

Search

Home
Donate
Progressive Press
Submissions
Editors' Blog
Special Reports
Opinion/ Analysis
Media
Social Security
Iraq Occupation
Black Box Voting
Bush Military Info
Letters
Book Reviews
Bookstore
9/11 Books, DVDs +
Links
Hosting
Online Journal Store
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Opinion

Keeping Hunter Thompson's death alive

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May 13, 2005—Given how stories and journalists are disappeared these days, here are some follow-up questions on Hunter Thompson's death. Let's hope they help keep the spirit of inquiry alive . . .

First, isn't it strange that Thompson wrote on page 3 of "The New Dumb," the first article in his last book, *Hey Rube*, 2004, "The autumn months are never a calm time in America. . . . There is always a rash of kidnapping and abductions of schoolchildren in the football months. Preteens of both sexes are traditionally seized and grabbed off the streets by gangs of organized perverts who traditionally give them as Christmas gifts to each other to be personal sex slaves and playthings."

This bears an uncanny resemblance to the Johnny Gosch story. The 12-year old Gosch was delivering Sunday morning papers in Des Moines Iowa on September 5, 1982, when two men approached and abducted him for the purposes of enslavement in a military-based pedophilia ring, according to testimony reported by another abused pre-teen, Paul Bonacci, in John DeCamp's 1992 book, *The Franklin Cover-Up—Child Abuse, Satanism and Murder in Nebraska*, pages 230–34.

Ironically, Gosch's identity has been linked to James Guckert which has been linked to Jeff Gannon, male prostitute and procurer of full-service military escorts. In fact, the former editor of the *Des Moines Register* for whom Gosch worked tried to discredit the identity link.



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Ironically, his name was James Gannon, conceivably a clue from the disappeared Gosch linking the three identities. Gosch's mother, Noreen, asked then editor James Gannon of the Des Moines Register to get community leaders to pressure the police to cooperate with her private detectives in order to solve her missing son's case. Instead, Mrs. Gosch's private letter was printed on the front page of the paper, and the police were encouraged to publicly reject and ridicule her claims. Perhaps James Gannon was involved himself.

Even if we look at just the Guckert/Gannon link, James/Jeff turned up in the White House Press Corp two years ago. Maureen Dowd notes in her 2/17/05 *New York Times* column, Bush's Barberini Faun, "I'm still mystified by this story (Gannon/Guckert). I was rejected for a White House press pass at the start of the Bush administration, but someone with an alias, a tax evasion problem, and Internet pictures where he posed like the 'Barberini Faun' is credentialed to cover a White House that won a second term by mining homophobia and preaching family values?"

"At first when I tried to complain about not getting my pass renewed, even though I'd been covering presidents and first ladies since 1986, no one called me back. Finally, when Mr. McClellan replaced Ari Fleischer he said he'd renew the pass—after a new Secret Service background check that would last several months. In an era when security concerns are paramount, what kind of Secret Service background check did James Guckert get so he could saunter into the West Wing every day under an assumed name while he was doing full-frontal advertising for stud services for \$1,200 a weekend?"

In addition, Carol Towarnicky, in her 5/2/05 article "The press takes a pass on 'Jeff Gannon,'" in the *Philadelphia Daily News*, said, "Just last week, a Freedom of Information Act search requested by two members of Congress revealed that Gannon/Guckert visited the White House 196 times—39 of them days when there were no press briefings."

Returning to Thompson, he says in "The New Dumb," "Most of these things [the abductions] are obviously Wrong and Evil and Ugly—but at least they are Traditional. They will happen. . . . But what the hell? That's why we have Insurance, eh? And the Inevitability of these nightmares is what makes them so reassuring. Life will go on, for good or for ill. But some things are forever, right? The structure may be a *little* crooked, but the foundations are still strong and unshakable."

Is this a rationalization of something he had witnessed or in which he'd taken part? Or a story he simply read about in the *Washington Times* when it broke in 1989? In spite of its dark overtones, is it a strange attempt at affirmation of life and America?

