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In Deer Park, Unmasking of a Cultist

By Jim O'Neill
and Stephen Williams

Deer Park—Frank Delli Santi was 17 in 1972 when he was introduced to the Hare Krishna movement. Six months later, he wore a "sikha" (pony tail) and lived full-time at the cult's temple in Brooklyn. By last November, he had visited India and was living at a Miami temple. Then, he asked his parents for \$800 to make another trip to India.

By that time, his parents, Joe and Marie Delli Santi, had had enough: They decided that their son must leave the society and undergo "deprogramming," they said. They offered him the \$800, if he would come home for a farewell party. On Christmas Day, his father, two brothers-in-law and an uncle met him at LaGuardia Airport and took him to a Deer Park motel where, for four days and nights, he was held a virtual prisoner and persuaded by two men, themselves former cultists, to give up his Krishna beliefs, the family said.

Last week, Suffolk County police entered the picture. Jack Warren, a priest of the cult, called First Squad Det. Ed

Simmons. Warren said he was afraid Frank had been kidnaped by his parents and would be murdered, Simmons said yesterday. Simmons investigated and found Frank alive and well Thursday at his parents' home at 146 E. Second St. Frank has repudiated the Krishna cult, he says, and this morning he was to start work as a gas-station attendant.

At the Delli Santis' home last night, Frank, looking thin and sallow, recalled his life, with the cult: the monotony of mantra chants, meditation, cold showers at 4 AM, a vegetarian diet, no sex, no meat, no coffee or tea, no alcohol or drugs.

Hare Krishna, who, cult members say, lived on earth 5,000 years ago, is the Supreme God of the cult. Its purpose is to worship Krishna and become one with God.

"They get you when you're young," Frank said, "and they shape your mind as if it was clay. I'm so glad to be back again with my family."

In November, Frank's parents, alarmed by newspaper accounts about cults, contacted Ted Patrick, a 45-year-old, controversial self-styled "depro-

gramer" who has worked with disciples of the cult of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church, among others.

When he was brought to the motel in Deer Park and found two "deprogrammers" sent by Patrick waiting for him, Frank bolted. He jumped out of a second-story window, but landed on a balcony only a few feet below, the Delli Santis said. "I broke down then... I was in tears," his father said. "I said, 'If that's what he wants, let him go.'" But Frank, screaming and chanting Krishna incantations, was dragged back into the room. He was allowed to sleep but was never left alone for four days.

On the fourth night, Patrick himself arrived from California. He brought with him tapes made by former members of various cults, including the Charles Manson family. Frank said. The tapes finally convinced him, he said.

"I've got to catch up on the three and a half years I missed," Frank said last night. "I'd like to go back to school and learn a trade and then try to get a good job."



Newsday Photo by Mitch Turner

Frank Delli Santi at his home.