

# Manchester Says Charge Is 'Both Cruel and Unjust'

Denies He Broke Faith With Mrs. Kennedy by Use of Interview Data

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Text of Manchester statement will be found on Page 31.

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON

William Manchester, the author of the disputed book on the assassination of President Kennedy, said yesterday that the former President as a historian would have wanted his countrymen to know the truth of those terrible days.

"John Kennedy was my President," Mr. Manchester said in a statement. "To suggest that I would dishonor his memory or my association with him is both cruel and unjust."

It was the first statement issued by the author since it became known that Mrs. Kennedy opposed publication of the book, "The Death of a President." Last Friday, she filed suit in State Supreme Court to block its publication. A hearing is scheduled Dec. 27.

In her suit, Mrs. Kennedy said that Mr. Manchester had exploited the emotional state she was in after the death of her husband by his use of personal recollections obtained in 10 hours of tape-recorded conversations.

At stake in the controversy are not only the domestic and foreign book and magazine rights, but the possibility of pas-

sages offensive to President Johnson, Senator Robert F. Kennedy's political future, and Mrs. Kennedy's role in history.

Mr. Manchester's statement was issued through Look magazine, which bought serialization rights to the book for \$665,000. A spokesman for the magazine said there had been "absolutely no change" in plans to begin the four-part 80,000-word abridgment of the 300,000-word book in the Jan. 10 issue.

Mr. Manchester denied that he had "broken faith" with Mrs. Kennedy by taking advantage of her confidence or by recording "too faithfully" her words and emotions.

"Mrs. Kennedy asked me to write this book," the author said. "I did not seek the opportunity."

"I did not, indeed could not, have conducted these interviews without her voluntary contribution. Mrs. Kennedy herself did not ask to see the manuscript, and still hasn't. If she had, I would, of course, have given it to her."

In Washington, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, charged that Mr. Manchester "now intends to go ahead in violation of the word of his agreement, the spirit of his arrangements and despite the pain he knows it will give Mrs. Kennedy."

Mrs. Kennedy has contended in her lawsuit that Mr. Manchester violated her rights with his plans to have published the unapproved manuscript of his book. A memorandum signed by Mr. Manchester and Senator Robert F. Kennedy on March 26, 1964, says that Mrs. Kennedy and the Senator must approve the text of the book.

Another clause says that the book may not be published before Nov. 22, 1968, exactly five years after the assassination. A third clause says Mr. Manchester may not dispose of subsidiary rights without the approval of the Kennedys.

## Telegram Quoted

Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., which plans to publish the book in March or April, says that Senator Kennedy told Mr. Manchester in a telegram last July that "member of the Kennedy family will place no obstacle in the way of publication of his book."

In a five-page affidavit in support of Mrs. Kennedy's suit,

the Senator said that the telegram makes no statement approving either text, or date, or mode of publication.

The telegram from Senator Kennedy read:

"Should any inquiries arise re the manuscript of your book I would like to state the following:

"While I have not read William Manchester's account of the death of President Kennedy, I know of the President's respect for Mr. Manchester as an historian and a reporter. I understand others have plans to publish books regarding the events of Nov. 22, 1963. As this is going to be the subject matter of a book and since Mr. Manchester in his research had access to more information and sources than any other writer, members of the Kennedy family will place no obstacle in the way of publication of his work.

"However, if Mr. Manchester's account is published in segments or excerpts, I would expect that incidents would not be taken out of context or summarized in any way which might distort facts of or the events relating to President Kennedy's death."

In his statement yesterday, Mr. Manchester said that on July 29, 1966, "I was informed by a member of the Kennedy family that because of President Kennedy's 'respect' for me as a historian and a reporter . . . members of the Kennedy family will place no obstacle in the way of publication' of my work."

## 'The Same Historian'

"I believe that I am now—in December of 1966—the same historian and reporter that I was in July and the same historian and reporter that I was in 1962 when President Kennedy expressed his confidence in me," the Manchester statement continued.

"I had hoped my book would be allowed to speak for itself and I would not have to speak for it. This is no longer possible. The integrity of my book and my own honesty as a writer and a person have been attacked."

