



**The Disappearance of Jim Thompson,  
the “Silk King of Thailand” –  
A Search and Rescue Analysis**

Presented by

**Lew Toulmin, PhD, FRGS**

**Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference**

London, England

August 2019

# Llewellyn “Lew” Toulmin, Ph.D.



- Int'l School Bangkok 1959—1965
- Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society
- Fellow of The Explorers Club
- Former Chair, Section on Emergency Management, American Society for Public Administration
- Consultant to 20+ US Federal agencies and 30+ foreign countries
- Expeditions in search of missing aircraft, persons, battlefields, plantations and towns

# Today we will cover these topics:

- The exotic life of Jim Thompson
- The disappearance and search
- Theories re the disappearance
- Analysis of the search
- Murder of Jim's sister in PA
- Conclusions and implications



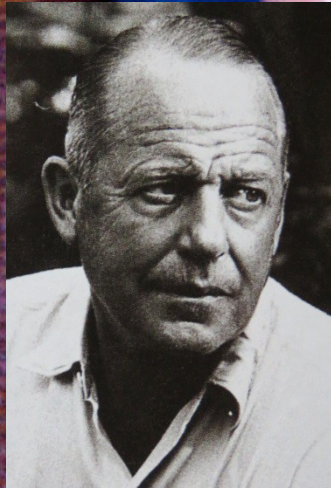
Jim Thompson in WW II



Moonlight Bungalow, Cameron Highlands







## The Exotic Life of Jim Thompson

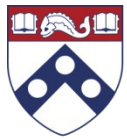


# James Harrison Wilson Thompson: b. 1906 in Greenville, Delaware



**PRINCETON  
UNIVERSITY**

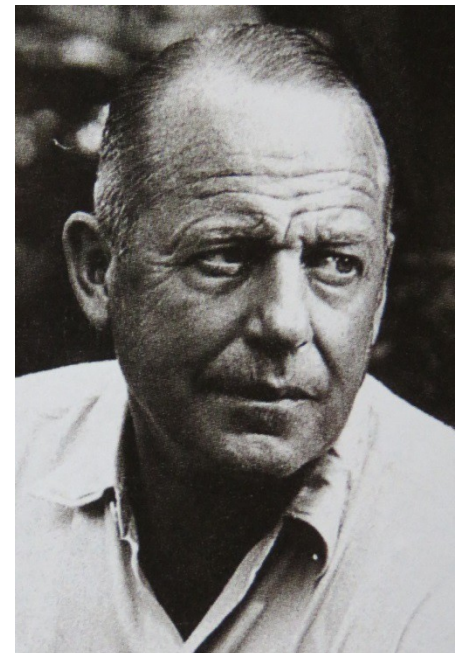
-- 1928, B. Arch.



**Penn**  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

-- 1929-31, studied design

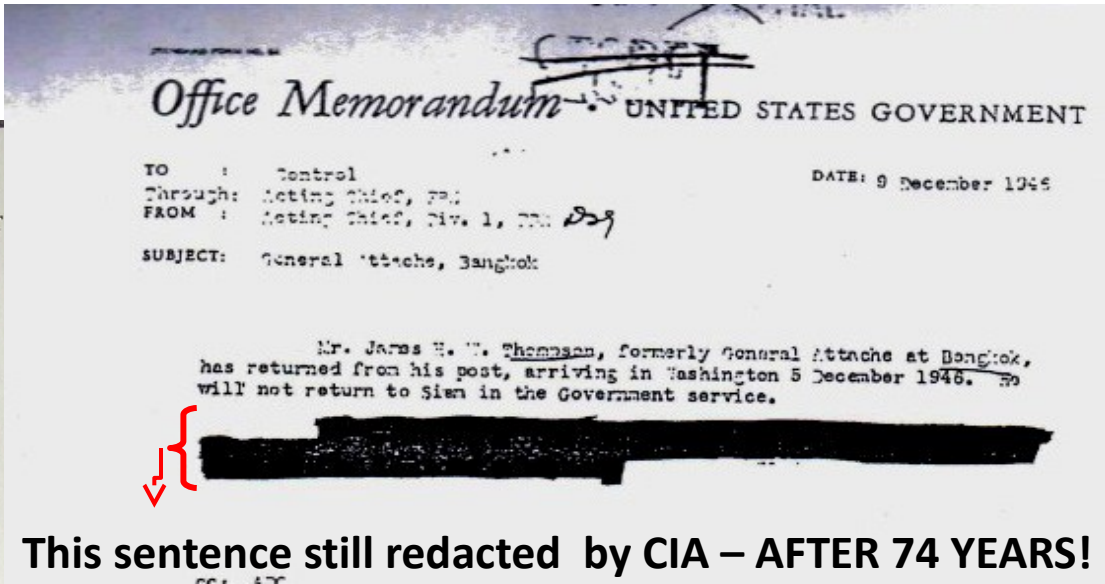
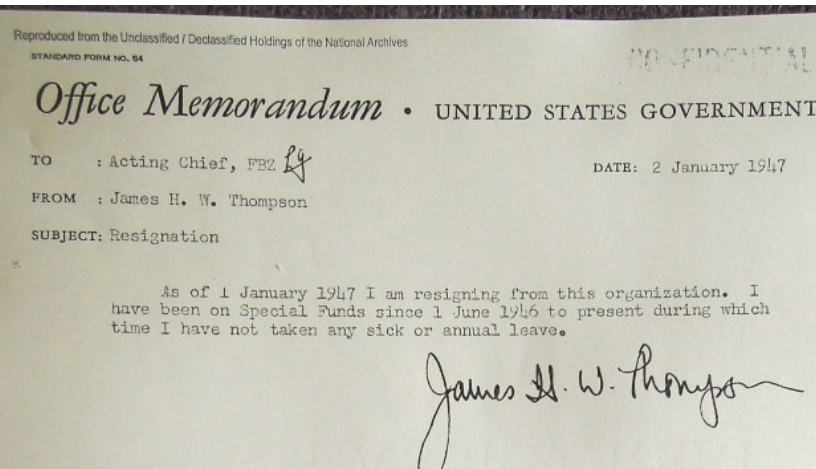
- **Architect & designer, 1931-41**
- **Spoke fluent French**
- **Gracious, cultured, occasional hot temper**
- **Piercing blue eyes**
- **Businessman, wonderful eye for color, sales genius, creative, too trusting of subordinates**
- **OSS intelligence officer, rising to CIA “agent of influence”**
- **Art expert and avid Asian art collector**
- **No children, divorced early, many affairs**



# Army private to OSS Lt. Col. during WW II..



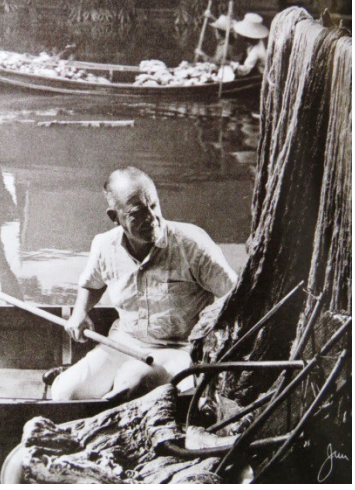
## ...then resigned – sort of



This sentence still redacted by CIA – AFTER 74 YEARS!



# Jim built the Thai silk industry



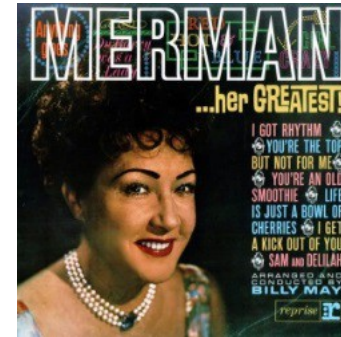
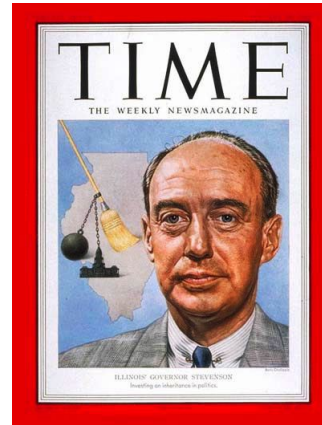


# His house/museum in Bangkok is fabulous





# Jim entertained almost every night...

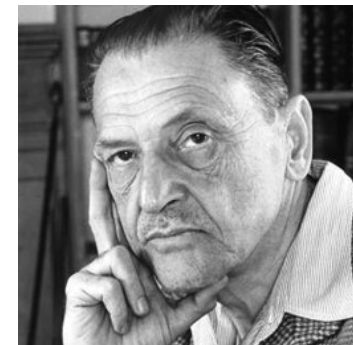
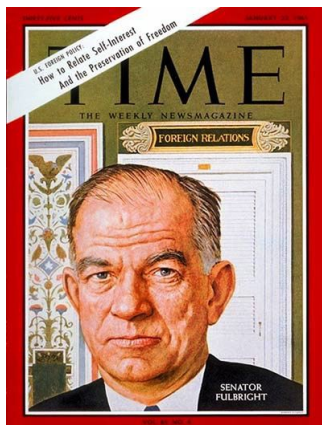


Doris Duke

Barbara Hutton



Tenn. Wms.



