

Manchester Replies to Charges Of Inaccuracy on Swearing-In

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William Manchester defended himself yesterday against charges that he had inaccurately portrayed the scene in which Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as President after the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

The author of "The Death of a President" also said he did not intend to be critical of Mr. Johnson's actions on Nov. 22, 1963, in writing his controversial book.

"We forget how we all were that day," he said. "I think the President behaved well. I think, if anything, he ought to have taken over more rapidly than he did."

Manchester was interviewed in an hour-long session on "Meet the Press" (NBC, WRC).

A recently released photograph reveals Kenneth O'Donnell, Mr. Kennedy's former appointments secretary, standing beside Mrs. Kennedy at the oath-taking ceremony aboard Air Force One. Manchester had written that wide-angle photographs failed to reveal the presence of a single male Kennedy aide at the time.

In the current issue of Look, which is serializing the Manchester book prior to its April publication, the author asserted that O'Donnell was "pacing the corridor outside [the conference room] like a caged tiger, his hands clapped over his ears as though to block out the oath." "Perhaps this is in error," Manchester conceded in the interview. ". . . Ken O'Donnell did tell me that he was present at the ceremonies. The photographs that I saw did not show him there and five people told me that they saw him in the corridor a few steps away."

Lawrence F. O'Brien, a former Kennedy aide now serving as Postmaster General, also was present at the ceremony. He stood behind the official White House photographer, Capt. Cecil Stoughton.

Manchester also defended the use of the word "tong" in describing Mr. Johnson's session with his companions on the eve of the assassination in Dallas. ". . . If you consult Webster's Third International, it is not a criminal gang," he said. "It is a group, a club."

Webster's Third International Dictionary defines "tong," a word derived from the Cantonese "t'ong," meaning hall or meeting place, as follows:

"A secret society or fraternal organization, especially among the Chinese in the U.S. formerly notorious for gang warfare and popularly associated with racketeering, gambling and traffic in narcotics."

Manchester also characterized himself as "a privileged observer" at the Warren Commission's hearings on the Kennedy assassination. He said that at the invitation of Chief

Justice Earl Warren, he read the testimony and examined the exhibits "as they came in."

But Manchester said he declined the Chief Justice's bid to read the report on behalf of the Kennedy family and to state that it was "acceptable" to them.

USIA May Put Book In Libraries Abroad

United Press International

The U.S. information agency will consider putting in its libraries abroad copies of William Manchester's controversial book on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, it was reported yesterday.

USIA Director Leonard H. Marks said the decision would be made after reviewers receive copies of "The Death of a President," which some claim is critical of President Johnson.

In a copyrighted interview in U.S. News & World Report, Marks said the Voice of America and USIA publications already have carried summaries of the book's main points and news stories of the controversy between Manchester and the Kennedy family.