

Murderpedia


 Juan Ignacio Blanco
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DeVernon LeGRAND



A.K.A.: "The Reverend"

Classification: Serial killer**Characteristics:** Convicted rapist - Child abuse - Called himself bishop - Head of the St. John's Pentecostal Church of Our Lord

Number of victims: 12 +

Date of murders: 1963 - 1976

Date of arrest: May 1976

Date of birth: 1924

Victims profile: **Women** (wives and members of his Brooklyn cult of begging nuns)Method of murder: **Shooting - Beating**Location: **New York/New Jersey, USA**Status: **Sentenced to 25 years to life in prison, 1977. Died in prison in 2006**

[photo gallery](#)

The Rev. DeVernon LeGrand, who headed St. John's Pentecostal Church of Our Lord in Brooklyn, recruited many teenage "nuns" who solicited money for his church. In 1975 the pastor, age 50, was convicted of raping one of the 17-year-old nuns.

In 1976 the bodies of two more of the girls were found in a pond at LeGrand's farm in the Catskills. He and a son were convicted of murdering them. In 1977 the pastor was found guilty of murdering his former wives, who died in 1963 and 1970. He's serving life in prison.

DeVernon LeGrand

A New York native, born in 1925, LeGrand was arrested on charges of kidnapping, assault, and firearms possession in 1965.

Three years later, police accused him of snatching a 23-year-old woman from her home, assaulting and raping her before she managed to escape. Neither case was prosecuted, but in 1975, LeGrand was convicted of bribery and sexual misconduct with a 17-year-old girl.

That same year, along with his 20-year-old son Noconda, LeGrand was convicted of kidnapping and rape; he drew a sentence of five to 15 years in prison, while his son got off "easy" with an eight-year prison term. Such conduct is not unheard of in New York City, but it is peculiar for the leader of a church.

A self-styled holy man, LeGrand had organized St. John's Pentecostal Church of Our Lord a decade earlier, putting down roots in the Crown Heights district of Brooklyn. His headquarters, a four-story townhouse,

was occupied by eleven "nuns" and their 47 children, many of them fathered by LeGrand.

According to police, LeGrand did most of his recruiting by seduction, impregnating young women, then threatening them or their children if they refused to beg for money on the streets. His black-clad "nuns" were often seen around Grand Central Station, and others had been jailed on misdemeanor charges in New Jersey. It was within the Crown Heights "chapel" that LeGrand had raped his final victim, during August 1974, and authorities suspected that sexual assault was only the tip of the iceberg.

In 1966, LeGrand's "church" had purchased a 58-acre spread in the Catskills, near White Sulphur Springs, converting the place to a summer retreat for the faithful. Over the next eight years, state police received steady complaints from the neighbors, alleging child abuse and health violations, wild parties and indiscriminate gunfire. Children from the camp roamed freely through the countryside, begging and stealing, while horses were cruelly beaten and left to starve.

Authorities raided the camp in October 1968, seizing drug paraphernalia, photographing clogged toilets and general squalor, but LeGrand's troop returned each summer, without fail, immune to public opinion.

Church members Gladys Stewart, 16, and her sister Yvonne, 18, had testified for the prosecution in LeGrand's bribery trial, but they were missing when the D.A. sought to use their testimony in the later rape case. Informants said the girls were dead, dismembered in the Brooklyn "church," with their remains transported to the Catskills for disposal. State police dug up the ranch in mid-December 1975, but they came away empty-handed.

Three months later, on March 6, assorted bones and bits of cartilage were found in Briscoe Lake, and Brooklyn raiding parties turned up human bloodstains in the Crown Heights townhouse. By April, state police were confident that DeVernon LeGrand had murdered a dozen or more victims, dumping some of them in Briscoe Lake. The list included three wives, two of LeGrand's step-children, the Stewart sisters, and two male employees of his "church."

In May 1976, LeGrand was indicted on four counts of murder, including the Stewarts and two of his wives, slain in 1963 and 1970, respectively. The "reverend's" son, 26-year-old Steven LeGrand, was also charged with murdering the Stewart sisters, plus two men employed by his father as pimps.

Father and son were convicted together in the Stewart case, on May 7, 1977, and both drew prison terms of 25 years to life.

Michael Newton - An Encyclopedia of Modern Serial Killers - Hunting Humans

Back to Brooklyn house of evil

Bizarre sisters act writes new chapter in horror story of rape, cages and murder

By Brad Hamilton - NYPost.com

August 1, 2010

The girl met her killer at Adventurers Inn, a second-rate amusement park in College Point, Queens.

Elizabeth Brown, 15, was at the park with friends one summer night in 1974 when he rolled up in his chauffeur-driven, cream-colored Cadillac -- with its own bar and TV -- and stepped out. He would have been hard to resist: a dapper preacher in a silk suit with movie-star looks, wealth and charm.

But this "pastor," DeVernon "Doc" LeGrand, 50, had no intention of saving her soul. His slick approach was intended to snare the girl into his commune in Brooklyn, where he plied teens with drugs and booze, seduced them and forced them to panhandle in nun garb.

Brown became LeGrand's concubine and beggar, hitting up subway riders by day and having sex with him and dropping angel dust by night.

"She had a good heart but was very angry, very belligerent," said Brown's sister Cathy. "Our father was sick with cancer and dying. She was looking for stability. A kid like that attracts dirtbags like magnets."

Thirty-six years later, authorities assumed LeGrand's cult, which eventually devolved into rape and murder and scandalized the city in the 1970s, was long gone. But last week they opened a new probe into the remnants of his clan after The Post found Mindy LeGrand, his daughter-in-law, pulling the same old sister act in Little Italy.

Investigators have returned to the dark secrets of 222 Brooklyn Ave., a Crown Heights row house where for two decades LeGrand headed one of the most notorious crime families in city history.

LeGRAND fathered 46 children, many of whom lived in tiny bedrooms upstairs in the four-story headquarters where DeVernon preached on the first floor. For years, kids were kept in cages, starved and beaten -- until cops busted LeGrand for child-abuse in 1965.

"They had these tiny little rooms. The kids would stay with their mothers or just run around everywhere," said Eugene Jarkow, who investigated LeGrand for the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office. "The street-level floor is where they had the church. There was a big meat freezer in the basement, supposedly where he'd put the bodies, but there was no proof of that."

Every morning, LeGrand's phony nuns would pile into his Cadillac and he would drop them off at locations across the city. One fake sister, Vivian Roye, "was olive-skinned and passed as Italian -- she did very well on Mulberry Street," recalled former Brooklyn prosecutor Harold Rosenbaum.

The church took in an estimated \$250,000 a year, enough to buy the Crown Heights building and a 58-acre farm in Sullivan County, which LeGrand paid for with rolls of coins.

When DeVernon wasn't in a rage, life could be good. There were tailored outfits, luxury cars and gambling trips to Atlantic City. Booze and drugs flowed freely.

"They lived what they thought was the good life," Jarkow said. Cathy Brown added, "There was always a

party at that place."

Jarkow even admitted to a certain fondness for the charlatan.

"I liked him -- and I knew the horrors he committed, the grief he brought on this earth," said Jarkow. "The guy could have sold me anything. He was very charming. . . . He was like an entertainer."

LeGRAND, born in 1924, said he came to New York as a 12-year-old with his parents from Laurinburg, NC. He claimed he was ordained in 1954 on Long Island and got a doctorate in a psychology and theology from an unnamed institute in Newark.

LeGrand was charged with killing his first wife, Ann Sorise, and his second wife, Ernestine Timmons. The wonder is that he got away with so much for so long. City and state officials never figured out a way to shut down the panhandling swindle. And as many as 23 additional "parishioners" went missing and couldn't be located. Cops wondered: Had LeGrand killed them?

Twice cops dug up the basement of the church looking for bodies -- in 1965, after three members vanished, and 10 years later while looking for the remains of two teenage sisters. It was a long time before they would learn the full truth.

The cloak began to fall away in 1975 when LeGrand and his son Noconda were convicted of first-degree rape after they repeatedly sexually assaulted a 20-year-old woman in the church. Then two cult insiders -- Kathleen Kennedy and the church handyman, Frank Holman -- came forward to say LeGrand had killed his own daughter-in-law, Gladys Stewart, 18, in a fit of rage.

The truth was much worse.

Stewart, who had married LeGrand's 20-year-old stepson, Donald Stewart, had had enough of the family and wanted out. She had also secretly helped prosecutors get the rape conviction. When she made it clear to Donald on Oct. 3, 1975, that she was leaving for good, he flew into a rage, and LeGrand intervened.

