime Family member Bobby Beausoleil along with Mary Brunner and Susan Atkins to the house of acquaintance Gary Hinman, to persuade him to turn over money Manson thought Hinman had inherited.[5]:75–77[46][49] The three held the uncooperative Hinman hostage for two days, during which Manson showed up with a sword to slash his ear. After that, Beausoleil stabbed Hinman to death, ostensibly on Manson's instruction. Before leaving the Topanga Canyon residence, Beausoleil, or one of the women, used Hinman's blood to write "Political piggy" on the wall and to draw a panther paw, a Black Panther symbol.[5]:33, 91–96, 99–113[50]

In magazine interviews of 1981 and 1998–99,[51][52] Beausoleil would say he went to Hinman's to recover money they paid to Hinman for drugs that had supposedly been bad; he added that Brunner and Atkins, unaware of his intent, went along idly, merely to visit Hinman. On the other hand, Atkins, in her 1977 autobiography, wrote that Manson directly told Beausoleil, Brunner, and her to go to Hinman's and get the supposed inheritance—$21,000. She said Manson had told her privately, two days earlier, that, if she wanted to "do something important", she could kill Hinman and get his money.[49] Beausoleil was arrested on August 6, 1969, after he had been caught driving Hinman's car. Police found the murder weapon in the tire well.[5]:28–38 Two days later, Manson told Family members at Spahn Ranch, "Now is the time for Helter Skelter."[5]:258–269[46][53]

Tate murders

On the night of August 8, 1969, Manson directed Watson to take Atkins, Linda Kasabian, and Patricia Krenwinkel to "that house where Melcher used to live" and "totally destroy everyone in [it], as gruesome as you can."[5]:463–468[54] He told the women to do as Watson would instruct them.[5]:176–184, 258–269 Krenwinkel was one of the early Family members and one of the hitchhikers who had allegedly been picked up by Dennis Wilson.[5]:250–253 The current occupants of the house at 10050 Cielo Drive, all of whom were strangers to the Manson followers, were movie actress Sharon Tate, wife of film director Roman Polanski and eight and a half months pregnant; her friend and former lover Jay Sebring, a noted hairstylist; Polanski's friend and aspiring screenwriter Wojciech Frykowski; and Frykowski's lover Abigail Folger, heiress to the Folger coffee fortune.[5]:28–38 Tate's husband, Polanski, was in London working on a film project; Tate had been visiting with him and had returned to the United States only three weeks earlier.

When the murder team arrived at the entrance to the Cielo Drive property, Watson, who had been to the house on at least one other occasion, climbed a telephone pole near the gate and cut the phone line.[27] It was now after midnight, August 9, 1969.

Backing their car to the bottom of the hill that led up to the estate, the group parked there and walked back up to the house. Thinking the gate might be electrified or rigged with an alarm,[5]:176–184 they climbed a brushy embankment at its right and dropped onto the grounds.

Just then, headlights came their way from farther within the angled property. Watson ordered the women to lie in the bushes. He then stepped out and ordered the approaching driver, 18-year-old student and hi-fi enthusiast Steven Parent, to halt. As Watson leveled a 22-caliber revolver at Parent, the frightened youth begged Watson not to hurt him, claiming that he wouldn't say anything. Watson first lunged at Parent with a knife, giving him a defensive slash wound on the palm of his hand (severing tendons and tearing the boy's watch off his wrist), then shot him four times in the chest and abdomen. Watson then ordered the women to help push the car further up the driveway[5]:22–25[54]

After traversing the front lawn and having Kasabian search for an open window of the main house, Watson cut the screen of a window. Watson told Kasabian to keep watch down by the gate; she walked over to Steven Parent's Rambler and waited.[5]:258–269[5]:176–184[54] He then removed the screen, entered through the window, and let Atkins and Krenwinkel in through the front door.[5]:176–184

As Watson whispered to Atkins, Frykowski awoke on the living-room couch; Watson kicked him in the head.[54] When Frykowski asked him who he was and what he was doing there, Watson replied, "I'm the devil, and I'm here to do the devil's business."[5]:176–184[54]

On Watson's direction, Atkins found the house's three other occupants and, with Krenwinkel's help,[5]:176–184, 297–300 brought them to the living room. Watson began to tie Tate and Sebring together by their necks with rope he'd brought and slung up over a beam. Sebring's protest – his second – of rough treatment of the pregnant Tate prompted Watson to shoot him. Folger was taken momentarily back to her bedroom for her purse, out of which she gave the intruders $70. After that, Watson stabbed the groaning Sebring seven times.[5]:28–38[54]

Frykowski's hands had been bound with a towel. Freeing himself, Frykowski began struggling with Atkins, who stabbed at his legs with the knife with which she had been guarding him.[54] As he fought his way toward and out the front door, onto the porch, Watson joined in against him. Watson struck him over the head with the gun multiple times, stabbed him repeatedly, and shot him twice.[54] Watson broke the gun's right grip in the process.

Around this time, Kasabian was drawn up from the driveway by the "horrifying sounds". She arrived outside the door. In a vain effort to halt the massacre, she told Atkins falsely that someone was coming.[5]:258–269[54]

Inside the house, Folger had escaped from Krenwinkel and fled out a bedroom door to the pool area.[5]:341–344, 356–361 Folger was pursued to the front lawn by Krenwinkel, who stabbed – and finally, tackled – her. She was dispatched by Watson; her two assailants had stabbed her 28 times.[5]:28–38[54] As Frykowski struggled across the lawn, Watson murdered him with a final flurry of stabbing. Frykowski was stabbed a total of 51 times.[5]:28–38, 258–269[54]

Back in the house, Tate pleaded to be allowed to live long enough to have her baby, and even offered herself as a hostage in an attempt to save the life of her unborn child; her killers would have none of it, as either Atkins, Watson, or both killed Tate, who was stabbed 16 times.[5]:28–38 Watson later wrote that Tate cried, "Mother ... mother ..." as she was being killed.[54]

