

Record Advance Sale for Manchester Book

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The presses of two book manufacturers are racing to meet the publication date, April 7, of William Manchester's "The Death of a President."

An extraordinary advance order of 500,000 copies was reported yesterday, probably the largest first printing ever recorded by a trade book in America.

The figure is unofficial because the book's publisher, Harper & Row, is not yet prepared to release publishing details of what is certain to be a controversial volume, as well as a runaway bestseller.

"The lawyers feel there should be no interviews about anything. The book is still a

little sensitive," said Stewart Harris, publicity director for Harper & Row.

Copies of the \$10 book are in the hands of reviewers but one of them said yesterday he would "burn the book" rather than surrender it to prying eyes before the publication date.

To the review copies, Harper attached a blue card labeled "Important." It states that reviews and stories are not to be released before 6 p.m., April 6. It limits direct quotes to 500 words and insists that Harper & Row's book is "the only approved and correct version."

The jacket of the book carries only the words "The Death of a President," "November 1963," "William Manchester," printed in red-bordered, white letters

They are on a dark blue background lightly speckled with faint white dots.

The background, according to reports, represents stars against a night-blue field and was inspired by three quotes within the book referring to stars, one a quote from "Romeo and Juliet" and another from Walt Whitman's poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

The jacket carries the acknowledgment, "Jacket designed by J. Caroff Associates, from an idea by William Manchester."

The back of the jacket has only a picture of Manchester on a white background. Some pirated photocopies of the manuscript were believed to have been made when the typescript circulated among

magazine publishers during the sale of the serial rights. These could be used for editions printed abroad.

Demand for the authorized version is so great that Harper has distributed the printing among two book manufacturers, an initial order of 50,000 books is considered normal for a Harper order is said to be 10 times as great. The advance order for Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood" was 100,000.

The publisher is known to be taking extra precautions to make sure that no bookseller places the book on sale before publication date. One way to insure an equitable release would be to deliver the book simultaneously to book stores across the country.

Although there is certain to be a first-day scramble for copies, Leonard Schwartz, president of Brentano's, said he would present the book "with as much dignity as possible, as a serious effort by a serious writer, dealing with the facts as he knows them."

He added: "We will sell as many copies as the public wishes to buy."