LeGrand detained both Stewart and her sister, Yvonne Rivera, 16, who was visiting, and ordered the rest of the congregation downstairs to the first-floor meeting room, where he demanded they stay "until I tell you to come out." Over the next two hours, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., LeGrand and another stepson kicked and beat the two teens. A LeGrand daughter went in and told the flock, "Daddy's stomping Gladys."

Holman said he heard a woman scream, and the group began to sing hymns. They stayed until 2:30 a.m., when LeGrand came in and sent them to bed. Weeks later, LeGrand boasted he'd killed and dismembered the girls and had their remains incinerated at his upstate farm.

"You all remember Gladys," he said. "Daughter or no daughter, you'll join the bitch. You know what I do with bitches. I burn them. . . . That little bitch [Yvonne] came down to see about her sister and I got her, too."

Holman, who joined the church after leaving his job as an autopsy assistant with the Brooklyn Medical Examiner's Office, said he was ordered to load two big garbage bags into his car and drive them to the farm. When he got there, something had spilled from a bag.

It was Yvonne Rivera's severed head.

He dumped the jumble of body parts into an old bathtub, doused them with paint thinner, and set the contents on fire. They burned for two hours. He then put the ashy remains in a garbage can, which he tossed into a pond near the camp. He later led investigators to where the bone fragments were submerged.

"I was given two large Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets with bones and told, 'Here, try the case,' " said Rosenbaum.

The prosecutor said he enlisted an expert from the Museum of Natural History to piece together the fragments, and LeGrand and stepson Steven LeGrand were convicted of the double homicide; each got 25 to life. DeVernon LeGrand died in prison in 2006 at age 82.

THE family business, renamed St. Joseph's Church of Christ and Home, is now headed by LeGrand's son, Noconda, the convicted rapist, and is under investigation by the state attorney general. The agency wants to know why Mindy LeGrand is lying about being an Episcopal sister and raising funds for an orphanage that doesn't exist.

The Attorney General's Office served LeGrand with a subpoena after The Post's front-page expose last Sunday, sources said.

The city Health Department sent inspectors to 222 Brooklyn Ave. last week after her son Quomenters claimed to The Post that the church took in orphans and provided child care. The inspectors found no evidence of either, a department spokesperson said.

Perhaps more worrisome was Quomenters' insistence that nine youths who lived in the house were "away at summer camp" on the family's farm in White Sulphur Springs, the same place -- now abandoned -- where Holman burned up the Rivera sisters' bodies.

Following Up

A Job Description Contradicted by Killings

By Joseph P. Fried - The New York Times

Sunday, September 1, 2002

He ran a house of God, he said, but it turned out to be a house of horrors.

In the 1970's, women in black habits resembling those of nuns became a familiar sight in New York City as they solicited alms on the street and in the subway. Actually, they were from St. John's Pentecostal Church of Our Lord, which DeVernon LeGrand, who called himself a bishop, presided over in Crown Heights,

Brooklyn.

Soon, the public learned that there was more to Mr. LeGrand than his dispatch of charity seekers whose garb confused many New Yorkers. In 1975, he and a son were convicted of raping a young woman in the four-story building at 222 Brooklyn Avenue that housed the church and the LeGrand family.

Then, amid bigger headlines in 1977, he and a stepson were convicted of charges that in 1975 they had beaten and stomped two teenage sisters to death in the building and dismembered their bodies. The men murdered the sisters, the prosecutors said, to keep them from testifying in the rape case. Later in 1977, Mr. LeGrand was convicted of having similarly murdered and dismembered his wife in 1970 in the Brooklyn building.

Now 77, Mr. LeGrand has served 27 years of his prison sentence (25 years to life) for the three murder convictions and the rape. He is to be considered for parole in October. He was first considered for parole in early 2001, after reaching the minimum 25 years of his term. He insisted he had not been involved in any of the crimes but had been the victim of lying witnesses and an ambitious prosecutor.

"I was a minister, and I liked a lot of women," he told the parole commissioners interviewing him at the Shawangunk Correctional Facility in Walkill, N.Y., where he is confined. But he said he had "nothing to do with that woman," referring to the rape victim. He blamed the sisters' killings on the husband of one of them. And his own wife's killing? "She's in Africa," he said. "She left and went to Africa."

In denying him release then, the parole commissioners said, "Your conduct indicates a depraved indifference for human life and no respect for the law."

As for 222 Brooklyn Avenue, it is the site these days of St. Joseph's Church of Christ and Home, with the Rev. Noconda LeGrand, a son of Mr. LeGrand, listed among the ministers.

No Jobs, Just Suits After Labor Day Parade

Four Labor Days ago, the annual parade in Broad Channel, Queens, took an infamous turn.

A group of men on one float wore blackface and Afro wigs. Some threw watermelon to the crowd, and one re-enacted a black man's being dragged to his death behind a pickup truck in Texas. The group included two New York City firefighters, Robert Steiner and Jonathan Walters, and a police officer, Joseph Locurto.

Though they had been off duty, they were fired from their jobs, deemed to have undermined their departments' images and standing with the public. The men said they had not meant to offend black people and had been mocking the views of their fellow whites in mostly white Broad Channel.

Now they are using another argument in a court fight to get their jobs back. "Their constitutional right to free speech was denied to them when they were fired," Marvin M. Kornberg, a lawyer for Mr. Steiner, said last week.

In July, the city, which says it had every right to fire the men, was rebuffed in its latest effort to get the lawsuits dismissed, and a combined trial in the three suits is expected in January.

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Bodies of 2 Missing Teen-Age Sisters Found Near Farm of Convicted Rapist

By MAX H. SEIGEL

The state police, acting on a tip from District Attorney Eugene Gold of Brooklyn, have found parts of the bodies of two missing teen-age sisters in a large pond near the Sullivan County hamlet of Briscoe.

And yesterday, scores of New York City police officers and investigators for the District Attorney searched a building at 222 Brooklyn Avenue in the Crown Heights section, looking for a link between the bodies and Deverson LeGrand, a self-styled bishop whose "church" occupies the site.

The District Attorney's office had been seeking the two sisters, Gladys Riviera Stewart, 16 years old, and Yvonne, 18, both of whom had testified last fall at a trial that resulted in the conviction of Mr. LeGrand for bribery.

Other Witnesses Missing

When the two sisters were sought as witnesses for a subsequent trial, at which Mr. LeGrand was charged with rape, they could not be found, a member of the District Attorney's staff said. He added that other potential witnesses had also disappeared.

The District Attorney's office would not comment on the case. But it was learned from other sources that the two girls had apparently been murdered in Brooklyn and their bodies transported upstate to the Catskill Mountain area near White Sulphur Springs, where Mr. LeGrand maintained a 58-acre summer camp for his followers and their children.

Law enforcement officials said that the bodies of the two sisters had apparently been dismembered upstate and put into a washtub. Then, they said, an inflammable liquid—either benzene or turpentine—had been poured over the bodies and set afire.

The officials said they had found the washtub and four turpentine containers on the farm owned by Mr. LeGrand. Officials also are examining several stained garbage containers that they found on the property.

Search to Continue

Police and professional divers also found bones and cartilage in a section of a five-acre pond that is two miles from the LeGrand farm, after searching for a few hours last Saturday. They are scheduled to continue their search today. The divers were said to have selected a special area of the pond on the basis of information provided by District Attorney Gold.

Last December, acting on an earlier tip, the state police dug in several places on the farm in a search for bodies of other missing persons. However, they

ney's office, is Kathleen LeGrand, whom the self-styled bishop married in 1968, allegedly to keep her from testifying against him at a forthcoming trial. Her two small children are also missing.

It was also learned yesterday that the police search of the building at 222 Brooklyn Avenue has turned up bloodstains, fingerprints and other "interesting" evidence. The findings are being checked for possible evidence establishing the presence of the Stewart sisters in the house.

Mr. LeGrand, 51 years old, who established both the "church" and a harem of alms-seeking "nuns," is now in prison, serving a 5-to 15-year sentence for rape. His son, Noconda, 20, was convicted of the same charge and is now serving up

to eight years in prison. Both were found guilty of repeatedly raping a young woman on the night of Aug. 22, 1974, while holding her prisoner in their house.

Mr. LeGrand was said to have maintained his "harem" by recruiting young women for his church, getting them pregnant, and then threatening to harm them or their children if they did not bring in money.

A spokesman at the District Attorney's office said that the women, wearing black nuns' habits, could be seen asking for alms at Grand Central Terminal, near the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn and on Manhattan's West Side.

Several of the women, who went to Perth Amboy, N.J., to solicit alms, were arrested and are awaiting trial.

