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# Dallas Assassination Story Told Superbly

## First Installment of Manchester Volume Shows Narrative Quality, Bold Judgments

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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-known story.

It is the quality of the narrative, the boldness of the author's judgments and his penetrating and often biting characterizations 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 magazine, which was released to the press Saturday, there is really not a great deal that had not already been known about the tragedy. More new material doubtless will appear in future installments and in the book itself, scheduled for publication in April.

### Penetrating Skill

But judging by the first installment, the story is told with such skill and penetration that even though it is a familiar one it seems fresh, vivid, clear.

This is not to say there are no new details. There are, particularly incidents and conversations between President and Mrs. Kennedy. It is certainly newly revealed, for instance, that Mrs. Kennedy took an intense dislike to Gov. John B. Connally Jr. when she reached Texas with her husband on the fateful trip. "I can't stand him all day," she told the President.

Indeed Connally emer-

ges in the Manchester work as a most unappealing figure. Manchester makes no effort to conceal his loathing for Dallas. He goes far beyond the Warren Commission by suggesting that the city "disease of the spirit" conditioned the state of mind of Lee Harvey Oswald. On the other hand, though this first instal-

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 de-traction 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 Dem-

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 not want to go and Manchester said that "it appeared to him that Johnson could not resist."

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 heading 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.

### No Blame Laid

Naturally Manchester does not blame Connally, who was seriously wounded himself, for what hap-

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

Perhaps the boldest judgment Manchester makes in the first installment is in setting the most precise moment at which Oswald went totally

insane or, in the author's words, suffered "the total eclipse of his reason."

This occurred, Manchester wrote, "shortly before 9 p.m." on the night before the assassination while the President and Mrs. Kennedy were still in Ft. 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 of him.

No one will ever be able to know Oswald's exact mental condition and ex-

pects may question how Manchester can be so precise in describing its processes. In another context he had said that "legitimate speculation is one of the duties of historians." Obviously he is per-

forming this duty in trying to penetrate Oswald. His speculations come through in highly convincing fashion and Manchester's characterization of Oswald is about as good as the world has ever

truly to get. Indeed if the entire book measures up to the first installment, it will be a work of art.

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## HE KNEW OF HAZARDS IN AUTHORSHIP

AMHERST, Mass. (AP) —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 customers are right."

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