

Manchester Assails Kennedy 'Politics'

Says He Got Approval

Mr. Manchester, however, says that the Kennedys approved the manuscript last July 14 when John Siegenthaler, the editor of The Nashville Tennessean, who is one of the Kennedy advisers, told him it was all right to submit the manuscript to magazines for bids on the serialization rights.

Furthermore, he says, Mrs. Kennedy did not object to publication of the book until she learned of Look magazine's offer for the rights—\$665,000.

"She apparently felt that this was too much for an author to get," he said.

The Kennedys say this is absurd, that when Mrs. Kennedy first objected to serialization she thought the money was going to the Kennedy Library in Cambridge, Mass. Furthermore, they say, Mr. Thomas was also under this impression.

They also say that, when Mr. Manchester agreed to write the book, he said he would accept

no more than \$250,000 for his work.

Now, Senator Kennedy told a friend, "They have the money and we have the public relations problem."

Mr. Manchester says he does not understand the Kennedys, but he insists that they sometimes treated him as if he were a paid family chronicler, although they did not support him financially while he worked.

"Mao Tse-tung and Jackie are the two most inscrutable people I know," he said.

While gathering material for the book, Mr. Manchester had two interviews with Mrs. Kennedy, recording about 10 hours of the conversation on four reels of tape.

The tapes are now in a safe

deposit box. Simon H. Rifkind, Mrs. Kennedy's attorney, has one key to the box, Mr. Manchester the other.

"This is humiliating," he said. "Am I a pervert? Have I ever belonged to any disloyal organization? The Kennedys entrusted me with all kinds of confidences, and I never violated them, but now I'm suspect."

Mr. Manchester admits that Mrs. Kennedy made a deep emotional impact on him during the interviews. "She must be seen to be believed," he said. "When she turns on the charm, it's incredible."

While he wrote the book, Mr. Manchester said, "I knew for the first time what it was like to live in an absolute monarchy."



The New York Times
William Manchester

"Then," Mr. Manchester said, "he demanded that I 'shred and emasculate' the manuscript. He even asked if I would join in a suit against Look."

Mr. Manchester offered his views on the dispute that enveloped "The Death of a President" in a series of interviews with The New York Times at his home in Middletown, Conn. He has since departed for an extended vacation at an undisclosed location. He offered many of the same views to Newsweek magazine, which is publishing an interview with him in its issue just out.

He said in his Times interview that Theodore C. Sorensen, one of the advisers, suggested to the Senator that for political reasons he file suit to prevent the publication of the book. Ultimately, however, it was Mrs. Kennedy who brought suit. She said that Mr. Manchester had invaded her privacy in his use of her personal recollections. The suit was withdrawn last week following an agreement on the content of

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visers that he sit down. "Bobby lost his temper," Mr. Manchester said. "At one point he accused me of shouting at him when I hadn't raised my voice. This is an old courtroom lawyer's trick."

warned the Kennedys that the manuscript was in part tasteless in its treatment of Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Manchester himself, in a letter to Mrs. Kennedy, wrote that he had tried to purge himself of political and personal prejudices while he wrote the book.

"Though I tried desperately to suppress my bias against a certain eminent statesman who always reminded me of someone in a grade D movie of the late show," he wrote, "the prejudice showed through."

"This was cheap of me, but I suppose there is a little meanness in all of us."

Neither in the letter nor in the interview did he name the statesman to whom he referred.

Neither the Kennedys nor their advisers deny that much of the revision they sought in the book dealt with material that had political implications. But this was done, they say, largely in the interest of good taste.

They agree that the book could strain relationships between the Kennedy and Johnson political alliances, but they say this is largely because the book could be thought of as the official Kennedy version of the assassination.

Mrs. Kennedy and Senator Kennedy did authorize Mr. Manchester to write the book, they say, but never approved its text.

By JOHN CORRY

William Manchester says that Senator Robert F. Kennedy wanted to "shred and emasculate" his book, "The Death of a President," simply for political reasons.

Furthermore, he says, "the Senator is surrounded by people who have hitched their wagon to his star," adding:

"They all think in terms of another Kennedy Administration."

The advisers, the author says, edited the manuscript and served as intermediaries between himself and Senator Kennedy and Mrs. John F. Kennedy. Their eagerness to please the Senator, he said, clouded their judgments.

According to Mr. Manchester, Senator Kennedy demanded that he change the manuscript at a meeting in his office in Washington.

Mr. Manchester says that Mr. Kennedy's advisers sat on facing couches, and that he sat on a chair. The Senator, he said, paced back and forth despite entreaties from his ad-

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the Manchester book. Senator Kennedy said last night that he could not comment on the Manchester interviews since he had not read them. But, he said, "the fact is that Ted Sorensen never advised anyone to sue."

In commenting on the Newsweek interview, Senator Kennedy said last night: "It all finally comes down to the fact that Mr. Manchester gave his word and then broke it. No statement or interview or description of events, however dramatic, can alter that plain fact."

Mr. Manchester did not speculate, in The Times interview, on precisely how his book might affect Senator Kennedy, although he denied that it was a diatribe against President Johnson.

He told the story of the assassination of President Kennedy, he said, exactly as it happened.

"To do less," he said, "would have violated my integrity as a reporter."

Not all the people involved in the dispute over the book accept Mr. Manchester's views. Mrs. Kennedy called the book "tasteless and distorted." Evan Thomas, the vice president of Harper & Row, which plans a first printing of 400,000 copies of the book in the spring,

"It was like she was Marie Antoinette, completely isolated from the world around her by her court-- her advisers," he said.

Mr. Manchester, who wrote an earlier book about President Kennedy, "Portrait of a President," said that at first he had transferred his feelings about the President to Mrs. Kennedy and Senator Kennedy and that this had been a mistake.

"They don't understand contemporary history," he said. "John Kennedy did."

"The one Kennedy I had to please with the book was John Kennedy," he said. "I think I did that. You have to tell a story as straight as you can and to do less is to violate your integrity."

Mr. Manchester denies that he suffered a nervous breakdown while writing the book, although he admits to having had emotional difficulties.

He said he entered a hospital on Nov. 26, 1965, suffering from exhaustion, and that he stayed in bed 12 days. On the 13th day, he said, he arranged to have a doctor's vacant office put at his disposal and spent the next eight weeks there working on the book.

He stayed in the hospital, he said, to avoid phone calls and distractions. Before then, he said, he had worked virtually every day for two years, usually as many as 15 hours a day.

He says, however, that his emotional problems were considerable. He recalls an evening