

Kennedy-Johnson Clash on the Eve of Killing

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 7—The "final conference" between President Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson the night before the President was assassinated angered Mr. Johnson and ended in substantial disagreement over political matters, it is alleged in the first installment of William Manchester's "Death of a President."

The installment, recounting the events of Nov. 21, 1963, the first day of the Texas tour that

An eyewitness to Mr. Johnson's departure is quoted as saying that the Vice President looked furious, and Mr. Man-

chester reports that Mr. Kennedy later told his wife, Jacqueline Kennedy, that "Lyndon" was in "trouble."

Another Recollection

Mr. Manchester refers to this meeting as the final conference between the two men, but Mr. Johnson has recalled at least one later, more felicitous exchange between the two.

At the LBJ Ranch a few days after Christmas, 1963, Mr. Johnson—by then the President—told this correspondent and others that the last words Mr. Kennedy had spoken to him were:

"Lyndon, I know there are two states we're going to carry in 1964—Massachusetts and Texas."

Mr. Johnson said Mr. Kennedy told him that in a room at the Texas Hotel at Fort Worth on the morning of Nov. 22, just before the Presidential party departed for Dallas.

Mr. Manchester writes that Mr. Kennedy did not want to make the Texas trip, believed that Mr. Johnson ought to be able to straighten out that state's political problems by himself but felt that he had no political choice since his prospects of carrying Texas in 1964 were endangered.

As was reported at the time in this and other newspapers, the Texas feud—which still exists—was between a conservative Democratic faction headed by Gov. John B. Connally Jr., then and now a close associate of Mr. Johnson, and the liberal wing of the party led by Senator Ralph W. Yarborough.

Mr. Manchester writes that during the Presidential visit to Texas, Governor Connally intended to snub and embarrass Senator Yarborough, who had been a strong supporter of Mr. Kennedy. He recounts how the Senator, on Nov. 21, twice refused to ride in the same car with Vice President Johnson in motorcades at San Antonio and Houston.

This was widely reported at the time. It was further reported on Nov. 22, when Mr. Yarborough and Mr. Johnson did ride together in the fatal motorcade at Dallas, that they had done so on the express orders of President Kennedy, who wanted a show of unity.

In a letter to this correspondent dated Dec. 21, 1965, Senator Yarborough called the latter report "absolutely incorrect" and added that "it was not on any President's orders that I rode with Vice President Johnson."

Fort Worth Motorcade

That part of the story is not

reached in the first installment of "Death of a President," but the Yarborough letter of 1965 mentions one incident not included in the installment's account of the events of Nov. 21.

Conceding that he had not ridden with Mr. Johnson in the San Antonio and Houston motorcades, Senator Yarborough wrote:

"That same night, Nov. 21, 1963, I rode in the car with Vice President and Mrs. Johnson from Carswell Air Force Base in a parade to the Texas Hotel in Fort Worth at approximately 11:00 P.M. and planned to ride with Vice President Johnson for the rest of the time if requested, and if he had no objections. President Kennedy had not asked me to ride with Vice President Johnson then."

In Mr. Manchester's account of Nov. 21, as presented in Look, there is no mention of this motorcade or of the Yarborough-Johnson presence in the same car. The author mentions only the two occasions on which Mr. Yarborough did not ride with Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Manchester reports that Mrs. Kennedy—shortly after the Kennedy-Johnson conference that is said to have angered the Vice President—"blurted" to the President that she did not like Governor Connally.

Governor Connally, riding in the same limousine with Mr.

Kennedy on Nov. 22, was wounded critically by the assassin's bullets.

Mr. Manchester pictures Mrs. Kennedy as having felt that the conservative Governor was hypocritical in his compliments to the President and that he was "needling" Mr. Kennedy.

He reports that the President cautioned her against developing a prejudice against Mr. Connally and reminded her that he had come to Texas to heal political wounds, no cause them. He said Mr. Connally had only been hinting that he would run ahead of Mr. Kennedy in Texas in 1964.

Mr. Manchester reports that later that night Governor Connally talked with reporters in the coffee shop on the Texas Hotel in Fort Worth, but he does not include one incident of the Governor's conversation. Mr. Connally tried to get a reporter for The Houston Post to tell him in advance the results of a statewide political poll that The Post intended to publish the next day.

