

Manchester:



MRS. KENNEDY

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World Journal Tribune Staff

Careers were made and broken aboard Air Force One as stunned and tormented men found themselves wrenched between allegiance to a dead president and the growing authority of his successor, according to William Manchester in "The Death of a President."

In the third of a four-part Look magazine serialization of his book, Manchester's account of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy embraces the period between Lyndon Johnson's departure from Parkland Hospital and the return of Air Force One—with its cargo of living and dead—to Andrews Air Force Base.

In the course of his narrative, Manchester tells of:

- How attention was drawn to Johnson's car despite the hopes of Secret Service men that he could be spirited from the hospital to Love Field.

Jackie's

- Expressions of elation in various parts of the country at Kennedy's death.
- J. Edgar Hoover's terse announcement of the President's death to Robert F. Kennedy.
- The dispute between Johnson and Robert Kennedy over the presidential oath of office.
- The undertaker who worried over the effect of the president's wound on his coffin.
- The eccentric priest who cavorted around Mrs. Kennedy.
- The stubborn medical examiner who touched off a scuffle in the hospital over the president's body.
- Mrs. Kennedy's return to the plane with her husband's body.
- The macabre comedy of errors aboard the plane over the orders of the Kennedy party and those of the Johnson party.

Ordeal

- Mrs. Kennedy's refusal to change her clothes.
- The swearing-in of Lyndon Johnson.
- The theft of President Kennedy's Bible.
- Tension and drinking aboard the plane en route to Washington.
- Johnson's annoyance at Mrs. Kennedy's conduct.
- Learning about Lee Harvey Oswald.
- And the ghostly appearance of Robert Kennedy.

In the aftermath of the president's death, according to Manchester, confusion reigned. In Parkland Hospital, Secret Service agents, devoid of central leadership, polarized around the Kennedys and the Johnsons.

In the Johnson party, agent Rufus Youngblood,

Turn to Page 8



PRESIDENT JOHNSON

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United Press International Telephoto

Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, with his wife Lady Bird at left, and just-widowed Mrs. John F. Kennedy, was sworn in as President by Federal District Judge Sarah T. Hughes of Dallas aboard Air Force One on Nov. 22, 1963.

Continued from Page One

fearful that the assassination of Kennedy was but a single element of a bloody conspiracy against the government, remained determined to spirit Johnson out of the hospital and central Dallas to the relative safety of the presidential plane.

When Johnson agreed, Youngblood moved to execute his plans by means of two cars. Mrs. Johnson served as a decoy. Youngblood surmised that a prospective assassin, spying her, would open fire on her auto. Johnson was placed in the other car, driven by Jesse Curry, the Dallas police chief, and ordered to stay low. He was out of sight.

Johnson Gives His First Order

As Johnson's car began to pull out, Congressman Albert Thomas called for it to halt. Youngblood told Curry not to stop, but Johnson, hearing the call although he could not see Thomas, gave his first orders. The car halted. Youngblood ordered Congressman Homer Thornberry, already in the car, to sit in the back. Thomas was placed in the front seat, and Johnson was between the two men and Youngblood also shielded him.

As the car picked up speed, a delivery truck with a careless driver screeched to a stop in its path. The Secret Service men were reaching for their pistols, but their fears proved unfounded. Seconds afterward, Curry began using the siren, a decision drawing attention to the car and dissipating the anonymity Youngblood had hoped for.

Both Johnson and the agent instructed Curry to turn it off, but a motorcycle escort, taking the chief's lead, opened up with sirens. Using his radio, Curry told them to stop.

At Love Field, Youngblood hurried the vice president aboard the presidential plane, where he immediately began watching a television news broadcast.

Johnson, now beginning to exercise authority, ordered the plane's shades drawn, and Youngblood—now receding as a figure of authority—repeated his orders.

"To those who loved John Kennedy," Manchester ob-

serves, "the transition of power seemed needlessly cruel. Consolidating the two groups on one airplane was to prove extremely unfortunate. . . ."

The author says, "Johnson was not himself that afternoon—no man was himself then.

"In Dallas, the national interest required strength, not elegance, and it is arguable that Johnson, far from taking over too quickly, did not take over quickly enough."