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Verdict/Urteil:

A New York native, born in 1925, LeGrand was arrested on charges of kidnapping , assault, and firearms possession in 1965. Three years later, police accused him of snatching a 23-year-old woman from her home, assaulting and raping her before she managed to escape. Neither case was prosecuted, but in 1975, LeGrand was convicted of bribery and sexual misconduct with a 17-year-old girl. That same year, along with his 20-year-old son Noconda, LeGrand was convicted of kidnapping and rape ; he drew a sentence of five to 15 years in prison, while his son got off "easy" with an eight-year prison term. Such conduct is not unheard of in New York City, but it is peculiar for the leader of a church. A self-styled holy man, LeGrand had organized St. John's Pentecostal Church of Our Lord a decade earlier, putting down roots in the Crown Heights district of Brooklyn. His headquarters, a four-story townhouse, was occupied by eleven "nuns" and their 47 children, many of them fathered by LeGrand. According to police, LeGrand did most of his recruiting by seduction, impregnating young women, then threatening them or their children if they refused to beg for money on the streets. His black-clad "nuns" were often seen around Grand Central Station, and others had been jailed on misdemeanor charges in New Jersey. It was within the Crown Heights "chapel" that LeGrand had raped his final victim , during August 1974, and authorities suspected that sexual assault was only the tip of the iceberg. In 1966, LeGrand's "church" had purchased a 58-acre spread in the Catskills, near White Sulphur Springs, converting the place to a summer retreat for the faithful. Over the next eight years, state police received steady complaints from the neighbors, alleging child abuse and health violations, wild parties and indiscriminate gunfire. Children from the camp roamed freely through the countryside, begging and stealing, while horses were cruelly beaten and left to starve. Authorities raided the camp in October 1968, seizing drug paraphernalia, photographing clogged toilets and general squalor, but LeGrand's troop returned each summer, without fail, immune to public opinion. Church

members Gladys Stewart, 16, and her sister Yvonne, 18, had testified for the prosecution in LeGrand's bribery trial, but they were missing when the D.A. sought to use their testimony in the later rape case. Informants said the girls were dead, dismembered in the Brooklyn "church," with their remains transported to the Catskills for disposal. State police dug up the ranch in mid-December 1975, but they came away empty-handed. Three months later, on March 6, assorted bones and bits of cartilage were found in Briscoe Lake, and Brooklyn raiding parties turned up human bloodstains in the Crown Heights townhouse. By April, state police were confident that Devernon LeGrand had murdered a dozen or more victims, dumping some of them in Briscoe Lake. The list included three wives, two of LeGrand's step-children, the Stewart sisters, and two male employees of his "church." In May 1976, LeGrand was indicted on four counts of murder, including the Stewarts and two of his wives, slain in 1963 and 1970, respectively. The "reverend's" son, 26-year-old Steven LeGrand, was also charged with murdering the Stewart sisters, plus two men employed by his father as pimps. Father and son were convicted together in the Stewart case, on May 7, 1977, and both drew prison terms of 25 years to life.

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LeGrand's Neighbors Kept a Log on a Decade of Confrontations

By MARY BREASTER
Special to The New York Times

WHITE SULPHUR, N.Y., March 15—A white clapboard building where Devernon LeGrand brought his women lovers and their children in summer for the last 10 years are deserted now, and Mr. and Mrs. John Robert Wicks, who live on the adjacent farm about 150 yards from the LeGrand holdings, the emptiness of the 45-acre estate is a vast relief. He said he took care of the men from the city and women after they had been rehabilitated at Rockland State Hospital," said Mrs. Wicks, describing her first meeting with the self-styled Bishop convicted rapist who has been accused of murdering two teen-age girls and dumping their bodies in a pond near his "Grand Acres," in this roll-Catskill region.

Log Kept

Mrs. Wicks, the discoverer of the bodies last year was the latest and most disturbing development of a decade of unsettling events that had prompted her to keep a detailed typewritten record about the unusual behavior of the LeGrand group.

In a lengthy interview this afternoon, Mrs. Wicks referred to the typewritten sheets as she described a decade of run-ins with Mr. LeGrand and his followers, who would arrive as many as 45 strong in June and stay through October.

Tells of Gunfire

She told of hearing gunfire, crying children and loud parties at night. She described groups of LeGrand children wandering over the countryside, begging and stealing food, rifling mail boxes and, on one occasion, openly stealing furniture from a house whose owners were away.

Mr. Wicks said she had started keeping the record soon after the LeGrands

moved here in 1966 because the state police had told her she had to be precise in making complaints.

What had first drawn the attention of neighbors, Mrs. Wicks said, was the way the people in the LeGrand group would ride their dozen or so horses over nearby fields, trampling down crops on neighboring farms. Then, she said, the horses were left untended the first winter and several starved to death and were not buried until the summer.

That, Mrs. Wicks said, led to a cruelty-to-animals hearing and the temporary removal of the horses, which were soon returned to the estate.

Mrs. Wicks said that complaints against the LeGrands seldom led to official action, with the state police unable to find evidence during their numerous visits to the estate on the complaints of neighbors.

Police 'Raid' Noted

She described what she called a state police "raid" on the estate in October 1968 saying that drugs and hypodermic needles were found, with no evident interruption in the annual pattern of middle-of-the-night arrivals and a summer of disruptions by people in the LeGrand group.

"The most frustrating thing was that nobody could do anything about it," said

Mrs. Wicks, explaining how she had hope, in vain, that the "stopped up toilets and filthy conditions," discovered during the 1968 raid would lead to an order that would clean things up.

Instead, she said, nothing improved. The visits and the disorder continued and Mr. LeGrand, always polite, continued to express sympathy whenever the Wicks would complain about the actions of the children.

"He would always agree that the nuisances and thievery of the children was terrible and all wrong," said Mrs. Wicks, who recalled that on one occasion Mr. LeGrand said that Mr. Wicks "should take off his belt and give those naughty kids a licking."

STAYS IN CUSTODY

Habeas Corpus Writ Denied in Case Against Rapist

Kathleen Kennedy LeGrand, whose information led to the discovery of two bodies in a Sullivan County pond last week and to a murder complaint against her husband, Devernon LeGrand, was ordered continued in custody without bail yesterday as a material witness.

A lawyer for the LeGrand family had filed a writ of habeas corpus seeking her release on the ground that the Brooklyn District Attorney's office had no valid reason to hold her.

But District Attorney Eugene Gold, appearing in person to argue the state's case, told Justice Dominic S. Rinaldi in State Supreme Court that the 31-year-old English-born wife of the convicted rapist had said she feared for her life.

Fears for Life Expressed

Mrs. LeGrand had been ordered held without bail as a material witness last Friday night by Justice Irwin Brownstein in State Supreme Court. A Legal Aid lawyer who represented her then said the judge had expressed strong fears that Mrs. LeGrand might take her life.

In arguing for continuation of the no-bail status, Mr. Gold told the court that Mrs. LeGrand had said she might go to Florida where she had a sister, taking her out of the court's jurisdiction.

"And when she was brought to my office last Friday," Mr. Gold continued, "the opinion of several of my assistants was that she was in a drugged state. She had come from 222 Brooklyn Avenue [the headquarters of Mr. LeGrand's religious sect] and she said she had been given drugs. Later, she said that she had taken the drugs herself — a large quantity of valium." Valium serves, among other things, as a mild tranquilizer.

When Theodore Rosenberg, the LeGrand family lawyer, questioned whether Mrs. LeGrand was, in fact, a material witness with direct knowledge of any crimes, Mr. Gold leaped to his feet.

"The witness," he declared, "has said on one or more occasions that she can give direct evidence on the crime of murder."

The District Attorney added that Mrs. LeGrand had visited his office voluntarily last Nov. 14 to give an assistant district attorney information indicating her direct knowledge of murders. "And last Friday," he said, "she made a similar statement on the same murders."

Mr. Gold disclosed that as a result of a statement from Mrs. LeGrand, a court had authorized the upstate search that produced the two bodies.

He added that the charges against the self-styled overseer of the religious group called St. John's Pentacostal Church of Our Lord had been placed before a grand jury yesterday

A JUSTICE STORY

BY JOSEPH McNAMARA

Brooklyn's deadly 'bishop'

ON OCT. 3, 1975, 16-year-old Yvonne Rivera visited her sister in Brooklyn and then vanished. It was the beginning of a macabre saga that would shock the metropolitan area.

The next day her mother, Laura Rivera, went to 222 Brooklyn Ave., Crown Heights, where Yvonne's sister, 18-year-old Gladys, lived with her husband, Donald Stewart.

