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Kennedy Clan Battles Author Over New Book

Highly Personal, Poignant Recollections of President's Widow Stir Publishing Storm

Exclusive to The Times from the Chicago Daily News

WASHINGTON — The family of the late President John F. Kennedy is engaged in a strange and bitter struggle to delete from a book manuscript they commissioned some highly personal and poignant recollections of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy.

The Kennedys decline to discuss their quarrel with author William Manchester, whose book titled "Death of a President" is due to be published by Harper & Row next March. It will be serialized in four installments in Look magazine starting Jan. 10.

Enough details of the conflict between the principals have circulated to tantalize New York publishing circles and excite the gossip-ridden political community here.

The manuscript is understood to contain hitherto unpublished material involving President Johnson and the Kennedys in the immediate aftermath of the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. These revelations are likely to exacerbate existing tensions between Mr. Johnson and the Kennedy clan, according to those familiar with the Manchester work.

Emotional Attitudes

The author and the editors, however, have been mainly caught up in the anguish of Mrs. Kennedy over some of the disclo-

tures in the 350,000-word manuscript. They are said to include some of her innermost thoughts and emotional attitudes at the time of the tragedy, which she doesn't want published. But their main concern has been that Look's condensation would put incidents out of context and create needless misunderstandings.

Ironically, Mrs. Kennedy, together with her brother-in-law Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, handpicked Manchester to write the book for two reasons.

First, they were anxious to fend off an expected parade of authors seeking the family's cooperation in writing their own accounts of the assassination.

Secondly, Mrs. Kennedy was greatly impressed by an earlier Manchester book about John Kennedy, titled "Portrait of a President," a sensitive and intimate closeup.

According to friends, the contract with Manchester gave the family the right to review the author's manuscript and presumably to remove any material that they felt was

unseemly, embarrassing or in bad taste.

The Kennedys are said to feel that Manchester violated his contract, as well as breached the confidences of the widow, who spent many hours tape-recording in the author's presence her candid recollections of events surrounding her husband's death.

The trouble between Manchester and the family chiefly involves the magazine rights for which Look paid an estimated \$600,000 to excerpt some 60,000 words for four installments. The author also began to resist efforts to remove what the Kennedys thought to be some of the more sensational passages.

The magazine objected to editing changes, although several were agreed to by its editors. Negotiations on possible changes are continuing.

"Jackie now regrets having poured out her soul to Manchester as if he were a psychiatrist," says one person who has read the manuscript. "In truth, the book is a remarkable history in which everybody comes out real. When the dust settles, everybody's going to be pleased."

This judgment is not shared by those familiar with other facets of the enterprise which have become controversial.

Many persons interviewed by Manchester were led to believe that he wouldn't publish the book for five years, or until after the 1968 elections, to allay any suspicions of a political motive on the part of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.).

Friends of the family, on the other hand, say that the agreement was that the book would be published within five years. The decision to publish it when finished was made, again to avoid any charges

that it was timed to promote the Kennedy fortunes in politics.

Meanwhile, the flood of gossip, speculation and conjecture surrounding the book has washed up the story that Manchester worked himself into such a state of physical and emotional exhaustion that he was forced into a sanitarium during the preparation of the book.

In any case, it is understood that the Kennedys have rejected any idea of suing to prevent serialization of the book. "Imagine what would be said about the Kennedys being ruthless and censorious if that happened," a friend observed. *END*