

Hope Of Dallas Conspiracy

NEW YORK (AP) — Mrs. John F. Kennedy sought solace in the hope that her husband had been the victim of a conspiracy when he was assassinated in Dallas, William Manchester says in his book, "The Death of a President."

"She considered (Lee Harvey) Oswald and hoped he had been part of a conspiracy," the book says, "for then there would be an air of inevitability about the tragedy; then she could persuade herself that if the plotters had missed on Elm Street they would have eventually succeeded elsewhere."

This is Manchester's statement. The passage does not quote Mrs. Kennedy in support of it.

The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy, Friday, Nov. 22, 1963.

Manchester's book, priced at \$10, goes on sale Friday. The publishers, Harper & Row, said the first printing ran to 600,000 copies. They declined to specify the advance sale. The 350,000-word text fills 647 pages, plus charts, diagrams, and a list of sources.

Literary agents estimate the book may earn close to \$3 million.

Harper & Row said they would retain six per cent of the net receipts on the first 100,000 copies sold. An undisclosed portion of both the author's and publishers' earnings have been earmarked for the Kennedy library.

A gigantic publicity buildup, probably the biggest in literary history, preceded publication of the book. It stemmed largely from the long-drawn dispute between the Kennedys and Man-

chester after he finished his manuscript and the contents became known.

Mrs. Kennedy called the book "tasteless and distorted." She demanded—and obtained—revisions and deletions of certain passages. Manchester retorted that her motivations were political and an "attempt to suppress vital facts."

As a result of the row, the Kennedys have disavowed the book, although they had selected Manchester to write a "definitive" history of the assassination.

A note on the title page says: "Harper & Row wish to make it clear that neither Mrs. John F. Kennedy nor Sen. Robert F. Kennedy approved or authorized the material appearing in this book."

In a foreword, Manchester says he does not "offer this

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study as a definitive work."

He agrees with the findings of the Warren Commission. "The commission had met its mandate," he writes. "Oswald was correctly identified as the assassin; the absence of a cabal was established." The commission said it found no credible evidence of a conspiracy.

Manchester is deeply critical of the operations of the Secret Service during the President's trip to Texas and in general. He summarizes numerous derogatory statements about the agency by saying, "The central fact was that the Secret Service had failed."

Manchester also has thousands of harsh words about Texas, and more especially, Dallas. He writes at length about the political, social and psychological climate of the city at the time of the assassination. He

describes it as "a stridency, a disease of the spirit, a shrill hysterical note suggestive of a deeply troubled society."

Lee Harvey Oswald, however, could scarcely be considered a product of Dallas. In his 23 years of life, he lived in New Orleans and New York, in Japan and the Soviet Union. The Warren report says that boys in New Orleans teased him about his "northern accent."

With respect to Dallas, the commission said it was impossible "to judge what the effect of the general political ferment present in that city might have been, even though Oswald was aware of it."

Moreover, Manchester states flatly that on Nov. 21, the night before the assassination, "in

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fact, he (Oswald) was going mad."

This is in total contrast to the impression Oswald made on U.S. Postal Inspector H. D. Holmes, who interviewed him two days after Kennedy was killed.

Holmes' memorandum to the Warren Commission says:

"Oswald at no time appeared confused or in doubt as to whether or not he should answer a question. On the contrary, he was quite alert and showed no hesitancy in answering those questions which he wanted to answer, and was quite skillful in parrying those questions which he did not want to answer."

Manchester offers no factual evidence to support his assertion that Oswald "was going mad."

In his preword, Manchester says he felt entitled to "record my opinions." However, passages reflecting his opinion — and not hard facts — are not always clearly identified as opinion.

Manchester's story contains a multiplicity of details and many episodes. He writes:

— Mrs. Kennedy's determination to mark her husband's grave in Arlington with an eternal flame aroused misgivings among those close to her but she brushed them aside. Sargent Shriver, her brother-in-law, is quoted as saying, "Some people might think it's a little ostentatious." Mrs. Kennedy snapped, "Let them." William

Walton, an artist, called her plan for the flame "aesthetically unfortunate."

— Army engineers told Richard Goodwin, a State Department officer, that they did not know how to arrange for the graveside flame. They said they would have to go to Paris and study blueprints for the eternal flame that burns in the Arc de Triomphe. Goodwin snapped, "OK. Its six hours to Europe. Go get it." In the end, the engineers found this unnecessary.

— Twice during the night before Kennedy's funeral, an anonymous caller telephoned to say that the French Embassy, where President Charles de Gaulle was sleeping, would be bombed. French policemen, members of the Surete, patrolled the embassy grounds throughout the night.

— Along with De Gaulle, threats were reported against President Johnson, Robert Kennedy, Chief Justice Earl Warren, and Anastas Mikoyan, deputy premier of the Soviet Union. Johnson said to his military aide, who wanted to set up special precautions during the funeral, "You damn bastards are trying to take over. I'm going to walk."

— Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara flashed an alert to every American military base in the world minutes after the shooting in Dallas. The possibility of an international conspiracy was uppermost in the minds of numerous federal officials.

The CIA activated what Manchester calls the "watch committee." Its members were "expert in the ways of Sino-Soviet agents. They remained on duty for days after the assassination, "tapping foreign sources to determine whether or not the crime could have been the work of an outside ring."