

# LBJ Depicted as Fleeing Dallas In Fear of a Plot on His Own Life

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Amid the confusion spawned by John F. Kennedy's death, Lyndon B. Johnson feared a conspiracy against his own life existed and fled from Dallas aboard the Presidential jet—Air Force One—allegedly against the wishes of the Kennedy White House staff.

In the hour after the Kennedy assassination, Mr. Johnson is portrayed as a dazed figure, slumped in a booth at Parkland Memorial Hospital,

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sniffing on a plastic vapor inhaler while his wife recorded what she called her "never-to-be-forgotten moments" in the notebooks that she always carried in her purse.

This account of the Johnsons' initial reaction to the Dallas tragedy is described in Look's second 17,000-word serialized installment from "The Death of a President" by William Manchester. The magazine goes on sale today.

Manchester quotes Mrs. Johnson as recalling later that "Lyndon and I didn't speak

We just looked at each other, exchanging messages with our eyes. We knew what it might be."

Finally, just after President Kennedy's death was announced to the world, White House special assistant Kenneth O'Donnell returned to Booth 13 in Parkland's minor-medicine section to confer with the yet-to-be-sworn Chief Executive.

Mr. Johnson, who unlike his wife, refused to grant the author an interview, recalled in a written reply to Manchester that O'Donnell twice pressed him to board Air Force One and that he consented—provided that the airplane would wait at Dallas' Love Field until the coffin bearing the body of the President and until his widow could come aboard.

But O'Donnell, according to Manchester, asserted that Mr. Johnson's version of what occurred in the booth is "absolutely, totally and unequivocally wrong." In the Look account, O'Donnell is quoted as saying:

"The President and I had no conversation regarding Air Force One. If we had known that he was going on Air Force One, we would

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*Caroline Kennedy was riding in a station wagon to spend the weekend with a friend when a fragment of the fatal news from Dallas came over the car radio.*

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have taken Air Force Two (the companion Vice Presidential jet.) One plane was just like another."

Yet the contrasting versions of history presented to Manchester by the President and by O'Donnell threatened to be eclipsed by the controversy raging over the book itself—first commissioned and then repudiated by Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) and Mrs. John F. Kennedy.

The uneasy truce that followed an out-of-court settlement between the Kennedys and Manchester was broken over the weekend when the author granted a series of candid interviews before leaving on a Caribbean vacation.

In one of these interviews, Manchester quoted the President's widow as telling him: "Unless I run off with Eddie Fisher, the people will think that anyone who is in a fight with me is a rat."

Richard N. Goodwin, a close associate of the Kennedy family and a Middletown, Conn., neighbor of Manchester's retaliated by releasing the text of a letter that Manchester's publisher, Harper & Row, sent to Mrs. Kennedy last March.

In the letter, Harper editor Evan Thomas said: "The book

## RFK to Go To Britain, France Soon

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) will visit Britain and France later this week.

Between Jan. 27 and Jan. 31, Kennedy will join five of his Senatorial colleagues and nine Congressmen at a private seminar on Anglo-American relations sponsored by Britain's Ditchley Foundation.

The conference will be held at an old country manor in Ditchley, near Oxford.

Besides Kennedy, the Senators attending the conference are Daniel B. Brewster (D-Md.) and Joseph D. Tydings (D-Md.), Hiram L. Fong (R-Hawaii), Jack Miller (R-Iowa) and Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.).

On his week-long trip, Kennedy will also visit with "old friends" in Paris.

(then in manuscript form) is, in part, tasteless and gratuitously insulting to President Johnson and, for that matter, to the memory of the late President Kennedy." The letter further claimed that Manchester had succeeded in turning "the tragedy into a magic fairy tale."

Manchester revealed his own feelings by releasing to a reporter a letter that he wrote to Mrs. Kennedy in which he said:

"Though I tried desperately to suppress my bias against a certain eminent statesman who always reminded me of someone in a Grade D movie of the late show, the prejudice showed through. This was cheap of me, but I suppose there is a little meanness in all of us."

