

*The National Broadcasting Company Presents*



# MEET THE PRESS

*America's Press Conference of the Air*

*Produced by* LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

*Guest:* WILLIAM MANCHESTER  
Author, *The Death of a President*

VOLUME 11

FEBRUARY 12, 1967

NUMBER 7

---

*Merkle Press Inc.*

*Printers and Periodical Publishers*

*Division of Publishers Co. Inc.*

*Box 2111, Washington, D. C. 20013*

10 cents per copy

*Panel:* ALISTAIR COOKE, *The Guardian of England*  
(Formerly *Manchester Guardian*)  
ROBERT MacNEIL, *NBC News*  
CHARLES ROBERTS, *Newsweek Magazine*  
LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK, *Permanent Panel Member*

*Moderator:* EDWIN NEWMAN, *NBC News*

*Permission is hereby granted to news media and magazines to reproduce in whole or in part. Credit to NBC's MEET THE PRESS will be appreciated.*

## MEET THE PRESS

---

**MR. NEWMAN:** MEET THE PRESS comes to you today in a special one-hour edition. Our guest is William Manchester, author of *The Death of a President*, which deals with the events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy.

The book, scheduled for publication on April 7 by Harper and Row, has created extraordinary controversy and worldwide interest. Indications are that it will become one of the best sellers of all time. Portions of it are being published by Look Magazine.

We will have the questions now from Lawrence E. Spivak, permanent member of the MEET THE PRESS panel.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Manchester, almost everyone involved in the quarrel over your book *The Death of a President* has been hurt or somehow damaged—you, Mrs. Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy, President Johnson and the book itself, of course.

Do you think your book will contribute enough to outweigh the damage done?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I would agree with everything you said except "the book itself." I don't think the book has been damaged. After all, it is nearly two months until publication date, and I am confident that when the book appears, it will stand on its own and the controversy will recede into the past.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mrs. Kennedy asked you to write the book. When she asked you to write the book, she hoped it would fulfill a pretty definite purpose. Can you tell us what that purpose was, as you saw it?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** She wanted a complete chronicle of the events of those terrible autumn days.

I dare believe I succeeded in doing that.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Will you tell us what you think the book will contribute in terms of historical value?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I think I can best sum that up by a comment that President Eisenhower made to me in which he said that he wished someone had done something of this sort after the assassination of President Lincoln.

I was able to interview people in the two years immediately after the assassination before memories had begun to fade.

There is a distinct difference, interestingly, between my first interviews and the later interviews, because memories do fade rapidly, and by piecing these together, I could provide some sort of account of what actually happened. This, of course, is denied to the historians of later generations.

**MR. SPIVAK:** I'd like to ask you now some questions about the most serious charges that have been made against you. The charge is made that you broke your agreement with Robert Kennedy, an agreement which said, "The final text shall not be published unless and until approved by Jacqueline Kennedy and Robert Kennedy."

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Granted that the legalities have been resolved, what about the ethics involved, did you break your agreement?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No, I did not. Actually I wrote that memorandum of understanding. We weren't thinking very clearly then, but later, upon reconsideration, we realized that the date specified in our agreement, 1968, would be most unfortunate, because it would be a Presidential election year. It would be the worst time for the book to appear. Inevitably charges of political motivation would arise.

In addition, we became aware that there were—a number of books casting doubt on the probity of the United States government were in press. As early as January 12, 1965, when having dinner at Caravelle's with Robert Kennedy in New York, he agreed that the book should be published as soon as finished. Mrs. Kennedy, on May 11 of 1966, told me the same, and on January 28,\* Robert Kennedy sent a special delivery letter to Harpers liquidating the agreement and on January 29\* he sent me a telegram stating "Members of the Kennedy family will place no obstacle in the way of publication of the book."

He was an active participant in the negotiations for the sale of serial rights to Look, in fact, Look was his preference. And

\*See page 7

in the light of that, I don't think I broke any agreement. I think the agreement was revised among us.

**MR. SPIVAK:** What is your explanation, then, for the statement that he made, summing up his dealings with you? He said, "It all finally comes down to the fact that Mr. Manchester gave his word and then broke it. No statement or interview or description of events, however dramatic, can alter that plain fact." How do you answer that?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I think that question should be properly placed to Senator Kennedy. He discussed this with a number of people. On November 21 of last year Marquis Childs asked him this, and he replied that that had all been washed out in an agreement with the author last July, and Marquis Childs offered to submit an affidavit to that effect. So, Senator Kennedy told me over six months ago that he would place no obstacle in the way of publication of the book. A number of obstacles have been placed in the way of the book since then. I think that Senator Kennedy is the person to interrogate.

