

CERF'S REPORT

Manchester Quoted On Strain at Dallas

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP)—Bennett Cerf, publisher and television personality, was quoted today as saying he read an unedited manuscript of a controversial book on the death of President John F. Kennedy and that it described some "unbelievable things that happened after the assassination."

The Yale Daily News, the student newspaper, said Cerf told a banquet audience at Yale's Pierson College last night that the unedited manuscript of William Manchester's "Death of a President" described an incident involving the presidential plane at Love Airfield in Texas after the assassination.

The student newspaper quoted Cerf, chairman of the board of

The Foreword to "The Death of a President." Page A-16

Random House, as saying the manuscript depicted the Kennedy people as stunned, remaining at the hospital, while Lyndon B. Johnson and a small entourage went to Love Airfield, where both the presidential and vice presidential planes were parked.

The student newspaper's account of Cerf's remarks continued:

"The airplanes were identical in construction and furnishing, he (Cerf) said, except that the presidential plane carried a 'football,' a bag containing all the crucial information about

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what was to be done in case of nuclear attack.

"According to Mr. Cerf's narration of Manchester's book, the Johnson party reached the airfield first, and, knowing that President Kennedy was dead, boarded the presidential jet. When the Kennedys returned to the airport with the coffin and discovered that the presidential plane was already occupied, they were shocked and infuriated, said Mr. Cerf."

Cerf, reached in New York, confirmed that he had made the remarks, but said, "I was under the impression I was talking off the record."

He said he considered it a "wonderful book" and believes that it will influence history.

Cerf declined to elaborate further on the talk. "This is not our book," he said, "and I'm interested in it only as an American citizen and as a publisher who is concerned with books."

Another Story

The student newspaper said Cerf described another part in the unedited manuscript of the

book—that President Johnson says he telephoned Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy from Texas shortly after the assassination, asking for advice on whether or not he should be sworn in as chief executive in Dallas or in Washington.

Cerf was quoted as saying that Kennedy now denies he received such a call.

Mrs. John Kennedy said earlier she is prepared to relive her grief and shock after the assassination of her husband in order to legally block publication of parts of the book.

The outlook for her is "horrible," she said.

Mrs. Kennedy calls the book "tasteless and distorted" and says:

"As horrible as a trial will be, it now seems clear that my only redress is to ask the courts to enforce my rights . . ."

Agreement Quoted

A source close to Mrs. Kennedy said a "memorandum of understanding" spelled out the terms under which Manchester, selected by the family, would write the book. It was signed by

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Senator Kennedy and Manchester.

It is dated March 26, 1964, and contains 11 clauses. The Kennedys feel that two of these have immediate bearing on the case.

One reads, "The completed manuscript shall be reviewed by Mrs. John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy and the text shall not be published unless and until approved by them."

The other reads, "The book may not be published before Nov. 22, 1968, unless Mrs. Kennedy designates a prior date and shall be published at a date thereafter as shall be mutually agreeable to the contracting parties."

Manchester reportedly feels that a telegram from Robert Kennedy releases him on the date and the family is known to feel that publication in 1967 would be preferable.

Mrs. Kennedy's attorneys said they are preparing papers

seeking a temporary injunction to stop the book's publication and would file them in two or three days. Summonses already have been served on Harper & Row, book publishers, and on Cowles Communications, Inc., publishers of Look magazine.

The magazine, which reportedly paid Manchester \$650,000 for the serial rights to his book, scheduled publication of the first article for Jan. 10. Harper & Row plans to bring out the book next April.

It is known that the family objects only to small parts of the book and does not seek to bar publication permanently.

The impending lawsuit, and a charge of "inaccurate and unfair references to other individuals" in a statement issued yesterday by Mrs. Kennedy about Manchester's book, may throw some light on long-standing reports of friction between the Kennedys and Johnson.

A friend of the Kennedy family said Manchester's book depicts Mrs. Kennedy as having been "upset because LBJ kept the plane on the ground too long in Dallas, waiting to be sworn in as President."

Another version of this incident is that Mrs. Kennedy and Kenneth O'Donnell, special assistant to the assassinated

President, boarded the plane and ordered the pilot to take off at once. Johnson reportedly countermanded the order.

