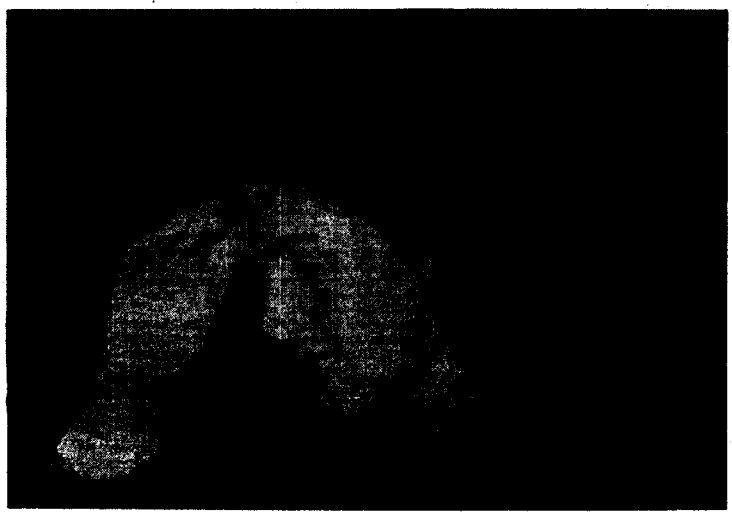
Post Daily Magazine

The Kennedys vs. Manchester

JACKIE'S TAPES



ARTICLE III

By WILLIAM H. RUDY

Based on reports by Michael Berlin, Arthur Berman (in Los Angeles), Barry Cunningham (in Washington), Rene English (in London), John Garabedian, Arthur Greenspan in Middletown, Conn.), William Greaves, Kenneth Gross, Pete Hamill, Joseph Kahn, Edward Katcher, Leonard Katz, Murray Kempton, Anthony Prisendorf, and Marvin Smilon.

WHEN BILL MANCHESTER went to Washington in April, 1964, to begin work on his authorized account of the assassination of President Kennedy, the most immediate task was to get the recollections of the President's intimates while they still were fresh.

Two years later the tape recordings he made of Jacqueline Kennedy's intimate recollections of her husband and of the period of his assassination became one of the several major issues in the controversy over his book.

At the time, the issue of the tapes caused no friction. Later, they proved to be the first source of trouble.

Most of Manchester's interviews were made with pad and pencil. His talks with Robert Kennedy and the President's widow were taped. He had two five-hour sessions with Mrs. Kennedy.

An intimate of the Kennedys recalls:

"At the time the Kennedys were approving the book project they also approved an oral history of the Kennedy Administration for the Kennedy Memorial Library. This study was designed to obtain all possible information, and included the stipulation that anyone agreeing to be interviewed, such as Nixon, Khrushchev, de Gaulle, could dictate terms of the interview."

The interviewee could select the interviewer and state when the interview would be made public—immediately, 100 years from now, or whenever.

"Jackie selected Arthur Schlesinger. This left her with the prospect of describing the assassination for both Schlesinger and Manchester. Rather than having her put through it twice, it was decided that Manchester would interview her for the oral history project *and* the book."

"One reason we all talked to Manchester was the original reason we decided to have the book written in the first place—we wanted to talk about it once," Bobby Kennedy told Pete Hamill. "Arthur Schlesinger and Ted Sorensen felt that we had to talk about it. If we talked only to Manchester, that would have been it. It would be over with and we would never have to do *that* again. We just didn't want to have to go over it again and again and again."

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FRIENDS OF SCHLESINGER RECALL THAT HE interviewed Jackie first. But when he came to the Texas trip, he turned the taping over to Manchester.

"Arthur does not know how specifically Manchester understood that he was completing the oral history program, and at the same time doing research for his own book," one friend said recently. "Manchester knew quite well he was carrying the oral history program forward, that the interviews had this double purpose, and the assumption was that he could draw on the interviews for his book, but couldn't use material without her permission. This was implicit and explicit."

Another says: "The key to the whole problem was Manchester's insistence that what Mrs. Kennedy told him was his personal property to be used according to his decision.

"Among historians, it's a perfectly common situation that when people open up papers for you, you can't quote from them without their permission."

"She told Manchester everything that there was to tell," says another who was involved in the process. "It was like expunging herself—the wound was still pretty raw.

"The key factor in Mrs. Kennedy's personality is this: She has a great visual eye and great recall. She remembers every goodamn thing about that assassination. And what she saw, she retained . . . An exceptional eye .

"It was great for history, but terrible for her."

Manchester's friends, on the other hand, ask why, if he was not to be allowed to use the interview in his book, was he given the task of interviewing the President's widow. There were not to be two interviews with her, one for the oral history and one for the book. Her story, obviously, was to be one of the key portions of the book, and the most moving. This, obviously, was the way it was made available to him, they say.