Earlier, as the four Family members were heading out from Spahn Ranch, Manson told the women to "leave a sign ... something witchy".[54] Using the towel that had bound Frykowski's hands, Atkins wrote "pig" on the house's front door, in Tate's blood. En route home, the killers changed out of bloody clothes, which were ditched in the hills, along with their weapons.[5]:84–90, 176–184[54]

In initial confessions to cellmates of hers at Sybil Brand Institute, Atkins would say she killed Tate.[5]:84–90 In later statements to her attorney, to prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi, and before a grand jury, Atkins indicated Tate had been stabbed by Tex Watson.[5]:163–174, 176–184 In his 1978 autobiography, Watson said that he stabbed Tate and that Atkins never touched her.[54] Since he was aware that the prosecutor, Bugliosi, and the jury that had tried the other Tate-LaBianca defendants were convinced Atkins had stabbed Tate, he falsely testified that he did not stab her.[55]

LaBianca murders

The next night, six Family members—Leslie Van Houten, Steve "Clem" Grogan, and the four from the previous night—rode out on Manson's orders. Displeased by the panic of the victims at Cielo Drive, Manson accompanied the six, "to show [them] how to do it."[5]:176–184, 258–269[56] After a few hours' ride, in which he considered a number of murders and even attempted one of them,[5]:258–269[56] Manson gave Kasabian directions that brought the group to 3301 Waverly Drive. This was the home of supermarket executive Leno LaBianca and his wife, Rosemary, a dress shop co-owner.[5]:22–25, 42–48 Located in the Los Feliz section of Los Angeles, it was next door to a house at which Manson and Family members had attended a party the previous year.[5]:176–184, 204–210

According to Atkins and Kasabian, Manson disappeared up the driveway and returned to say he had tied up the house's occupants. He then sent Watson up with Krenwinkel and Van Houten.[5]:176–184, 258–269 In his autobiography, Watson stated that having gone up alone, Manson returned to take him up to the house with him. After Manson pointed out a sleeping man through a window, the two of them entered through the unlocked back door.[56] Watson added at trial, he "went along with" the women's account, which he figured made him "look that much less responsible."[55]

As Watson related it, Manson roused the sleeping Leno LaBianca from the couch at gunpoint and had Watson bind his hands with a leather thong. After Rosemary was brought briefly into the living room from the bedroom, Watson followed Manson's instructions to cover the couple's heads with pillowcases. He bound these in place with lamp cords. Manson left, sending Krenwinkel and Leslie Van Houten into the house with instructions that the couple be killed.[5]:176–184, 258–269[56]

Before leaving Spahn Ranch, Watson had complained to Manson of the inadequacy of the previous night's weapons.[5]:258–269 Now, sending the women from the kitchen to the bedroom, to which Rosemary LaBianca had been returned, he went to the living room and began stabbing Leno LaBianca with a chrome-plated bayonet. The first thrust went into the man's throat.[56]

Sounds of a scuffle in the bedroom drew Watson there to discover Mrs. LaBianca keeping the women at bay by swinging the lamp tied to her neck. After subduing her with several stabs of the bayonet, he returned to the living room and resumed attacking Leno, whom he stabbed a total of 12 times with the bayonet. When he had finished, Watson carved "WAR" on the man's exposed abdomen. He stated this in his autobiography.[56] In an unclear portion of her eventual grand jury testimony, Atkins, who did not enter the LaBianca house, said she believed Krenwinkel had carved the word.[5]:176–184[57] In a ghost-written newspaper account based on a statement she had made earlier to her attorney,[5]:160,193 she said Watson carved it.[58]

Returning to the bedroom, Watson found Krenwinkel stabbing Rosemary LaBianca with a knife from the LaBianca kitchen. Heeding Manson's instruction to make sure each of the women played a part, Watson told Van Houten to stab Mrs. LaBianca too.[56] She did, stabbing her approximately 16 times in the back and the exposed buttocks.[5]:204–210, 297–300, 341–344 At trial, Van Houten would claim, uncertainly,[5]:433 that Rosemary LaBianca was dead when she stabbed her. Evidence showed that many of Mrs. LaBianca's 41 stab wounds had, in fact, been inflicted post-mortem.[5]:44, 206, 297, 341–42, 380, 404, 406–07, 433

While Watson cleaned off the bayonet and showered, Krenwinkel wrote "Rise" and "Death to pigs" on the walls and "Healter [*sic*] Skelter" on the refrigerator door, all in LaBianca blood. She gave Leno LaBianca 14 puncture wounds with an ivory-handled, two-tined carving fork, which she left jutting out of his stomach. She also planted a steak knife in his throat.[5]:176–184, 258–269[56]

Hoping, he said, for a double crime, Manson had gone on to direct Kasabian to drive to the Venice home of an actor acquaintance of hers, another "piggy". Depositing the second trio of Family members at the man's apartment building, he drove back to Spahn Ranch, leaving them and the LaBianca killers to hitchhike home.[5]:176–184, 258–269 Kasabian thwarted this murder by deliberately knocking on the wrong apartment door and waking a stranger. As the group abandoned the murder plan and left, Susan Atkins defecated in the stairwell.[5]:270–273

Justice system

Investigation

The Tate murders had become news on August 9, 1969. The Polanskis' housekeeper, Winifred Chapman, had arrived for work that morning and discovered the murder scene.[5]:5–6, 11–15 On August 10, detectives of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, which had jurisdiction in the Hinman case, informed Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) detectives assigned to the Tate case of the bloody writing at the Hinman house. Thinking the Tate murders were a consequence of a drug transaction, the Tate team ignored this and the crimes' other similarities.[5]:28–38[59] The Tate autopsies were under way and the LaBianca bodies were yet to be discovered.