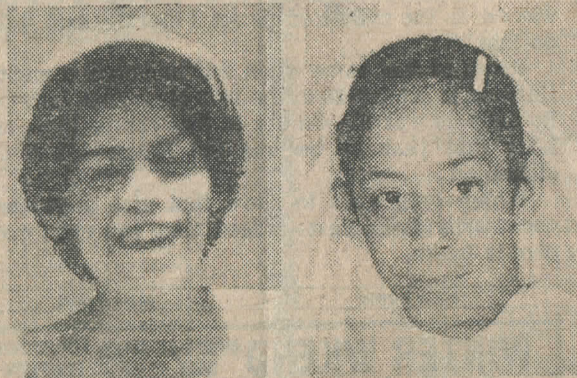
Mrs. Rivera was informed by the master of the house, Devernon LeGrand, Stewart's stepfather, that her teenage daughters had gone to his Catskill Mountains farm. Mrs. Rivera returned to her East New York home. But two weeks later she was back and this time LeGrand told her the girls had come down from the farm, but "left with three men."

That's when Mrs. Rivera went to the police. And the officers were very interested in her story. They knew Devernon LeGrand well. Ordained under mysterious circumstances, LeGrand had proclaimed himself "bishop" of the church he had incorporated in 1958, St. John's Church of Our Lord, headquartered at the Brooklyn Ave. address.

Each day "nuns" of the church, wearing black habits and clutching tambourines, fanned out to busy thoroughfares to beg. And each dusk the "bishop" picked them up in his cream-colored Cadillac, complete with TV and bar, and returned them to the four-story white stone "church" where all lived.

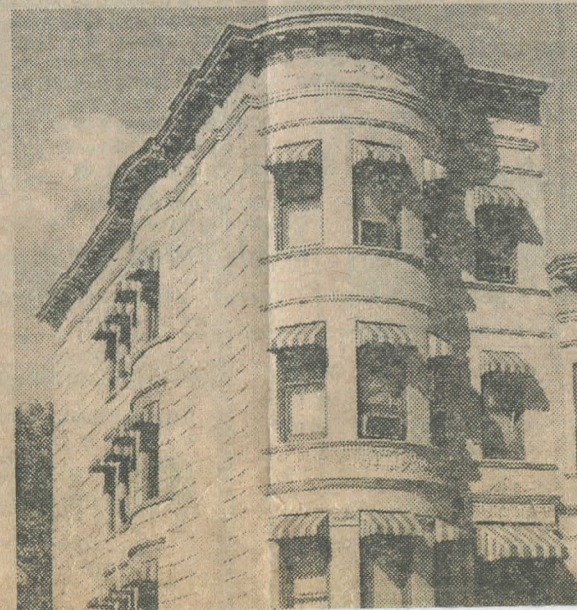
"It's a charity racket," perpetuated by a "harem of fund-soliciting sisters," charged State Attorney General Louis Lefkowitz in 1961, when he sued to shutter the church and end its estimated \$250,000-a-year income. It was alleged that the good bishop had 19 children by several women of his flock.

Not so, cried the flamboyant churchman in silk suit and expensive toupee. "I have only 12 children, and they are all by Sister Eva there," he said outside court. Sister Eva, in black habit, fingered her crucifix and said nothing.



Gladys Rivera Stewart

Yvonne Rivera



"bishop" and his son were convicted of the August rapes. That gratified Gold, who had intended calling Gladys as a witness. She reportedly had introduced LeGrand to the rape victim. On Feb. 31, 1976, LeGrand drew 5 to 15 years in prison, his son 1 to 8.

The convictions stiffened the resolve of some LeGrand employees. Church caretaker George Holman, a former morgue attendant, told investigators that the previous Oct. 5 he had helped LeGrand remove two dismembered bodies from the church to the farm, where the parts were burned and later tossed into a lake.

On March 6, guided by Holman, state police divers found charred parts of two bodies in five-acre, eight-foot-deep Segar Pond on Briscoe Road four miles from the LeGrand farm. Also found were a fire-blackened ring and a bracelet which Mrs. Rivera later said were similar to her daughters'.

On March 12, the "bishop" was charged with the murder of Yvonne Rivera and her sister, Gladys. Later, his son, Steven LeGrand, 26, was also booked in the slayings.

IN LATE MARCH, affidavits from Holman and Kathleen LeGrand were released. Kathleen related that on Oct. 3 she saw LeGrand stop the Rivera sisters from leaving the church. She added that the "bishop" then ordered the members of his congregation to assemble in one large room and stay there "until I tell you to come out." Meanwhile, LeGrand had taken the Riveras to another room. Two hours later, at 8:30 p.m., a LeGrand daughter entered the big room and said, "Daddy's stomping Gladys." The church members remained in the room singing hymns until 2:30 a.m., when LeGrand sent them to their bedrooms.

Kathleen said she later asked her husband what had happened to one of the Rivera sisters and LeGrand told her: "Shut up! If you don't stop talking, I'll hit you."

suit and expensive toupee. "I have only 12 children, and they are all by Sister Eva there," he said outside court. Sister Eva, in black habit, fingered her crucifix and said nothing.

All the money solicited went to the church and its "orphans," LeGrand told the court. But that seemed to violate the church constitution, which said, in part, the congregation must "take care of its founder and his family for the rest of their natural lives."

Lefky portrayed LeGrand as a frequenter of the \$50 window at Aqueduct Race Track. The "bishop" saw himself as a "healer" and modestly admitted curing 300 people. The court suit languished . . . and died.

Born in Laurinberg, N.C., in 1924, LeGrand came to New York at age 12 and, starting in 1946 with a bust for not carrying a draft card, created an impressive sheet of some 20 arrests. In 1947 he was nabbed for rape, but the case was dismissed. He beat a felonious assault rap the next year. He then got 1 to 2 years for attempted abortion, term suspended.

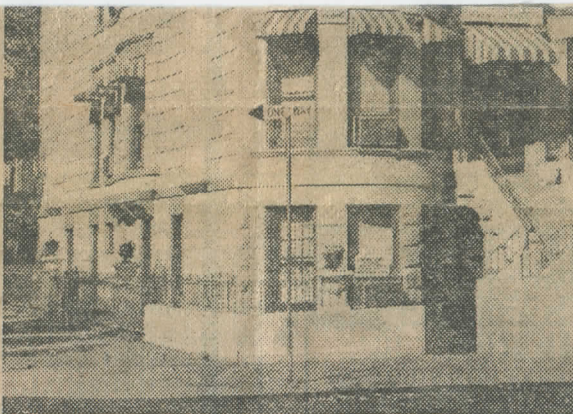
In 1965, police dug up the cellar and backyard of his church when three "nuns" disappeared. The women were not found, but LeGrand was charged with locking up 50 children at night in cages.

Then, in 1968, blond Kathleen Kennedy, 23, charged LeGrand with kidnaping and rape. It was all a misunderstanding, declared the "bishop," who then married her. They had two children.

AS MRS. RIVERA reported her daughters missing, LeGrand, now 51, stood accused with a son, Noconda, 20, of repeatedly raping a 20-year-old woman at the church the previous Aug. 22. Both men were out on bail, awaiting trial.

Brooklyn District Attorney Eugene Gold was notified of the latest LeGrand development. But it was not until Nov. 14, 1975, that Gold was able to move on the case. On that day LeGrand's wife, Kathleen, walked into Gold's office and said she believed the Rivera sisters had been killed in the church and buried in the basement. She expressed fear for her life also.

Keeping quiet about Kathleen's visit, Gold got a court order, dug up the cellar of the church . . . and found nothing. It now occurred to the DA, however, that LeGrand had the farm, a former summer camp on 58 acres he had purchased, reportedly with rolled coins, 10 years before. It



Devernon LeGrand (above) called himself a bishop, but in the "church" he established at 222 Brooklyn Ave. (top), only evil reigned.

was off East Hill Road near White Sulphur Springs in Sullivan County, 111 miles from New York.

In mid-December, with LeGrand's rape trial under way and his bail revoked, state troopers dug 15 trenches on the farm. But they found no bodies. Investigators from the DA's office began questioning church people, who had been reluctant to talk while LeGrand was free. On Dec. 31, 1975, the

a.m., when LeGrand sent them to their bedrooms.

Kathleen said she later asked her husband what had happened to one of the Rivera sisters and LeGrand told her: "Shut up! If you don't stop asking, you'll join the bitch."

Another time, Kathleen said, she heard LeGrand shout to one of his daughters: "Let me tell you something. You all remember Gladys: Daughter or no daughter, you'll join the bitch. You know what I do with bitches. I burn them."

