

F Post
12/19/66

'Didn't Break Faith', Manchester Explains

NEW YORK (AP) — William Manchester denied Sunday that he had "broken faith" or taken advantage of Mrs. John F. Kennedy's confidence in recording her "words and emotions." He claimed he had the family's authorization for publication of his book "The Death of a President," in early 1967.

Manchester issued his first significant public statement on the dispute in which Mrs. Kennedy has sued to suppress the manuscript as "tasteless and distorted."

"John Kennedy was my president," Manchester said. "To suggest that I would dishonor his memory or my association with him is both cruel and unjust."

The author's statement referred to information he received from a member of the Kennedy family on July 29, 1966, that the family would place "no obstacle in the way of publication."

The only other reference in the statement is a sentence that "in the summer of 1966, au-

thorization was given by the family for publication of the book in early 1967, to be preceded by serialization in Look magazine."

In Mrs. Kennedy's suit, filed last Friday, no mention is made of possible publication by early 1967. Sen. Kennedy, in an accompanying affidavit, refers to a July 28 "no obstacle" telegram he sent and a telephone conversation he had with Manchester on July 29 in which Kennedy said the author agreed "nothing would be published which did not have the approval

of Mrs. Kennedy and myself."

Commenting Sunday night on Manchester's statement, Simon H. Ritkind, attorney for the late President's widow, said:

"I don't know how Mr. Manchester escapes from the fact that he made a promise and now he has not lived up to his part of the bargain. "I don't know about literary integrity nor the matter of history -- they don't concern me at the moment -- But I believe strongly in a man keeping his word, particularly when it is in a written memorandum of understanding. There has been no approval from Mrs. Kennedy."

Manchester, stressing that the Kennedy family had sought him out to write the definitive account of the president's assassi-

nation, said the late president's "standards of excellence had guided me through this work."

"It has been said that I have broken faith with Mrs. Kennedy: that I took advantage of her confidence in me and that I recorded too faithfully her words and emotions," Manchester said.

"I do not believe this to be so. Mrs. Kennedy asked me to write this book. I did not seek the opportunity."

He said the book had been read by friends and advisers of the family, and that changes had been made at their suggestion.

"Mrs. Kennedy herself did not ask to see the manuscript and still hasn't," he said. "If she had, I would, of course, have given it to her."

Manchester said that he had hoped the book would be able to speak for itself, but indicated it

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AUTHOR EXPLAINS

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was no longer possible for him to remain silent. "The integrity of my book and my own honesty as a writer and a person have been attacked" he said.

Manchester's written statement, issued through the offices of Look here, followed Mrs. Kennedy's filing of the suit to block publication last Friday.

She and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., the late president's brother, obtained a show cause order returnable Dec. 27 requiring Harper & Row, the book's publisher, and Look, to be stopped.

Manchester was not available in person for comment.

Manchester pointed at the very circumstances of the President's death as a possible cause of the furor.

"I cannot help but feel that some of the present bitterness comes from the dark nightmare of his death and the impotence in the face of death which we felt then and feel now."

"I believe John Kennedy, who was himself an historian, would have wanted his countrymen to know the truth of those terrible days, and I have dedicated myself for nearly three years to relieving and reconstructing them so that the truth could be faithfully and accurately recorded."

"In the last analysis," Manchester said, "this is my book. Neither Mrs. Kennedy nor any member of the Kennedy family nor anyone else is in any way responsible for my research or the content of my work."

"It is my responsibility, and I am confident that my book can withstand any objective test — particularly the test of time. I ask only that it be given a chance."

Earlier, Mrs. Kennedy's attorney in her suit to block publication of the account, said she is not seeking an out-of-court settlement despite the prospect of a "horrible" trial.

Rifkind, a former federal judge, filed suit in Supreme Court Friday to bar publication by Look magazine and Harper

& Row of Manchester's account of President Kennedy's assassination and events surrounding it. Its appearance, Mrs. Kennedy said in a 10-page affidavit, would cause her "great and irreparable harm."

Harper & Row and Look, which planned to start serialization with the magazine issue of Jan. 10, were to show cause by Dec. 27 why the publication should not be stopped.

Mrs. Kennedy was reported to have emerged in tears Saturday from a conference with representatives of Look magazine. Rifkind said he asked her questions about a few passages from the Manchester book, but she did not read the manuscript.

Rifkind, calling the meeting "strictly routine," said its purpose was "to give us a look at the manuscript; for the first

time — a very normal legal procedure in action of this kind." He refused comment on the book's contents.

"Our present intention is to go to court," Rifkind said. "We have no other plans. I am unaware of any discussions for a settlement."

A Look spokesman said he had not been told of any attempts to reach a settlement. "We would still make changes up to a reasonable point," he said, "but there's not going to be any censorship of history."

Mrs. Kennedy's objections to the book are believed to lie in its portrayal of her emotional reactions to her husband's death and a largely unfavorable picture that it reportedly projects of President Johnson.

Manchester has drawn President Johnson as a "weak and ineffectual person" while vice president and Mrs. Kennedy as "quite frantic, quite hysterical, quite ferocious" on Nov. 22, 1963 the day of the assassination, the New York Times said Sunday. The newspaper quoted two unnamed men in the publishing business.

"Johnson will absolutely hate it," one of the men said.

White House press secretary Bill D. Moyers denied a report Sunday that he had read pertinent sections of the book and was assumed to have relayed his impressions to the President.

"I have not read the book and I have not read anything to the President," Moyers said, adding that Johnson has neither seen the entire manuscript nor excerpts.

Manchester, the publishing sources said, shows Mrs. Kennedy in the book to have an attitude "that she is quite angry at the world for letting this happen. Jackie keeps saying she wants to keep her blood spattered clothes on so "they can see what they've done."

Manchester, selected by the Kennedy family to write a non-sensational, definitive story of the assassination, was given 10 hours of interviews with Mrs. Kennedy. The author's tape recorded the conversations.

A highly placed official with the Kennedy Administration said "it's clear that Manchester took stuff from the tape recorder when Mrs. Kennedy was not in control of her emotions."