The Owl Rises

Why did Hunter name his gated compound in Woody Creek, Colorado, the "Owl Farm?" The name echoed the 40-foot stone owl, which stands before an altar at Bohemian Grove, in the redwood forest of northern California, not far from Sacramento. Bohemian Grove became the stage and meeting place for all-male rituals of purported Satanist pedophiles similar to those performed in the Cult of Canaan. This ancient cult would worship Moloch and perform sex orgies around hollow effigies of owls.

The owl served as a representation of the ancient god, Moloch, whose sacrificial rite called for human beings as its victims. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the chief feature of Moloch's worship among the ancients seems to have been the sacrifice of children. The usual expression for describing that sacrifice was "to pass through the fire," a rite carried out after the victims had been put to death.

The Cremation of Care Ritual

As the *Sonoma Country Free Press* online reports, this ritual "is over one hundred years old and is always the first order of business when men of industry, government, and military

gather each July at Bohemian Grove. At sundown on the first Saturday of their encampment they enact a bizarre short scripted play (always the same) in which they burn an effigy of 'Dull Care' at the bottom of a forty-foot stone owl. Their rationale is that they carry the cares of the world around on their shoulders and they need a symbolic ritual in order to put it down and enjoy their holiday. Since 1980, activists in Sonoma County have brought this to the attention of anyone who will listen, all while a new tradition began with a Resurrection of Care event on the same day."

This rather benign-sounding Grove description conflicts radically with John DeCamp's reporting of events in *The Franklin Cover-up*. He writes on pages 326–328 that one of many young victims, Paul Bonacci, while at the Grove, claims that he and another boy were forced to perform sex acts with and to consume parts of a child whom they had watched being murdered by men in hooded robes. The body was to be disposed of by "the men with the hoods."

DeCamp reported that Bonacci also claimed that a "snuff" film was made of these events. The shocker is that the man the party had purportedly picked up in Las Vegas and who purportedly filmed the events was identified by Bonacci as "Hunter Thompson." Was it set-up or was it real?

Bonacci also told investigators that he was tortured and groomed into becoming a sex slave at Offut Air Force base near Omaha, Nebraska. He claims that he was abducted and taken there by a babysitter's boy friend at 3 years of age. As a young adult, he was subsequently awarded one million dollars in damages by the same Nebraska court that sentenced him earlier to five years in jail for perjury. In the second round of trials, he passed all his polygraph exams. Mr. DeCamp, a lawyer, 16-year Nebraska State Senator and decorated Vietnam vet, provided Bonacci with legal assistance the second time around.

Cover-Up also reports that over the years, Bohemian Grove participants included George

Herbert Walker Bush, George Walker Bush, Henry Kissinger, George Schultz and the crème de la merde of the Republican power structure.

So, was Hunter Thompson being ironic with the name "Owl Farm," nostalgic for the good old bad times? Or did Thompson think of himself as the avenging owl, swooping out of the night, seeing through the dark a truth that haunted his own memory?

Anita Thompson's Stories

Why did Anita Thompson, Hunter's wife, originally tell the AP, on Sunday 2/20/05, "I was on the phone with him, he set the receiver down and he did it [shot himself]. I heard the clicking of the gun," and then said she heard a loud, muffled noise, but didn't know what had happened. "I was waiting for him to get back on the phone," she said. In the second version, she thinks the clicking noise was her husband loading and cocking the handgun. This time, she said she didn't hear a gunshot before she hung up. In fact, she said she heard of the shooting by a phone call enroute home.

Also, in a 3/8/2005 online *Rocky Mountain News* article by Jeff Kass, 'Kitchen crew convenes for final toast,' Hunter Thompson claimed he always spoke to family and many celebrity friends on his speaker phone in the kitchen/office area. This time, with his wife Anita, why did he use the receiver, then put it down? If he were going to shoot himself, wouldn't it have been easier to keep both his hands free and talk to her on the speaker phone? Was someone there who didn't want to be detected on the speaker?

