

Censorship Out, 'Look' Told Kennedy Author

Magazine's Lawyers Sent Sharply Worded Letter to Manchester About Book Changes

BY ANDREW J. GLASS

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WASHINGTON— Look magazine warned William Manchester, author of "Death of a President," that "we will not accept any censorship" of his book by either him or members of the Kennedy family.

The magazine's lawyers took this stand in a letter to the author last September. Their sharply worded letter was written several weeks after Manchester, in an emotion-wracked meeting with Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy at Hyannis Port, Mass., promised her that she would not be embarrassed by a series of Look articles about the assassination of her husband taken from the book.

Revision Not Shown

Although Look and Manchester then proceeded to make substantial changes in the articles, they refused to show the revised draft to Mrs. Kennedy's representatives or to inform them which of their suggestions were accepted and which were not.

At the Hyannis Port meeting, Manchester arranged for the 300,000-word manuscript to be flown to her for further editing. According to sources close to Mrs. Kennedy, Manchester changed his mind later in the day and never turned over the draft.

Cowles Communications, Inc., publishers of Look, purchased the magazine rights to Manchester's account for a record price of \$665,000 in a deal

signed Aug. 11, 1966.

Scheduled in April

The book is scheduled to be published in April by Harper & Row, the publisher that has brought out many books of the late President John F. Kennedy and his brother, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.).

In her court suit against Manchester, Cowles and Harper's, Mrs. Kennedy contends that her contract rights were violated by plans to publish a manuscript she had not approved.

But sources close to Mrs. Kennedy assert that the issue would have been settled without a court

fight if Manchester had not signed away his own basic rights to the manuscript.

A crucial point in what has become a bitter battle between Mrs. Kennedy and some of her oldest friends in the publishing world was reached last July 18. On that day, Don Cogdon, Manchester's longtime literary agent, submitted the manuscript to many of the country's

leading magazines.

Mrs. Kennedy was vacationing in Hawaii at the time and knew nothing of the move to publish the book in serial form.

But her brother-in-law, Sen. Kennedy, had come under strong pressure to follow through on his earlier decision to allow the book to be published early in 1967. The original contract permitted publication as a serial.

Salinger's Idea

Manchester, as Mrs. Kennedy once put it, was "hired" by her to write the sole Kennedy-sanctioned account about the five days around the moment that the powers of the Presidency were abruptly transferred from John F. Kennedy to Lyndon B. Johnson.

It was former White House press secretary Pierre Salinger, who suggested that Manchester write the book.

From the start, it was agreed on all sides that, as one Kennedy source noted, "Nobody should get rich from this book." Manchester, who viewed the project as "a special trust," had little say over the specific terms of the accord with the Kennedys.

Under the contract with Harper's, Manchester's royalties were halved from the normal amount. They were also limited to the first printing of the book. Other subsidiary royalties were scaled down to ensure that the bulk of the proceeds would go to the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library in Boston.

Manchester received \$40,000 advance from Harper's, although the publishing house withheld the final third of the money until it possessed an "approved" manuscript. Therefore, to subsidize the

author was forced to dip into his savings.

In early summer—three months after he had turned over the first draft to Harper's—Manchester approached Arthur Schlesinger Jr., a close friend of Robert Kennedy and himself a biographer of John F. Kennedy, in an effort to obtain a release from the Kennedy family.

It was Schlesinger who wrested the key telegram from the senator that said: "Members of the Kennedy family will place no obstacle in the way of publication of his work."

Acting upon even earlier oral assurances from Sen. Kennedy to Evan Thomas, the book's editor, Harper's paid Manchester the remaining third of his advance on the basis of what Thomas believed at the time to be an "approved" version.

It was at this juncture that Cogdon, the literary agent, moved quickly to sell the book to a magazine. As Cogdon well knew, under the agreement the magazine rights

were the only source from which Manchester could possibly make a substantial financial return on his two-year project.

Besides Look, Cogdon submitted the draft to such magazines as Life, the Saturday Evening Post, New Yorker, Good Housekeeping and Cosmopolitan. He assured all the editors involved that Manchester was fully empowered to sign a binding contract.

Life Bid In

Final bids for the magazine rights were to be submitted by 5 p.m. July 23 at Cogdon's Rockefeller Plaza office. The closing of the deal was then set for the day after Kennedy had sent his wire.

At 3:30 p.m., David Mass, articles editor of Life, submitted a bid of

\$550,000 plus substantial promotional benefits to Harper's.

Ninety minutes later, Look editor William B. Arthur and Robert Mes-kill, a managing editor, arrived. Cogdon opened

their offer and told them that Look had bid low.

The Look team, greatly disturbed at the news, conferred in an anteroom and finally said they would return at 7 p.m. They arrived with the winning \$665,000 package that also called for Manchester to receive a fee as a "special editorial consultant."

On the day of the sale, Manchester telephoned the senator to report what had happened and to assure him that he would retain control of the way Look presented the material. Kennedy raised no objections.

Asks for Help

Within a month, however, Mrs. Kennedy had become increasingly perturbed at the prospect of

the Look sales. She asked Richard N. Goodwin, a Middletown (Conn.) neighbor of Manchester's and the first person to have read the draft, to intervene on her behalf.

Manchester agreed to bring Goodwin, a former White House special assistant, into the negotiations. But John F. Harding, secretary of Cowles Communications, promptly balked at this arrangement.

In a letter to the author dated Sept. 16, Harding said he was disturbed at Manchester's understanding that the Look articles must be in keeping with the spirit of the book or that the Kennedy family might designate Goodwin and former Asst. Atty. Gen. Burke Marshall to advise the author.

The only rights, Harding noted, that Look was prepared to grant to

Manchester, Robert F. Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy was to check the articles for the purpose of assuring themselves that in the editing process the magazine had not changed the meaning of any material taken from a purportedly approved manuscript.

Manchester, finding himself trapped between the adamant Kennedys and an equally adamant magazine hierarchy, fled to Europe, largely to escape the controversy. His frame of mind could not have been improved by the fact that he had agreed to reimburse Look for its damages—up to the total sum paid to him—if the deal fell through.

Sen. Kennedy is known to believe that the controversy is certain to damage his political future no matter how it turns out. But as one source close to the senator put it: "Bob sometimes does things against his better judgment to make Mrs. Kennedy happy. In his scale of priorities, her interests come first, no matter what the cost."