

TWO PORTRAITS FILMSCRIPT
A Film by Peter Thompson

This double portrait is comprised of two linked films: "Anything Else: A Portrait of Tommy Thompson", and "Shooting Scripts: A Portrait of Betty Thompson". The voice of the woman interrogator in the documentary recording within "Anything Else" is that of Tommy's wife, Betty Thompson.

**1. ANYTHING ELSE:
A PORTRAIT OF TOMMY THOMPSON**

Title: 1. ANYTHING ELSE accompanied by one strike of a bell.

TOMMY THOMPSON, a white-haired man in his seventies, walks toward the viewer. He is inside a neon-green airport corridor. In his hands, he holds a suitcase and a ticket.

VOICE-OVER (Peter Thompson): He was a real estate salesman. His father was an iron miner. He was an only child. His dog was stolen when he was nine. He later saw the dog and said to the thief, "that used to be my dog." As a child he wounded a deer. He followed the deer 3 days through forests. He never hunted again. As a young man he wore black. He went to college and studied business. He played shortstop and stole 26 bases. He graduated from college in 3 1/2 years and read 9 books during the next 41 years. In World War II he spent 7 months 14 days on the surface of the sea. He was an officer. He visited 9 foreign countries. In a foreign country he spoke English with an accent that imitated the language of the country he was in. On vacations he stayed home. He believed the upkeep of his home was a moral obligation. He was a Christian Scientist and for religious reasons lived with a medical condition for 39 years. It made him snore. Following the wish of his wife, he slept with his head in a closet. He later had a separate bedroom. During his life he lived with 2 women: his mother until he married, and his wife after that. He married at age 39. His wife was 17 years his junior. He had two observations to make about marriage: "It's like

crossing the sea--you don't go if you don't expect storms", and "If you put 1 pea in a bowl each time you have sex during the first 2 years of marriage, and take 1 pea out each time you do it during all the years after, you'll never get all the peas out". He was married 41 years, 271 days. He believed art should be uplifting. His favorite movie was THE SOUND OF MUSIC. On cold floors he walked with his toes turned up. He did not like food on his fingers. He ate bacon with a knife and a fork. His wife believed the medical condition he had lived with for 39 years was contagious. Following her wish, he had an operation. His wife believed the operation violated the principles of Christian Science. Following her wish, he cancelled church membership. He had been a member for 41 years. He never raised his voice. He folded his clothes at night. He liked to sleep in a chair. His bed was 2 feet 8 inches wide. He slept on one side. He dressed on awakening. His cavities were drilled without painkillers. He slept through any noise. He did not like to be touched. He loved dogs and talked to them while patting their heads and scratching their backs. He slipped a disk twice, once while feeding alligators. His wife hung an 8 foot mirror in the dining room. He used it to straighten his tie. He never noticed the mirror. He was nicknamed "Checkgrabber" because he always paid at restaurants. Every second Tuesday for 9 years he had lunch with a seascape painter, a photographer, a stamp collector, and 3 real estate brokers. Each week his wife asked to be invited. He never took her. He believed God was Love. He washed his hair with barsoap. Women he did not know sometimes touched his hair in restaurants. He never had an affair. He fathered 2 sons. When walking them he let go of the stroller and pushed it ahead if he saw a male acquaintance. He lifted a hand once against a son, when the son shouted Goddamn you! to his brother. He believed there were no atheists in foxholes. He did not force his beliefs upon others. Both sons renounced his religion. His oldest son died at age 31. The decision to have children was left to his wife, as were all decisions except those concerning money. His lifetime earnings were \$915,000. He changed professions once. He played tennis on Sunday mornings after church and was considered a steady player. He spoke of dying as "turning in the bat and glove". He was a Republican. He believed the country would be lost if an atheist were elected president. He voted in 11 presidential elections. He voted for Barry Goldwater and Eugene McCarthy. He believed that keeping the law protected him from harm. He kept a radio playing when he left the house. During his lifetime he owned 5 houses, 1 sailboat and 23 automobiles. He never let the gasoline drop below the half-full mark. Each year he spent 780 hours in his car, driving 36,650 miles to commute to work. On Friday evening he made a list of household duties. He spent Saturday and Sunday completing them. He once gave a drunk a blank check made out to a grocery store. When his checkbook was out of balance he cancelled all other activities until he found the error and corrected it. He believed details were best handled by women. Women he