Full realization of the fact of Kennedy's death had not yet gripped the Johnson party, according to Manchester.

Elsewhere, the death of the president was being met with elation. In Oklahoma City, Manchester notes, a doctor was gleefully hoping that Mrs. Kennedy had also been killed. In Connecticut, another doctor crowed, "The joyride's over. This is one deal Papa Joe can't fix." And in Amarillo and near Dallas, young students cheered the president's death.

In Virginia, Robert Kennedy, who had been informed that his brother had been shot, was preparing to leave for Dallas when the telephone rang.

From Presidential Naval Aide Capt. Tazewell Shepard, Robert Kennedy learned that his brother had died. Robert broke the news to his wife and to John McCone, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and said:

"He had the most wonderful life."

He was walking toward the family swimming pool, when the poolside phone rang. J. Edgar Hoover told the attorney general, "The president's dead." With those words, his conversation began and ended. Manchester notes that Hoover is customarily a loquacious man and that at no time during Robert Kennedy's remaining nine months as attorney general did Hoover, his subordinate, ever offer his sympathies.

Plane to Wait For JFK's Body

To the friends who flocked to him on learning of the president's death, Robert Kennedy appeared solicitous of their grief more than his own, Manchester reports. "Don't be sad," he told Ed Guthman, his aide, a few minutes after receiving

Hoover's blunt message.

In Dallas, as Johnson watched television seeking to learn the scope of what had happened, Patrolman J. D. Tippit lay dead. No one yet had discerned a link between him and Lee Harvey Oswald. Less than two hours had

elapsed since Kennedy had been shot.

Johnson, learning that Mrs. Kennedy was refusing to leave the hospital without her husband's body, made it clear that Air Force One would not leave until Mrs. Kennedy and the body of the dead president had arrived.

In the sweltering interior of the plane, only Mrs. Johnson felt cold. Her husband was asking advice of three congressmen about the appropriate site for his taking of the oath of office. Two pressed for quick action—at Love Field, and one counseled a wait until Washington.

Johnson, Manchester conjectures, had probably already decided. He said he sided with Jack Brook and Albert Thomas, who had pointed out that the nation now had no president.

Next Johnson asked the men about the oath of office, but none knew the oath or who was empowered to administer it.

There was bitter irony in the recognition that the one official who could best advise the vice president on the constitutional provisions governing the situation was the attorney general of the United States, the dead president's brother, Robert Kennedy.

Although he had said earlier that he hoped not to use Kennedys' personal quarters aboard the plane, Johnson now entered them and telephoned the attorney general.

First he offered his sympathies, then told Robert that he feared a mass plot, although—Manchester says—the idea of such a plot apparently was incomprehensible to him. Johnson told him that he was being encouraged to take the oath as soon as possible, and asked Robert if he objected.

Manchester says the thought of Johnson's succession—coming so quickly on the heels of the news of the shooting and death—came as a new shock. Robert wanted

administration of the oath put off until the body of the dead president had been returned to Washington:

But Robert offered to try to gather information pertaining to the oath and promised he would then speak with Johnson again. Robert then consulted Nicholas Katzenbach, who later succeeded him as attorney general. Katzenbach, after consulting with an aide, told Robert that—as he already has surmised—anyone could administer the oath who was empowered to administer oaths under federal or state law; and that the oath appeared in the Constitution.

Suspect Seized In Tippett Killing

Robert now called Johnson and the conversation that followed is in dispute. Johnson later told the Warren Commission that the attorney general advised him to take the oath at once. Manchester says Robert does not recall giving such counsel to Johnson. He remembers, as does Guthman, informing the vice president that judges could swear him in.

Johnson now sent out word to find Sarah Hughes, whose appointment to the federal bench he had encouraged.

Another call from Air Force One to Katzenbach produced the text of the oath.

Moments before, Dallas police had become aware that the man they had seized for the killing of Patrolman Tippett was employed at the Texas School Book Depository and had been absent when the depository's superintendent had checked his staff 30 minutes after the shooting.

At about the same time, undertaker Vernon Oneal received a telephone call from Secret Service agent Clint

REMEMBERED

BY FREEMAN

Cabinet member Orville Freeman, flying over the Pacific when word of the President's death came, remembered with sudden awe that he had come closer than most men to becoming President Kennedy's running mate.