According to Mrs. LeGrand, on Nov. 1 she overheard LeGrand tell Holman, "We almost had to make another trip up there, because I half-killed Estelle (an alms-soliciting nun). I almost knocked her brains out because she wouldn't go to work."

Holman's affidavit presaged his testimony at the murder trial, which began in January 1977, in Brooklyn Supreme Court. Holman swore that during the singing of hymns he heard a woman scream while LeGrand had her in another room.

At 1 a.m. Oct. 5, Holman testified, LeGrand directed him to load two garbage cans and a box of women's clothing into a car and drive with him to the farm. There, Holman opened the cans to find plastic bags containing dismembered parts of two girls' bodies, he related. Holman said he believed he recognized Yvonne's body.

At LeGrand's order, Holman said, he filled an old tub with benzene and dumped the severed parts into it. LeGrand ignited the contents and stood there while it "burned for hours," Holman testified. He added that he then helped the "bishop" dispose of the remains in the pond.

Holman quoted LeGrand as saying: "That little bitch (Yvonne) came down to see about her sister, and I got her, too."

Evidence submitted at the trial included church floor tiles with traces of blood, an ax, two hacksaws and a pair of scissors seized at the church.

On March 6, 1977, after a two-and-a-half-month trial, LeGrand and his son were convicted of two counts each of second-degree murder. Neither showed any emotion, though a wail went up in the corridor from the assembled faithful.

On May 6, Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Joseph Corso sentenced both LeGrands to 25 years to life. LeGrand is serving his sentence at Greenhaven Correction Facility, his son in Auburn.

LIBERTY NY 12754 9-15-76

The Times Herald

SULLIVAN

RECORD

ULSTER

Edition

Weather: Cloudy, windy

Middletown, N.Y. 10940

Friday morning, March 12, 1976

20 cents

Sullivan pond yields grisly catch to police

By PHILLIP BLANCHARD
Staff Writer

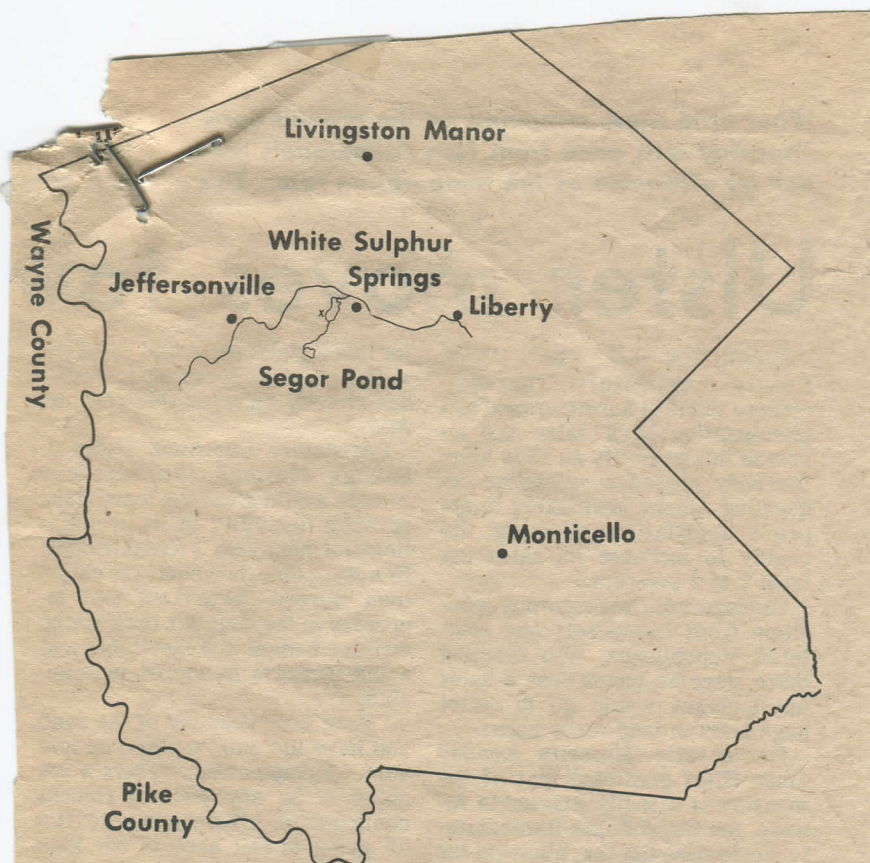
BRISCOE — State police divers here have recovered from Segor Pond, also known as Briscoe Pond, human bones believed to be those of two Brooklyn murder victims, it was learned Thursday.

It is also believed the discovery will lead to an arrest soon in a murder investigation conducted by the Brooklyn District Attorney Eugene Gold's office. Officials of that office refused to comment on the report Thursday.

Gold's office, working with state police from Ferndale, has been investigating the murder of two teen-aged sisters from Brooklyn for more than three months. Police sources identified the girls as Gladys Riveria Stewart, 16, and Yvonne Stewart, 18.

The bones were taken from the pond last Saturday, according to a police source. State police divers were seen searching the pond's icy waters that day. They declined to say then whether they found anything. Objects removed from the pond were photographed and taken from the scene by investigators, but it could not be learned if these were the bones.

(Continued on Page 3)



This map shows the location of Segor Pond in Briscoe, a Sullivan County hamlet, where the bones of two people were found in a pond by state police divers.--Record map

...pond yields bones

(Continued from Page 1)

A Brooklyn detective confirmed the search was connected to the murder investigation, but referred further questions to Gold's office, which refused comment.

Sr. Inv. Harry Reichmann of the Ferndale Barracks said Thursday he would reserve comment until Gold's office issues a statement.

The Sullivan County search for the girls' bodies began in December when, acting on an informant's tip, investigators searched the White Sulphur Springs property of DeVernon LeGrand, the self-ordained "bishop" whose brushes with the law are numerous. LeGrand recently was convicted in New York City on kidnap and rape charges.

Police combed the East Hill Road estate for about two weeks. The search was fruitless. A fresh tip from an informant brought police to the pond, where operations evidently were successful.

It could not be learned whether LeGrand himself is connected with the case.

LeGrand heads a church for "nuns" in Brooklyn, and claims to be the father of more than 80 children.

The 68-acre farm in White Sulphur Springs, while used as a children's camp, was once closed down by the State Health Department for health code violations.

The original police tip said the girls' bodies were buried on the farm.



By PHILLIP BLANCHARD
Staff Writer

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS — This tiny Sullivan County hamlet seems an unlikely locale for murderous intrigue.

Surrounded by the picturesque farm-scape, nestled on a rarely-traveled back road, stand a cluster of buildings that appear equally innocuous. They are the heart of LeGrand Acres, an erstwhile "religious" children's camp.

They are cluttered, but uninhabited, now. But for 10 years the activities of those who stayed in and around those buildings struck fear in the hearts of neighbors.

The camp was the Sullivan County headquarters of Devernon LeGrand, leader of his own religious cult; a cult that appears to have revolved around the rituals of sex and violence. For years, townspeople have expressed their fear of the LeGrand that trekked here annually for the summer season. Now, their worst fears have been realized.

LeGrand, who over the years had escaped relatively unscathed from various clashes with the law, is in jail now, convicted of kidnaping and raping a 20-year-old woman. Then two weeks ago police found what they think is the most damning evidence yet against LeGrand: the partial remains of what police believe to be the bodies of two teenaged girls who testified against LeGrand at his rape trial last year. Police believe their deaths were

LeGrand's Sullivan neighbors are saying, 'We told you so'

lyn, pay diner tabs with rolls of dimes and nickels.

Relatively minor charges first brought Legrand into the public limelight, although area residents had cast suspicious eyes on his "children's camp" since it opened in the mid-1960s.

In August 1967, he faced the first of three separate charges of cruelty to animals. Charged again a little more than a year later, LeGrand finally pleaded guilty to still a third such charge in February 1971. The charges alleged that he had failed to provide food and care for animals, including horses, kept on the LeGrand Acres property.

LeGrand reportedly peeled off his \$500 fine from the roll of bills and left court.

More than once, LeGrand got in trouble because of the general condition of the camp, at which as many as 45 children — whom some said were LeGrand's own — were housed in summer and early fall. He was cited in October 1968, when county officials removed 45 children from the camp, acting under state child neglect laws. The county acted similarly in early 1969, arresting two of LeGrand's sons on charges of neglecting the children's welfare.

Also in 1968, LeGrand was involved in an unusual case involving kidnap and rape. Kathleen Kennedy, then 23, filed charges against LeGrand in New York claiming he kept her captive at a home for "nuns" he maintains in Bristol.