**MR. SPIVAK:** One more question: Was there any substantial difference as far as you know about the book between Senator Robert Kennedy and Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy in the final—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I have no first-hand information of that. I know that Senator Kennedy did tell Mrs. Kennedy about the arrangements after they had been completed, and she was disturbed over serialization which she felt would be commercialization, although serialization—that is, magazine use—had been provided for specifically in the original memorandum of understanding. Since then, between then and the settlement, the problem was working out these differences.

The difficulty was that the Kennedys had asked me to write the book. The Kennedys had the right of approval, but when the manuscript was finished, the Kennedy's felt—understandably—that they could not read the book. Therefore, this right was delegated to other people. Over a four-month period, my editor and I worked with responsible representatives of the Kennedy family and at the end we had an approved manuscript. This was not censorship. It was editorial work. That was when Senator Kennedy sent his telegram, at the end of that four-month period.

Then, after that, there were waves of changes, which I felt would constitute censorship: 77 from one of Mrs. Kennedy's secretaries, and 111 from one of Senator Kennedy's representatives. In one case I was asked to rewrite my account of President Johnson's first Cabinet meeting. To me this would have been a

distortion of history. It was a threat to the integrity of my manuscript, and I refused.

In the end, when we were within hours, literally, of a trial, Mrs. Kennedy did sit up until 5:30 in the morning reading the manuscript with what the person who was present said, "growing interest and fascination," and the number of changes she suggested were very small, all were understandable, and they constituted less than one per cent of the manuscript. Had the Kennedys read the manuscript last spring, I think we would have been spared much.

**MR. COOKE:** Mr. Manchester, to get to the beginning of this whole thing, how did you get into it, how were you first approached to write the book, and what were the terms on which you thought you were being employed?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I was never employed. I never received a penny from the Kennedys or from the Government or from any source. This research was financed out of my own savings.

**MR. COOKE:** I didn't mean financed. There was a meeting.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes. I was first approached in a telephone call on February 5, 1966. I was told that a number of writers had asked the Kennedys for cooperation in such a project. The Kennedys realized that such a book was necessary—difficult though it would be for them—but they wanted to name the writer. I was invited to undertake—

**MR. COOKE:** You said February '66; did you mean '64?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes. I'm sorry, that was a lapse. February 5th of 1964.

I said I would have to think about it. I did. I came to Washington on February 26th and talked to the Attorney General. I remember that among other things he said that he didn't want anyone to make a financial killing out of his brother's death. I replied to the then Attorney General that I could not bargain over a national tragedy, it was up to him to dictate the terms, and he told me what he wanted.

**MR. COOKE:** Did he ever put that in writing or make—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No, I took notes at the time. Then I came down in March, and Pierre Salinger was to have drawn up a memorandum of understanding. I arrived in Washington and picked up the paper and found that Pierre had left to run for the Senate in California. By telephone he suggested to me that I write the memorandum of understanding. I did, based on my notes with the then Attorney General, and during a full day of negotiations Attorney General Kennedy, his aides, Evan Thomas of Harper's, and the author, concluded the agreement which was substantially what I had written.

**MR. COOKE:** Was Mrs. Kennedy in on this at all?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No, she was not. Mrs. Kennedy was mentioned in it, but she was not. I suggested that since it was her wish that I undertake this task, it might be wise for me to meet her before it was announced, but this was impossible, and I did not meet her. I met her briefly in April, but my interviews with her do not begin until May 7th of 1964.

**MR. COOKE:** It seems to me that a great deal of the dispute that broke between you and the Kennedys stems from an evident misunderstanding about the use of the tapes, the so-called—is it ten-hour—tapes that you made with Mrs. Kennedy.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes.

**MR. COOKE:** What I want to know is, did you regard those as a proper raw material for your book, or did you have an understanding that they were to go to the Kennedy Library under an embargo of several years?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** At no time was I a member of the so-called "oral history project." I had thought that I might be invited to join it. Meetings were held, but I was not invited. However, I did, on my own initiative, introduce a number of safeguards during the taping. For example, while we were talking, if she wanted to say something off the record, she would point to the machine, and I would turn it off.

**MR. COOKE:** Only you and she were present?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** That is correct. At other times she would say something and then she would say "Perhaps that shouldn't be in the book." I didn't put it in the book.

