

Author at Work

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A Book About Manchester Book Would End Controversy

By Art Buchwald

THERE HAS BEEN so much controversy over the William Manchester book that the only solution to the problem would be for Manchester to commission someone to write the official version of what happened when he was writing the book.

In this way history would be served and the principals in the drama would not have to talk to a lot of writers who are planning to do books on how Manchester wrote his book.

The first thing to do would be to find a writer whom the Manchester family trusted. Since the writer would have access to very personal matters, as well as letters and documentation, he would have to agree in a signed contract to submit the manuscript to the Manchesters before it was published. The Manchester family, or their representatives, would have the right to delete anything that might prove embarrassing to the Manchesters, Harper and Row or Look magazine.

It should be understood that anybody who undertook the assignment would not profit by it and that all the money earned from the book would be turned over to the Middletown, Conn., public library. The author would keep magazine and newspaper rights and would have to pay all legal fees in case Manchester tried to stop him from publishing the book.

Furthermore, all tapes and notes taken during the research of the book would be turned over to Manchester and not made available to the public until he wrote another history.

IN EXCHANGE for making him official historian of this publishing debacle, the Manchester family would speak to the writer at length and would tell him the most intimate details of what happened while the book was being written. He would also be given permission to interview all the lawyers involved in the case, as well as Manchester's doctor, literary

agents, Look publisher Gardner Cowles, Harper and Row publisher Cass Canfield and, of course, the editor of the German magazine Der Stern.

Nothing would be held back from the writer that could contribute to history, and since the final manuscript would be submitted to the Manchesters before publication, they would need have no fear that something might appear in print that could embarrass them or be misinterpreted by the press or the public.

It would be assumed that the writer would also talk to the Kennedy people and ask them their version of what happened. But since the Manchesters commissioned the book, they would have the last say as to how these facts would be represented.

The one fear of authorizing such a book is that it could show Sen. Robert Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Richard Goodwin in a bad light, and the Manchester family would have to avoid this at all costs, particularly during an election year.

It is for this reason that the Manchesters would hope to find someone who would be sympathetic to the way everyone behaved during the fateful writing days.

There is the danger that the pro-Manchester people might twist and turn events in such a way as to make the Kennedy people look bad, but much of this material could be edited out of the final draft with the help of the writer and Manchester's lawyers.

If this couldn't be worked out amicably, the Kennedy people could always commission someone to write their version of how Manchester wrote his book. It could keep Look magazine going for years.

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