

is also the claim that Sirhan was at the wrong angle to—or distance from—Kennedy to have inflicted the wounds that killed him. Considering all of these unresolved possibilities, Robert Joling, president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, declared last week: "Let's take the next scientific steps and get all the answers out front once and for all."

What steps, if any, will be undertaken to tie up the loose ends remain unclear. Neither Godfrey Isaac, Sirhan's lawyer, nor Schrade now intends to push for further investigations. Says Schrade: "I feel tremendously relieved that we resolved the major question, essentially that there was one gun. We have eliminated as much doubt as possible." Enough skeptics remain, however, to virtually guarantee that questions about the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy—like that of his brother John—will continue to simmer for years.

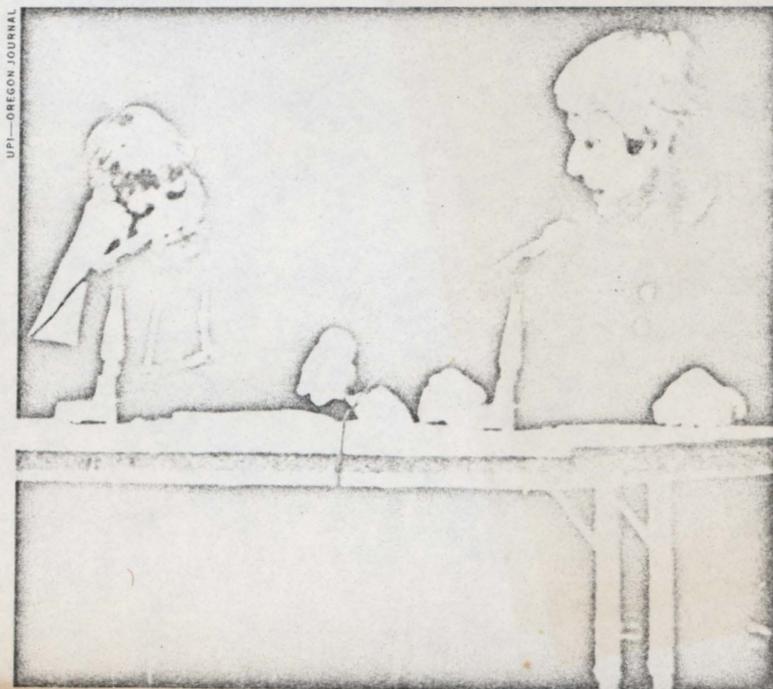
CULTS

Out of This World

One day last month Robert Rubin, a transplanted New Yorker living in Newport, Ore., signed over the four houses and ten-acre farm he owned to a friend and then went away. His neighbor Sue Greenberg put her name to a notarized document assigning her two children to a friend's care, and then she went away too. In Eugene, Surveyor Gerald Anderson quit his job and disappeared, as did Dan Staggs, a nurseryman from nearby Springfield. In all, somewhere between 21 and 26 Oregonians simply up and left everything they had after attending a recruiting meeting of a baffling new sect called HIM—Human Individual Metamorphosis. The sect's sales pitch is simple: it promises to take its followers literally out of this world.

The leaders of HIM are a man and a

PAIR IDENTIFIED AS "THE TWO" AT OREGON MEETING



woman known to outsiders only as "the Two." Eyewitnesses describe them as being in their 40s and having glassy, hollow-looking eyes. According to a flyer they distributed at one meeting in California, they claim to have come from the same "kingdom" as Jesus Christ. Jesus, the flyer read, left earth "in a cloud of light (what humans refer to as UFOs) and moves and returns in the same manner . . . There are two individuals here now who have also come from the next kingdom, incarnate as humans . . . and will soon demonstrate that same proof of overcoming death." The Two expect to be assassinated sometime soon, rise from the dead in 3½ days and then leave for home in a UFO. The faithful can come along, provided they have completed an "overcoming process"—a stripping away of all earthly possessions and desires. Converts abandon everything they own, except camping gear and cars, and hit the road. They live a spartan existence, renounce sex entirely—and wait.

The Two apparently began attracting followers as early as July 4 and have since turned up in Colorado, Washington, Oregon, California and Arizona. Few noticed them until the Oregon contingent dropped out of sight. Travelers fitting the Oregonians' descriptions have been seen at various Colorado campsites, and were recently noticed near the Nebraska border, heading east. Another, much larger band of converts is said to be in Northern California.

Hypnotic State. The ultimate lift-off spot of the putative UFO is unknown, but it seems that HIM disciples generally alternate between traveling in caravans and fanning out in smaller groups or alone in order to proselytize. Some of them have got in touch with news organizations or written postcards home to prove they are well and victims of neither fraud nor coercion. "Try to be happy for me," a 25-year-old Denver man named Larry wrote to his parents. "Don't worry, this is not an S.L.A. group or a Charles Manson group. You have to be awfully good to go on this journey."

Several people who attended a meeting in Waldport, Ore., wonder whether their neighbors who disappeared might have been in "some sort of hypnotic state." The male half of the Two, who always runs the meetings, seems to have a rare ability to impress audiences with the urgency and truth of his message. His gestures too are apparently hypnotic: he is said to tip his head back at regular intervals. Says one witness: "A robot was the only comparison I could make."

In Oregon, police do not even have missing-persons reports in their files: the HIM converts simply told their loved ones they were leaving for good. Nor are the police terribly concerned, at least so far. "Most of these people were hippie types," says Oregon State Policeman Melvin Gibson. "They're not what you'd call prominent citizens." Still, he adds, "there's no question there's something funny going on."

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