

THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT

'Let Them See the Horror,' Mrs. Kennedy Said

New York Feb. 7 (UPI) — Only Mrs. John F. Kennedy was able momentarily to put aside her grief and anger after her husband's assassination in order to lend "some semblance of national majesty" to the swearing-in of President Johnson, *Look Magazine* said yesterday.

None of the other members of the Kennedy group aboard the presidential jet at Dallas' Love Field on Nov. 22, 1963 would stand with Mr. Johnson when he took the oath, Author William Manchester reported. And Mr. Kennedy's closest aide, Kenneth O'Donnell, was "pacing the corridor outside like a caged tiger, his hands clapped over his ears."

Adding to the nightmare of the first hours of the Johnson Administration was the fear that at any moment the plane would be raked by machine gun fire.

Mr. Manchester described the exodus from Parkland Hospital and the scene aboard the jet in the third serial article of his book, "The Death of a President."

DISMAYED PRIEST

Mr. Manchester disclosed Mrs. Kennedy's grotesque hospital encounter with a distracted Catholic priest, Rev. Thomas Cain of the Dallas University who brandished a relic of the "true cross" over Mr. Kennedy's body. He put his arms around her and called her Jackie and "endearing" names until Mrs. Kennedy told him to leave her alone.

He tells how Kennedy aides and Secret Servicemen shoved aside "officious" Dallas County medical examiner Dr. Earl Rose, who blocked removal of Mr. Kennedy's coffin with his own body for 20 minutes. He insisted on an autopsy that would take three hours and a policeman fingering a pistol stood at his side.

Dr. Rose is quoted as saying it was "just another" homicide case as far as he was concerned.

The article pictures President Johnson crouching on the floor of the car that raced from Parkland Hospital to the airport, shielded by five men because of fears that he, too, might have been marked for death. It describes the growing

concern on the plane about the caked blood on Mrs. Kennedy's clothes and how the White House doctor, kneeling, appealed to her to change before reaching the capital.

"No," she whispered fiercely. 'Let them see the horror!'"

VOLUNTEER

Mr. Manchester related how none of the Kennedy aides would stand with Mr. Johnson for the oath of office and, desperate, he was ready to fetch Mrs. Kennedy from her bedroom when she came out voluntarily.

"President Johnson did not deserve this. To a man of his hypersensitivity, such treatment was deeply wounding. More important, it was an affront to the Presidency. The coexistence of the two Administrations in an oppressive airplane and the fact that most of these same individuals had battled one another three years earlier in Los Angeles, made tempest inevitable here."

Mr. Johnson apparently decided on boarding the plane to have the oath administered before takeoff and received support from several advisers. He reached Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy by phone in Washington and claims Mr. Kennedy approved the plan, but Mr. Kennedy denied this to Mr. Manchester.

"It was her (Mrs. Kennedy's) presence that the man about to be sworn in coveted most . . . and he said so to everyone within earshot. In the end she appeared, but the decision was to be hers. She understood the symbols of authority, the need for some semblance of national majesty . . ." Mr. Manchester wrote.

ERRORS OF TACT

When she boarded the plane Mrs. Kennedy was surprised to find Mr. Johnson reclining on her bed in the presidential bedroom, talking on the phone. After takeoff Mr. Johnson surrendered the room to her and came to comfort her. Mrs. Manchester, usually the essence of tact, "slipped." Mr. Manchester reported.

"I don't know what to say," she sobbed, and then she

said it: "What wounds me most of all is that this should happen in my beloved state of Texas. . . . Immediately," she said later, "I regretted it." This was no day for Texas chauvinism; Kennedy's death should be what wounded her most.

The Johnsons wanted Mrs. Kennedy to sit in the forecabin with them, but she excused herself and returned to the back where Mr. O'Donnell and other Kennedy aides were sitting around the coffin. She wept for the first time and they decided to have drinks to buoy them for the hideous ride. Mrs. Kennedy took the first scotch in her life, then another. But they all remained cold sober, Mr. Manchester said.

During the swearing in, Judge Hughes was so confused she didn't even know where to find the presidential oath and Assistant Atty. Gen. Nicholas De B. Katzenbach had to dictate it — directly from the Constitution — by phone from Washington. She also was dubious about using Mr. Kennedy's bedside Bible because it was "probably" Catholic but decided it would be "all right."

STRANGER GETS BIBLE

When Judge Hughes left the plane she surrendered the Bible and the typed oath to a self-assured stranger who asked for them, thinking he was a security agent. They have never been traced.

The harrowing trip ended with Robert F. Kennedy leaping aboard the plane, telling Mrs. Kennedy, "I'm here," and the removal of the coffin with everyone aboard, including stewards, getting off before Mr. Johnson who was left behind in the stateroom. Mr. Manchester says that according to notes made by acting Press Secretary Mac Kitchuff, Mr. Johnson still was brooding about it the following day.

"Only then did he leave the plane without any attention directed or any courtesy toward him, then the President of the United States," the notes are quoted. "But he said he just turned the other cheek . . . He said, what can I do, I do not want to get into a fight with the (Kennedy) family and the aura of Kennedy is important to all of us."