According to William Manchester in "The Death of a President," as serialized in Look, Freeman recalled that

he had been proposed as a candidate for Vice President at the Los Angeles convention in 1960. With that in mind, he began wondering what he would do if he were now in the position that Lyndon Johnson was in.

Hill who told him to bring a casket to the hospital at once.

"Hold on—hold on!" Oneal replied. "We've got merchandise at all prices."

Hill told him to bring "the best one." Oneal chose just that, an 800 pound bronze casket made by the Elgin Casket Co. and known as the Britannia model. Rounding up some workers, because most of his employees were at lunch, he loaded the casket onto a white Cadillac hearse.

As the hearse arrived at the hospital, presidential aide Ken O'Donnell called Mrs. Kennedy aside to keep her from seeing the casket, but he had also given her his word that she could look at the president before the casket was sealed.

Dr. Kemp Clark tried to dissuade her. She said, "Do you think seeing the coffin can upset me, doctor? I've seen my husband die, shot in my arms. His blood is all over me. How can I see anything worse than I've seen?"

Inside the emergency room, after Sgt. Bob Dugger of the Dallas police helped her remove her glove, Mrs. Kennedy lifted the president's hand, and slipped on one finger her plain gold wedding band. An orderly, using cream, pushed the ring over the knuckle because undertaker Oneal was afraid it might fall off.

Oneal was also disturbed at the thought that the President's wounds might mar the lining of his best casket. So he busied himself with directing two nurses who wrapped the body in plastic before he took some rubber bags and plastic and used them to wind about the President's head to guard the green satin lining.

Next on the scene was an eccentric Catholic priest, who managed to slip past all the security and reach Mrs. Kennedy. He was Father Thomas Cain, superior of the Dominican Fathers at the Roman Catholic University

of Dallas.

Learning of the shooting, he had driven at breakneck speed to the hospital, bringing in a green bag a crucifix featuring a tiny piece of the True Cross imbedded in plastic.

Approaching Mrs. Kennedy, he got her to confirm that the President was dead, and then—holding forth the crucifix, urged her to "venerate it." Mrs. Kennedy placed her lips to the crucifix.

The priest next informed her he was taking the crucifix into the emergency room where the President lay. Mrs. Kennedy, believing the priest intended to leave the crucifix with the President and believing that the gesture would mean much to the clergyman, offered no objection.

Inside the room, Father Cain strode about, gesturing with the crucifix over the

heads of Oneal and the hospital workers and above the plastic and rubber that Oneal was using.

Mrs. Kennedy was dismayed when she saw the priest emerge still holding the crucifix and realized he had not placed it in the casket with the President.

Although aide Ken O'Donnell tried to intervene, the priest capered in high zeal toward Mrs. Kennedy, attempted to embrace her, called her Jacqueline or Jackie and used endearments. Now three aides moved toward him, but the priest eluded them, scuttled back into the emergency room and persuaded hospital workers to say with him the Lord's Prayer.

Outside, he approached Mrs. Kennedy again.

She shrank from his touch, saying "Please, Father, leave me alone."

As O'Donnell headed for him, Father Cain scuttled away, still intoning prayers. He remained at the hospital, although the Kennedy party thought he had been driven off.

Felt Autopsy Was Necessary

All now seemed in readiness for the removal of the President's body. But there

was to be a delay, and its central figure was Dr. Earl Rose, Dallas County medical examiner.

As far as Rose was concerned, the body in the emergency room was the body of a homicide victim, and as he saw the law, the body could not be released without an autopsy.

Secret Service Agent Roy Kellerman told Rose the body was going to be taken to Washington. Rose said no, he was going to apply the law. Rose buttressed his conviction and stand with telephone calls to the sheriff's office and homicide bureau.

Dr. Burkley, the President's physician, pointed out that Mrs. Kennedy intended to remain with the body, and if Rose was going to hold the body pending an autopsy he would be forcing her into a lengthier ordeal.

