

The Manchester Story

To publish excerpts from William Manchester's "The Death of a President," *Look* magazine had to pay \$665,000, endure a raw-nerved confrontation with the Kennedy family and subsequently contend with a lawsuit.

Was it worth it? Apparently. *Look's* circulation, normally about 7.6 million, climbed to an estimated 9.5 million by the time the fourth and final installment of the Manchester book appeared; this represented one of the sharpest, short-run circulation gains in magazine history.

How many of these new readers will *Look* keep? *Look* wasn't talking for the record, but the first edition after the series reportedly had a press run of 8.1 million copies—including an estimated 300,000 for new subscribers. If the bi-weekly *Look* can hang on to its new readers, it will have widened its numerical edge over its nearest competitor, *Life* (weekly circulation: 7.4 million), which *Look* outbid for the rights to serialize the Manchester articles.

This week, *Look* publishes an intensely personal, sometimes bitter 12,000-word monograph by Manchester on the story "behind" his book. Some items:

- The 44-year-old author describes how the task of writing the book put him in the hospital with exhaustion. "I was trying," he wrote, "to say *Oswald, surrounded by over 70 policemen, was murdered in the basement of the Dallas jail*. But the pen point remained immobile. It was too much . . . Like a watch that someone had forgotten to wind, I had just stopped."

- Manchester also accuses Sen. Robert F. Kennedy of being "wholly irrational" when they met to discuss the book in Washington last August. Manchester writes: "He pretended to leave the room, hid in an alcove, and leapt out, pointing an accusing finger at me."

- When Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy told him that honor was the issue in their dispute, Manchester agreed. "The difficulty," he writes, "was that her definition differed sharply from mine. I was a writer, not a courtier."