Mr. Manchester said that "in life John Kennedy belonged to all Americans." He said that it was his belief that "some of the present bitterness comes from the dark nightmare of his death and the impotence in the face of death which we felt then and feel now."

He continued:

"I believe John Kennedy, who was himself a historian, would have wanted his countrymen to know the truth of those terrible days, and I have dedicated myself for nearly three years to reliving and reconstructing them so that the truth could be

faithfully and accurately recorded."

Mr. Manchester also denied that his work was being published prematurely and that magazine serialization had not been contemplated by the Kennedys. He said that the family had authorized publication of the book in early 1967, to be preceded by the serialization in Look.

The author pointed out that

a number of friends and advisers of the Kennedy family had read the book at their request and that "appropriate changes" had been made in consultation with these friends.

## 'This Is My Book'

The author maintained, however, that "in the final analysis, this is my book."

He said:

"Neither Mrs. Kennedy nor any member of the Kennedy family nor anyone else is in any way responsible for my research or the content of my work. It is my responsibility and I am confident that my book can withstand any objective test, particularly the test of time. I only ask that it be given the chance."

In addition to the \$665,000 paid by Look for serialization rights, Harper & Row contracted with Mr. Manchester to pay some \$675,000 for the hardcover book. Of this sum, the author has already received \$365,000.

Last week, Dell Books offered \$1-million for the book's paperback rights, a price said to be the largest ever tendered for such rights.

Former Federal Judge Simon H. Rifkind, who is representing Mrs. Kennedy in the suit, said about the author's statement:

"I don't know how Mr. Manchester escapes from the fact that he made a promise and now has not lived up to his part of the bargain."

"I don't know about literary integrity, nor the matter of history," he continued. "They don't concern me at the moment. But I believe strongly in a man keeping his word, particularly when it is in a written memorandum of understanding. There has been no approval from Mrs. Kennedy."

Earlier, Mr. Rifkind said he knew of no attempt to arrange an out-of-court settlement although he added that "conceivably any case can be settled out of court."

"But my present plans are to be in court on Dec. 27," he said.

In his statement in Washington, Senator Edward Kennedy recalled that Mr. Manchester had voluntarily signed an agreement promising "to use the material given him by Mrs. Kennedy only with her consent."

"Relying on the protection of his word," he continued, "she unburdened herself of her personal memories concerning her-

self and her children, in order to give him some background for his historical researches.

"I know she never dreamed that that material which related strictly to her private thoughts and acts—none of it part of the historical record—would ever be made public.

"Mr. Manchester now intends to go ahead in violation of the word of his agreement, the spirit of his arrangements, and despite the pain he knows it will give Mrs. Kennedy.

"What is at stake is not his integrity as a writer nor the accuracy of history, but rather the integrity of the commitment and the promise he willingly and voluntarily made."

Regarding the parts of the book that might possibly put President Johnson in a bad light, Bill D. Moyers, the President's press secretary, told The Associated Press in Washington that he had "not read the book and I have not read anything to the President," adding that Mr. Johnson had seen no part of the manuscript.

Mr. Moyers made the comment in response to a query about a statement by James Reston on the editorial page of The New York Times yesterday. Mr. Reston wrote that Mr. Moyers had read the "offending passages" and had no doubt informed the President.

Asked whether he was denying that he had read excerpts of the book, Mr. Moyers replied:

"No, I'm not denying that and I'm not confirming it either. This is a tragic enough case already without the White House getting involved in it."

From Austin, Tex., it was reported that some associates of President Johnson know what is in the book and believe that it gives a biased and inaccurate account of his attitudes and activities in the assassination period.

They are reported to possess evidence that rebuts or refutes some of the material in the Manchester book but do not intend to engage in a public dispute about it. They are not believed to have participated in the dispute about whether the book should be published.

In another development, the Rev. Dr. Donald S. Harrington, the pastor of the Community Church in New York, recommended that the public refuse to purchase the Manchester material if the book was published against Mrs. Kennedy's wishes.