

Squeaky

The Life and Times of
Lynette Alice Fromme

Jess Bravin

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FRONT ENDPAPER: Her fellow performers recognized Lynette's talent. Here, on a visit to a military base, the Lariats hoist Lynette (*right*) and her friend Nora Lynn Stevens above the crowd. (Credit: Courtesy J. Tiltman Hall)

BACK ENDPAPER: Secret Service agents and Sacramento city police officers arrest Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme in Capitol Park, September 5, 1975, moments after she tried to shoot President Gerald Ford as he walked through the park to the state capitol building. (Credit: Dick Schmidt, *Sacramento Bee*)

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For Ben and Syd
my parents

spiritualist organization that tried to get people to nirvana through meditation, yoga, and celibacy. That trip had failed.

Bobby brought Lulu down to Spahn Ranch, and she was at home.

But things were getting tougher. In Los Angeles, Dennis Wilson had fallen under some new influences, and moved out of the Sunset Boulevard house. The Family could no longer crash there. There were tensions up at the ranch. Shorty Shea and the other hands were always nosing about, grumbling. Worse, now that the Family wasn't on the road so much and couldn't get pulled over, the cops were coming to them. They would claim they were looking for stolen vehicles and laugh arrogantly when told that people had just "given" their cars to Charlie. They'd come up there looking for kids who were trying hard not to be found by their parents and the society that had done them wrong. Kids, Lyn said, who decided they weren't going back to their parents who had abused them.

Charlie would talk to the police. He was as old as they were and could treat them like his brothers. But still, the harrassment became insufferable. The Family had tried to get away from the city, and now the city was crawling up to the country, coming back to get them. The pressures touched them when they tripped.

On one trip, Lyn clung to Charlie's arm tightly.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I'm hanging on to you," she said.

Uncertainty came through his eyes. "No," he said. "I'm hanging on to you."

"No, no! I'm hanging on to you!" she wailed, and started thrashing her arms. "No! No, Charlie!" she shouted again. "It's not true. . . . Charlie. . . . Charlie! It's not so!"

He said it was. He was hanging on to her, even as he left the room.

She rolled into a woodpile and flailed her arms, kicked her feet, cutting herself on the stacked cords. Her arms and legs, even her face bled before she was pulled away, and talked through her changes, as her body convulsed.

It was time to leave.

The girl they called Capistrano, Cathy Gillies, had a grandmother who owned some property in Inyo County. The place was some ten hours away from Spahn Ranch, practically inaccessible in the desolate outback of California. They drove up the highways to the town of Trona, then down a gravel road that rattled the bus. When the bus could go no farther, they had to hike the rest of the way, a two-and-a-half-hour trek. Sadie and some of the others who marched ahead had trouble with their packs, and sometimes dropped things so they wouldn't have to carry them. Lyn, who took up the rear, was sure to reclaim all the things the others wouldn't carry.

The property—Myers Ranch, and the nearby Barker Ranch—lay in Goler

Wash, which crossed the Panamint Range in the badlands of Death Valley. They were south of the Last Chance Mountains, west of the Funeral Mountains. Charlie liked it. Lyn liked it, too. "I flashed on the reality of Disneyland . . . that it's already here . . . every bit of it!" she recalled.

The county's name, Inyo, was an Indian word meaning "Dwelling place of a great spirit." Out there, among the cactus and the scorpions, was where Charlie wanted to dwell. The rivers that ran down from the mountain ranges flowed underground, feeding the oases where prospectors and hermits built their homes. Charlie explained that the hole that led to this underground world was well known to the native tribes, that the Aztec emperor Montezuma had not perished at the hands of the conquistadors—"cross-peddling Spaniards," he called them—but had left Mexico with a small band of hardy warriors and robust women, and come to the hole in the Valley of Death, Death Valley. It was their cleansing ground of the spirit, and once in the hole you could travel anywhere in the earth. That's how Hopi writings got to the Himalayas, he said. Of course, the hole had remained concealed after Montezuma had descended into it 450 years ago. To find the hole leading to the underground rivers would be really something, Charlie said. Especially since the temperatures in Death Valley could hit 120 degrees in the day, and drop near freezing at night.

The place wasn't much, just two stone houses, a shed, and a small stone-lined pool fed by a trickling stream. The property was adorned with a junk garden made up of rusted car and bicycle parts, and the wreckage of a plane crash. But Charlie was pleased. He gave his framed gold record, awarded for the album *The Beach Boys Today*, to the owner, Arlene Barker.

The Family was so far from the city, they could focus on what was real. And what was real was the music. They had to tighten up the sound, deliver the message better when they went into the studio again. Then they could bring the message to everyone.

For moving to the desert did not bring an end to Charlie's mission. There was still business to conduct all around California, and groups regularly were dispatched to the Bay Area, to Sacramento, and to Los Angeles, for engine parts and drugs and other necessities. Conventional vehicles wouldn't do in Death Valley, so they started to acquire jeeps and dune buggies, fixing them up, hiding them out of the way.

Lyn, accompanied by Sandy and Ouisch, would head into the nearest big city, Las Vegas, and panhandle at colleges and warehouses. They said they were from an Indian tribe in the desert and received donations of ketchup and other foodstuffs for hungry Native Americans. Charlie, meanwhile, went down to Hollywood to connect with his contacts, and brought back word of what was going down.

The country had changed considerably from 1967 to 1968. Shot dead were Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. The police had rioted at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, Tom Hayden, Bobby Seale, and a bunch of other radicals were being tried as a result.

a black belt they called Karate Dave, and a big dude who was hassling the girls. Charlie was small next to the big dude. But he whipped him around and grabbed him between his legs, and escorted him out the door, right into the trash can. He didn't have to hurt the guy; by humiliating him, by leveling his ego, he saved him a lot of trouble.

The cops eventually came down on the club. They followed the San Fernando Valley kids who went there, and cited George Spahn for operating an entertainment establishment without a license. They had to close the club, or get George in trouble. And they didn't want to get George in trouble.

Even when outsiders weren't coming in, Shorty Shea and some of the other ranch hands were around to cause problems, getting high and mighty over all the vehicle parts and equipment that were coming in, acting as if those things were stolen. Lyn would overhear Shorty complain to George about the Family, brag how he could clean up Spahn Ranch if George would only let him. Lyn discussed Shorty's opinions with Charlie. It was another problem that had to be handled. Worse yet, George had made it clear he was hoping to sell the ranch to some developers, folks who would grade the land and build tract homes. That wouldn't be a fitting end for the ranch at all.

It was about this time that Lyn's little brother, Bill, came up to visit. The ranch was a beautiful scene, Lyn had told him, a place where he could really be. Bill didn't like it. He couldn't see the love, and recoiled when he met Charlie, as if Charlie gave him the creeps. Bill kept trying to persuade Lyn to leave. She laughed. He had gotten it all wrong; rather than Lyn leaving, Bill should stay and join the Family. Bill decided to leave.

So much time, so much energy was now being spent on just holding the Family together, safely, as it used to be. What with the bikers, and the speed, and the cops, and all the problems of the city reaching out to them, it would be nice if Helter Skelter finally would come down, if it all would be over with so life could go back to the way it was. Charlie began to carry a sword.

It was almost time to return to Death Valley, he said. "That desert's got everything. Hell, the whole desert ain't nothing but an upside-down river. Water's running under every inch it. . . . It's underground. I haven't explored it yet, but I sat on the edge of the hole and watched the water flowing underground. Man, the possibilities of that place are endless. And we'll find that hole again and build our own city."

Lyn was eager to prepare. She embroidered handsome denim vests for the girls, stitching them in the manner of a varsity jacket: "Devil's Witches—Devil's Hole, Death Valley," they read, complete with a skull and crossbones.

Charlie continued: "Why do you think we been breaking our asses to put together all this equipment?" He listed the goods they were accumulating to build their desert paradise, where there would be "No rent to pay, no laws to

obey," and most important, "no cops." They had to move fast, Charlie said. "Look around you, the worm's turning on the white man. Him and his pigs have put the dollar in front of everything. Even his own kids. Blackie's tired of being the doormat for the rich man's pad. So while the white man's locked into his dollars, blackie's balling the blond, blue-eyed daughters and making mixed babies. It's all leading to bad shit."

The Black Muslims and the Black Panthers were highly organized, and had conquered fear. It was only a matter of time until they started striking out against the white pigs at the top of the structure. They'd head into their houses, and put true fear into whitey, Charlie explained.

"Real madness is going to explode soon—everything is going to be Helter Skelter. But that won't affect us, 'cause we'll be in a beautiful land that only we know how to survive in. To be ready, we need equipment and supplies by the tons. If we have to do a little stealing and hustling to get what we need, let's do it."

They bought topographical maps of Death Valley to plan an efficient route for their caravans out of Los Angeles. Lyn and the other girls started wearing knives—Buck knives, only the best.

Even as they were getting ready to clear out of Spahn's, more troubles cropped up. Tex had burned some black dude named Lotsapoppa in a drug deal, and Charlie had to go out to Hollywood to straighten it out. The black dude got killed when Charlie had to shoot him, and the next day they heard in the news that he had been a major Black Panther. Coincidentally, two Black Panthers had been murdered that January, 1969, at UCLA, and their fellows were all riled up. The Panthers weren't the type to sit around and take it if they knew who was to blame. There were witnesses to the Lotsapoppa shooting, and they could tell all about the Family and Spahn Ranch. Blackie, Charlie knew, might be coming up any day to get his revenge. The Family had to be in maximum awareness. Maximum fear. They had to be ready for anything.

Lotsapoppa, whose real name was Bernard Crowe, survived the shooting, and more than a year later would testify against Charlie. There was no connection between the story about the Black Panther and the encounter with Lotsapoppa. But Charlie didn't know that.

Then there was another drug burn.

According to Manson, Bobby Beausoleil had been selling mescaline he got from Gary Hinman, the music teacher in Topanga Canyon. Some bikers who bought the drugs complained that the batch they had gotten was bad and demanded back their money, \$2,000. Charlie promised to get it from Gary. But Gary refused, saying the drugs were fine. So Charlie sent Bobby, Sadie, and Mary to work it out with Gary. Even after getting roughed up, though, Gary wouldn't

Grand theft, auto.

Charlie smiled. On the way to the sheriff's station in Malibu, they sang. When all charges were dropped—the sheriff, it later turned out, had conducted the raid on an expired search warrant—it was clear the Man couldn't touch Charlie.

They hitchhiked back and saw how the cops had destroyed Spahn Ranch. All their things had been taken or smashed, and all their secret hiding places revealed. Charlie believed that Shorty Shea, the ranch hand, had snitched. Snitches had the worst karma. By the end of August, Shorty had disappeared, never to be heard from again.

They had all had it with Los Angeles, and the way it kept stepping on their young love. "Fuck it," said Sandy. Lyn agreed. It was time to return to the desert. She was too busy with preparations to attend the wedding of her childhood friend, Nora Lynn, on August 23.

Once in the desert, with no law to speak of, they could get down to it. Lyn and the other girls cut their hair short, a more practical style for the hard times they saw just around the corner. They carried knives all the time now. They were ready.

It wasn't Mendocino, but it was nice. "Sure gives your eyes a stretch," Lyn thought, looking at the vastness of it all. The stone house they lived in was a spot to get together for singing, a warm place for babies, a watering hole.

But the authorities in Inyo County began harassing them. "Routine Big Brother," thought Lyn. So the Family tried to restrict movements to the night, communicated by radio, even set up dummy camps to throw the cops off the track. They were tired of all the hassles. Some members of the Family couldn't handle the changes. Several drifted off—back to the city, or even to the police. On October 10, there was another raid. The Inyo County sheriff, the California Highway Patrol, and the park rangers all came together, rousing everyone at dawn. Lyn was wearing a big coat to keep warm, and one cop, who thought she had a shotgun inside it, stunned her with a smack across her face. It was only, she knew, because he was so afraid. It took four hands feeling up her clothes to find she had no shotgun.

The police got them all together, on the ground, but none fought back, none resisted. Charlie was nowhere in sight.

"Where's Jesus Christ?" one of the cops barked. "We wanna crucify him!"

"Charlie never calls himself anything," Lyn thought. "Strange that so many recognize him as Christ."

Lyn was booked, yet again, for violating Section 10851 of the California Vehicle Code: theft or taking of a vehicle. Asked her name, she lied, "Elizabeth Elaine Williamson."

They jailed her in the county seat, a town called Independence, 125 miles away. Two days later, Lyn learned, there had been another raid, and the rest of

the Family was hauled in. Charlie, who had been in Los Angeles getting supplies when Lyn was arrested, had come back to get the kids out of jail. He arrived just in time for the raid. Police found Charlie in a tiny cabinet, measuring $3 \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ feet. They booked him as "Manson, Charles M., aka Jesus Christ, God."

