

'Death of a President: Fact or Opinion, Major Question

Manchester Book Goes on Sale April 6

By RELMAN MORIN

(Associated Press Special Correspondent)
NEW YORK (AP) — Mrs. John F. Kennedy sought solace in the hope that her husband had been the victim of a conspiracy when he was assassinated in Dallas, William Manchester says in his book, "The Death of a President."

"She considered (Lee Harvey) Oswald and hoped he had been part of a conspiracy," the book says, "For then there would be an air of inevitability about the tragedy; then she could persuade herself that if the plotters had missed on Elm Street they would have eventually succeeded elsewhere."

This is Manchester's statement. The passage does not quote Mrs. Kennedy in support of it.

The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy, Friday, Nov. 22, 1963.

Manchester's book, priced at \$10, goes on sale April 6. The publishers, Harper & Row, said the first printing ran to 600,000 copies. They declined to specify the advance sale. The 350,000-word text fills 647 pages, plus charts, diagrams, and a list of sources.

Literary agents estimate the book may earn close to \$3 million.

Harper & Row said they would retain six per cent of the net receipts on the first 100,000 copies sold. An undisclosed portion of both the author's and publishers' earnings have been earmarked for the Kennedy library.

GIANT BUILDUP

A gigantic publicity buildup, probably the biggest in literary history, preceded publication of the book. It stemmed largely from the long-drawn dispute between the Kennedys and Manchester after he finished his manuscript and the contents

became known.

As a result of the row, the Kennedys have disavowed the book, although they had selected Manchester to write a "definitive" history of the assassination. A note on the title page says:

"Harper & Row wish to make it clear that neither Mrs. John F. Kennedy nor Senator Robert F. Kennedy approved or authorized the material appearing in this book."

In a foreword, Manchester says he does not "offer this study as a definitive work."

He agrees with the findings of the Warren Commission. "The commission had met its mandate," he writes. "Oswald was correctly identified as the assassin; the absence of a cabal was established."

Moreover, Manchester states flatly that on Nov. 21, the night before the assassination, "In fact, he (Oswald) was going mad."

This is in total contrast to the impression Oswald made on United States postal inspector H. D. Holmes, who interviewed him two days after Kennedy was killed. Holmes' memorandum to the Warren Commission says:

"Oswald at no time appeared confused or in doubt as to whether or not he should answer a question. On the contrary, he was quite alert and showed no hesitancy in answering those questions which he wanted to answer, and was quite skillful in parrying those questions which he did not want to answer."

Manchester offers no factual evidence to support his assertion that Oswald "was going mad."

In his foreword, Manchester says he felt entitled to "record my opinions." However, passages reflecting his opinion — and not hard facts — are not always clearly identified as

opinion.

"This deeply disturbed" one of the editors who worked on the manuscript. In a letter to two representatives of Robert Kennedy, who were reading it, he wrote, "It is almost as though Manchester had become so deeply involved in this tragic narrative that he could not resist turning it into a magic fairy tale."

MANY EPISODES

Manchester's story contains a multiplicity of details and many episodes. He writes:

—Mrs. Kennedy's determination to mark her husband's grave in Arlington with an eternal flame aroused misgivings among those close to her but she brushed them aside. Sargent Shriver, her brother-in-law, is quoted as saying, "Some people might think it's a little ostentatious." Mrs. Kennedy snapped, "Let them." William Walton, an artist, called her plan for the flame "aesthetically unfortunate."

—Army Engineers told Richard Goodwin, a State Department officer, that they did not

know how to arrange for the graveside flame. They said they would have to go to Paris and study blueprints for the eternal flame that burns in the Arc De Triomphe. Goodwin snapped, "O.K. It's six hours to Europe. Go get it." In the end, the Engineers found this unnecessary.

—Twice during the night before Kennedy's funeral, an anonymous caller telephoned to say that the French embassy, where President Charles de Gaulle was sleeping, would be bombed. French policemen, members of the Surete, patrolled the embassy grounds throughout the night.

—Along with DeGaulle, threats were reported against President Johnson, Robert Kennedy, Chief Justice Earl Warren, and

Anastas Mikoyan, deputy premier of the Soviet Union. Johnson said to his military aide, who wanted to set up special precautions during the funeral, "You damn bastards are trying to take over . . . I'm going to walk."

The apostolic delegate to the United States, the Most Rev. Egidio Vagnozzi, said a catholic head of state was entitled to five absolutions in the funeral mass. This brought on a "hassle" with Richard Cardinal Cushing. The Cardinal is quoted as saying, "If there are going to be five absolutions, you'll have to say them yourself. I won't do it because they'll last as long as the mass itself. In the popular parlance, this family has had it."

WORLD ALERT

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara flashed an alert to every American military base in the world minutes after the shooting in Dallas. The possibility of an international conspiracy was uppermost in the minds of numerous federal officials.

The CIA activated what Manchester calls the "Watch Committee." Its members were "experts in the ways of Sino-Soviet agents . . . they remained on duty for days after the assassination, "tapping foreign sources to determine whether or not the crime could have been the work of an outside ring."