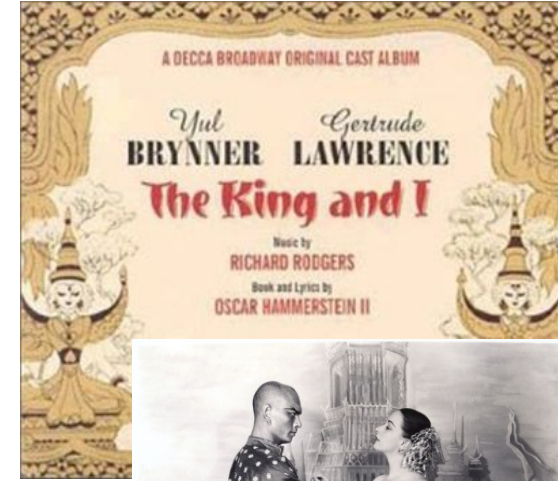
Somerset Maugham (ex-MI5)



# ...and had clients all over the world



Queen Sirikit  
of Thailand with JT



## THE THAI SILK COMPANY LTD.

311/6-7 SURIWONGSE ROAD, BANGKOK, THAILAND.

JAMES H.W. THOMPSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR TELEPHONE NO.: 3 2 3 4 1

BANK PAYMENTS: BANK OF AMERICA, BANGKOK

MAIL: P. O. BOX 906 BANGKOK, THAILAND. CABLE: THAISILK BANGKOK

Our ref. 5092

11 August, 1960

Mrs. Thad Partridge  
311 Mohawk Street  
Mobile, Alabama  
U. S. A.

REGISTERED

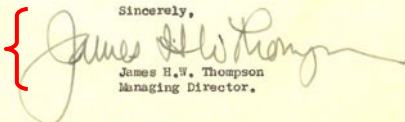
Dear Mrs. Partridge:

Enclosed are our invoice and an insurance certificate for our shipment to you by sea parcel post, by order of Mrs. Harry Toulmin.

Shipment by sea is slow and may take as long as four months, but with any luck your parcel should reach you in two or three, or even less.

We hope you like our products. If there is anything further we can do for you, please let us know.

Sincerely,



James H.W. Thompson  
Managing Director.

Enclosures:

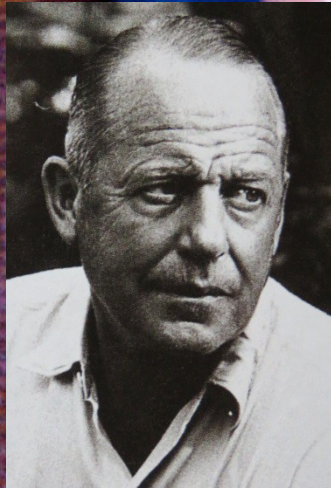
Invoice No. 1477/60 R. (Original)  
Insurance Certificate No. 5037/5427 (Original)  
Mail Order Price List.

CUS/so.



The cast of *Ben-Hur*





## The Disappearance and Search



# He went for Easter vacation to Tanah Rata, Malaysia



214 curves on the road up



1960s view



Some tacky resorts now



Still some terrific views



# Jim awoke, went to church and a picnic...



Stayed at the Moonlight Bungalow



Jim's bedroom – you can sleep there too



Last  
known  
Photo;  
52 yrs ago

*Jim Thompson at the picnic on Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967,  
a few hours before he disappeared.*



...took a short afternoon walk...



The Moonlight Bungalow =  
the last known point (LKP)



View to W



View to S

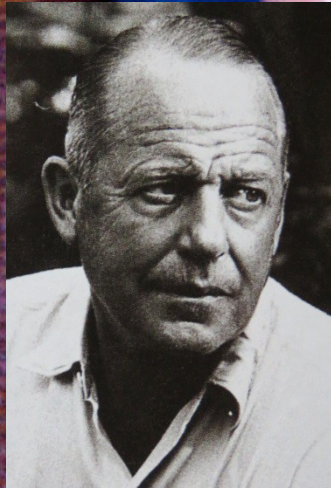


View  
to NW

...and vanished forever







## Theories re the Disappearance



# FBI, US DoS, CIA, Malay & Thai police turned up nothing



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
Chicago, Illinois  
May 8, 1967

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No. 163-553

JAMES HARRISON WILSON THOMPSON

On May 4, 1967, Mr. James Douglas, a member of the law firm Gardner, Carton, Douglas and Chilgren, 33 South Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois, advised that James Harrison Wilson Thompson was his wife's brother-in-law.

JAMES HARRISON WILSON THOMPSON

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas went to [redacted] in or near Beverly Hills, California. They had dinner with [redacted] at which time they made arrangements with him to assist in this matter. In Thailand [redacted] advised that Thompson had been taken against his will to Cambodia. [redacted] wanted to go to Cambodia but due to the international situation he was advised not to go to Cambodia.

On Friday before Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967, Thompson arrived at a vacation bungalow in Cameron Highlands of Malaysia, a resort area, accompanied by [redacted] an old friend. [redacted] is an authority concerning art objects and is an art dealer. [redacted] also were in the bungalow. On Easter Sunday about 3:00 PM after the group had had a picnic, Thompson was seen walking away from the bungalow and was last seen on a nearby hill. About 4:00 PM of this date [redacted] started searching for Thompson. About 8:00 PM he was joined by the [redacted]. The search continued to about 2:00 AM with no results. [redacted] an authority concerning this area later lead a search party.

Mr. Douglas explained he had no additional information regarding Thompson's personal life or background which might lead to his whereabouts. He felt that Thompson was highly respected and well liked by those people around him. To his knowledge Thompson had no enemies.

Attached is a copy of an article made available by Mr. Douglas and identified by him as from the New York Times issue of April 29, 1967, captioned "Clues Are Sought On Lost



0.  
W  
on  
ved

ried  
to  
b6  
b7C

selling  
o be  
e

ry  
atters  
y  
gkok  
e  
k  
lk  
al  
bout  
a  
ot  
s  
e

vern-  
of that



EMBASSY  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Bangkok, Thailand

SECRET

The Honorable  
William P. Bundy  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of State



May 8, 1967

Dear Bill:

Although we have been exchanging telegrams at a rapid rate with regard to Jim Thompson, the case has now reached a point where I thought it might be useful to summarize its status as it seems to us here. This might be particularly useful in view of the forthcoming arrival of Mrs. Douglas and Henry Thompson.

The first thing to be said is that as seen from Bangkok there is virtually no prospect of solution. After several weeks of organized search of the jungle by the Malaysian police and after Mr. Noone's careful expedition, there seems to be every reason to accept his judgment that Jim was not lost in the jungle. Of course, no such conclusion can be drawn absolutely and I assume the Malaysian authorities will continue to be alert to any possible clues leading back to the jungle.

The sequel, however, has been to focus everyone's attention on the search for other explanations. This, of course, can lead to all kinds of intriguing speculation but as far as we can tell none of it is founded on anything more solid than romance. This is not to say that Jim was not the victim of some devious political or personal conspiracy, but only that so far there is no evidence of such. Mr. Vander Hurk's effort falls into this general category. I can easily understand the motives of the Douglas' in hiring Vander Hurk for this purpose and I certainly could not say that Vander Hurk's theory is wrong but it is only a theory totally unsupported by evidence. It has, of

DECLASSIFIED

JRS  
Bundy h  
not to  
JRS  
of the  
f



# Myriad possible suspects..



JT's lover  
Irena Yost



UN Amb.  
Chas. Yost?



CIA, peeved over Jim's  
supposed opposition to VN war?



Communist terrorists?

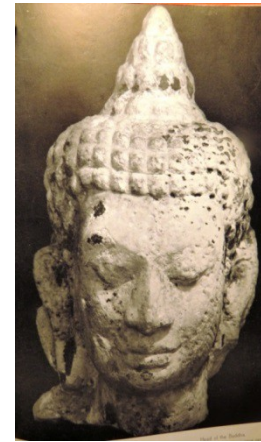


Ex-lover and art  
associate  
Lisa Lyons?

# More possible suspects...



Fine Arts Dept.  
Director, in cave  
dispute?



## SIAM'S KING SLAIN, INVESTIGATORS SAY

American Physician and 13 of  
20-Man Board Find Ananda  
Probably Assassinated

BANGKOK, Siam, July 1 (UP)—  
An American physician and thir-  
teen other members of a twenty-

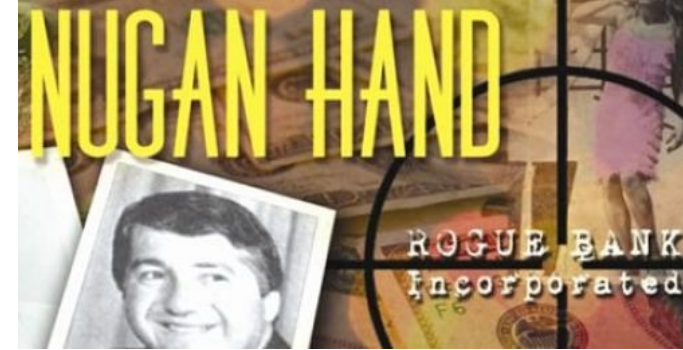
PM faction who  
knew JT had  
truth about  
death of King  
Ananda?



terious circumstances under which  
the King died and made a thir-



# ...Numerous other possible conspiracies



Link to corrupt Aussie/CIA bank?

\$\$\$ Business rivals in Bangkok?

Main heir, nephew Henry B. Thompson III = not a feasible suspect

Malay gangs?

b6  
b7c

Homosexual lover?

b7D



Sick ex-wife Pat Thraves = not a suspect

Page 3, STATE DATE: 4/27/67  
DEPT. Info Docs  
NOT WARRANT CLASSIFICATION  
per LTR DTD 6/16/93  
9803RDD/TAP/JS 8/3/93  
FOIA# 339,703

10/8/92 SP5 CI/JS  
FOIA# 339,703  
Previously processed for FOIA #239,

ReMANcab 4/25/67.

