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'The Death of a President' Stirs a Book Price War

By ARTHUR GREENSPAN

Metropolitan Area booksellers today are involved in a full-scale price war involving William Manchester's "The Death of a President."

"The Book" went on sale here over the weekend, and discounters have dropped the publisher's \$10 price to \$5.99, much to the distress of some traditional bookshops who are staying at the \$10 figure.

Most major department stores, including Macy's and Gimbels, quickly offered the book for sale at \$5.99 after Alexander's advertised it would sell the controversial volume for that amount. E. J. Korvette, by contrast, yesterday was keeping its price at the pre-publication \$7.99 it had offered advance purchasers.

Although the book won't formally be published until Friday, the initial 600,000 copies printed are nearly exhausted, according to Harper & Row spokesmen. The publisher will decide this week how many copies of a second printing will be run off the presses.

"It could be up to 100,000 copies," said a Harper spokesman. "From our point of view, the first edition is nearly sold out."

Rush To Some

Although small book stores were selling "well" the relatively few copies they received, Alexander's reported a buyer's rush for the book.

In the fifth-floor book depart-

ment of the store's branch at 59th St. and Lexington Av. "more than 500" copies were sold in the first five hours it was available yesterday.

A spokesman for Brentano's reported "it is not setting the world on fire yet . . . the sales are not yet equal to the advance publicity." But he expected an increase in sales, even at \$10.

And Frank O'Rourke, manager of Barnes & Noble book shop, said "Frankly, it's not selling very well. You see, we're not in the discount field. We're only sold a few copies at \$10, and we're not going to sell a lot at that price."

Igor Kropotkin, manager of Scribners, said the first impression of sales, at \$10, was "fair, whatever that means." Double day Book Shop, where a spokesman said, "we always sell everything at list price," reported "it's doing very well." The Doubleday Store at 436 Fifth Av. reported it sold out its first 200 copies.

The Cokesbury Book Store at 55 E. 55th St. was offering free paperback copies of Manchester's earlier volume about Kennedy, "Portrait of a President," and Mark Lane's "Rush to Judgement," all for the \$10 price.

Cokesbury's manager, W. Scott Jackson, Jr., said he had a very good advance sales.

He pointed out that there must be very little profit being made by the discounters. The

book is offered at discounts of 40 to 46 per cent, depending upon how large the volume purchased. So a big store getting a 46 per cent discount from Harper & Row, and selling the book for \$5.99 is making a profit of only 59 cents a copy, not much compared to the \$4 or more earned by the large stores.