disliked were "dames". Women he liked were "kids". He had several hundred acquaintances. He had no close friends. He once brought home a former employee. His wife did not allow them to come in because her home was not presentable. They spoke standing at the curb. He never again brought anyone home. His one grandchild spoke a foreign language he did not understand. He did not speak of pain when he felt it. He did not speak of himself. His wife questioned him and tape recorded his responses. Following her wish, he taped his telephone conversations with his son. His wife played them back to hear what he had said about himself and about her. He grew accustomed to the tape recorder. He did not keep letters or snapshots. He did not write a letter of condolence to the widow of a man he had known for 57 years. He wrote letters of recommendation to his college fraternity for the sons of acquaintances who were applying for membership. He was once expelled from college for drinking. He never drank again or took drugs until he did both on April 1 and again on April 3, 1979, 44 years after his expulsion.

CUT to HIM climbing stairs with hand on white railing accompanied by documentary recording made on cheap tape recorder. HIS voice is slurred, weak and full of white noise but fully understandable where not specified "inaudible". HER voice is insistent, relentless.

SHE: Would you like a doctor?
Would you like a doctor?

HE: *(inaudible)*

SHE: No?

HE: *(inaudible)*

SHE: What?

HE: *(barely audible)* I don't think so.

SHE: Say it so I can hear you.

HE: *(inaudible)*

SHE: Say it so I can hear you.

Do you want a doctor?

HE: *(barely audible)* No.

SHE: Do you want a nurse?

(silence)

Darling, do you want a nurse?

HE: *(barely audible)* No.

SHE: Say it so I can hear you. What?

Do you want a nurse?

HE: *(barely audible)* Yeah?
SHE: Do you want a nurse?
HE: Yeah?
SHE: Do you want a nurse?
HE: *(barely audible)* Yeah.
SHE: What?
HE: Yeah.
SHE: Say it louder.
HE: *(louder)* Yeah!
SHE: You want a--do you want a Christian Science practitioner?
HE: Yeah.
SHE: What?
HE: Yes.
SHE: Well, you turned that man down!
HE: *(inaudible)*
SHE: You don't want him?
HE: *(inaudible)*
SHE: OK. You don't want him?
HE: *(inaudible)*
SHE: All right. What do you want?
Do you want to sleep?
HE: *(inaudible)*
SHE: Is that what you want to do right now?
Do you want to sleep?
What do you want?
(louder) What do you want?
You want anything from me? Hmm?
What do you want.
HE: *(inaudible)*
SHE: What?
HE: *(inaudible, but louder)*
SHE: I can't hear you.
HE: I don't need anything.
SHE: What?
HE: *(repeats louder)* I don't need anything.
SHE: I can't hear you.

HE: *(repeats louder)* I don't need anything else.
SHE: What?
HE: *(repeats louder)* I don't need anything else.
SHE: I can't understand you.
 Say it so we can....
HE: *(repeats louder)* I don't need anything else.
SHE: What?
HE: *(repeats clearer)* I do not need anything else.
SHE: I can't understand you.
HE: I don't know of anything else that I need!
SHE: *(commands)* Say it again!
HE: I do not know of anything else that I need!
SHE: *(commands)* Say it so I can hear you!
HE: *(hysterical)* I do not know of anything else that I need!
SHE: All right. You do not know of anything else that you need.
 Is that what you said?
 (silence)
 Is that what you said?
HE: Yes.
SHE: All right.

*HIS white hair is merged within the teeth of the white umbrella at the top of the white stairs.
CUT to HIM at the airport. HE has walked closer to the viewer. Eyes open. Head straight.
Face bright. Beginning of a smile.*