[redacted] Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, have requested Bureau assistance in connection with the disappearance of the captioned person under circumstances b7D

Police contacted all criminal and communist gangs in Malaysia and received assurance that none of these groups had any knowledge pertinent to victim's disappearance. To date, no request for ransom has been received. The only activity in the case has been three anonymous letters mailed in Singapore to the police and the U.S. Embassy, Kuala Lumpur, alleging in summary that [redacted] is not telling everything he knows. Interview of [redacted] have been without significant result.

[redacted] have received reports from two sources--a reliable one in Bangkok, and from personnel at the hotel in Cameron Highlands, where the victim is not known to have ever frequented or stayed--that the victim is homosexual.

["b7d" = redacted by FBI due to confidential informant]



# Did Ed Pollitz sight JT in Tahiti on 27 May 1967? Possible but unlikely



Wm. Bundy,  
Asst. SecState  
for E Asia

June 14

WPB,

Here is the report on Pollitz' sighting of Jim Thompson (or a person he thought to be J T) in Tahiti.

I recommend that we not send it to Bangkok, K L and Singapore at this stage, but I would propose that we send a memo to Bill Colby so that he is aware of it and I think it might be worthwhile passing on to James Doug after Mr. Bundy initials.

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NND 20104

CONFIDENTIAL

TELEGRAM

ACTION: Amembassy KUALA LUMPUR

INFO: Amembassy SINGAPORE  
Amembassy BANGKOK

STATE

Subject: Thompson Disappearance

1. On June 12 DeptOff was informed by Edward Pollitz, International Executive Service Corps member assigned Singapore, that he believed he had seen Jim Thompson in Tahiti. Pollitz is responsible American citizen who has done commendable work in IESC. He claims to have known Thompson for number of years and was scheduled to have had dinner and business discussions in Singapore with Thompson few days after his disappearance. Pollitz realizes could have been matter mistaken identity but was most positive that individual he saw was Thompson. Pollitz was so positive that he shouted to individual across hotel lobby from manager's office. Individual did not respond to Pollitz greeting.

2. Claimed sighting took place at Hotel Tahiti in Papeete on May 27. Individual believed to be Thompson was casually dressed in sport shirt and gray slacks. Was accompanied by gray haired Caucasian woman, whose face Pollitz did not see. They both drove away from hotel in black sedan.

3. Pollitz related details this sighting to Bob Pritcher and Forrest Duff, Pan Am employees in Tahiti. Pollitz states he did

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NND 20104

*Thompson sighting*



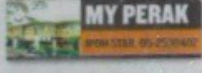
# Clue lies in the bones

Researcher: DNA may help unravel the mysterious disappearance of 'Thai Silk King'



Intriguing case: Captain Rivers with retired ASP Tan Ai Bee, who was involved in the investigations on the case of the missing Jim Thompson, in Ipoh recently.

By FOONG THIM LENG  
report@star.com.my



**A** RESEARCHER believes that the clue to the mysterious disappearance of 'Thai Silk King' Jim Thompson may be found in bones from a grave in Cameron Highlands. Captain Philip J. Rivers, a long-time resident in the highlands, said the bone fragments, without the skull, were discovered at the edge of a vegetable plot off the main road in Brinchang by orang asli settlers in 1985. He found out about the discovery of the bones from a district health officer while doing research on Thompson's death in 2007. Police collected the fragments but no connection was made to Thompson's disappearance in Tanah Rata, as they were found in Brinchang and almost 30 years after his 'death', Rivers said at a talk on 'He Never Left The Hills - The Real Search for Jim Thompson' organised by the Perak Academy in Ipoh on Friday. Among the audience were retired Asst Supt Tan Ai Bee, who was involved in the investigations on Thompson's case, and Edward Roy De Souza, author of the book 'Solved!'. Thompson was reported missing on March 26, 1967. He was believed to be taking a walk in the jungles of Cameron Highlands then. The American was on a holiday with friends and they were staying at the Moonlight Cottage in Tanah Rata. Several theories have emerged about his disappearance including political conspiracies

Rivers, who scrutinised books, articles and police reports from Deputy Supt (Retired) Ismail Hashim who was the OCPD then, said he concluded that Thompson never left the highlands and had suffered an accidental death. "The probability is that his body lay undiscovered in the thick underbush, hidden in an unmarked grave after a hit-and-run accident. A DNA on the bones might possibly provide a fuller answer," he said. Asked to comment later, De Souza agreed that there was a probability that Thompson's death was accidental. "But there is still a need to determine whether the bones found were that of Thompson's," he said. De Souza's theory was that Thompson had planned his own disappearance as "an honourable manner" to get out of Thailand. He said Thompson had felt uneasy staying in Thailand because of his poor relationship with the Fine Arts Department (FAD). Apparently, the FAD's director-general then was not happy with Thompson's collection of artefacts. De Souza said the press had, on occasions, quoted the director-general as saying that Thompson was one of the leaders involved in

# Capt. Philip Rivers contends Jim was hit by a speeding truck, body buried, and bones found much later...



# ...but no proven relation of the bones to JT, and bones possibly not human

ARE THESE THE BONES?  
The Great Thai Silk King Mystery  
and  
The Real Search for Jim Thompson  
Capt. P. J. Rivers

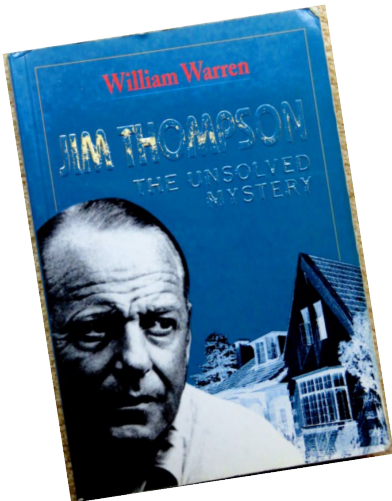
The Perception and the Reality

Over four decades ago another Easter legend was created when an American millionaire disappeared without trace in the midst of a mountainous tropical jungle. The man was Jim Thompson, well known as the Thai Silk King, the date was Sunday 26 March 1967, the place the Cameron Highlands in peninsular Malaysia. Evocatively set in a former British colonial hill resort, the mystery continues to capture the imagination into the new century.

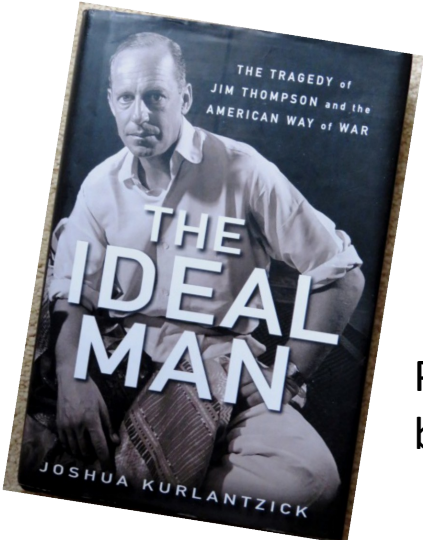
Less than a week after his 61st birthday, the American Jim Thompson, accompanied by his close friend, a former British colonial hill resort, the mystery continues to capture the imagination into the new century.



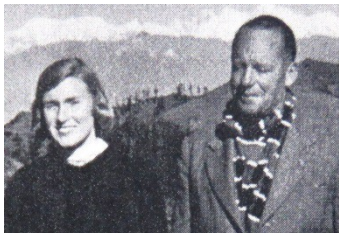
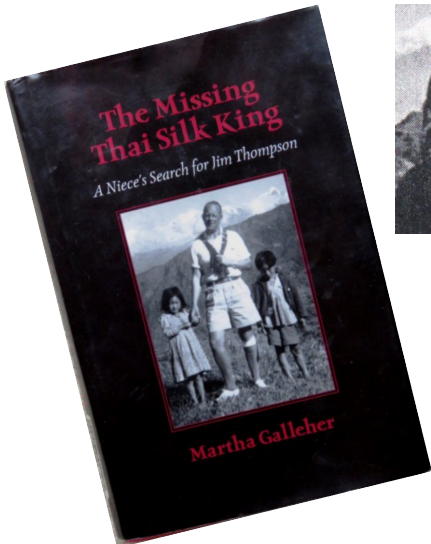
# Four books have described Jim's life, the case, and causes...



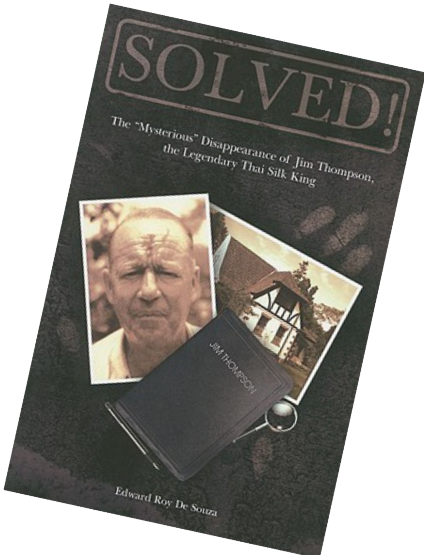
Possible accident, or kidnapping?



Possible murder by business rival?



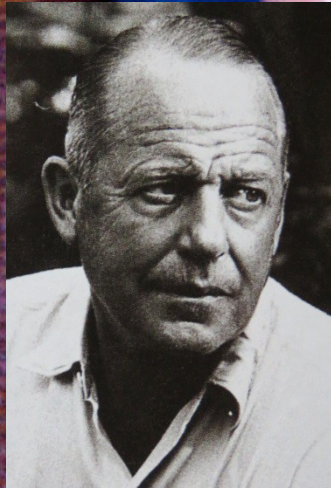
Voluntary departure to help solve VN war?



