

Jacqueline Kennedy's 'Victory'

As suddenly as it had swirled up, the million-dollar war over the words of William Manchester's "The Death of a President" (NEWSWEEK, Dec. 26) escalated into an armed truce last week. Mrs. John F. Kennedy and Look arrived at an agreement on just what the magazine could and could not print in its four-part serialization of the book, due on the newsstands Jan. 10. The out-of-court settlement enabled both sides to claim victory—Mrs. Kennedy for her sense of privacy, Look for its sense of history (and the fortune riding on its Manchester issues). The headlines proclaimed Mrs. Kennedy the winner. But the stories under the headlines suggested that it was a pyrrhic victory.

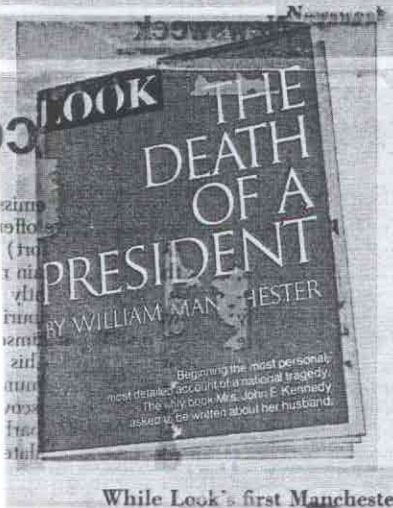
Though negotiations remained to be concluded between Mrs. Kennedy and author Manchester and his publisher, Harper & Row, the Kennedys announced after round one that they had forced Look to delete or tone down a dozen passages from the 60,000 words Manchester sold the magazine for \$665,000. Look's net loss—in the final crunch—added up to exactly 1,621 words. The cost to Jackie was harder to measure. Her threatened lawsuit to block publication of the book and the serialization had made "The Death of a President" fair game for the nation's press. And even as Mrs. Kennedy's lawyers struggled to dilute the work of its most intimate revelations, newspapers across the country bannered the very details that so disturbed her.

Mini-Version: What emerged from the journalistic scavenger hunt was, in effect, a composite mini-version of the book—or at least of the most eye-catching details Manchester had included in his manuscript. It went to the

cleaners. Wrenched out of context, the jiff of headlines inevitably emphasized what was "news" at the expense of the book's inside reputation as a masterly job of reporting and a gripping—if somewhat emotional—narrative. By now, only a handful of those most closely involved could say for sure what remained in the work as it might finally see print. But Manchester's original manuscript minutely detailing the six days beginning on Nov. 20, 1963, had been read and discussed so widely that it had taken on an enduring entity of its own.

Dribbling out bit by juicy bit, the morsels that found their way into the press tended to exaggerate the prominence of both Mrs. Kennedy's private anguish and the Kennedy-Johnson political tensions as they actually appear in the book. Viewed against the panorama of the whole manuscript, according to one authoritative source who has read it, these elements lose a good deal of their flammability.

Fretting: The original manuscript told how President Kennedy had personally selected Jackie's wardrobe for the Texas journey. He chose mostly woolens—then discovered to his dismay that the forecast was for warm weather in Dallas. The trip was one of Mrs. Kennedy's first since the death of her infant son, Patrick Bouvier, the previous August, and her husband particularly wanted her to enjoy it. Now he fretted that she would be uncomfortable in her heavy clothing and that the trip would be ruined for her. Nevertheless, she picked out, for Nov. 22, the pink two-piece outfit in which history would always remember her. On their last night together before flying to Dallas, Jackie visited JFK's bedroom in the hotel in Fort Worth, Stand-