The Sheriff's Report

In the Pitkin County Sheriff's Report that I saw, Deputy Sheriff John Armstrong arrived first, not the sheriff. He drove up the Thompson driveway, responding to a call from Thompson's son Juan. At approximately 1750 hours on 2/20/05, he responded to a "Combined Communications radio . . ." He was told the victim was Hunter Thompson, well-known writer

and journalist, who "had fatally shot himself," and that an ambulance and Sheriff Braudis were driving to the residence.

Yet when Deputy Armstrong arrived at "about 1800 hours," he heard "three shots ring out." He found out subsequently that they were fired from a shotgun by Juan "to mark the passing of his father." Does anyone find Juan's reaction an unusual expression of grief? Was he trying to scare someone off? Hit an assassin?

Deputy Armstrong also encountered Deputy Gibson, who had arrived previously and blocked the entrance to the Thompson home with his vehicle to avoid the entry of curious friends and neighbors.

Before encountering Juan, Deputy Armstrong parked his cruiser by the caretaker's cabin and a man exited, introducing himself as "Ben" and said he lived in the residence. Ben asked what was going on. The deputy told Ben to return to his house and wait there. Was there any further questioning of Ben concerning what he saw, who he was, what his period of employ was, where he came from?

Two guns, no silencer mentioned

When Deputy Armstrong questioned Juan as to what occurred, Juan said he had been "in the living room next to the kitchen where his father was. . . . He said he had heard a dull sound not a sharp crack typical of a gunshot . . . about 20 minutes prior to my [Armstrong's] arrival." Doesn't that dull sound, sound like the work of a silencer on the powerful .45 caliber gun? According to the authorities, the gun was a Smith & Wesson semiautomatic 645, first produced in 1985. A silencer was not found, and is not easy to attain by non-professionals. It effectively muffles loud gun shots. So this shot could sound like what Juan described as "a book falling from a shelf."

What's more, Juan had originally said the gun was a 357 Magnum. Magnum does make a 2000 9mm Springfield Armory XD HS .40cal. 357 handgun that "looks" something like a .45.

The classic Magnum 357 is a very different looking and sounding gun than the S&W or Colt 645 .45 semiautomatic. Do we want to give the authorities the benefit of the doubt on the gun being the latter? If so, was it dusted for prints? It wasn't found in Thompson's hand, and was subsequently handled by at least one person, Investigator Ryan.

The Gray Substance . . . the Case on Top of the Gun

Deputy Armstrong reports, "I saw Dr. Thompson sitting in a chair at his desk by the kitchen stove. . . . sitting upright in the chair but his head was faced down on his chest. There was a lot of blood emanating from and formed around his mouth. Dr. Thompson was still and lifeless and I detected no visible move to evidence breathing. His color was pale. There was blood splatter behind Thompson on the counter and stove. I lifted Dr. Thompson's left hand to check for pulse and noticed that his hand had a gray substance on it the color of pencil lead." Was that substance lead from inserting the bullets in the magazine and then inserting the mag into the handle? Was it analyzed?

Deputy Armstrong also reports, "I saw a handgun at the right foot of Dr. Thompson. I also saw handgun case with a lot of blood on it which was partially covering the gun." How did the handgun end up neatly placed at the right foot? Wouldn't it have either remained in Thompson's hand, fallen on the desk, or on the floor? The bloody case in fact was found on top of the gun. Was Hunter Thompson left or right-handed? Did the gun and case fall in tandem on each other in the same spot by coincidence?

Deputy Armstrong then says, "There was a grayish color substance around the mouth of Thompson as well as a lot of blood." Was this the same "grayish color substance" found on Thompson's left hand? Has anyone verified what this substance was: gunpowder or a poison?

Bullet and Casing

Shortly after Armstrong's arrival, paramedic Hagan Kuhl entered and after checking for vital signs determined that Thompson was dead. At 1807 the heart monitor flatlined. Kuhl then cleared the scene. Deputy Armstrong determined that the trajectory leading from Thompson's mouth through the wound on the rear of his head led into and through the front face of the hood of the stove. He observed scrape marks in the metal under the hood of the stove. At the time, Armstrong couldn't find a bullet or bullet hole in the wall behind the scene without disturbing it.