Left CH to start new life elsewhere, spotted in Tahiti later in 1967

...none have analyzed the search itself





## Analysis of the Search



# Key new research questions:

- What obstacles did the search encounter?
- What was the quantity and quality of the search?
- What was the probability of success (PoS) of the search?
- What cited causes and witnesses can be eliminated?
- What was JT like as a subject?

## Is Jim Thompson Alive And Well in Asia?

By WILLIAM WARREN

**B**ANGKOK. AMONG the many visitors who came to a picturesque hill station called the Cameron Highlands, in northern Malaysia, for the Easter weekend last year was a tall, 61-year-old American businessman from Bangkok, James H. W. Thompson, internationally known as the founder of the Thai silk industry. He and a friend, Mrs. Connie Mangskau, had come from Bangkok via Penang to be houseguests of Dr. and Mrs. T. G. Ling of Singapore, whose summer bungalow, romantically named "Moonlight Cottage," was set on a hill above and away from the main part of the Highlands resort. It was planned as a restful weekend since Thompson was going to Singapore on Monday for a series of business meetings, but even so he hoped to indulge in a favorite pastime and explore a few of the myriad and sometimes all but invisible trails that meander through the dense surrounding jungle.

On Easter Sunday afternoon, following a picnic, the party returned to the bungalow for a rest. The Lings and Mrs. Mangskau decided on a nap; Thompson said he was going to sit in the mild sunshine on the terrace. Around 3:30 P.M., Dr. Ling heard the sound of footsteps crossing the stone terrace and remarked to his wife that Thompson was going out for one of his solitary strolls. At about 4 P.M., a maid from a nearby cottage saw a man answering Thompson's general description admiring a rose garden along the road. If she was correct—the maid

Thompson case is that even before he disappeared he had become something of a legend in Southeast Asia. He first came to Thailand as a colonel in the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.), a forerunner of the C.I.A., shortly after the Japanese surrender and, on his discharge from the Army, decided to go into business there rather than return to his prewar profession as an architect in New York. He experimented with several ventures before he hit on the lustrous silk of the country, which had been turned out for centuries on a family-use basis but never for export.

Thompson felt it had wider possibilities and, to test his belief, gathered up all the samples he could find and went to New York, where he called on the late Edna Woolman Chase, an old friend and the editor of *Vogue*. Mrs. Chase, according to Thompson, took one look at the collection and then issued a dramatic order that no one was to leave the office without seeing it. The future of Thai silk was assured, at least as far as *Vogue* was concerned.

The subsequent history of the silk industry in Thailand is one of the classic success stories of postwar Asia. With a small initial investment, raised from both Thai and American sources, Thompson formed a silk-producing company of which he became managing director. He offered the weavers good prices, introduced fast European dyes and new designs, insisted that standards be met, and set about creating a market for the silk by methods that covered from selling it to the

antiques, which he displayed in his Bangkok residence, a composite of five elegant old Thai houses that became such a tourist attraction that he had to open it to the public two days a week to keep total strangers from barging into his bedroom; the proceeds went to a local charity. He also gained fame as host to an extraordinarily varied list of guests. Many of these, especially in later years, were world-traveling celebrities on the order of the late Somerset Maugham and Robert F. Kennedy; but in the early days the list included dissident Vietnamese and Laotian nationalists who had sought refuge in Thailand, as well as some high Thai officials who later fell into disfavor.

His association with such people gave rise to speculation—never confirmed—that he was still involved in the intelligence work he had done in the Army. As his business and social life increased, and as most of the refugees returned to their homelands, this aspect of Thompson's life diminished in importance. After he disappeared, however, many people recalled it, and it was to figure in some of the theories of what might have happened to him.

**W**HEN Thompson had not returned to Moonlight Cottage by nightfall, the Lings became alarmed and called the authorities. An impromptu search party was organized and spent a fruitless night thrashing through the jungle near the house. Their theory was that Thompson either had become lost or had slipped and fallen into one of the



# I interviewed actual 1967 searchers:



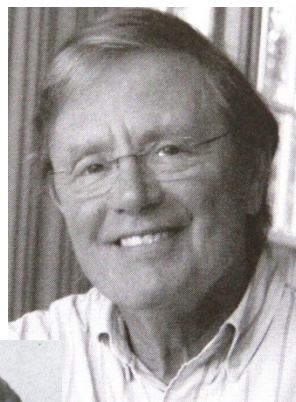
Madi, his house searched, writing book



Capt. Mohammad, Malay Army search leader



Cikgo "The Teacher," volunteer searcher



Lt. Denis Horgan, US Army search observer



Perak Aleyak, Boy Scout searcher



Taxi driver Ng Kiew Chay, aka "Jim Thompson," searcher, refused interview!