Manchester, almost everyone agrees, has a technique in interviews that draws the subject out.

But the interviews affected Manchester, too.

Ed Guthman was one of those interviewed. As a newspaperman and Robert Kennedy's press secretary, he had been on both sides of the process many times.

"The interviews were hard on him (Manchester)," Guthman says. "It was very, very tough—people broke down and cried. It was very, very tough on me when he interviewed me."

Two other developments, later to become issues, arose during this interviewing process. One had to do with Robert Kennedy's pledge to make persons available to Manchester.

"Many people wouldn't have talked to him unless they'd been asked to by Jackie or Bobby," Peter Lisagor, Washington correspondent for the Chicago Daily News, says. "One person told me he felt as if he were talking to Manchester as a confessor. The person he interviewed said he felt 'totally protected against indiscreet exposures.'"

The other development was Manchester's failure to get an interview with President Johnson.

"I never tried harder for an interview," Manchester has said. "Twice he agreed to see me, once with Mac Bundy and once with a member of the Kennedy family, and I even had a rehearsal session in the White House with one of his staff people for the interview, but he never granted it."

Some think this may have played a part in the anti-Johnson bias attributed to Manchester. But Manchester denies such a bias.

One who read the early text said Manchester was worried whether he had been fair to the President, but thought he had.

"One of the things that's important was that Johnson would never see Manchester—made appointments and broke them and generally gave him the run-around," this person said. "Johnson did answer some written questions, but this offended Manchester. Also, Kennedy had been Manchester's kind of President—and Johnson could not be."

Bobby Kennedy was asked recently why he thought Johnson had refused to be interviewed by Manchester.

He paused almost a minute before answering. Then he said:

"I don't really know."

Another pause, a laugh and:

"Maybe he knew better than anyone what was going to happen."

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THERE WAS, HOWEVER, NO HINT OF FUTURE controversy at this time. Jackie had made the tapes, whether for "the historian of the 21st Century" as Richard Goodwin says today, or for "The Death of a President," the other principals were interviewed, some in tears, and the gossip in Washington was not yet of "an anti-Johnson book."

A person later identified with the Kennedy side of the dispute may have put his finger on the reason for this period of peace when he said:

"During the two years of writing, the Kennedys deliberately kept their distance from Manchester so they wouldn't be accused of interfering.

"They were confident that Harper's and Evan Thomas, having published books by both President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, would handle things properly.

"So there you are—it looked like everything was in great shape."

The quiet persisted until Feb. 15, 1966, when Manchester delivered the completed text to Evan Thomas in New York.

"When I read it, in February, it was a very emotional experience," the Harper editor said recently.

Three days later, Thomas suggested that copies be sent to John Siegenthaler, editor of the Nashville Tennessean, and to Guthman, national news editor of the Los Angeles Times, both former aides to Robert Kennedy. They were to read the book for their former boss, who did not want to do it himself.

At about the same time, one person recalls, "Bill Manchester gave copies to Dick Goodwin and Arthur Schlesinger on his own."

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THERE IS A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON HOW Goodwin, who became Mrs. Kennedy's chief advocate in the dispute, happened to get his early copy.

Goodwin says: "I knew Manchester briefly. I first met him when he interviewed me for the book. Then, of course, I saw him around town here (in Middletown). This is a small town, and there are dinners and such. He first asked me to read the book in the spring of '66, soon after he finished it, and long before anything happened."

But Manchester says:

"Goodwin saw the book first because he asked to see it. He's been quoted as saying that he told me I had problems, but he never said that. All he said was that it was great. A lot of people in Middletown remember his saying it."

Little controversies were beginning to appear. The big ones were on their heels.

Continued Tomorrow

Political Romances

JAMES A. WECHSLER

Too many liberals lead excessively turbulent political love-lives. They are forever being enchanted and disillusioned, enthralled and appalled, stirred to heights of inspiration and then thrust into the valley of despair by an infidelity. The affliction is not unique to them; to some degree it affects all people who care about public events. But there is an inherent romanticism that seems to render the liberal's life peculiarly subject to such cycles and ecstasy and agony.

Not long ago, in a magazine article, I suggested that I was unprepared to consign Hubert Humphrey to the inferno of lost souls because of his defense of the Johnson Administration's course in Vietnam. I disagree with much that he has said and done and decry his tendency to raise his voice most stridently when he is enduring private torment. But I tried to argue that a man's long life was not rendered meaningless—or traitorous—by one interlude.

These remarks evoked little favor (I think the only generous note came from Norman Thomas) and much derision.

