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The Charles Manson (Tate-LaBianca Murder) Trial

by Douglas Linder

In the annals of crime, there might never have been a more bizarre motive for killing than that revealed in the 1970-71 trial of four Manson "Family" members. In the twisted mind of thirty-four-year-old Charles Manson, a wave of bloody killings of high-society types in Los Angeles would be the spark that would set off a revolution by blacks against the white establishment. When "blackie," as Manson called black people, proved unable to govern, they would turn to Manson and his tribe of followers, who would have survived "Helter Skelter" by hiding out in an underground cave in the Death Valley area of California while the chaos raged above.

Manson's vision never materialized. Instead, he and several of his followers found themselves convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death in one of the strangest trials the strange state of California has ever witnessed.

THE ROAD TO SPAHN RANCH

Manson's early life marked him for trouble. The illegitimate son of a heavy drinking, promiscuous sixteen-year-old girl from Cincinnati--who would enter prison for armed robbery when Charles was five--, Manson spent most of his life in institutions. By age thirteen, he had committed his first crime, the burglary of a grocery store. The next nineteen years were a parade of crimes, apprehensions, incarcerations, escapes, and paroles. Most of the crimes were non-violent, the major exception being Manson's 1952 sodomization of a boy while holding a razor to his throat.

Psychiatrists saw Manson as "a very emotionally upset youth," "slick" but "extremely sensitive" (1951), "dangerous" with "homosexual and assaultive tendencies" (1952), having "an unstable personality" but being potentially able "to straighten himself out" (1955), being "unable to control himself" with "a tendency to cut up" (1956), having "work habits that range from good to poor" (1957), being "erratic and moody" and "a classic text book case of a correctional institution inmate" (1958), as an "energetic person" who hides "his loneliness, resentment and hostility behind a facade of superficial ingratiation" (1961), being "emotionally insecure" and tending to "involve himself in various fanatical interests" (1963), and, finally, as "in need of a great deal of help in the transition from institution to the free world" (1966).

Manson was scheduled for release on March 21, 1967, following completion of a ten-year sentence for forging a Treasury check. Manson begged prison officials to allow him to stay--prison, he told them, was his home. Unable to comply, the State of California released Charles Manson. He headed north to the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco. Within months of his arrival, "the Family" had begun to form around him.

The activities of the Family included sexual orgies, hallucinogenic drug trips, and frequent sermons by Manson on the meaning of Beatles' music and the coming of Helter Skelter. Manson dominated Family life, even to the extent of telling members who they

could have sex with. No one questioned his authority. Many Family members seemed even to see Manson as having "Christ-like" characteristics, a perception Manson encouraged by often asking, "Don't you know who I am?"

After traveling a circuitous route around the American West in an old school bus for nearly eighteen months, the Family moved into a series of residences in the Los Angeles area in 1969. It was at Spahn Ranch, a ramshackle collection of movie-set buildings in the Simi Hills northwest of Los Angeles, where Manson developed his murderous plan to set off Helter Skelter.

THE TATE-LABIANCA MURDERS

On the afternoon of August 8, 1969, Manson set his plan in motion. Calling together several Family members, Manson announced, "Now is the time for Helter Skelter." That evening he told three female members of the Family--Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, and Linda Kasabian--to get an additional change of clothes, a knife, and a driver's license. Manson discussed details of his plan with a fourth Family member, Charles "Tex" Watson before all four piled into an old Ford. As they drove down the driveway of the ranch, Manson stuck his head in the car window and told them "to leave a sign." He said, "You girls know what I mean, something witchy." Although Tex understood his mission fully, the three women knew neither their destination nor that the night was destined for murder.

Forty-five minutes or so later, shortly after midnight on August 9, the group pulled up in front of the Bel Air residence of actress Sharon Tate, famous for her recent role in the movie *Valley of the Dolls*. Tate shared the home with her husband, director Roman Polanski, who was in London at the time working on his next film project, *The Day of the Dolphin*. In his absence, two friends were staying at the large home at 10050 Cielo Drive, including coffee heiress Abigail Folger and her lover, Voytek Frykowski. Also in the home that night was hair stylist Jay Sebring, a friend of Tate's.