Steven Parent, the shooting victim in the Tate driveway, was determined to have been an acquaintance of William Garretson, who lived in the guest house. Garretson was a young man hired by Rudi Altobelli to take care of the property while Altobelli himself was away.[5]:28–38 As the killers arrived, Parent had been leaving Cielo Drive, after a visit to Garretson.[5]:28–38

Held briefly as a Tate suspect, Garretson told police he had neither seen nor heard anything on the murder night. He was released on August 11, 1969, after undergoing a polygraph examination that indicated he had not been involved in the crimes.[5]:28–38, 42–48 Interviewed decades later, he stated he had, in fact, witnessed a portion of the murders, as the examination suggested. (See "Later events", below.)[60]

The LaBianca crime scene was discovered at about 10:30 pm on August 10, approximately 19 hours after the murders were committed. Fifteen-year-old Frank Struthers—Rosemary's son from a prior marriage and Leno's stepson—returned from a camping trip and was disturbed by seeing all of the window shades of his home drawn, and by the fact that his stepfather's speedboat was still attached to the family car, which was parked in the driveway. He called his older sister and her boyfriend, Joe Dorgan, accompanied the younger Struthers into the home and discovered Leno's body. Rosemary's body was found by investigating police officers.[5]:38

On August 12, 1969, the LAPD told the press it had ruled out any connection between the Tate and LaBianca homicides.[5]:42–48 On August 16, the sheriff's office raided Spahn Ranch and arrested Manson and 25 others, as "suspects in a major auto theft ring" that had been stealing Volkswagens and converting them into dune buggies. Weapons were seized, but because the warrant had been misdated the group was released a few days later.[5]:56

In a report at the end of August when virtually all leads had gone nowhere, the LaBianca detectives noted a possible connection between the bloody writings at the LaBianca house and "the singing group the Beatles' most recent album."[5]:65

Breakthrough

Still working separately from the Tate team, the LaBianca team checked with the sheriff's office in mid-October about possible similar crimes. They learned of the Hinman case. They also learned that the Hinman detectives had spoke with Beausoleil's girlfriend, Kitty Lutesinger. She had been arrested a few days earlier with members of "the Manson Family".[5]:75–77

The arrests had taken place at the desert ranches, to which the Family had moved and whence, unknown to authorities, its members had been searching Death Valley for a hole in the ground—access to the Bottomless Pit.[5]:228–233[61][62] A joint force of National Park rangers and officers from the California Highway Patrol and the Inyo County Sheriff's Office—federal, state, and county personnel—had raided both the Myers Ranch and Barker Ranch after following clues unwittingly left when Family members burned an earthmover owned by Death Valley National Monument.[5]:125–127[63][64] The raiders had found stolen dune buggies and other vehicles and had arrested two dozen people, including Manson. A Highway Patrol officer found Manson hiding in a cabinet beneath Barker's bathroom sink.[5]:75–77, 125–127

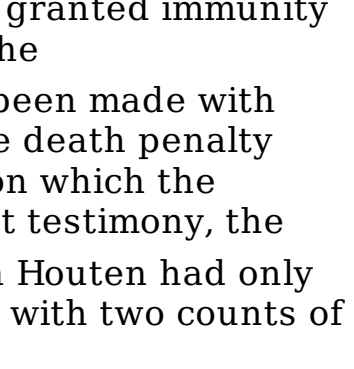
Following up leads a month after they had spoken with Lutesinger, LaBianca detectives contacted members of a motorcycle gang Manson tried to enlist as his bodyguards while the Family was at Spahn Ranch.[5]:75–77 While the gang members supplied information that suggested a link between Manson and the murders,[5]:84–90, 99–113 a dormitory mate of Susan Atkins informed LAPD of the Family's involvement in the crimes.[5]:99–113 As one of those arrested at Barker, Atkins had been booked for the Hinman murder after she'd confirmed to the sheriff's detectives that she'd been involved in it, as Lutesinger had said.[5]:75–77[65] Transferred to Sybil Brand Institute, a detention center in Los Angeles, she had begun talking to bunkmates Ronnie Howard and Virginia Graham, to whom she gave accounts of the events in which she had been involved.[5]:91–96

Apprehension

On 1 December 1969, acting on the information from these sources, LAPD announced warrants for the arrest of Watson, Krenwinkel, and Kasabian in the Tate case; the suspects' involvement in the LaBianca murders was noted. Manson and Atkins, already in custody, were not mentioned; the connection between the LaBianca case and Van Houten, who was also among those arrested near Death Valley, had not yet been recognized.[5]:125–127, 155–161, 176–184

Watson and Krenwinkel were already under arrest, with authorities in McKinney, Texas, and Mobile, Alabama, having picked them up on notice from LAPD.[5]:155–161 Informed that a warrant was out for her arrest, Kasabian voluntarily surrendered to authorities in Concord, New Hampshire, on December 2.[5]:155–161

Before long, physical evidence such as Krenwinkel's and Watson's fingerprints, which had been collected by LAPD at Cielo Drive,[5]:15, 156, 273, and photographs between 340–41 was augmented by evidence recovered by the public. On September 1, 1969, the distinctive .22-caliber Hi Standard "Buntline Special" revolver Watson used on Parent, Sebring, and Frykowski had been found and given to the police by Steven Weiss, a 10-year-old who lived near the Tate residence.[5]:66 In mid-December, when the *Los Angeles Times* published a crime account based on information Susan Atkins had given her attorney,[5]:160,193 Weiss' father made several phone calls which finally prompted LAPD to locate the gun in its evidence file and connect it with the murders via ballistics tests.[5]:198–199