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Connally Gets a Laugh

The reporter would not disclose the poll results. White House reporters who had been in Houston earlier in the day had been told about the poll.

however. When Douglas Kiker, then the White House correspondent of The New York Herald Tribune, joined the Connally group he asked Mr. Connally what he thought of the fact that the poll would show that Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona would easily defeat Mr. Kennedy in Texas in 1964.

Mr. Connally laughed out loud at finding out by accident what he had wanted to know. In later discussions of the poll, however, he said he was not surprised at its results as of that time, but believed that by election day Mr. Kennedy would be able to carry the state.

Mr. Manchester lays heavy stress on the right-wing political climate and the penchant for violence that he attributes to the city of Dallas—a city that he asserts had a "disease of the spirit."

He calls it "legitimate speculation" to suggest that this atmosphere had considerable effect upon Lee Harvey Oswald, whom he labels the assassin but who he says did not belong to a conventional criminal conspiracy.

The threatening attitude of Dallas was so pervasive, Mr. Manchester writes, that in the days before his Texas trip, Mr. Kennedy was specifically warned not to visit the city.

The warning was made by Representative Hale Boggs of Louisiana (later a member of the Warren Commission); Byron Skelton, the Texas Democratic National Committeeman, and Senator J. W. Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas.

After having been mobbed in Dallas on Oct. 24, 1963, Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson also urged Mr. Kennedy not to visit the city, but he later withdrew his objection.

According to Mr. Manchester, Mr. Skelton carried his objections to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Walter W. Jenkins of the Vice President's staff, and to John M. Bailey and Jerry Bruno of the Democratic National Committee—all without effect. Mr. Bailey was chairman of the committee.

Robert Kennedy did pass the warning along to P. Kenneth O'Donnell, then the President's primary aide for political and security matters, but Mr. Manchester reports that Mr. O'Donnell regarded the Skelton warning about the possibilities of violence as being based on an unsupported hunch.

A Change in Plans

Mr. Bruno, who made advance arrangements for the trip, had selected the Dallas Women's Building for the President's luncheon speech, Mr. Manchester writes, but for political reasons Governor Connally insisted on the Dallas Trade Mart. The motorcade route to the mart

passed the Texas School Book Depository from which Lee Harvey Oswald fired.

Ultimately, Mr. O'Donnell made the decision to accede to Mr. Connally's choice of the Trade Mart.

Mr. Manchester reports that President Kennedy was delighted when Mrs. Kennedy readily agreed to accompany him on the political tour. This was something she had seldom done, and her decision surprised Washington at the time.

The author describes the President as having personally selected the clothes he wanted Mrs. Kennedy to wear in Texas, so that she could show "these Texans what good taste really is."

Informed sources said that this quotation included one of the modifications that Look had agreed to in the first installment. The word "Texans" was said to have been substituted for "these rich Texas broads."

On their departure day, Mr. Kennedy was said to be angry at Brig. Gen. Godfrey McHugh, his Air Force aide, when it was learned that the weather in Texas would be hot.

General McHugh had reported that the weather would be cool, and the President had chosen cool-weather clothes for Mrs. Kennedy as a result. She wore them anyway, as it was too late to change the selection.

Mr. Manchester recounts one particularly striking anecdote. As Mr. Kennedy spoke at a dinner in Houston on the night of Nov. 21, Jack Valenti—later an aide to President Johnson and now the president of the Motion Picture Association—was standing directly behind him but below the raised platform.

Mr. Valenti's eyes were in line with Mr. Kennedy's hands, Mr. Manchester writes. He saw them trembling so violently that the President seemed to be palsied.

No reason for this is given in the Look installment, although the incident may be discussed at greater length in the forthcoming book version of "The Death of a President," to be published by Harper & Row. Preparing for bed in Fort Worth the night of Nov. 21, Mr. Manchester writes, the President told his tired wife to sleep late and skip his first appearance the next day.

The author does not explain that the early morning appearance in a parking lot across from the Texas Hotel, was arranged to appease followers of Mr. Yarborough. They believed Mr. Connally was confining Mr. Kennedy to conservative audiences, and they insisted upon the parking lot speech so that anyone who wanted to could see and hear him.

Having instructed Mrs. Kennedy to sleep late, Mr. Kennedy appeared at the parking lot without her. Those who heard him remember that he drew a laugh from the sizable crowd standing in a drizzling rain when he said:

"Mrs. Kennedy is organizing herself. It takes longer, but of course she looks better than we do when she does it." *ENE*