Charlie understood that the deputies and the highway patrolmen were supposed to arrest him; that was their role in the play. He was incensed, however, that the park rangers took part in the raid. "How come you guys are hassling me?" he questioned them. "You should be out telling people about the flowers and animals."

The authorities bragged to the press about their skill in apprehending the band of nude and long-haired thieves. They had hauled in twenty-seven men and women, plus eight children, among them two babies they said were suffering from malnutrition. A cache of weapons and six dune buggies police claimed were stolen also were confiscated.

"They gave us a merry chase," said Deputy Sheriff Jerry Hildreth.

Now, with so many of them crowding the Inyo County Jail, the sheriff looked for ways to get rid of them. Since some had been arrested on National Park property, park rangers tried to get them booked on federal charges—and thus taken out of the county sheriff's hands and into those of the federal marshal. They called the newly appointed United States Attorney responsible for Inyo and dozens of California's other inland counties, Dwayne Keyes of Sacramento.

Keyes seemed less than excited about prosecuting barefoot hippies for stealing dune buggies out in the desert, hundreds of miles from his office. He declined to file charges. It would be six years before he had the chance to prosecute Lyn again.

and about the kind of places the mind can go on acid. She would point out the ways that nature was being destroyed by the Establishment, and Steve would nod, thinking about these issues for the first time.

Still, Steve liked to tweak Lyn. To her annoyance, he would invariably call her Squeaky.

"Oh! Why do you call me that?" Lyn would frown. Steve smiled; he thought she looked especially cute when she was mad, her fair, freckled cheeks all flushed with blood.

Sometimes, Lyn would ask Steve why he didn't make more of a play for Brenda. Aggressive as she was comely, Brenda was not used to being rejected. Steve just shrugged, and smiled at Lyn. According to Steve, soon they were sleeping together, too. To his regret, Steve sensed that Lyn was not fully into the experience, that she was holding back.

But it was different for Sandy, who was released from jail a short while later. Sandy was attracted to Steve, and they were soon sleeping together, usually in the Family van parked outside. According to Steve, then Lyn began to show up when Steve and Sandy made love, and they became a threesome.

They shared everything, all drinking from the same coffee cup, eating vegetarian stews from the same pot, singing in unison Manson's songs with their familiar refrain: *all is one all is one all is one*. Steve began to feel his identity meld into those of Lyn and Sandy, and so he would sometimes slip away, committing robberies and other crimes on the side that he didn't share with the women. Under their influence, he had given up meat, he had given up heroin; Steve needed a sphere of his own, away from the beatific world on Melrose Avenue.

The women, as far as Steve could tell, did not engage in crimes. The only activity he considered morally suspect was their habit of breaking into Salvation Army collection drops and stealing the clothes and broken appliances people had donated to the poor.

Sometimes, in the Family van, its veils and pillows giving the ambience of an Arabian tent, they spoke of fear. A candle flickered and Lyn would explain to the group how to grab hold of fear, how to take it inside, how to use it. Lyn, it seemed, had long ago conquered fear. When others would freak out, she was always there to bring them back. One day, when Steve Bekins had flipped out on a particularly bad dose of acid, Lyn materialized to rescue him from the trip. She took his hand and talked him down, walking him around the block and showing him the trees and flowers that made him know that everything was, after all, all right. He loved her. Once, he tried to kill her.

Steve had returned to the apartment, having fished a handsome leather wallet. After removing the cash and credit cards, he presented it to Lyn as a gift. Later, she came to him. "Give me my forty dollars back," she demanded. Steve acted like he didn't know what she meant.

Forty dollars, she explained, had been in the wallet's hidden pocket. When last she checked, the money was gone. She wanted it back.

Steve, already loaded, insisted he didn't take the money. But Lyn persisted, and the ex-convict grew angry. He grabbed her hard, wrapped his hands around her slender neck, and squeezed, intent on killing her then and there.

But Lyn didn't flinch. She held herself proud, and stared into Steve's eyes with an intensity he had never encountered, anywhere. Their gazes locked, and he felt his grip loosening, as if it were beyond his control. He thought she commanded a special kind of magic.

Each night, sometimes after taking the mini-bennies, they would discuss the important things: sex, the justice system, politics. Sandy and Brenda, as well as other women who occasionally stopped by, looked to Lyn as their leader, and listened carefully to her explanations of rock lyrics and environmental problems. When they received a letter from Charlie, they would gather excitedly as Lyn read it aloud, explaining and annotating the often opaque words scrawled from San Quentin. Sandy might add views of racial issues; she was impressed with the way blacks often addressed each other as "brother" or "sister," as if their race was just one big family. If only the white race behaved the same way, Sandy said. Steve, used to the strict racial divisions among convicts, readily agreed.

The women often spoke of the desert—and of the eerily prescient song by the pop group America, "A Horse with No Name." The lyric, Lyn explained, was suffused with meaning, telling as it did of oceans running beneath the desert surface—the same prophecy, in so many words, that Manson had revealed. After a group acid trip, they felt nostalgic for the times at Death Valley. They decided to take a road trip to the desert.

Barber and Myers ranches seemed a bit too far, however, so they settled on camping at Joshua Tree, in the Mojave Desert east of Los Angeles. They stopped at a friend's house midway to the desert, in a remote section of Riverside County. It seemed to be a commune, with teenagers and young adults all living on their own, in a hippie-decorated house with floor-to-ceiling tropical aquariums that made them feel like they were underwater. They all got high, had sex, then fell asleep. The next day, they headed out to the Mojave for several days of swimming, playing music, looking at animals, dropping acid, and having sex. Life wasn't so bad after all.

Others came by to share in the magic, too. One visitor was Paul Krassner, the comic protégé of Lenny Bruce who had gone on to help concoct the Yippies. Krassner had written to Manson in prison, seeking material for a purported book called *The Parts Left Out of the Manson Case*. "Call Squeaky," Manson had replied. Thoughtfully, Krassner brought to the meeting several 300-microgram

Vincent Bugliosi was less oblique. Noting that Manson had been returned from Vacaville to Folsom Prison, he commented that Lyn and Sandy were "waiting for their god to be set free, and twenty miles from their god is better than a couple of thousand."

While original members of the Family drifted away, Lyn was collecting a handful of new admirers. One correspondent was a former mental patient named Edward Vandervort. A short, heavyset thirty-four-year-old, Vandervort lived with his mother in York, Pennsylvania. He apparently had read *Helter Skelter* and become enthralled with Lyn. He started sending her whatever dollars he could scrounge, and Lyn responded gently to her new friend. Pleased at the reception, Vandervort sent snapshots of himself as a child in 1962, showing him playing with chipmunks. More recent photos depicted him as he looked in 1975. Vandervort apologized for his appearance.

Lyn sought to boost his self-esteem. "You sure did gain weight, but ten years is a long while for it to creep up on you. As long as you feel good at your present weight, that's good, but if not, it would be a good idea to lose it," she advised.

They corresponded for months, with Vandervort making an effort to enclose items he knew would interest Lyn, such as a knife and an audiocassette of Vincent Bugliosi on the Phil Donahue show. According to prosecutors, Lyn concluded from Vandervort's enthusiastic letters that he was unstable enough to kill. And if Vandervort was going to kill someone anyway, Lyn and Sandy decided he should take out someone who deserved it.

"Next I have a project for you and I want you to report to me how you feel about it," Lyn wrote.

In step-by-step instructions, she directed Vandervort to research the names and addresses of top corporate executives and their wives. "If anyone wants to know what you're doing, tell them you're doing a story on wives of executives. You can say you have an economy class or anything you wish," Lyn suggested. Vandervort was then to telephone the targets and, in his "meanest voice," utter the following: "Your (product or activity, or you may mention the name of it), is killing, poisoning the world. There is no excuse for it." Now, say this very slowly: "If you do not stop killing us, Manson will send for your heart. (If the company pollutes the air, you may say lungs.) Close the shop. Flee the country. Or watch your own blood spill out your crime on the wall. Remember Sharon Tate." You may vary this. The main thing is to be scary and clear. Practice. Be a thug. You'll be a good one. . . . There is no need to feel guilty about this, because we are not doing anything wrong."

Apparently, Vandervort had good feelings about Lyn. After they exchanged several more letters and telephone calls, she sent him instructions for a more ambitious follow-up. He was to visit the president of "Kaiser Company," makers of more forms of pollution than I can count; conveniently, the executive lived in Pennsylvania. "Do not threaten him first," the letter instructed. "Kill him. Destroy him." But, "check for kids. We want to avoid hurting any kids." The

murder scene was to be an echo of the Tate house, with the bodies painted in pink—the color of Kaiser's machines.

Vandervort was instructed to put an aerosol can in Roesch's mouth, and to leave at the crime scene a copy of the counterculture magazine *New Times*, open to an article on pollution.

"We are making a picture to warn others who pollute," Lyn explained. "Do not write anything about Helter Skelter or any other words you got out of that book. Or anything about Manson. . . . Can you get silencers? Answer this now and throw away. Be good. Be quick. Be love."

Vandervort, however, did not follow through on the plans. When Lyn tried to call him collect, his mother refused to accept the charges.

Lyn continued to grow more extreme as 1975 wore on. "We must show new love—not twisted, spanked, yanked and beat misunderstood love, but RESPECT FIRST," she wrote. "Like the house of Islam, we women are to cover our bodies, wash our faces, put down the cigarettes and leave love making under our own roof in 'our own house,' not to flash bodies on the street for the confused and abused people to desire." With the exception of Manny Boro, Lyn left lovemaking with men altogether. Various acquaintances still drifted by the P Street apartment, but only female visitors could stay inside; male overnight guests slept outside, on the porch.

Dressed in a red robe, Lyn appeared at news bureaus around Sacramento to deliver fearsome press releases attributed to Manson, along with baskets of fresh-baked cookies for the reporters. "We're waiting for our Lord and there's only one thing to do before He comes off the cross and that's clean up the earth," Lyn explained. "We're nuns now. . . . Our red robes are an example of the new morality. . . . They're red with the sacrifice, the blood of the sacrifice."

UPI correspondents Rob Gunnison and Carl Ingram considered Lyn a good cook, although only the *Sacramento Union* published an item on Lyn's warning. About once a month, Lyn visited Capistrano in Death Valley, where the old friends would get high and discuss their adventures. Occasionally, Lyn would try to reach out to the young people and prospectors who continued to trickle through the region. On several visits, she ran into the owner of the Modoc Mine, Rodney Catsiff, and struck up an acquaintanceship with him; once, he even towed her car to a service station after it ran out of gas. It was a reunion of sorts for Catsiff, as he had been passingly acquainted with the Family when they lived at Spahn Ranch.

Later, Catsiff would tell the FBI about his conversations with Lyn. She had insisted to the mine owner that Shorty Shea had not been murdered by the Family after all, but was alive and well and living in Denver. (This assertion would be proven false in 1979, when Clem led investigators to Shea's body near Spahn Ranch.) She complained about the environmental destruction going on

across the country, and criticized the nation's leaders, particularly Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, whom she called a "pneumatic pig."

Lyn also had personal advice for Caisiff. At one point, she told him to throw away his beer and cigarettes, and eat grass instead. It would be much better for him, she explained.

Other friends, though, began to drift away. Marsha Bradt, who had taken Lyn to the Pacifica firing range, sensed a change in her after the publication of Bugliosi's *Helter Skelter*. Lyn's communications were becoming more violent and more angry, something Bradt ascribed to Sandra Good's influence. Lyn, Bradt later said, was two different people, depending on whether she was around Sandra, whom she considered "more of a catalyst on her than even Charlie." Scared by the new tone, Bradt dropped her friendship with Lyn.

Lyn continued her efforts to visit Manson at Folsom Prison. She regularly petitioned the Corrections Department, and even pressed her case with the lieutenant governor, Mervyn Dymally, whom she buttonholed in a hallway at the state Capitol. Lyn asked Dymally, the only black statewide elected official, for help in getting in to see her incarcerated "husband." Dymally told Lyn to call his office for help. Although a Dymally aide had only positive things to say of Lyn—"she seemed interested in everybody being happy," he recalled—nothing came of the requests.

In May 1975, Lyn called upon yet another lawyer to help her out. Clyde Blackmon was one of Sacramento's rising criminal defense attorneys, and a law partner with a future speaker pro tem of the California state assembly. A bear of a man, he agreed to meet with Lyn, even as his secretary recoiled at the notorious woman in her frightening red robe.

