

Deletions in Kennedy Book

To the Editor:

Because I have been abroad, I have only now read the comments attributed to Richard N. Goodwin in *The Times* of Jan. 23, in which he asserts that "the publisher and representatives of the Kennedy family recommended many changes" in "The Death of a President." "As a result, almost a third of the book was modified."

This is absurd. No significant deletions were suggested by the publisher, and had I accepted every cut proposed by Kennedy friends and employes, less than one-twentieth of the text would have been altered. Because I declined to sacrifice the integrity of a historical document, conflict arose. The dispute was resolved when Mrs. Kennedy herself read the page proofs. At her request I struck out certain phrases and sentences which she considered personal. Altogether these constituted less than 1 per cent of the book.

Mr. Goodwin is further reported to have said "almost the entire first chapter was either discarded or rewritten." That is utterly false. My typescript opened with a 95-page prologue. My editorial advisers felt that the incident described on the first two pages would be more effective elsewhere in the book.

I agreed, and the switch was made, but nothing was discarded.

It is also charged by Mr. Goodwin that "objectionable passages" of my "original manuscript" were "fictional." This, clearly, is an attempt to discredit the quality of my research. In reply I should like to point out that last April, at his request, I loaned Mr. Goodwin a carbon of that original manuscript. To me and to mutual friends he expressed only admiration for the style and documentation of the work. Later he did make three suggestions, all of which were sensible and which were, therefore, adopted by me.

It does seem unfair that a privileged reader of an unedited version of a manuscript should publicly criticize it two months before copies will be available to reviewers. Judgment then will be appropriate. Judgment now is certainly improper.

WILLIAM MANCHESTER
Middletown, Conn.
Feb. 13, 1967