VOICE-OVER (Peter Thompson): He believed the Word of God could be heard, but that Man did not hear it when he listened to his own needs and desires. He believed Man was expelled from a state of perfection by his own ignorance. He believed the meanings of Love and Duty were clear. He followed the wish of his wife and moved into the guest house next to his home. He lived alone. He watched television standing. He owned one record, an album of Al Jolson songs. His favorite song was "Mammy". He remembered one Greek myth and knew the names of the protagonists. The myth concerned the love of one man for another. He sang one song and accompanied himself at the piano. The first stanza of the song was "Life in Rio must be grand, Husbands marching hand in hand, Shouting the battle cry of Freedom!" He had a hotplate and a toaster. He liked his toast burnt. He ate small portions and ate standing at the sink. He weighed 148 pounds. His ashes, weighing 4

pounds 8 ounces, were dropped into the sea off Point Lobos, California. Two weeks after his death his wife announced her second marriage. He knew this man and had exchanged Christmas cards with him each year for 41 years. At Christmas time he would say to his family, "Don't bother with a present. I don't need anything. I don't need anything else".

HIS smiling face now fills the frame. HIS eyes close. HIS face falls forward.

Title:

TOMMY THOMPSON
February 13, 1896 - April 3, 1979.

2. SHOOTING SCRIPTS
A PORTRAIT OF BETTY THOMPSON

Title: 2. SHOOTING SCRIPTS accompanied by one strike of a bell.

Title: Narrated by Betty Thompson who reads from her diaries.

The scene is like a still photograph: BETTY THOMPSON lies asleep in a garden chair in front of a green wall in bright sunlight. SHE is well-dressed, with sunglasses, sunhat and silver bracelets on both wrists. Her arms are crossed.

SHE makes slight movements: twitching finger or cheek, eyelid flutter, repositioning of body.

A long shadow from the setting sun enters the frame and falls across her body. This shadow literally blacks her out over the course of the film. The green wall behind remains brightly sunlit.

HER words are delivered in voice-over. No environmental presence is heard until the line "every day a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope", when we hear the sounds of a garden at dusk: birds, crickets, wind.

At the end of the film she awakens and addresses the camera.

VOICE-OVER (Betty Thompson): We do not continue to suffer when we have learned to be very quiet and to listen. Listening is always the basis for proper relationship. Just listen and observe. I neither approve nor disapprove. I accept. I always tell the truth unless I need to lie. If I knew now I would be struck dead by lightning six months from today, how would I live until then? I'd have top grade French cook and gardener to live graciously at home. I'd have as many lovely plants and a fountain and a stream put in our garden. I'd rent a lovely little cottage with a view in Europe, with servants--one or two--to do cooking and keep the garden blooming. I'd see European art galleries and so forth by chauffeured car. Now I have some questions. How is the paying off of the existing loan on our house to be accomplished? Will we be making a mistake to sell? Is the safe road where we are? Will it be too fatiguing now for me to get ready to move? Make red canopy for Betty's bed. Betty's bed is 3 feet 3 inches wide at the base. Betty's bed is 7 feet 1 inch long at the base. At the end of the bed, 7 feet 1 inch, from the head of the bed it is 8 foot tall from the floor, uh, to the ceiling. Nine and one half is the difference in the ceiling height from the head of the bed ceiling height and the end, uh, of the bed. Saturday, went to bed and felt a little dizzy. Sunday, 8 o'clock, temperature up, neck stiff, dizzy. October 2 temperature 103. October 3 temperature 102. October 4 temperature 101. *(pause.)* I'm much improved and starting in again to pack, slowly, and only doing a little at a time. I'm on my 45th box of packing, carefully. Sending to Peter in London: 1 fruitcake, 1 Christmas stocking, 1 Boy Scout book, 1 dog's stocking for Christmas, 1 elastic exercisor, 1 schoolbook--used, 1 tie, rayon, 3 used T-shirts, 1 used undershorts, 1 grey wool stripped jacket, 1 school textbook--used. *(fades out)* Now I have some questions. We have not received a reply to the last questions we sent, sir. You say you have a phone. What is the number? Is it your private phone? It is an apartment phone? Write us every Sunday. Takes 8 or 9 days to reach us air mail. Write down on paper every goal in your life. Make yourself answer just what is my problem. Problems start to shrink when you start to think. Experience your thinking and feeling marching toward a goal. Most people live never realizing their potential powers to make dreams and goals come true. I have some lifetime personal goals. As for my career: just let it happen--perhaps decorating doll houses and painting pictures of people's houses. Financial: not to be worried, but to live simply and graciously. Within the community sphere: a small amount of activity, not to overdo. Mental goals: keep writing goals, keep studying something, deep being aware of necessity, to be selective, not efficient. Family goals: express warmth only toward those who respond. Now some words regarding your girlfriend. Let's keep it on the light side. You must be so occupied and busy with school and the business of contacting important business