After Tex cut the telephone wires leading to the Tate home, the four scrambled over the fence at the bottom of the property and began heading up the hill leading to the residence. A car pulled up the driveway. Tex leaped forward, stuck his hand through the car window, aimed at the driver's head, and pulled the trigger four times. The first victim in the Tate-LaBianca killings was eighteen-year-old Steven Parent, in the wrong place at the wrong time. While Kasabian waited below by the car, the other three Family members entered the Tate home. Within minutes, the screams began. Watson would later describe the next four victims "as running around the place like chickens with their heads cut off."

In all, the four victims received 102 stab wounds. Sharon Tate was the last to die, knifed by Watson while she was held down by Susan Atkins. Atkins said later that she tasted Tate's blood and found it to be "warm and sticky." She took some of Tate's blood and used it to scrawl, on the porch wall, "PIG."

The next morning, a maid arriving at the Tate home left screaming, "Murder! Death! Bodies! Blood!" Within hours, investigators discovered two badly mutilated bodies on the lawn of the Tate residence, those of Folger and Frykowski. Inside, near a couch in the living room, they discovered the bloody pregnant body of Tate and, with a rope around his neck and a bloody towel over his face, Jay Sebring.

Manson, meanwhile, expressed his displeasure with the attack at the Tate residence. Too messy, he thought. He decided to accompany the next Helter Skelter mission, which he scheduled for that very night. In addition to the four Family members from the previous night's mission, Manson was joined by Clem Tufts and Leslie Van Houten. Manson ordered Kasabian to cruise the neighborhoods of Los Angeles, in search for potential victims, before settling on the home of Leno and Rosemary LaBianca. Watson, Krenwinkel, and Van Houten were the killers chosen by Manson. As they left the car, Manson told them: "Don't let them know you are going to kill them."

Police found Leno LaBianca with a knife lodged in his throat, twelve stab wounds, and seven pairs of fork wounds. The word "WAR" had been carved on his stomach. Rosemary LaBianca was found with multiple stab wounds in her chest and neck. On the LaBianca's living room wall, written in blood, were the words "DEATH TO PIGS" and "RISE." On the refrigerator door was written, "HEALTER SKELTER."

INVESTIGATION AND ARRESTS

On September 1, 1969, a ten-year-old boy in Sherman Oaks discovered a .22 caliber Longhorn revolver under a bush near his home. His parents notified the LAPD, who picked up the gun, but failed to make any connection between it and the Tate murders.

In October, Inyo County officers raided Barker Ranch, in a remote area south of Death Valley National Monument. Twenty-four members of the Manson Family were arrested, on charges of arson and grand theft. Cult leader Charles Manson (dressed entirely in buckskins) and Susan Atkins were among those arrested.

After her arrest, Atkins was housed at Dormitory 8000 in Los Angeles. On November 6, she told another inmate, Virginia Graham, an almost unbelievable tale. She told of "a beautiful cat" named Charles Manson. She told of murder: of finding Sharon Tate, in bed with her bikini bra and underpants, of her victim's futile cries for help, of tasting Tate's blood. Atkins expressed no remorse at all over the killings. She even told Graham a list of celebrities that she and other Family members planned to kill in the future, including Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Tom Jones, Steve McQueen, and Frank Sinatra. Through an inmate friend of Graham's, Ronnie Howard, word of Atkins's amazing story soon reached the LAPD.

About the same time, detectives on the LaBianca case interviewed Al Springer, a member of the Straight Satan biker's group that Manson had tried to recruit into the Family. Word had leaked to police that the Straight Satans might have some knowledge about who was responsible for another recent murder with several similarities to the LaBianca killings.