**MR. COOKE:** So there was an understanding on her part—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** This was a tacit understanding.

**MR. COOKE:** Yes.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Then I edited material which I felt was personal or unwise to publish at this time while writing the book, and at the end of my writing I had a 1400-page typewritten manuscript, and I cut 200 pages of material which I felt was personal or which would injure the prestige of people now in public office. So there was some discretion, and the suggestion that I interviewed Mrs. Kennedy for ten hours and ran off and wrote a book is incorrect.

In fact, Mrs. Kennedy was one of approximately a thousand interviews in this book.

**MR. ROBERTS:** I want to pin down one little historical detail and then get to the question on the arrangements.

Who was the first person who contacted you?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Pierre Salinger.

**MR. ROBERTS:** On the arrangements you had, do you feel now that any writer, novelist or historian, commissioned by people who were involved in a drama of this sort and given exclusive access to information which other writers do not have, do you feel that he can do an honest book where controversy is involved if he is beholden to those people who commissioned him and gave him access to information?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Mr. Roberts, I think he can if he is an honest man and if he can take certain safeguards. I did everything I could to preserve my scholarly integrity. I accepted no funds from anyone. It was understood that the Kennedys did have the right of approval. However, I had the right to delete material and, in fact, to withdraw the book entirely if I felt it was an inaccurate representation of that tragedy. And actually, in the end, Mrs. Kennedy's suggestions were wise and understandable, and I feel that the integrity of the book has been preserved.

I think it depends entirely upon the people with whom you are working, but I think that it would have been cruel and preposterous to suggest that the Kennedys, in the weeks following the assassination, should make themselves available to all writers, and I think the selection of a single writer was, well, it was simply practical.

**MR. ROBERTS:** Did you feel in the writing process that if you came across information that perhaps would have faulted any of the Kennedys in their conduct at any time during this thing that you would have been perfectly free to use that information even though they were in effect your sponsors?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I felt so. There was no attempt to censor such information, and I think that when you read the book you will be in a better position to make a judgment.

**MR. ROBERTS:** I'd like to ask just one more thing that relates to that. The charge has been made that in this editing process everything that came out was offensive to the Kennedys—specifically to Mrs. Kennedy, what was left in was offensive or damaging to President Johnson.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes. Well, that is unjust. Nothing was deleted of a historical or a political nature, with respect to the Kennedys. The material which was deleted was very personal. Of course the charge has been made that the book is hostile to President Johnson, and I resent this. It is not true. I think when the book is read, people will realize that I was and still am very sympathetic to President Johnson, who I believed be haved admirably at a time when the rest of us were just barely able to function.



**MR. MacNEIL:** Can I ask you one question relating to something you said to Mr. Spivak. You said that Senator Kennedy wrote a letter on January 28, '66, to Harpers, liquidating the agreement. I hadn't heard of this letter before. Was the Senator aware that he was liquidating the agreement in this letter?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes, he was, and I can show you a copy of the letter later if you would like to see it.

**MR. MacNEIL:** It was later in the summer?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I may say that on July 14, one of the men designated by the Senator—and I might say that there were people designated by the Senator and by me—Arthur Schlesinger, for example, read the manuscript at my request and made some very useful suggestions which strengthened the manuscript; they were all adopted. But on July 14 in a conference called between one of the men designated by the Senator and Evan Thomas of Harper's and me, Evan and I were told that the manuscript was approved. I remember we talked briefly about the deletion of one final phase, and the submission of manuscripts to periodicals could begin, and we were told that a letter was on the way from the Senator.

At one o'clock the following morning I was called and told that the letter would be delayed because Ambassador Kennedy had just suffered a heart attack, and the Senator therefore had gone to Hyannisport. So there was a long—and there is a great deal of correspondence during this four months of editing, leading up to this letter.

**MR. MacNEIL:** Are you saying then that Senator Kennedy liquidated the agreement in January consciously but then—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** In July.

**MR. MacNEIL:** In July.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** July of '66, he liquidated it.

**MR. MacNEIL:** Knowingly liquidated it and then realizing that some parts of the book might cause increasing friction between himself and President Johnson, then decided that the agreement was not liquidated, accused you of breaking it?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I don't think that was his motivation at all. I think that Senator Kennedy has a strong and admirable sense of family loyalty, and when he learned that Mrs. Kennedy was distressed, then he tried to find another solution. Throughout the two and a half years of research and writing, the publisher and the author had assumed that Senator Kennedy was acting in behalf of Mrs. Kennedy. In fact the memorandum of understanding was signed by Robert F. Kennedy and the author, not by Mrs. Kennedy.

