

STORY ON JOHNSON DISPUTED BY AIDE

Comments in Newsweek on
Kennedy Book Challenged

Special to The New York Times

AUSTIN, Tex., Dec. 26—The White House disputed today some comments attributed by Newsweek magazine to President Johnson and his associates, purportedly giving their version of some of the events following the assassination of President Kennedy.

George Christian, acting Presidential press secretary, said he had not seen the magazine but was responding to quotations printed in Texas newspapers. The article dealt with controversy surrounding a new book, "The Death of a President," by William Manchester.

"The President has granted no interviews to anyone, including Mr. Manchester, and has asked his staff to refrain from discussing the entire subject of the book," Mr. Christian said.

"He did not talk to Newsweek. I'll not discuss the various attributions credited to so-called friends and alleged intimates except to say that I believe them to be inaccurate and untrue."

Interview Denied

The President did not have an interview with Newsweek, Mr. Christian said, and if he did not, "I don't see how he can be quoted directly by the magazine."

He refused to explain whether he was denying only the attribution or the substance of the quotations, saying only that "if he is quoted directly, I know that's wrong."

Mr. Christian said he believed the "attributions" to be inaccurate and untrue because "I know better."

He indicated that he and other White House officials would continue to turn away all questions relating to the assassination and the Manchester book.

[Commenting on the White House statements, Osborn Elliott, editor of Newsweek, said last night that the magazine "has confidence in its reporter and in the reliability of the source from which (the information) came."

["Had it been otherwise, we would not have printed the story."

[Mr. Elliott declined to comment any further on the source of the magazine's material.]

Author in Hospital

Special to The New York Times

MIDDLETOWN, Conn., Dec. 26—William Manchester, author of the controversial book "The Death of a President," remained today on the critical list in a hospital here, more as a precaution than out of fear for his life.

The 44-year-old Mr. Manchester was rushed to Middlesex Memorial Hospital by ambulance last night with a temperature of 104.2. He had been stricken with a pneumonia infection in his lower left lung.

His temperature returned to normal at noon today.

A 6 P.M. medical bulletin said that Mr. Manchester's condition had "improved" and that he was "doing very well." However, it is also said he would remain on the critical list as a precaution until his temperature had leveled off for 24 hours.

Doctor's Orders

Dr. F. Erwin Tracy, Mr. Manchester's physician, said he hesitated to make any firm predictions because "with a thing like this you never know."

For the next three or four days, Dr. Tracy said, "Mr. Manchester is to have nothing to do with anyone who has anything to do with the book."

For the last two weeks, Mr. Manchester has been involved in a controversy with Mrs. John F. Kennedy, who is suing to block the April publication of "The Death of a President."

Mrs. Kennedy, who requested Mr. Manchester to write the definitive history of the assassination and made available to the author her own recollections, contends that Mr. Manchester violated their agreement by including passages she did not approve.

Hard Work and Tension

Lawyers from both sides have been meeting to try to arrange a compromise. The suit is to be heard in court tomorrow.

Asked if the strains of the controversy had anything to do with Mr. Manchester's illness, Dr. Tracy said, "I don't think you can separate this." He added that hard work and tension had lowered Mr. Manchester's resistance to the point where he was more susceptible to illness. Mr. Manchester's greatest

discomfort was coming from a scratch on the cornea of his right eye inflicted Friday night by a pine needle on the Christmas tree he was trimming. Dr. Mark Thumin, who was treating Mr. Manchester's eye, said it would suffer no permanent damage.

Mr. Manchester, who is staying in a private, air-conditioned, \$43.50-a-day room on the fifth floor of the 258-bed hospital, was reported to be conscious and in good spirits, although, Dr. Tracy said, "he feels lousy."

He was fed intravenously last night and early this morning. By this afternoon he was eating vegetable beef broth, tea and gelatin. He is being treated with antibiotics.

Dr. Tracy brought up the possibility that after the illness Mr.

Manchester might suffer from "reactive depression," which, he said, sometimes follows such ailments. In that case, he said, the author might be put under the care of a psychiatrist.

The first indication of illness, Dr. Tracy said, was about 8 or 9 P.M. yesterday when the author, who was at home at 115 High Street, began shivering with chills and then burning up with fever. An ambulance brought him to the hospital about 11:30 P.M.

The Manchesters, who have a 16-year-old son and two younger daughters, have been living in Middletown, a town of about 33,000 between New Haven and Hartford, since 1955, when he became managing editor of the Wesleyan University Press Department of School

Services and Publications, now American Educational Publications.

Court Hearing Today

Attorneys for both sides will appear in State Supreme Court this morning in the dispute over the publication of William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President."

Simon H. Rifkind, attorney for Mrs. John F. Kennedy, who has brought suit to stop publication of the book by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., said last night that he would give a report to Judge Saul S. Streit on the status of negotiations.

"I will tell the judge that there have been many discussions, some text inspection,

some analysis," Mr. Rifkind said. "But we have not reached agreement. We are not anywhere near it."

Nancy Wexler of Greenbaum, Wolff & Ernst, the firm representing the publishers, declined to comment yesterday on the status of the talks.

'I Will Not Comment'

"We will appear in court," she said. "I will not comment on anything."

Though negotiations had been scheduled yesterday, they were canceled due to the illness of Mr. Manchester.

The negotiations with Harper & Row followed an agreement between representatives of Mrs. Kennedy and Look Magazine, which plans to serialize excerpts of the book beginning

with its Jan. 10 issue. The book is scheduled for publication in April.

In the earlier settlement, Look had agreed to delete certain passages involving the personal activities and feelings of Mrs. Kennedy and her children.

Though the Look dispute has been settled, it was believed that representatives of Cowles Communications, Inc., the magazine's publishers, would also have to appear in court today, since they also were named in the original suit.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Kennedy left John F. Kennedy International Airport at 6:10 P.M. yesterday for a brief vacation in Antigua.

She was accompanied by her daughter Caroline, her son John and a friend of Caroline's.

The friend, a girl who appeared to be about the same age as Caroline, was identified as on the manifest of the Pan American World Airways plane as C. Nelson.

The jetliner was delayed for an hour and 15 minutes before taking off from the snow-jammed airport.

Mrs. Kennedy, who wore a plain black cloth coat and was hatless, declined to answer reporters' questions at the airport. She also refused to smile or wave for photographers.

In the court session scheduled for today, the publishers and the author were to show cause why they should not be enjoined from publishing the book.

Justice Streit, who granted Mrs. Kennedy the show-cause order Dec. 16, had said pre-

viously he would further postpone the action if the negotiations were not successful by today.

Sections Deleted in France

PARIS, Dec. 26 (UPI)—The magazine Paris-Match said today none of the controversial passages of "The Death of a President" would appear in its forthcoming serialization of the book.

The disputed sections are being deleted "as a gesture of our long friendship and respect" for the family of President Kennedy, a spokesman said.

Paris-Match, a mass circulation weekly, has exclusive French-language publication rights for serialization of the book.