

# RARELY WHAT IT SEEMS

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Though a product of the '60s, The Process Church disdained flower power, tie-dye and patchouli oil. On the street they wore black cloaks with hoods and Goat of Mendes patches, selling literature with titles like *Death and Fear* and *Humanity is the Devil*.

The Process Church of the Final Judgment officially changed its name and its Gods in 1975, but even today the original group enjoys cultural influence. Its screeds were reproduced as liner notes for two Funkadelic albums; Skinny Puppy had an album called *Process* complete with anti-vivisection lyrics, a prominent Process Church concern. Process rituals were appropriated and valorized by Psychick TV and Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth (or TOPY), and The Process' misanthropic bombast appeared on the pages of my *Apocalypse Culture* compilation.

The apocalyptic group also inspired sinister conspiracy theories and was called, by Maury Terry's *The Ultimate Evil*, "one of the most dangerous satanic cults in America."

Their story begins in London in 1963, when the United States was playing Cold War chicken with the Soviet Union, and children ducked and covered in classrooms. Less than 20 years earlier, Germany rained V2 bombs on Londoners' heads, and for citizens alert to the Cuban Missile Crisis, mass nuclear death not only seemed possible, but inevitable.

The psychological havoc of nuclear end times preoccupied two Church of Scientology members who grumbled that its teachings were turning people into little L. Ron Hubbards. One of the dropouts, Robert Moor, was a married architecture student, and the other, Mary Ann MacLean, was an aggressive and charismatic woman who had bootstrapped herself out of a poor background as a call girl.

Robert and Mary Ann hijacked a Scientology E-meter and struck out on their own with a group called “Compulsions Analysis,” combining Scientology auditing techniques with Alfred Adler-style psychotherapy to dig deeper into the dynamics of self-actualization.

Under Mary Ann’s urging, Robert broke up his marriage, changed his last name to de Grimston, and brought in his architecture school friend Timothy Wyllie as a guinea pig for E-meter (later renamed P-scope) tests after the Process Church found its name.

Timothy found these procedures helpful in breaking through British stiff-upper-lip stoicism to connect with his deeper self. Mixed feelings toward Mary Ann provoked Timothy to drop out of Compulsions Analysis, but two years later he returned to the fold, becoming convinced that Mary Ann was his true spiritual guide. These moments, and Process’ transition from atheism into occult practices are compellingly told by Timothy Wyllie in this book.

We have photographs to prove that dark-cloaked Process Church “Messengers” went out into the world wearing crucifixes and Luciferian sigils. Such was the look of a group of committed young people who saw the world coming to an end, but to their disbelief, few seemed to be paying any mind.

*Love Sex Fear Death* began as a collaborative effort with Genesis P-Orridge to publish a monograph of Process’ magazines. The monograph concept was bypassed after speaking to Timothy Wyllie and other former Process members—their previously unrevealed memories excited us more as a book than simply reproducing the colorful magazines alone. Timothy was a longtime and prominent member of The Process Church and its later incarnations, The Foundation Church of the Millennium and then The Foundation Faith of the Millennium. He art-directed *Fear* and *Death* and other notorious Process publications, and even played lead guitar for Process’ own rock band. Our lengthy conversations sparked Timothy’s enthusiasm for presenting his story in written form.

Timothy surprised me when he revealed that a number of inside elements did not correspond with Process’ public image. For the first time, I discovered that The Process Church was in fact a matriarchal cult ruled by co-founder Mary Ann, who was treated as a goddess by most of its members. Apparently the biggest issue in the group’s schism with Robert was simply finding another public face for leadership. Mary Ann never wanted to be the official leader, and her image became forbidden inside Process and Foundation Faith Chapters. We’re lucky to have one photograph of Mary Ann in the form of a flash-marred snapshot of another photograph.

This book is supplemented with original photos collected by Sammy M. Nasr, who fortunately disobeyed Mary Ann’s directive to destroy the images. We were also able to speak at length with Malachi (Father Malachi) McCormick, a longtime high-level Process Church leader who edited many of the Process magazines and newsletters. We communicated with other former members,

some of whom provided us their fascinating memories, and others who declined to participate. This book breaks through decades of silence, and tells the story from the vantage points of half a dozen former members.

Approximately a dozen people from the original Process collective continue to work together today within the large and successful animal sanctuary known as “Best Friends.” We have not solicited anecdotes from ex-Process members within Best Friends. After a 2/28/04 *Rocky Mountain News* feature by Lou Kilzer revealed the Process Church origins of Best Friends, a well-scrubbed official story was posted on the Best Friends site. Its version of its history removes Lucifer and Satan from Process theology, or any mention of far-out Process theology or its cultic elements. The Best Friends animal sanctuary is now widely seen in the popular television show, *Dogtown*.

I first learned in 1987 that some of the conspiracy literature regarding The Process Church was either dishonest or was poorly fact-checked. After hearing a rumor that Robert de Grimston was listed in the Staten Island phone book under his given name Robert Moor, I called him up—that is, after certain hesitation. After all, Maury Terry’s *The Ultimate Evil* informs us that de Grimston is a diabolical mystery man who had removed himself from the world at large to pursue the practice of evil. What was he doing so easily reached in the phone book? And how confident could I be of Maury Terry’s research if he couldn’t even bother locating Robert de Grimston by calling the Information operator?