Rose remained unmoved by the argument. Air Force Aide Gen. Godfrey McHugh urged Dallas Mayor Earle Cabell to tell Rose to release the body, but Cabell said he could not supravene the law. A Dallas plainclothesman said that perhaps a justice of the peace could order the body released.

After some false starts, Theron Ward, a justice of the peace for Garland, Tex., nearly 15 miles from Dallas, was reached and instructed to come to the hospital.

Among the Kennedy adherents, meanwhile, there was talk of overpowering Rose and removing the body. When Ward finally arrived, he was denied admittance by a Secret Service agent who did not understand that justices of the peace in Texas are more significant judicial officials than their counterparts in the East. A nurse at another entrance admitted Ward.

Ward, Manchester writes, was understandably hesitant and asked to be excused while he made an effort to determine the law on the subject. Manchester says he deserved more consideration than he was accorded by the Kennedy party, but they, too, were understandably distressed by what they had seen that day of Texas law.

The justice of the peace told Kellerman he did not think he could give the Kennedy party a waiver to remove the body.

At that moment, a truck holding the casket was being rolled out. Touching it was Mrs. Kennedy, who was sur-

rounded by Presidential aides, agents, police and the undertaker, among others. Rose blocked their path.

Manchester admits that what happened next is clouded by the differing versions offered by the witnesses, but it is clear that Rose was highly agitated.

He launched into a noisy tirade. As the Presidential party, now primarily angry, cursing men, pressed about him, Rose was joined by a policeman.

There was a momentary truce when Burkley and McHugh told O'Donnell and O'Brien that Ward had the power to overrule Rose. Ward said the law forced him to side with Rose and said the autopsy would take about three hours. O'Donnell and O'Brien asked him to waive it.

Then, according to Manchester, O'Donnell and O'Brien heard Ward say callously, "It's just another homicide case as far as I'm concerned."

O'Donnell cursed and said, "We're leaving." The policeman told him Rose and Ward said no. O'Donnell reiterated his intention, and gave orders to push out the casket.

There was a physical clash. The patrolman left Rose, and Rose was thrust aside. Ward had left to telephone the District Attorney, who told him—as he already had told Rose—that he did not intend to block removal of the body.

Outside on the loading platform, Father Cain was intoning prayers.

Casket Carried Aboard Plane

As the hearse pulled out, Oneal was telling a magazine writer of his worry about who would pay him.

After the casket was aboard the plane, Mrs. Kennedy moved toward her husband's room, opened the door, and found Johnson lying on the bed while his secretary transcribed his words. Mrs. Kennedy left the room. Johnson, inside, wolfed down some soup and crackers.

Mrs. Kennedy moved toward the rear of the plane to remain with the casket.

Gen. McHugh, unaware that the Johnson's were aboard, ordered the plane's pilot, Jim Swindal, to take off, because, as he said, "The President (Kennedy) is

aboard."

McHugh's order was countermanded by Mac Kilduff, the press aide. Kilduff and McHugh had passed each other in the crowd on board, and each was unaware of the other's thinking. As far as McHugh was concerned, the President's body was aboard and that was all that was needed to give the order for takeoff. He still did not know of the Johnsons' presence. Kilduff had already been informed by Johnson that the swearing-in would take place at Love Field.

Pilot Swindal turned off the engines on Kilduff's orders. Kilduff had left when McHugh entered and demanded to know why they had not taken off. Swindal told him he was following Kilduff's instructions. Gen. McHugh told Col. Swindal to take off and left the cockpit.

In the tail cabin, Mrs. Kennedy mentioned the heat and made it clear that she hoped they would take off soon. O'Donnell asked McHugh why they had not taken off. He explained that Kilduff had countermanded him and said he would go forward once more.

Finally he and Kilduff came face to face.

Kilduff told McHugh they were waiting for the press, for Mrs. Johnson's baggage and for a judge. McHugh said he thought Mrs. Johnson was on her own plane, but Kilduff said she was aboard Air Force One.

McHugh, mystified, returned to O'Donnell. O'Donnell sent him forward again. McHugh was ready to fly the plane himself, and the Kennedy and Johnson parties were bitterly at odds over the matter of the takeoff.

On his fifth trip through the plane, he met Kilduff again and insisted on a takeoff. Kilduff said he would have to wait until Johnson was sworn in.