Police have been digging around the barbecue pit at LeGrand Acres.

his children — to bring her back to his church.

The woman's father greeted LeGrand and a bodyguard with pistol fire. LeGrand was critically injured and his companion

to the murder investigation if they have anything to do with the LeGrand case.

While the wheels of justice grind in New York City, the area around LeGrand Acres and Segar Pond reels in the shock of another event that attracted "negative" national attention. Only a few weeks ago, it was learned that the fugitive Patricia Hearst had made her home-in-hiding in nearby Jeffersonville, a village with close geographic and social ties to White Sulphur Springs and Briscoe, where Segar Pond is located.

Now the residents, who were at best amused and at worst embarrassed at learning the then most hunted fugitive in America was right under their noses in 1974, are more fearful.

One resident, who lives near LeGrand Acres, told her observations during the past 10 years to a New York Times reporter earlier this week. Now, she has second thoughts about having done so: She is afraid of just the kind of reprisal that is said to have led to the deaths of the teenaged girls.

Area residents tell of wild parties, the sound of gunfire, and crying children at the camp. Stories abound of thievery by the many children there, the motive for which was said to be simple hunger.

Today, the complex of buildings stand abandoned but open, and the only traces of recent activity are mounds of dirt piled by police who were digging in search of

bodies of two teenaged girls who testified against LeGrand at his rape trial last year. Police believe theirs were deaths of vengeance.

The evidence so far discussed by the Brooklyn District Attorney, who brought the charges, is circumstantial, but there is a "mystery witness" who directed police to Segar Pond, where the bodies have been found.

Additionally, body fragments have been unearthed from a barbecue pit adjacent to the main building at LeGrand Acres, about three miles from the ponds. The grisly finds, combined with whatever evidence the DA has gathered but is reluctant to discuss, were considered sufficient to charge LeGrand with the murders of sisters Yvonne Rivera and Gladys Rivera Stewart.

But this most serious incident involving LeGrand is only the latest in an often-bizarre chronology.

"It's strange," said one resident, who, like most discussing LeGrand, doesn't want her name used. "We've been telling people about this man for years. Only when something like this comes out does anybody listen."

Her name isn't important; the memories she and others have of LeGrand in Sullivan County may be.

When LeGrand's public image and his private impact on people are compared, he seems to be a study in schizophrenia. A man who has been charged with and/or convicted of such crimes as rape, kidnap, larceny, cruelty to animals and, now, murder, is described by many who knew him personally as a "charmer."

LeGrand's flamboyance was manifested in many ways. Persons who remember him from his Sullivan County heyday recall that he would saunter into restaurants, respond charmingly to the help, and leave \$10 or \$20 tips — peeled from the always-huge roll of bills he carried.

In contrast, it was not unusual to see the many young, primarily female followers of LeGrand (or his wives and children, depending on whether you chose to believe his claim of having fathered scores of children by a dozen wives), who were sent into the streets to beg, both here and in Brook-

against LeGrand in New York claiming he kept her captive at a home for "nuns" he maintains in Brooklyn.

Miss Kennedy, a British-born blonde, claimed that LeGrand and accomplices abducted her from her rooming house early in 1968 and brought her to his church — and that LeGrand had beaten and sexually assaulted her.

That charge disappeared from the books 25 days after it was filed, when Kathleen Kennedy became Mrs. LeGrand, perhaps the only legal wife LeGrand has had.

She is currently under protective custody as a material witness against her husband. She testified against him at his rape trial last year.

The eerie lifestyle at LeGrand's St. John's Penecostal Church of Our Lord in Brooklyn was in the news again in October 1969 when a woman who reportedly lived there for 10 years sued to gain custody of eight children she bore by LeGrand.

At the time, Betty Davis said LeGrand kept her and other women captive in the church, releasing them only to solicit money on the streets.

Those solicitations both here and in New York are believed to be the primary, if not only, source of LeGrand's considerable financial resources.

In March 1970, LeGrand went to the home of a 32-year-old former "nun" — who he claimed was the mother of six of

ad a bodyguard with pistol fire. LeGrand was critically injured and his companion died.

It was not until last year, however, that LeGrand's conflicts with the law finally led to a major conviction. In March, he was found guilty of sexual misconduct involving a 17-year-old girl. Then, just last January, another jury convicted him and his 20-year-old son, Noconda, of holding a 20-year-old woman hostage and raping her repeatedly.

LeGrand is now serving a five-to-15-year sentence on that conviction.

But Gladys Stewart and Yvonne Rivera disappeared after testifying at the trial. Acting on tips, police unsuccessfully dug for the bodies at LeGrand Acres and finally, two weeks ago, found bones immersed in Segar Pond. Later, teeth, cartilage and jewelry were reported found. The murder charges were filed and were followed by unconfirmed reports that as many as 15 additional murders are being investigated in connection with this case.

More disturbing, albeit unconfirmed, reports circulated that as many as 19 women with connections to LeGrand have disappeared in recent years.

Caught by surprise before they wanted the story out, the Brooklyn DA's office has adopted a code of strict official silence with regard to LeGrand. Spokesmen there refuse even to discuss matters not related

recent activity are mounds of dirt piled by police who were digging in search of bodies.

There is the main building, a shambles inside, perhaps from a police search. There are unstuffed mattresses and piles of dirty clothes everywhere. The only evidence of recent use is a dog-eared copy of "TV Guide" dated last September.

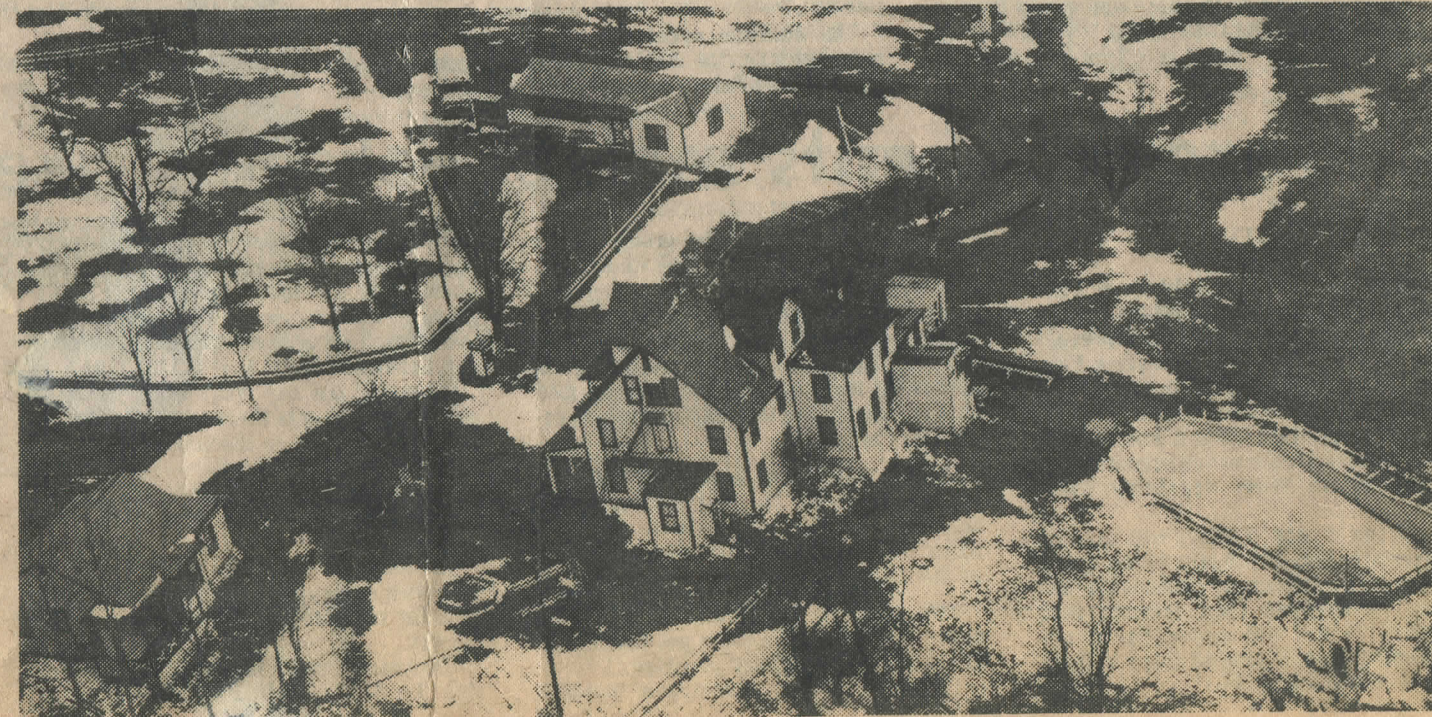
There are the stables, where the horses involved in the cruelty to animals charges were kept. It is piled high with garbage.