After dialing the listed Mr. Moor and hearing the phone answered by a polite man with a British accent, I was more than a bit surprised. Though he wasn’t particularly happy to receive an unexpected phone call, Mr. Moor and I spoke for ten minutes about the conspiracy literature (“unbearable ... a pack of lies”), and my appeal for him to tell his story (“I’ll think about it”).

Maury Terry reveals more about his experts on The Process Church within *The Ultimate Evil*:

*I raised the subject of the dead German shepherds with Larry Siegel ... Larry, twenty-seven, was a well-informed researcher and professional writer. He’d offered to spend some time checking into the occult, and was ready with an opinion.*

*“You’ve heard of the Process, right? Well, the Process kept German shepherds.”*

Here, a 27-year-old “researcher” speculates that since The Process Church took care of German shepherds, some sort of weird splinter group must be the ones massacring them à la the Son of Sam murders in the late ’70s long after The Process Church folded and became The Foundation. Maury Terry further writes:

*The Process, as far as is known, has now officially splintered, and its offspring—while still active—have gone underground. But before the Process divided, it spread seeds of destruction throughout the United States. Those spores were carried on winds of evil across the 1970s and into the present. The terror still reigns with far-flung subsidiary groups united by the sins of the father.*

It's strange to see these unsubstantiated assertions stated as fact, and repeated widely online as absolute proof. Coincidentally, Maury Terry's New York agent contacted Feral House in 2008 to publish a revised edition of *The Ultimate Evil*.

In *The Ultimate Evil*, Maury Terry also credits Ed Sanders for providing valuable information.

It was Yippie and Fugs founder Ed Sanders who wrote the true-crime tome *The Family: The Story of Charles Manson's Dune Buggy Attack Battalion* (Dutton, 1971), concerned that the Manson murders and its fallout destroyed hippie and yippie goals forever, Sanders appeared to take an instant dislike to The Process Church's apocalyptic rhetoric and its dark Satanic garb.

"The Process," Chapter Five of *The Family*, swiped at The Process with hipster ridicule ("oo-ee-oo") and called Process' German shepherds a "vicious Alsatian dog pack," tying The Process, though tenuously, to Charles Manson. All this provoked the cult to protect itself with a defamation suit. Sanders' American publisher soon caved in, removing the offending material from the book in a settlement. Following this victory, The Process initiated a lawsuit in England against Sanders' British publisher. Rather than settling, the British case went to trial. Transcripts of the trial reveal a judge with obvious bias in a case that pitched an underground cult against a major British corporation. The Process lost the defamation case, and were forced to pay the British publisher's legal fees.

One could make the argument that due to its extreme views and insular arrogance, The Process Church had itself to blame for the smears and resulting hysteria. But the fallout of this failed suit loomed large in the cult's toning down of its public face, and clamming up in public dialogue about its history.

Despite its obsession with public relations and the domineering control of its followers, my view is that The Process Church did not manifest their ideas with violence or cruelty, and are not guilty of the various accusations.

A more even-handed view of The Process Church's history was provided by William Sims Bainbridge in his *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult* (University of California Press, 1978).

Bainbridge, a scholar, professor and prolific author of books about religion and cults, spent months with The Process Church, primarily at its Boston Chapter, in the early '70s, prior to the schism in which co-founder Robert de Grim-

ston was flung from the church and Mary Ann was now seen as the sole leader. *Satan's Power* avoids calling The Process or its members by their actual or group-appointed names, and is a thorough academic investigation into The Process Church's rituals, hierarchy, clothing, language, and use of meditation, psychometry and Scientology-like auditing sessions (called "therapy" by Processeans).

Bainbridge's book concludes by focusing on Robert de Grimston's apparently ineffective attempts to lead a reformed Process Church following his removal. Obviously distanced from Mary Ann's devoted followers, Bainbridge mistakenly reports that an interior group known as "The Four" (and not Mary Ann) led the group.

*Satan's Power* describes the cult's conflicted attitude about the Manson murder hysteria. Even as early as 1970, a Process member said: "I got a real wild idea in my head and decided we should go off to California and check out Charles Manson and what was happening out there. 'Cause we had just been pointed out as being involved in these strange ritual murders."

The Process Church's interest in soliciting celebrity articles and plugs inspired two Process members to present themselves to Manson in prison and interview him for its *Death Issue*, in which Manson's short "essay" is presented next to a piece by super-Catholic British establishment figure Malcolm Muggeridge. *Love Sex Fear Death* reproduces Manson's article. We have also included original photographs, period news clips, excerpts from Robert de Grimston's books, magazine covers, interior stories, in-group newsletters and material meant for the public at large.

This book would not have been possible without the generous involvement of Timothy Wyllie, Genesis P-Orridge, Malachi McCormick, Sammy M. Nasr, Edward Mason, Ruth Strassberg, Kathe McCaffrey, Laura Merrill and a half-dozen other former members who wish to remain nameless. Doug Mesner of Process.org assisted with the Timeline, and William Morrison of Process.org and Skinny Puppy shared his thoughts about Process. We'd also like to thank Jodi Wille, Benjamin Tischer, and Laura Smith for their invaluable assistance.

Here we are: worldwide droughts bringing on catastrophic reductions in food production, global monetary breakdowns, restless masses, fundamentalist battles for nuclear weapons ... it's a Process Church world once again, perhaps even more so.