Springer told detectives that Manson had bragged to him in August at Spahn Ranch--after offering him his pick from among the eighteen or so "naked girls" scattered around the ranch--about "knocking off" five people. When Springer told detectives that Manson had said the Tate killers "wrote something on the...refrigerator in blood"--"something about pigs"--, the detectives knew they might be onto something. Still, it struck them as odd that anyone would confess to several murders to someone that they barely knew. It took another member of the Straight Satans, Danny DeCarlo, to move the focus of the investigation decisively to Charles Manson. DeCarlo told police he heard a Manson Family member brag, "We got five piggies," and that Manson had asked him what to use "to decompose a body."

On November 18, 1969, the District Attorney and his staff selected Vincent Bugliosi to be the chief prosecutor in the Tate-LaBianca case. The choice was no doubt influenced by Bugliosi's impressive record of winning 103 convictions in 104 felony trials. The day after getting the Tate-LaBianca assignment, Bugliosi joined in a search of the Spahn Movie Ranch, where police gathered .22 caliber bullets and shell casings from a canyon used by Family members for target practice. The next day, the search party moved on to isolated Barker Ranch, the most recent home of the Family, on the edge of Death Valley. In the small house at Barker Ranch, Bugliosi saw the small cabinet under the sink where Manson was found hiding during the October raid. On an abandoned bus in a gully, investigators discovered magazines from World War II, all containing articles about Hitler.

Based on Ronnie Howard's account of Susan Atkins's jailhouse confession and interviews conducted with various Manson Family members, the LAPD eventually identified the five persons who participated in the actual Tate and LaBianca murders. The suspects consisted of four women, all in their early twenties, and one man in his mid-twenties: Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, Leslie Van Houten, Linda Kasabian, and Charles "Tex" Watson. Atkins remained in custody at Dormitory 8000. Van Houten was picked up for questioning in California. Watson was arrested by a local sheriff in Texas. Patricia Krenwinkel was apprehended in Mobile, Alabama. Kasabian voluntarily surrendered to local police in Concord, New Hampshire.

Knowing that convictions of at least some defendant would require testimony from one of those persons present at the murders, the D.A.'s office first reached a deal with the attorney for Susan Atkins: a promise not to seek the death penalty in return for testimony before the Grand Jury, plus consideration of a further reduction in charges for her continued cooperation during the trial. Atkins appeared before the Grand Jury on December 5. She told the Grand Jury she was "in love with the reflection" of Charles Manson and that there was "no limit" to what she would do for him. In an emotionless voice, she described the horrific events in the early morning hours of August 9 at the Tate residence. She told of Tate pleading for her life: "Please let me go. All I want to do is have my baby." She described the actual murders, told of returning to the car and stopping along a side street to wash off bloody clothes with a garden hose, and of Manson's reaction on their return to Spahn Ranch. Atkins said that on returning to Spahn Ranch she "felt dead." She added, "I feel dead now." After twenty minutes of

deliberations, the Grand Jury returned murder indictments against Manson, Watson, Krenwinkel, Atkins, Kasabian, and Van Houten.

THE TRIAL

When efforts to extradite Tex Watson from became bogged down in local Texas politics, the District Attorney's Office decided to proceed against the four persons indicted for the Tate-LaBianca murders who were in custody in California. Jury selection began on June 15, 1970 in the eighth floor courtroom of Judge Charles Older in the Hall of Justice in Los Angeles. Manson's request to ask potential jurors "a few simple, childlike questions that are real to me in my reality" was denied. During the voir dire, Manson fixed his penetrating stare for hours, first on Judge Older and then one day on Prosecutor Bugliosi. After getting Manson's stare treatment, Bugliosi took advantage of a recess to slide his chair next to Manson and ask, "What are you trembling about Charlie? Are you afraid of me?" Manson responded, "Bugliosi, you think I'm bad and I'm not." He went on to tell Manson that Atkins was "just a stupid little bitch" you told a story "to get attention." After a month of voir dire, a jury of seven men and five women was selected. The jury knew it would be sequestered for a long time, but it didn't know how long. As it turned out, their sequestration would last 225 days, longer than any previous jury in history.

Opening statements began on July 24. Manson entered the courtroom sporting a freshly cut, bloody "X" on his forehead--signifying, he said in a statement, that "I have X'd myself from your world."