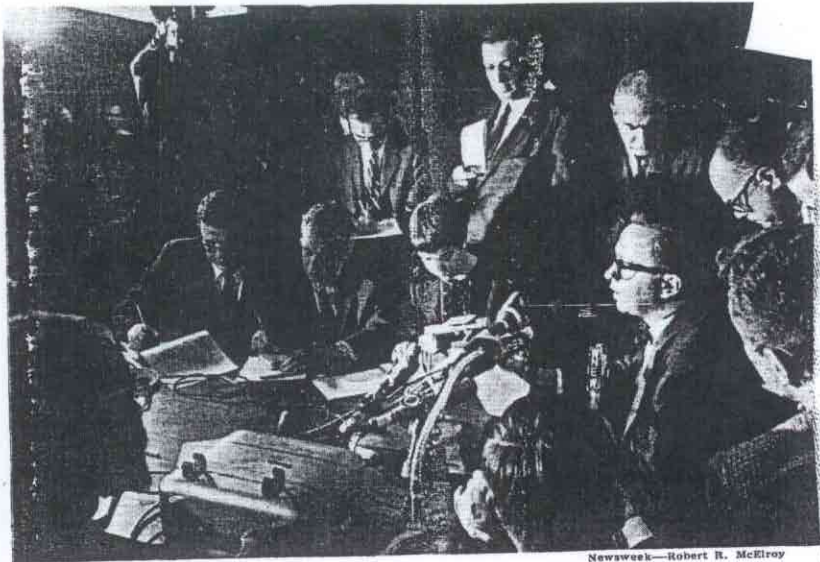


While Look's first Manchester issue rolled, Bobbie went shopping in New York

Newsway 1/2/67



UPI



Newsway—Robert H. McElroy

Valley and Jackie settled her fight with the magazine's editors (right, announcing terms) out of court

ing beside his bed, they embraced for the last time.

On the assassination itself, Manchester's inquiry, according to the source, agrees with the Warren commission's essential verdict that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, shot the President. Manchester is at variance with the commission only in detail. The author argues, for example, that Oswald fired only two shots and that the third cartridge found in his sniper's nest at the book depository could have been an empty casing left in the breach earlier. The assassination showed Mrs. Kennedy scrambling onto the trunk of the Presidential car after the final fatal shot. In Manchester's view, Mrs. Kennedy in her shock was attempting to catch a fragment of President Kennedy's skull.

Roses: During the dash to Parkland Memorial Hospital, by Manchester's account, Mrs. Kennedy supported her husband's head. When the limousine reached Parkland, she used her spray of red roses to shield his gaping head wound from view. Still, she resisted efforts to take her husband into the hospital. Finally, she reportedly said to Secret Service agent Clint Hill, "You know he's dead, Mr. Hill," and Hill, at last comprehending what she wanted, took his own coat and covered the head wound. Outside Trauma Room I, Mrs. Kennedy exchanged shoves with a nurse blocking the door who thought that she should not see the President. "I'm coming in and I'm staying," Jackie is quoted as having insisted.

Inside the trauma room, according to the manuscript, there was a nightmare within a nightmare. While two Roman Catholic priests were administering the last rites to the President, a third appeared outside, proclaiming that he had a piece of the one true Cross. Mrs. Kennedy was at first pleased that the priest had brought an offering for the Presi-

dent. Admitted to the room, the priest instead only waved a paper bag supposedly containing his relic near the body and then began trying to comfort the widow so eagerly that he had to be ousted. Later, a passage in the manuscript pictures Mrs. Kennedy missing her husband's instep as the body lay on a table.

Hostility: A good deal of the controversy about "The Death of a President" relates to supposed friction between the Kennedy and Johnson parties on the flight back to Washington aboard Air Force One. Manchester's account is not nearly so anti-Johnson as some reports in the press suggest. The Kennedy staff's animus toward Johnson was directed only in part at the new President personally. It was a function as well of their sense of loss and their almost inevitable hostility to anyone taking JFK's place. At the same time, the Kennedy party could not forget that the assassination had taken place on LBJ's native soil. At one point in the manuscript, Lady Bird Johnson recalls that, in an effort to console Jackie, she had mentioned her sorrow that the tragedy took place in Texas—and then immediately realized what an unfortunate thing that was to say under the circumstances.

There are many other examples of small misunderstandings, mostly innocent, that caused friction. LBJ is reported to have repeatedly called Mrs. Kennedy "Honey"—a well-intended gesture that she found grating. Arriving at Air Force One, Mrs. Kennedy was surprised to find LBJ and his party already on board. Almost at once, she wandered into the cabin JFK had used only to find the new President sprawled on the bunk dictating to a secretary. According to the manuscript, he rose without a word and left the cabin to her.