And there are a few bungalows, most of which are cluttered with old clothes and magazines.

Seen in one bureau drawer are coin wrappers, the kind which LeGrand's "nuns" used to wrap the change collected on the street in the name of the church.

While those who lived with shotguns at bedside in fear of the farm next door wouldn't agree, there are some who found LeGrand charming, polite and accomodating. They found a certain perverse sense of humor in a man who would emblazon his license plates with the number of children he claims to have fathered.

To most, the murder charges are a shock but not a surprise. It's almost as if, when the prosecution opens its case against LeGrand, scores of Sullivan County residents who have lived in fear for years will be looking over the DA's shoulder, saying, "We told you so."



From the air, LeGrand Acres in White Sulphur Springs doesn't look like the setting for murderous intrigue. — Record photos by Robert Martin

N.Y. TIMES

SUNDAY 3/14/76

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Police Press Search for Bodies In a Pond in Sullivan County

By EMANUEL PERLMUTTER

Investigators searched a pond at White Sulphur Springs in Sullivan County yesterday for possibly more bodies in the waters where the charred and dismembered bodies of two teen-age sisters were found March 6.

The searchers were believed to be looking for the bodies of several women witnesses who disappeared last year shortly before Devernon LeGrand, a self-styled "Bishop" of a Brooklyn church, went on trial there last year for rape.

Divers began the search for the bodies in early morning as a mountain wind whipped across the lake. They had to chop through some ice-encrusted portions of the pond. Brooklyn investigators and members of the state police looked on.

Homicide Charge Filed

The two whose bodies were found a week ago yesterday were Gladys Riviera Stewart, 16 years old, and her sister, Yvonne, 18. Both had testified last fall at a trial in which Mr. LeGrand was convicted of bribery. They were to have been witnesses at his subsequent trial for rape.

A spokesman for District Attorney Eugene Gold of Brooklyn said that a homicide charge had been filed against Mr. LeGrand in connection with the deaths of the two sisters. It was lodged late Friday night in Brooklyn Criminal Court before Judge Albert Murray.

Mr. LeGrand, 51, had established his so-called church at 220 Brooklyn Avenue in Crown Heights. He is serving a sentence of 5 to 15 years for rape. His son, Noconda, 20, is serving up to eight years in prison on the same charge.

Both were found guilty of repeatedly raping a young woman the night of Aug. 22, 1974, while holding her prisoner at their St. John's Pentecostal Church of Our Lord.

Bodies Set Afire

The two bodies were found near the upstate farm where Mr. LeGrand had maintained a 58-acre summer camp for his followers and their children. Mr. Gold's office said that the two girls had apparently been murdered in Brooklyn and their bodies transported upstate, where they were dismembered and set afire.

Mr. LeGrand had allegedly maintained a "harem" of alms-seeking nuns in his church. The women, wearing black nuns' habits, could be seen asking for alms at Brooklyn and Manhattan subway terminals.

In addition to the two girls found dead, detectives from Mr. Gold's office and the state police had been looking for Kathleen LeGrand, whom the suspect had married in 1968, and her two children. It was thought they also had been murdered. But it was learned yesterday that three had been found alive on Friday.

Mrs. LeGrand still jailed in protective custody

By GIL WEISINGER
Staff Writer

BROOKLYN — Kathleen Kennedy LeGrand, wife of murder suspect Devernon LeGrand, was denied freedom from protective custody by a Brooklyn State Supreme Court judge. Mrs. LeGrand, who is one of her husband's many wives, was a prosecution witness at LeGrand's recent trial in which he was convicted of kidnap and rape.

Brooklyn Dist. Atty. Eugene Gold ordered Mrs. LeGrand held without bail Friday when state police and other authorities, searching the Sullivan County area, uncovered bones and other evidence of two murders which were allegedly linked to the self-styled bishop.

Hardie Mintzer, press secretary for Gold's Brooklyn office, said a writ of Habeas Corpus, brought by Mrs. LeGrand to force her release from custody, was denied by Supreme Court Judge Dominick Rinaldi.

Mintzer, while confirming that any information about the murder must come from the DA's office, refused to reveal any more details Monday about the case, including whether any other murder evidence was uncovered by state police who are searching Segar Pond

in Briscoe and LeGrand's camp in White Sulphur Springs, LeGrand Acres, about three miles from the pond.

Hardie also issued a "no comment" when asked whether any other murders are involved in the police probe and whether Mrs. LeGrand is expected to be a witness against her husband in the case.

LeGrand is serving a five- to 15-year sentence for his conviction last month on charges of rape and kidnaping. He also was convicted last fall of bribery and sentenced to four years in prison, and of sexual misconduct with a 17-year-old girl and sentenced to a year on that charge.

Two sisters, Gladys Rivera Stewart, 18, and Yvonne Rivera, 16, testified against LeGrand at the bribery trial, and police say LeGrand had them murdered as a result of their testimony. It is the remains of their bodies that police say they found in Segar Pond.

Mrs. LeGrand was thrust into the limelight in October 1968 when the then-23-year-old bank clerk told authorities she had been held captive by LeGrand for seven months and was repeatedly assaulted by him during that time. At that time, LeGrand already was under investigation and was

brought up on charges of cruelty to children and animals at the White Sulphur Springs Camp.

The British-born Mrs. LeGrand claimed that the flamboyant, self-proclaimed "physicologist" held her captive in St. John's Pentacostal Church of Our Lord, 222 Brooklyn Ave., Brooklyn. The church is one of several owned by LeGrand, who has lived in high style since he founded the houses of worship in 1946.

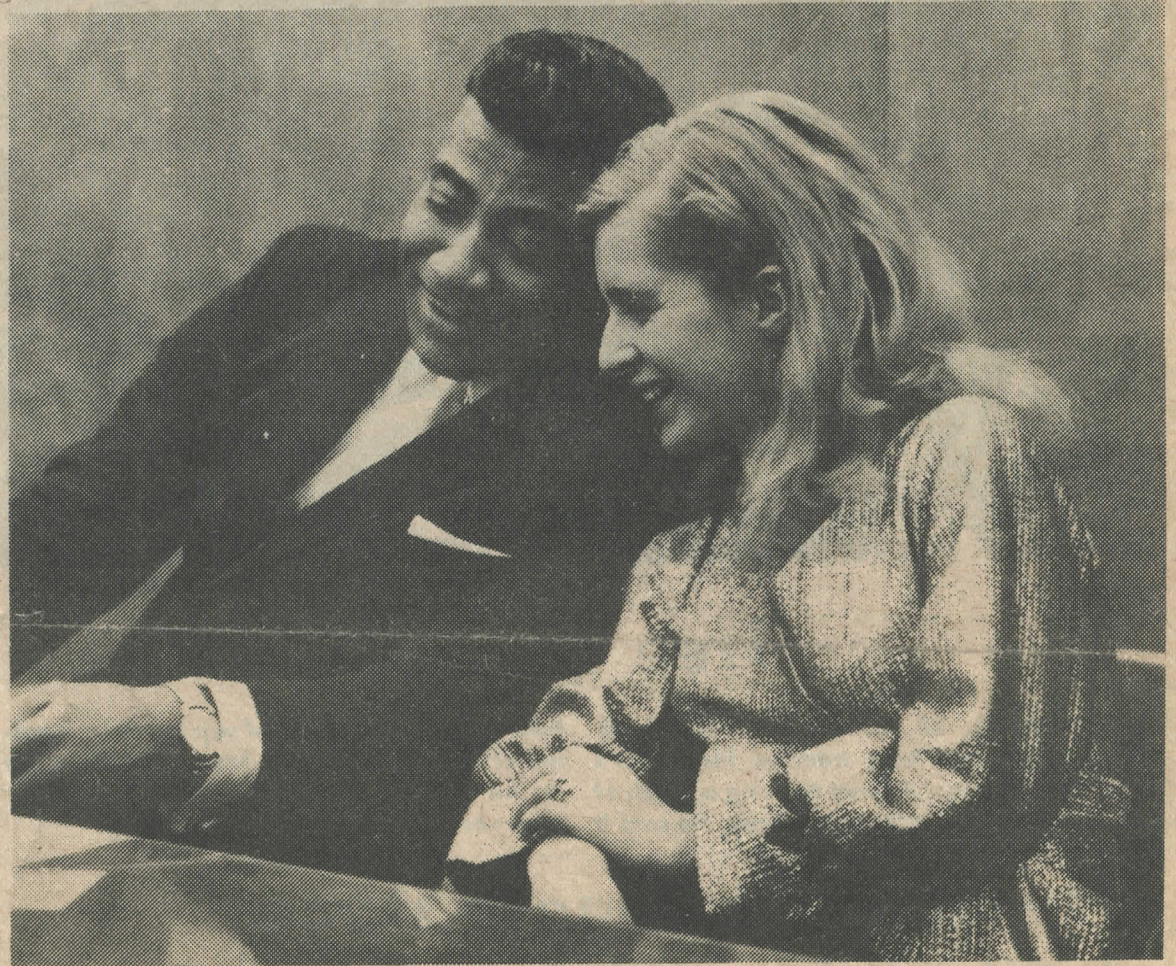
LeGrand was released in \$25,000 bail following his arrest on the charges of kidnap and assault, but surprised everyone Oct. 30, 1968, when he disclosed that he had married Miss Kennedy. He said the charges were brought against him by her as the result of a "misunderstanding."

