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JFK Book Hearing May Be Postponed

NEW YORK (AP) — The dispute over "The Death of A President" moves into a judge's chambers today with Mrs. John F. Kennedy's attorney favoring a postponement of hearings on her move to block publication of the book.

Author William Manchester, hospitalized with pneumonia, and Harper & Row, publishers of his 300,000-word manuscript on the assassination of the President, have been ordered to show cause in state supreme court why they should not be barred from bringing out the account.

Lawyers for the two sides were to discuss the situation informally in Justice Saul Streit's chambers.

"I have no grave objections to putting the matter over as long as necessary," said Simon H. Rifkind, attorney for Mrs. Kennedy. "I'll make that very clear. Counsel for Mr. Manchester needs the views of his client and that's not possible now."

WOULD AGREE

Streit, who issued the show cause order Dec. 16, suggested previously he would agree to postpone the hearings if negotiations on removing disputed passages from the text were not completed by today.

Edward S. Greenbaum, attorney for the publishers, declined comment on any postponement request.

Negotiations on trimming passages that Mrs. Kennedy considers intimate beyond the interest of history continued yesterday. More talks — a Kennedy spokesman said they "are going along well" — were scheduled for today.

"Naturally," the spokesman said, "this illness makes things just that much more difficult. Manchester can't be consulted on the manuscript and that slows things, of course."

Mrs. Kennedy has already reached a settlement on deleting sections of a 60,000-word extract of the manuscript that

Look magazine plans to serialize beginning in the issue which reaches newsstands Jan. 10. The book is scheduled for publication in April.

JACKIE LEAVES

The literary and legal maneuvering came against a background of Manchester's illness, a White House statement denying comments attributed to the President by Newsweek Magazine relating to the assassination, and Mrs. Kennedy's departure with her children for a holiday on the British West Indies island of Antigua.

Manchester was ordered to remain in the hospital for at least a week after his admission early yesterday morning with what his physician called "a slight touch of pneumonia."

The 44-year-old writer remained on the critical list in Middlesex Memorial Hospital, Middletown, Conn., although he was reported responding well to antibiotic treatment. A complete diagnosis would take at least three days and until then he would be considered in critical condition, Dr. F. Erwin Tracy said.

Tracy barred telephone calls of "an emotional or controversial nature" to Manchester. The doctor said he has been "confused and depressed" for the past few weeks.

Manchester suffered similar physical symptoms several weeks ago in London, where he was working on a new book, the doctor said. The author was treated in London and appeared to have recovered.

Tracy said Manchester had been working very hard and was under great stress as a result of the furor over his book.

"The pressure lowers his resistance so he catches things more easily," the doctor said. "He has been terribly depressed."

Mrs. Kennedy and her brother-in-law, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., sent Manchester telegrams wishing him a speedy recovery.