The Berkeley-educated attorney listened carefully to Lyn's request. To Blackmon, visitation rights for prisoners were a matter of principle, regardless of any particular inmate's notoriety. And no inmate could better vindicate the principle than Charles Manson.

Sitting in Blackmon's office, Lyn and Sandra went over their arrest records, and gave him copies of their correspondence with prison officials. Her letters to the Corrections Department "may sound a bit aggressive," Lyn told him, but "only because of the past runaround history." Blackmon saw no legal justification for barring Lyn from visiting Manson. He also was impressed with her polite manners and respectful demeanor. He agreed to take her case, pro bono. A former law school classmate now represented the Department of Corrections, so Blackmon figured he might be able to negotiate an informal compromise over visits. He told Lyn that she probably wouldn't get the full contact visits she wanted, but something might be worked out that could lead to greater privileges in the future.

Lyn, for her part, returned the favor as best she could. She brought Blackmon home-baked cookies, as well as gourmet coffee to replace the undrinkable institutional grind the office served.

Blackmon's interest contrasted with that of a San Francisco legal aid attorney, whom Lyn had been urging to take her case since February 1975. When she began to appear at his home to press her arguments, the lawyer called police. Summoned to the San Francisco Hall of Justice, Lyn was admonished to leave the frazzled attorney alone or face legal action.

Trying to set her personal affairs in order, Lyn wrote to Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Raymond Choate, who had presided over both the Barbara Hoyt case and Manson's convictions for the Gary Hinman and Sherry Shea murders. She confessed to the judge her feelings of guilt for failing to persuade him to set Manson free.

"Instead, I played the father-daughter game with you and took my rebellious child opinion and sent him to prison with it," she wrote. "My own judgment is heavy for this and I realize it more each day. I buried Manson in my own fear."

About a month later, Lyn called Choate at home, to ask him how he felt about "all this killing"—meaning the killing in Vietnam and the "killing of the ecology." She said she planned to do something desperate.

"At first I thought she meant she was going to kill herself," Choate later told a reporter. "But she specifically said she didn't mean suicide."

The International People's Court of Retribution

Lyn had become a Manson nun. In her red robes and daily obeisances, she lived her life in ascetic devotion to the long-gone days of Spahn Ranch and Death Valley. To Lyn, there was no irony. Spahn Ranch may well have been filled with sex, drugs, and wanton irresponsibility—a focus on Now—but in retrospect, it had been about so much more. The Family had lived as a model, and eventually a warning, to the world. A warning, she decided, about the state of the ecology, about the environmental, and thus spiritual, pollution of the earth. That was what the Tate-LaBianca murders must have been about, that must have been the point of Charlie's trials and of Lyn's struggle in the years since. Charlie had taught that "no sense makes sense," and it all made sense to Lyn.

Charlie, Katie, Lulu, Sadie, and Tex had found enough courage to go all the way to the gas chamber. The time had come for Lyn to prove herself worthy of her brothers and sisters: Do something, like the Tate murders years before, that would capture the imagination of the world. In the P Street apartment, Lyn and Sandy launched their plan.

The world had ignored them when trying to get their message out in peaceful fashion. It was easy to ignore a pair of unemployed young women with no leverage beyond Manson's name.

As the Weather Underground and the Symbionese Liberation Army had proved, however, it was a lot harder to ignore a band of terrorists. To seize public attention in the current environment, Lyn and Sandy concluded, they

Vincent Bugliosi was less oblique. Noting that Manson had been returned from Vacaville to Folsom Prison, he commented that Lyn and Sandy were "waiting for their god to be set free, and twenty miles from their god is better than a couple of thousand."

While original members of the Family drifted away, Lyn was collecting a handful of new admirers. One correspondent was a former mental patient named Edward Vandervort. A short, heavyset thirty-four-year-old, Vandervort lived with his mother in York, Pennsylvania. He apparently had read *Helter Skelter* and became enthralled with Lyn. He started sending her whatever dollars he could scrounge, and Lyn responded gently to her new friend. Pleased at the reception, Vandervort sent snapshots of himself as a child in 1962, showing him playing with chipmunks. More recent photos depicted him as he looked in 1975; Vandervort apologized for his appearance.

Lyn sought to boost his self-esteem. "You sure did gain weight, but ten years is a long while for it to creep up on you. As long as you feel good at your present weight, that's good, but if not, it would be a good idea to lose it," she advised.

They corresponded for months, with Vandervort making an effort to enclose items he knew would interest Lyn, such as a knife and an audiotape of Vincent Bugliosi on the Phil Donahue show. According to prosecutors, Lyn concluded from Vandervort's enthusiastic letters that he was unstable enough to kill. And if Vandervort was going to kill someone anyway, Lyn and Sandy decided he should take out someone who deserved it.

"Next I have a project for you and I want you to report to me how you feel about it," Lyn wrote.

In step-by-step instructions, she directed Vandervort to research the names and addresses of top corporate executives and their wives. "If anyone wants to know what you're doing, tell them you're doing a story on wives of executives. You can say you have an economy class or anything you wish," Lyn suggested. Vandervort was then to telephone the targets and, in his "meanest voice," utter the following: "Your (product or activity, or you may mention the name of it), is killing, poisoning the world. There is no excuse for it." Now, say this very slowly: "If you do not stop killing us, Manson will send for your heart. (If the company pollutes the air, you may say lungs.) Close the shop. Flee the country. Or watch your own blood spill out your crime on the wall. Remember Sharon Tate." You may vary this. The main thing is to be scary and clear. Practice. Be a thing. You'll be a good one. . . . There is no need to feel guilty about this, because we are not doing anything wrong."

Apparently, Vandervort had good feelings about Lyn. After they exchanged several more letters and telephone calls, she sent him instructions for a more ambitious follow-up. He was to visit the president of "Kaiser Company, makers of more forms of pollution than I can count"; conveniently, the executive lived in Pennsylvania. "Do not threaten him first," the letter instructed. "Kill him. Destroy him." But, "check for kids. We want to avoid hurting any kids." The

murder scene was to be an echo of the Tate house, with the bodies painted in pink—the color of Kaiser's machines.

Vandervort was instructed to put an aerosol can in Roesch's mouth, and to leave at the crime scene a copy of the counterculture magazine *New Times*, open to an article on pollution.

"We are making a picture to warn others who pollute," Lyn explained. "Do not write anything about Helter Skelter or any other words you got out of that book. Or anything about Manson. . . . Can you get silencers? Answer this now and throw away. Be good. Be quick. Be love."

Vandervort, however, did not follow through on the plans. When Lyn tried to call him collect, his mother refused to accept the charges.

Lyn continued to grow more extreme as 1975 wore on. "We must show new love—not twisted, spanked, yanked and beat misunderstood love, but RESPECT FIRST," she wrote. "Like the house of Islam, we women are to cover our bodies, wash our faces, put down the cigarettes and leave love making under our own roof in 'our own house,' not to flash bodies on the street for the confused and abused people to desire." With the exception of Manny Boro, Lyn left lovemaking with men altogether. Various acquaintances still drifted by the P Street apartment, but only female visitors could stay inside; male overnight guests slept outside, on the porch.

Dressed in a red robe, Lyn appeared at news bureaus around Sacramento to deliver fearsome press releases attributed to Manson, along with baskets of fresh-baked cookies for the reporters. "We're waiting for our Lord and there's only one thing to do before He comes off the cross and that's clean up the earth," Lyn explained. "We're nuns now. . . . Our red robes are an example of the new morality. . . . They're red with the sacrifice, the blood of the sacrifice."

UPI correspondents Rob Gunnison and Carl Ingram considered Lyn a good cook, although only the *Sacramento Union* published an item on Lyn's warning.

About once a month, Lyn visited Capistrano in Death Valley, where the old friends would get high and discuss their adventures. Occasionally, Lyn would try to reach out to the young people and prospectors who continued to trickle through the region. On several visits, she ran into the owner of the Modoc Mine, Rodney Casisiff, and struck up an acquaintanceship with him; once, he even towed her car to a service station after it ran out of gas. It was a reunion of sorts for Casisiff, as he had been passingly acquainted with the Family when they lived at Spahn Ranch.

Later, Casisiff would tell the FBI about his conversations with Lyn. She had insisted to the mine owner that Shorty Shea had not been murdered by the Family after all, but was alive and well and living in Denver. (This assertion would be proven false in 1979, when Clem led investigators to Shea's body near Spahn Ranch.) She complained about the environmental destruction going on

would have to launch a terror campaign of their own—or at least make people think they had. As a counterpoint to the American justice system that had strymined them for so long, they decided their cadre would be called the International People's Court of Retribution. There were so many who deserved retribution.

The International People's Court was not a personal vendetta against those who had wronged Manson. Rather, the targets would be the current enemies of Lyn's world, the corporate executives whose firms chopped down trees, coughed out smog, and clubbed baby seals. It was essential that the International People's Court speak across the country in one loud voice. To accomplish the task, Lyn and Sandy would compile a master list of all the corporate polluters in the nation, and mail them warnings all at once. Stop polluting—or die.

To them, it seemed eminently plausible. If there was one Edward Vandervort ready to execute corporate leaders upon command from Sacramento, there could be thousands of them amid a country of more than 200 million. And so, they assembled the story of the International People's Court of Retribution. It had been founded in the 1950s in the federal penitentiaries at Terminal Island, California, and McNeil Island, Washington—the very prisons where Charles Manson had been incarcerated. It had grown during the Cuban missile crisis, with major expansions in Florida and Mexico, and now consisted of two thousand members throughout the world. After decades underground, the International People's Court of Retribution was ready to strike at the corporate executives who were damaging the environment. Of course, the head of the International People's Court of Retribution was Charles Manson.

Lyn and Sandy would always stress, however, that they themselves were not actually members of the International People's Court, and merely communicated on its behalf when it contacted them. The women did not, they said, even know how to reach the terrorist group on their own initiative.

The head of the FBI's intelligence division, William N. Preusse, would later testify at Sandra Good's trial that the bureau had never heard of the International People's Court of Retribution, despite exhaustive efforts to surveil potential subversives. The International People's Court, the government would contend, existed only in Sandy and Lyn's minds.

In her remarks at trial, Sandy would offer a different explanation for the FBI's ignorance of the terrorist group. Since the days of J. Edgar Hoover, she observed, the bureau had been obsessed with fighting Communists; with such an ideological bias, the FBI could easily have overlooked a non-Marxist, environmentally concerned guerrilla organization like the International People's Court of Retribution.

breaking a window. The noise awoke their downstairs neighbor, Morris Wilmarth. Concerned, he bounded up the outdoor staircase to take a look.

In his early twenties and nearly six feet tall, Wilmarth was a long-haired easygoing, hard-drinking type. After his Army service in Korea, he had returned to his family in Sacramento, and later, having rented his own apartment at 17 P Street, enrolled at Sacramento State University to study chemistry. He was working several jobs over the summer, including one at Fannie Ann's saloon and another at the Libby McNeil factory, where he canned tomato juice. Wilmarth had occasionally passed Lyn while coming or leaving his place, but never had been introduced. Now, after an exchange of names, the handy Wilmarth helped the women get back into their apartment.

Lyn and Sandy invited their neighbor in. They were impressed by his interest in their predicament. "Not too many people would have bothered to find out what was going on," Lyn said. This led to a conversation about the overall state of society, and Wilmarth appeared to have his heart in the right place, even if he was somewhat naive: Wilmarth believed for example, that the world could be changed through conventional political activism, and was planning to volunteer for a ballot measure that would restrict nuclear power.

Lyn explained that she and Sandy were full-time ecological activists, and that they were launching a campaign to increase environmental awareness. Manik she observed, didn't have many years left if nothing were done to stop pollution. Wilmarth readily agreed, and volunteered to help the women in their cause. Moreover, he thought, "Sandra's not half bad looking." Perhaps he might get date out of his good works.

Wilmarth soon became an almost daily visitor to the women's garret.] would carry their groceries up the stairs for them, and chop carrots and onions for their stews. To help in Wilmarth's education, Lyn and Sandra would show him their environmental literature—magazine articles depicting Soviet whaling ships, or the hazards of nuclear waste.

Wilmarth noticed a pattern in the women's relationship. While Sandra, most of the talking, Lyn seemed to be in charge. Sandra would get excited and sometimes go out on a limb; a glance from Lyn would pull her back. Yet later, Wilmarth would describe Sandra as "codependent."

It was Sandra who gave Wilmarth his first assignment in the ecology campaign: to obtain the address of every newspaper in the United States with circulation of more than 100,000. They would use the mailing list for environmental awareness press releases, she explained. Wilmarth began spending free hours at the public library, tracking down the addresses.

