

## **From a chaotic childhood to delinquency, crime and hippie background**

Charles Milles Maddox was born on November 12, 1934, of Kathleen Maddox, a 16-year-old prostitute and alcoholic mother, and of the alleged Colonel Walker Scott, a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and a descendant of the Scottish Scott Clan, whom he never knew. In August 1934, before the birth of the child, his mother married William Eugene Manson, and left him to fend for himself with the child, who now bore his name, regularly disappearing for days drinking with his brother. They divorced in 1937. In 1939, when he was only five years old, his mother was sent to prison for five years for armed robbery. The child is then placed with his uncle and aunt who turn out to be sadistic guardians. When his mother returned, her alcoholism prevented her from obtaining custody of the child. Charles Manson was placed in a special school in Indiana.

When he was 14, he stole from a grocery store. This will be followed by an alternation of prison sentences for thefts and sexual assaults, especially homosexuals, in rehabilitation homes and periods of freedom. When he was 16, doctors called him “aggressive antisocial”. When he was 18 years old, a psychiatrist in his prison diagnosed a psychological trauma and “a great sensitivity wounded by a lack of love and affection”. He married in 1955 and had a child, while he was incarcerated again. But his wife left him when he was incarcerated. In 1958, divorced, he is pimp of a young minor woman and is incarcerated for attempting to cash a stolen cheque. Escaping prison, he continued his activities as a small pimp, and was finally imprisoned again. In prison, he learned guitar and singing in the early 1960s.

According to some sources, Manson showed a brief interest in scientology in the early 1960s, then in the mid-1960s, still in prison, he developed a fascination for the Beatles, and aspired to a similar career. He realizes a great frustration that this does not lead to his release from prison in 1967, and declares at that time to have a revenge to take on those who refused to produce his record, including Terry Melcher. Before being released in 1967, he asked to remain in prison but his application was rejected. Once outside, Manson discovers a transformed society. He stayed in Los Angeles, where he was incarcerated for the last time and mingled with hippie circles, beginning with a life as a wandering musician, quickly followed by a group of admirers and admirers.

## **The «Manson Family», a hippie movement**

Thus in 1967, at the age of 32, he founded a hippie community, of which he became the charismatic leader, presenting himself as a reincarnation of Christ. The band, first called "Black Bus Charlie" by other communities that were afraid of Manson, ends up being called "the Manson Family". It consisted of 9 people at the beginning and then 20 people at different times, mostly young women. The Manson Family settled in a cave and various ranches, including the Spahn Ranch near Los Angeles, owned by George Spahn, an old man who housed them for free against services such as ranch maintenance and horse management. “The Family” lives on robberies and drug trafficking. Members of the group take drugs. Many

children are born within the community, young women serve as sexual slaves. The community is called by the neighborhood The Garbage People, with members searching the garbage in the evening to bring back food to “the Family”.

By associating excerpts from the Bible with texts from the Beatles' White Album, Manson devised a strange prophecy, according to which blacks would soon dominate whites and then turn to him to lead their new nation. Charles Manson makes a particular interpretation of the white album, using the purported meaning of the texts to provoke and justify the murders of the summer of 1969.

The song Helter Skelter speaks of a carnival attraction that consists of a conical propeller slide. Manson uses the words “helter skelter” in the sense of “disorderly” and “confusion”: Manson gives this name to his vision of an apocalyptic war between blacks and whites, which should begin in 1969, and of which he and his community should finally be the beneficiaries, since after their victory, the Blacks, unable to control the world, will turn to him to follow his advice.

In order to hasten the realization of this prophecy, in August 1969 he asked some of the members of his community to go and commit assassinations in the beautiful neighborhoods of Los Angeles, murders which he then wanted to accuse the blacks. He has one of the murders signed by his criminal group called Helter Skelter.

## **The assassinations and the trial**

First of all, it is important to introduce some of the active members of the Family.

Susan Atkins :

She met Charles Manson in 1967. At the time, she was a topless dancer. Manson persuades her to join her community which has to make a long bus trip. She accepts thinking that he is Jesus Christ. Well integrated into the Family, she gives birth to a little boy in October 1967. She will be in every bad move of the Family.

Charles Tex Watson :

We don't know much about Watson, he was involved in two murders, during one of them he will say to one of his victims, “I'm the devil, and I'm here to do the devil's business”.

Leslie Van Houten :

Leslie became addicted after her parents' divorce, at 17, her mother forced her to abort... She fled the family home. In 1967, Leslie wants to get involved in different hippie communities, but it's The Family she's going to choose. Charles Manson will not have sex with Leslie, unlike other women in the cult. So she tries to get noticed, by participating in murders, for example.

Patricia Krenwinkel :

Involved in one of the murders, she will be identified because of her fingerprints and will be incarcerated with Leslie Van Houten, his accomplice, in Chino.

Bobby Beausoleil :

His story is a bit long. Bobby is a musician, a bit delinquent and especially addicted to drugs. He will work quickly on a few pieces with Charles Manson, but will be especially at the origin of the Family's first murder.