* * *

In the recent gubernatorial campaign, I found myself endorsing Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., who had fallen from liberal grace some years ago. In fact I had been one of those who had written most harshly about his Trujillo escapade. But I also remembered an earlier time and, perhaps more important, I was impressed by the earnestness and intelligence of his bid for the governorship. As the contest neared its end, it seemed to me that he alone had said the things that mattered (on such matters as civilian review and church and state).

For some days the purists seemed to look at me as if I were soft of head for proposing that Roosevelt be readmitted—even on probation—to the liberal fraternity. But by Election Day there were those who had rallied with even uncritical, unreserved enthusiasm to his side.

* * *

Probably no modern man has evoked more violent fluctuation of liberal emotion than Robert F. Kennedy. To some extent John F. Kennedy went through a similar experience, but the intensity of response was less acute; once he achieved the Presidency, he produced a steadily ascending curve.

Robert Kennedy had a harder time, probably in largest measure because of his youthful association with the McCarthy committee. There was an interval after he entered New York's Senate race when one defended his candidacy only at the risk of ideological life in limbo in some liberal salons.

But slowly the atmosphere changed. His independence and spirit captivated the young and disarmed many elders. In the places where Humphrey's name was once identified with the hope of the future, there were political memorial services for the fallen Vice President and revival meetings for Kennedy.

* * *

Now there is a new emotional crisis created by the dreary conflict over William Manchester's book. Pollster Lou Harris reports a sharp drop in Kennedy's rating among Eastern intellectuals; both Humphrey and President Johnson are the beneficiaries of the change.

The arithmetic is confirmed by personal encounter; some who had seemingly buried their earlier anti-Kennedy passion suddenly exhibit a resurgence of that old feeling, with added antagonism born of a new sense of betrayal.

* * *

Up to now there has been no commentary here on the book dispute because a member of my family is associated with the legal firm representing Harper and Row. It happens that I believe that Cass Canfield and Evan Thomas of Harper are the "good guys" in a battle they never made; but it would have seemed improper to press this point while the lawyers were arguing.

Despite my possible conflict of interest, I think I am only echoing a general judgment when I voice my unhappiness over the whole struggle. I do not have to be persuaded that the Kennedys maneuvered themselves into an indefensible corner by applying pressures that recreated the image of power-madness; their case is hardly helped when Pierre Salinger and Dick Goodwin make Manchester—an agonized, battle-fatigued author—the target of bitter personal attack. But no one was innocent of error in his tragic folly, including Manchester, Look and Harper's.

The point of these remarks is not to offer a solemn assessment of human frailty and frenzy, for the personal reason already stated. It is only to voice a certain skepticism about the finality of judgments now being rendered anew.

Robert F. Kennedy will return to the U. S. shortly and deliver a major speech on our Far Eastern policy in Chicago next week. Nothing that has happened in this local war of words will render me less attentive to what he has to say. If he has acquired some new wisdom on this journey bearing on our misadventures in Vietnam, that will be more important in the long run than the battle of the book. The saddest consequence of this dismal failure in literary human-relations would be any sign that he felt obliged to lower his voice on great issues lest he be accused of diversionary rhetoric. It was the book that was the melancholy distraction, and another wretched accident of history.

Inside Argentina

From "Inside South America" by John Gunther (Harper, $7.95).

Argentina has the highest standard of living of any South American country, and, along with Uruguay, is the best educated and healthiest.

SAVE ON TAXES—VIII

Alimony, Sick Pay

SYLVIA PORTER

(In collaboration with the Research Institute of America)

If you are a divorced husband who must contribute toward the support of your children, you probably face this common problem on your 1966 tax return. How do you figure whether you or your ex-wife contributed more than half the support of the children so you are able to claim them as a dependency deduction?

Your wife has the upper hand. She knows or can find out how much actually was spent for support of the children. But you can't get this information without her cooperation—and that often is not forthcoming. Unless your contribution is so large as to be obviously more than half a child's support, you generally will not be able to get by an examining agent if you are challenged in claiming a dependency deduction.

But as a practical matter, if you feel that you are contributing more than half the support of your child, you may want to claim the dependency exemption on your return, even though your ex-wife well may claim the same exemption on her return.

There still seems to be no way out of this dilemma, although Congress almost passed a bill last year which would have solved it. Let me warn you, though: if your return is examined, the agent almost certainly will disallow the deduction. And if you appeal, court decisions show that you are likely to lose because you can't prove what it cost to support the children.

* * *

If you are a wife who is entitled to receive support from your ex-husband but he doesn't make the payments, you do not have any tax deduction for the money you must pay out because of his failure to pay. According to the Treasury and the Tax Court, you cannot even claim this uncollected amount as a non-business bad debt, which would give you at least a capital loss.