Armstrong and Gibson noticed there was a spent shell casing under the chair.

Sheriff Bob Braudis and Investigator DeSalvo arrived later—it's not clear exactly when, according to the report. Also a Deputy Lumsden arrived, not clear when, and summoned a counselor from Aspen Counseling Center and Coroner Dr. Steven Ayers. Another Investigator, Ron Ryan, arrived at about 1900 hours. Rick Ballantine of the Aspen Valley Fire Department came as well.

Ryan discovered that Thompson had typed just one word, "counselor," in the center of a page of stationery from Thompson's *Fourth Amendment Foundation*, an organization he founded, ironically to defend victims of unwarranted search and seizure. Could that word have been a reference to lawyer [counselor] John DeCamp, author of *the Franklin Cover-Up?*

At some point, DeSalvo allowed Juan, his wife and child, to be alone with Thompson's body. Juan placed a gold colored scarf on his father's shoulders, a gift they'd given him the night before.

The Interesting Dr. Ayers

According to the Sheriff's Office report, Dr. Ayers, who arrived at about 1930 hours, decided to have a partial autopsy done by an outside agency. Was that done? What were the results? Also, according to Armstrong, Dr.

Ayers, after hearing Armstrong's story of the trajectory, went over to the stove hood, reached under the hood and found the slug resting above the stove. He notes the evidence, the gun, one handgun magazine, one spent shell casing, one slug and fabric case.

Ayers, as reported by the *Portland Independent Media Center* in a 3/2/05 article, "Some Hunter S. Thompson QUESTIONS," was an emergency room doctor as well as Pitkin County coroner and, "estimated at least half of the trauma cases—murders, suicides, injuries from car wrecks and other similar events—are drug or alcohol related. 'That number has always been significant, but more patients are being admitted via the emergency room for problems created by drug or alcohol use,' he said. . . . Yet, he did not order a toxicology report on HST because he figured 'substance abuse did NOT factor in and is NOT relevant.'" Given Thompson's addictions, or the grey powder around his mouth and left hand, why is that not relevant?

Was the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation launching a smear campaign, in the absence of evidence that Hunter was depressed, as the *Portland Independent Media Center* reports in the same article?

The Perceptive Investigator Ryan

At the scene of Thompson's death, it was Investigator Ryan who noticed that there was no cartridge in the chamber of the pistol. He also mentioned that a semiautomatic, which the pistol was, could be put on manual fire to shoot the one bullet, without replenishing the chamber. Yet did anyone check and see if the manual override was on? If not, someone would have had to fire that gun first then put in a new clip. In either case, could this have been an assisted suicide if not a murder? Could that be why Juan fired three shots in the air afterwards? Also, before Ryan handled the gun, were prints first taken?

In the supplemental narrative to the Sheriff's Report done by Brad Gibson, who arrived a few

minutes after Deputy John Armstrong, Gibson says he took "a quick look in the kitchen" to see Hunter Thompson sitting "on a stool." It was originally said to be a chair. Gibson also reports Thompson's head was resting on his chest. But "both hands were in his lap. There was a fair amount of blood at the base of the stool." Did somebody move Thompson's hands into his lap? And why does he call the desk chair a stool again? Was it in fact an elevated stool with arms that was used at the countertop/desk in the kitchen?

Also, given what an important, controversial figure Thompson was, why did the sheriff and his crew decide on the spot to note that the case status was a "closed/non-criminal" suicide? Why rush to judgment?

The Famous Neighbor

Do you know that Prince Bandar, brother of the king of Saudi Arabia and Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., was a nearby neighbor of Hunter Thompson? This is the same Prince Bandar who was recently photographed literally holding hands with George Bush and later kissing him bye-bye at an oil pricing-and-production meeting?

Thompson also described a Bandar incident in a 1992 letter to James Carville (Bill Clinton's campaign manager) in his 1994 book, *Better Than Sex—Confessions of A Political Junky*, page 132. This letter was written shortly before the Clinton/Bush 1 election in 1992.

"There is another small point of information . . . James, which has to do with my new neighbor, Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia, brother of the king and Saudi Ambassador to the U.S.