The question of when LBJ should take the Presidential oath also caused

problems. The manuscript has Attorney General Robert Kennedy in Washington, stunned by his grief, making no direct recommendation to LBJ when asked for an opinion on when the swearing in should take place. But one source who read the manuscript says it portrays Mr. Johnson as having left a distinct impression as the hours passed that Bobby had urged him to take the oath immediately. Another widely reported episode—the circumstances under which Mrs. Kennedy appeared in the picture of LBJ's swearing in—seems to have been distorted in the retelling. Some accounts suggested that Mr. Johnson had all but dragooned her into the photo. Actually, Manchester's version is that Mrs. Kennedy recognized the historical imperative of standing at LBJ's side as a symbol of the continuity of the Presidency and took her place by choice.

Delay: Before the swearing in, there was an agonizing delay until Federal Judge Sarah Hughes arrived at the plane. While Jackie waited in the rear, a photographer worked out positions for the principals to take during the ceremony. One key consideration was to place Mrs. Kennedy so that the photographs would not show her bloodstained skirt and legs.

When Air Force One arrived at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, a forklift truck rolled up to the hatch in the rear, where Mr. Kennedy's coffin had been stowed and where the Kennedy party had segregated themselves. The coffin was placed on the lift and Mrs. Kennedy jumped down beside it. LBJ tried to follow, but his way was barred by a knot of Kennedy staffers. Whatever their motives—blocking LBJ or sticking close to their fallen chief—Mr. Johnson came away with the feeling that they were trying to exclude him.

Mrs. Kennedy learned that Lee Harvey Oswald had been arrested as the

assassin, according to one reader, as she waited out the autopsy with Bobby at Bethesda Naval Hospital. When RFK told her that Oswald was believed to be a Communist, Jackie is quoted as saying: "That's absurd" and later explaining "He [JFK] didn't even have the satisfaction of being killed for civil rights. It had to be some silly little Communist . . . It even robs his death of any meaning."

Last Letter: On the night before the funeral, as the manuscript had it, Mrs. Kennedy wrote a last long letter to her husband, which she paraphrased in her taped interviews with author Manchester. Caroline wrote a note, too, and John Jr., 3 years old the day of the funeral, made a mark on a piece of paper. Mrs. Kennedy slipped these along with a pair of cuff links she had once given her husband and other mementos into the coffin at the White House. According to the source who read the manuscript, there was a discussion between Mrs. Kennedy and her mother, Mrs. Hugh D. Auchincloss, about how to break the news to Caroline. Mrs. Auchincloss suggested that Jackie ask nurse Maud Shaw to tell the girl, who was then almost 6. Before Jackie could instruct the nanny, Mrs. Auchincloss, to spare her daughter, personally asked Miss Shaw to undertake the task.

The tragedy kept on spawning its own aching problems of detail—even down to the choice of the gravesite. The manuscript has the "Irish Mafia" arguing for burial in Massachusetts, specifically in Boston's suburban Brookline. But Defense Secretary Robert McNamara urged Arlington National Cemetery and ultimately won Jackie over to his view. After the funeral, Mrs. Kennedy gave French President Charles de Gaulle two mementos of JFK: a whispered reminder

of how much her husband had hoped for better Franco-American relations and a single daisy from a vase in the Kennedys' quarters. That night, at French Ambassador Hervé Alphand's residence, de Gaulle showed the flower and spoke movingly of it.

The manuscript, readers say, is laced with innumerable poignant vignettes, few more moving than a love letter Jackie sent JFK from a Mediterranean holiday a month before the last trip to Dallas. Written in Mrs. Kennedy's characteristic style—phrases spliced by dashes—the letter reportedly says: "I miss you very much—which is nice—though it is a bit sad—but when I think how happy I am to miss you—I know I exaggerate everything—but I feel sorry for everyone else who is married."