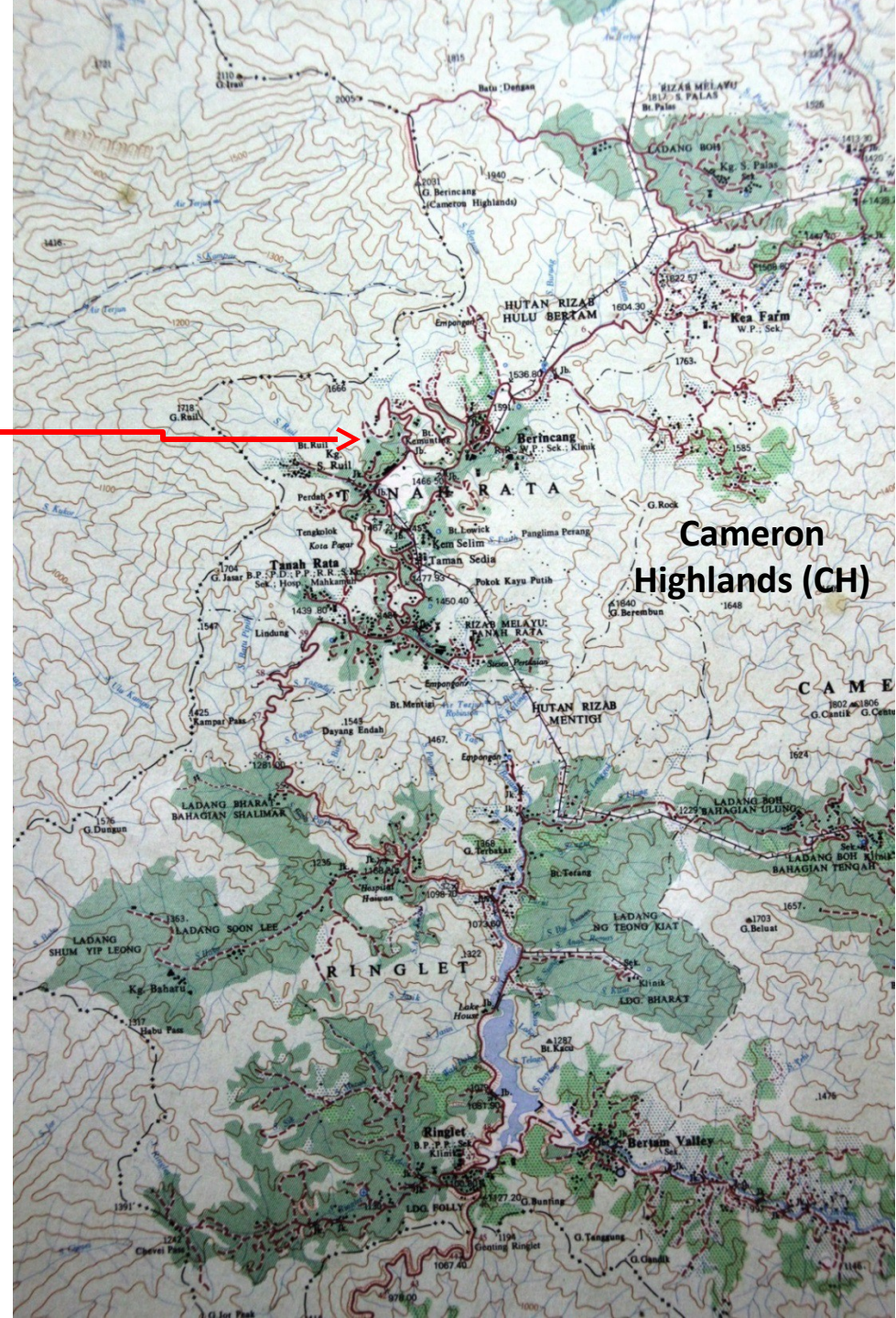


Me and Malaysian Police staff



**Obstacles:  
the search terrain  
is very rugged, high,  
thick jungle**

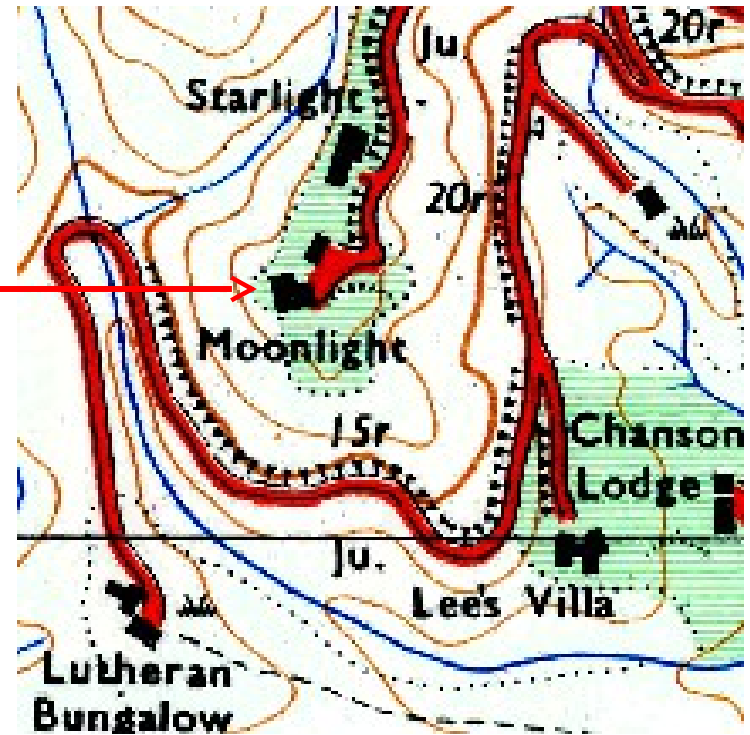
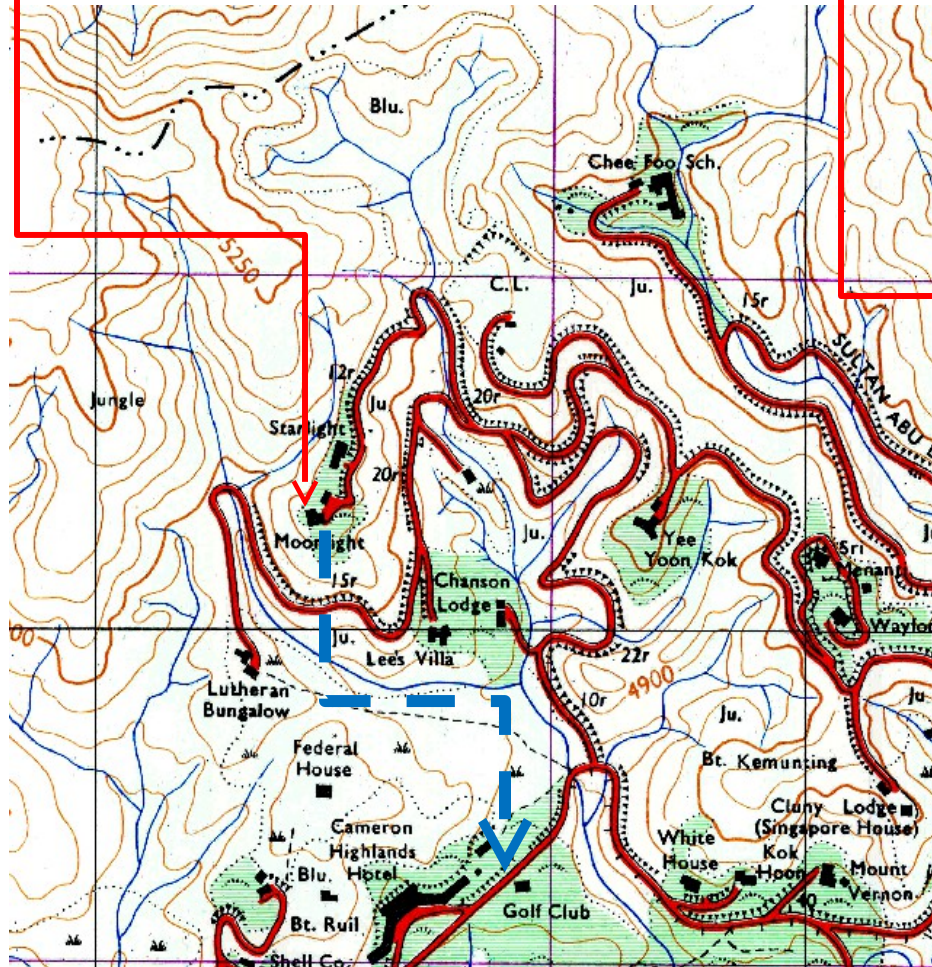
**Moonlight  
Bungalow,  
LKP, 5118 ft.**





Numerous ravines, streams and drainages;  
in which Jim got lost the previous day...

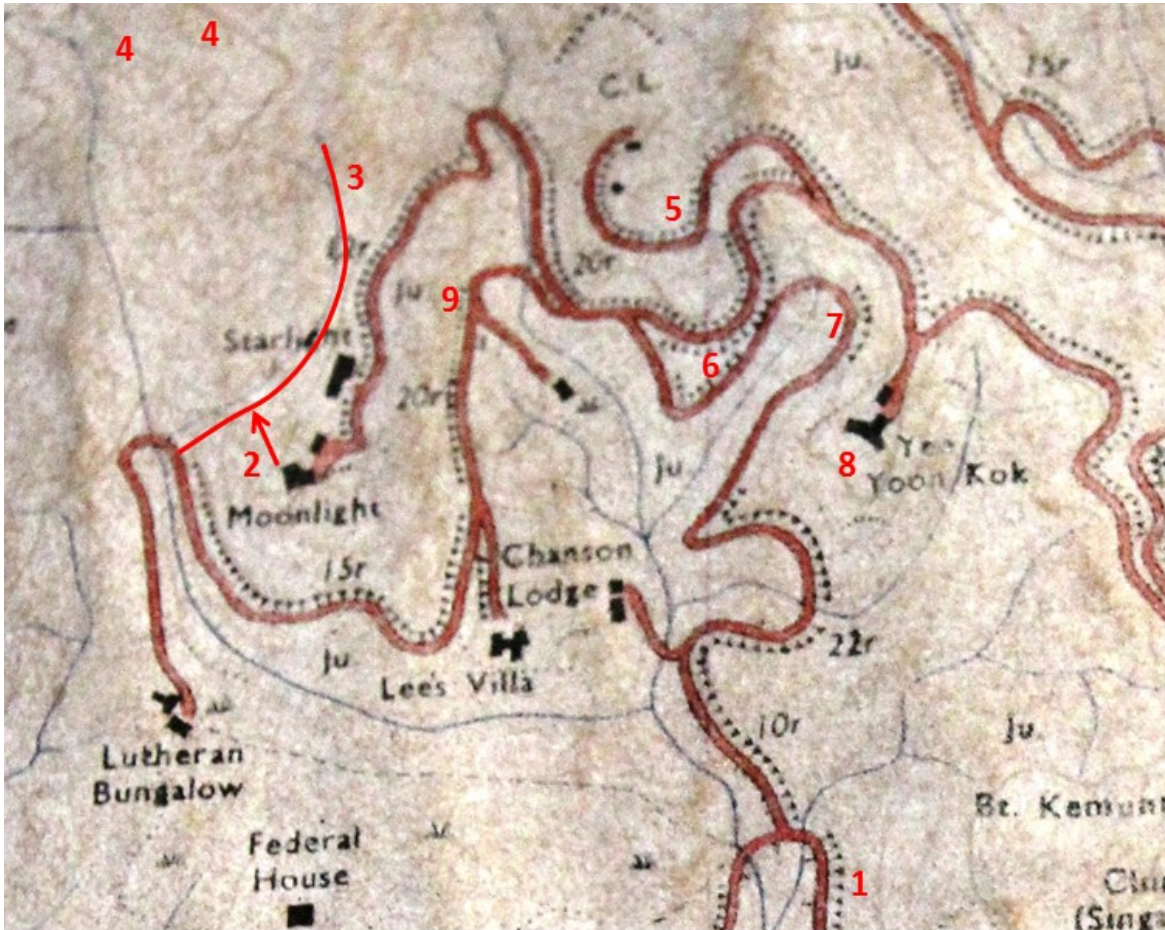
Moonlight Bungalow



...and liked it!



# Key search locations



1. main road Tanah Rata to Brinchang;
2. kitchen trail downhill NNW from Moonlight Bungalow;
3. trail running along stream NW of MB, part of which is now called the "JT Mystery Trail";
4. two-headed ridge NNW of MB;
5. area of "hornet's nest," now Strawberry Park Resort;
6. large stone where JT may have rested;
7. location where JT may have been killed by truck;
8. what is now the OMF Bungalow;
9. location where JT may have been picked up by car



"Kitchen trail" behind MB (#2)



Two-headed ridge to the NW (#4)

SCALE:  
Approx. 200 meters:



Jim got into car here? (#9)



# Witnesses after the LKP = mostly low credibility...



28. This was the paved road down from the Moonlight Cottage with the rock on which Jim was sitting smoking a cigarette when he greeted the Mission girl.



Servant stated saw JT sitting on this stone, smoking (#9)



Witness location at Lutheran Bungalow, 200 yards from MB in distance



Witness viewed "hornet's nest" from 254 yards (location #8 looking across to #5 on map)

## A SEARCH IN NEW JUNGLE AREA BEGINS



**Cook: I saw millionaire the day he vanished**

By P.C. SHIVADAS  
TANAH RATA, Wednesday

A COOK in the Lutheran Mission bungalow here looked closely at today's picture in the Straits Times

Fatimah claims saw JT from close up

**...using GPS and Google Earth, I impeached two witnesses as too far (200 & 254 yds) to have recognized Jim**



# Est. 1448 SAR person-days delivered, probably largest search on land in SE Asia

## 300 Search in Malaysia For Missing American

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, March 28 (AP) — More than 300 policemen, soldiers and trackers with dogs searched the jungles of the Cameron Highlands without success today for James H. W. Thompson, the “silk king” of Thailand.