Lyn did not rely solely on Wilmarth to do their research. Using the pseudonym "Lyn White," she sent a request to the Planning and Conservation League, one of California's major environmental organizations. She asked for

"If you do not have such a list, please find the time to compile one for me," she wrote. "My friends and I wish to devote our entire summer to writing hundreds of letters." The envelope was returned to P Street, stamped "Undeliverable as Addressed."

Even before Morris Willmarth finished his mailing list, Lyn and Sandy knew how to reach some news organizations. They had begun their campaign early in July.

Lyn contacted the Associated Press bureau in Sacramento, the *Sacramento Bee*, and KSN-17 in San Francisco with a news release attributed to Manson. An anonymous female caller (prosecutors later said it was Sandra) telephoned the *San Francisco Chronicle* and read a statement:

✓ The International People's Court of Retribution is a new justice movement for the balance of the earth. All state, federal and private money interests are now warned: Stop whaling. We consider all wildlife to be part of ourselves and will move viciously to defend our lives. Anyone caught killing wildlife, polluting or cutting down trees will be maimed, poisoned or chopped in a similar manner. A whaler without arms cannot swim.

Their next news release was titled "Manson is Mad at Nixon"—with the parallel spelling intended. It blamed former President Nixon for the conviction of the Tate-LaBianca defendants because of his comment during the trial that Manson was guilty. Along with various other indictments of society, the release pronounced: "If Nixon's reality wearing a Ford face continues to run this country against the law, your homes will be bloodier than the Tate-LaBianca homes and My Lai put together."

Although AP moved the story, the White House was not impressed. The next day, in an address from the Oval Office, Gerald Ford announced his candidacy to win the presidency in his own right.

While they had been pleasant with Morris Willmarth, Lyn and Sandra took a somewhat different tone when discussing their concerns with Lanier Ramer, an ex-convict friend of Charlie who visited the women that same July. The burly and bearded Ramer, now forty-three, had introduced Charlie to Scientology when both were imprisoned at McNeil Island. After his release, Ramer had gone to work for the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, and remained in correspondence with Charlie.

Stopping by the Sacramento apartment, Ramer had a long, wide-ranging discussion with Lyn and Sandy. Despite her approval of some of Governor Jerry Brown's proposals, Lyn was distraught at the country's direction. She became emotional as she catalogued the environmental devastation going on. People should be deeply concerned about these problems, and she was committed to

doing whatever was necessary to heighten their awareness. She stressed that she would be telephoning and writing letters to various corporate executives and government officials to alert them to her concerns.

But mere words, she realized, would not be enough to stop the strip miners, the forest cutters, and the water polluters. "She told me," Ramer later testified, "that she thought it was quite likely, probably, that some people were going to have to be killed, to set examples."

Could Ramer put her in touch with the *Weather Underground*, Lyn wanted to know. Could Ramer get her a couple of guns?

Ramer said no, on both accounts. His five convictions—four for unarmed bank robbery, one for auto theft—were all for property crimes, not crimes against persons. He told Lyn that he had strong feelings against physically harming people. Later, Ramer reported the conversation to his probation officer, and to the FBI.

If Lanier Ramer wouldn't provide her with a gun, Lyn knew someone else who would. Manny Boro had once shown her the antique pistol he kept. One July night over at his apartment, Lyn asked to see it again. She explained to him that her life was in danger, and she needed protection. Charlie had a lot of enemies, and now that it was known that she was living in Sacramento, one of those enemies might come to get her.

Manny went to his clothes closet, reached to the top shelf, and took down a box. He brought it to her and removed the contents. It was a Colt .45 semi-automatic pistol, made before World War I. Manny had owned it for five years, but never fired it, never even loaded it with a cartridge.

Now, he showed her how it worked.

"You press this on the back, that's the automatic grip. It won't fire if you press—pull the trigger, it won't fire, you got to pull them both together here."

Manny demonstrated how to drop the clip out, and how to release the safety. He showed her how to disassemble the weapon, and how to rack it, pulling a bullet into the breach. Lyn gazed admiringly at the large, sleek weapon.

But Manny had misgivings about giving the pistol to Lyn. He suggested that perhaps she didn't want this particular gun. It wasn't registered, he explained as he put it back in its holster, and into the box, and then back in the closet. He handed Lyn a gun catalogue, and proposed that she pick out another model. The .45 was a common gun, worth maybe \$200. Manny pointed out a pistol in the catalogue. It was much rarer, he said, only 7,800 were made. Wouldn't she prefer something like that?

Lyn leafed through the catalogue and settled on a pistol she wanted. Manny, however, was noncommittal about when he might actually get her the gun. Lyn stood up, walked over to the closet, and removed the .45 he had just put away.

"What are you doing?" Manny asked, as Lyn stuffed the gun, the holster, and twenty-five cartridges into her handbag. She didn't answer, but headed straight for the door. Manny tried to stop her.

The .45 was too heavy, too big, too complicated, too dangerous for Lyn, he said.

Lyn hesitated.

"Get that one in the book," he said. "I'll buy that one for you."

"You will?" she asked.

"Yeah," Manny said.

Lyn thought about it for a few minutes. Then she left, the gun still in her handbag.

Later, Manny told his daughter-in-law, Nelda, that Lyn had taken his gun. "I tried to stop her," he said, "but she just took it and ran out."

"By God, Manny, get out of this situation," Nelda urged. "Why don't you call the authorities?"

Manny said he was afraid to. Scared to death.

But whatever misgivings Manny might have had about Lyn taking his pistol, he seemed more concerned with keeping her happy. When he saw Lyn later that week, he didn't ask for the .45 back. Instead, he brought her more bullets. As he told a neighbor, "My girlfriends keep me busy."

Lyn did not treat her new possession casually. Aware that it was the kind of evidence police would love to find on her, she wrapped the pistol in glassine packaging and buried it in the lawn outside her house, at least ten inches deep. It was also where she kept her stash of marijuana.

Lyn had been communicating with a Denver-based journalist named John Barry, who expressed sympathy with some of her environmental goals. He had suggested that she publish a Manson Family newsletter, as a regular forum for discussing her agenda.

Lyn sent Barry a "Mad at Nixon" news release, and encouraged him to compose an article based on it. "This is the thought we want to push," she told him. "See what you can do with it."

Barry, however, didn't think much could be done with the release, and felt that attacking private citizen Nixon was a bad strategy. His views were seconded by reporters at the *Denver Post* and at the local Associated Press office. The AP bureau chief told Barry he had no interest in running "end-of-the-world-type prophecies."

Though the American press showed little interest in Lyn's latest messages, a German magazine, the racy *Neue Revue*, decided to do a piece on the Manson nuts. The German correspondent, accompanied by a freelance photographer, went to the P Street apartment, where Lyn and Sandy greeted him dressed in red robes. They wore nothing but red these days, they explained, because red symbolized blood.

Sitting on their couch, Lyn displayed some of the photos she had clipped from newspapers and magazines.

"These are people we find very offensive," she said. She held a picture of Nixon, and one of Ford toasting a foreign dignitary. Ford was doing a terrible job, Lyn said, and "he will have to pay for what he's doing. Nixon's karma is getting back at him. Ford is picking up in Nixon's footsteps, and he is just as bad."

Then Lyn showed them a photo of the Pope. He, Lyn said, was responsible for the loose morals of the world.

Next, she pointed to a picture of Gina Lollobrigida, the glamorous Italian actress, wearing a fur coat. Wearing the fur of animals, Lyn explained, was a crime.

Lyn and Sandy complained to the correspondent about the world's fondness for material things, for "hair dryers and makeup." Sex, they declared, was dirty, and few things offended them more than lesbianism.

For the photo shoot, Lyn and Sandy had something special in mind. They put on their wine red cloaks, embroidered with swastikas. They then led their guests to the Sacramento City Cemetery, which had closed for the night. Lyn and Sandy hopped over the fence and wandered among the tombstones. *Neue Revue* published a photo of the hooded women pointing demonstratively at a grave.

This was a very different Lyn from the one who had sung show tunes with the Lariats, who had composed poetry for honors English class. Yet on August 4, she wrote to Jim Van Wagoner, her beloved teacher at Redondo Union High School. The letter came on pastel paper, decorated with whimsical flowers reminiscent of Art Nouveau: "This is Lyn Fromme, former student of yours and occasional pest," it began.

She wanted to know if he would help her in pitching her book to a publisher. She didn't know if she needed an agent; she just wanted someone she could trust. "I thought of you because you could appreciate its literary merit—even if you do not agree with its verbal paintings. I'm assuming that you know me, know where I've been, and know what my book is about—and most importantly that you are the right Mr. Van Wagoner."

Lyn sketched a happy face. The letter concluded: "If not, please return this letter. If so, please reply. I see you well and smiling. Did you quit smoking?"

Years later, Jim Van Wagoner couldn't recall if the letter came in 1974 or 1975. Nevertheless, he certainly did know who Lyn was, and where she had been. Although he still cared for his brilliant former pupil, he was fearful of becoming known to other Manson Family members. He never replied.

In August 1975, Heather Murphy moved into 1725 P Street's basement apartment, paying not only her own rent but that of Lyn and Sandy. Her new residence was not much to speak of, just a simple room with a dresser, a bed, a chair, and a small table. The closet was a cavity in the wall, covered by a curtain.

To Morris Willmarth, Heather seemed mentally troubled. She was slow and shy, parroting whatever Lyn or Sandy said, obeying their instructions without question. They used her, Willmarth thought, like their secretary.

It was Lyn, however, who typed a letter to Charles Rossie, an assignment editor at KNBC-TV in Los Angeles. Rossie had written to Manson requesting an interview, and Manson had forwarded the letter to Lyn for reply. She used the opportunity to comment on various issues bedeviling her, including television's dominance of American culture.

"It was not people the Manson Family was at war with, but a thought. The same thought that sells our children and our more innocent world sex, political ideology, death, theology and toothpaste in one hour," she wrote.

She added a hopeful note. "The media CAN be used to unwind the tangles of a world running circles toward what it fears most"—along those lines, she had recently told an Associated Press reporter that Manson had predicted an earthquake that rattled Northern California on August 1, as a reaction to mankind's abuse of the environment. But, she cautioned Rossie, if Manson was "NOT ALLOWED TO EXPLAIN, THERE WILL BE MANY MORE YOUNG MURDERERS..."

The letter made no reference to Rossie's chance of interviewing Manson. But in a postscript, Lyn offered another programming possibility. "Sandra and myself would like to sit next to Bugtosi on one of his talk shows, under the right circumstances. Why don't you give me your thoughts on the best spot for this. I felt that CBS would be the most fair in the editing room," she wrote, perhaps as a dare to the NBC editor.

Lyn mailed the letter from Berkeley on August 13, where she and Sandra had driven to launch another stage of their campaign. While the University of California dominated the eastern half of the city, West Berkeley was home to dozens of small and medium-sized industrial firms. On a Wednesday morning, Lyn piloted her red VW through the industrial district, pulling up at the Berkeley Ready Mix cement factory on Virginia Street.

In their red robes, the women marched into the factory and confronted the manager, Grant Chamberlain. It was time for Berkeley Ready Mix to stop polluting, they explained, or the cement makers would be killed by the International People's Court of Retribution. Chamberlain ordered Lyn and Sandy off the property, and called police.

Lyn and Sandy headed off on a circuit of other industrial firms, receiving a similar reception at each one. After a flurry of complaints, the Berkeley Police Department dispatched Officer J. W. Houpt to investigate. He spotted the red VW on Grayson Street, outside Cutter Laboratories. At the factory, he found Lyn and Sandy inside the restroom, where they had been hiding for ten minutes.

Under questioning, Lyn and Sandy truthfully identified themselves and presented their driver's licenses. They denied, however, that they actually were members of the International People's Court of Retribution; instead, they said they merely were delivering messages on its behalf.

Officer Houpt offered them a choice: They could risk having a complaint filed against them or they could depart Berkeley immediately.

"The suspects," Houpt later reported, "felt that this would probably be a good idea and agreed to leave the city."

While Lyn was not much of a media draw, Charlie remained a source of interest. He finally consented to an interview with KTVV-TV in Oakland, which the station hyped by playing over five consecutive nights in August. Manson's only condition was that a videotape of the interview be sent to Lyn at her Sacramento apartment.

Lyn was excited about Charlie's forthcoming appearance on TV. She told all her friends about it, and sent a floral greeting card to Clyde Blackmon urging him to tune in. Although no fan of Manson, the attorney believed he was making progress for his new client. Blackmon had begun communicating with the Corrections Department, and it seemed he might be able to reach an accommodation with officials so that Lyn could visit Charlie. He told Lyn to contact the Corrections Department to follow up.