Kennedy View: If author Manchester's 300,000-word reconstruction of the days immediately preceding and following Dallas has a serious flaw, it lies in a heavy orientation toward the Kennedys' view of the events and the absence of any firsthand reminiscence from Lyndon Baines Johnson. Manchester did interview Lady Bird and twice set up appointments with LBJ, but he never managed to see him. Through all the subsequent controversy, the President has maintained a dignified—if hurt—silence about Manchester's chronicle. Now, intimates say, he is "as puzzled as anyone else" about the flap. Unhappy about the evolving portrait of himself in the stories about the Manchester book, he understands at the same time that the Kennedy set would have resented anyone who succeeded John Kennedy.

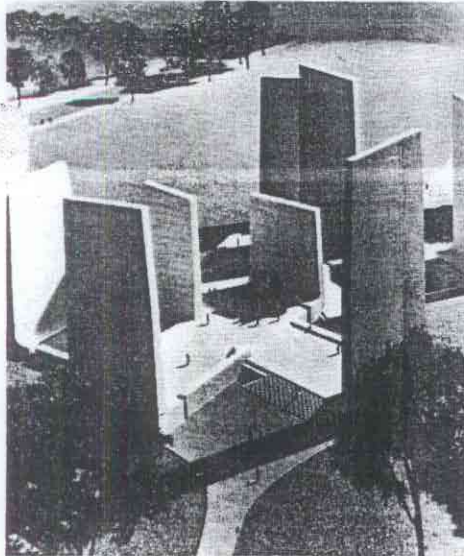
LBJ's own recollections of that fateful day, as he has recounted them to friends, have a touching quality all their own. What raced through his mind when

he learned the President was dead was no personal thrust for power but rather the memory of the day Harry Truman suddenly inherited the Presidency from Franklin D. Roosevelt more than eighteen years before.

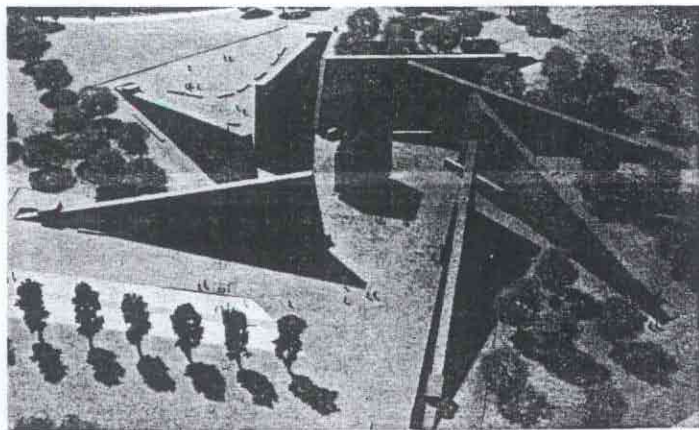
Recollection: By coincidence, President Johnson recalls, he and House Speaker Sam Rayburn had planned a party for Truman that very day, mainly as a morale booster for a man lost in the limbo of the Vice Presidency. "He doesn't think anybody likes him," Rayburn told Mr. Johnson. As it happened, before LBJ arrived the guest of honor was suddenly and mysteriously summoned to the White House and told to come in the front door. What Truman didn't know was that FDR had just died in Warm Springs, Ga.—"but," as Truman dourly told Rayburn, "they never tell me anything."

Rayburn followed Truman to the White House and later filled Mr. Johnson in on the scene there: Harry Truman taking charge, thanking everyone for rallying so quickly for his swearing in, consoling a tearful Frances Perkins. The oath-taking, administered by Chief Justice Harlan Stone, was carried off as soon as Bess and Margaret Truman arrived. The moral Mr. Johnson seemed to be drawing last week without spelling it out was that no one at the time suggested that Truman had shown unseemly haste in promptly taking the Presidential oath.