## Jungle Expert Joins Search For American in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, April 22 (Reuters)—A British jungle warfare expert aided by an aborigine medicine man today joined the search for James H. W. Thompson, an American



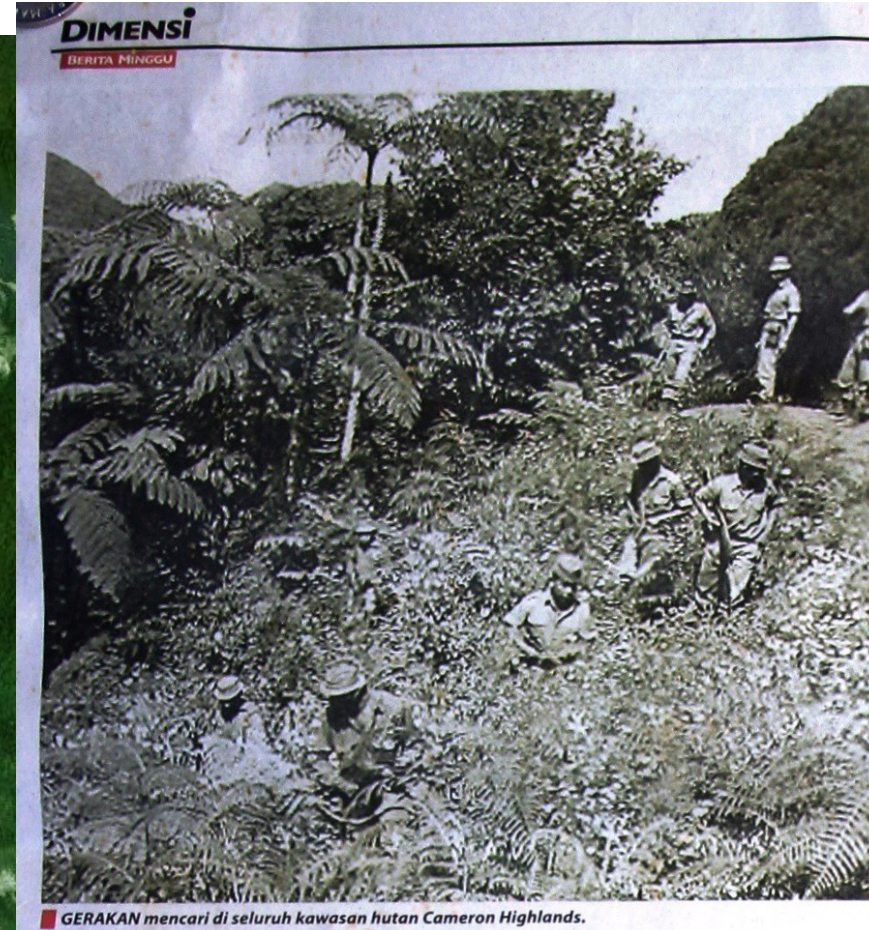
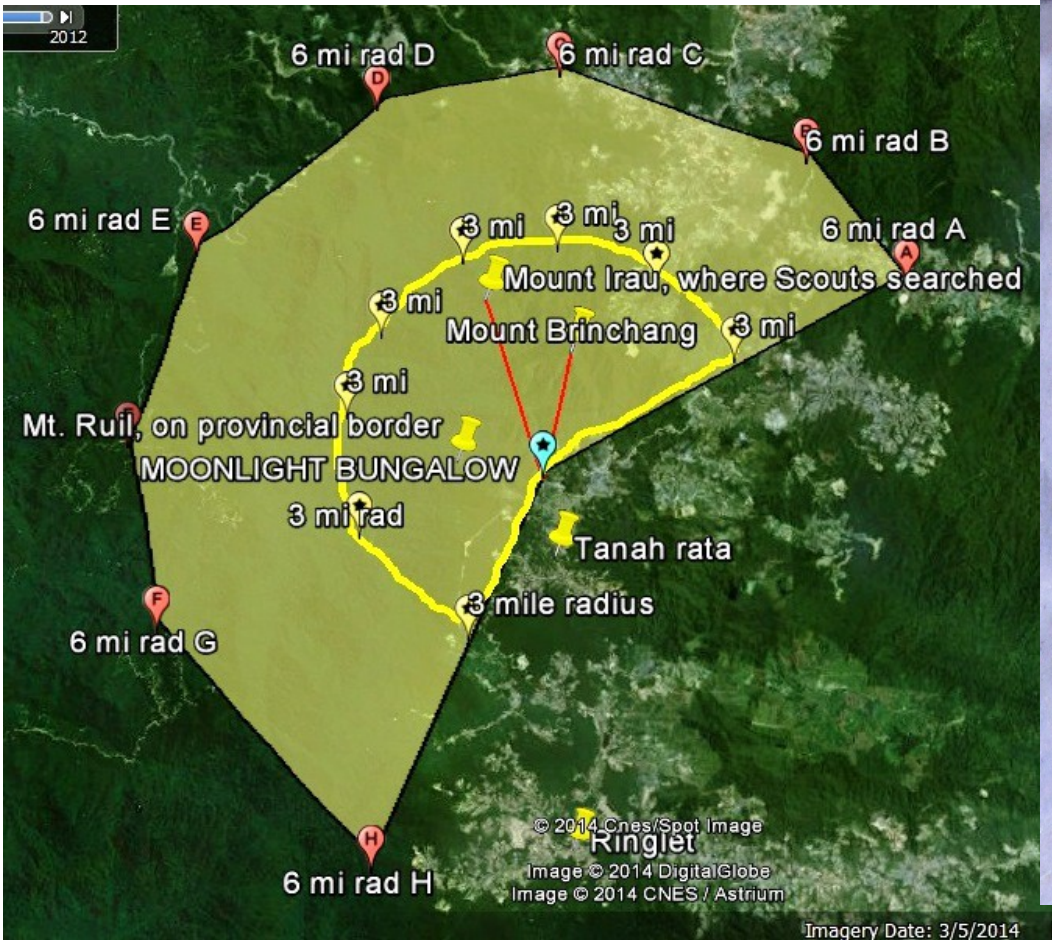
Type of “bloodhound” used

ks  
ds  
ld,  
ial  
st  
in  
ex-  
ti-  
by  
ied

DATE	SEARCH DAY	HIGHLIGHTS	EST. PERSON DAYS
Sun, 3/26/67	1	Hasty search in evening	8
Mon, 3/27/67	2	Hasty search up to 300	160
Tue, 3/28/67	3	300 searchers, orang asli	300
Wed, 3/29/67	4	Helos, \$10K USD reward	119
Thu, 3/30/67	5	100 searchers + mystics	100
Fri, 3/31/67	6	Gen. Black arrives	105
Sat, 4/1/67	7	Black, Army, PD, mystics	130
Sun, 4/2/67	8	Gen. Black leaves	125
Mon, 4/3/67	9	Assume 100 x 6 hrs ea +	75
Tue, 4/4/67	10	More reward, now \$25K	75
Wed, 4/5/67	11	50 Police searched	57
Thu, 4/6/67+	12+	Rich Noone search 4/23	194
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1448</b>



# About 17.7+ sq. mi. needed to be searched...



3 mile radius (yellow line) = 17.7 sq mi;  
6 mile radius (lt green) = 70 sq mi!

Only known photo of search --  
note close spacing and thick growth



# ...but only about 11 sq. mi. was searched

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Area searched} \\ \text{(sq. mi.)} = & \frac{\text{Spacing (ft)} \times 11,584 \text{ (hrs.)}}{5280 \text{ (ft)} \times 3.5 \text{ (hrs./mi.)}} \end{aligned}$$

**11 sq. mi. = reasonable est.**, based on 2/5 of searchers at 120 ft. spacing but at 5.25 hrs/mi; 1/5 at 8 ft. spacing at 7 hrs/mi; and 2/5 of searchers ineffective . So 11/17.7 or 11/70 =

**56.5% or 15.7% of needed effort delivered**

**Alternate est.:** “1 regiment for a month” needed; = 1600 men x 31 days = 49,600 person-days vs. 1448 delivered;  
= **2.9% of needed effort actually delivered**

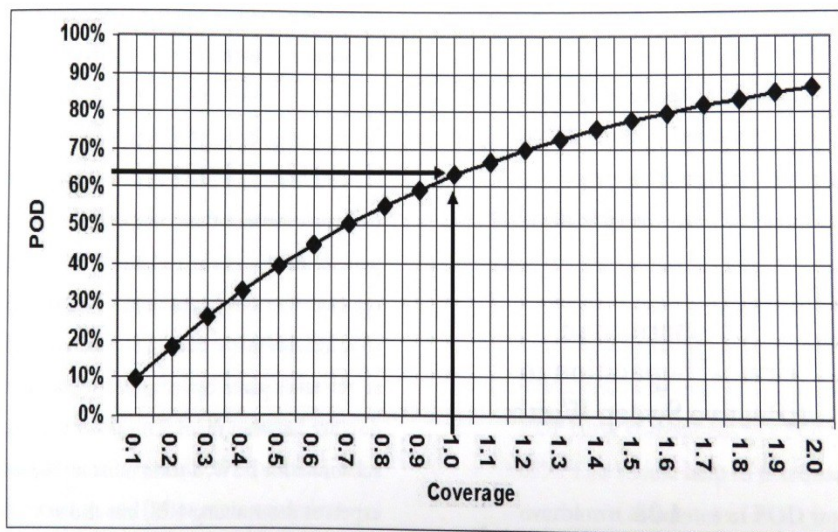




# Probability of Detection (PoD) is problematic

NASAR formula:  $POD = 1 - e^{-C}$

POD vs. Coverage  
The Exponential Detection Function



Search the jungle!

