

# The Kennedy Book: Game of...

By Jimmy Breslin

NEW YORK, Dec. 22—Everybody is a spokesman. They do not have names. They are only spokesmen. Here we are in the literary business where names and events are supposed to be put down faithfully, and yet everybody moves around namelessly so the lawyers won't scream and so that their statements can be more outrageous.

And late in the day, the Kennedy office spokesman said that negotiations with Look magazine had ended in a stirring victory. The spokesman said a full 5000 words that were painful to Mrs. John F. Kennedy had been deleted from the manuscript.

"We asked for ten things and we got ten things, and to me that's a victory," he said.

So now, a book about the assassination of John F. Kennedy had become a game.

Win. Score. Get it on the record. Get the headline out there saying, "Jackie Wins."

And, of course, Look magazine now had to say something back. "We can't have any settlement with a lot of claims like this going around," somebody at Look said. "The deletions in the manuscript amount to a few hundred words. We took out just gingerbread. Much of it related to Mrs. Kennedy's personal vanity."

Both attitudes were carried into the law offices of Simon Rifkind, on Madison Avenue, where the final announcement was supposed to be made at 8 p.m. The law offices looked the scene of a sit-in. Newsmen filled the chairs and couches. A couple of them, overcoats on, sat on the floor. They waited for an announcement which was supposed to come at any moment.

It did not come. It was held up

because there was an argument over the 5000-word victory claim.

The Kennedy spokesman had mentioned the 5000-word figure on two phone calls placed by Andrew Glass, a Washington Post reporter, and myself. We then called Look to check the figure. This must have created trouble. At night, the Kennedy spokesman was standing in front of the elevator banks, going up to the meeting, when he said that he and I had never met, which was true, and that any mention of the figure 5000 couldn't have come from us meeting and talking.

Finally, after something like two hours, Andrew Glass got up from his chair and walked out of the waiting room and when he came back, he said it was done. He said he told somebody to blame him for an erroneous figure, and let's get out of here and go home.

This is how it was being done last

## Win...Score

## Portions Are Deleted, Emotions Depleted

night. This is how they quibbled over a matter involving the story of the death of a President who had lived with such class.

Murray Kempton sat on the floor in the waiting room and said, in a quiet horror, "One of the Kennedy people spoke to me on the phone the other night and he just lied and said, 'You know, Mrs. Kennedy is nearly as upset over this as she was when he died.'"

Finally, at 10:30 p.m., William Atwood of Look walked into a crowded conference room and sat down at the end of a long table. He read a statement from Gardner Cowles, editorial chairman of *Look magazine*.

He said several changes in the text were mutually agreed on. He said, pointedly, that the changes involved 1600 of approximately 80,000 authorized words.

Simon Rifkind, the lawyer for Mrs. Kennedy, followed Atwood to the table.

He said the suit against Look magazine was being withdrawn. He then quoted Jacqueline Kennedy as saying, "I have been told there are historical inaccuracies and unfair references in this book."

This trouble started on Dec. 16, with an affidavit filed in court by Mrs. Kennedy against Look, Harper & Row and author William Manchester. The affidavit was 11 pages long. Hundreds of thousands of words have since been written about the fight. Last night, in a lawyer's office, the total number of words needed to settle the thing was 1600 out of 80,000.

This is the fight they couldn't keep in private, all of them. The argument over how to handle the story of the death of John F. Kennedy had to be brought out in public and all of us had to gossip over it. And the major part of the fight ended in a carpeted lawyer's conference room which really was the gutter.