Bugliosi, in his opening statement for the prosecution, indicated that his "principal witness" would be Linda Kasabian, a Manson Family member who accompanied the killers to both the Tate and LaBianca residences. The prosecution turned to Kasabian, with a promise of prosecutorial immunity for her testimony, when Susan Atkins--probably in response to threats from Manson--announced that she would not testify at the trial. Bugliosi promised the jury that the evidence would show Manson had a motive for the murders that was "perhaps even more bizarre than the murders themselves."

On July 27, Bugliosi announced, "The People call Linda Kasabian." Manson's attorney, fabled obstructionist Irving Kanarek, immediately sprung up with an objection, "Object, Your Honor, on the grounds this witness is not competent and is insane!" Calling Kanarek to the bench and telling him his conduct was "outrageous," Judge Older denied the objection and Kasabian was sworn as a witness. She would remain on the stand for an astounding eighteen days, including seven days of cross-examination by Kanarek.

Kasabian told the jury that no Family member ever refused an order from Charles Manson: "We always wanted to do anything and everything for him." After describing what she saw of the Tate murders, Kasabian was asked Bugliosi about the return to Spahn Ranch:

"Was there anyone in the parking area at Spahn Ranch as you drove in the Spahn Ranch area?"

"Yes."

"Who was there?"

"Charlie."

"Was there anyone there other than Charlie?"

"Not that I know of"

"Where was Charlie when you arrived at the premises?"

"About the same spot he was in when he first drove away."

"What happened after you pulled the car onto the parking area and parked the car?"

"Sadie said she saw a spot of blood on the outside of the car when we were at the gas station."

"Who was present at that time when she said that?"

"The four of us and Charlie."

"What is the next thing that happened?"

"Well, Charlie told us to go into the kitchen, get a sponge, wipe the blood off, and he also instructed Katie and I to go all through the car and wipe off the blood spots."

"What is the next thing that happened after Mr. Manson told you and Katie to check out the car and remove the blood?"

"He told us to go into the bunk room and wait, which we did."

Kasabian also offered her account of the night of the LaBianca murders. She testified that she didn't want to go, but went anyway "because Charlie asked me and I was afraid to say no."

Kasabian proved a very credible witness, despite the best efforts during cross-examination of defense attorneys to make her appear a spaced-out hippie. After admitting that she took LSD about fifty times, Kasabian was asked by Kanarek, "Describe what happened on trip number 23." Other defense questions explored her beliefs in ESP and witchcraft or focused on the "vibrations" she claimed to receive from Manson.

A major distraction from Kasabian's testimony came on August 3, when Manson stood before the jury and held up a copy of the Los Angeles *Times* with the headline, "MANSON GUILTY, NIXON DECLARES." The defense moved for a mistrial on the grounds that the headline prejudiced the jury against the defense, but Judge Older denied the motion after each juror stated under oath that he or she would not be influenced by the President's reported declaration of guilt.

Testimony corroborating that of Kasabian came from several other prosecution witnesses, most notably the woman Atkins confided in at Dormitory 8000, Virginia Graham. Other witnesses described receiving threats from Manson, evidence of Manson's total control over the lives of family members, or conversations in which Manson had told of the coming Helter Skelter.

Nineteen-year-old Paul Watkins, Manson's foremost recruiter of young women, provided key testimony about the strange motive for the Tate-LaBianca murders--including its link to the Bible's Book of Revelation. Watkins testified that Manson discussed Helter Skelter "constantly." Bugliosi asked Watkins how Helter Skelter would start:

"There would be some atrocious murders; that some of the spades from Watts would come up into the Bel-Air and Beverly Hills district and just really wipe some people out, just cut bodies up and smear blood and write things on the wall in blood, and cut little boys up and make parents watch. So, in retaliation-this

would scare; in other words, all the other white people would be afraid that this would happen to them, so out of their fear they would go into the ghetto and just start shooting black people like crazy. But all they would shoot would be the garbage man and Uncle Toms, and all the ones that were with Whitey in the first place. And underneath it all, the Black Muslims would-he would know that it was coming down."