County Sheriff mugshot of Manson in 1971

Acting on that same newspaper account, a local ABC television crew quickly located and recovered the bloody clothing discarded by the Tate killers.[5]:197–198 The knives discarded en route from the Tate residence were never recovered, despite a search by some of the same crewmen and months later by LAPD.[5]:198, 273 A knife found behind the cushion of a chair in the Tate living room was apparently that of Susan Atkins, who lost her knife in the course of the attack.[5]:17, 180, 262[66]

Trial

The trial began June 15, 1970.[5]:297–300 The prosecution's main witness was Kasabian, who, along with Manson, Atkins, and Krenwinkel, had been charged with seven counts of murder and one of conspiracy.[5]:185–188 Since Kasabian, by all accounts, had not participated in the killings, she was granted immunity in exchange for testimony that detailed the nights of the crimes.[5]:214–219, 250–253, 330–332 Originally, a deal had been made with Atkins in which the prosecution agreed not to seek the death penalty against her in exchange for her grand jury testimony on which the indictments were secured; once Atkins repudiated that testimony, the deal was withdrawn.[5]:169, 173–184, 188, 292 Because Van Houten had only participated in the LaBianca killings, she was charged with two counts of murder and one of conspiracy.

Originally, Judge William Keene had reluctantly granted Manson permission to act as his own attorney. Because of Manson's conduct, including violations of a gag order and submission of "outlandish" and "nonsensical" pretrial motions, the permission was withdrawn before the trial's start.[5]:200–202, 265 Manson filed an affidavit of prejudice against Keene, who was replaced by Judge Charles H. Older.[5]:290 On Friday, July 24, the first day of testimony, Manson appeared in court with an X carved into his forehead. He issued a statement that he was "considered inadequate and incompetent to speak or defend [him]self" – and had "X'd [him]self from [the establishment's] world."[5]:310[67] Over the following weekend, the female defendants duplicated the mark on their own foreheads, as did most Family members within another day or so.[5]:316 (Years later, Manson carved the X into a swastika. See "Remaining in view", below.)

The prosecution argued the triggering of "Helter Skelter" was Manson's main motive.[68] The crime scene's bloody *White Album* references (*pig*, *rise*, *helter skelter*) were correlated with testimony about Manson predictions that the murders blacks would commit at the outset of Helter Skelter would involve the writing of "pigs" on walls in victims' blood.[5]:244–247, 450–457

Testimony that Manson had said "now is the time for Helter Skelter" was supplemented with Kasabian's testimony that, on the night of the LaBianca murders, Manson considered discarding Rosemary LaBianca's wallet on the street of a black neighborhood.[5]:258–269 Having obtained the wallet in the LaBianca house, he "wanted a black person to pick it up and use the credit cards so that the people, the establishment, would think it was some sort of an organized group that killed these people."[69] On his direction, Kasabian had hidden it in the women's restroom of a service station near a black area.[5]:176–184, 190–191, 258–269, 369–377 "I want to show blackie how to do it," Manson had said as the Family members had driven along after the departure from the LaBianca house.[69]

Ongoing disruptions

During the trial, Family members loitered near the entrances and corridors of the courthouse. To keep them out of the courtroom itself, the prosecution subpoenaed them as prospective witnesses, who would not be able to enter while others were testifying.[5]:309 When the group established itself in vigil on the sidewalk, some members wore a sheathed hunting knife that, although in plain view, was carried legally. Each of them was also identifiable by the X on his or her forehead.[5]:339

Some Family members attempted to dissuade witnesses from testifying. Prosecution witnesses Paul Watkins and Juan Flynn were both threatened;[5]:280, 332–335 Watkins was badly burned in a suspicious fire in his van.[5]:280 Former Family member Barbara Hoyt, who had overheard Susan Atkins describing the Tate murders to Family member Ruth Ann Moorehouse, agreed to accompany the latter to Hawaii. There, Moorehouse allegedly gave her a hamburger spiked with several doses of LSD. Found sprawled on a Honolulu curb in a drugged semi-stupor, Hoyt was taken to the hospital, where she did her best to identify herself as a witness in the Tate-LaBianca murder trial. Before the incident, Hoyt had been a reluctant witness; after the attempt to silence her, her reticence disappeared.[5]:348–350, 361

On August 4, despite precautions taken by the court, Manson flashed the jury a *Los Angeles Times* front page whose headline was "Manson Guilty, Nixon Declares". This was a reference to a statement made the previous day when U.S. President Richard Nixon had decried what he saw as the media's glamorization of Manson. Voir dire by Judge Older, the jurors contended that the headline had not influenced them. The next day, the female defendants stood up and said in unison that, in light of Nixon's remark, there was no point in going on with the trial.[5]:323–238

On October 5, Manson was denied the court's permission to question a prosecution witness whom the defense attorneys had declined to cross-examine. Leaping over the defense table, Manson attempted to attack the judge. Wrestled to the ground by bailiffs, he was removed from the courtroom with the female defendants, who had subsequently risen and begun chanting in Latin.[5]:369–377 Thereafter, Older allegedly began wearing a revolver under his robes.[5]:369–377

Defense rests

On November 16, the prosecution rested its case. Three days later, after arguing standard dismissal motions, the defense stunned the court by resting as well, without calling a single witness. Shouting their disapproval, Atkins, Krenwinkel, and Van Houten demanded their right to testify.[5]:382–388

In chambers, the women's lawyers told the judge their clients wanted to testify that they had planned and committed the crimes and that Manson had not been involved.[5]:382–388 By resting their case, the defense lawyers had tried to stop this; Van Houten's attorney, Ronald Hughes, vehemently stated that he would not "push a client out the window". In the prosecutor's view, it was Manson who was advising the women to testify in this way as a means of saving himself.[5]:382–388 Speaking about the trial in a 1987 documentary, Krenwinkel said, "The entire proceedings were scripted – by Charlie."[70]

The next day, Manson testified. Lest Manson's address violate the California Supreme Court's decision in *People v. Aranda* by making statements implicating his co-defendants, the jury was removed from the courtroom.[5]:134 Speaking for more than an hour, Manson said, among other things, that "the music is telling the youth to rise up against the establishment." He said, "Why blame it on me? I didn't write the music." "To be honest with you," Manson also stated, "I don't recall ever saying 'Get a knife and a change of clothes and go do what Tex says.' "[5]:388–392

As the body of the trial concluded and with the closing arguments impending, attorney Ronald Hughes disappeared during a weekend trip.[5]:393–398 When Maxwell Keith was appointed to represent Van Houten in Hughes' absence, a delay of more than two weeks was required to permit Keith to familiarize himself with the voluminous trial transcripts.[5]:393–398 No sooner had the trial resumed, just before Christmas, than disruptions of the prosecution's closing argument by the defendants led Older to ban the four defendants from the courtroom for the remainder of the guilt phase. This may have occurred because the defendants were acting in collusion with each other and were simply putting on a performance, which Older said was becoming

obvious.[5]:399–407

Conviction and penalty phase

On January 25, 1971, guilty verdicts were returned against the four defendants on each of the 27 separate counts against them.[5]:411–419 Not far into the trial's penalty phase, the jurors saw, at last, the defense that Manson—in the prosecution's view—had planned to present.[5]:455 Atkins, Krenwinkel, and Van Houten testified the murders had been conceived as "copycat" versions of the Hinman murder, for which Atkins now took credit. The killings, they said, were intended to draw suspicion away from Bobby Beausoleil, by resembling the crime for which he had been jailed. This plan had supposedly been the work of, and carried out under the guidance of, not Manson, but someone allegedly in love with Beausoleil —Linda Kasabian.[5]:424–433 Among the narrative's weak points was the inability of Atkins to explain why, as she was maintaining, she had written "political piggy" at the Hinman house in the first place.[5]:424–433, 450–457

Midway through the penalty phase, Manson shaved his head and trimmed his beard to a fork; he told the press, "I am the Devil, and the Devil always has a bald head."[5]:439 In what the prosecution regarded as belated recognition on their part that imitation of Manson only proved his domination, the female defendants refrained from shaving their heads until the jurors retired to weigh the state's request for the death penalty.[5]:439, 455

The effort to exonerate Manson via the "copycat" scenario failed. On March 29, 1971, the jury returned verdicts of death against all four defendants on all counts.[5]:450–457 On April 19, 1971, Judge Older sentenced the four to death.[5]:458–459

Aftermath

On the day the verdicts recommending the death penalty were returned, news came that the badly decomposed body of Ronald Hughes had been found wedged between two boulders in Ventura County.[5]:457 It was rumored, although never proven, that Hughes was murdered by the Family, possibly because he had stood up to Manson and refused to allow Van Houten to take the stand and absolve Manson of the crimes.[5]:387, 394, 481 Though he might have perished in flooding,[5]:393–394, 481[71] Family member Sandra Good stated that Hughes was "the first of the retaliation murders".[5]:481–482, 625

Protracted proceedings to extradite Watson from his native Texas,[5]:204–210, 356–361[72] where he had resettled a month before his arrest,[73] resulted in his being tried separately. The trial commenced in August 1971; by October, he, too, had been found guilty on seven counts of murder and one of conspiracy. Unlike the others, Watson had presented a psychiatric defense; prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi made short work of Watson's insanity claims. Like his co-conspirators, Watson was sentenced to death.[5]:463–468

In February 1972, the death sentences of all five parties were automatically reduced to life in prison by *California v. Anderson*, 493 P.2d 880, 6 Cal. 3d 628 (Cal. 1972), in which the California Supreme Court abolished the death penalty in that state.[5]:488–491 After his return to prison, Manson's rhetoric and hippie speeches held little sway. Though he found temporary acceptance from the Aryan Brotherhood, his role was submissive to a sexually aggressive member of the group, at San Quentin.[74]

Before the conclusion of Manson's Tate/LaBianca trial, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* tracked down Manson's mother, remarried and living in the Pacific Northwest. The former Kathleen Maddox claimed that, in childhood, her son had suffered no neglect; he had even been "pampered by all the women who surrounded him."[7]

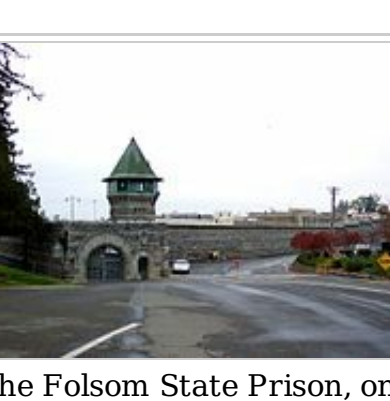
On November 8, 1972, the body of 26-year-old Vietnam Marine combat veteran James L. T. Willett was found by a hiker near Guerneville, California.[75] Months earlier, he had been forced to dig his own grave, and then was shot and poorly buried; his body was found with the one hand protruding from the grave and the head and other hand missing (likely because of scavenging animals). His station wagon was found outside a house in Stockton where several Manson followers were living, including Priscilla Cooper, Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, and Nancy Pitman. Police forced their way into the house and arrested several of the people there, along with Fromme who called the house after they had arrived. The body of James Willett's 19-year-old wife Lauren "Reni" Chavelle[76] Olmstead Willett was found buried in the basement.[75] She had been killed very recently by a gunshot to the head, in what the Family members initially claimed was an accident. It was later suggested that she was killed out of fear that she would reveal who killed her husband, as the discovery of his body had become prominent news. The Willetts' infant daughter was found alive in the house. Michael Monfort pled guilty to murdering Reni Willett, and Priscilla Cooper, James Craig, and Nancy Pitman pled guilty as accessories after the fact. Monfort and William Goucher later pled guilty to the murder of James Willett, and James Craig pled guilty as an accessory after the fact. The group had been living in the house with the Willetts while committing various robberies. Shortly after killing Willett, Monfort had used Willett's identification papers to pose as Willett after being arrested in an armed robbery of a liquor store.[76] News reports suggested that James Willett was not involved in the robberies[77] and wanted to move away, and was killed out of fear that he would talk to police. After leaving the Marines following two tours in Vietnam, Willett had been an ESL teacher for immigrant children.