Mary Brunner :

She is a very close friend of Beausoleil's, she will witness her first murder.

The first murder took place on 25 July 1969. Bobby Beausoleil, Mary Brunner and Susan Atkins were responsible. Beausoleil had an appointment with Gary Hinman, a music teacher. Apparently, Beausoleil owed him money. He couldn't give it to her. They then fought, and it was with a stabbing that the first murder of the Family took place.

Their most well-known and publicized murder was undoubtedly that of the evening of August 9, 1969. Charles "Tex" Watson, Patricia Krenwinkel, and Susan Atkins enter Roman Polanski's Los Angeles 10050 Cielo Drive 3. They come to avenge Charles Manson of music producer Terry Melcher, who refused to sign him a contract. But he recently moved out, detail they failed to care about... They sever the telephone cables of this star villa<sup>18</sup> then occupied by Sharon Tate, Polanski's wife, then eight months pregnant, and her friends. All the occupants are shot, except for the guard who hears nothing because he listens to music. While his friend, Steven, leaves the property, Tex Watson shoots him four bullets from a revolver. The word "pig" is written with Sharon Tate's blood on the front door. One of the followers, Linda Kasabian, who was on the lookout, later obtained legal immunity for testifying against the group. Sharon Tate's murder was called ritual murder.

Finally, last known murder, August 10, 1969, of Leno and Rosemary Labianca, a rich couple from Los Angeles. Watson, Susan Atkins and Lesly Van Houten drive around the beautiful Los Angeles neighbourhoods. They fall on the Labianca house, the couple is asleep on the couch. The Family enters the house, assures the couple -awakened by the noise- that they are only after their money. They tie them up so they can take what they want. No resistance from the Labiancas who want to save their lives. But the family members are real barbarians... They will torture the couple before killing them... On the belly of Leno Labianca, they engrave «War», on the walls, with the blood of the victims they write Death to pigs and Rise. On the fridge, somebody writes Healter Skelter, referring to a Beatles song...

They are suspected of committing many other murders, including the murder of Donald Shea.

The first attempts to identify and find the killers were unsuccessful, as the Los Angeles Police Brigades did not link the murders of July 25, August 9 and 10. The investigation progresses when the police randomly arrest Bobby Beausoleil's girlfriend, Kitty Lutesinger, and through the revelation of her murders to her fellow inmates by Susan Atkins, imprisoned for auto theft.

The "Manson Family" trial will be the longest and most expensive in the history of the United States.

Although Manson himself was not present at the scene of the murders, he was found guilty on 25 January 1971 for having led the killers, and sentenced on 29 March to the death penalty. This sentence is commuted to a life sentence after the Supreme Court overturns the death sentences before 1972.

On the first day of his trial, which began on 15 June 1970, he wore a cross incised on his forehead with a knife, to signify that he had retired from society. Later, his disciples in freedom, as a sign of loyalty, will also mark their foreheads with an “X”. Then he turns this “X” into a swastika. Out of provocation, he made his first public appearance with the swastika on the occasion of an interview show that he gave to the journalist Tom Snyder for the NBC’s Tomorrow show, June 13, 1981.

## **During his incarceration**

In November 2009, 41-year-old Californian DJ Matthew Roberts announced that he had discovered at the age of 29 that his biological father was Charles Manson. An adopted child, Matthew first found his biological mother, who had explained to him that he belonged briefly to the Manson sect and found himself pregnant after he raped her in 1967. She then returned to her family and proposed the child for adoption after her birth in March 1968. Matthew Roberts has published several papers, including correspondence with Manson in which he confirms that he knew his mother in 1967 and states that he may well be her father. Manson had another child, Michael Valentine Manson, with one of the followers, Mary Brunner.

In November 2014, the California Prison Administration announced that he had obtained a marriage license and that he would marry a 26-year-old fan, Afton Burton.

On February 11, 2015, Manson announced that the wedding was finally cancelled because it was a macabre plan to enjoy his notoriety. Burton hoped, in fact, to build a mausoleum in honor of the prisoner, when he died, and to charge entrance.

Moreover, Charles Manson thought that the idea was completely stupid because being the reincarnation of Christ, he could not die.

## **End of Life**

Admitted to a hospital in Bakersfield on November 15, he reportedly died of natural causes at this facility in Kern County, California on November 19, 2017 at the age of 83. But his last words are disturbing, and they are: I am the most famous human being not only alive, but the most famous to have ever existed. And I’m not even dead yet. What do you think is going to happen when I die?”

His body is frozen for four months until the judge decides who to give it to. One of Manson’s grandsons will finally have control. His private funeral, attended by some 30 people including his fiancée Afton Burton, took place on 17 March 2018 in Porterville. They will still be photographed and unveiled, including a photo of Charles Manson’s body. His ashes were scattered in a nearby forest.

## **And after that...**

Since his death and even before, the history of the Manson family has inspired many films, series, books, music... Indeed, this sordid story attracts and appeals enormously.