Mr. Johnson's own recollection of his subsequent rise to power differs sharply from the Kennedys' evident perception of it. The Secret Service, he recalled, wanted to put him aboard Air Force One with its superior communications gear and to place Mr. Kennedy's coffin on the Vice Presidential plane, Air Force Two, which had flown LBJ to Texas. But Mr. John-



Louis Checkman



Ben Schnall

THE FDR MEMORIAL: Amid the furor over a literary memorial to JFK, the six-year battle over an FDR monument in Washington apparently ended. "Instant Stonehenge," critics had branded the eight rectangular slabs of an earlier design (left) before the Roosevelt family vetoed it. Last week, seven towering slabs were unveiled (above) to FDR Jr.'s instant approval.

son ordered the body put aboard Air Force One. "I wasn't going to let Mrs. Kennedy fly back alone with his body," he explained to intimates. By Mr. Johnson's memory, Robert Kennedy was not noncommittal about when he should take the oath of office, but recommended that he do so at once. He recalls telephoning Bobby ("I hate to bother you at a time like this, but . . .") and asking for a ruling. Kennedy, he said, told him: "I think you should be sworn in there," but Bobby also said he would check it and call back. The return call came instead from then Deputy Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, who advised Mr. Johnson to take the Presidential oath at once and dictated its wording to a Johnson secretary.

Interception: There was, the President admitted, at least one instance which he had to exert his new authority—when JFK's Air Force aide, Brig. Gen. Godfrey McHugh, went forward to tell the pilot to get the plane off the ground. (According to NEWSWEEK's Charles Roberts, who was on the plane, McHugh got his cue from staffer Kenneth O'Donnell after the coffin was hoisted aboard.) LBJ remembers intercepting McHugh and telling him he would tell the pilot when to take off. "I did tell him off," Johnson conceded. He also agreed that he probably did call Mrs. Kennedy "Honey." "It's a word that comes easy to me as a Texan," he explained. "You know, if I call some guy's office and he isn't in, I'll say to his secretary, 'Honey, have him call me when he comes in.'"

But for once, last week, the President of the United States was a mere spectator at the main event—the battle of wills pitting Mrs. Kennedy against Manchester, Look and Harper & Row. The contest seemed headed for the courts until a pivotal meeting at the Wall Street offices of Look's attorneys. Accompanied by sometime Kennedy (and Johnson) braintruster Richard Goodwin and her lawyer, Simon Rifkind, Mrs. Kennedy was given a paste-up of Look's four installments and, for the first time, read portions of the text she had fought so hard to quash. More conferences followed over the next few days and by midweek, Mrs. Kennedy and Look came to terms after the magazine agreed to cut or soften a dozen passages to which she objected as invasions of her privacy. The changes were relayed by telephone to Jackie (who was at her Fifth Avenue apartment), Bobby (who was skiing in Idaho), Manchester's New York lawyer and Harper & Row officials.

Even at that, the lawyers wrangled over the wording of a joint statement. Finally the parties put out separate ones. What neither Look spokesman William Attwood's statement nor Rifkind's specified was which parts of the manuscript had been scissored. One insider said

Mrs. Kennedy wanted to cut chunks of up to five paragraphs, most of them concerning her emotional reactions. Some such material did go—including several teary paragraphs elaborating on how the news was broken to Caroline—and so did some other passages that Attwood dismissed as "gingerbread." One solid source said that some of the dozen cuts had been as trivial as a passing mention by Jackie that she had discovered a wrinkle on her face.

Sticking Points: With the settlement of the Jackie-Look contretemps, the consensus was that the rest of the dispute would be easily settled. Actually, however, sticking points remained in the negotiations with Harper & Row and Manchester. The publisher apparently thought it could simply adopt the Look changes, but Jackie wanted to exercise what she considered to be her contractual right to review the entire manuscript. Late in the week, one source said, the publishers turned over the entire manuscript to the Kennedys. In her action against Manchester, Mrs. Kennedy sought also to recover the tape recordings of her ten hours of interviews with the author and copies of letters that had been turned over to him. With their deadline for filing court papers obligingly postponed by the judge at least until this week, the contending parties were expected to keep pressing for a quiet settlement.

However the squabble was finally resolved, "The Death of a President" had already become, like the assassination, the stuff of gossip, speculation and, ultimately, legend. There were persistent reports that foreign publishers might try to issue uncut versions of the book, but it hardly mattered. Jacqueline Kennedy's crusade against sensationalism had already brought out enough of Manchester's history to make it the most sensational story of the year. **END**