Shea murder

In a 1971 trial that took place after his Tate/LaBianca convictions, Manson was found guilty of the murders of Gary Hinman and Donald "Shorty" Shea and was given a life sentence. Shea was a Spahn Ranch stuntman and horse wrangler who had been killed approximately 10 days after the August 16, 1969, sheriff's raid on the ranch. Manson, who suspected that Shea helped set up the raid, had apparently believed Shea was trying to get Spahn to run the Family off the ranch. Manson may have considered it a "sin" that the white Shea had married a black woman; and there was the possibility that Shea knew about the Tate/LaBianca killings.[5]:99–113[78] In separate trials, Family members Bruce Davis and Steve "Clem" Grogan were also found guilty of Shea's murder.[5]:99–113, 463–468[79]

In 1977, authorities learned the precise location of the remains of Shorty Shea and, contrary to Family claims, Shea had not been dismembered and buried in several places. Contacting the prosecutor in his case, Steve Grogan told him Shea's corpse had been buried in one piece; he drew a map that pinpointed the location of the body, which was recovered. Of those convicted of Manson-ordered murders, Grogan would become, in 1985, the first— and, as of 2015, the only one—to be paroled.[5]:509

Remaining in view


The Folsom State Prison, one of the facilities where Manson has been held

On September 5, 1975, the Family rocketed back to national attention when Squeaky Fromme attempted to assassinate US President Gerald Ford.[5]:502–511 The attempt took place in Sacramento, to which she and Manson follower Sandra Good had moved to be near Manson while he was incarcerated at Folsom State Prison. A subsequent search of the apartment shared by Fromme, Good, and a Family recruit turned up evidence that, coupled with later actions on the part of Good, resulted in Good's conviction for conspiring to send threatening communications through the United States mail and transmitting death threats by way of interstate commerce. The threats involved corporate executives and US government officials vis-à-vis supposed environmental dereliction on their part.[5]:502–511 Fromme was sentenced to 15 years to life, becoming the first person sentenced under United States Code Title 18, chapter 84 (1965),[80] which made it a Federal crime to attempt to assassinate the President of the United States.

In December 1987, Fromme, serving a life sentence for the assassination attempt, escaped briefly from Alderson Federal Prison Camp in West Virginia. She was trying to reach Manson, whom she had heard had testicular cancer; she was apprehended within days.[5]:502–511 She was released on parole from Federal Medical Center, Carswell on August 14, 2009.[81]

Interviews

In the 1980s, Manson gave four notable interviews. The first, recorded at California Medical Facility and aired June 13, 1981, was by Tom Snyder for NBC's *The Tomorrow Show*. The second, recorded at San Quentin Prison and aired March 7, 1986, was by Charlie Rose for *CBS News Nightwatch*; it won the national news Emmy Award for "Best Interview" in 1987.[82] The last, with Geraldo Rivera in 1988, was part of that journalist's prime-time special on Satanism.[83] At least as early as the Snyder interview, Manson's forehead bore a swastika, in the spot where the X carved during his trial had been.[84]

In 1989, Nikolas Schreck conducted an interview of Manson, cutting the interview up for material in his documentary *Charles Manson Superstar*. Schreck concluded that Manson was not insane, but merely acting that way out of frustration.[85][86]

On September 25, 1984, while imprisoned at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville, Manson was severely burned by a fellow inmate who poured paint thinner on him and set him alight. The other prisoner, Jan Holmstrom, explained that Manson had objected to his Hare Krishna chants and had verbally threatened him. Despite suffering second- and third-degree burns over 20 percent of his body, Manson recovered from his injuries.[5]:497

Later events

In a 1994 conversation with Manson prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi, Catherine Share, a one-time Manson-follower, stated that her testimony in the penalty phase of Manson's trial had been a fabrication intended to save Manson from the gas chamber and had been given on Manson's explicit direction.[5]:502–511 Share's testimony had introduced the copycat-motive story, which the testimony of the three female defendants echoed and according to which the Tate-LaBianca murders had been Linda Kasabian's idea.[5]:424–433 In a 1997 segment of the tabloid television program *Hard Copy*, Share implied that her testimony had been given under a Manson threat of physical harm.[87] In August 1971, after Manson's trial and sentencing, Share had participated in a violent California retail store robbery, the object of which was the acquisition of weapons to help free Manson.[5]:463–468

In January 1996, a Manson website was established by latter-day Manson follower George Stimson, who was helped by Sandra Good. Good had been released from prison in 1985, after serving 10 years of her 15-year sentence for the death threats.[5]:502–511[88]

In June 1997, Manson was found to have been trafficking in drugs by a prison disciplinary committee.[89] That August, he was moved from Corcoran State Prison to Pelican Bay State Prison.[89]

In a 1998–99 interview in *Seconds* magazine, Bobby Beausoleil rejected the view that Manson ordered him to kill Gary Hinman.[52] He stated Manson did come to Hinman's house and slash Hinman with a sword. In a 1981 interview with *Oui* magazine, he denied this. Beausoleil stated that when he read about the Tate murders in the newspaper, "I wasn't even sure at that point – really, I had no idea who had done it until Manson's group were actually arrested for it. It had only crossed my mind and I had a premonition, perhaps. There was some little tickle in my mind that the killings might be connected with them ..." In the *Oui* magazine interview, he had stated, "When the [Tate-LaBianca murders] happened, I knew who had done it. I was fairly certain."[51]