**MR. MacNEIL:** Do you mean that there was no consideration of Senator Kennedy's political position or political future in his desire to have an opportunity to revise the manuscript?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Not then. Afterward there came two waves of changes, and the largest wave of 111—the suggestion that 111 passages be deleted, these were clearly political. They were not made by the Senator, who has not read the manuscript, but by one of his representatives. These I resisted.

**MR. MacNEIL:** And for that purpose he maintained that the agreement was still in force?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No, I think he maintained the agreement was still in force because Mrs. Kennedy was vehemently opposed to magazine serialization. And as she felt—understandably, I think—that each installment of the magazine would produce a rash of newspaper stories—therefore Mike Cowles, the publisher of Look—gallantly, I think—agreed to reduce the number of installments from seven to four and to postpone publication from the—what would have been the anniversary of the assassination, which is always a difficult time for the Kennedys, until January.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Manchester, you say you have a letter to prove that Senator Kennedy liquidated the arrangements—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** This letter has been published in the New York Times. It is not—

**MR. SPIVAK:** Yes, but what about Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy? According to the memorandum which you yourself wrote, you said, "Final text shall not be published unless and until approved by them," which included Mrs. Kennedy.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Precisely.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Yes. When did she liquidate it and how did she liquidate it?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** She—first, I wrote her—I may say that I kept both Kennedys posted on all developments, and in May she wrote me that she would read the manuscript when and if Evan Thomas and Robert Kennedy thought she should, but on May 11 she sent me word that she felt warmly toward me, that she hoped that I would understand if she did not read the manuscript because it would be painful and that she thought that fall publication was wise.

**MR. SPIVAK:** She sent you word through whom?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Through Richard N. Goodwin.

**MR. SPIVAK:** But you had no direct word from her and you had nothing in writing indicating that she liquidated the agreement?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** But may I once more point out that my agreement, my memorandum of understanding, was signed by the author and Robert Kennedy, representing his sister-in-law. Therefore it was assumed that when Robert Kennedy liquidated it, that he was again acting, so to speak, as her agent.

**MR. SPIVAK:** But do you think that she had no right finally to say that she didn't, no matter what Robert Kennedy did, that she didn't liquidate the agreement, that she was part of that memorandum of understanding which you wrote, and that she never did liquidate the agreement? Is that what she maintained in the end?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** So far as I know, Mr. Spivak, Mrs. Kennedy has never read the memorandum of understanding, and there are a number of things she said which indicate to me that she is unfamiliar with the contents.

**MR. SPIVAK:** You don't feel then that you accepted a special privilege from the Kennedys in return for assuming a special obligation and that you couldn't give up one without giving up the other?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I accepted a special privilege, but in return I yielded a good deal. You must recall that under the provisions I am accepting a part—approximately a quarter—of the royalties in the first printing of the book, a quarter of the paperback profits, and a quarter of the book club profits. The great beneficiary is going to be the Kennedy Library, which it is estimated will receive somewhere between five and ten million dollars.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Manchester, I'd like to take up another thing that I think is of great importance. There are many charges based on the "Look" articles that the book contains some inexcusable inaccuracies. Do you think, for example, that there was much excuse for implying that no male Kennedy aide attended the swearing-in, when there was ample evidence available, and I think recently published, for example, that Kenneth O'Donnell was in the picture and that picture was—what is your explanation for that?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I never said—I think you have to wait to read the book for the full account of the swearing-in to understand that. I never said that Ken was not in the picture. Actually Cecil Stoughton, the White House photographer, took three pictures with an Alfa Reflex and 15 pictures with a Hasselblad, 18 pictures. Ken appears in one of them, but the distance between the oath scene and the corridor where Ken was pacing was approximately three steps, and there were five witnesses who saw him in that corridor.

To use that word, much abused word "consensus," I think a reporter has to operate on that principle. I interviewed 33 people who were aboard that aircraft and I used a majority of their views.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Manchester, I'd like to come back to the pictures for a minute. In your third "Look" article, you say "Despite the width of the Hasselblad lens, it did not record the presence of a single male Kennedy aide. The only Kennedy man there, Dr. Burkley, stood behind someone else." Have you checked to see whether—the O'Donnell picture has already been published—but do you know and have you checked to see whether pictures were taken of other Kennedy aides there by that Hasselblad lens and available?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes, Captain Stoughton showed me photographs which showed the full range of the stateroom and Dr. Burkley was the only one present. I might say that this is also confirmed by the testimony of certain witnesses.