Sources close to the Kennedy family said Manchester's book contains "other things that involve LBJ, which are distorted and unfair."

To support Mrs. Kennedy's contention that Manchester's book violated the terms of the agreement under which it was written, this and other episodes may be aired.

Mrs. Kennedy's full statement said:

"Look magazine, Harper & Row, and Mr. William Manchester have repeatedly made clear that only legal action can alter their insistence upon publishing at this time—without regard to accepted standards of propriety and good faith, and in specific violation of my wishes, my contract with Mr. Manchester and the dignity and privacy which my children and I have striven with difficulty to retain—a premature account of the events of November 1963 that is in part both tasteless and distorted.

"Its inaccurate and unfair references to other individuals, in contrast with its generous references to all members of the Kennedy family, are perhaps beyond my prevention; but to expose to all the world at this time all the private grief, personal thoughts and painful reactions which my children and I endured in those terrible days does not seem to me to be essential to any current historical record.

"I am shocked that Mr. Manchester would exploit the emotional state in which I recounted my recollections to him early in 1964, and I am equally shocked that reputable publishers would take commercial advantage of his failure to keep his word. To the author and publishers, this book will be only another transient chapter in their work; but my children and I will have to live with it for the rest of our lives.

"As horrible as a trial will be, it now seems clear that my only redress is to ask the courts to enforce my rights and postpone publication until the minimum limits of my family's privacy can be protected."

Manchester said, "I have confidence in the book. I think it will stand on its own. I ask only that people give it a chance."

He said he was "not informed on what is happening" but was "puzzled by the disturbance."

William Attwood, editor-in-chief of Look, issued a statement last night saying cancellation of the scheduled publication now would amount to "censorship of history." He said Look intends to go ahead. Attwood's statement said:

"To keep the record straight, the public should know that Mrs. Kennedy asked Gardner Cowles, editorial chairman of Cowles Communications, Inc., last August to postpone the start of the serialization in Look so that the serialization would not be occurring during the anniversary of the assassination.

"That is the time of year that she said was most difficult for her. Look agreed to a postponement in accordance with her wishes.

"Two weeks later, she requested that Look's serialization be reduced from the seven installments originally contemplated. Look agreed to this second request in deference to her feelings and rescheduled the serialization to four installments.

"In late September, Mrs. Kennedy asked Look to see her representative who wanted to suggest several changes in certain episodes in the manuscript which particularly distressed her. After several conferences, Look sent an editor to England to discuss these changes with Mr. Manchester who agreed to a number of changes in the areas which were particularly troubling Mrs. Kennedy.

"Then Mrs. Kennedy asked Cass Canfield, chairman of the executive committee of Harper & Row, to meet with Gardner

Cowles to consider some further changes. These were considered with great care at two editing sessions lasting over many hours. A majority of them were finally agreed upon with Mr. Manchester.

"Other changes or deletions were made by Mr. Canfield and Mr. Cowles which they felt would also avoid distress for the Kennedy family without in any way impairing the accuracy of completeness of the author's important manuscript."

Harper & Row sources said they had made four sets of "substantial" revisions to the book at the request of Mrs. Kennedy and other members of the family.

After the first series, the firm said in a statement, the Kennedys officially notified them "members of the family will place no obstacle in the way of publication."

The statement said "Harper & Row has done its utmost to

comply with the wishes of the Kennedy family and deeply regrets their present attitude."

Mrs. Kennedy, the family source said, gave Manchester two long interviews in early 1964.

"She was in a state of grief, of course," the informant said. "She was not self-censoring but relying on his agreement not to publish anything that would be offensive to her.

"The material is offensive in that it delineates her feelings

during that period. No woman would want these things disclosed to the world."

When Manchester's manuscript was finished, the source said, it was read by four persons: Richard Goodwin, special assistant to President Kennedy; Pamela Timmons, Mrs. Kennedy's secretary; John Siegenthaler, editor of the Nashville Tennessean, and Edward Guthman of the Los Angeles Times, who had been press secretary to then-Atty. General Kennedy.