

*SF Examiner-Chronicle Dec. 25, 1966***Bob Considine**

JFK Tragedy Expands

Jack Kennedy would have given them all hell, from his wife down, for their combined foul-up of the story of his murder. He was a good reporter; indeed, I knew him at a time when that's what he mainly wanted to be in life.

It's a pity he couldn't have covered the assassination himself. He'd have turned in a better job.

As things now stand, the ugly charges and counter-charges, the bandying about of huge sums in the form of guarantees, advances against royalties, first serial rights, foreign privileges, and posted bonds, are as obscene as a raffle of Lincoln's bones.

The dead need friends, too. The shade of JFK must have wondered where his friends were, really, in the heat of the controversy. This has been for his memory another Bay of Pigs, but grim circumstances afford him no chance for a recoup.

THE BEAUTIFUL WIDOW'S naivete or lack of (or refusal to listen to) the advice of cooler heads has set two inexorable courses for "The Death of a President."

Course No. 1 -- in the form in which it will eventually appear in magazine and book form in this country it will be a sorry let-down to millions of readers. The reigning question raised on publication day will be, "So what was all the fuss about?"

Course No. 2 -- in its unexpurgated, pirated and perhaps even embellished form, it will become one of the most widely published and hawked books in the world.

It is too late to chastise Manchester for failing to clear the manuscript with the family; too late to suggest that the widow and Sen. Robert Kennedy should have evidenced closer interest in the book during its gestation period.

The 20-20 vision of hindsight is heavily involved, at this late date, in any lecture to Harper & Row and Look Magazine to the effect that they should have looked before they leaped for all that dough.

WHAT'S GOING to happen is that millions who would never have read the Manchester work will now read it. They will read it not as an historical document, which is what the family hoped for when they chose him to the exclusion of other and perhaps more competent reporters, but to confirm (or disavow) hosts of rumors about what the original contained.

There have been more leaks of this manuscript than in an old Greek freighter. There was a time when I crossed my heart and swore to die, in the presence of a Cowles publications pal, if I ever repeated a word of what he told me the original script contained.

Now, any cab driver can give you an escalated version of each of the once-sacrosanct passages.

JFK deserved better. So much of the class died with him.

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