

Johnson Won't Discuss Kennedy Book, Bars Aides From Dispute

Magazine's Story
Called Inaccurate
Special to *The Inquirer*
And *Washington Post*

AUSTIN, Tex., Dec. 26.—President Johnson will not discuss the controversial book, "The Death of a President," and he has instructed his staff to refrain from discussing it, White House press secretary George Christian said on Monday.

Christian made these disclosures when questioned about Newsweek magazine's report

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on the President's recollection of his succession to the Presidency on Nov. 22, 1963.

Mr. Johnson has not seen the manuscript of the forthcoming book by William Manchester, Christian said. Nor has he seen the text of the Newsweek report of his own memories of that fateful day.

'NO INTERVIEWS'

But based on news accounts of the magazine story, on the stands on Monday, Christian took issue with Newsweek's sources and information.

"The President has granted no interviews to anyone, including Mr. Manchester, and has asked his staff to refrain from discussing the subject of the book," Christian said.

"He did not talk to Newsweek.

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Johnson Bars Book Comment

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"I'll not discuss the various attributions credited to so-called friends and alleged intimates except to say that I believe them to be inaccurate and untrue."

Newsweek Editor Osborn Elliott replied: "Newsweek has confidence in its reporter and in the reliability of the source from which the information came. Had it been otherwise, we would not have printed the story."

CENTRAL PART

Mr. Johnson's activities on the day of President John F. Kennedy's assassination have become a central part of the controversy over the Manchester book.

According to those who have seen the manuscript, it gives an unflattering picture of Mr. Johnson on the day he succeeded to the Presidency.

Newsweek did not contend that

it interviewed the President. It said intimates of the President reported his recollection of the events of the day and of his conversations with Mrs. Kennedy.

UPHOLD PRESIDENT

For months the White House has been deeply interested in the Manchester book and has made attempts to obtain the manuscript. While Christian said he knew of no White House staff member who has seen it, it was understood that retiring press secretary Bill D. Moyers has seen the excerpts which Look magazine will begin publishing next month.

When first word leaked out several months ago that the Manchester book was critical of the President, the White House assembled considerable documentation to uphold the President's side of the argument that he had shown the greatest possible consideration for the Kennedy family.

NO COMMENT NOW

But it has never made any of the material public. Christian said Monday that Mr. Johnson declined to grant Manchester an interview but that he did respond to written questions that Manchester submitted.

Otherwise the President stands on the statement he made to the Warren Commission about

the events of Nov. 22, 1963, Christian said.

Reporters sought unsuccessfully to draw Christian into a discussion of what he thought accurate and what he thought inaccurate about Newsweek's report of Mr. Johnson's recollections of that day.

Asked if the President would continue to refuse to discuss the book and the events of November, 1963, Christian said:

"I can't say he will never discuss them again but he doesn't have any plans to do so."

Monday afternoon, the President and Mrs. Johnson went by helicopter to Floresville, south of San Antonio, to attend the funeral of Sam Fore, Jr., a long-time friend.

Fore, former publisher of the Floresville Chronicle - Journal, died on Saturday.

In addition to the President, Texas Gov. and Mrs. John Connally also attended the funeral. Connally is a native of Floresville.

Immediately after the services, the President and Mrs. Johnson returned by helicopter to their ranch, about 80 miles from Floresville.

Christian said that the President worked at his ranch the rest of the day.

"As of now, it looks as though he will be here all week," Christian said. The President flew to Texas from Washington Dec. 16.