Of course, it is entirely possible that they are mistaken. As Mr. Roberts very wisely pointed out in an article in Newsweek, eye-witnesses are mistaken, and I think it would be presumptuous for a contemporary historian or for any historian or writer to claim that he bats a thousand. Perhaps this is an error, but Ken O'Donnell did tell me that he was present during the ceremonies. The photographs that I saw did not show him there, and five people told me that they saw him in the corridor a few steps away.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Have you talked to the photographer?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Oh, yes.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Have you see all of the pictures?

I understand that eight Kennedy aides were shown in pictures that the photographer has. Has that been changed at all?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Eight!

**MR. SPIVAK:** Yes.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I am not aware eight Kennedy aides were aboard that aircraft.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Well, Ted Clifton, Pam Turnure, Larry O'Brien, Mac Kilduff, Dr. Burkley—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I said "male." Pam is not a man.

**MR. SPIVAK:** All right. Then let's count the males. Ted Clifton, Larry O'Brien, Mac Kilduff, Dr. Burkley, in addition to O'Donnell.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Mac Kilduff is mentioned because he was sitting to the left of the picture holding the dictaphone to the President, but the presence of the others, I might say, simply was not shown in the photographs which I saw.

**MR. COOKE:** Mr. Manchester, I'd like to ask you a question that comes down to the central problem, which I guess is a problem of judgment and conscience that afflicts everybody who writes a commission book. They are notoriously very delicate properties because—mostly they are bad books because the writer can very rarely satisfy the dual obligation to be historically true and not to hurt the participants.

I think we have rather brushed this off.

One thing that occurs to me in the beginning is, I can't understand why the publishers didn't insist in the beginning on something more legal and binding than a memorandum written by you. Did this ever come up?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No, it didn't. In fact, if I were retracing my steps, I think I would ask that a copyright lawyer be present. But the publisher was in a curious position, because Harper is not my publisher; Little Brown is. Harper had a long, continuing association with the Kennedys, and so really the publisher was representing the family and not the author.

I might say that the people at Harper's were in a difficult position, and I think on the whole behaved very well. They had a dual responsibility. I felt I had a single responsibility to history.

There have been other Kennedy books, you know; the Schlesinger book, the Sorenson book, the Salinger book, and these went through this process with the family, but there was no difficulty. The difficulty arose in my case because I rejected what I felt were changes which would distort history.

**MR. COOKE:** I feel that you were in a way in a dilemma that was similar to that of the Warren Commission. In other words, you were sworn—or you had undertaken to assess and evaluate the facts surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy. They also discovered a second obligation, which was to preserve the safety of the Republic. That wasn't your business, but I think you undertook in your own mind to preserve the serenity of Mrs. Kennedy, and what I am saying is, isn't this an impossible task, to do both?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Had I undertaken to preserve the serenity of Mrs. Kennedy, there would have been no conflict over the so-called personal changes.

**MR. COOKE:** But wasn't it impossible to avoid distress with such a horrendous subject as this?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I did not feel a stress when I was writing. I feel that a writer has a single obligation, to his readers.

**MR. COOKE:** But you said that during the tapes you had taken out things which you thought would be damaging to her or distressing.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** But these were not matters of historical importance; they were personal observations.

**MR. COOKE:** At what point would something that might hurt Mrs. Kennedy be historically important?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** This is, as you know, a very difficult line to draw.

**MR. COOKE:** But this is the difficult subject we are on.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I cannot tell you without citing examples, and because I have given my word to Mrs. Kennedy that I shall not discuss such examples—and despite what some people say, I do keep my word—I can't go into that.

**MR. ROBERTS:** Discussing that role just a little further, you mentioned that Senator Kennedy wanted 111 passages—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No, it was not the Senator. I don't believe the Senator would have done this.

**MR. ROBERTS:** His representative wanted 111 passages deleted.

Did you at any time, in writing this book, get the feeling that Senator Robert Kennedy—particularly when you moved up the publication date on the book—did you feel that Robert Kennedy was seeking to get any political advantage out of this book, perhaps by making the Kennedys look good and the Johnsons look bad?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I never felt that Senator Robert F. Kennedy had that attitude at all, and I think that—I think that when we are dealing with principals—that is, with the Senator and Mrs. Kennedy—that their view was generous and laudable. The difficulty arose on lower levels when there were employees who knew that they would be answerable to the Kennedys and who were understandably over-zealous in their suggestions.

