

PERSONALITY IN THE NEWS

Manchester Usually Studying or Writing

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NEW YORK (AP)—Tall, slim and scholarly looking, William Manchester, the protege of Mencken, has spent most of his 44 years with his nose buried in a book or writing one.

Known to acquaintances as "very intense," almost a recluse, he's a most unlikely figure to be the center of a swirling controversy over his book, "Death of a President."

Manchester was born April 1, 1922, in Attleboro, Mass., of parents who came east from Oklahoma City. He closed the circle after World War II when he spent a brief period as a police reporter on the Daily Oklahoman in Oklahoma City.

Manchester was 7 when the family moved to Springfield, Mass., where he attended Classical High School. He had put in three years at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst when he joined the Marines.

He became a sergeant and was wounded at Okinawa, for which he got the Purple Heart and a long period of hospitalization.

Returning to Massachusetts, he was graduated from the university in 1946.

Manchester was a graduate student in journalism at the University of

Missouri when an earlier-developed interest in the irascible H. L. Mencken, the sage of Baltimore, led him to do his master's degree dissertation on Mencken.

In the fall of 1947, he was summoned to Baltimore by Mencken, given a job as a reporter on the Baltimore Sun, and commissioned to bury his nose in 10,000 unpublished letters and 80 scrap books and come up with a biography of Mencken.

Mencken approved the work, even the title—"Disturber of the Peace."

He also turned out a series of novels—"City of Anger," about an honest police commissioner surrounded by corruption, and "Shadows of the Moon" and "Beard the Lion."

In 1948 Manchester married Julia Marshall of Baltimore. They now have three children.

In 1955 he moved to Connecticut, where for 10 years he was an editor for Wesleyan University's American Education Publications. Since 1959 he has been a fellow of the Wesleyan Center for Advanced Studies.

Manchester's literary production has been prolific. In addition to a well-received biography, "A



William Manchester
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Rockefeller Family Portrait," he poured out articles for the Saturday Evening Post, Harper's, the Reporter, the Saturday Review, Look, Reader's Digest and the Nation, wrote TV plays and another novel, "The Long Gainer," about a university president who wanted to be governor.

In 1962 Manchester published "Portrait of a President," a biography of John F. Kennedy which pleased both President Kennedy and the First Lady.

It was this book that led Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy and the late President's brother, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, to ask Manchester when they decided there should be a definitive book on the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination.