

F. Paul 3/27/67

'Death Of A President'

Author Rejected Warren Offer On Kennedy Book

NEW YORK (AP)—Author William Manchester says Chief Justice Earl Warren "invited" him to state that the findings of the Warren Commission on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy were wholly acceptable to the Kennedy family.

Writing in Look magazine about his dispute with the Kennedys over his book, "The Death of a President," Manchester says Warren gave him access to the testimony and all other evidence taken by the commission.

He adds: "Rather cannily, I thought, the chief justice had also invited me to read a first draft of the report and declare, as a friend of the family, that its findings were acceptable to the Kennedys in every respect."

Manchester writes that he "demurred" on grounds that this would be improper.

The Look article is scheduled to go on newsstands March 21.

In another comment on the

Warren Commission, Manchester says:

"As I then knew, and as the nation has since discovered, the prestigious names on Earl Warren's panel did little except glitter; the long hours were put in by junior staff men."

Nonetheless, Manchester has stated that he agrees with the central conclusion of the commission—that Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated the president and there is no credible evidence of any accomplices.

Manchester's article also criticizes Theodore H. Sorensen and Pierre Salinger, White House aides to President Kennedy, in connection with books they wrote about the Kennedy administration.

He says they both capitulated to demands by the Kennedys for changes in their manuscripts.

"Like Pierre Salinger the following year, Ted took the easy way, giving way on point after

point and weakening what should have been a great volume," the article says. "I spent two hours begging him to hold his ground. He refused. He was a public figure, not a writer; he couldn't see the principle involved."

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., another former White House assistant, resisted the Kennedys' efforts to change the book he wrote about President Kennedy. Thereafter, Manchester wrote, Schlesinger's relations with Mrs. John F. Kennedy became "chilly."

She and her brother-in-law, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., chose Manchester, on Salinger's recommendation, to write the authorized history of the assassination of the president. He and the senator, on March 26, 1964, signed a "memorandum of understanding" which gave the Kennedys the

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MANCHESTER

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right to approve the book before publication.

Not long after Manchester completed it in the spring of 1966, those who read the manuscript began suggesting changes.

One of those who read it was John Seigenthaler, editor of the Nashville Tennessean and a former associate of Robert Kennedy in the Justice Department.

Manchester writes: "John had already approved the manuscript. But now he (or someone) was beginning to have second thoughts—political thoughts."

"Among other things, he wanted a new version of President Johnson's first Cabinet meeting, eliminating the friction between Johnson and Bob (Kennedy). It would in brief have constituted outright distortion

and was swiftly rejected."

Manchester has previously said the revisions sought by the Kennedys were based on "political" reasons. In the Look article he says:

"In sum, over 75 per cent of the deletions proposed in her (Mrs. Kennedy's) behalf did not involve her. They were an extension of the attempt to suppress vital facts."

The author indicates that he believes most of his troubles over the proposed changes in his manuscript stemmed from Mrs. Kennedy.

He writes: "It is easy to see how she had come to think of the author she had chosen as a member of her court. She had even persuaded herself, as she wrote another writer, that she had 'hired' me—a slip I find fascinating. Under these circumstances, it was inconceivable to Jacqueline Kennedy that I should deny her anything. I was a writer, not a courtier."

However, Manchester calls Mrs. Kennedy a "heroine" for

the way she comported herself in the days immediately after the assassination. "In kindling that Arlington flame (she) rekindled our national pride," he writes.

As to being "hired" to write the history of the tragedy in Dallas, Tex., Manchester has repeatedly stated that he received no money from the Kennedys. He says he used his own money.

Manchester writes that he invested, not only his savings, but 30 months of his life in writing the book. Nonetheless, the

article continues, when his dispute with the Kennedys was at its height, Robert Kennedy wired Harper & Row, the publisher, "I feel the book on President Kennedy's death should neither be published nor serialized." He asked the publishers to so inform Manchester.

"It is this sheer insanity that explains the Kennedy behavior throughout the controversy," Manchester writes.

Summarizing, the author writes:

"Once, we were united by a unique friendship. But now very deep wounds have been inflicted. Eventually, they will heal but the scar tissue will remain ugly."

"Had the Kennedys chosen a pedestrian talent, the resulting chronicle would have been bland and flat, yet there would have been no row."

Manchester says some will "disclaim" his book, but he writes that he expected that from the moment he first began putting words on paper.