

Manchester's Book —Presses Are Rolling

W.J.T. 3/8/67

By JOHN MOLLESON
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The presses of two book manufacturers are racing to meet the publication date, April 7, of William Manchester's "The Death of a President."

An extraordinary advance order of 500,000 copies was reported yesterday, probably the largest first-printing ever recorded by a trade book in America.

The figure is unofficial because the book's publisher, Harper & Row, is not yet prepared to release publishing details of what is certain to be a controversial volume, as well as a runaway best-seller.

"The lawyers feel there should be no interviews about anything. The book is still a little

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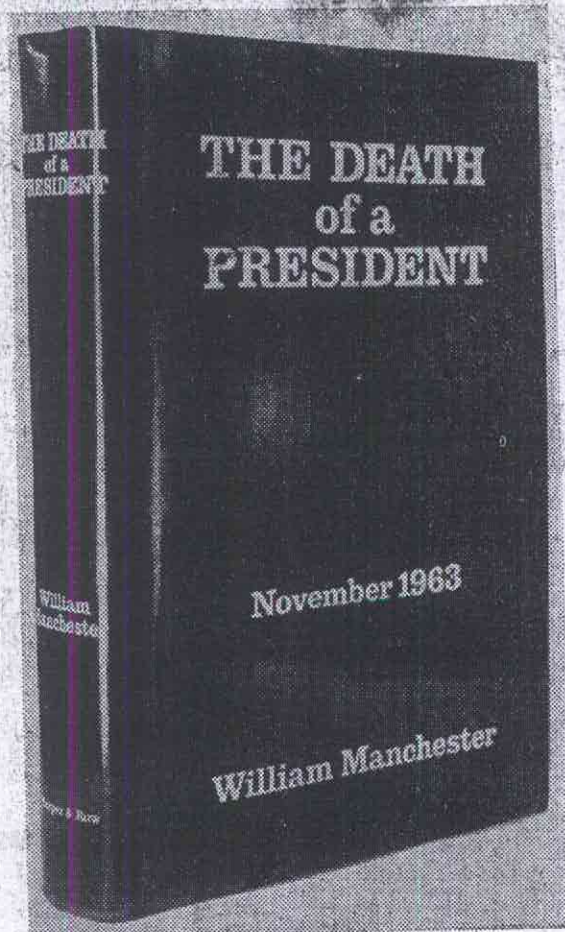
...Another View

WASHINGTON, March 8 (UPI).—A new book about the assassination of John F. Kennedy disputes William Manchester's statements in "The Death of a President" that Lyndon Johnson was in unseemly haste to assume the presidency after the assassination and inconsiderate to members of the Kennedy staff.

On the contrary, says Charles Roberts, White House reporter for Newsweek magazine in "The Truth About the Assassination," published by Grosset and Dunlap yesterday, the new Chief Executive conducted himself admirably,

He was, says one passage, "careful, correct,

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The Manchester missive

New Book on JFK's Death

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considerate and compassionate" aboard Air Force One.

"President Johnson is capable of crudities," Roberts wrote. "Like his predecessors, he can be ruthless, callous, self-centered and profane. But it just happens that on that wretched afternoon, Manchester notwithstanding, he rose to the occasion as few men could after having such an awesome burden suddenly and unceremoniously thrust upon him:

"To put it more precisely, the hours from 1 p.m., when Kennedy died, to 4:59 p.m., when Air Force One touched down at Andrews (the Air Force Base outside Washington) were four of Johnson's finest."

Roberts was one of two reporters aboard the presidential plane, Air Force One, which brought Kennedy's body and the newly sworn President Johnson back to Washington from Dallas a few hours after

the Nov. 22, 1963 assassination. The other reporter aboard the plane was Merriman Smith, United Press International White House reporter.

Roberts also expresses fear that public sentiment whipped by critics of the Warren Commission might lead to demands for disinterment of the slain President's body.

In a preface to his book, Roberts noted that in 1887 and again in 1901, Abraham Lincoln was disinterred because of rumors sweeping the country that his coffin was empty. The second exhumation of Lincoln came shortly before he was permanently enshrined in a crypt at Springfield, Ill. In each case the coffin was open and the corpse inspected for identification.

Roberts said the questions raised about the Warren Commission's findings in the Kennedy assassination could lead to recurrence of the grim situation involving Lincoln's body

Manchester Book Rolling on

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sensitive," said Stuart Harris, publicity director for Harper & Row.

Copies of the \$10 book are in the hands of reviewers but one of them said yesterday he would "burn the book" rather than surrender it to prying eyes before the publication date.

To the review copies, Harper attached a blue card labeled

"Important." It states that reviews and stories are not to be released before 6 p.m., April 6. It limits direct quotes to 500 words and insists that Harper & Row's book is "the only approved and correct version."

The jacket of the book carries only the words "The Death of a President." "November 1963," "William Manchester," printed in red-bordered white letters.

They are on a dark blue background lightly spattered with faint white dots.

The background, according to reports, represents stars against a night-blue field and was inspired by three quotes within the book referring to stars, one a quote from "Romeo and Juliet" and another from Walt Whitman's poem, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." The jacket carries the acknowledgement, "Jacket de-

signed by J. Caroff Associates, from an idea by William Manchester."

The back of the Jacket has only a picture of Manchester on a white background.

Some pirated photocopies of the manuscript were believed to have been made when the typescript circulated among magazine publishers during the sale of the serial rights. These could be used for editions printed abroad.

York, Wednesday, March 3, 1967

Presses

Demand for the authorized version is so great that Harper has distributed the printing among two book manufacturers. An initial order of 50,000 books is considered normal for a promising best seller, but the Harper order is said to be 10 times as great. The advance order for Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood" was 100,000.

The publisher is known to be taking extra precautions to make sure that no bookseller

places the book on sale before publication date. One way to insure an equitable release would be to denver the book simultaneously to book stores across the country.

Although there is certain to be a first-day scramble for copies, Leonard Schwartz, president of Brentano's, said he would present the book "with as much dignity as possible, as a

serious effort by a serious writer, dealing with the facts as he knows them."

He added: "We will sell as many copies as the public wishes to buy."