

Kennedy Book Divides Town

By DON ROSS

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Middletown, Conn., a pleasant town of 33,500 where Wesleyan University is located, has a very special interest in the bitter controversy between William Manchester, author of "The Death of a President," and Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy who will sue to prevent the book's publication.

Manchester, a former fellow at the university's Center for Advanced Studies, lives there on High St., and Richard N. Goodwin, currently a fellow at the Center and a close associate of the Kennedy family, lives on Home Ave., a 10-minute walk away. The two men have been friends and have met at many parties in Middletown but are now on opposite sides of the quarrel.

DISCUSSED PASSAGES

It was Goodwin, a former assistant special counsel to President Kennedy and a speech writer for the late president, who read the Manchester book at Mrs. Kennedy's request and reported to her that it contained passages involving her innermost emotions and thoughts that should be deleted.

The book is about the assassination of the president on Nov. 22, 1963, and is based in part on long interviews which Mrs. Kennedy gave Manchester, a 44-year-old novelist and biographer.

"I have discussed some of these passages with people of considerable academic and intellectual distinction in the community," Goodwin said.

"Their reaction was one of disbelief that anyone would want to go ahead and print such things."

But William L. Churchill, the university's director of information, believes the community will support Manchester because the issue seems to be an attempt to suppress news and information.

"This seems rather close to an attempt to suppress academic freedom and any university community would oppose this," he said.

Dr. Victor Butterfield, president of Wesleyan, which has a student enrollment of slightly more than 1,000, said he had not yet heard much comment on the controversy.

"But, I expect that it will really be the main topic of discussion at the Christmas parties we will have," he added.

Manchester himself is not talking about how he will do in his home town. He is avoiding reporters.

NOT AT HOME

His wife, Julia, said at their home that she thought he was in Middletown but she wasn't sure. She was only sure, she said, that he wasn't at their home at that moment.

"Bill Manchester is a man of impeccable taste," said Clarence McKelvie, executive vice president of American Education Publications of Middletown, of which Manchester was managing editor for about 10 years. Manchester is now on leave from the organization, which had been affiliated with

Wesleyan but now is a subsidiary of the Xerox Corp.

"Manchester would be particularly sensitive to such a thing as invasion of privacy that Mrs. Kennedy accuses him of," McKelvie said. "He has never been a sensational writer." McKelvie said he had not read the manuscript.

Goodwin recalled that in the winter of 1965 Manchester asked him to read the book.

Goodwin did so and told Manchester, "you've got problems." It was shortly afterwards that Mrs. Kennedy asked Goodwin to read the book for her and that he told her that, although there were many excellent things in it, some passages should be removed.

DECIDED TO SUE

It was on the basis of these passages, Goodwin said, that Mrs. Kennedy decided to bring suit.

"You understand," Goodwin said, "there's nothing discreditable to Mrs. Kennedy in these passages. We all have things in our private lives we're not ashamed of but which we wouldn't care to have published in Look magazine or in a book."

Look has scheduled a serialization beginning Jan. 10, and Harper & Row plans to publish the book in the spring.

Asked whether he now considers Manchester a friend, Goodwin said: "I have been friendly with him, but now we find ourselves on opposite sides in this lawsuit. It would be presumptuous of me to describe the relationship

now. I don't want to reduce this to a personal thing."

Many of Manchester's friends have not seen him for some time.

"I saw him about a month ago when we picked up our Sunday papers at the drug store," McKelvie said. "I didn't even know he'd been to Europe until I saw in the papers that he had returned last Tuesday."

IN LONDON

Manchester was in London about three weeks attempting to avoid interviewers and to find a little uninterrupted time to work on his next book, a study of the Krupps, the German munitions family.

"He's been hiding for months, a sort of recluse," said Churchill.

For one thing, he said, Manchester wanted to have quiet in order to finish "The Death of a President" and for another he wanted to avoid interviewers who urged him to talk about the book which even before the current explosion of bad feelings, had aroused the curiosity of millions.

Julia Manchester knows her husband is under the gun. She feels that Mrs. Kennedy, a woman who commands enormous sympathy, is making him look bad to many Americans by her charges that he exploited her confidence. She thinks that her husband should tell his own side of the matter quickly.

"But it's in the hands of the lawyers," Mrs. Manchester said. "He can't say anything until they tell him it's all right."