

# CAPITOL STUFF

By TED LEWIS

Washington, March 28—Two mysteries remain now that William Manchester's book "The Death of a President" has come out. One concerns what was deleted as a result of the furious controversy before publication. The other mystery pertains to "the curse."

It may never be firmly determined what was expurgated from the volume on demand of Jackie and Bobby Kennedy, but "the curse" is already measurable, even if its duration is questionable.

## 'The Curse' And the Book By Manchester

What is meant by "the curse"? Simply that virtually everyone involved directly or indirectly in the pre-publication dispute had reputations soiled, glamor removed or political careers damaged.

The author developed a serious emotional problem. The book and magazine publishers who bid for Manchester's opus became mentally strained

from "the curse," posed as disciples of honest history, not as business men wanting to make a fast buck.

Jacqueline Kennedy suddenly became controversial, no longer the lovely widow of Camelot above reproach. In the process of developing intensely human and especially feminine venom toward a hand-picked author she had once blessed, she lost some of her loyal following.

As for Bobby, he was hurt politically by doing what comes naturally to a Kennedy—simply exploding on the Manchester issue and accusing the author of putting the almighty dollar ahead of his obligations to the family to produce a book they liked.

"The curse" to a smaller extent touched those Kennedy aids who were assigned the job of cleaning up the Manchester manuscript before it appeared in serial form in Look magazine, or in book form, as it now is. Each had a different idea of what should be kept out, what should be retained.

As a result, the efforts of Pierre Salinger, Arthur Schlesinger, John Siegenthaler and others were at cross purposes, producing a mad hodgepodge of individual decisions—which en masse left Manchester bewildered as to what the Kennedys wanted.

It was as if a hex had been put on all concerned in reading the Manchester manuscript.

But "the curse" has been even more widespread. The gossip-mongering that flowed out of the controversy hurt others, including Lyndon Johnson. There were rumors that Manchester was prejudiced against LBJ, considered him uncouth or ungallant, or both, during the hysterical hours after the assassination in Dallas.



Jackie Kennedy  
Some of the glamor is gone

- Tolson
- DeLoach
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- Felt
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele. Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

*Handwritten signatures and initials:*  
 J. Edgar Hoover  
 Robert F. Kennedy  
 Sen. Edward Kennedy  
 B. J. Casper

- The Washington Post \_\_\_\_\_
- Times Herald \_\_\_\_\_
- The Washington Daily News \_\_\_\_\_
- The Evening Star (Washington) \_\_\_\_\_
- The Sunday Star (Washington) \_\_\_\_\_
- Daily News (New York) 5
- Sunday News (New York) \_\_\_\_\_
- New York Post \_\_\_\_\_
- The New York Times \_\_\_\_\_
- World Journal Tribune (New York) \_\_\_\_\_
- The Sun (Baltimore) \_\_\_\_\_
- The Worker \_\_\_\_\_
- The New Leader \_\_\_\_\_
- The Wall Street Journal \_\_\_\_\_
- The National Observer \_\_\_\_\_
- People's World \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Johnson a Man of Dignity in Book**

Yet in the book, as now published, Lyndon comes through clear and strong, as having admirable poise and great human dignity and understanding at that time of crisis.

But the damage has been done. The written word, especially when changes are known to have been made, seldom catches up with the rumors that went before and were seized on by political enemies.

But what we can particularly get along without has been the drivel dispensed by at least two individuals who have seemed particularly influenced by "the curse." One is Cass Canfield of Harper and Row, publisher of the book. The other is Arthur Schlesinger, the instant historian.

Canfield, according to author Manchester, considered "The Death of a President" a "work of unusual distinction and great power—in demand long after you and I have disappeared from the scene."

Schlesinger similarly praised it highly, saying Manchester had "a remarkable and potentially a great book."

But let's be more honest about it. The book is worth reading, whether it is great history is something else. How can a meticulously detailed account of a few days before and after the assassination of a President be compared with Theodore Sorensen's account of the entire dramatic political career of John F. Kennedy? Sorensen's book, incidentally, also was published by Harper and Row, and at the same price as the Manchester book, \$10.

### **The Cuts Give It an Air of Mystery**

Actually what is in Manchester's book is not so important as what went out of it. It has a symbolic quality of mystery because it was expurgated. Also it symbolizes human frailty because so many individuals were hurt by their own activities in the process of its production.

It probably will live for a long time for those two reasons alone. It can always, if put on the living room table, become a conversation piece, like a replica of the bust of Tutankhamen, which recalls the violation of that Egyptian monarch's tomb and the "curse" that struck all those involved in the excavation.

So in a sense it is a black book. That was Jackie Kennedy's estimate of it, according to Manchester in the last copy of *Look* magazine, when he made such an emotional defense of his perfection as a historian. He quoted Jackie as telling him last summer: "I thought it would be bound in black and put away on dark library shelves."

But before it is bound in black and sort of hidden away—as all books, great and cheap, are sooner or later—it is definitely going to be a record best seller. The notoriety, even if not so intended, will see to that.

And if there has been a curse in connection with the volume, there will also be a blessing later, for it is estimated that from the profits at least \$5 million will go to the Kennedy Library at Harvard. So a decent memorial to a much-loved President will at least benefit from a controversial book that was the center of an unhappy ethical squabble, with prejudiced overtones, that would have embarrassed John F. Kennedy had he been alive.