

NEW books...books...books

Book Suggests Thomas Lied But Says America Will Never Know

By Richard Carelli

WASHINGTON (AP) - A new book on the strangest Supreme Court confirmation battle offers new but inconclusive evidence to support those who say Justice Clarence Thomas lied when he denied talking dirty to Anita Hill.

"Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas" says a "preponderance of evidence suggests" Thomas lied under oath to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

But authors Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, Wall Street Journal reporters who spent more than two years on the book, also write: Unless an eyewitness to these private events emerges, no one will ever know with absolute certainty whether Hill or Thomas - if either of them - was telling the whole truth." The authors interviewed many people who knew or worked with Thomas or Hill - as well as such figures as the proprietor of a video store who remembered Thomas as a regular renter of adult movies.

The gripping confirmation hearings in 1991 made on-the-job sexual harassment a national issue. Thomas adamantly denied Hill's accusations before the committee that he made crudely sexual comments to her while she worked as his aide at two government agencies in the 1980s.

In a best-selling book published last year, "The Real Anita Hill: The Untold Story," author David Brock cited government records and numerous interviews with people who knew Hill to conclude she lied.

Mayer and Abramson wrote a scathing review of Brock's book in The New Yorker magazine.

"We didn't come to this with any axe to grind," Mayer said in an interview Wednesday. Abramson added: "We viewed this as a giant puzzle, and we've been able to add some significant new pieces." Supreme Court spokeswoman Toni House said Thomas would have no comment on the book.

But Armstrong Williams, a close friend of Thomas, said, "The bottom line is this has nothing to do with sexual harassment." "This is about a black man whose life and thought explodes (liberals') most sacred cows and threatens to free blacks from the liberal plantation. The liberal media can't get over it," Williams told The Associated Press.

Using a phrase Thomas employed during the confirmation hearings, Williams added, "The high-tech lynching continues." Lying to Congress is a crime, but lawmakers have not raised the possibility of investigating the testimony of Thomas or Hill, or of attempting to impeach Thomas.

A University of Oklahoma law professor at the time of the confirmation hearings, Hill, who is also black, had worked for Thomas at the Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

One of Hill's allegations was that during a private meeting with her, Thomas once picked up a soda can, stared at it and said, "Who has put public hair on my Coke?" Questioned about that at the hearings, Thomas agreed that such a comment would be gross and asserted he never would say such a thing.

The book quotes two former EEOC officials, Marguerite Donnelly and Michael Middleton, as saying they had heard stories while at the agency about Thomas making that remark. But neither could remember actually having heard Thomas say it.

Hill also accused Thomas of talking to her about a pornographic film star of the 1980s known as "Long Dong Silver." Thomas denied ever having heard of the actor.

Mayer and Abramson interviewed the proprietor of a video rental near the EEOC's offices who said Thomas had been a "regular customer of adult movies" at that time. The store stocked movies featuring Silver.

Three women are quoted in the book discussing inappropriate sexual remarks they said Thomas made to women who worked for him at the commission. Thomas was not married at the time.

The experiences of two of those women, Angela Wright and Sukari Hardnett, previously have been reported.

Wright is quoted as saying Thomas repeatedly told her she would some day date him and once asked her, "What size are your breasts?" Rose Jourdain said Wright had confided in her that Thomas was making comments about Wright's "figure, her body, her breasts, her legs, and how she looked in certain suits and dresses." Hardnett said: "If you were young, black, female and reasonably attractive, you knew you were being inspected and auditioned as a female. ... Women know when there are sexual dimensions to the attention they are receiving. And there was never any doubt about that dimension in Clarence Thomas' office." The Associated Press reported in 1991 that Hardnett submitted those comments to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

A fourth woman, Kaye Savage, is quoted as saying she had seen a five-year collection of Playboy magazines in Thomas' bachelor apartment and nude centerfoldsorning the walls in 1982.

The book also offers these items:

-Although the justice has said publicly he never aspired to a Supreme Court seat, Mayer and Abramson report that several former Thomas colleagues said that as early as 1981, when he was barely 30, Thomas predicted he would some day be on the

African American History

November 12

1941 - Madame Lillian Evanti founded the National Negro Opera Company.
1977 - Ernest N. Moriai elected mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana.

November 13

1839 - First anti-slavery political party organized — Liberty Party.
1894 - C.A. Richardson patented casket lowering device.

November 14

1915 - Booker T. Washington died. Educator and writer.
1977 - Trial began for 1963 Birmingham church bombing case.

November 15

[215 B.C. - Hannibal, full blooded black man, crossed the Alps.]
1867 - Granville Woods patented system for railway telegraphy.
1881 - P. Johnson patented swinging chairs.

November 16

[1892 - Behanzin defended his native land, Dahomey, against France.]
1873 - W.C. Handy born in Florence, Alabama. Musician - Father of "The Blues."
1981 - Pam Johnson named publisher of the *Ithaca (N.Y.) Journal*. First black woman to head a daily newspaper.

November 17

[1636 - Henrique Dias won battle against the Dutch.]
1980 - WHHM, the first black-operated public radio station, went on the air at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

November 18

1787 - Sojourner Truth born. Abolitionist and women's rights activist.

court.

-President Bush added to Thomas' troubles when he deviated from his prepared speech in announcing his appointment. The president had been scripted to describe Thomas as "the best man" for the job, but instead called him "the best qualified" person. That assertion fueled criticism.

Report: 'Tonight Show' Bandleader Says It's No Great Gig

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Branford Marsalis, soon to take a break from his "Tonight Show" bandleader duties, is taking a few shots at the late-night show as well.

Shabba Ranks Loses Assault Case

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) - Popular Jamaican rapper Shabba Ranks has lost by default a lawsuit in which he is accused of punching a Kingston laborer who asked him for money outside a recording studio in 1990.

The Kingston court handed down the decision Oct. 28. Now the judge must award damages.

The laborer, Lloyd McKenzie, sued Ranks for \$800 in special damages, plus general damages. McKenzie said he suffered injuries to his face, his lower spine and right forearm.

Ranks, whose real name is Rexton Gordon, lost the case because he didn't file a defense to McKenzie's claim.

"It's not my idea of wonderful musical creativity," Marsalis told music magazine B.A.M. "We play the music exactly the way they (the show's producers) want, but we're laughing the whole time." "They seem uncomfortable with us because as long as everybody toes the line in mediocrity, it's cool," he said.

Marsalis also spoke about his relationship with host Jay Leno.

Unlike David Letterman and longtime bandleader Paul Shaffer's easy banter, that of the "Tonight" show duo often seems strained.

"I was thrown under a microphone and expected to have a rapport with a man I really didn't know. It takes time," Marsalis told B.A.M. "If you watch the show now, the lines are drawn and Jay and I have our things." "It will never be what Dave and Paul have, because I'm not the kind of person that's gonna kiss Jay's ass and say everything he does is right." The jazz musician said this week he's taking an indefinite leave of absence from "Tonight" in early 1995 to spend more time touring and with his young son. His comments appear in the current issue of B.A.M.