A source familiar with the letter said the "eminent statesman" to whom Manchester referred was President Johnson and the man he reminded him of was John Wayne, the movie actor.

While Kennedy associates fired back at Manchester's fresh account of his difficult dealings with the family over the 360,000-word effort, a court in Hamburg, Germany, rejected a move by Look to break the magazine's contract with Der Stern for the German and Austrian serial rights to "The Death of a President."

The Hamburg-based magazine, which had bought the rights from Look for \$72,500, refused to delete the 1628 controversial words that had been cut from Look's version in the United States.

Thus, in its current issue, Der Stern includes Manchester's report of what Mrs. Kennedy carried in her handbag and her dismay over detecting a wrinkle on her face while she was preparing for her public appearance in Dallas on Nov. 22. Both these items were struck from the second Look installment.

William van den Heuvel, a New York lawyer who flew to Hamburg at Sen. Kennedy's behest to negotiate with Der Stern's editors, noted that five of the eight German articles had not yet been published. He expressed hope that an accord with Der Stern could be reached, despite the court action.

Both Look and Der Stern carry President Kennedy's account of his visit to the LBJ Ranch eight days after he was elected President. Mrs. Kennedy told Manchester about it during their 10-hour taped interview.

While at the ranch, Mr. Ken-

neddy was besieged by the new Vice President-elect to join him in a dawn deer hunt. Kennedy, who loathed the prospect of shooting a tame deer, nevertheless agreed in order not to offend his host, Mr. Johnson.

"In that instant," Manchester writes, "... John Fitzgerald Kennedy had squinted down the barrel of a high-powered rifle and had looked into the face of the life he was about to take. He had committed himself; he couldn't finch. He fire and quickly turned back to the car. Yet he couldn't rid himself of the recollection. The memory of that creature's death had been haunting, and afterward, he had relived it with his wife, trying to heal the inner scar."

Subsequently, Mr. Johnson had the slain deer's head mounted and he brought it over to the White House, where he urged Mr. Kennedy to mount it in his oval office. Although Mr. Kennedy ordered the deer head to be stored, the then Vice President persisted and it "became an issue between them." Finally Mr. Kennedy mounted the gift in the Fish Room, but not before telling his wife:

"The three most overrated things in the world are the State of Texas, the FBI and mounted deer heads."

The deer-slaying episode served as the first chapter of Manchester's book in his original draft. But Edwin O. Guthman, national editor of the Los Angeles Times, and John Seigenthaler, editor of the Nashville Tennessean — the friends whom Sen. Kennedy asked to read the manuscript — persuaded Manchester to condense the account and to use another opening.

The second installment of "The Death of a President" bears directly upon the hours just before and after Lee Harvey Oswald fired the fatal bullets from his sixth-floor perch in the Texas Depository Building. Manchester, incidentally, claims there were two shots, instead of the three found by the Warren Commission. Three ejected shells were later discovered by Oswald's rifle, although only two of the bullets have been accounted for.

Manchester also tells of Mr. Kennedy's reaction to a right-wing ad in the Dallas News, just before the fateful motorcade. "Oh, you know," he said, "we're heading into nut country today."

Then, rather lightly, Mr.

Kennedy told his wife: "You know, last night would have been a hell of a night to assassinate a President. I mean it . . . Suppose a man had a pistol in a briefcase."

He used his rigid index finger to form a pistol and jerked his thumb twice to show the action of a hammer. "Then," he added, "he could have dropped the gun and the briefcase . . . and melted away in the crowd."

Manchester contends in the article that the slow response of the Secret Service agents riding in the front seats of the Presidential limousine spelled the difference between a painful — but not fatal — throat wound to the President and the second bullet that ripped away part of his brains. Five seconds separated the shots, according to film—time enough, Manchester asserts, for driver William Greer, then 54, and agent-in-charge Roy Kellerman, then 48, to race away from Oswald's line of fire.

"My God, what are they doing?" Mrs. Kennedy screamed. "My God, they've killed Jack, they've killed my husband. Jack, Jack!"