

Johnson Aide Disputes Newsweek Report of President's Comments on Ke

Special to The New York Times
 AUSTIN, Tex., Dec. 26—The White House disputed today some comments attributed by Newsweek magazine to President Johnson and his associates, purportedly giving their version of some of the events following the assassination of President Kennedy.

George Christian, acting Presidential press secretary, said he had not seen the magazine but was responding to quotations printed in Texas newspapers. The article dealt with controversy surrounding a new book, "The Death of a President," by William Manchester.

"The President has granted interviews to anyone, including Mr. Manchester, and has asked his staff to refrain from discussing the entire subject of the book," Mr. Christian said.

"He did not talk to Newsweek. I'll not discuss the various attributions credited to so-called friends and alleged intimates except to say that I believe them to be inaccurate and untrue."

Interview Denied

The President did not have an interview with Newsweek, Mr. Christian said, and if he had not, "I don't see how he can be quoted directly by the magazine."

He refused to explain whether he was denying only the attribution or the substance of the quotations, saying only that "if he is quoted directly, I know that's wrong."

Mr. Christian said he believed the "attributions" to be inaccurate and untrue because "I know better."

He indicated that he and other White House officials would continue to turn away all questions relating to the assassination and the Manchester book.

[Commenting on the White House statements, Osborn Elliott, editor of Newsweek, said

In New York that the magazine "has confidence in its reporter and in the reliability of the source" from which the information came.

"Had it been otherwise, we would not have printed the story."

Mr. Elliott declined to comment any further on the source of the magazine's material.]

In the article, Newsweek quoted the President as having told "intimates" that he was puzzled and unhappy about the unfavorable picture of himself that was emerging in news reports about the book.

It said the President's recollections of events connected with the assassination differed from descriptions reported to be in the book.

Manchester Improving

MIDDLETOWN, Conn., Dec. 26—William Manchester, author of the controversial book "The Death of a President," remained today on the critical list in a hospital here, more as a precaution than out of fear for his life.

The 44-year-old Mr. Manchester was rushed to Middletown Memorial Hospital by ambulance last night with a temperature of 104.2. He had been stricken with a pneumonia infection in his lower left lung.

His temperature returned to normal at noon today.

A 6 P.M. medical bulletin said that Mr. Manchester's condition had "improved" and that he was "doing very well."

However, it is also said he would remain on the critical list as a precaution until his temperature had leveled off for 24 hours.

Dr. F. Erwin Tracy, Mr. Manchester's physician, said he hesitated to make any firm predictions because "with a thing like this you never know."

For the next three or four

days, Dr. Tracy said, "Mr. Manchester is to have nothing to do with anyone who has anything to do with the book."

For the last two weeks, Mr. Manchester has been involved in a controversy with Mrs. John F. Kennedy, who is suing to block the April publication of "The Death of a President."

Mrs. Kennedy, who requested Mr. Manchester to write the definitive history of the assassination and made available to the author her own recollections, contends that Mr. Manchester violated their agreement by including passages she did not approve.

Lawyers from both sides have been meeting to try to arrange a compromise. The suit is to be heard in court tomorrow.

Asked if the strains of the controversy had anything to do with Mr. Manchester's illness, Dr. Tracy said, "I don't think you can separate this." He added that hard work and tension had lowered Mr. Manchester's resistance to the point where he was more susceptible to illness.

Mr. Manchester's greatest discomfort was coming from a scratch on the corner of his right eye inflicted Friday night by a pine needle on the Christmas tree he was trimming.

Dr. Mark Thumin, who was treating Mr. Manchester's eye, said it would suffer no permanent damage.

Mr. Manchester, who is staying in a private, air-conditioned, \$43.50-a-day room on the fifth floor of the 253-bed hospital, was reported to be conscious and in good spirits, although, Dr. Tracy said, "he feels lousy."

He was fed intravenously last night and early this morning. By this afternoon he was eating vegetable beef broth, tea and gelatin. He is being treated with antibiotics.

Dr. Tracy brought up the possibility that after the illness Mr. Manchester might suffer from

"reactive depression" which, he said, sometimes follows such ailments. In that case, he said, the author might be put under the care of a psychiatrist.

The first indication of illness, Dr. Tracy said, was about 8 or 9 P.M. yesterday when the author, who was at home, began shivering with chills and then burning up with fever. An ambulance brought him to the hospital about 11:30 P.M.

The Manchesters, who have a 16-year-old son and two younger daughters, have been living in Middletown, a town of about 33,000 between New Haven and Hartford, since 1965, when he became managing editor of the Wesleyan University Press Department of School Services and Publications, now the American Educational Publications.

Court Hearing Today

Attorneys for both sides will appear in State Supreme Court this morning in the dispute over the publication of William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President."

