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Defiant on Garrison Subpoena, Tampan Recalls Lee Oswald

By THOM WILKERSON
Tribune Staff Writer

Kerry Wendell Thornley, the self-styled "libertarian" who served in the same U.S. Marine Corps outfit with accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, has turned his nose up at New Orleans Dist. Atty. James Garrison and he says it doesn't bother him any more than did the death of President John F. Kennedy.

"I'm not concerned about being suspected," commented Thornley, 29, 726 51st St. S. "I've enjoyed my life up to now. If Garrison frames me and I wind up in jail, well, I never expected life to be a ball."

Garrison last week subpoenaed Thornley, a freelance writer, to appear Feb. 8-9 before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury to testify about his alleged affiliation with Oswald in New Orleans in 1963. Thornley still insists he never saw Oswald after late June 1959 in El Toro, Calif.

Thornley, author of a book, "Oswald," published in 1965 by New Classics House, Chicago, recalls some memories of the accused killer that simply don't fit the complexion of a man who would carefully plot the murder of a president.

"One day we got into an argument about U.S. imperialism," said Thornley, "on whether or not there was such a thing. At that time, I didn't believe there was. He did. He started talking of the brutality of Marines on liberty, calling them 'fascist stormtroopers.' He became pale and started shaking when he finished talking. It seemed strange. I got the idea he was very much opposed to violence.

"He neglected mundane things, like his rifle, uniform, shoes. He didn't clean his rifle. He never talked about guns. He was intelligent, a little disconnected from the real, concrete world like a lot of intellectuals. He was too busy solving the world's problems to take care of his own.

"He spent his time sitting around and discussing how this or that international problem could be solved to

such a degree that he neglected more pressing personal problems, such as getting ready for the next day's inspection. He wouldn't be ready and he'd get in trouble."

Thornley is a native of Los Angeles. He has two younger brothers. A 1957 graduate of California High School at Whittier, Calif., he entered the Marine Corps in October, 1958, after studying journalism one year at the University of Southern California. He was honorably discharged from the Corps in October, 1963, as a corporal.

He went to New Orleans shortly after his discharge and stayed there a couple of years. In August, 1963, following a trip back to Whittier, he went to Mexico City for a

week then back to New Orleans.

He was in Louisiana at the same time Oswald was floating in and out of the state on various sojourns. Thornley said he spent a lot of time in a New Orleans bar-restaurant which Oswald allegedly frequented, but he never noticed the sullen youth.

Then, on Nov. 22, 1963, the bomb exploded.

"After the assassination," said Thornley, "I lost a lot of friends because I was flippant about Kennedy's death. I let it be known that so many people get killed every day and we live in a country where everyone is supposed to be equal yet when the President gets killed, all these people go into an emotional tantrum, and to me that

smacks of monarchy."

Thornley, whose initial ambition was to be a novelist but now has turned to an appetite for articles on varied topics, rejects the lone-assassin theory deduced by the Warren Commission after several months of investigation.

"I'm not too optimistic about the truth coming out on the Kennedy assassination," he remarked. "They'll finally find out what happened 100 years from now and, as far as most people will be concerned, it will be a matter of academic interest. I think Oswald's name already has been cleared in the minds of most people in this country."

He contends that he has "been trying to mind my own business" since testifying before the Warren Commission in April, 1964, in Washington but Garrison, prompted by a New Orleans "practitioner of witchcraft," Barbara Reid, won't accept the fact that he told investigators all he knew about Oswald.

Thornley has hired Max P. Gabreski, Oil City, Pa., as his attorney in the case. Gabreski has told him that he doesn't have to obey the Garrison subpoena. Thornley accepts this advice.

"There is no way he (Garrison) could get a deposition here in Tampa from me because he can't convince me of his integrity," said Thornley.

"Putting it simply," he added, "I just don't have anything else to tell them."

Thornley is, most of the time, a vegetarian, which may or may not account for his slim 140-lb., 5 ft., 10 in. frame. "I'm now studying edible plants, reading books on them," he said. "Occasionally, I eat meat."

He is a voracious reader and practices much of what he consumes from the printed page. He has found that dandelion roots, when boiled, make good coffee and pigweed is good spinach.

Thornley married the former Cara Leach, New Bethlehem, Pa., on Dec. 11, 1965. They have no children. They moved here last October. (Continued on Page 2, Col. 3)



Thornley Remembers Marine Days

... Oswald was 'a little disconnected from the world'

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Mrs. Thornley is a graduate of American University in Washington and currently is a reading aide at Robert F. Lee School in Tampa.

Thornley's post-Marine Corps life has been spent primarily in odd jobs — door-man, telephone switchboard operator, editor of a Los Angeles newsletter and others. "I'm a libertarian," he said. "I'm for civil liberties and economic liberties. I'm with either is for individual freedom."

That "individual freedom" extends to a passionate dis-

like of Garrison, with whom the Tampan compares to the late Wisconsin Republican Sen. Joseph McCarthy of the 1950s.

Thornley said he and his wife probably will stay here for a couple of years. "Usually, I get tired of the scenery after two years any place I live," he observed.

The writer, who doesn't

hesitate to admit that he will "dig ditches or wait on tables" if his free lance professional pursuits fail, doesn't

care to be referred to as Oswald's "best friend" in the Marine Corps. "He didn't have any friends

that I knew about," said Thornley. "He didn't have a good mind for details but he was intelligent."

Somebody with a good mind for details pulled that trigger in Dallas, Thornley thinks there were more than one.

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