

Manchester Says: 'I Had to Fight'

By JOHN CORRY

The waitress said, "I see your picture all over now," and a man nearby pretended to be deep in a cup of coffee while he stared at him over the rim. William Manchester smiled a small, uncomfortable smile and spoke more softly. He was talking about his book.

"I had to fight for it," he said. "It was like my child. Wouldn't a parent dash into a burning house to save his child from the flames? That was just the way it was."

Not all the people involved in the dispute over "The Death of a President," the book Mr. Manchester wrote, agree with him.

Harper & Row, which will publish the book, had reservations about it. Mrs. John F. Kennedy called it "tasteless and distorted." After her suit to prevent its publication was ended in a settlement out of court, Senator Robert F. Kennedy told a friend:

"They have the money, and we have the public relations problem."

Mr. Manchester says he does not understand the Kennedys, but he insists that sometimes they made him feel as if he were a paid historian, although they did not support him financially while he wrote the book.

"Mao and Jackie are the two most inscrutable people I know," he said.

Mao Tse-tung is chairman of the Communist party of China.

While gathering material for the book, Mr. Manchester had two interviews with Mrs. Kennedy, recording about 10 hours of the conversation on four reels of tape.

The tapes are now in a safe deposit box. Simon H. Rifkind, Mrs. Kennedy's attorney, has one key to the box, Mr. Manchester the other.

"This is humiliating," Mr. Manchester said. "Am I a pervert? Have I ever belonged to any disloyal organizations? The Kennedys entrusted me with all kinds of confidences, and I never violated any of them, but now I'm suspect."

Mr. Manchester admits that Mrs. Kennedy made a deep emotional impact on him during the interviews. "She must be seen to be believed," he said. "When she turns on the charm, it's incredible."

"The one Kennedy I had to



The New York Times
William Manchester

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please with the book was John F. Kennedy," he said. "I think I did that. You have to tell a story as straight as you can and to do less is to violate your integrity."

Mr. Manchester says Mrs. Kennedy first objected to publication of the manuscript when she learned that Look magazine had paid \$665,000 for its serialization rights.

However, the Kennedys say that Mrs. Kennedy did not know of the money involved in the sale to Look, and that she was agitated simply because Mr. Manchester had sold the manuscript without her approval of the text.

Furthermore, they say they understood that the money from the sale was going entirely to the Kennedy Library in Cambridge, Mass.

"Why would Mrs. Kennedy have been agitated about the money if she didn't know Manchester was getting it?" Richard N. Goodwin, one of Mrs. Kennedy's advisers, said.

Mr. Manchester says the controversy was unfortunate, and that if he had dealt more directly with Mrs. Kennedy or the Senator, not with advisers, it might not have arisen.

"For the first time I know what it was like to live in a monarchy," he said. "It was like she was Marie Antoinette, completely isolated from the world around her by her court advisers."

Feelings Transferred

Mr. Manchester, who wrote an earlier book about President Kennedy, "Portrait of a President," said that at first he had transferred his feelings about the President to Mrs. Kennedy and the Senator, and that this had been a mistake.

"They don't understand contemporary history," he said. "John Kennedy did."

Mr. Manchester denies that he suffered a nervous breakdown while writing the book, although he admits to having had emotional difficulties.

Mr. Manchester said he had entered a hospital on Nov. 26, 1965, suffering from exhaustion and had stayed in bed 12 days.

On the 13th day, he said, he arranged to have a doctor's vacant office put at his disposal and spent the next eight weeks working there on the book.

He stayed in the hospital, he said, to avoid phone calls and distractions. Before then, he said, he had worked virtually every day for two years, usually as many as 15 hours a day.

He does, however, say that his emotional problems were considerable. He recalls an evening in the previous spring, sitting at home, when his son asked him the date.

"I told him it was Nov. 22," he said. "I sat there, reading a paper for a full two minutes, and then realized what I had said. I looked at my son, and he was stricken, but for me time had stopped on Nov. 22, the day Kennedy was shot."

Mr. Manchester says that by the fall of 1965 he was becoming overcome with exhaustion.

"I was just tired," he said. "I would get a pen and look at the manuscript, and I just couldn't do anything. I was at this part about Lee Harvey Oswald and I would just sit and look at it. I would get a good night's sleep and still be tired. I'd just had it."

On the night of Nov. 22, 1965, precisely two years after the assassination, he wrote that "Lee Oswald was killed in the presence of more than 70 uniformed police officers."

