

What Jackie

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1966

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Wrote to LBJ

By **PETER LISAGOR**

Washington, Dec. 28 (CDN)—President Johnson has in his files several hand-written letters from Mrs. John F. Kennedy, expressing her gratitude for his thoughtfulness and kindness in the period following her husband's assassination, it was learned here today.

The letters were written at intervals in the aftermath of the tragedy, and contradict the account of Johnson's behavior toward the grief-stricken widow reportedly contained in William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President," according to informants.

In his controversial manuscript, Manchester allegedly pictured Johnson as boorish and thoughtless on the Presidential plane at the Dallas airport and on the flight back to Washington.

The White House staff has been explicitly instructed not to discuss the Manchester book or any matters pertaining to it.

But, it is known that, when rumors of the author's unflattering portrayal of Johnson's actions and words began to circulate here several months ago, the President's staff assembled evidence to disprove the allegations and to show that the President was not only considerate to Mrs. Kennedy and her family but deferred in every possible way to her wishes.

Mrs. Kennedy's letters to the President presumably are a part of that evidence.

Johnson's Recollections

President Johnson's own recollections of events at Parkland Memorial Hospital and on Air Force One were contained in a statement he sent to the Warren Commission on July 10, 1964, and they also serve as a vivid rebuttal to charges that he lacked solicitude for the widow.

He said that Kenneth P.

O'Donnell, President Kennedy's special assistant, informed him upon arrival at the plane that Mrs. Kennedy "would not leave the hospital without the President's body, and urged again that we go ahead and take Air Force one and return to Washington.

"I did not want to go and leave Mrs. Kennedy in this situation. I said so, but I agreed to that we would board the

The End of the Affair. See Murray Kempton's column on Page 43.

airplane and wait until Mrs. Kennedy and the President's body were brought aboard the plane."

Some reports of the Manchester version indicated that the author strongly suggested that Johnson took command of the plane in a hasty manner that was offensive to Mrs. Kennedy and others in the official party.

In his Warren Commission statement, Johnson recalled the difficulty of conveying "an accurate impression of the period time that we were in the hospital room.

'We Were All Stunned'

"We were all stunned. I suppose we were in a state of shock and there was no time for the shock to wear off sufficiently so that the magnitude of our personal loss of this great man and good friend could express itself in words or in surface feelings.

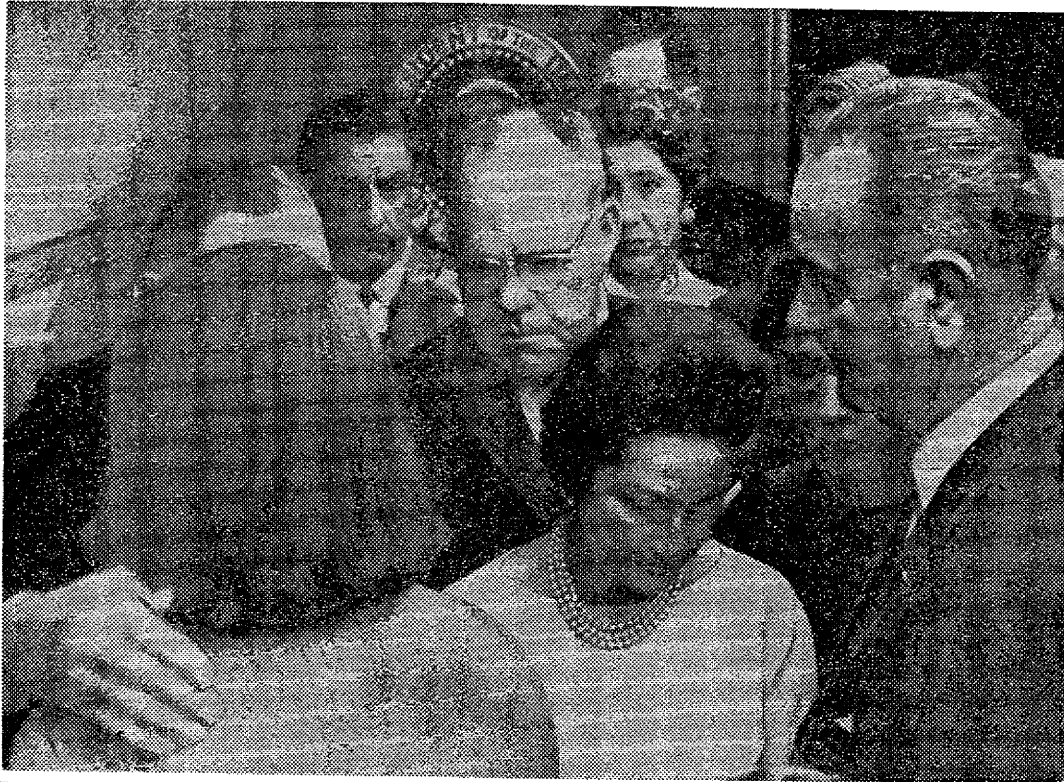
"I suppose actually that the only outlet for the grief that shock had submerged was our sharp, painful and bitter concern and solicitude for Mrs. Kennedy."

When he was taken into the private quarters of Air Force One, Johnson recalled, "it didn't seem right for John Kennedy not to be there. I told someone that we preferred Mrs. Kennedy to use these quarters."

Later in his statement, Johnson said that, when Mrs. Kennedy arrived with the coffin, "Mrs. Johnson and I spoke to her. We tried to comfort her and our words seemed inadequate. She went into the private quarters of the plane . . ."

Relating how he had asked someone to find out if Mrs. Kennedy would stand with him

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Rep. Thomas (D-Tex) comforts Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy moments after Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as President in Air Force One at Dallas.