

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

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Brady

TO : Mr. DeLoach

DATE: December 7, 1967

FROM : A. Rosen

SUBJECT: BOOK REVIEW
"SIX SECONDS IN DALLAS"
BY JOSIAH THOMPSON

Book

- 1 - Mr. DeLoach
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Mr. Malley
- 1 - Mr. Shroder
- 1 - Mr. Raupach
- 1 - Mr. Bishop
- 1 - Mr. Sullivan
- 1 - Mr. Conrad

Handwritten initials and marks

John F. [unclear]

SYNOPSIS: The book "Six Seconds in Dallas," written by Josiah Donald Thompson, Jr., Ph.D., Haverford College, has been reviewed. The book contains numerous references to the FBI and reports we furnished to the Warren Commission now retained in the National Archives. He does not refer to these derogatorily.

He refers to testimony of FBI experts on numerous occasions and that the FBI used an inferior copy of the Zapruder film for analysis. Thompson is incorrect in reaching such a conclusion.

In a chapter titled "A Reconstruction," he prepared a scenario of events which he believed happened and is the basis of his research. He said of the scenario, it is an "amalgam of hard fact and educated speculation."

Based on his research, he arrived at the theory four shots were fired from three guns in six seconds from three different positions. The Warren Commission concluded only three shots were fired originating from the Texas School Book Depository Building and were fired by Lee Harvey Oswald.

Thompson's book could cause belief he has uncovered new information to support a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. In reality, he has offered no plausible evidence on which such a determination can be made.

BACKGROUND CONCERNING JOSIAH DONALD THOMPSON: Our files contain numerous references to Thompson who was born on 1/17/35 in Liverpool, Ohio. He has been associated with many Vietnam peace movements and marches. On 10/20/67, in protest of the Vietnam War, he was one of 350 individuals who either mailed or relinquished their Selective Service Cards to the Attorney General in Washington, D. C. It is noted that a summary of the information contained in our files concerning Thompson has previously been furnished to the White House.

ACTION: For information.

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Rosen to DeLoach Memo
RE: BOOK REVIEW
"SIX SECONDS IN DALLAS"

DETAILS:

Josiah Donald Thompson, Jr., Ph.D., Haverford College, has written a book entitled, "Six Seconds in Dallas," which he said is a micro-study of the Kennedy assassination proving that three gunmen murdered the president. This was an independent study conducted by Thompson. Thompson mentions that 46 books have been written regarding the assassination which include the Warren Commission Report and the 26 volumes of hearings which support the Report. He has divided these books into two classifications, "The First Generation" which deals primarily with lurid, groundless speculations, and "The Second Generation" which attacks the Warren Commission Report. In view of this, he claims the purpose of his book, therefore, is that it is the first step of a radical different sort to synthesize the evidence (new and old) and point the way to an emerging conclusion.

Thompson has written a chapter entitled "A Reconstruction." In this chapter, he has prepared a scenario which he says is an "amalgam of hard fact and educated speculation." As a result, he has concluded that in connection with the assassination of President Kennedy, four shots from three guns were fired in six seconds. In this respect, he says details remain unclear, and a future investigation of other researchers and historians may yet fill in the details.

Thompson has arrived at his theory of the assassination based on his research of documents available in the National Archives, interviews conducted at Dallas, and a review of the Zapruder film in possession of Life Magazine. In this respect, he was employed by Life Magazine as a special consultant. The greatest aid to his theory is based on his examination of the Zapruder film dealing with measurements of the President's movements at the time he was shot.

He also supports his so-called conclusions with interviews of various individuals in Dallas, the testimony of Governor Connally and other witnesses to whom he gives the title "earwitness." Thompson admits that unlike photographic witness, the "eye and ear witness" reports have to be accepted with certain reservation. However, he utilizes the "earwitness" reports to help substantiate his theory of the sequence of shots which caused the death of the President.

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The Warren Commission concluded three shots were fired from the Texas School Book Depository Building (TSBDB) which were responsible for the killing of President Kennedy and wounding of Governor Connally. This is generally referred to as the "single-bullet theory" in which one shot entered the President's back, traversed through his body, and inflicted the wounds on Governor Connally. Another shot hit the President in the head which was responsible for his death and one bullet missed.

