

# No Break in Mystery Of Missing Silk King

By MAYNARD PARKER  
(Newsweek Feature Service)

BANGKOK — More than a year has passed since the disappearance of 61-year-old Jim Thompson, the American who adopted Thailand and made a fortune from its hand-loomed silk. But his legend continues to open up like a bed of morning glories.

Thompson was vacationing in the Cameron Highlands of Malaysia in April, 1967, when he went for a stroll in the jungle and never returned. For weeks the area was combed by police and by Thai tribesmen attracted by the \$25,000 dead-or-alive reward.

At first, the assumption was that Thompson had either been kidnapped or had run into unexpected trouble in the jungle, perhaps from a tiger. Both theories now have been swamped by much more exotic rumors.

The most prominent hypothesis is that Thompson

had very carefully arranged his own disappearance.

According to this theory, Thompson had got wind that he was due to be rubbed out by a group of highly placed Thais and had slipped the country while he still had time.

The theory is not all that ludicrous. With his fortune from the silk trade, Thompson had put together a priceless collection of Southeast Asian art.

These treasures were eyed with envy not only by art collectors and dealers but by smugglers and corrupt government officials.

## NO CLUES

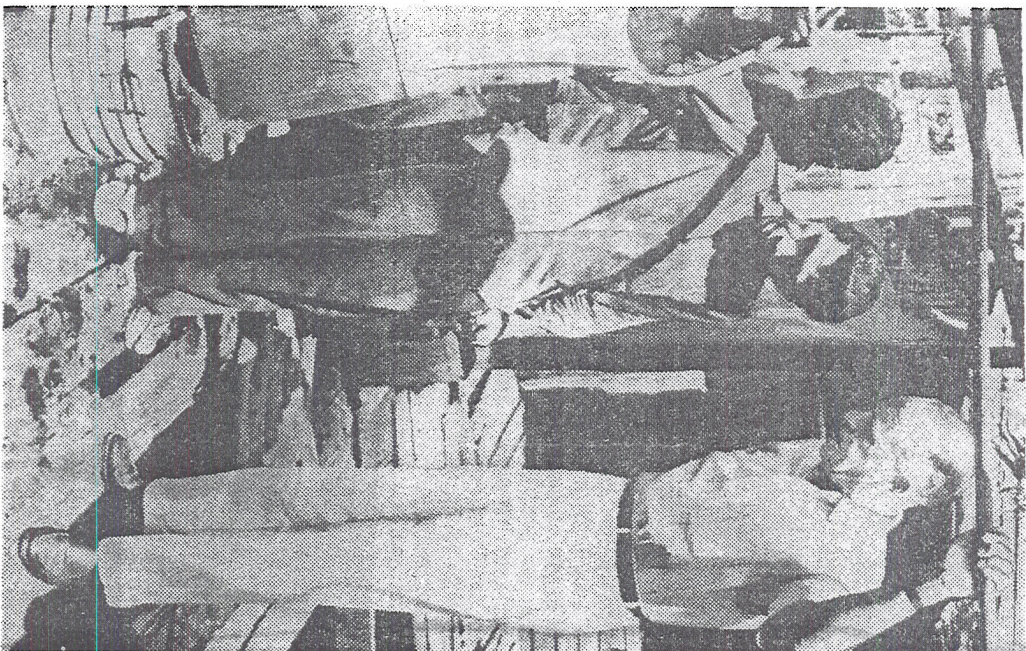
Supporting the theory that Thompson disappeared voluntarily is the fact that the most intensive search failed to turn up any clues. It is almost certain that no tiger gobbled him up — tigers like their meat slightly gummy, and never eat a victim until after he or it has been dead

Beyond this, many Malaysians point to the curious behavior of the aboriginal Sakai tribesmen. Though the reward involved more money than the whole tribe earns in a generation, the Sakai gave up the search after three days — leading others to the conclusion that they must have known that Thompson was simply not in the jungle — dead or alive.

## TUG-OF-WAR

Whatever happened to Thompson, the predicted tug-of-war over his art treasures is already justly underway.

Many smuggled Thompson pieces have already turned up abroad, notably in museums in Cleveland and Philadelphia. The pressure is intense, and it is entirely probable that even if Thompson is alive, the priceless art collection that caused him so much trouble will be gone by the time he shows his face again.



THAI SILK KING JIM THOMPSON  
A \$25,000 reward still is unclaimed  
—London Express photo.