Under-Secretary of State Averell Harriman expressed the belief that DeGaulle would not have recognized Red China if Kennedy had lived. Manchester says, "DeGaulle had promised to meet Kennedy in the capital . . . the funeral became his Washington 'visit', he refused to follow through with Johnson. Harriman also believes that if Kennedy had lived France wouldn't have recognized Red China." Harriman added that this was no criticism of Johnson.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk and five other cabinet members were over the Pacific, flying to Japan, when the news from Dallas reached them. Another member of the party described the reactions on the plane:

"Pierre Salinger, in the aisle, grabs his wife, they cling in a terribly tragic embrace — (Luther) Hodges, now seated

across from us, buries his head in his hands and sobs, tears come down his cheeks—others crying—(Stewart) Udall sits next to Lee (Udall), stares tough-jawed past her, out the cabin window and he takes her hand—(Robert) Manning sits opposite us—tears start down his eyes—Myer Feldman crying—(Villard) Virts mad—not a sound or movement in the cabin for five minutes."

Salinger, the White House press secretary, organized a poker game aboard the plane to relieve the grief and shock everyone felt. "At the end of the journey, he was to survey a crumpled mass of bills and silver. In a semicomma he counted it out. He had won over \$800, and he was appalled."

HELD INACCURATE

After the serialized parts of the book appeared, several of those mentioned accused Manchester of inaccuracies or exaggeration.

One was Maj.-Gen. Chester V. Clifton, the President's military aide.

Manchester wrote that Clifton telephoned from Dallas and asked the White House to notify his wife that he was uninjured. Next he asked to speak to the executive secretary of the National Security Council. Manchester wrote, "the general's order of priorities was staggering. Only after wives had been reassured could he deal with the possibility of a plot against the United States."

The publishers said Clifton complained. In the hard cover, this has been corrected to have Clifton asking that his wife be notified in "a later, second call."

Yet Manchester lists Clifton as one of his sources.

The newspaper trade publication, Editor & Publisher, re-

ported last Feb. 4.

"Three reporters mentioned in the second installment of 'The Death of a President' . . . are in agreement that if the accuracy of the other events described in William Manchester's book is measured by what he wrote about them the book is a faulty story of an historic event."

The magazine said the reporters used such terms as "fantastic," "made out of whole cloth," and "overdrawn."

One was Robert Baskin,

Washington bureau chief of the Dallas Morning News. Manchester wrote that "reporter Bob Baskin simply left. He simply rode downtown to the city room at the Dallas News to talk to friends and to find out what, if anything, was happening elsewhere in the world."

On the contrary, Baskin told Editor & Publisher, he stayed at Parkland Hospital, covered a press conference and covered the departure of Johnson for Love Field. He said his office instructed him to "come in and start writing." Baskin had two signed stories in the next edition of his newspaper.

Editor & Publisher reported that Baskin gave this information to Manchester. Baskin, like Clifton, is listed among Manchester's sources.

In the hard cover, Manchester's assertion that Baskin deserted the overwhelming news story at Parkland Hospital "to talk to friends" remains as it appeared in Look.

ONE-WORD CHANGE

A one-word change has been made in the author's assertion, as it appeared in Look, that the photograph taken of Johnson being sworn in as President "did not record the presence of a single male Kennedy aide."

The Boston Globe recently published a photograph of Kenneth O'Donnell standing close to Mrs. Kennedy during the ceremony. Further, O'Donnell answered "I was" when he testified before the Warren Commission and was asked whether he was present at the ceremony.

In the hard cover, "single male Kennedy aide" has been changed to a "single major Kennedy aide."

This reporter called Manchester's attention to the testimony on this point given by O'Donnell. The author replied, "Yes, Kenny told me that, too. But I have to believe the people who saw him in the corridor outside."

A quotation attributed to Mrs. Kennedy also has been changed from what appeared in Look. When several persons tried to persuade her to change out of her blood-drenched clothing, she refused, and the magazine has her saying, "Let them see the horror." In the book, this has become, "Let them see what they have done."

A representative of the pub-

lishers said of this, "Well, she may have said both and we liked the second one better."

There appears also to be a discrepancy between Manchester and O'Donnell with respect to how much whiskey, if any, Mrs. Kennedy drank on the flight from Dallas to Washington. Manchester writes that she drained two glasses. But when O'Donnell appeared before the Warren Commission, there was this exchange:

Q. "Did she have anything to eat on the trip back?"

A. "No; I think we both had a drink. I tried to get her to take a good strong drink. I had not much luck."

Q. "She drank part but not all?"

A. "As I recollect, she just wanted to talk."

Women's Wear Daily Breaks Embargo

NEW YORK (AP)—An April 6 release date for reviews of William Manchester's "The Death of a President" was broken Tuesday by Women's Wear Daily, a clothing industry publication.

In a preface to its front page review, the newspaper said:

"The (book) publishers, Harper & Row, had set a review release date of April 6. The date was acceptable to WWD (Women's Wear Daily) so long as the book did not earlier go on sale in normal commerce.

"Yesterday, March 27, Kaufmann's (department store) in Pittsburgh began selling the book at \$10.50 (tax included) in its book department. Kaufmann's advertised immediate sale of the book in the Pittsburgh Press Sunday (March 26).

"WWD purchased a copy of the Manchester book at retail and now feels itself free to publish its review."

The scheduled date of the book's publication is April 7.

Harper & Row conceded that by mistake there were premature shipments of the book to some outlets. Copies were to have been delivered next Friday.