Thompson claims four bullets were fired from three different positions, all of which found their mark. He claims the first shot was fired from the TSBDB and struck President Kennedy in the back. He claims this bullet did not traverse through President Kennedy and strike Governor Connally. He concluded from "earwitness reports" that the first shot was not as loud, inferring that it may not have had the power to penetrate through President Kennedy. He indicates that the autopsy report also supports this as the autopsy surgeons indicated the wound on the back of President Kennedy was probed to the depth of a finger. He said that his interpretations of the medical evidence suggested that the shot did not go all the way through, and the wound in the President's throat was caused by a fragment from a later head shot. Therefore, the contingency that Governor Connally and President Kennedy were struck by the same bullet becomes logically impossible.

In connection with the second shot, he claims that it originated from a building on Houston Street, across from the TSBDB, and this shot was the one that hit Governor Connally. He supports this theory through testimony of Governor Connally who, as we know, has continually stated that he was hit by the second shot. He also supports his theory through eye witness reports of other individuals, but namely, S. M. Holland who was positioned on the railroad overpass.

The third and fourth shots, which Thompson terms "the head shots," according to him, occurred almost simultaneously. The third shot originated from the TSBDB, and the fourth shot originated from behind the fence by the grassy knoll which means it came from the right front.

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To support his theory concerning the frontal shot, Thompson relies heavily on the testimony of S. M. Holland who claimed he saw a puff of smoke in the grassy knoll area. This testimony was previously considered by the President's Commission, which indicated there was no evidence to support his observations. He further supports his theory of the frontal shot by comments made by the pathologists at the Methodist Hospital in Dallas who examined a piece of bone specimen, who stated this specimen looked like it came from the occipital (rear) region of the skull. Therefore, according to Thompson, it was not difficult to understand how a shot from the right front, exploding through the rear of the skull, could produce precisely that effect.

It is interesting to note that two individuals, namely, Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., LL.B., and Dr. Milton Helpert, Chief Medical Examiner of the City of New York, both of whom deal in forensic pathology, and were very critical of the doctors who performed the autopsy on President Kennedy were consulted frequently by Thompson so that he could utilize their knowledge to support his theories. They indicated the autopsy doctors were not qualified to conduct a forensic pathological examination.

Although Thompson claims the autopsy surgeons were unfamiliar with forensic pathology, except Lt. Col. Pierre A. Finck, it is pertinent to know that Colonel Finck established through close examination that the bullet which entered the back of President Kennedy's head did cause all the head damage. He based this on the examination and the characteristics of the wound which were observed from the inside of the skull, a beveling and coning effect which can only be caused by an entry wound resulting in the loss of a portion of the skull as was illustrated by the autopsy doctors. Thompson does not refer to the examination of Lt. Col. Finck. It is noted if he did it would have a tendency to refute Thompson's fourth shot theory from the right front.

Further review of Thompson's book can only determine that it is a very scholarly study which he supports with numerous photographs, mathematical equations, diagrams of

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trajectories and measurements relative to the positions of both President Kennedy and Governor Connally in the automobile. However, errors have been detected.

For example, on page 31, Thompson states the fastest time for getting off three shots with Oswald's rifle achieved by the FBI Laboratory examiners was 4.6 seconds. Thompson then states this figure includes no time for aiming. Factually, the testimony clearly shows that the 4.6 seconds was the time required for getting off three aimed shots with Oswald's rifle. Thompson is in error.

Thompson dwells on physical evidence obtained during the investigation and has attempted to establish that one of the cartridge cases found on the sixth floor of the TSBDB could not have been fired from Oswald's gun.

On page 143, Thompson erroneously identifies the two cartridge cases first received by the FBI (of the three cartridge cases received) from the Dallas Police Department as C7 and C38. Actually, C6 and C7 were received first, and the third cartridge case, C38, was received approximately one week later.

Thompson states (page 145) that the only marks on C6 (cartridge case) linking it with Oswald's rifle were mechanism marks, and these marks could not have been incurred on November 22, the date of the assassination. Actually, all three of these cartridge cases, C6, C7, and C38 were identified by the FBI Laboratory as having been fired in Oswald's rifle. Accordingly, Thompson is in error on this point also.

On page 173, Thompson cites a letter from the Bureau to the Commission dated June 2, 1964, as being in conflict with the testimony of a Laboratory examiner. In reality, the testimony of the Laboratory examiner is not in conflict in any respect with the contents of the June 2, 1964, letter; however, using his erroneous interpretation, Thompson then proceeds to the obvious erroneous conclusion (page 146) that the third cartridge case "is most likely an extra, unfired shell and possibly a deliberate fake."

