

Mrs. Manchester Never Met Mrs. Kennedy

By Dorothy McCardle
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MIDDLETOWN, Conn., April 1—Mrs. William Manchester, wife of the author of the controversial account of the assassination of President Kennedy, "The Death of a President," has never met Mrs. John F. Kennedy.

"And I don't want to, either," she said during an interview at her home in this quiet college town.

Judy Manchester, the former Julia Marshall of Baltimore, spread her hands in a "so what?" gesture and shrugged her trim shoulders. She pushed her auburn page boy hair out of her eyes.

Then she yawned. These yawns punctuated the two-hour interview.

"I feel sorry for Mrs. Kennedy," she said as she discussed the weeks that Jacqueline Kennedy fought to cut certain passages from the book and the excerpts published in *Look* magazine.

"I think she lives in a different world. She doesn't understand writers. And she spoke of hiring my husband!" Her low voice left its husky register and rocketed upward, partly because of emotion and partly to drown out the noise of children playing in the next room.

THE YOUNGEST of the Manchesters' three children, 4-year-old Laurie, and a boy from next door were building a dream castle of big wooden blocks which had just collapsed. The children moved into the living room to start a game of nurse and doctor.

As Laurie and her tow-headed boy friend played happily in one end of the big, high-ceilinged room, Julie, 9, came home from school. She and her mother discussed the



Mrs. McCardle

time of a music lesson. John, 16, had returned to boarding school after the Easter recess.

THE AUTHOR was not at home. He spends his days in a hideaway office in the library of Wesleyan University. He has been associated with Wesleyan ever since the Manchesters moved to Middletown 12 years ago and bought a 100-year-old house on the edge of the campus.

The paint is peeling from the black shutters against the grey clapboard siding. Red paint on the front door has chipped and blobs of white give it a polka-dotted look. The Manchesters are not doing any repairs, because they are selling the house to the University and are building a modern home on the crest of a hill a short walk down the street.

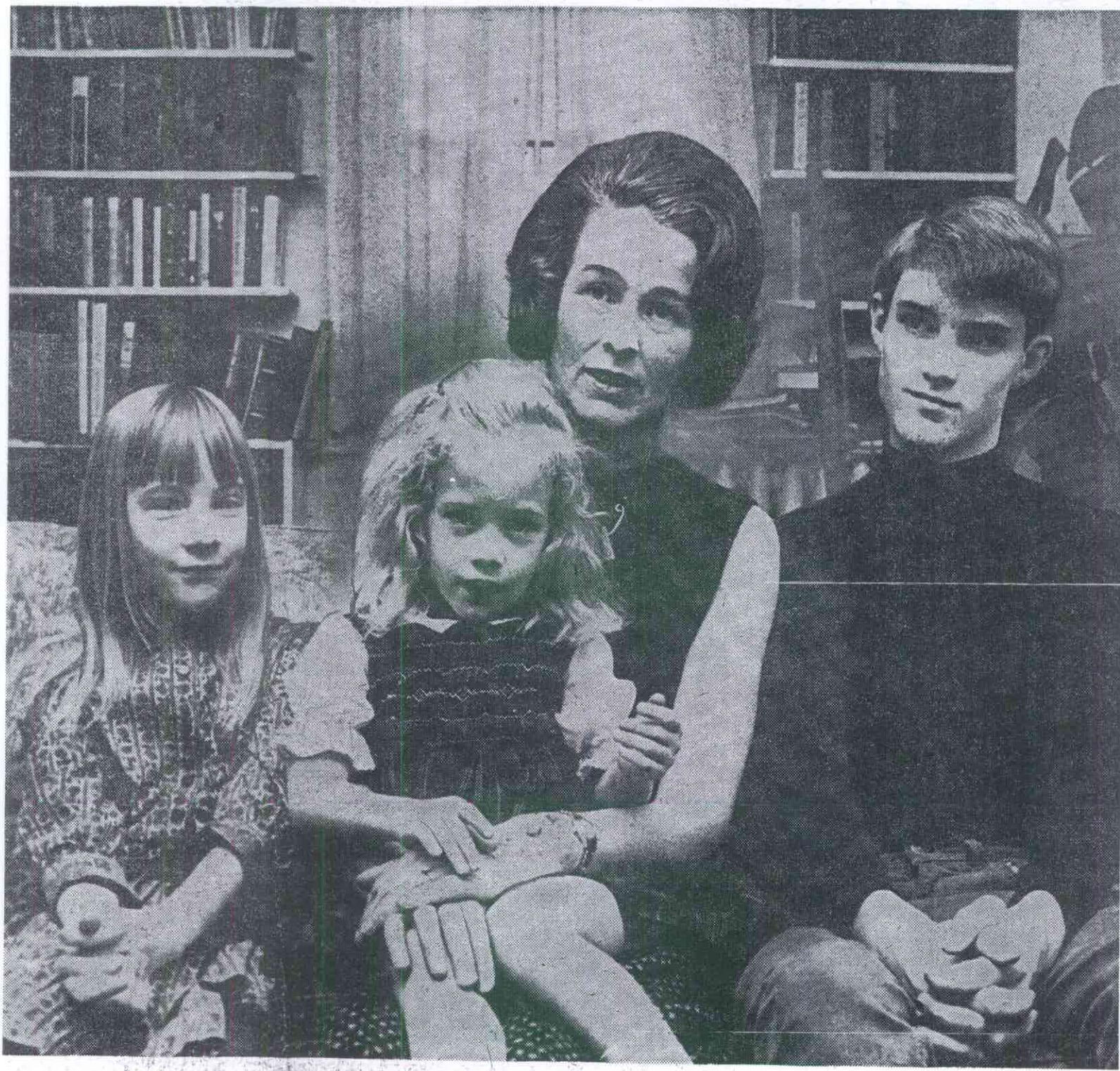
Plans for the new house lay on the coffee table. "This is to be our lifetime home," Mrs. Manchester said.