connections that you just do not have time for women in your life. Let's face it, if you put your head up over the horizon, some women will take a pot shot at you. Don't accept any favors from women. If there is help to be given, you do it, and do it impersonally, without getting involved. Are you going to succumb to the attention and attentive help of a woman or women, or are you going to express your God-given, virile strength and say--No! this is the path I wish to take, a Man's World, a world which helps me and my talents. We have not had a bit of help since moving to this doll house. Two hours creativity is enough, then change to another type of work. Clean the floors, the mirrors the windows. Polish the copper, brass and andirons. Paint the gold bath, Betty's to a light, white color. A new light fixture for Betty's bath. Paint around the front door and decorate it with flowers. Paint 18th century lantern red. Change the lights by the outside steps. Seven steps up, eight steps down. Leave the premises, leave the house when you can't cope. If you fan a cold fire you just get ashes in your face. *(pause)* If he dies, will I wish to remain here in this house alone? If I die, will I wish to remain here in this house alone? *(pause)* The angel loosed him and he was free. *(pause)* In quietude and humility we turn to God in prayer: O Lord, what am I doing or not doing? To do ideas--before retiring: 1) mix cod liver oil and bring to my bed, 2) bring hot water in a thermos, 3) make a malt and bring to the room, 4) make a list of things to do for the next day.

SHE is now hidden in shadow and her movements during sleep are seen in silhouette against the bright green wall.

Here are some notes that I have. I'd like to share some of my thoughts. Parents have almost nothing to do with their children's emotional instability. Children are born the way they are. A man is not greater than his dream, his ideals, his hope, his plans. Man dreams the dream, and fulfilling it, it's the dream that makes the man. Civilization is a social order promoting culture and order, creation, arts, sciences, manners, philosophy and dress. The USA has not aristocracy to transmit social order. There is a higher level of ignorance in the USA than in another other civilized country. Whenever you come near the human race there's always layers and layers of nonsense. Every idea has its own rhythm. It's a listening. It includes no human effort. As a reader I am partaking of it as well as the listener. The idea includes the reader and the listener. Take the subject, the idea, uppermost. Duration, undivided attention, uninterrupted consciousness, not dreaming, an awakening of thought. Antonyms of visualization: out of focus, unrelated, confused, deadletter, dormant, asleep. Whatever effect you see depends upon your assumptions. We have to be willing to let go of our assumptions.

Her glasses reflect brilliant columns of white light reflected from the sun.

We have to hook up to a white light. 1 desk lamp, 4 lamps, 1 plaster lamp, 2 silver lamps. *(pause)* Lord, help me to hold out. Lead Kindly Light, keep Thou my feet. I do not ask to see the distant scene. One step enough for me. Think of your hour--your life--as an hourglass. A grain of sand passing through a narrow neck in the middle so that one grain passes at a time. So let one task at a time pass slowly and evenly. One grain of sand at a time, one task at a time. This is the day which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it for yesterday is but a dream and tomorrow is only a vision but today well lived makes every day a dream of happiness. Every tomorrow is a vision of hope.

The sun's reflection dies out.

Look well therefore to this day. Such is the salvation to the dawn. *(falters)* I have to say dogmatically that I have run out of Time.

SHE remains in shadow. Natural sounds are now heard for the first time: birds, crickets, wind. SHE wakes slowly, stretches, and then addresses the camera.

BETTY THOMPSON: Ye Gods! Did I go to sleep? It's getting cold! I must have. I went to sleep! Wow! I don't do that very often!

SHE tilts garden chair backwards to peer up at clouds. The soles of her shoes fill the frame. SHE lies flat. Only her silhouetted shoes and hat are visible.

Oh, those clouds are so gorgeous, moving. So beautiful. *(pause)*

Behind the shoes, both arms reach up and make wide half-circle before dropping to her sides.

Ohhhhh. *(softly)* That was so nice. *(pause)* I must have been *dreaming*.

BLACK SCREEN.

CREDITS.

END OF FILM