He says that after that he sat and stared at his typewriter.

'Theater of Absurd'

"Oswald," he says. "This was the theater of the absurd. This was Camus. I was overwhelmed. A few days later I was in the hospital."

Mr. Manchester denies strongly that his book is unfair to anyone, although he admits that at times he had to be cautious to prevent his personal and political feelings from intruding into the book.

For instance, in a letter to Mrs. Kennedy he wrote:

"Though I tried desperately to suppress my bias against a certain eminent statesman who always reminded me of someone in a grade D movie of the late show, the prejudice showed through. This was cheap of me, but I suppose there is a little meanness in all of us."

But these unfair references, he wrote, "that might conceivably have rubbed off on the Kennedy family" were cut from the book.

The Newsweek Interview

William Manchester says in an interview in the current issue of Newsweek that the controversy over his book, "The Death of a President," did not begin until Look magazine agreed to pay \$665,000 for the serialization rights.

In the interview, Mr. Manchester recalled that he had been told in his first meeting with Senator Robert F. Kennedy, "I don't want anyone to make a killing out of my brother's death."

The author said that his own response to this had been, "You dictate the terms."

He said that until the Look offer "staggered everybody" there had been no indication that an extraordinary amount of money would be made from the book. He said that according to current estimates, the Kennedy Library stands to make \$5-million from the book. He also said that his agent predicted that his own share might be "in the area of \$1.5-million."

After taxes and legal expenses, Mr. Manchester said, "I may come out with something in the range of \$500,000."

He called this "a lot of money" but said it was not ex-



Associated Press

WENT TO COURT: Mrs. John F. Kennedy, whose suit to prevent the publication of the book "The Death of a President" ended in a settlement out of court.

cessive "in light of my three years' agony."

It was only after the disclosure of the deal made with Look that the Kennedy family began raising objections. Mr. Manchester said in replying to questions put to him by James M. Cannon, senior editor, and Edward Kosner, a general editor, of News Week.

The day after the deal was made, Mr. Manchester said, "Bobby told Jackie, and a mushroom cloud appeared over Hyannis Port."

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"She was concerned over the sum of money and what she felt was commercialization," he said. "Apparently, Jackie didn't know the details of the memorandum of understanding between Bobby and me. She didn't hire me."

He said there had been a conference with Senator Kennedy in Washington a week later at which "Bobby was so irrational. He was concerned about the money now."

Asked if that had been the real reason for their distress, Mr. Manchester told the Newsweek team, "It was impossible to ascertain their motives," but he said the family was "all for the book — but no magazine serialization."

"On Sept. 7, Dick Goodwin and I flew up to Hyannis Port on the Caroline to see Jackie," he said. "She took the position that I was the St. George who was going to slay the dragon — Look. I couldn't get her to face the reality that I had signed a contract with them."

Richard N. Goodwin was an aide to President Kennedy.

"By now the whole four months of editing and approval by designated representatives was forgotten about by the Kennedys," Mr. Manchester said. Mr. Goodwin, he said, was editing "largely for political reasons—material about Bobby and Johnson."

Editing Called 'Fantastic'

"Dick tried to emasculate the Look galleys," he said. "His editing of the Look galleys was fantastic."

Another conference was held later in the fall at Hickory Hill, Robert Kennedy's home in McLean, Va.

"It was chilly," Mr. Manchester said, "but Bobby being Bobby, he had to put on a bathing suit and go swimming."

He said the Senator "would ask me a question, then duck under water, and I would wait for him to surface in the pool before answering."

Mr. Manchester said that it was during this conversation that "Bobby told me Ted Sorensen had advised him to file suit because of his own political future."

"But putting Jackie on the stand would be intolerable," Mr. Manchester said the Senator said, "so would I consider the personal changes which Dick Goodwin was then making in Look, and I said I would."

Theodore C. Sorensen was an aide to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Mr. Manchester told the Newsweek interviewers that he had been given a letter from Mrs. Kennedy in which she said the changes she had asked for were personal ones involving her or her children.

"But," the writer said, "the first six that I encountered in the galleys involved L.B.J. and had nothing to do with her or her children."

The author is quoted in the Newsweek interview as saying that it was not until after Mrs. Kennedy had filed suit that she read the book and the excerpts for Look. He said she had been smiling when she left the meeting, but that her eyes filled with tears when she saw reporters and photographers outside—"and that's how the stories that the book made her cry got started."