PoD = only 63%, even if entire segment is fully searched once



**“Probability of Area” is the probability that the subject is in that search segment**



$$\text{Probability of Detection (PoD)} \times \text{Probability of Area (PoA)} = \text{Probability of Success (PoS)}$$

**High Est.:**

$$0.63 \times 0.75 = 47\%$$

**Low Est.:**

$$0.55 \times 0.55 = 30\%$$

**Thus the chances are good (53-70%) that the remains of Jim Thompson are still in the Cameron Highlands**



# There were many issues with the search

- Low training and experience in SAR
- No searching beyond 200 yards of trails, altho JT often hiked off-trail, cross-country
- No attempt to “block” trails
- One famous mystic, Peter Hurkos, shaped the investigation, + 118 others distracted it
- Likely “scenario lock” on JT leaving the Cameron Highlands, due to 3 dogs not able to pick up scent trail leaving Moonlight Bungalow
- Many disparate searchers

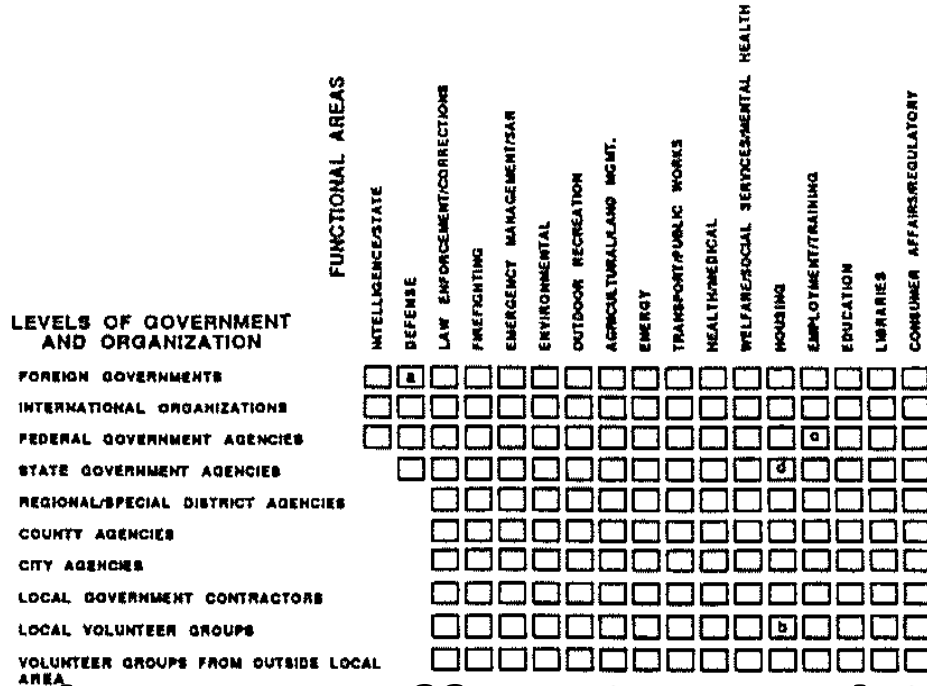


Peter Hurkos,  
“Leading Psychic of the Century”

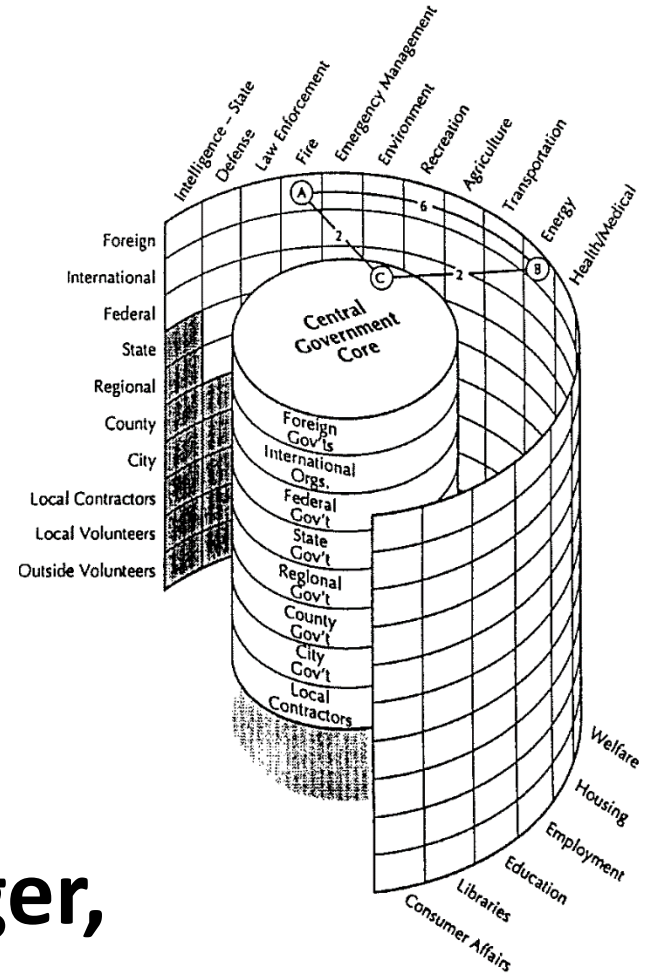


# Disparate searchers create major issues...

TWO DIMENSIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL DISTANCE SCALE



Hypothetical Disaster with Three Responses from One Level

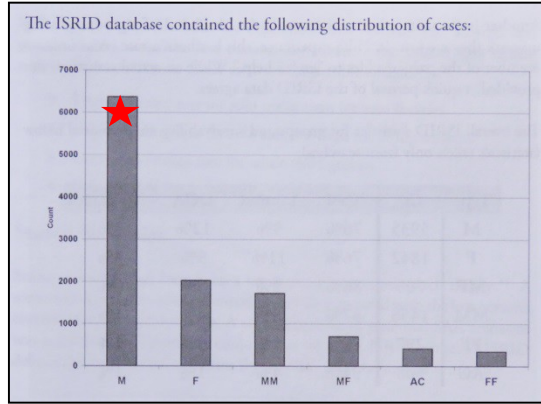
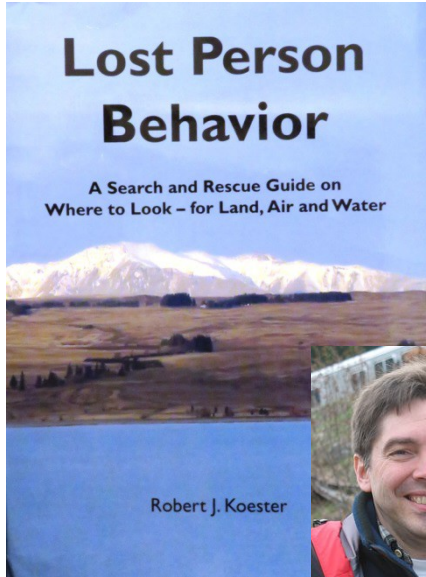


...if the SAR effort is 10x bigger,  
it is about 150x more likely to  
have communication &  
management problems

From Lew Toulmin et al.,  
*Int'l Journal of Mass Emergencies*,  
Aug. 1989



# The Int'l SAR Incident Database (ISRID) can provide insights



The overall ISRID statistics for groups and survivability are presented below (statistics taken only from searches).

Type	(n)	Well	Injured	DOA	No Trace
M	5935	76%	9%	12%	3%
F	1842	76%	11%	9%	3%
MF	705	86%	9%	5%	0%
MM	1456	87%	8%	4%	1%
FF	297	88%	9%	3%	1%
AC	508	94%	4%	1%	1%

JT = typical male: lost

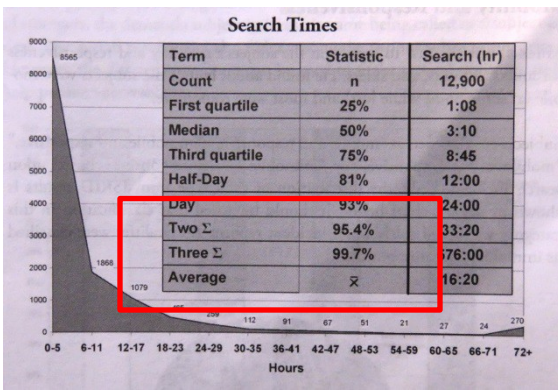
“no trace” = very atypical

184 Lost Person Behavior

Hiker

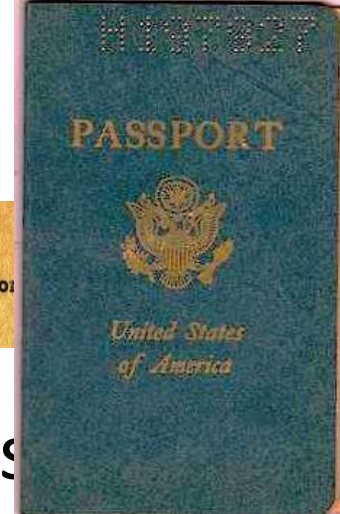
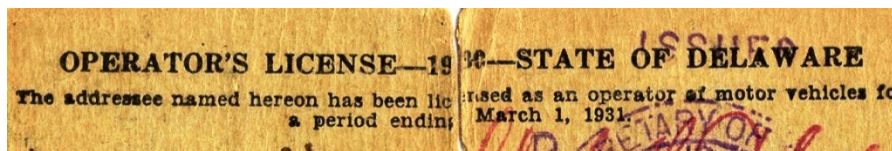
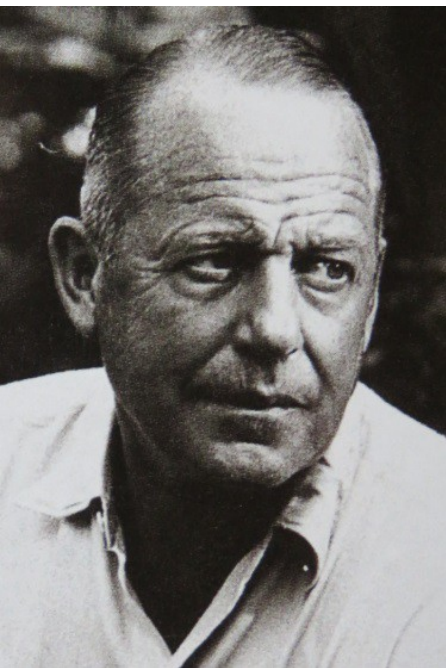
	Distance (horizontal) from the IPP (miles)				
	Temperate		Dry		Urban
	Mtn	Flat	Mtn	Flat	
n	568	274	221	58	8
25%	0.7	0.4	1.0	0.8	
50%	1.9	1.1	2.0	1.3	1.6
75%	3.6	2.0	4.0	4.1	
95%	11.3	6.1	11.9	8.1	

