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Friends Defend LBJ On Dallas Flight

By ROBERT THOMPSON
Examiner Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Persons close to President Johnson said today it would be an unfortunate distortion of fact if Johnson were portrayed in the William Manchester book as having acted boorish toward the Kennedy family in November, 1963.

One source, who was on the presidential jet that carried Johnson and the body of the late President Kennedy back to Washington from Dallas on Nov. 22, conceded there was tenseness between the Johnson and Kennedy forces on that emotion-laden flight.

But he said Johnson made every effort to treat Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy and the late President's staff with consideration while pursuing his constitutional responsibility to preserve the continuity of government.

DISTURBED

The source said everyone aboard the plane was in a fog — deeply disturbed by the assassination and uncertain of its ramifications.

Jack J. Valenti, former as-

sistant to Johnson and now president of the Motion Picture Association of America, said he never saw any friction or hostility aboard the plane.

Valenti maintained Johnson was at all times compassionate toward Mrs. Kennedy.

"The enormity of his responsibility was on him," said Valenti. "His whole demeanor was one of somber calm. He was thoughtful, kind and gracious to Mrs. Kennedy. All the time, he was conscious of her grief."

CONFIRMED

These accounts of Johnson conduct are substantiated in the current issue of Newsweek by White House correspondent Charles Roberts, one of two newsmen who made the sad flight to Washington.

Roberts is quoted as saying he saw no show of insensitivity on Johnson's part.

Johnson and the White House have tried to avoid any public involvement in the court fight between Manchester and the Kennedys.

But the President is understood to be concerned lest the facts about what happened

on Air Force One and in the day immediately following the assassination be presented in a false light by Manchester.

There have been reports the Manchester book implies a dispute between Johnson and Robert Kennedy over the new President's decision to address Congress and the nation just four days after the assassination.

NEWS TO HIM

Valenti, who became an assistant to Johnson on that fateful day and remained in the White House until last summer, said he is not aware of any such disagreement.

"The President was determined and all the advisers around him decided he must go before the people of the country — and of the world — as soon as possible to reassure them," said Valenti.

One source, who was interviewed by Manchester during his research on the book, said the author, a staunch admirer of the late President, had identified himself emotionally as pro-Kennedy and anti-Johnson.

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