

'Death of President' Dud in Book Markets

NEW YORK (AP) — Many book dealers across the country reported Tuesday that sales of William Manchester's "The Death of a President" have fallen far short of expectations.

The controversial account of John F. Kennedy's assassination landed on retail shelves early last month in a blaze of sensational publicity. Trade sources thought the book might become the runaway best-seller of the 20th century.

But a national survey indicated things haven't worked out that way.

The publisher, Harper & Row, said the initial printing of 600,000 copies was sold out to retailers but acknowledged that thousands of the books have been

returned by dealers. Firm plans for a second printing have yet to be made.

"We'll have to print more, but as yet we don't know how many or how soon," said Frank Scioscia, Harper & Row's sales manager.

Many book retailers complained that discount stores had skimmed off the cream by cutting the price of the Manchester book from the publisher-recommended \$10 to as little as \$5.

A few dealers reported that the book was selling about as well as they had expected. They said it probably would enjoy a slow but steady demand for years.

More typically, Stuart Brent, a major independent retailer in

Chicago, said: "The book is dead and has been for weeks. It never really took off. Considering the incredible buildup, it never did sell."

Stanely Loth, manager of Brentano's in Washington, said on the other hand, "We're quite satisfied with the way the book is selling. There is no real way of knowing how many more we could have sold if there had been no discounting."

Louis Epstein, owner of a store in Hollywood, Calif., said he had expected to sell 2,500 or more copies, but had found only 600 or 700 buyers. "In no way does it match my expectations," he said.

Comments from stores in Massachusetts, President Ken-

nedy's home state, ranged from, "The book is doing very well" to, "We didn't do what we expected with it."

A store in Hyannis Port, where the Kennedy family has a summer home, reported, "We're selling it but not like we expected to. Perhaps the serialization in Look magazine satisfied some potential readers, who then passed up the book."

The book got a mixed reception in Detroit.

A major chain, Hudsons, which discounted the price, said more than 5,000 copies had been sold—"the greatest sale of any book we ever had."

But a spokesman for Marwil's store near the campus of Wayne State University, declared: "It's just like the title. It's dead." Marwil's maintained the \$10 price.

Cokesbury in Atlanta, which is selling the book for \$10, described advance orders as "excellent, above our expectations" and said sales have continued "slow but steady."

Kroch's and Brentano's, Inc., in Chicago said more than 3,000 of the 4,000 volumes ordered had been sold at \$10 apiece.

"The book has done exceedingly well," a store spokesman said.

From Dallas, scene of the assassination, there were conflicting returns.

"It's our No. 1 non-fiction book, outselling everything else at about 200 copies a week," said J.B. Albright, manager of the Cokesbury book store, which does a big mail order business.

"Sales have been about a third less than what I'd figured," said William Gilliland, manager of the Doubleday shop.

"I think we sold about three in the last three weeks," said Carl Bigke, manager of the Dallas House of Books. "I think the interest in it is over. The people buying it now say they're putting it away for their kids to read as a good history book—not that they want to read it themselves."

Sales Manager Scioscia of Harper & Row said all of the 600,000 initial printing had been sold to bookstores by May 7, one month after the official publica-

tion date. The department estimated that 500,000 of these copies had been sold to the public.

"We found that some stores had too few copies, and some had too many," Scioscia said.

"Normanly stores that are overstocked start making returns in about three months, and keep at it for as long as a year. But we wanted to speed up this process.

"So we had our salesman tell the overstocked stores to make their returns immediately. By this effort we re-distributed close to 40,000 copies."