

Kennedy book stirs plagiarism

Historian says author Joe McGinniss copied from 'The Death of a President'

By HOWARD KURTZ
The Washington Post

William Manchester, the historian who wrote the definitive account of John F. Kennedy's assassination, has always felt strongly about his book "The Death of a President." So strongly, that he declined all profits, turning them over to the Kennedy Library. So strongly that he went to court to stop NBC from using his material in a movie about Kennedy's death.

Now Manchester is plenty mad at Joe McGinniss, whose forthcoming book about Ted Kennedy draws heavily on "The Death of a President." After comparing 11 chapters of "The Last Brother" to his 1967 book, Manchester believes he is the victim of plagiarism. One hundred and eighty-seven instances of it, to



McGINNISS

be exact.

Manchester, 71, who first made the accusation in an interview with New York Magazine that hit newsstands Monday, elaborated in a telephone interview from his Connecticut home. He said he

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WILLIAM MANCHESTER

would sue McGinniss' publisher, Simon and Schuster, unless changes are made before the book's release next month.

"I was astonished at the number of instances of copying, and also the pattern," Manchester said. "I'm disturbed, and I've sent what I have to my lawyers." He said he would make it "very clear to Simon and Schuster" that he

will go to court if necessary.

McGinniss did not respond to a message on his answering machine, but he told New York Magazine in a letter published Monday he is "appalled and outraged" at Manchester's accusations.

"I have drawn heavily from Manchester's account for the facts upon which I have based my own interpretations of Teddy Kennedy's actions and reactions during this period. . . . What I have not done is to appropriate, or to pass off as my own, any of Mr. Manchester's 'ideas' or 'words,'" he said.

McGinniss mentions Manchester several times in his book with such phrases as "As William Manchester would write . . ." The book has no footnotes or source notes.

Simon & Schuster planned no revisions. "Joe McGinniss, in 'The Last Brother,' has treated William Manchester's work in a thoroughly responsible way, both legally and morally," said Wendy Nicholson, vice president and director of marketing for the publisher's trade division.

"The Last Brother" has been the focus of front-page controversy since The Washington Post reported last month that a 123-page excerpt distributed by the publisher contained an extraordinary disclaimer that said some thoughts and dialogue were "created by the author."

Simon and Schuster now says it will drop the disclaimer in favor of a longer author's note. The biography is to be excerpted in Vanity Fair, which insists it will be subjected to the usual fact-checking process, and made into an NBC miniseries. McGinniss was paid a reported \$1 million for the book.

charge

Taylor sparked a second controversy two weeks ago when he wrote that "the overwhelming bulk of the material" in the 123-page excerpt came from Manchester's book.

A professor emeritus at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., Manchester is finishing the third volume of a biography of Winston Churchill. He said his editors at Little, Brown & Co. alert him if he paraphrases another historian's work too closely.

An acquaintance of Jack Kennedy, Manchester was chosen by the family to write an authorized account of the assassination. But Jacqueline Kennedy did not like the manuscript and tried to prevent its publication.

Manchester said he accepted only a \$40,000 advance for his three years of work on the book. He said he and his publisher, Harper & Row, stipulated that all royalties be donated to the Kennedy Library. "I didn't want to become rich because of the death of a friend," he said.

Manchester said he signed an agreement with Robert Kennedy that no part of the book would be used for television. He said he spent \$25,000 on legal fees several

years ago to persuade NBC to reshoot several movie scenes that were based on his book. Manchester sounded weary of the battle

over his 26-year-old work. "It's a very special book for me, and I'm very upset about this development," he said.