"Johnson isn't here," said McHugh. "He's on the back-up plane."

Remark Cost Him Promotion

"Then you go back and tell that six-foot Texan he isn't Lyndon Johnson," Kilduff retorted, adding that there would be no takeoff until Johnson was sworn in.

Darkening, McHugh

snapped, "I have only one President, and he's lying back in that cabin."

Reports of the exchange spread swiftly through the plane. Kilduff's words won him a position in Johnson's

administration. McHugh's lost him promotion, and in effect, ended his military career.

Mrs. Kennedy was in a bedroom when Mr. and Mrs. Johnson entered to offer their sympathies. Addressing her as "Honey," Johnson embraced her but could offer no words.

Weeping, Mrs. Johnson said, "Oh, Jackie, you know, we never even wanted to be Vice President, and now, dear God, it's come to this!"

"Oh, what if I hadn't been there!" said Mrs. Kennedy. "I was so glad I was there."

Next came what Manchester says Mrs. Johnson acknowledges as a regrettable remark. She said, "What wounds me most of all is that it should happen in my beloved state of Texas." It was, Manchester writes, "no day for Texas chauvinism. Kennedy's death should be what wounded her most."

Mrs. Johnson urged Mrs. Kennedy to change her clothes, but Mrs. Kennedy put her off. She and the Johnsons were sitting on a bed, when Mrs. Kennedy said, "Lyndon" — then apologized: "I mean, Mr. President."

Johnson said, "Honey, I hope you'll call me that for the rest of your life."

They discussed the oath taking, and Johnson told her he expected Judge Sarah Hughes in an hour or so. The Johnsons left and Mrs. Kennedy was left alone, chafing at the wait.

Johnson then sought to persuade O'Donnell and O'Brien to be at his side when he took the oath. O'Brien realized suddenly that Johnson was, in fact, the President, and ended his resistance. O'Donnell was unconvinced.

Judge Hughes arrived. Manchester notes that staunch Kennedy adherents, with the exception of Mrs. Kennedy, who had realized the importance of showing the continuity of government, were conspicuously absent from photos of the oath taking.

Someone suggested that a

Johnson ordered a takeoff. Mrs. Kennedy declined an offer of food and returned to the coffin. Now, for the first time, tears coursed down her face.

On the flight back to Washington, O'Donnell and O'Brien refused Johnson's request, relayed through Bill Moyers, to sit with him. McHugh said he wanted it known that he, O'Donnell, O'Brien and Dave Powers remained with Kennedy.

Tension filled the plane. Agent Youngblood urged Johnson to go immediately to the White House, because security there was good. Johnson declined.

Mrs. Kennedy told Kilduff to make it known that she had spent the flight with the dead President. She resisted all efforts to persuade her to change her clothes or wash off the blood that was congealed on her left wrist. "No," she told Dr. Burkley, "let them see the horror."

Voice Resembles Slain President's

As the plane approached Andrews Air Force Base, Robert Kennedy avoided newsmen and hid in the back of a truck waiting for the landing. In the air, Mrs. Kennedy was relaying orders for the agents who accompanied the President to carry him off the plane. She herself told others that she wanted them by the casket. Manchester says that at this time, the new President was all but completely ignored.

The moment the plane halted, Robert Kennedy came aboard, pressing toward his brother's widow. "Hi, Jackie. I'm here," he said. The effect was eerie, so much did his voice resemble the dead President's.

Now those who had been in the rear of the plane learned initially of Oswald's arrest.

Mrs. Kennedy gave instructions for burial preparations by the Navy, not undertakers.

Robert Kennedy was surprised to learn that Johnson had said he had told him to take the oath of office in Dallas.

Then as they sat by the casket, Mrs. Kennedy told Robert the entire story of the day and said, "Oh, Bobby, I just can't believe Jack has gone."

Bible was needed for the ceremony. President Kennedy's personal Bible was produced. Using a card with the words of the oath on it, Sarah Hughes conducted the ceremony.

When it ended, the lady judge left the plane, and at the foot of the ramp, an impressive-looking man took the oath card and the Bible from her. Neither has ever been seen again, and the identity of the man is unknown.

On board Air Force One,