"Last Saturday (9/19/[92]), about 9 or 10 o'clock at night, the black sky over my home was rent by the thunderous noise of a low-flying U.S. military helicopter, en route to Bandar's house about a mile up the valley from mine (which is in Woody Creek, James, not in Aspen. There is a big difference, and Bandar is only on the cusp of it).

"Bandar does not normally arrive in this fashion—and if he departed that way (other witnesses swear they saw/heard three military choppers), it was a blatant display of urgency. Bush [Senior] would not move [in the Gulf War] without Him 'on board.'

"Ah . . . but so what, eh? There are many rooms in the mansion, James, and we will never be privy to all of them.

"As for fleet movements—they're not essential in that every other ordnance (weapons, bombs, boats, etc.) except hospital ships is already in place over there and they won't really need hospital ships, anyway.

"Not to take Saddam's head . . . Shit, even a phony head would look good for a South Lawn photo op on October 15. Who's going to call the president a liar when he's parading around in public with a rotting human head that he says is Saddam Hussein's?"

First, the chopper delivery of Bandar gives you a sense of the prince's closeness to the Bush family, then and now. It also reveals Hunter's insider knowledge of what was going on. You also get a sense of Hunter's distaste for Bush 1 and political lies in general. What's more, Thompson reports in *Better Than Sex* that he had gotten tipped by a merchant marine friend that the U.S. was moving several black-painted hospital ships (which he above mentions) into the Gulf region as part of a larger attack.

Prince Bandar and the Aspen Medical Foundation

Returning to present day and the *Portland Independent Media Center's* previously mentioned article, we are told that Bandar "had a cozy relationship with the Aspen Medical Foundation . . . In 1998, Level III Trauma Center at Aspen Valley Hospital is renovated thanks to a generous gift from HRH Prince Bandar.

"His \$325,000 donation to Aspen Valley Medical Foundation helped fund construction of

a new trauma center at Aspen Valley Hospital," said Kris Marsh, foundation president. "He also gave \$500,000 to the foundation for a CAT scanner several years ago, she said." Remember, the *Media Center's* article had also accused the foundation of trying to smear Thompson as being depressed.

Thompson and "W"

On still another front, is there any coincidence with Thompson's "suicide," coming one day after the release of "secret Bush tapes," in which George W. Bush was concerned about his mention of prior drug use? Thompson had previously written in *Hey Rube* about having been in a room where "W", who apparently couldn't handle his cocaine, was puking all over the place.

Thompson also had this to say about Bush 2 and his administration in *Better Than Sex*, "Presidential politics is a vicious business, even for rich white men, and anybody who gets into it should be prepared to grapple with the meanest of the mean. The White House has never been seized by timid warriors. There are no rules, and the roadside is littered with wreckage. That is why they call it the passing lane. Just ask any candidate who ever ran against George Bush—Al Gore, Ann Richards, John McCain—all of them ambushed and vanquished by lies and dirty tricks. And all of them still whining about it.

"That is why George W. Bush is President of the United States, and Al Gore is not. Bush simply wanted it more, and he was willing *to demolish anything that got in his way, including the U.S. Supreme Court*. It is not by accident that the Bush White House (read: Dick Cheney & Halliburton Inc.) control all three branches of our federal government today. They are powerful thugs who would far rather die than lose the election in November." That said, was Hunter's death payback for anti-Bush writings?

Food for thought. For now it's amen HST and RIP. I couldn't have said it better or nearly as well. We'll just keep watching, including what surfaces from the release of the Secret Service

information that Jeff Gannon made some 196 visits to the White House. On some visits, he wasn't even officially checked in or out. Hmmmm, I wonder what he could have been doing all those times, especially when the Secret Service didn't even know he was there?

Jerry Mazza is freelance writer in New York City. Reach him at gvmaz@verizon.net. Thanks to Bryan Monroe, Atlanta, Ga., criminal defense attorney and veteran investigator of 15 years, who provided a copy of the Pitkin Country Sheriff's Report and a reminder, "Something doesn't wash here."

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