

SF Examiner Jan 11, 1967



Bob Considine

Manchester's Revelations

Most of the material in the Look magazine's first installment of William Manchester's "The Death of a President" was leaked, dripped or legitimately published before.

The service Manchester seems to have rendered, judging from this opening burst, is that he has given order to the tumbled deluge of events.

There is clear focus for the first time on the spiteful and juvenile feuding between Texas Gov. Connally, a Democrat ideologically somewhat to the right of Louis XIV, and the state's liberal senior Senator, Ralph Yarborough.

It pulled Vice President Johnson into the sordid factional fray and the Vice President, in turn, appears to have pulled in JFK to serve as peacemaker-on-the-scene. Without the feud there would have been no trip to Texas.

★ ★ ★

WHILE FASCINATED by the retelling of this harsh chapter in American history, I found it difficult to buy two of Manchester's views. He seems to demand that the reader share his own marked hatred of everything and just about everybody in Dallas, and he also asks the reader to believe that Oswald was driven mad about 9 o'clock the night before the shooting by his Russian wife's rejection of a washing machine.

I found myself vaguely let down by the emphasis Manchester places on JFK's preoccupation with Jackie's wardrobe.

JFK personally ordered a weather prediction and was incensed when Gen. Godfrey McHugh, USAF, came up with a last-minute correction. It would be hot, not cool.

Jackie's "cool" clothes were already packed and on the helicopter which was about to take off from the White House lawn.

"He lunged for his telephone," attempting to change the whole wardrobe, Manchester relates — probably from information supplied by Mrs. Kennedy.

It just isn't consistent with the image JFK left us and the world.

★ ★ ★

THE REPORTED damage the book may do to President Johnson is discerned at least in Look's first article in the portrayal of LBJ as he was at that time—a traditional Vice President.

JFK bawls out his Vice President for failing to straighten out the Texas political mess himself, but Manchester does not tell us what JFK said that sent the Vice President stalking angrily into the hotel corridor.

LBJ is thus made to look like a whipped schoolboy, or dolt. Just like all vice presidential predecessors who have occupied that abysmal out-house of American politics, Manchester makes him look as impotent as, let's say, Hubert Humphrey.

Hear Bob Considine on KGO Radio (810) Monday through Friday at 5:50 p.m.