"Helter Skelter was coming down?"

"Yes. So, after Whitey goes in the ghettos and shoots all the Uncle Toms, then the Black Muslims come out and appeal to the people by saying, 'Look what you have done to my people.' And this would split Whitey down the middle, between all the hippies and the liberals and all the up-tight piggies. This would split them in the middle and a big civil war would start and really split them up in all these different factions, and they would just kill each other off in the meantime through their war. And after they killed each other off, then there would be a few of them left who supposedly won."

"A few of who left?"

"A few white people left who supposedly won. Then the Black Muslims would come out of hiding and wipe them all out."

"Wipe the white people out?"

"Yes. By sneaking around and slitting their throats."

"Did Charlie say anything about where he and the Family would be during this Helter Skelter?"

"Yes. When we was [sic] in the desert the first time, Charlie used to walk around in the desert and say-you see, there are places where water would come up to the top of the ground and then it would go down and there wouldn't be no more water, and then it would come up again and go down again. He would look at that and say, 'There has got to be a hole somewhere, somewhere here, a big old lake.' And it just really got far out, that there was a hole underneath there somewhere where you could drive a speedboat across it, a big underground city. Then we started from the 'Revolution 9' song on the Beatles album which was interpreted by Charlie to mean the Revelation 9. So-

"The last book of the New Testament?"

"Just the book of Revelation and the song would be 'Revelations 9: So, in this book it says, there is a part about, in Revelations 9, it talks of the bottomless pit. Then later on, I believe it is in 10."

"Revelation 10?"

"Yes. It talks about there will be a city where there will be no sun and there will be no moon."

"Manson spoke about this?"

"Yes, many times. That there would be a city of gold, but there would be no life, and there would be a tree there that bears twelve different kinds of fruit that changed every month. And this was interpreted to mean-this was the hole down under Death Valley."

"Did he talk about the twelve tribes of Israel?"

"Yes. That was in there, too. It was supposed to get back to the 144,000 people. The Family was to grow to this number."

"The twelve tribes of Israel being 144,000 people?"

"Yes."

"And Manson said that the Family would eventually increase to 144,000 people?"

"Yes."

"Did he say when this would take place?"

"Oh, yes. See, it was all happening simultaneously. In other words, as we are making the music and it is drawing all the young love to the desert, the Family increases in ranks, and at the same time this sets off Helter Skelter. So then the Family finds the hole in the meantime and gets down in the hole and lives there until the whole thing comes down."

"Until Helter Skelter comes down?"

"Yes."

"Did he say who would win this Helter Skelter?"

"The karma would have completely reversed, meaning that the black men would be on top and the white race would be wiped out; there would be none except for the Family."

"Except for Manson and the Family?"

"Yes."

"Did he say what the black man would do once he was all by himself?"

"Well, according to Charlie, he would clean up the mess, just like he always has done. He is supposed to be the servant, see. He will clean up the mess that he made, that the white man made, and build the world back up a little bit, build the cities back up, but then he wouldn't know what to do with it, he couldn't handle it."

"Blackie couldn't handle it?"

"Yes, and this is when the Family would come out of the hole, and being that he would have completed the white man's karma, then he would no longer have this vicious want to kill."

"When you say 'he,' you mean Blackie?"

"Blackie then would come to Charlie and say, you know, 'I did my thing, I killed them all and, you know, I am tired of killing now. It is all over.' And Charlie would scratch his fuzzy head and kick him in the butt and tell him to go pick the cotton and go be a good nigger, and he would live happily ever after."

On November 16, 1970, after twenty-two weeks of testimony, the prosecution rested its case.

When the trial resumed three days later, the defense startled courtroom spectators and the prosecution by announcing, without calling a single witness, "The defense rests." Suddenly, the three female defendants began shouting that they wanted to testify. In

chambers, attorneys for the women explained that although their clients wanted to testify, they were strongly opposed, believing that they would--still under the powerful influence of Manson--testify that they planned and committed the murders without Manson's help. Returning to the courtroom, Judge Older declared that the right to testify took precedence and said that the defendants could testify over the objections of their counsel. Atkins was then sworn as a witness, but her attorney, Daye Shinn, refused to question her. Returning to chambers, one defense attorney complained that questioning their clients on the stand would be like "aiding and abetting a suicide."