Many thousand of employes receive disability pensions which qualify as tax-free sick pay up to $75 or $100 a week. But if these payments are continued when the employe reaches retirement age, from that time on the payments no longer qualify as sick pay. What happens when the employer's retirement plan provides for an optional early retirement before normal retirement age?

The Treasury has taken the view that a disability pension no longer qualifies as sick pay at the earliest age at which the disabled employe could have retired without detriment if he had not been disabled. The courts have repeatedly rejected this rule and allowed disability pensions to qualify as sick pay beyond early retirement age, either to the age at which most employes of that employer retired or to mandatory retirement age under the employer's retirement plan. In 1966 the Treasury announced it was reexamining its view, but then it issued regulations that did not seem to change its view much.

If you received disability pay in 1966 which qualifies in whole or in part as tax-free sick pay and you reached your employer's early retirement option in 1966 (but not the age at which most of your fellow employes retire or your employer's mandatory retirement age), you have court support for continuing to treat the appropriate portion of your disability pay as tax-free sick pay on your 1966 return. But the Treasury may fight you on this point.

* * *

"Leased" life insurance is a relatively new method for selling financed life insurance. If you bought any, you will recall that one of the attractions was the suggestion that you might be able to deduct part of your "rent" payment as interest.

In 1966, though, the Treasury announced that you may not deduct any part of your "rent" payment for leased life insurance—not as interest or otherwise.

Tomorrow: Interest, state transfer taxes.

Did FBI Get Its Man?

DREW PEARSON

(Today's column is by Drew Pearson and his associate, Jack Anderson.)

Washington.

Anyone who tangles with J. Edgar Hoover usually lives to regret it. This is axiomatic on Capitol Hill, but wasn't axiomatic in the state of Nevada last fall when Gov. Grant Sawyer, Democrat, running for reelection, charged the FBI with wholesale wiretapping in Las Vegas and waging "an invisible war against Nevada."

J. Edgar was really sore. The election boiled down, in effect, to one between Gov. Sawyer and J. Edgar Hoover—though Hoover remained silent on the sidelines.

In the end Sawyer lost, and afterward came to Washington to talk with President Johnson, Vice President Humphrey and John Macy, head of the Civil Service Commission. All three urged him to accept a federal job. Finally LBJ came up with the offer that Sawyer become governor general of the Panama Canal Zone.

Sawyer hesitated, but finally agreed to accept the appointment. The White House then ordered the routine FBI check, and G-men started to ask questions in Nevada regarding Sawyer.

Either Hoover's men were not discreet in asking questions, or they deliberately leaked. At any rate, their investigation got into the headlines.

There's nothing LBJ dislikes more than being scooped on an appointment. This J. Edgar Hoover knows all too well. So the chances are his Nevada critic will not be governor of the Canal Zone.

* * *

Alabama's ex-governor, George Wallace, who still pulls the apron strings in the statehouse, last week brought his soapbox to Washington, mounted it on Capitol Hill and kicked off his 1968 Presidential campaign.

Ostensibly, he came to appeal to Congress not to let the federal government take away $93,000,000 in federal welfare payments from Alabama's "needy, aged, lame and blind." Actually, he was more interested in finding a national forum for another of his attacks on the big, bad federal government.

Wallace arranged through Sen. Lister Hill (D-Ala.) for a hearing before the Senate Finance Committee. It made no difference that the question is now before the courts, not Congress, and that Wallace himself had placed it before the courts.

The Civil Rights Act, passed by Congress more than two years ago, forbids racial discrimination in any federally financed program. All the other 49 states have filed the required statement of compliance. Only Alabama has held out, and now it faces the loss of federal funds.

The case, which has been dragging on since August 17, 1965, is up for a ruling from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Senate Finance Committee has absolutely nothing to say about it.

Note—Hospitals, nursing homes and other welfare institutions across the country, anxious to continue collecting federal benefits, particularly the new Medicare money now available, have made remarkable progress in abolishing discrimination. Federal officials say that more has been done in the past six months to bar discrimination in hospitals and nursing homes than was accomplished in the previous 60 years.

* * *

Shortly after Alabama's "assistant governor" left town, another Southern governor, John J. McKeithen of Louisiana, arrived in Washington.

Queried by the press as to how Louisiana handled the problems which caused Wallace to take to the soapbox, McKeithen replied:

"We have had no integration problems with the federal government. I appointed a bi-racial commission on human rights, including both whites and Negroes, Democrats and Republicans, and they have worked together to iron out our problems.

"Former Gov. Sam Jones, who hasn't voted for a Democrat since he voted for himself, is on the commission; also some of the Negro leaders of the NAACP. They are working together. We are doing all right. We have had one or two pockets of trouble, but on the whole we are doing all right."