

PLANS FOR OFFICIAL BOOK

ON KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

PUBLISHED WEEKLY 9/5/66
William Manchester's long-awaited book about the assassination of President Kennedy, "The Death of a President," is now due from Harper & Row in the late winter or early next spring with a first printing of 100,000 copies. In complete book form it will run to 350,000 words or about 900 pages, and the price will be \$10. There will be no illustrations. *Look* magazine, which has bought first serial rights for a reputed record sum of \$650,000, will use 80,000 words, or somewhat less than one quarter of the complete text. *Look's* material, at latest word, was set for January, to run in four installments.

According to the *Newsweek* of September 5, *Look* is running this week a full-page ad in the *New York Times* announcing publication of the excerpts and giving full support to Mr. Manchester's statement that neither Mrs. John F. Kennedy nor any member of the Kennedy family has tried to edit the manuscript in any way, a statement in which Harper & Row concurs. Rumors have persisted, however, that Mrs. Kennedy was concerned as to the effect publication of the *Look* material in several installments might have, and that she preferred a shorter number of longer installments.

A story in *The New York Times* of August 27 reported that Mrs. Kennedy and the Kennedy family are said to fear that certain events and incidents printed outside the full context of the work might be misconstrued and that longer installments would mitigate somewhat the danger of distortion in news stories.

"The Death of a President" began as a project in the spring of 1964, a few months after President Kennedy's death. While it is true that William Manchester was officially selected by Mrs. Kennedy to write what the Kennedy family hoped would be the authoritative history of the President's assassination (*PW*, April 6, 1964), no member of the Kennedy family has paid any sum of money towards the publication of the book. Mrs. Kennedy, who had never met William Manchester at the time she approved him as author, chose him on the basis of her liking for his early biography of President John F. Kennedy, "Portrait of a President" (*Little, Brown*).

"The Death of a President" opens with a long prolog on the events leading up to President Kennedy's decision to go to Dallas. It picks up the story then on the Wednesday before the assassination and carries it through the entire tragic sequence of events, the assassination, the return to Washington, the funeral. The closing sequence in the main body of the book depicts the President's widow and his brother, Robert, walking away

from his grave after a private visit to it on Monday night, some hours after the interment. There is an epilog on the state of the nation and the people concerned in "The Death of a President" in the aftermath of the assassination.

In preparing to write "The Death of a President" Mr. Manchester took an indefinite leave of absence from Wesleyan University Press, where he was managing editor. He interviewed some 1000 people and amassed some 45 volumes of documents and transcriptions of tape-recorded conversations

he held with those close to the late President. Mrs. Kennedy, herself, gave him 10 hours of taped interviews.

No member of the Kennedy family has read "The Death of a President," but a panel of five headed by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has read the manuscript. Certain portions of the book to which this panel objected on grounds of taste, violation of the national interest or "an anti-LBJ bias" were excluded. Mr. Manchester, himself, is said to have deleted certain material from his interviews with Jacqueline Kennedy on the grounds that their publication would have constituted "unwarranted invasion of privacy."

In its September 5 story on "The Death of a President" *Newsweek* quotes an unidentified *Look* executive as describing the material in the book as "extraordinarily strong" and saying, "The President is going to have to read it and I don't think he is going to like it." One sequence in the book deals with the last Washington conversation between John F. Kennedy and the then Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, a conversation which, according to Mr. Manchester, was an argument over whether or not President Kennedy's presence on the trip to Dallas was really necessary. The Vice President is said to have replied that his own influence had waned and that a Presidential appearance was essential.