In March 1970, LeGrand was himself the victim of an assault when the father of one of his many "nuns" shot him an a bodyguard

for reportedly trying to force the "nun" to return with him to his Brooklyn church. LeGrand was in critical condition for several weeks and his bodyguard, James Ward died.

LeGrand, who has been arrested almost 20 times since 1946, became a father by his wife Kathleen in June 1970. The child, he claimed, was his 82nd.

LeGrand is in the Brooklyn House of Detention



--Record file photo

Self-proclaimed Bishop Devernon LeGrand is arraigned in Liberty magistrate's court in 1968 on charges stemming from his opera-

tion of a children's camp. With him is his wife, the former Kathleen Kennedy, who earlier had accused him of assault.

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The New York Times/Robert Demetry

Looking for clues, investigators sift through silt dredged from Briscoe Lake in the Catskills.

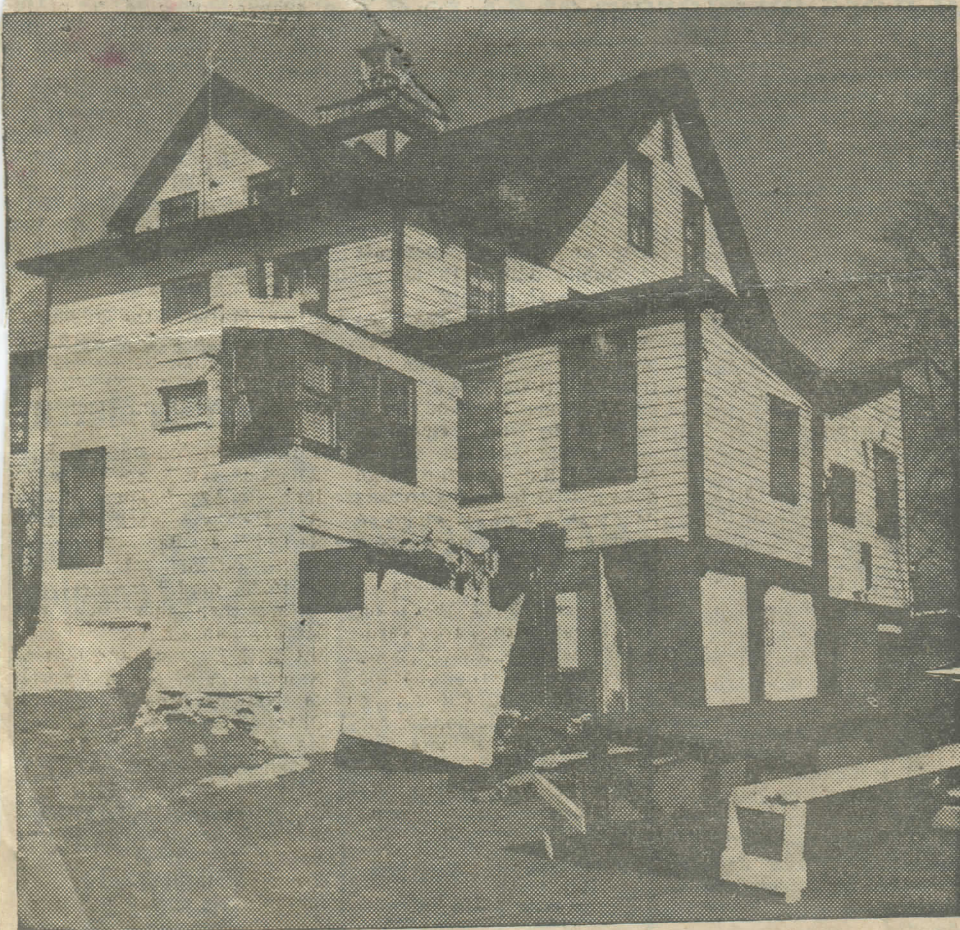
Arthur Murray
changes people into couples.



SCHOOL OF DANCE

Arthur Murray
FRANCHISED DANCE SCHOOLS
"Where we change people into couples."
MANHATTAN
604 Fifth Ave.
(212) 247-4032

one day in an interview, "You never get anybody to agree on them. You won't even get a consensus on them." That may be the reason he committed Dr. King's name from this litany of heroes last week. And, when he came here to Marion, as racially conservative a community as any town in Georgia, he was true to his word. He did not leave out Dr. King's name. He omitted the entire list.



The Town House near Briscoe where Devernon LeGrand and his followers lived

Gold's Detectives Seek More Bodies in Catskills

By EMANUEL PERLMUTTER

Three detectives from the office of District Attorney Eugene Gold of Brooklyn supervised a search by divers using electrical suction vacuums yesterday for more bodies in the waters of Brisco Lake in the Catskills, where the remains of two teen-age sisters were found last week.

Devernon LeGrand, a convicted rapist and self-styled "bishop" of a Brooklyn religious cult, has been charged by Mr. Gold with murdering the two sisters to prevent them from testifying last fall at his trial for rape. He was sentenced to serve 5 to 15 years after conviction on the rape charge.

Early yesterday, two divers descended into the lake near the hamlet of Briscoe, which is about four miles from Mr. LeGrand's farmhouse and the summer camp where he used to send his women followers and their children.

Others Reported Missing

Using the suction vacuums, the divers brought up parts of bodies and some jewelry that will be checked for identification. Women other than the two girls found last week, all members of Mr. LeGrand cult, have also been reported missing.

The two bodies found last week were those of Gladys Rivera Stewart, 18 years old and her sister, Yvonne Rivera, 16, both of Brooklyn. They had testified at an earlier trial that resulted in Mr. LeGrand's conviction for bribery.

Subsequently, the 51-year-old cult leader and his son, Noconda, 20, were both convicted of raping a young woman in August 1974 while holding her prisoner at their St. John's Pentacostal Church of Our Lord at 222 Brooklyn Avenue at Sterling Place in the Crown Heights section. The son received a maximum jail term of eight years.

Neighbors in Brooklyn, who declined to be identified, said yesterday that Mr. LeGrand

had often been seen playing ball with children on Sterling Place, the quiet residential street on which he is said to own at least two large brownstone apartment buildings.

"I would read a newspaper story about this guy being put away and look up and see him playing with his kids in the street," a neighbor said.

"A Friendly Man"

Another said Mr. LeGrand, whom he characterized as "a friendly man" often invited residents of the block to visit his Catskill retreat and his Brooklyn "church."

At least five adult sons had been seen coming and going from his home at 222 Brooklyn Avenue, usually by taxi or in the family's dilapidated customized Cadillac limousine.

Sheriff Joseph Wasser of Sullivan County and a fire company from nearby Liberty were present at the lake during yesterday's search. Mr. Wasser recalled that some complaints had been lodged with him and the state police in recent years about alleged child abuse and violations of health and safety at Mr. LeGrand's farm.

The search that resulted in the finding of the sisters' bodies undertaken by Mr. Gold several weeks ago as a result of information from Mr. LeGrand's wife, Kathleen, and other informants. She is now in protective custody.

Prior to his conviction for rape, Mr. LeGrand had been sentenced to four years in jail in 1974 for bribery and sexual misconduct with a 17-year-old girl.

In 1968, he was arrested and charged with kidnaping, raping and assaulting a 23-year-old woman whom he was alleged to have abducted from her home. Three years earlier, he had been arrested on charges of assault, kidnaping and the possession of firearms. He was reported to have been living in his church, a four-story white limestone town house, with 11 women and 47 children.