**MR. ROBERTS:** But the fact is, if you had adhered to the original publication schedule, the book would not have come out until after the 1968 elections?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** The book would not, but the serialization would have appeared during the campaign, and the agreement provided for serialization.

**MR. ROBERTS:** The embargo was five years from the date of the assassination which would have put it November 22, 1968.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** The book.

**MR. ROBERTS:** Then the question of whether the Kennedys or the Johnsons looked good or bad would have been moot because President Johnson would have been out of office.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes, but the book would have appeared on November 22nd, but the agreement also provided for magazine serialization before the appearance of the book, and there-

fore articles would have been appearing through the campaign, you see.

**MR. MacNEIL:** To come to the part of the book itself that has appeared in serialized form, you appear to accept unreservedly the findings of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I do.

**MR. MacNEIL:** You go briefly into the bullets. Are you going to go any more fully into how many bullets there were in the full book?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Oh, yes. You must remember that when all four Look installments have been published, they will constitute a fraction—the book is six times longer than all the words in Look, and there is a good deal more about that. I have some material in there. In fact Mr. MacNeil of NBC is mentioned.

**MR. MacNEIL:** Do you have any reason to think that the Warren Commission's inquiry should be reopened because of any inadequacy in their findings?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No. I was a privileged observer of the Warren Commission hearings at the invitation of the Chief Justice. I read the testimony, the depositions, I saw the exhibits as they came in.

He asked me to read the report in behalf of the family and state that it was acceptable to the Kennedys. I declined because my own inquiry was incomplete, and unlike Mr. Mark Lane, I was unwilling to rush to judgment in 1964.

**MR. MacNEIL:** Can I ask you a question about the way the Commission treated Marina Oswald. You say that because the Chief Justice found her appealing, he treated her very gently.

The implication is left that had he treated her less gently, some other information might have come out. Is that what you intended to imply?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes. I don't know how much else, but I would say of all of the witnesses before the Commission, the testimony of Marina Oswald is the one which is filled with contradictions, and this is why she was repeatedly recalled. There was a great deal of feeling among the staff in the Commission that she should have been questioned more sharply.

**MR. MacNEIL:** Does she know something that she hasn't said?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I can't answer that. Marina Oswald of all of the people involved in this catastrophe was the one person who declined to see me.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Manchester, I'd like to clarify one thing about the pictures, which I don't think I have or you have. Ac-

ording to what I have heard, that lens recorded and pictures are available of five male aides who were in the pictures. Will you check that and if that is so, will you correct your book on that?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I certainly—it is too late to correct the first edition, but I will certainly—if that were true—I may say I am highly skeptical, but if it is true, then it would certainly be corrected in later editions.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Do I understand then that you did talk with the photographer and that as far as you know he showed you all of the negatives that he had at that time and all of the pictures that he had taken?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** He certainly showed me all that he had there, yes. I can't—I didn't count them.

**MR. SPIVAK:** I'd like to come back now to the question of the anti-Johnson business.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes.

**MR. SPIVAK:** As you know, a great many people who read your first few chapters feel that the book is anti-Johnson, and there are many charges that the book itself when it all comes out is going to be anti-Johnson.

What do you say to the letter that has been published from Evan Thomas to Guthman and Seigenthaler, I think dated May, '66, which said, "The book which is in part gratuitously and tastelessly insulting to Johnson." It also says, I might add, that he thought he also had almost a great book; I give you credit there. But what about his statement that it was "gratuitously and tastelessly insulting to Johnson."

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Mr. Spivak, I can only take your word for it that he made that statement. I know that this has been published. I might say that—

**MR. SPIVAK:** Haven't you seen the copy of the letter?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I have not seen the letter, and I will not believe it until I have seen the letter. During this period we were in constant communication, and every time I wrote a letter to anyone I sent a carbon copy to Evan Thomas. I was under the impression he was doing the same, and Evan Thomas' letters to me and his telephone calls to me did not indicate this point of view at all, so I am at a loss to explain it.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Did you ever ask him? I have seen what is supposed to be a copy of the letter. Have you asked Evan Thomas about this, whether he ever wrote a letter of that kind?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** We discussed it, and he merely said that he felt that the author-editor relationship was privileged and



that he thought it was outrageous for other people to be discussing it.

