

FRONTIER

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Profits Without Honor

THE UGLY streak of brutality running through our cash-box culture was never revealed in starker terms than in the controversy between Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy and the publishers of the forthcoming book, *Death of a President*.

William Manchester, the author, entered into an agreement two years ago with Mrs. Kennedy and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, then Attorney-General, to write an account of the assassination. This agreement gave both the President's widow and Senator Kennedy the right to approve the text before publication. Under the agreement, the author had access to material that would have been otherwise unavailable to him.

Mrs. Kennedy's objections relate only to small parts of the huge manuscript—sections she claims are an invasion of her privacy. But only after she started court action, did Harper & Row, publisher of the forthcoming book, and *Look* magazine, which will serialize a condensed version, agree to delete the objectionable passages. In a peti-

tion to the New York State Supreme Court, Mrs. Kennedy said that publication of the work in its present form "will result precisely in the sensationalism and commercialism which we—Robert F. Kennedy and I—sought so strenuously to avoid."

Behind that formal statement, the anguish of Mrs. Kennedy was evident, but the distinguished chairman of Harper & Row, Cass Canfield, chose to reply mawkishly of the book's "right to live," and said it will be published "in the interest of historical accuracy and the public's right to know."

The issue is neither historical accuracy nor the public's right to know. The question is whether the author broke his agreement with Mrs. Kennedy and whether, as a spokesman for Mrs. Kennedy said, "details which bear no conceivable relation to history" can be published in violation of that agreement.

Remove the rewards of the project—money and public attention—and the wishes of the President's widow would have been honored without question. *em*