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JFK Censored?

JACKIE'S CRACKDOWN ON THE JFK BOOKS, ran a headline over the latest exposé by syndicated columnists Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson. Junior partner Anderson had obtained from Hearst writer Jim Bishop ("The Day Lincoln Was Shot") copies of two letters that Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy had written to Bishop. Mrs. Kennedy seemed to be trying—the column charged—"to restrict the history of the assassination to her authorized version." Moreover, the letters seemingly revealed a steel-hard facet of Jacqueline Kennedy's personality.

As Bishop tells the story, he planned to write a book called "The Day Kennedy Was Shot." But in a letter to him dated Sept. 17, 1964, the President's widow is quoted as writing: "The idea of it is so distressing to me, I can't bear to think of seeing—or of seeing advertised—a book with that name and subject—one that my children might see or someone might mention it to them." According to Bishop, she also said that she had "hired" author William Manchester to write the official record of the assassination, "The Death of a President" (NEWSWEEK, Sept. 5). In Jacqueline Kennedy's words, Manchester was "to protect President Kennedy and the truth." "And," wrote Mrs. Kennedy, "if I decide the book should never be published—then Mr. Manchester will be reimbursed for his time. Or if I decide it should be known—I will decide when it should be published . . ."

In reply, the 58-year-old Bishop asked the former First Lady to reconsider on the ground that "to say one man may write history but another may not, amounts to personal copyright . . ." He also pointed out that there would be many books dealing with the assassination. Mrs. Kennedy reiterated her position in a second letter. Bishop went ahead anyway, and, as he now recalls, he found the doors of principal sources closing so fast "you could hear them clicking all over the place." Bishop declared that Evelyn Lincoln, the late President's secretary, declined to see him and that George Thomas, Kennedy's valet, said he had promised not to talk. Finally Bishop discovered that Mrs. Kennedy had made a personal appeal to his publisher, Bennett Cerf, chairman of Random House, not to publish the book.

Pointless: "Mrs. Kennedy called me and she was terribly disturbed," the 68-year-old publisher explained last week. Cerf said he tactfully explained to Mrs. Kennedy that he believed it was pointless to turn the book down because "50 other publishers" would print it.

The situation remains unresolved. Bishop has temporarily put the Kennedy project aside while he pushes

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ahead on "A Day in the Life of President Johnson." Bishop says he still plans to write the Kennedy book and has 4,200 pages of notes, including some 350 pages covering a single 30-minute period on Nov. 22, 1963.

The charge of censorship aired by Pearson-Anderson was not the first one directed at the Kennedy family. A series of flaps over editing and publication—involving such diverse books as governess Maud Shaw's "White House Nannie—My Years With Caroline and John Kennedy Jr." and Theodore Sorensen's "Kennedy"—has led some critics to refer disparagingly to the Kennedy family as "Keepers of the Flame." Just last month, former Under Secretary of the Navy Paul B. (Red) Fay Jr. ran into flack with his new book, "The Pleasure of His

in Courage," Sorensen's "Kennedy," and it will bring out Manchester's "The Death of a President" next spring). They "took what they considered the best 90,000 words," he said last week. Fay acknowledges that "The Pleasure of His Company" was submitted to an old Kennedy family friend, former U.S. Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith for guidance. Galbraith said his suggestions were slight.

Naturally enough, Manchester's authorized book is the subject of most of the censorship rumors. Some stories claim that Robert Kennedy personally edited the manuscript. Jacqueline Kennedy is supposed to be unhappy with some of the more personal material Manchester included after his taped interviews with her (total time on tape:



Associated Press

Jacqueline Kennedy, authors Bishop (above) and Manchester: 'A personal copyright'?



UPI

Company" (Harper & Row, 262 pages, \$5.95). A confidant of the President and his family for 21 years, Fay's casual reminiscence of life with JFK from the Pacific war days to the White House years made mild enough reading. Nevertheless Sen. Robert Kennedy was reported to be concerned that his mother might read with chagrin the story of JFK's failure to provide Christmas presents for the family in 1944. And Fay also had reported a casual luncheon remark attributed to Eunice Kennedy Shriver: "Dad, you are the Secretary of the Treasury . . . Bobby we'll make Attorney General so he can throw all the people Dad doesn't like into jail." Right after publication Maxine Cheshire reported in The Washington Post that Fay was "now being coolly ostracized" by the Kennedy family.

Yet Fay's book itself had gone through a "Kennedy censorship" of sorts. As he tells it, Fay submitted a manuscript of 180,000 words to Harper & Row editors (the firm also published JFK's "Profiles

ten hours). And at the offices of Look magazine (which will serialize parts of the Manchester book), stories of Mrs. Kennedy's clashes with the magazine's top echelons are endlessly repeated.

Beneath all the rumors, the facts are these: JFK's own editor, 46-year-old Evan Thomas (son of Norman Thomas), is the man in charge of the Manchester project at Harper's. Several New Frontiersmen have been asked by Robert Kennedy to read the Manchester manuscript. Among them were Edwin Guthman, press aide to Senator Kennedy when he was Attorney General and now national news editor of The Los Angeles Times; John Seigenthaler, a former administrative assistant to Bobby at Justice and now editor of The Nashville Tennessean; Pamela Turnure, Mrs. Kennedy's secretary; and Richard Goodwin, a former JFK speechwriter and currently at Wesleyan University. Goodwin will be the last to see all the changes and revisions. "The changes so far are not monumental," says Evan Thomas. "One

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concern is that Senator Kennedy doesn't want to do anyone any harm."

Portions of the manuscript, for example, were returned to Look magazine with sections blocked out. Some changes are clearly corrections of fact. Others involved matters of taste. Mrs. Kennedy had talked to Manchester about the loss of her husband and her role as a mother, and she later wanted the reference deleted. And Mrs. Kennedy also asked Look executives to make certain changes.

Target LBJ: One source of substantive discord between Manchester and the Kennedy editors is the portrait of a supremely significant figure in the book—Lyndon Johnson. In Manchester's original manuscript, for example, there is a picture of the then Vice President rushing to Air Force One, anxious to be sworn in as quickly as possible after the awful events in Dallas. Those who have read this passage say that it could be easily misinterpreted. They argued with Manchester that no one at that moment could know whether the assassination was a plot that also included Mr. Johnson as a target. His clear duty, they say, was to reach the safety of the Presidential plane as quickly as possible.

Guthman, for one, says he suggested that "Manchester ought to just let the story tell itself and let the reader make up his own mind." Of his own role, Guthman adds: "All I did was the kind of editing I would do on a reporter's copy if I thought he had overwritten it."

But so sensitive are most Kennedy allies to the rumors about the book that they do more to inflate them than anyone else. Seigenthaler, for example, last week denied he had seen the manuscript. And Miss Turnure carefully says she has not "reviewed" the book. Still another former Kennedy aide, historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who was asked by the author—not by the Kennedys—to read the book, believes "there is nothing unusual about giving a book to a few friends to read. I think the book is powerful and impressive," he adds, "and I know that no member of the Kennedy family has read it. That would be too much."

RFK's Role: The censorship stories disturb no one more than Bobby Kennedy himself. His view is that he has a responsibility—to his mother, Rose, and to Jacqueline—where matters of taste are concerned and that he is not trying to control the writing of history. "Jacqueline liked Manchester's 1962 biography of John Kennedy," he said. "It was warm and human. She made the decision to invite him to write of the assassination on that basis." He said he had not changed the Fay or the Manchester manuscript. "I have not read either book. I have asked people to read them for me whose judgment I trust and admire.")