

Manchester's JFK Book Comes Out Prematurely

By Andrew J. Glass
Washington Post Staff Writer

BOOK 3/29/67

William Manchester's controversial account of the death of John F. Kennedy—a book attacked by the Kennedy family and likely to become one of the best selling volumes of the decade — produced fresh anguish yesterday when it was prematurely released to the public.

The April 6 publication date of "The Death of a President" was breached by a Pittsburgh department store and by Women's Wear Daily, a fashion trade newspaper, which reviewed the volume on the grounds that it was on sale in the Pittsburgh store.

A spokesman for the book's beleaguered publisher, Harper & Row, said the books were mistakenly delivered a week too early to Kaufmann's Department Store in Pittsburgh. The store then refused repeated pleas from Harper's to keep the volume off its shelves until the scheduled publication date.

In New York, Cass Canfield, chairman of Harper & Row, issued a statement that the publisher regretted the breach of the release date despite "persistent efforts" to

comply with a court order permitting publication only on or after April 1.

The premature release added yet another disputed sequel to a book that had been repudiated by Mrs. John F. Kennedy as, "in part . . . tasteless and distorted" and that is expected to yield millions of dollars for the Kennedy Memorial Library in Cambridge, Mass.

The struggle that raged for months between Manchester and members of the Kennedy family—who had commissioned the project in 1964 — finally erupted last December in a court suit aimed at blocking publication.

The suit was settled after about seven pages in the 710-page book were deleted. Mrs. Kennedy felt the offending passages were too personal.

Much of the controversial material in the 350,000-word book, which has a retail list price of \$10, has already appeared in four 15,000-word installments serialized by Look magazine.

In the full version of the 1963 assassination, Manchester asserts that a gradual failure of telephone service in the Washington area shortly after the tragedy in Dallas raised the possibility of sabotage.

The author said this proved that "telephones would become highly unreliable" in the event of a national disaster. Therefore, he said, the Army Signal Corps should be allowed to link the phones of all key Administration officials in an emergency system.

The Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Co. said the "only effect" of the heavy traffic "was that the dial tone was a little slow." And the Defense Department contended, in response, that existing military communications facilities are "adequate."

The previously unreported material in the Manchester book includes such items as:

- The President's widow

overruled a suggestion by the Roman Catholic hierarchy that the funeral he held at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception as well as the idea of Richard Cardinal Cushing that the President be entombed in the middle of Boston Common.

- The President was buried in a casket that cost \$1400 because the White House aides who selected the coffin were influenced by Jessica Mitford's critical study of funeral practices, "The American Way of Death."

- French President de Gaulle was urged not to walk behind the casket after the Central Intelligence Agency received an "absolutely reliable" report that he would be assassinated. When he demurred, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover made a final appeal to de Gaulle whose reply was "pfft."