The next day came another surprise. Charles Manson announced that he, too, wished to testify--before his co-defendants did. He testified first without the jury being present, so that potentially excludable testimony relating to evidence incriminating co-defendants might be identified before it prejudiced the jury. His over one-hour of testimony, full of digressions, fascinated observers:

"I never went to school, so I never grew up to read and write too good, so I have stayed in jail and I have stayed stupid, and I have stayed a child while I have watched your world grow up, and then I look at the things that you do and I don't understand. . . .

"You eat meat and you kill things that are better than you are, and then you say how bad, and even killers, your children are. You made your children what they are. . . .

"These children that come at you with knives. they are your children. You taught them. I didn't teach them. I just tried to help them stand up. . .

"Most of the people at the ranch that you call the Family were just people that you did not want, people that were alongside the road, that their parents had kicked out, that did not want to go to Juvenile Hall. So I did the best I could and I took them up on my garbage dump and I told them this: that in love there is no wrong. . . .

"I told them that anything they do for their brothers and sisters is good if they do it with a good thought. . . .

"I don't understand you, but I don't try. I don't try to judge nobody. I know that the only person I can judge is me . . . But I know this: that in your hearts and your own souls, you are as much responsible for the Vietnam war as I am for killing these people. . . .

"I can't judge any of you. I have no malice against you and no ribbons for you. But I think that it is high time that you all start looking at yourselves, and judging the lie that you live in.

"I can't dislike you, but I will say this to you: you haven't got long before you are all going to kill yourselves, because you are all crazy. And you can project it back at me . . . but I am only what lives inside each and everyone of you.

"My father is the jailhouse. My father is your system. . . I am only what you made me. I am only a reflection of you.

"I have ate out of your garbage cans to stay out of jail. I have wore your second-hand clothes. . . I have done my best to get along in your world and now you want to kill me, and I look at you, and then I say to myself, You want to kill me? Ha! I'm already dead, have been all my life. I've spent twenty-three years in tombs that you built.

"Sometimes I think about giving it back to you; sometimes I think about just jumping on you and letting you shoot me . . . If I could, I would jerk this microphone off and beat your brains out with it, because that is what you deserve, that is what you deserve. . . .

"These children [indicating the female defendants] were finding themselves. What they did, if they did whatever they did, is up to them. They will have to explain that to you. . . .

"You expect to break me? Impossible! You broke me years ago. You killed me years ago. . . .

"Mr. Bugliosi is a hard-driving prosecutor, polished education, a master of words, semantics. He is a genius. He has got everything that every lawyer would want to have except one thing: a case. He doesn't have a case. Were I allowed to defend myself, I could have proven this to you. . . The evidence in this case is a gun. There was a gun that laid around the ranch. It belonged to everybody. Anybody could have picked that gun up and done anything they wanted to do with it. I don't deny having that gun. That gun has been in my possession many times. Like the rope was there because you need rope on a ranch. . . It is really convenient that Mr. Baggot found those clothes. I imagine he got a little taste of money for that. . . They put the hideous bodies on [photographic] display and they imply: If he gets out, see what will happen to you. . . [Helter Skelter] means confusion, literally. It doesn't mean any war with anyone. It doesn't mean that some people are going to kill other people. . . Helter Skelter is confusion. Confusion is coming down around you fast. If you can't see the confusion coming down around you fast, you can call it what you wish. . Is it a conspiracy that the music is telling the youth to rise up against the establishment because the establishment is rapidly destroying things? Is that a conspiracy? The music speaks to you every day, but you are too deaf, dumb, and blind to even listen to the music. . . It is not my conspiracy. It is not my music. I hear what it relates. It says "Rise," it says "Kill." Why blame it on me? I didn't write the music. . . .

