

Author Denies Breaking Faith Over JFK Book

Manchester Says Kennedys Sanctioned His Volume and Serialization in Magazine

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William Manchester denied yesterday that he had ever "broken faith" with Mrs. John F. Kennedy in writing an account of her husband's death that she has repudiated as "both tasteless and distorted."

"This is my book," the author of "The Death of a President," declared in a statement. He pleaded that the 300,000-word book that the President's widow authorized in 1964 be "given the chance . . . to withstand any objective test—particularly the test of time."

The 44-year-old author broke a week-long silence to contend that the Kennedy family last summer—after friends had read the manuscript—sanctioned both publication of the book by Harper & Row in early 1967 and a prior serialization in Look magazine.

Last week, Mrs. Kennedy sued Manchester, Harper's and Cowles Communications, Inc., publishers of Look, to keep them from releasing the book in its present form. She relied heavily in her court action on a March, 1964, agreement between Manchester and her brother-in-law, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.), providing that the manuscript would be reviewed by Mrs. Kennedy and the Senator, and that "the final text shall not be published unless and until approved by them."

In defending himself yesterday, Manchester noted that "Mrs. Kennedy herself did not ask to see the manuscript and still hasn't. If she had, I would, of course, have given it to her."

Mrs. Kennedy raised strong objections to the publi-



WILLIAM MANCHESTER
... asks "test of time"

cation of the Manchester manuscript only after it had been sold on Aug. 11, 1966, to Look for a record price of \$665,000. In effect, the accord with the Kennedy family marked the magazine sale as the sole source from which Manchester could expect to receive a substantial financial reward.

Manchester recalled that Mrs. Kennedy had initially asked him to write the book, that she had voluntarily submitted to ten hours of interviews with the author and that his account had been repeatedly revised with the help of "distinguished friends" of the Kennedy family.

"In the last analysis," Manchester concluded, "this is my book. Neither Mrs. Kennedy nor any member of the Kennedy family nor anyone else is in any way responsible for my research or the content of my work."

Asked for comment, a source close to the Kennedy family who requested that his name not be used said:

"These are brave words. But they come from a man who broke a contract for money. His statement does not really speak to the issue. The issue is whether he is prepared to honor a written contract, and the courts will decide that."

This source added that Man-

chester's plea, citing both editorial freedom and historical truth, "would sound a lot better if Look were not using his book to raise its price to 50 cents a copy."

In spite of the bitterness aroused by the dispute, quiet efforts were still under way to reach an accord before the start of what Mrs. Kennedy has termed a "horrible" court trial.

Simon H. Rifkind, her lawyer, and Richard N. Goodwin, her principal adviser, conferred with David W. Peck, a Cowles attorney, for three hours Saturday afternoon. Mrs. Kennedy, who attended the meeting, left with tears in her eyes.

While the purported purpose of the session was to allow the Kennedy representatives to read the Manchester draft in its present form, Peck utilized the occasion to propose a compromise. As one source put it, "It wasn't necessary to sit around for three hours to read a book."

For his part, Manchester refrained from mentioning in his statement that he had heavily edited his April, 1964, interviews with Mrs. Kennedy, which took place in her former Georgetown home. The material which Manchester, on his own motion, regarded as too personal was laid aside to be deposited in the Kennedy Memorial Library.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the historian and family friend

who interviewed Mrs. Kennedy for the Library's "oral history" project, decided to skip the assassination period. They agreed that it would be too painful to repeat the material covered in the Manchester interviews.

Thus, it was planned that the Manchester tapes would be used for the oral history under the standard provision that the person interviewed—in this case, Mrs. Kennedy—would have complete control of the material.

"The only issue," one Kennedy source said, "is whether the things Jacqueline told Manchester under great stress for the 21st century became Manchester's personal property."

In the forward to his book, Manchester reports that Lyndon B. Johnson twice scheduled and broke interviews with him. However, a reliable White House source said the President never intended to allow Manchester to see him. The source said Mr. Johnson regarded the Manchester book as "a Kennedy project" and was always leery of becoming involved.

Bill Moyers, the White House news secretary, yesterday denied a published report that he had read portions of the book dealing with Mr. Johnson and that he had briefed the President about them.