## **Dallas Assassination Story Told Superbly**

First Installment of Manchester Volume
Shows Narrative Quality, Bold Judgments

BY ROBERT J. DONOVAN
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WASHINGTON — The first glimpse of William Manchester's heralded work on the Kennedy assassination reveals it as a superb retelling of a well-nown story.

It is the quality of the narrative, the boldness of the author's judgments and his penetrating and often biting characteriza-tions of men and events that are paramount, not the much publicized "scoops." In the first of the four installments of the serialiation of "The Death of a President" in Look magaine, which was released to the press Saturday, here is really not a great deal that had not already been known about the ragedy. More new materil doubtless will appear in nture installments and in he book itself, scheduled or publication in April.

Penetrating Skill

But judging by the first installment, the story is fold with such skill and renetration that even hough it is a familiar one it seems fresh, vivid, clear. This is not to say there are no new details. Kennedy. It is certainly newly revealed, for instance, that Mrs. Kennedy fook an intense dislike to fov. John B. Connally Jr. when she reached Texas with her husband on the lateful trip. "I can't stand aim all day," she told the President.

Indeed Connally emer.

vork as a most unappealing figure. Manchester makes no effort to concealist loathing for Dallas. He coes far beyond the Waren Commission by sugesting that the cit disease of the spirit" contitioned the state of mill Lee Harvey Oswald. On the other hand augh this lirst insta

ment carries the story only up to the eve of the assassination, its implication is that Manchester agrees with the Warren Commission that Oswald was the sole assassin. The book therefore may have to endure the tirades of those who believe that President Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy.

Nothing in the first installment at least should seem very offensive to President Johnson. Of course the advance publicity about the book's detraction of Mr. Johnson pertained to the trip back from Dallas after the assassination. Hence later installments may yet have the White House in a rage.

In the first installment, however, Manchester sympathizes with Mr. Johnson's political problem in Texas. The problem was that the conservative Democrate her the conservative Democrate he

the liberal Democrats led by Sen. Ralph Yarborough. It was to help smooth over this squabble that Mr. Kennedy agreed to go to Texas.

Mr. Kennedy did want to go and Mancoter said that "it appeared him that Jahnson on the said to him that Jahnson on the said that the said

petty dispute himself," Nevertheless Manchester writes that "Johnson's problems were authentic."

Thus it is not Mr. Johnson but Connally who comes off badly in this account. The Texas governor is depicted as a money-conscious schemer who was constantly spinning wheels.

One result, according to Manchester, was that the Trade Mart was chosen as the place for the President to speak in Dallas rather than the Women's Building because the Trade Mart better suited a Connally scheme for humiliating Yarborough. But by he ad ing for the Trade Mart the Presidential motorcade passed the Texas School Book Depository and Lee Harvey Oswald as it would not have done if Mr. Kennedy had gone instead to the Women's Building.

Ne Blame Laid

Naturally Manchester does not blame Connally, who will say four wine haps

pened outside Oswald's window. But if this book is to become the definitive work on the subject, Connally's name will be unipleasantly associated with the assassination throughs out history.

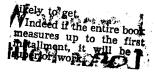
Perhaps the boldest judgment Manchester makes in the first installment is in setting the almost precise moment at which Oswald went totally insane or, in the author's words, suffered "the total eclipse of his reason."

This occurred, Manchest ter wrote, "shortly before 9 p.m." on the night before the assassination while the President and Mrs. Kennedy were still in Fg. Worth. What caused "the breaking point" was the final rejection of the "paranoic" Oswald by his wife, Marina.

To those who believe that Oswald did act alone while in the grip of mental disease, Manchester paints a fairly believable picture

Manchester can be so precise in describing its processes. In another context he had said that "legifimate speculation is one of the duties of historicans. 9 Obviously had is per-

forming this duty in Trying to penetrate Os o wald. His speculations come through in highly convincing fashion and manchester's characterization of Oswald's about as good at the yould be even



## HE KNEW OF HAZARDS IN **AUTHORSHIP**

AMHERST, Mass. (#)

That tension can develop between a writer and his subject was a fact known to William R. Manchester long before he submitted his prose to the editing of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy's friends.

Four years ago, speaking at a writer's conference at the University of Massachusetts here, Manchester said:

"No one knows better than the novelist how deeply people cherish illusions. It's risky for him and even riskier for his subjects. Some authors persuade themselves that the custo-

thors persuade them-selves that the custo-mers are right."