Simon H. Rifkind, attorney for Mrs. John F. Kennedy, who has brought suit to stop publication of the book by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., said last night that he would give a report to Justice Saul S. Streit on the status of negotiations.

"I will tell the judge that there have been many discussions, some text inspection, some analysis," Mr. Rifkind said. "But we have not reached agreement. We are not anywhere near it."

Asked if he would ask for a postponement in court today, Mr. Rifkind, a former Federal judge, said: "I will ask for nothing. I will leave it to the justice's counsel."

Nancy Wexler of Greenbaum, Wolf & Ernst, the firm representing the publishers, declined



United Press International
Mrs. John F. Kennedy as she left on Antigua trip.

to comment yesterday on the status of the talks.

"We will appear in court," she said. "I will not comment on anything."

Though negotiations had been canceled yesterday, they were canceled due to the illness of Mr. Manchester.

The negotiations with Harper & Row followed an agreement between representatives of Mrs. Kennedy and Look magazine, which plans to serialize excerpts of the book beginning with its Jan. 10 issue. The book is scheduled for publication in April.

In the earlier settlement, Look had agreed to modify certain passages involving the personal activities and feelings of Mrs. Kennedy and her children. Though the Look dispute has been settled, it was believed that

representatives of Cowles Communications, Inc., the magazine's publishers, would also have to appear in court today, since they also were named in the original suit.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Kennedy left John F. Kennedy International Airport at 6:10 P.M. yesterday for a brief vacation in Antigua.

She was accompanied by her daughter Caroline, her son John Jr. and a friend of Caroline's. The friend, a girl who appeared to be about the same age as Caroline, was identified on the manifest of the Pan American World Airways plane as C. Nelson.

The jetliner was delayed for an hour and 15 minutes before taking off from the snow-jammed airport.

Mrs. Kennedy, who wore a plain black cloth coat and was hatless, declined to answer reporters' questions at the airport. She also refused to smile or wave for photographers.

In the court session scheduled for today, the publishers and the author were to show cause why they should not be enjoined from publishing the book.

Justice Streit, who granted Mrs. Kennedy the show-cause order Dec. 16, had said previously he would further postpone the action if the negotiations were not successful by today.

Mrs. Kennedy's suit against Harper & Row and Look maintained that publication of the manuscript in serial or book form would violate a memorandum that the author and Senator Robert F. Kennedy signed in March 1964.

It specified that the book would be withheld from publication until Nov. 22, 1968, five years after the assassination and that it must get the ap-

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Kennedy Book Controversy

approval of Mrs. Kennedy and the Senator.

But Marquis Childs, a Washington newspaperman, said yesterday that he talked to Senator Kennedy on Nov. 21, the day before the third anniversary of the assassination, and was told that the agreement relating to the publication date no longer applied.

Mr. Childs, chief of the Washington bureau of The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, writes a column that is syndicated by the United Features Syndicate three times a week to about 175 newspapers. He said Senator Kennedy had told him that the Kennedy family reached agreement with the author in July and was no longer concerned about when the book would come out.

Vacationing at Island

Mr. Childs was reached by telephone at Harbor Island, which is on the northeast tip of Euleuthera Island 50 miles from Nassau, where he is vacationing.

The correspondent said that he had called the Senator while preparing his column for Nov. 23. His column on the new Kennedy book appeared in The New York Post on Nov. 25.

He said the Senator expressed some concern about what was in the book.

"He said there were some distressing aspects in the book, which Mrs. Kennedy would have like changed, but there was no indication or suggestion of any legal action or any effort to postpone or stop publication," he recalled yesterday.

He added that Senator Kennedy had told him about two personal letters Mrs. Kennedy had given to Mr. Manchester and that she was "depressed" and "concerned" that material from them might appear in the book.

Mr. Childs said that he had called the Senator because he had been told by a "close friend of President Johnson" that the Manchester book contained "sinister implications."

Much of what Mr. Childs said in yesterday's interview was referred to in his November column.

In the column, he wrote that one reason the Kennedys were no longer holding the author to the 1968 publication date was that the Kennedy family's "objective" for a "warmly sympathetic" biography of the late President "had not been achieved."

This, he added in his column, was because "other books on the assassination were being rushed to completion and it was advisable to come out at the earliest moment with the authentic account."

"Originally, too," he continued, "there was some sort of understanding, although no one will be specific about it, that members of the Kennedy family would have a veto over material supplied for 'The Death of a President.' However binding this may once have been, it no longer applies and certainly not to magazine publication."

Sections Deleted in France

PARIS, Dec. 26 (UPI)—The magazine Paris-Match said today none of the controversial passages of "The Death of a President" would appear in its forthcoming serialization of the book.

The disputed sections are being deleted "as a gesture of our long friendship and respect" for the family of President Kennedy, a spokesman said.

Paris-Match, a mass circulation weekly, has exclusive French-language publication rights for serialization of the book.