"I haven't got any guilt about anything because I have never been able to see any wrong. . . I have always said: Do what your love tells you, and I do what my love tells me . . . Is it my fault that your children do what you do? What about your children? You say there are just a few? There are many, many more, coming in the same direction. They are running in the streets-and they are coming right at you!"

At the conclusion of Bugliosi's brief cross-examination of Manson, Older asked Manson if he now wished to testify before the jury. He replied, "I have already relieved all the pressure I had." Manson left the stand. As he walked by the counsel table, he told his three co-defendants, "You don't have to testify now."

There remained one last frightening surprise of the Tate-LaBianca murder trial. When the trial resumed on November 30 following Manson's testimony, Ronald Hughes, defense attorney for Leslie Van Houten failed to show. A subsequent investigation revealed he had disappeared over the weekend while camping in the remote Sespe Hot Springs area northwest of Los Angeles. It is widely believed that Hughes was ordered murdered by Manson for his determination to pursue a defense strategy at odds with that favored by Manson. Hughes had made clear his hope to show that Van Houten was not acting independently--as Manson suggested--but was completely controlled in her actions by Manson.

Manson's defense attorney, Irving Kanarek, argued to the jury that the female defendants committed the Tate and LaBianca murders out of a love of the crimes' true mastermind, the absent Tex Watson. Kanarek suggested that Manson was being persecuted because of his "life style." He argued that the prosecution's theory of a motive was fanciful. His argument lasted seven days, prompting Judge Older to call it "no longer an argument but a filibuster."

Bugliosi's powerful summation described Charles Manson as "the Mephistophelean guru" who "sent out from the fires of hell at Spahn Ranch three heartless, bloodthirsty robots and--unfortunately for him--one human being, the little hippie girl Linda Kasabian." Bugliosi ended his summation with "a roll call of the dead": "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Sharon Tate...Abigail Folger...Voytek Frykowski...Jay Sebring...Steven Parent...Leno LaBianca...Rosemary LaBianca...are not here with us in this courtroom, but from their graves they cry out for justice."

The jury deliberated a week before returning its verdict on January 25, 1971. The jury found all defendants guilty on each count of first-degree murder. After hearing additional evidence in the penalty phase of the trial, the jury completed its work by sentencing each of the four defendants to death on March 29. As the clerk read the verdict, Manson shouted, "You people have no authority over me." Patricia Krenwinkel declared, "You have judged yourselves." Susan Atkins said, "Better lock your doors and watch your own kids." Leslie Van Houten complained, "The whole system is a game." The trial was over. At over nine-months, it had been the longest and most expensive in American history.

TRIAL AFTERMATH

The death sentences imposed by the Tate-LaBianca jury would never be imposed, thanks to a California Supreme Court ruling in 1972 declaring the state's death penalty law unconstitutional. The death sentences for the four convicted defendants, as well as for Tex Watson who had been convicted and sentenced to death in a separate trial in 1971, were commuted to life in prison. All five currently remain in prison in California.

Charles Manson is incarcerated at in a maximum security section of a state penitentiary in Concoran, California. He has been denied parole ten times, most recently in 2002. In prison, he has assaulted prison staff a half dozen times. A search of his the prison chapel where Manson took a job in 1980 revealed his hidden cache including marijuana, one hundred feet of nylon rope, and a mail-order catalog for hot air balloons. In 1986, he published his story, *Manson in His Own Words*. In his book, Manson claims: "My eyes are cameras. My mind is tuned to more television channels than exist in your world. And it suffers no censorship. Through it, I have a world and the universe as my own."

All three female defendants have expressed remorse for their crimes, been exemplary inmates, and offered their time for charity work. Yet none has been released by the California Parole Board, even though each of them was young and clearly under Manson's powerful influence at the time of their crimes. There is no question that but for their unfortunate connection with Charles Manson, none would have committed murder. It is sad, but undoubtedly true, that parole boards are political bodies that base decisions as much upon anticipated public reaction to their decisions as on a careful review of a parole applicant's prison record and statements. The three female defendants deserve release, but there is a real question whether they will ever experience freedom again.

<https://www.famous-trials.com/manson>