JT = likely within 4 mi of Moonlight Bungalow



The JT search = atypically long

# Jim Thompson as a search subject is quite unusual



- Left wallet, money, meds, pass  
cigarettes, driving license behind
- Was “exhilarated” to be lost the day before
- Made 7 blunders in 2/3 days re departing BKK
- Poor health
- Some powerful enemies



# Many cited causes can be reasonably eliminated...

- “Leopard attack” -- no leopards in the CH
- “Caves,” “quicksand,” “snapping traps” – none
- “Orang asli pit trap” or “orang asli murder” – no such traps reported in search
- “Bore holes” – none
- “Suicide” – no evidence “Murder by main beneficiary of estate” or “ex-wife” – feasible



...but some should be added

- “Tiger attack” -- none since 1920
  - “Close associates in CH” – possible but unlikely
  - “Widow-maker limbs” – possible, feared by SAS

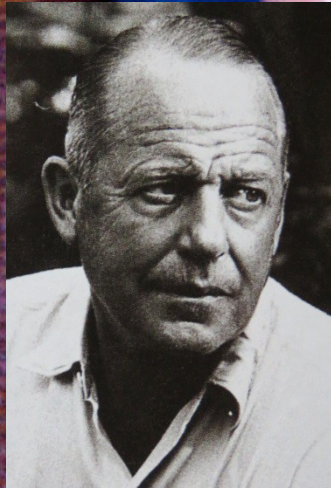


# And various possible causes remain

- “Snake bite” -- possible but statistically unlikely
- “Kidnapping by local gangs” or by “Communist terrorists” – possible but not the right M.O., & no note
- “Meeting & departure” – unlikely, no evidence
- “Intentional disappearance” – very unlikely, no money trail
- **“Accident in jungle and body missed in SAR” – possible, moderately likely**







**Murder of Jim's Sister in PA +  
Recent Case in Cameron Highlands**



# Jim's older sister was brutally murdered in PA in August 1967...



## SOCIETY MATRON BEATEN TO DEATH

Mrs. Katherine Wood Found in Pennsylvania Home

CENTREVILLE, Del., Aug. 30 (UPI)—Mrs. Katherine Thompson Wood, 74 years old, a wealthy society matron and sister of James H. W. Thompson, the missing Thailand silk industrialist, was found beaten to death this morning. Her body was found in her bed at her isolated estate near here, where she lived alone.

The Pennsylvania state police said that Mrs. Wood had been beaten on the head with a heavy weapon while two huge watch dogs she kept for protection were apparently nearby. The weapon was not found immediately.

Investigators could give no motive for the slaying. There were no signs of a robbery, although her son, Harrison Wil-

...case still unsolved



SLAYING SCENE TODAY—In the south wing (left) of this home near Centerville Mrs. Katherine Thompson Wood was fatally bludgeoned.

## New leads sparse in Wood slaying

*Wilmington - Dec 1967*

By JERRY SAPIENZA  
"A couple of suspects" have emerged during the 10-week investigation into the slaying of Mrs. Katharine Thompson Wood, says Chester County District Attorney A. Alfred Deidaco.  
He also thinks the killer "probably knew her."  
But neither he nor the Pennsylvania State Police is saying much more about their probe of the brutal summer crime that shattered the affluent calm of Selwyn Drive, a plush residential area near Centerville.  
Motives? "Nothing definite," Deidaco says. "Wrap-up? None has been found." Fingerprints? "Nothing significant."  
DETECTIVE Sgt. William J. Devlin, ranking state policeman on the case says: "We have given up hope. We still have things to work on."  
Malaysian police say they don't believe there is a link between Mrs. Wood's death and the mysterious disappearance of her brother, James H. W. Thompson, last March 28 in Malaysia.  
"It is felt that the slaying... has no connection with his disappearance," T. B. M. Krishnan, inspector-general of the Royal Malaysia Police, wrote in response to a News-Journal query. The possibility that Mrs. Wood's death was part of a plot against her brother was brushed early in the investigation.

Thompson, who was with the Office of Strategic Services in World War II, revived the silk industry in Thailand and was called the "silk king."  
As for the status of the Thompson probe, Krishnan said that "since the investigations are incomplete it is felt that any disclosure... may be prejudicial."

MRS. Wood, 74, a society matron and member of a prominent Wilmington family, lived alone in a secluded 10-room home set in an island of tall oak trees on her 14-acre estate.



Sadly, Katharine's son is a suspect...



Harrison W. Wood

...especially since he killed himself four years later

Coroner  
Gordon R. Eck, D.O.  
Chief Deputy Coroner  
Eric Bieber F-ABMDI



COUNTY OF CHESTER  
OFFICE OF THE CORONER  
313 West Market Street, Suite 4102  
West Chester, PA 19382  
Phone: (610) 344-6165  
Fax: (610) 344-6018  
"Committed Service and Responsiveness"

VIEW OF FORM

An inquisition taken at 313 West Market Street, West Chester, PA.

On the \_ of \_ in the year of our Lord \_ before

Gordon R. Eck DO of the County of Chester.

Name:	Harrison Wilson Wood
Address:	Malvern, PA
Age:	47 Years
Sex:	Male
Race:	WHITE
Date of Death:	December 25, 1971 (Based on Date Found)
Time of Death:	12:30:00 PM (Based on Time Pronounced)
Place of Death:	Residence
Cause of Death:	Gunshot Wound Head

Manner of Death: Suicide

In Witness Whereof, the said Coroner set his hand and seal this day, year and place first mentioned.

Gordon R. Eck, D.O., S.S.  
Gordon R. Eck, D.O.

But no proof against anyone

Other possible but unlikely suspects:

- Maid
- Handyman
- Local lawyer
- Drifter
- Communist terrorists
- Jim Thompson!

# “Forest” Gan, biologist and mountaineer, went missing in the Cameron Highlands...

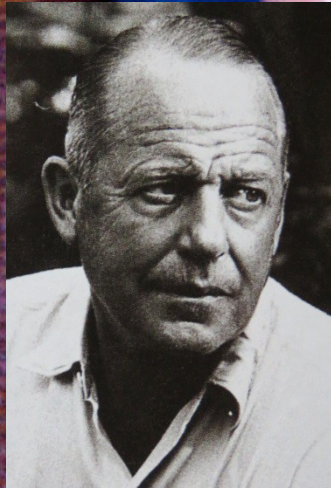


**2016: Looking for Forest Gan**  
**Last Seen: Cameron Highland (14/01/16)**  
**Please Call: 013 - 501 0267 (Ah Bu)**



**...I advised the family on search strategy & tactics**





## Conclusions and Implications

# Conclusions -- and -- implications:



- JT search was large but insufficient and flawed
- 53-70%+ chance that JT's remains are in CH
- Search now using scenarios, Mattson voting, probability heat mapping, HHRD dogs and DNA might have a chance
- Be safe in the wild!



Detailed report:

[www.themosttraveled.com/](http://www.themosttraveled.com/)  
(page on “New Land Adventures”)



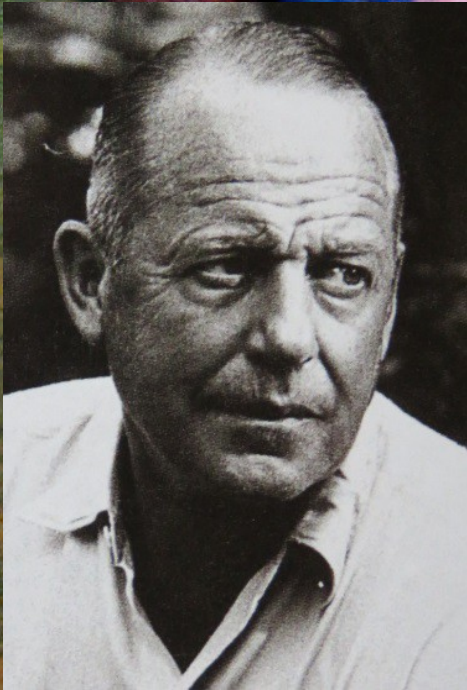
by

Llewellyn M. Toulmin, Ph.D., MN '04, F.R.G.S.



May 2015

Silver Spring, Maryland, USA and  
Port Vila, Efate, Republic of Vanuatu



**THANKS!!!  
QUESTIONS?**