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In attempting to establish that President Kennedy and Governor Connally were not hit by the same bullet, (CE399) which was recovered on Governor Connally's stretcher, he claimed it was found on another stretcher entirely. He cites the original comments made by autopsy doctors to substantiate his theory that this was the bullet that had entered the President's back and had worked its way out during external cardiac massage.* These comments were reported by SAs Francis X. O'Neill, Jr., and James W. Sibert following the completion of the autopsy on 11/22/63. The question then arises as to how this bullet, if it did come from President Kennedy's stretcher, appeared on another stretcher located in the hospital hall. Thompson very adroitly contributes this to souvenir hunting, and as he says, "we must appeal to an old, traditionally American institution-souvenir hunting." He is implying that someone picked up CE399 who evidently realized the importance of this bullet and deposited it on a stretcher in the hall so that it would not be found in their possession.

Thompson has developed his theory as to how the assassination was committed through research in the Archives, coupled with his so-called discoveries in Dallas. He suggested that Oswald may not have been the gunman on the sixth floor and that during the shooting he was quite likely where he said he was (on the first floor) and that two conspirators other than Oswald may well have been on the sixth floor and that these two individuals made their escape in a light-colored Rambler. It is noted that during the interview of numerous witnesses following the assassination, one thought she had seen Oswald on the first floor at the time of the assassination but could not be positive. Thompson claimed that none of this information proves Oswald innocent, but does provide a plausible alternative to the presumption of his guilt.

Quite frequently in his book, Thompson refers to the FBI in respect to reports and testimony of our experts. His comments are not derogatory in this respect.

He did mention that when he was conducting research concerning the bullet (CE399) relative to its weight, he

*Referring to the autopsy doctors probing the wound on the back of the President to the depth of a finger and no bullet was located.

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brought a sensitive Metler balance to the Archives to weigh it. The Deputy Archivist denied him permission to make such an experiment. The Deputy Archivist informed him that if the FBI recalled it, the FBI could weigh it. Thompson said that the FBI's cooperation in this matter could not be anticipated. He made a brief inquiry with SA C. Benjamin Fulton, Crime Records Division, who informed him that no FBI personnel would be able to provide him with any information with regard to the assassination. Thompson said that the purpose for his inquiry was part of an effort to locate and interview SAs Sibert and O'Neill.

In respect to this matter, numerous individuals have either written or come to the Bureau seeking information relative to the assassination investigation. Following a long standing established policy no comment is made to any person inquiring and in each instance they are referred to the findings of the Warren Commission located in the National Archives.

It was earlier mentioned that Thompson's theories are based primarily on the examination of the Zapruder film. He stated that the FBI used an inferior copy of the Zapruder film for analysis, whereas he examined a better copy. He alleged this enabled him to make more valid determinations. While the Zapruder film initially furnished to us and used for much of the initial study was a copy, the FBI and the Commission later had an opportunity to examine the original film when brought to Washington by a representative of Life Magazine. Our later detailed studies were made using a set of excellent quality 35 mm slides made directly from the original film by Life for us. Therefore, the findings of the FBI and the Commission were not based on an inferior copy of the Zapruder film as alleged by Thompson but upon over-all analysis of all the films, original and copies, and the slides made available by Life Magazine. Here again, Thompson is in error both as to his facts and his conclusions.

It is of interest to note that some of Thompson's conclusions are based on measurement of movements of the President's head subsequent to the shot that shattered his

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head, as shown on sequential Zapruder film frames. These measurements, regardless of how accurately made, cannot be used for any similarly accurate conclusions because of the many unknown factors, such as sudden change in car speed, body movement, and human reflex action, unknown factors that cannot be established but which could have a profound and variable effect on the reasons behind the questioned movements. Thompson, in fact, suggests some of these possibilities and then selects the interpretation that best fits his theories, the very approach he has critically accused the Commission of following. -

While Thompson has come up with this new theory, he has not named or suggested anyone who may have been involved. He indicated the purpose of his study was to perform a task of archeology to lay bare a whole level of contradictory evidence beneath the conclusions of the Warren Report. He said it does not prove the assassination was a conspiracy, nor does it prove Oswald's innocence. It seems odd that by this latter statement, if Thompson's theory was true, noting he claims proof that three gunmen were involved, it only stands to reason that a conspiracy was involved.

At the conclusion of his book, Thompson has reproduced numerous Commission documents available in the National Archives. He has also reproduced copies of letters addressed to President Johnson and other individuals by Congressman Theodore R. Kupferman (R. - N.Y.). We are well aware of the fact that Kupferman, in the past, has attempted to establish a joint committee of Congress to determine the necessity of a Congressional investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy.

To those unfamiliar with the facts regarding the assassination as developed by the Warren Commission, Thompson's book revealing his theory could cause the belief Thompson has uncovered new information to support a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. In reality, Thompson offered no positive evidence on which such a determination can be made.

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