Whatever progress Blackmon had been making, however, wasn't evident to Lyn. Her requests to see Manson continued to be denied.

By late August, Morris Willmarth had realized a few things about his upstairs neighbors. He had learned of their devotion to Charles Manson, and of the almost violent extremity of some of their views. More than that, he recognized that his chance of scoring a date with Sandra was quite small; the women insisted that as "nuns of the earth," they were celibate. The news surprised Willmarth, who knew of the Manson Family's reputation for open sexual relationships.

Still, Willmarth enjoyed the two women's company. He found them stimulating, and came to relish the regular arguments he would have with Lyn and Sandy over the propriety of violence, over the justification of the Tate murders and assorted other topics. He liked to get loaded, then head upstairs for an evening of criticism—including his own personal habits. Lyn and Sandy objected to Willmarth's drinking, and regularly encouraged him to grow a beard.

Moreover, Willmarth strongly agreed with the women's ecological agenda. While they might be extreme, he thought, they certainly were committed to getting something done. In the third week of August, he brought a friend into the group, someone who was similarly committed to the environment.

Michael Davies, a college classmate, was visiting Willmarth for dinner when Lyn returned from a trip to San Francisco. Willmarth and Davies helped her carry her things in, and then joined Lyn and Sandy for the evening at their apartment. Sandra explained to Davies about their ecology project, with Lyn occasionally adding details and refinements. They were working to build a better world, where instead of polluting the environment, people would have new jobs planting trees, restoring the ocean, and cleaning up oil slicks. Later, the group

was joined by Heather Murphy, who said little before heading over to a small desk where she began to type addresses onto pink envelopes.

Willmarth and Davies returned to the downstairs apartment to check on the stew they were fixing. Willmarth mentioned that Lyn and Sandy were planning to contact the media to raise environmental awareness, and that he was helping by researching newspaper addresses.

"If that's the type of thing they're doing, I'd be willing to do something, too," Davies said. He wasn't too busy over his summer vacation, and shared a concern about the dangers of nuclear power and radioactive waste. The men headed back up the stairs to Lyn's apartment, and Davies volunteered to help the ecology project. He said he was well acquainted with radical activism, having taken part in student demonstrations in Berkeley.

Sandra gave Davies an assignment: Compile a list of every nuclear power plant in America, along with the names and home addresses of their presidents, vice presidents, and boards of directors. The home addresses were needed, she said, because they preferred to contact the executives—or even better, their wives—directly.

Letters sent to company offices usually get screened by a secretary, Sandy explained, and thrown out. "Letters to anyone but the parties themselves and their wives end up in the city dump," she said. "And our survival does not belong in the dump."

Sandy showed Davies a sample letter to a nuclear power executive. The letter stridently outlined the dangers of atomic energy, but seemed to steer clear of any explicit threats. Davies thought it appropriately forceful.

As the evening drew to a close, Davies asked how Lyn and Sandy's environmental views fit with those of Charles Manson. They assured him that Manson had always stood for a pure environment.

But, Davies wondered, would the women be able to discuss their views with people who disagreed?

"Like, if [Vice President] Nelson Rockefeller walked into this room, can you sit down and discuss your point of view with him, you know, just discuss it?" Davies asked.

Sandy, Davies later testified, jumped up lividly. "No," she said. "I'd kill him."

Although Davies found the women's violent streak disconcerting, it wasn't so extreme as to cool his interest in an attractive woman. Later, he invited Sandy to play tennis with him.

Morris Willmarth and Michael Davies regularly visited Lyn's apartment through the summer, where they learned about various ecological problems plaguing the world, and marveled at the women's dedication. Lyn and Sandy's action plan was well under way. They sent a poster to the Alaska Fish and Game Commission opposing the hunting of wolves, and another to the prime minister of Japan, objecting to whaling.

The discussions in the P Street apartment incorporated all manner of current events and philosophical queries. Sandy gave Davies some books by the Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, including one she found especially influential, *The Murder of Christ*.

The women were particularly clear on all the things they disliked. Hollywood, Lyn and Sandy explained, "projected madness in the minds of the world with television and movies... Los Angeles sold herself and sold the world as a harlot."

Another problem was spiritual: the country was being invaded by false prophets, like the teenage Maharaj Ji and the self-proclaimed messiah from Korea, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. The women were outraged that the gurus "were taking advantage of the fact that in this country people don't believe in their Lord anymore, and so they're looking to the east." Lyn showed the men a letter they had written, on Manson's behalf, to the leaders of various Eastern cults they felt were leading Americans astray.

They also criticized feminists, who they said mistakenly were "primarily concerned with bettering themselves economically, and characterizing men as male chauvinist pigs." Women's lib, Sandy insisted, "negated" women's and men's sexuality. She brandished a copy of *Cosmopolitan*, and went into a tirade about the women "who sell their bodies to sell some cosmetics." Then she pulled out a letter the women had written to *Ms. magazine*: "Any woman who cares more about her image, position, paycheck or what she looks like than the earth will be treated like the earth has been treated," the letter said. The editors declined to print the letter.

For his part, Davies mentioned the problems he saw in his Sacramento neighborhood. Developers were destroying the area, filling it with warehouses and apartment complexes. Perhaps developers should also receive a warning letter, Davies suggested.

Lyn and Sandra agreed. But letters weren't enough; "things in the country right now are conducive to a lot of chaotic violence," Sandra observed. "Purposeless violence, in other words, young kids lashing out and committing crimes and they don't even know why." Since the violence was coming, wouldn't it be a good idea to direct it toward beneficial results?

Morris Willmarth mentioned a prank he and his chemistry classmates had pulled. They would mix a mild contact explosive, nitrogen trioxide, place it on the sidewalks outside the chemistry building, and wait for it to dry out. When passers by stepped on the explosive, it would make loud snaps; people would jump around in fright, unable to see the source of the noise, every step causing another loud pop.

Lyn asked Willmarth to fix a batch of nitrogen trioxide for the ecology campaign. If they managed to put some on the doorjams of corporate offices, they could give those executives a well-deserved shock. Sandy voted for making it a

big explosion, but Lyn insisted they weren't aiming to harm anyone—just to scare them.

Willmarth was noncommittal. He said the chemical was unstable after it dried, and he wasn't sure how much it would take to blow off a door, much less how to get it inside a corporate headquarters in the first place. Besides, why would such a trivial act be necessary if all that Lyn and Sandy said about the International People's Court of Retribution was true?

While Willmarth, Davies, and Heather Murphy compiled addresses, Sandy undertook the rest of the International People's Court's business. Because sending thousands of letters would cost a fair amount in postage, Sandy economized by obtaining several boxes of franked envelopes. One set bore the return address of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, an Episcopal seminary in Berkeley that had ordered the envelopes for a fund-raising campaign. Sandra told Davies that she had taken them from a warehouse. Another stack of postage-paid envelopes came from the California Highway Patrol. Sandy said she found them in a garbage can.

On August 26, Sandy went to the Sierra Copy stationery store and ordered several rubber stamps. One design read: "International People's Court of Retribution," while another featured a "reverse" swastika, a mirror image of the one used by the Nazi Party. Sandy would later claim that the reverse swastika—which she also had embroidered on her robe—stood for the opposite of Nazi beliefs.

Lyn and Sandy soon gave Mike Davies another assignment. The state Department of Fish and Game had authorized an antelope hunt. The women obtained the list of those approved for the hunt, and Davies's job was to persuade the participants not to go. The best way to do that, they decided, was to make the hunters understand that their targets were living, breathing creatures. So Davies was to call the hunters, pretend he was a woodland animal, and make it clear he didn't want them coming into his forest shooting things up.

The day after he was given the list, Davies reported back. "I made a call, and said, like, 'I'm Rocky Raccoon and don't come into my forests.'"

Lyn didn't respond. Sandy kind of laughed.

"No, that's not what you're supposed to do," she said. Lyn looked on as Sandy explained that Davies was to act more *mean* when he called the hunters. Cuddly animals were out; the tone was supposed to be, Davies later testified, "somewhat vicious."

Davies had never made any of the calls. He just didn't have it in him.

Lyn left Sacramento shortly after the Rocky Raccoon incident, on a series of missions around the state. They had not gone well.

Some reports placed her in Hollywood, trying to warn the guitarist Jimmy

Page of an evil portent. She went to the Continental Hyatt House, where, since 1969, the raucous English rock group Led Zeppelin had regularly stayed when visiting Los Angeles—after the Tate-LaBianca murders, the group felt more secure at the modern high-rise than in the secluded bungalows of their original base, the Chateau Marmont. But peeved desk clerks, experienced in misdirecting celebrity groupies, passed her on to the band's publicist, Danny Goldberg.

Something terrible would befall Page, perhaps even at his next concert, she told Goldberg. She assured him that the last time she had a similar vision, someone had been shot dead before her eyes.

Led Zeppelin, the group that helped create the heavy metal sound, were known for entertaining female callers in their rooms. But Lyn—a frantic, pale creature in beads and a wrinkled dress, at age twenty-six already old for a groupie—did not fit the bill.

Goldberg said that Page was unavailable. He offered to deliver a note to the guitarist on her behalf.

Lyn was frustrated, but didn't want to push the scene any further. She wrote the note—the story went—gave it to Goldberg, and finally left. That night, at Led Zeppelin's Long Beach Arena concert, Page was struck on the head with a roll of toilet paper, but avoided the firecrackers tossed at the stage.

Lyn did not know Page personally, although her old friend Bobby Beausoleil had years before been cast in the title role of a film Page was scoring, *Lucifer Rising*. For various reasons, the underground film, produced by Kenneth Anger, was never completed. Page finished only thirty minutes of music, and Beausoleil, of course, was serving a life sentence for the murder of Gary Hinman.

Lyn had met famous rock stars in her life, but by 1975, it had been years since she traveled in those circles, and perhaps it was not surprising to be blown off by some flack. More disturbing was the cold shoulder she had received from Paul Fitzgerald.

Near the end of August 1975, Lyn, with Sandy and Capistrano in tow, went to visit Fitzgerald in his Beverly Hills office. Dressed in their hand-sewn robes, the women told him about the Order of the Rainbow and its unique liturgy. Lyn's main business, however, was practical, not spiritual. Katie, Sadie, and Lulu, at the Frontera prison, were still refusing her letters, returning them through the mail unopened. Lyn wanted Fitzgerald to intercede.

She repeated to him her troubles in getting in to see Manson, and her difficulty in keeping track of the various Family members and associates. The Family, Lyn seemed to be saying, if not quite admitting to herself, was falling apart.

For years now, Fitzgerald's office had been a principal contact point for the many underground and incarcerated Family members scattered across California. But Fitzgerald, who had worked so hard on the case five years before, proved strangely unhelpful.

"Squeaky, the girls who are in prison want to get paroled," he told her, as if explaining a heretical, even untathomable idea. And, to Lyn, it was. Previously, the girls, especially Katie, had been haranguing Lyn, needling her for her failure to live up to their example. If Lyn was so committed to the cause, why was she out enjoying the housewife's life while Katie and the others were ready to go all the way to the gas chamber?

Fitzgerald insisted that the women's attitude had changed. "To them, Charlie is poison," he told a disbelieving Lyn. "If they correspond with you, they'll never get out."

Indeed, Sadie Mae Glutz, who now used her given name of Susan Denise Atkins, had proclaimed herself a born-again Christian, and ascribed her time with Charlie to Satanic possession. Katie and Lulu—Patricia Krenwinkel and Leslie Van Houten—had not announced such dramatic religious conversions, but both had professed to apologize for the murders. Just a few years in the joint, with so many ahead, and the girls were repudiating the Family.

Or so Fitzgerald said. Why would they want to return to the corrupt, foul world outside, while Charlie sat within a cage? Of course, Lyn believed, all of them should be out, not one had received a fair trial, none had been recognized for the sacrifice she had made, a sacrifice for the world. Certainly, Lyn would have been willing to make the same sacrifice if she had been called upon to do so.

That she hadn't been called, though, continued to trouble her—not least because she had felt some relief at not having to plunge a knife into a pregnant lady's belly. But her role, perhaps, was outside. She had helped Charlie keep things organized through the early days of the Family, and when it started coming down and Charlie got put in jail, it fell to her to hold it all together and to move everything forward. Compared to the murders, this was easy stuff. It should be easy stuff, but things weren't happening. Had she let them all down? Could the girls inside be doubting her?

So, there was more work to be done—something, Lyn told Fitzgerald, "drastic." On Wednesday, September 3, she mailed letters to the state assembly's Criminal Justice Committee. The letters were intended as a critique of the justice system.

