

4 KENNEDY ISSUES SET MARK AT LOOK

Sales of 9.5 Million at Peak
of Series Reported

By HENRY RAYMONT

In Pennsylvania Railroad cars and along the crowded platforms of the New Haven's suburban stations, Look magazine posters continue to urge commuters: "If you can't buy it, borrow it."

That exhortation is a reminder of the scramble for newsstand copies of the magazine's four-part serialization of William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President," which began in January and ended with the issue dated March 7.

During the two months of heavily promoted sales, Look's circulation rose from 7.5 million an issue to 9.5 million at the peak of sales of the Manchester issues, according to trade sources. A Look official said that during the series, newsstand sales increased from 500,000 to two million an issue.

With the appearance yesterday of the March 21 issue, the first one after the Manchester series, Look executives expect that sales would begin to level off, but still remain at a new high.

"We've reached the highest circulation in Look's history this week except for the four Manchester issues," a Look official said.

Although he declined to reveal circulation details, trade sources estimated that about 800,000 copies of the current issue have gone to newsstands and that 7.3 million copies have been sent to subscribers. Before the Manchester issues, the magazine had distributed slightly more than 550,000 copies to the newsstands and 7.2 million to subscribers.

The estimated total of almost

8.1 million copies would further widen the gap between Look, a bimonthly magazine, and Life, which has a guaranteed circulation of 7.2 million to 6.4 million each week. Life's newsstand sales amount to 500,000.

Subscription increases are more highly prized than newsstand sales because they determine the advertising rates of a publication. Look, while raising its newsstand price to 50 cents from 35 cents on Dec. 27, has retained a subscription rate of \$4 for 24 issues, or less than 17 cents an issue. Life costs 35 cents at the newsstand and its subscription rate for 52 issues is \$7.75, less than half the newsstand price for each issue.

The financial return from the Manchester series is still a guarded secret at Cowles Communications, Inc., Look's parent company. However, officials of Look privately acknowledge that the \$650,000 paid for the series has brought a substantial dividend, both in publicity and in sales.

The publicity that heralded

Mr. Manchester's 300,000-word reconstruction of President Kennedy's assassination was heightened by Mrs. Kennedy's suit against the author, Look and Harper & Row, the publishers, who will issue the book in April.

Mrs. Kennedy demanded that parts of the manuscript be deleted because she contended that they invaded her privacy. But much of the public attention was aroused by reports that she and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, her brother-in-law, were seeking to suppress references to political tensions between the Kennedy family and President Johnson.

An out-of-court settlement was reached late in December after Look agreed to delete 1,621 words from the 60,000 words that Mr. Manchester had sold to the magazine. The Look issue with the first Manchester installment was on the newsstands Jan. 10.

At the time, Look officials

said that the public demand for the Kennedy issues was without parallel in magazine publishing. For the third issue of the series, which was distributed on Feb. 7, almost two million copies were reported to have been added to the magazine's regular run.

There were indications, however, that the fourth and last installment of the Manchester series did not meet Look's sales expectations.

"The blizzard caused a delay in the sales," Richard Collins, publicity representative for Look said, "but even so we reached record figures."

William Attwood, Look's editor in chief, acknowledged in a recent interview that the peak sales would not be sustained after the Manchester series. But he voiced confidence that the subscriptions "will continue to grow because of our special editorial effort to offer insights into the issues that face us all."