**MR. SPIVAK:** But somebody else had the letter. They evidently didn't think it was privileged, and this has been published.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I intend to pursue this. I haven't had time to do so. But it certainly does not reflect the attitude of Mr. Thomas or of Mr. Guthman or of the other people who were working on the manuscript at the time.

**MR. SPIVAK:** May I take one specific thing on this Johnson business before I turn—in Chapter four of your Look article you write, "Five floors above them in the more spacious Will Rogers suite, Lyndon Johnson jovially entertained members of his tong."

It is being said that your prejudice is most clearly revealed by this small thing. A tong is a criminal gang.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Not if you consult Webster's Third International, it is not a criminal gang. It is a group, a club.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Do you know who was in that group?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes, there were a great many people that were admirers of President Johnson. A tong is not a criminal group. Mr. Johnson was not the head of a criminal group, and he was not surrounded by henchmen. This is preposterous.

**MR. COOKE:** Mr. Manchester—I am going to have to watch my words. I was going to say, when did this beautiful friendship—but I will say when did this useful and pleasant collaboration between you and the Kennedys break down, in the sense of when did you first hear that Mrs. Kennedy was distressed about any part of the book?

When, to you, did it begin to crumble? When was there trouble ahead?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** On Monday, August 1, I heard rumors of discontent. This was after I had received approval. I immediately wrote Robert Kennedy and said that I felt the time—the usefulness of intermediaries had passed and if there was any difficulty over our understanding he should contact me or I should contact him. I didn't receive an answer. I spoke to Mrs. Robert Kennedy, who told me there was no difficulty. I spoke to the Senator's secretary who told me that he was then in a meeting on the aircraft strike. She called me back and sent out a note saying that the Senator had said that he always kept his word and that he intended to in this case. That following Friday I spoke to Arthur Schlesinger who was going to Hyannisport for the weekend, and I talked to him on Sunday. He was still at the Cape, and he said he had spent the (preceding) evening with the Senator and with Mrs. Kennedy and that they were serene and tranquil.

**MR. COOKE:** Why did the whole thing erupt from tranquility?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Tranquility was the wrong word. I think pandemonium probably would have been better. Tranquil though she may have been with Arthur, I think she was apparently blazing like a bonfire with Bob.

**MR. ROBERTS:** I'd like to get back to this very difficult question, admittedly, of accuracy, and what people saw in that compartment aboard the plane. I was struck by the fact that you said you were depicting an agonizing delay, where Mrs. Kennedy was held up for an unconscionable length of time while they arranged a picture, and then you said that after she came into the compartment and they lined up for the picture-taking, someone said, "What about a Bible," and that the search for the Bible ensued. I looked up the picture of that, a picture relevant to that, and found that—and this was my recollection too—here is a picture of Judge Hughes standing with the Bible and the oath in hand, with the Johnsons present, awaiting Mrs. Kennedy. So I think it is quite clear that there was no delay on that account.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Photographs can lie, Mr. Roberts. People were moving back and forth, and to the left of that photograph—you know that plane as well as I do—it is just a short step into the corridor. So Mrs. Kennedy could quickly have stepped back into the corridor. I might say that my source for the Bible episode is Larry O'Brien, who said, "What about a Bible," and Joe Ayres, Sergeant Ayres, who is a steward on the aircraft—they went for the Bible, and during this time—there was some movement about between the stateroom and the compartment.

**MR. ROBERTS:** I was here at that time; I was standing here (indicating). My distinct recollection, borne out by this picture, is that Larry O'Brien brought the Bible to Judge Hughes. We then stood there for several minutes, waiting for Mrs. Kennedy to arrive. We can't resolve it here, but it seems to me that you have used stories of that kind to dramatize, to draw out this delay when actually Judge Hughes boarded the plane just 12 minutes after the Kennedys boarded the plane, and the oath-taking was just 20 minutes after the Kennedys boarded the plane, so I found—

**MR. NEWMAN:** What question are you putting, Mr. Roberts?

**MR. ROBERTS:** I am asking—that is one instance that he brings up. Another one, he says that there was a maddening delay over lens angles and focal lengths. He says that the President had to send out aides to round up people to come into the room. My recollection there is that the people pushed in from the forward cabin so far and in such numbers—there were 27 perspiring people in that room—that in order to take the picture

the photographer had to back the people up. That was a delay of perhaps a minute.

