

Production Halted on Kennedy Book to Fix Error

Production of William Manchester's controversial book, "The Death of a President," was temporarily halted for several days last week to correct an error.

The error, according to Evan Thomas, vice president of Harper & Row, publishers of the book, was contained in an account of an incident involving Maj. Gen. Chester V. Clifton Jr., military aide to President Kennedy. The general is now retired.

In his description of General Clifton's actions immediately after the assassination of President Kennedy, Mr. Manchester suggested that the general was more concerned about assuring his wife of his own safety than he was about the military situa-

tion created by the assassination.

As contained in the second installment of Look magazine's serialization of the book Mr. Manchester wrote of General Clifton that he was "a general officer, a combat veteran, the President's senior military aide. Of all the men there [in Parkland Hospital], Clifton should have been the likeliest to grasp the capabilities of the Signal Corps."

The account then reported that the military aide "forgot Signal entirely" and instead presented a credit card to an operator at the hospital and told her to make a long-distance call to the White House. On being connected, the author wrote, General Clifton

asked that Mrs. Clifton and Mrs. (Kenneth) O'Donnell be informed that their husbands were uninjured.

"That urgent business out of the way", the book went on, "he instructed the operator to switch him to Bromley Smith, executive secretary of the National Security Council, and inquired of Smith, 'Is there any intelligence on this?'"

"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."

Mr. Thomas said that after this account was included in the book, General Clifton informed him that the story was incorrect.

Mr. Thomas explained that Mr. Manchester's source, another military official, had been unaware that General Clifton had made an earlier phone call to the White House that dealt with the military and security aspects of the assassination.

A long-time friend of General Clifton, Mr. Thomas said, "When I learned that he had done his job, I believed him. So we changed it. Once we learned the truth we were damned anxious to use it."

Mr. Thomas said Mr. Manchester concurred in the change.

According to Mr. Thomas, 100,000 copies of the printed but as yet unbound book had to be corrected. He said this meant removing several pages, reprinting them and replacing them.