

THE HARRIS SURVEY

Book Dispute Lowers the Kennedys' Image

BY LOUIS HARRIS
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One in every three Americans says he "thinks less" of Jacqueline Kennedy as a result of the controversy over publication of William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President." By nearly 2 to 1, people reject the claim that Mrs. Kennedy's right to privacy might be invaded by publication of the full account of events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy.

Sen. Robert Kennedy (D-N.Y.) also lost some standing as a result of the dis-

pute, with 20% saying they "think less" of him now as a result of the book episode. Significantly, the better-educated and more affluent segments of the population are more critical of the Kennedys.

Despite the personal criticism, no more than one person in every three is prepared to believe that the Kennedy family was trying to control the writing of history. People simply believe that the matter was handled with a lack of dignity and propriety, particularly since Manchester had been commissioned to write the account in the first place.

Sampling of Opinions

"She told him he could go ahead and do it and then changed her mind," a housewife in Baltimore said. "That isn't right." A professional man in Greenfield, Mass., put it this way: "Mrs. Kennedy was a pawn. She let herself be used by members of that family to further their own political careers."

A salesclerk in Georgia took Mrs. Kennedy's side: "She had enough backbone to object. She risked an unfavorable reaction, but that's more in her favor." A blue-collar worker in Chicago said: "She should have the final say over what is written for private gain about herself and her husband's life. She's entitled to live her own life."

A rather high 69% of the public says it followed the book controversy closely. However, barely a majority of the less-well-educated and lower-income people read about the episode, compared with nearly nine out of every 10 people in the more affluent and upper-income group.

Effect on Kennedy

It must be concluded that the controversy has had an effect on Robert Kennedy's political future. For example, among people who did not follow the disagreements and the lawsuit Mrs. Kennedy filed, Sen. Kennedy runs slightly ahead of President Johnson as the choice for the Democratic nomination in 1968. But

among people who followed the controversy, an overwhelming 59% prefer Mr. Johnson.

The group most critical of the Kennedys is the growing body of affluent Americans. They were more prepared to think that the Kennedys were trying to dictate the writing of history and most rejected the claim that Mrs. Kennedy's privacy was being violated.

While it can be argued that people in this group tend to be the most conservative and Republican-minded, nonetheless, they are also the most tolerant segment of the public on such issues as civil rights and the introduction of new ideas into politics and the national life. President Kennedy had achieved a high degree of respect among the affluent.

A carefully drawn cross section of the public was asked:

"As a result of the controversy over the book, 'The Death of a President,' do you think more of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, less or has it made no difference in your attitude toward her?"

VIEW OF MRS. JACQUELINE KENNEDY

Think Think No Dif- Not
More Less erence Sure
% % % %

Nationwide	10	33	51	8
By education				
8th grade or less	15	22	50	13
High school	8	30	57	5
College	10	32	47	11

In the case of Robert Kennedy, 20% of the public said they thought less of him for his part in the episode; 6% thought more of him, 73% said it made no difference.

However, an analysis of the preference test between Kennedy and President Johnson (reported Sunday as 56 to 44% in favor of Mr. Johnson), according to whether or not they had followed the book controversy, is revealing:

IMPACT OF BOOK CONTROVERSY ON KENNEDY-JOHNSON PREFERENCE FOR 1968 PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

PREFER L.B.J. R.F.K.

Nationwide	56%	44%
By book episode:		
Followed controversy	59	41
Did not follow it	45	55