"In all your schooling, you are blind to the real needs of the country that if not met soon, will unseat you not only from your jobs but from your lives," read part of the three-page epistle.

"...I've told you people over and over—I can release thoughts that will destroy you...you lawyers, drunk with the blood of dummies like me, are in trouble. You best be thinking on how to save your lives because the other justice is gonna catch up with you...with points and authorities like you've never imagined."

Lyn typed the name "C. Manson" at the end, along with his prison address, Tamal, California 94964, the site of San Quentin. The return address on the

envelopes, though, was Lyn's Sacramento post office box, rented under the pseudonym "Kay Boro." If the committee members refused the letters, she'd know.

Then Lyn returned to the Bay Area, and made yet another unsuccessful application to see Charlie, who had been moved back to San Quentin in the interim. Though she was unsuccessful in gaining access to Charlie under her own name, it would later be reported that "Kay Boro" was on the prison's visitors list. Authorities denied the report, and said that Manson's only visitor had been his attorney, Irving Kanarek.

Meanwhile, Lyn had to put food on the table, and according to one story, she did so by shoplifting. Caught by a grocery manager, Lyn "turned on that flirtatious charm she's noted for," the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported. The manager not only released Lyn before the police arrived, he let her keep the cans of food she had been trying to steal.

That was just getting by. Lyn told a neighbor that she was planning something big, "bigger than the Tate killing and it [would] happen in the next few weeks." She would begin by stopping the antelope hunt, with or without Mike Davies's help. Some of the men authorized to go on the hunt received telephone calls warning them not to participate. Police never established precisely who took part in the telephone project, but Davies later testified that Sandy said she had made some of the calls. Sandy, for her part, told a court that Lyn had gone to Berkeley and stayed up all night with friends—Sandy did not name them—telephoning the hunters.

"Jas zis Allen Salsman?" began one phone call, placed at 2:25 A.M. to Suisun City, in Northern California. The female caller, trying to manage a German accent, spoke intensely.

"No, it isn't—" She cut him off.

"Jas zis—zis is Fred?"

"Yes, it is—"

"Well, you tell Allen zat he should not go on ze antelope hunt. Accidents happen. And we are ready to kill. You tell him." The caller hung up.

Fred called Allen. The two discussed the call for about fifteen minutes, and then notified the police. Fred couldn't sleep the rest of the night.

The German-accented voice also awoke Charles Huff, when his phone rang after midnight in his San Mateo home, south of San Francisco. Huff, a supervisor for Caltrans, the state highway department, had been asleep for hours.

"Mr. Huff, you have been chosen for an antelope hunt. If you go, you won't come back. Your brains will be *schplattered*. Do you understand?" said the caller. Mr. Huff wasn't yet quite awake.

"Oh, you don't like antelope hunting?" he asked politely. But the caller hung up.

In August 1975, California Resources Secretary Claire Dedrick warned that sustained logging in Redwood National Park, some 330 miles north of San Francisco, was threatening a grove of the world's tallest trees. The clear-cutting had caused extensive erosion and silting of Redwood Creek, meaning the trees could be washed out unless the creekbed was strengthened.

Lyn visited a Sacramento TV station to emphasize the story's importance. The news director wasn't available, and neither were any of the reporters or editors. Passed around from employee to employee, she finally got the attention of a cutter, a technician who spliced together film for news segments. He listened impatiently to Lyn's story.

"Not interested," he said, in the curt fashion of news professionals, adding, by way of explanation: "The President's coming to town." That was how Lyn learned of Ford's visit.

Soon Sacramento was agog over the president's impending arrival, with excitement reaching a peak on Thursday, September 4. In the Top Market grocery, at 18th and O streets, Lyn overheard a clerk, Ed Louie, talking about the visit with a neighborhood kid, Tommy Schnoor.

The grocer asked Tommy if he was going to see the president the next morning. Lyn couldn't stand it.

"I hate Ford," she said.

She didn't really hate Gerald Ford, the son of an Omaha wool trader who entered the world in 1913 as Leslie Lynch King, Jr., was renamed after his stepfather when his parents divorced, and rose to prominence through athletic scholarships, a friendly way with people, and lots of luck. What Lyn really hated was what Ford represented. He was a "dead-head," who permitted the destruction of the environment, who presided over a society that seemed oblivious to its mistreatment of the earth.

Ford the man was so much of a nonentity to Lyn that he rarely figured in her mind. She thought of him, when she thought of him at all, as a robot. That all of Sacramento could be so excited about this zero coming to town was offensive to her, even outrageous. Even children, who usually could spot a phony, were now being taken in. She talked to Tommy Schnoor for a while, on topics of more importance than President Ford, like the Northern California motorcycle gang called the Misfits. Lyn, of course, had known many bikers; in high school, she caroused with a crew from the Sunset Strip and later, had done business with the Straight Satans up at Spahn Ranch. Bikers were, in the main, straight-ahead guys. Tommy was impressed.

Lyn made another useless attempt to see Charlie at San Quentin. She returned to Sacramento on a Thursday night, dead tired and despondent. If she had called Clyde Blackmon, the attorney would have told her that he was close to concluding an arrangement for limited visiting privileges with Manson. But Lyn believed there was no hope of getting to see Charlie through normal channels. The only

way to move officialdom, it seemed, was through a subpoena. Nursing a cold, she trudged up the stairs to her P Street garret, bringing along the bag she had carried on her recent statewide trip. Sandra was home to greet her, but Lyn was not in a gregarious mood.

A few moments later, while she was unpacking, Michael Davies came by for one of his usual evening visits. He lounged about casually, as if nothing in particular was wrong. Lyn, weary and frustrated with the whole course of recent events, could take it no more. When he got up to use Lyn's telephone, she exploded at him.

"She said something to the effect that my life wasn't worth shit," Davies later testified. He started to defend himself, but Lyn snapped, "Don't talk. We don't have time for your talk."

Lyn left the room, and Sandra took over the critique. She called Davies a "phony" for his claims of being a student radical in Berkeley, for bragging about his experiences burning down buildings and taking part in riots. The argument heated up, with Sandra berating Davies as a "windbag" for always wanting to talk their projects out, wanting to talk them to death.

In Sandra's account, Lyn rejoined the fray. "Don't talk!" she commanded, as Davies tried to explain his position. "We don't have time to listen to your talk." Sandra chimed in: "There's bullshit coming from your mouth."

Davies remembered the phrase differently. He testified that Sandra's words were: "There's blood running from your mouth." Still, the encounter didn't wholly alienate Davies from the women, because Sandra made sure to soften the castigation before he left. She said, Davies testified, "that, you know, basically, I was a nice guy."

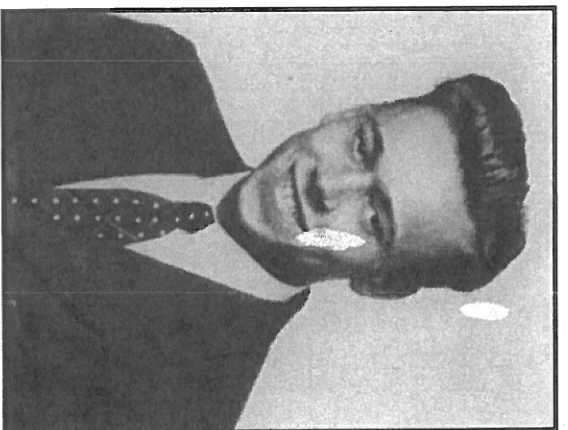
Around 10 P.M., Morris Willmarth came by for another talk about environmental projects. Lyn had a nonecological question for him: did he know where she could get a gun? What about that pistol he owned, the .38? How big was it? Lyn said she was concerned about safety in the "isolated" apartment she shared with Sandy.

The gun, Willmarth said, was a five-shooter with a three-inch barrel. But it didn't matter, anyway; he already had sold it.

They turned on the television. Channel 3 was running the pilot of *Medical Story*, starring Jose Ferrer as a crusty senior surgeon and Beau Bridges as the young upstart doctor who challenges him. At 10:45 P.M., however, Channel 3 broke into the program with live coverage of Air Force One's arrival at McClellan Air Force Base, in north Sacramento.

Hundreds of viewers, frustrated that *Medical Story* was interrupted just before the final act, called the station to complain. Lyn, however, watched spellbound as a grinning President Ford emerged from the aircraft and was welcomed with full military honors and the cheers of several hundred Air Force personnel gathered on the tarmac.

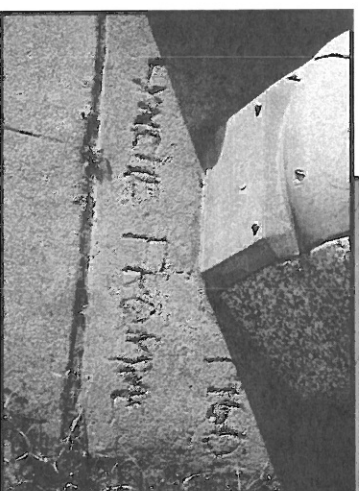
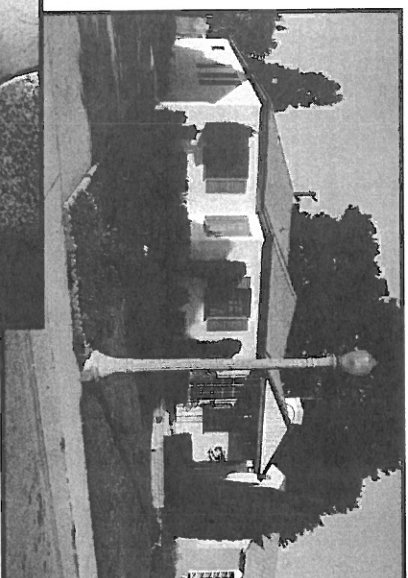
Disgusted, Lyn turned to Sandy. Ford was a "dummy, an empty head," she said. The crowds at McClellan were behaving "like sheep. These people are like sheep looking up to this dead head," she said. "A dead shell with dead thoughts." They looked at each other and asked, "How long can this go on?" Neither verbalized an answer. But after going over their literature on pollution, on the death of trees, they wept. Then Lyn, feeling ill, fell asleep on the couch.



William Millar Fromme: Lynette's father as he appeared in the 1942 NYU yearbook, shortly before he enlisted in the Army Air Forces. Lynette's childhood friends thought he was "scary." (Credit: New York University Archives)

The Eighty-second Street House in Westchester, California: After the war, the bean fields and farms near the Los Angeles airport quickly gave way to tract homes and cul-de-sacs. Lynette spent her early childhood in this house.

(Credit: Ben Bravin)



The base of the lamppost (pictured above) where Lynette immortalized her name in wet cement in 1960. (Credit: Ben Bravin)

Don Heller, accompanied by police lieutenant Robbie Waters, began firing questions at Sandy. Was Lyn troubled, unstable, paranoid?

"Lyn is fine. She's concerned about the survival of this planet. She's concerned about the children," Sandra said. "Paranoid? Psychologically, she's fine," the red-hooded roommate assured the crowd. "She's super-sane."

Heller asked Sandy if Lyn had acted strangely the previous night.

Lyn had been "just a little more tired," Sandy said. "A little more aware of the problems." She recalled how the two women had wept about the destruction of the earth. "I guess this morning [Lyn] thought the time for tears was over."

Where did Lyn get the gun?

Sandy said she didn't know, but they had lots of friends who could have guns and know how to use them.

Had Lyn said anything threatening about President Ford?

"No."

Was it wrong to kill?

"I don't believe in killing, myself," Sandy said. "You should take the guns out of the hands—"

"So why did she do it?" Waters interjected.

"You'll have to ask her," said Sandy.

"Does Manson believe in killing?"

"Why don't you talk to him?"

"Do you think killing is a solution?"

"What do you think?" Sandy said. "Are you going to continue to let them pollute the air? ... The big, big money people are allowing it to go on. Ford knows it and he's not doing anything about it. We are beyond the point of anger. We have been trying to wake you people up for five years."

Lieutenant Waters received a progress report on the search, and called Sandy aside to question her in private. She voiced her answers loudly enough for the onlookers to hear.

"Did you find anything else interesting?" she said, smiling. "Listen," she added, "why did you break into the car? The keys were right on the table." She then returned to the crowd of reporters, assuring them she would wait outside until investigators finished "ransacking the house."

Was Sandy sorry Lyn hadn't shot the president?

"I'm only sorry if Lynette is sorry," Sandy said.

Had Manson suggested an attack on Ford?