She brought in mugs of coffee as she showed the plans. She had made the mugs and had also made the pots containing flowers in the kitchen. She has a potter's wheel which will have its own special room in the new house.

"ACTUALLY, we don't expect all of this to change our way of living very much," she said, referring to the money her husband will make from the book.

"Bill will have a little more money to invest. But our plans for the new house

See MANCHESTER, H18, Col.3



Author William Manchester's wife and their three children (from left), Julie, Laurie and John.

Controversy Bores Her

were under way before the book."

As she talked she sat on a long, wide sofa she inherited from her father, Dr. E. Kennerly Marshall, a medical pioneer and emeritus professor of pharmacology and experimental therapeutics at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine when he died a year ago.

Mrs. Manchester, tall and slender, with an outdoorsy look, appears younger than her 44 years. She frowned as she raced through her own background, poking her memory for dates.

"I'm no good at dates," she said, and twisted her wedding ring around to see when she had been married—March 27, 1948.

She majored in history at Wellesley, received a master's degree from Columbia University Teachers College and taught school for two years after she and Bill were married.

THEY MET when both worked for the Baltimore Sun. He became an associate editor, but "I only answered mail," she said modestly.

She does not help her husband with his books. Nor does she help him answer the 25 or so letters a day he receives now. She has put 3000 letters in cartons upstairs in his study.

They won't be answered until her husband can find part-time secretarial help.

"Oh, this business of being a celebrity is not much fun!" she said.

"Bill wants to get back to normal and get to writing the book he interrupted when he took on the Kennedy thing three years ago."

The new book is a story of the Krupp munitions fortune. He has finished the research in Germany and could wind it up in two months of writing time, she said.

"Bill doesn't enjoy all the

offers that pour in on him every day now," she commented.

"What a shame these offers couldn't have come when we needed them."

OFFERS? To lecture, to write, to become resident author at this college and that university.

"He has turned down everything," she said.

The only current offer he is accepting is to go to England April 16 when his English publisher will bring out "The Death of a President." "But he has said no to his French and Italian publishers. We are only going to England for one week."

Another of her husband's books will be republished soon, and she seemed prouder of it than of his current book. She went over to a bookcase at the end of the long living room and took out his first novel, "The City of Anger," which is to be re-issued.

"It will be more timely now than it was when it was first published," she said. "It's all about urban development, slums and Negroes."

She led the way upstairs to her husband's study, a small, bare, tidy room. There was only a covered typewriter on the desk. A cot at one side had been slept in. The room pinches as a guest room when Bill Manchester is not working there.

"He probably sees more of his family than most fathers" she said "he is home for lunch and dinner."

Saturday nights are for friends, and she is the cook when it is the Manchesters' turn to entertain.

On weekday evenings when he works from 7 to midnight

in that upstairs study, she has her pottery classes, her work with Middletown's Re-development Agency, the League of Women Voters, and bridge parties with friends.

Their normal routine has been disrupted lately, what with the controversy over the book.

"Oh, I am so bored with all that," she said, and didn't bother to stifle her yawn.

Her husband's capacity to work amazes her. "He's a New Englander, you know," she said. "He never leaves anything undone. He's not like me. Besides, he loves to write."

She made him out to be a minor prophet, too. "Bill said all along that this book would cause a big controversy. He predicted that it would probably cut off any opportunities he might have to do other political writing."

THE MANCHESTERS don't think the book gives an unfair picture of President Johnson, as some reviewers do.

"Bill was only reporting what other people felt about President Johnson at the time of the assassination," she said. "I am sure such feelings must have come up when other Presidents have died and been succeeded."

Then she added a final gesture of Manchester good will toward LBJ.

"Why, Bill voted for Lyndon Johnson in 1964," she said. "And so did I."