**MR. MANCHESTER:** As you yourself noted, eye-witness accounts are fallible. I can only reply that my account of what took place was based upon interviews with 33 people, and when a clear majority said that something happened, then I must conclude that it did happen and, of course, I have Mrs. Kennedy—

**MR. MacNEIL:** To come back to Mrs. Marina Oswald for a moment, is your description of Marina meant to imply that she was merely a selfish person or that she may have known more than she said?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Now—

**MR. MacNEIL:** Does the possibility exist in your mind that Lee Oswald said something to her that evening that she knows she hasn't said?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I think on matters such as that, Mr. MacNeil, we have to suspend judgment. I don't think that is legitimate conjecture. How can we know what happened when she has not told us?

**MR. MacNEIL:** You say that Oswald's decision up to a certain point was tentative, and then you believe this—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes, I think this—

**MR. MacNEIL:** Upon what do you base your judgments on Oswald's state of mind that evening?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Because when Oswald came to—went to Irving on the afternoon of November 21st, he brought with him a paper bag which would have concealed the weapon. However, he pleaded with Marina to move to Dallas with him and the children. This went on for some time. He certainly would not have done that had he then contemplated the assassination or had he not made a final, irrevocable decision. I think that the decision—

**MR. NEWMAN:** You are saying that if she had gone back with him he would not have committed what the Warren Commission said he did?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I think that is a fair conclusion to draw from her testimony.

**MR. NEWMAN:** We have about three minutes left.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Manchester, it is not too clear from your Look articles whether you yourself are critical of President Johnson for the speed and the manner in which he assumed his oath of office. Will you tell us what your opinion is of the way the President acted on that particular thing, that is, the speed of taking the oath of office in Dallas?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I am reluctant to do so because this takes up so much space in the book and I go into such detail. But, to comment briefly, I think it is very easy for us in 1967 to look back and judge the conduct of individuals on November 22nd. We forget how we all were that day. I think the President behaved well. I think, if anything, he ought to have taken over more rapidly than he did.

**MR. MacNEIL:** Mr. Manchester, you have been quoted—you greatly admired President Kennedy. You have been quoted as saying of Robert Kennedy, "This is not the brother of the man I knew."

Did you say it and what did it mean?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** No, I did not. I never said that.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Manchester, there are many people who feel that your picture of Dallas as a city of violence and hate was vicious and unfair. Since you were not in Dallas at the time, what is your justification for such a sweeping indictment?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Again I refer you to the book. Among other things, I went through a full year of files of the Dallas Morning News, and I interviewed an extraordinary number of people in Dallas. I talked to such people as H. L. Hunt and General Walker. I think I have a pretty good idea of what the political climate there was.

But, as I point out very carefully, this is conjecture. It is legitimate historical conjecture, I feel, but I do not say that there was definitely a relationship between the political climate in Dallas and the performance of Oswald.

**MR. COOKE:** Mr. Manchester, you said at the beginning, I think, that you interviewed so many people and that a great many of them you interviewed at the beginning, so to speak, with their memories fresh, or panicky, and then much later.

Did you find a great discrepancy with most people between what they remembered of the dreadful day itself and then after two or three years, or whatever it was?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes. As I say, memories do fade. I found that generally people were more accurate in their observations of the conduct of other individuals than they were in describing their own conduct, and I think that is understandable.

**MR. ROBERTS:** Mr. Manchester, there is a strong suggestion in your book that you feel the President should have taken Air Force II, the back-up plane in which he came to town—

**MR. MANCHESTER:** I think it would have avoided—

**MR. ROBERTS:** But did you take into account that there was better communications equipment aboard the Air Force I?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** There is not. The communications aboard those two aircraft—it is identical.

**MR. ROBERTS:** They are now, but they weren't then, is that right?

**MR. MANCHESTER:** Yes, they were. Including the cryptograph device.

**MR. NEWMAN:** On that point, which I am afraid is a point of disagreement, we must end. I have to interrupt here because our time is up. Thank you, Mr. Manchester, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.

*The Proceedings of*

## MEET THE PRESS

as broadcast nationwide by the National Broadcasting Company, Inc., are printed and made available to the public to further interest in impartial discussions of questions affecting the public welfare. Transcripts may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope and ten cents for each copy to:

*Merkle Press Inc. Box 2111, Washington, D. C. 20013*

*(Division Publishers Co., Inc.)*

*MEET THE PRESS is telecast every Sunday over the NBC Television Network. This program originated from the NBC Studios in Washington, D. C.*

**Television Broadcast 12:30 P.M. EST**  
**Radio Broadcast 6:05 P.M. EST**