William Garretson, once the young caretaker at Cielo Drive, indicated in a program broadcast in July 1999 on *E!*, that he had, in fact, seen and heard a portion of the Tate murders from his location in the property's guest house. This comported with the unofficial results of the polygraph examination that had been given to Garretson on August 10, 1969, and that had effectively eliminated him as a suspect.[90] The LAPD officer who conducted the examination had concluded Garretson was "clean" on participation in the crimes but "muddy" as to his having heard anything.[5]:28–38 Garretson did not explain why he had withheld his knowledge of the events.[60]

It was announced in early 2008 that Susan Atkins was suffering from brain cancer.[91] An application for compassionate release, based on her health status, was denied in July 2008,[91] and she was denied parole for the 18th and final time on September 2, 2009.[92] Atkins died of natural causes 22 days later, on September 24, 2009, at the Central California Women's facility in Chowchilla.[93][94]

Further developments


Manson at age 76 in June 2011

On September 5, 2007, MSNBC aired *The Mind of Manson*, a complete version of a 1987 interview at California's San Quentin State Prison. The footage of the "unshackled, unapologetic, and unruly" Manson had been considered "so unbelievable" that only seven minutes of it had originally been broadcast on *The Today Show*, for which it had been recorded.[95]

In a January 2008 segment of the Discovery Channel's *Most Evil*, Barbara Hoyt said that the impression that she had accompanied Ruth Ann Moorehouse to Hawaii just to avoid testifying at Manson's trial was erroneous. Hoyt said she cooperated with the Family because she was "trying to keep them from killing my family." She stated that, at the time of the trial, she was "constantly being threatened: 'Your family's gonna die. The [murders] could be repeated at your house.' "[96]

On March 15, 2008, the Associated Press reported that forensic investigators had conducted a search for human remains at Barker Ranch the previous month. Following up on longstanding rumors that the Family had killed hitchhikers and runaways who had come into its orbit during its time at Barker, the investigators identified "two likely clandestine grave sites ... and one additional site that merits further investigation."[97] Though they recommended digging, CNN reported on March 28 that the Inyo County sheriff, who questioned the methods they employed with search dogs, had ordered additional tests before any excavation.[98] On May 9, after a delay caused by damage to test equipment,[99] the sheriff announced that test results had been inconclusive and that "exploratory excavation" would begin on May 20.[100] In the meantime, Tex Watson had commented publicly that "no one was killed" at the desert camp during the month-and-a-half he was there, after the Tate-LaBianca murders.[101][102] On May 21, after two days of work, the sheriff brought the search to an end; four potential gravesites had been dug up and had been found to hold no human remains.[103][104] In March 2009, a photograph taken of a 74-year old Manson, showing a receding hairline, grizzled gray beard and hair and the swastika tattoo still prominent on his forehead, was released to the public by California corrections officials.[105]

In September 2009, The History Channel broadcast a docudrama covering the Family's activities and the murders as part of its coverage on the 40th anniversary of the killings.[106] The program included an in-depth interview with Linda Kasabian, who spoke publicly for the first time since a 1989 appearance on *A Current Affair*, an American television news magazine.[106] Also included in the History Channel program were interviews with Vincent Bugliosi, Catherine Share, and Debra Tate, sister of Sharon.[107]

As the 40th anniversary of the Tate-LaBianca murders approached, in July 2009, *Los Angeles* magazine published an "oral history", in which former Family members, law-enforcement officers, and others involved with Manson, the arrests, and the trials offered their recollections of—and observations on—the events that made Manson notorious. In the article, Juan Flynn, a Spahn Ranch worker who had become associated with Manson and the Family, said, "Charles Manson got away with everything. People will say, 'He's in jail.' But Charlie is exactly where he wants to be."[108]

In November 2009, a Los Angeles DJ and songwriter named Matthew Roberts released correspondence and other evidence indicating he may have been biologically fathered by Manson. Roberts' biological mother claims to have been a member of the Manson Family who left in the summer of 1967 after being raped by Manson; she returned to her parents' home to complete the pregnancy, gave birth on March 22, 1968, and subsequently put Roberts up for adoption. Manson himself has stated that he "could be the father", acknowledging the biological mother and a sexual relationship with her during 1967; this was nearly two years before the Family began its murderous phase.[109][110]

In 2010, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Manson was caught with a cell phone in 2009 and had contacted people in California, New Jersey, Florida and British Columbia. A spokesperson for the California Department of Corrections stated that it was not known if Manson had used the phone for criminal purposes.[111]

On October 4, 2012, Bruce Davis, who had been convicted of the murder of Shorty Shea and the attempted robbery by Manson Family members of a Hawthorne gun shop in 1971, was recommended for parole by the California Department of Corrections at his 27th parole hearing. In 2010, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger had reversed the board's previous finding in favor of Davis, denying him parole for two more years.[112] On March 1, 2013, and again on August 8, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown also denied parole for Davis.[113]

On November 17, 2014, it was announced that Manson was engaged to 26-year-old Afton Elaine "Star" Burton who, while still in prison, and had obtained a marriage license on November 7.[114] Burton had been visiting Manson in prison for at least nine years, and maintained several websites that claimed his innocence.[115] The wedding license expired on February 5, 2015, without a marriage ceremony taking place.[116] It was later reported that according to a journalist Daniel Simone, the wedding was cancelled after it was discovered that Burton only wanted to marry Manson so she and a friend Craig "Gray Wolf" Hammond could use his corpse as a tourist attraction after he dies.[116][117] According to Simone, Manson believes he will never die, and may just be using the possibility of marriage as a way to encourage Burton and Hammond to continue visiting him and bringing him gifts.[116] Together with a co-author Heidi Jordan Ley and with the assistance of some of Manson's fellow prisoners, Simone has written a book about Manson and is seeking a publisher for it.[116] Burton said on her web site that the reason the marriage did not take place is merely logistical – that Manson is suffering from an infection and has been in a prison medical facility for two months, and cannot receive visitors.[116] She said she still hoped the marriage license will be renewed and the marriage will take place.[116]