"No, orders didn't come from him," Sandy said. "I read every word he writes. I know he's damn mad at Nixon for what he's done to the people." She repeated the Family's complaint that Charlie sat in jail because Nixon had proclaimed him "guilty" before the trial had ended. Along those lines, she noted with irritation that Nixon, who had received a full pardon from Ford before he was even indicted, remained at large. "Every law was broken to put Manson in prison," Sandy said. "Nixon was freed. The world is falling apart."

Was Manson mad at Ford?

"He never said it. [Ford] is just a robot. An empty-headed robot." Ford was unimportant. What mattered was Lyn and the reasons for her act. And now that Lyn was in jail, Sandy reflected, "all the weight of the world is on my shoulders." She sat down on the lawn next to Heather, and peeled a banana for a snack.

Lee Latham had expected Lyn's home to be a dump, a filthy hippie crash pad. Instead, he found a tidy, even spare little apartment, organized not for tripping but for work. The only obvious indication of the sinister element, Latham noted, was the small portrait of Manson hanging on the wall, along with photos of other Family members.

The women were avid readers, agents soon discovered. There were books like *The Prison Business*, a manuscript entitled "My Experiences with the S.L.A.," and countless articles clipped from both mainstream publications and the underground press—including a *Time* article on the Maharaj Ji and a cover story on the dangers of aerosol propellant from *New Times*. There was a pamphlet from the Environmental Protection Agency, which prominently displayed a quotation: "The nineteen-seventies absolutely must be the years when America pays its debt to the past by reclaiming the purity of its air, its waters and our living environment. It is literally now or never." The speaker was President Richard M. Nixon, quoted on January 1, 1970.

Elsewhere in the apartment, one agent found an embroidered vest, another a doll Manson had made in prison and sent to the women. There were dozens upon dozens of letters from Manson Family members, a letter addressed to the LAPD Homicide Bureau, and a reel-to-reel videotape of a television interview of Manson. Among the huge number of papers, notebooks, and folders containing Lyn's writings were a couple of manuscripts, one called "Inside Out," by Lyn Fromme and Sandra Good, the other "Burning Is the End." The women were found to have \$290 cash, kept in a gray knit purse, along with some American Express traveler's checks signed by Sandra.

They also collected knives, most made by the Manson Family's favorite manufacturer, Buck Knives, Inc. And, while Sandra had claimed to know nothing about Lyn's pistol, agents recovered plenty of firearms paraphernalia, including a brown leather cartridge belt, a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson cartridge, a gun registration pamphlet, and a manual, *The Modern Handgun*, which had a chapter on the .45 automatic. In the bathroom, agents found a brown paper bag containing .45 caliber ammunition. The package was partially empty; agents could surmise where four of the cartridges were.

More surprising was the discovery made in Heather's basement single. Agent Bill Carpenter was looking through a carton marked as containing "Feather River Canyon Drinking Water" when he came across a set of pink envelopes. He opened one and read a letter he later recalled as declaring something like "Stop

killing the earth or we'll kill you." Nearby, in boxes that originally contained avocados and butane cartridges, Carpenter found hundreds of similar letters, addressed to different corporate executives, filed carefully by state.

A few feet away, Agent Wade Plucker made a similar discovery inside a green canvas bag marked "Starting Point, Inc." The hundreds, perhaps thousands, of letters were organized by the addressee's location in the United States; green nylon bags were marked "Sacto," "S.F.," "North," "South," "Midwest," "East" and "West." Plucker showed Latham what he had found: the letters, most stamped with the reverse swastika and the initials IPC, screamed threats about "steel-toothed dogs of the IPCR" and a mysterious vigilante killer named Crazy Horse Manson, Jr.—"he can make your bedroom a butcher shop if you ask him to by killing or destroying any part of my family of air, water, land and wildlife," one letter advised. Latham decided to seize all the letters, along with the women's telephone and personal address directories, their sewing supplies, record albums, prayer beads, and their collection of rubber bands. Agents even took one of Heather's greeting cards, decorated with the popular "Smile" logo.

All in all, the agents hauled thousands of items from the property of Lyn and her friends. It took two station wagons and a sedan to carry the evidence away. Lee Latham, now conducting the biggest investigation of his career, was, in his own words, "hyper." He couldn't get to sleep that night, and decided to relieve his nerves by taking a four-mile jog around his suburban Sacramento neighborhood in the early morning hours.

Michael Davies had been driving home from school when he heard a report of the Ford incident on the radio. Stopping at the corner grocery store, he came upon a squad of FBI agents asking passers-by if they knew Lynette Fromme. When Davies mentioned his acquaintance with Lyn, agents were immediately interested. They accompanied him home, where they queried him about his relationship with the women of P Street. Davies was forthcoming, except on one point: He said nothing about the letter-writing project he had been helping with.

At about seven-thirty, Davies walked over to P Street and saw Sandy and Heather amid the crowd outside. Sandy smiled and grabbed Davies's arm. "I'm glad you're here," she said, apparently having forgiven him for the failings she had enumerated the night before. Davies, uncomfortable, decided to return home until the crowd dissipated.

Morris Willmarth had been working at the tomato juice cannery when word of the events in Capitol Park began to filter through. He overheard two co-workers speculating on the aftermath of the president's assassination in Sacramento.

Willmarth scoffed. "I don't think anyone's going to try to kill the President here in Sacramento," he said.

"But someone just did," came the reply. It was "a girl"—somehow connected to the Manson Family.

Willmarth immediately knew who it was, and shivered. He had stopped by P Street the night before and caught the drift of the pained, angry conversations. When Willmarth got off work, he immediately cashed his paycheck and had the first of many beers he would down that day. What had Lyn done? The young man was shattered.

At 9:30 P.M., Willmarth, by now in tears, went with Davies to check on their friends. The two were heatedly discussing the day's events as they approached the scene, still "complete chaos" to Willmarth, with police in the basement and reporters hovering everywhere for quotes. Heather would later say that Willmarth was staggering drunk, and that he had to be helped as he walked up the stairs.

Sandy was irritated at what she saw as the men's juvenile behavior. "Fellows," she told them, "you should be brothers. This is no time to be bickering. A woman just gave her life for the balance of this earth." When Willmarth and Davies wouldn't stop, she sternly commanded, "Now cut that out!"

Willmarth turned to Sandy. Why, he asked, had Lyn committed such a "fruitful, stupid" act? Didn't she realize how far it would set back the cause they all believed in? "She couldn't possibly accomplish as much being incarcerated as she could being out."

"She has been producing constantly to no avail," Sandra retorted. All Lyn's peaceful work, all her efforts at persuasion simply "didn't do any good."

But Willmarth wasn't even listening. He kept crying, muttering to himself, "Why did she do it? Why?"

Sandra grew impatient. "Get ahold of yourself," she told him. "She's my

dearest friend and you are reacting 10,000 times more than I am."

As the authorities began to wrap up their search, Sandra decided that the group should take a walk. The evening air still moist, the four headed down P Street to Sixteenth, then over toward the Capitol. Sandra made sure to circle the block, carefully scouting to see if anybody was still watching her house. The group eventually returned to P Street, and Willmarth carried Lyn's belongings from her car—with the window smashed, it wouldn't be safe to leave them there overnight—up to the apartment.

While they were out, they missed a television program that would have fascinated Lyn. According to UPI, CBS News' *The Guns of Autumn* examined the American hunting culture, using "blood-curdling living color" to document "the slaughter of wildlife by men and women who do not so much hunt animals as execute them." Because the news report depicted the killing of black bear, birds, deer, buffalo, and exotic animals, the network advised parental discretion.

At about ten-thirty, Lyn's friends reconvened in the P Street kitchen. Willmarth sat glumly, while Davies examined the inventory list left by the FBI, and

"Yes."

"—I want you to understand that anything you say in this courtroom, and it's public and it's heard by us, it might very well be held against you. You have been warned of your constitutional rights to remain silent at all times. And from here on out, when you make statements, these statements can be taken down and can very well be held against you. It would be harmful to you. I warn you that the more you talk the more you jeopardize the possibility of you getting a fair trial."

MacBride looked to Walker for support. Lyn continued:

"Well, this is in regard to, as I say, something that's in your jurisdiction. And it's more important to me at this time because I'm the one that's here and I'm the one that sits in the cell and has to worry about—"

"Does it have to do with the conditions of your confinement, Miss Fromme?" the judge asked.

"No, it doesn't. Will you hear me?"

"Have you discussed the matter with your attorney, Mr. Walker?"

"No, I haven't, but I—he has agreed to—" She looked at Walker. "What would you call it?"

Walker spoke. "She discussed with me the fact that she wanted to make a statement to the court."

"Well, Mr. Walker," the judge said, "are you satisfied that she in no way will jeopardize her position by a statement that she's about to make?"

"I am satisfied that she fully understands her rights and is able to deal with that situation, Your Honor. If she makes any statement that could be used against her in any way—"

MacBride interrupted Walker again, turning to the defendant. "And I will tell you this further, Miss Fromme, I don't propose at this time that I would accept any political statement on your part or any statement that might have to do with—"

"This is between—" Lyn began. She and the judge talked over each other.

"—the conditions of the country or anything of that sort," MacBride continued. "We are only concerned in this court in dealing with the question of your guilt or innocence. The purpose of this arraignment is to advise you of the charge that has been placed against you, to determine your identity, to fix a time for your entry of plea, to go into the matter of bail, and deal with matters that are strictly related to the eventual disposition of this case."

"Your Honor, this is in regard to this case. And it's necessary for me to tell you—"

"I will let you get a little start on it," MacBride said, "but I may shut you off and I hope you won't be mad at me if I do but—"

"You know I will!" Lyn seemed already to have established a filial rapport with the judge.

"Oh, you will. All right. I will have to bear up under that. Proceed," he said.

"This is something I want you to know. There are—there is an army of young people and children that want to clean up this earth."

"Miss Fromme. Wait just a minute, Miss Fromme—"

"Now what's involved—" They were talking over each other, again.

"Just a minute, I'm—"

"The redwood trees. That's what I want you to do. I want you to do one of two things, either order the government to buy up the land around the national park—" Lyn was referring to the heavy logging underway in Redwood National Park. She wasn't the only one in Sacramento concerned about the issue; a few blocks away, the State Board of Forestry had convened a hearing to investigate the problem.

"That is enough, Miss Fromme. You've had—"

"—or order the Army Corps of Engineers—"

"Just a minute, Miss Fromme—"

"—in there and have them clean up before we lose them."

MacBride began to lose patience. "I will cause you to be restrained unless you be quiet. It has nothing to do with this case."

"Certainly it does," Lyn insisted. "My intent—"

"No, it has nothing whatever to do with this case and I am sorry I can't permit you to proceed further," he said.

"Will you think about it?" Lyn asked.

"Yes, I'll think about it. I have the first part of the message and I'll think about it, but I can tell you this: It won't have any effect in my decision insofar as the proceedings are concerned or the way this case is going to be tried."

"Well," Lyn said, her voice rising, "that's not important. The important part is the redwood trees. We want to save them. Do you understand this is like cutting down your own arms and legs?"

"All right, Miss Fromme, thank you."

"The gun is pointed, Your Honor," Lyn continued. "The gun is pointed and whether it goes off is up to you all." That phrase, "The gun is pointed," would appear in countless headlines as Squeaky Fromme's latest threat.

MacBride told the bailiff to remove the defendant from the courtroom. A deputy grabbed her arm. Lyn looked at the judge and said cheerfully, "All right, I didn't mean to be rude, but it's necessary."

"You weren't rude and I understand your position," the judge said reassuringly. "But I'm sorry I can't accept your statement today." As the proceedings unfolded through the fall, observers would notice a dynamic in the relationship between Lyn and MacBride, whose own three children, like Lyn, were in their twenties. The judge "treats her like a child who has misbehaved," wrote Lucinda Franks, then a young correspondent for the *New York Times*. "And she treats him like a father who doesn't understand her."

Outside the courtroom, Walker complained that MacBride's characterization of Lyn as a "high-risk" defendant implied that she was "some type of criminal."

Sandy went even further. "This court is stuck in a dead procedure," she said. "The court wants to know *who* did something, instead of *why* something was done."

But some did take note of Lyn's explanation, truncated as it was. In the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the editorial cartoonist Auth drew a panel depicting a forest of redwoods frowning and wincing as a hooded Lyn strolls by with a placard reading, SAVE A REDWOOD. SHOOT A BUSINESSMAN! Says one redwood to another, "With friends like that, who needs enemies?"

Lyn was not discouraged. Unable to make her full statement in court, she wrote MacBride a letter explaining her concerns with the future of the redwoods, with pollution of the air and the water, with the fate of the nation's children.