Parole hearings

A footnote to the conclusion of *California v. Anderson*, the 1972 decision that neutralized California's death sentences, stated, "[A]ny prisoner now under a sentence of death ... may file a petition for writ of habeas corpus in the superior court inviting that court to modify its judgment to provide for the appropriate alternative punishment of life imprisonment or life imprisonment without possibility of parole specified by statute for the crime for which he was sentenced to death."[118]

This made Manson eligible to apply for parole after seven years' incarceration.[5]:488 His first parole hearing took place on November 16, 1978, at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville.[5]:498[119]

Manson was denied parole for the 12th time on April 11, 2012. Manson did not attend the hearing where prison officials argued that Manson had a history of controlling behavior and mental health issues including schizophrenia and paranoid delusional disorder[120] and was too great a danger to be released.[121] It was determined that Manson would not be reconsidered for parole for another 15 years,[122] at which time he would be 92 years old.[123]

His California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation inmate number at Corcoran State Prison is B33920.[124][125]

Manson and culture

Recordings

On March 6, 1970, the day the court vacated Manson's status as his own attorney,[5]:258–269 *LIE*, an album of Manson music, was released.[126][127][128] This included "Cease to Exist", a Manson composition the Beach Boys had recorded with modified lyrics and the title "Never Learn Not to Love".[129][130] Over the next couple of months, only about 300 of the album's 2,000 copies sold.[131]

Since that time, there have been several releases of Manson recordings—both musical and spoken.[132] *The Family Jams* includes two compact discs of Manson's songs recorded by the Family in 1970, after Manson and the others had been arrested. Guitar and lead vocals are supplied by Steve Grogan;[5]:125–127 additional vocals are supplied by Lynette Fromme, Sandra Good, Catherine Share, and others.[132][133] *One Mind*, an album of music, poetry, and spoken word, new at the time of its release, in April 2005,[132] was put out under a Creative Commons license.[134][135]

American rock band Guns N' Roses recorded Manson's "Look at Your Game, Girl", included as an unlisted 13th track on their 1993 album *"The Spaghetti Incident?"*[5]:488–491[136][137] "My Monkey", which appears on *Portrait of an American Family* by Marilyn Manson (no relation, as is explained below), includes the lyrics "I had a little monkey / I sent him to the country and I fed him on gingerbread / Along came a choo-choo / Knocked my monkey cuckoo / And now my monkey's dead."[138] These lyrics are from Manson's "Mechanical Man",[139] which is heard on *LIE*. Crispin Glover covered "Never Say 'Never' To Always" on his album *The Big Problem ≠ The Solution. The Solution = Let It Be* released in 1989.

Several of Manson's songs, including "I'm Scratching Peace Symbols on Your Tombstone" (a.k.a. "First They Made Me Sleep in the Closet"), "Garbage Dump", and "I Can't Remember When", are featured in the soundtrack of the 1976 TV-movie *Helter Skelter*, where they are performed by Steve Railsback, who portrays Manson.[140]

According to a popular urban legend, Manson unsuccessfully auditioned for the Monkees in late 1965; this is refuted by the fact that Manson was still incarcerated at McNeil Island at that time.[141]

Cultural reverberation

Beginning in January 1970, Manson was embraced by the underground newspapers *Los Angeles Free Press* and *Tuesday's Child*, with the latter proclaiming him "Man of the Year".[142] In June 1970, he was the subject of a *Rolling Stone* cover story, "Charles Manson: The Incredible Story of the Most Dangerous Man Alive".[142] When a *Rolling Stone* writer visited the Los Angeles District Attorney's office in preparing that story,[143] he was shocked by a photograph of the bloody "Healter [*sic*] Skelter" that would bind Manson to popular culture.[144]

Despite the Weathermen's views of themselves as "white pig babies"[145] and their determination to plug themselves into the black revolution (whether the black revolution wanted them or not), Bernardine Dohrn, who assumed leadership of the group up after it went underground and became more aggressive, said about the Tate murders: "Dig it, first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the same room with them, then they even shoved a fork into a victim's stomach. Wild!".[145]

Manson has been a presence in fashion,[146][147] graphics,[148][149] music,[150] and movies, as well as on television and the stage. In an afterword composed for the 1994 edition of the non-fiction book *Helter Skelter*, prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi quoted a BBC employee's assertion that a "neo-Manson cult" existing then in Europe was represented by, among other things, approximately 70 rock bands playing songs by Manson and "songs in support of him".[5]:488–491

Manson has even influenced the names of musical performers such as Kasabian, Spahn Ranch, and Marilyn Manson, the last a stage name assembled from "Charles Manson" and "Marilyn Monroe".[151] The story of the Family's activities inspired John Moran's opera *The Manson Family* and Stephen Sondheim's musical *Assassins*, the latter of which has Lynette Fromme as a character.[152][153] The tale has been the subject of several movies such as the 1984 film *Manson Family Movies*,[154] including two television dramatizations of *Helter Skelter*.[155][156] In the *South Park* episode "Merry Christmas, Charlie Manson", Manson is a comic character whose inmate number is 06660, an apparent reference to 666, the Biblical "number of the beast".[157][158]

The 2002 novel *The Dead Circus* by John Kaye includes the activities of the Manson Family as a major plot point.[159]

Documentaries

- *Manson* (1973), directed by Robert Hendrickson and Laurence Merrick[160]
- *Charles Manson Superstar* (1989), directed by Nikolas Schreck[161]

See also

- Doomsday cult
- Helter Skelter (Manson scenario)
- List of United States death row inmates

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