United States of America vs. Lynette Alice Fromme was not the only legal dispute to arise from the events of September 5, 1975. Another concerned two employees of Channel 13 News, reporter Suzan Kay Harris and cameraman Paul Nyberg.

On the day of Gerald Ford's visit, Nyberg handed Harris a still camera and asked her to snap a photo of him with the president. But when Lyn entered the picture, Harris took a shot of her—one so perfect that *Newsweek* paid \$2,000 to use the photo on its cover. Nyberg wanted half the proceeds and possession of the negatives. He had, after all, bought the film. Harris refused, and so the matter entered Sacramento County Superior Court.

Nyberg's attorney likened the parties' relationship to that of songwriters, where a composer and a lyricist split the proceeds of their work. Harris's lawyer, on the other hand, compared his client to an artist and Nyberg to an art supplier, entitled only to the value of the raw materials he provided.

Judge Merle Shreck issued a temporary restraining order barring Harris from spending the money she received from *Newsweek* or from selling any more photos until the matter was resolved. Shreck urged the reporter and cameraman to resolve the dispute on their own. News photos, he observed, were a rather perishable commodity, and the value of Lyn's image would only decrease with each passing day.

Time magazine's cover, a handsome portrait of Lyn against a black background, became embroiled in another kind of controversy. Clare Boothe Luce, widow of *Time* co-founder Henry Luce, protested that "Elizabeth Seton, the first native American to be canonized as a saint, couldn't make the cover of *Time*. But Lynette Fromme made it." Feminists were annoyed at the headline: THE GIRL WHO ALMOST KILLED FORD. Wrote a reader from Central Islip, New York, "If a twenty-seven-year-old male had held the gun, would your headline have been 'THE BOY WHO ALMOST KILLED FORD'?" Many readers accused the magazine of glamorizing terror. One letter came from Beverly Hills. It complained that the cover featuring Lyn "in all her fresh-faced, tender-lipped vulnerability, gaz-

ing dreamily into history," was "the epitome of irresponsible journalism. Where she may have failed in her attempt to make violence appealing, your cover certainly has not."

The writer was Roman Polanski.

Judge MacBride took up defense objections to the gag order and the \$1 million bail on Tuesday, September 16. With the red-hooded Lyn standing impatiently beside him, Dick Walker implored the judge to let his client speak freely to the press and public. "I suggest to you that it is the defendant's privilege and right . . . particularly in this type of case where it does have, on one hand, the President of the United States making comments which [carry] national coverage."

After Walker concluded his argument, Lyn asked the judge, "May I just speak on my behalf a moment please?"

MacBride looked at the federal defender. "Mr. Walker?"

"We would ask the indulgence of the court, Your Honor," said Walker.

MacBride turned to Lyn. He warned her to keep her remarks limited to the question of the gag order. "Believe me, Miss Fromme," he said, "we're not going to talk about the redwoods."

"All right, Your Honor," Lyn said. "First of all, I feel that—first of all, I make a motion to represent myself in pro per. I'd like you to consider that over the week."

"I will do that."

"Next, I feel that the proceeding was too drawn out. We take too long for things that are very simple, actually. In the U.S. Attorney's points and authorities against the gag order, he states in search of due process the Supreme Court mandated that . . . the trial court must take strong measures to ensure that the balance is never weighed against the accused."

"Your Honor, with the amount of past publicity in the Manson cases of 1969, 1970, with the amount of heavily prejudicial publicity against me, anything that I can say, if I talked all day and all night, could probably not balance what's already been said. And I feel that as long as I don't abuse the privilege, that I should be allowed to express myself. And I have numerous pieces of evidence. *Newsweek* magazine, for one, is so highly prejudicial against me, and this goes into most homes. You can't really expect to find a juror in the whole country that hasn't read some pieces."

The judge seemed unsure how to respond. "The fact there may be a Manson connection or something of that sort . . . apparently you're tied in or you're alleged to have been tied into the Manson matter in some way—and I'm not making a finding in that regard at all—but nevertheless it's true that you, yourself, have made statements in the past which apparently tied you in some way with the Manson affair, the so-called Manson Family."

perhaps the most difficult task a judge has to perform. However, considering all the factors in this case, the United States asks this court to impose the sentence of life on this defendant."

Now it was John Virga's turn. "The only thing I have to say, Your Honor, is that I feel that had Miss Fromme wanted to kill the President, he would be dead. And that she did want to draw attention to her ecological issues."

Lyn interrupted, "You don't know how—"

"Let me finish!" Virga cried. "I would ask that you not consider a life sentence. She's young. Certainly, her conduct that day was very foolish and potentially very dangerous. I would ask that you consider a sentence that leaves the path to rehabilitation open to her. With a life sentence, it will mean she's not eligible for parole for fifteen years."

Last of the speakers would be Lyn herself. "I assume that we're taking this very seriously?" she asked the judge.

"I hope you are—" said MacBride.

"I am."

"—'cause I sure am."

"I am."

"Very well," said the judge.

Lyn began: "I wrote you 120 pages of my heart and my mind. The D.A. talks about offending common sense. All of us are offending common sense when we destroy the earth like we're doing now." She recalled MacBride's remarks about the prosecutors' conduct. "You said the only way to get their attention is to do something drastic. That's what you told me. All of you lawyers throw words around. From what I've seen, if I lay my heart out to you it's like throwing it away. You are—lawyers to me from my experience are machines that work or may not work when you put in your quarter."

"I want Manson out. I want my world at peace. I know that none of you can bring it. We have ten years of air and water. That's not very long. You would rather die than notice yourself killing. I have tried to hold you up so we could let it down gently. And I've stood with a gun and said, 'Don't make me shoot.' And you keep saying, 'Do it, do it, do it.' You keep asking for it. I feel that I've done all I can, save killing you. I cannot be rehabilitated because I haven't done anything wrong. As soon as you let that Family together speak in a trial, then I'm free. Otherwise—"

"Otherwise what?" said the judge.

"Otherwise my freedom will be in seeing the International People's Court of Retribution give you what you deserve."

"Now, Miss Fromme," said MacBride, "are you talking about me individually or are you talking about society in general?"

"Your Honor, I consider you as the public opinion. I feel that's all you are, as a judge."

"Does that complete your statement?"

"That's right," said Lyn.

MacBride looked at his notes. He had drafted a statement of his own.

"I am not unaware of the rather awesome responsibility I have in pronouncing sentence in this particular case. I have no guidelines to assist me... It's the first time anyone has ever been sentenced for the attempted assassination of the President of the United States, so the sentence that I pronounce is based entirely on what I've observed in the trial, what I've read... and then my overall experience in this entire matter."

"Now, Miss Fromme... you send me this statement... I want you to know that I spent hours reading that statement and pondering it... Some parts I read over and over again to see if I could glean from that statement some understanding of you and possibly something that I could find in this that would assist me in mitigating any sentence that I might otherwise impose upon you. I searched in vain. I searched in vain in that statement for anything that would lead me to mitigate sentence. Ninety-five percent of the statement was devoted to your condemnation of society in general. Your—"

"Condemnation?" Lyn interrupted.

"Yes, that's the way I read it."

"Of people themselves?"

"Of what people are doing," said the judge.

"What are they doing?" asked Lyn.

But MacBride was not interested in a Socratic dialogue with Lyn. "You have had your turn and I'm going to have my turn now," he said. "You keep referring to this rotten mess and that society generally is to be condemned and that's—"

"Did I call it a 'rotten mess,' or did I tell you there's chemicals in the water?" Lyn said.

"There's no sense in your interrupting me because I'm going to say what I'm going to say."

Lyn continued her lesson: "Did I call it names or did I ask you to get it out of the water?"

"I'm telling you, Miss Fromme, I'm going to complete this statement and you're going to stand there either taped or not. Now, can we do this peacefully, please? I gave you an opportunity to make whatever statement you wanted."

"You fool," said Lyn. "I'm trying to save your life."

"Well, I also read that in the statement and I took it seriously. I really did, the statement you made in your letter to me. But I repeat that your statement was almost entirely [about], let's put it this way, your philosophy toward society, your attitude, your feelings concerning our environment and finally your defense of Charles Manson and other members of the Manson Family who are presently imprisoned and your justification for the Tate-LaBianca murders."

"Excuse me, Your Honor, I didn't 'justify' the Tate-LaBianca murders," Lyn said. "I asked that they be allowed to explain those murders."

"Well, anyway," the judge continued, "the remainder of your statement was

devoted to your view of what happened on the days leading up to September 5th and September 5th itself." In the letter, Lyn had written that before leaving her apartment, she had put a cartridge into the Colt .45's firing chamber and then ejected it, leaving the chamber empty. "I ejected that one and saw it fall to the floor," the letter said. She wrote that she had no intention of killing the president.

"Now, unfortunately, your version of what happened on that day comes too late," said the judge. "Unfortunately, having been afforded the opportunity to testify and having refused it, your explanation of the incident, even if it's to be believed... is now wasted. It is of no help whatsoever for any legal purpose insofar as this case is concerned. Now, your discussion of the environmental problems disturbs me, and it disturbs me not because I disagree with you that our environment can stand all the help that it can get, but rather because of the violent extremes to which you have committed yourself to correct what you believed to be our environmental problems and, incidentally, to help Manson and your Manson Family—"

"He's the only one that can save us," Lyn insisted, pounding the lectern.

"You said that repeatedly in your statement. 'Manson is the only one that can lead us out of this mess.' I recall that being stated a number of times in your statement. Now, the evidence in this case and your written statement to me, together with the letters that you wrote to Charles Rossie of NBC and to Edward Vandevort, have convinced me that you would murder or that you would cause others to commit murder in what I consider to be your false and distorted belief that only terror and violence can save our environment and our natural resources. Now, I want to suggest to you that the most precious natural resource in the world is a human life."

"You are suggesting that to me?" Lyn was incredulous. For that had been the entire point of her act, of her whole life, perhaps. And the judge, after their months together, after their moments of empathy, seemed not to have understood a thing.

"I'm suggesting it to you," MacBride said. "I'm suggesting it to anyone that will listen and those who might hear of this trial that the most precious natural resource in the world is a human life. To casually and coldly and without conscience take a human life solely for the purpose of calling attention to a cause is to me the most reprehensible and despicable of crimes."

"What if they are taking thousands of lives? Thousands of lives and slowly, very slowly?" Lyn shouted.

"And moreover," the judge continued, "a murder such as the one that you attempted in this case would impoverish the nation and, frankly, it would have done absolutely nothing to further the cause that you espouse."

"Well, I saw that," said Lyn.

"If John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy or Martin Luther King had been allowed

to live out their lives rather than having fallen at the hands of a person like yourself, they could have accomplished more for your environment and for all mankind than all the terrorists in the history of the world—you and Charles Manson included."

"We are not terrorists!" Lyn screamed.

"In this case," the judge said, "I am satisfied that you deserve a punishment equal to the harshness of the deed you attempted to commit. Now, by your own admission... you cannot be rehabilitated."

"That's true," said Lyn. "I didn't do anything wrong. You noticed I didn't kill him. Are you telling me I should have?"

"Now I accept your statement that you cannot be rehabilitated. I am convinced that you are so committed to violence as a means of getting your way—"

"That's why I've been killing all this time," Lyn said sarcastically.

"—in accomplishing your ill-conceived—"

"That's why I came to you to beg on my knees. That's why I knelt on the street corner for two years. That's why I crawled twenty-five miles—because I'm so committed to violence," she continued, mocking the judge.

"All right," said MacBride. "Shall I try again? Frankly, I don't think that any amount of rehabilitative effort will change you and I think you agreed to this yourself. So this leads to the matter of deterrence and I believe the only way to deter you from further violence or the encouragement of violence on the part of others... is to separate you from the society with which you cannot agree and the society from which you've already crossed yourself out by your own admission, by the X on your forehead, and, accordingly, being unable to find any reason or justification for imposing a sentence of less severity than the maximum provided by Congress for the commission of the crime with which you've been convicted, it is the sentence of this court that you be imprisoned for the term of your natural life in the custody of the Attorney General of the United States." It was the first life sentence MacBride had ever imposed. It also was Lyn's first felony conviction.

Emotionless at the sentence, Lyn told the judge that she was dismissing Virga and that she would handle her own appeal.

MacBride said that was none of his business. "The defendant is remanded to the custody of the marshal to carry out the sentence."

"Your Honor, I'd also—"

Deputies, prepared for the moment, grabbed Lyn and began to take her away.

"Wait a minute! Just hang on a second—Hey!"

MacBride stopped them. "What is it you want?"

"First of all I'd like my property. I'd like my robe."

"That will be brought down to you," said the judge.

"All right. I would like to make a motion for return of property."

"You may make that at a different time."