

Texts of Statements on Accord on Kennedy Book

Following are the texts of three statements on the settlement yesterday of the dispute over "The Death of a President." One was made in behalf of Mrs. John F. Kennedy by John Seigenthaler, Edward Guthman and Richard Goodwin; the second came from Harper & Row, publishers of the book, and the third from William Manchester, the author.

Statement for Mrs. Kennedy

In late 1963, several authors were planning to write about the events surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Members of the family and members of the late President's staff were receiving many requests for interviews and cooperation.

In order to prevent proliferation of demands and at the same time to permit a full historical account, Senator Robert F. Kennedy and Mrs. John F. Kennedy—on the advice of many of those being contacted—agreed to submit to one interviewer regarding those painful days.

William Manchester was asked to interview Mrs. Kennedy and Senator Kennedy and to do the research and write the story of Nov. 21-25, 1963. Neither Mrs. Kennedy nor Senator Kennedy then knew Mr. Manchester personally.

At that time the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library had begun an "oral history" project to record on tape the recollections of those involved in the Kennedy Administration. It was understood that all such tapes were to be deposited in the Kennedy Library to be made available to future historians at a time designated by the person interviewed. There are 300 such tapes already on deposit, some of them sealed for more than 100 years.

Background Material

Mr. Arthur Schlesinger had interviewed Mrs. Kennedy for this project. When his interview reached the period of the assassination, he stopped. Since Mr. Manchester was to write his book, it was thought that he should complete the interview since it might give him valuable background material and would not subject Mrs. Kennedy to a repetition of an account of the facts.

Mrs. Kennedy and Senator Kennedy, as they were interviewed, were told that they were talking for an "historian of the 21st century."

They were also told that like all others interviewed, they could designate when, if

ever, the tapes or the contents of their interviews could be released. Moreover, they felt fully protected by a formal contract signed by Mr. Manchester which guaranteed that nothing they said would be published without consent. They were reassured by both the author and representatives of the publishers, Harper & Row, that nothing they told Mr. Manchester would be printed unless they approved.

Under the agreement, the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library was to receive a share of the normal profits of the author and the publishers, since all agreed that Mr. Manchester's book was not to be a commercial enterprise. Mr. Manchester publicly acknowledged this as outlined in a press release at the time of the signing of his agreement to write the book.

Worked on Book 2 Years

The terms of the agreement signed in March, 1964, provided that Mr. Manchester would not publish his book until his completed manuscript was submitted to Senator Kennedy and to Mrs. Kennedy and was approved. This, of course, was never done, nor were the tapes of their interviews with Mr. Manchester ever turned over to the library.

Under the protection of this agreement and unaware of any danger that there would be any unauthorized publication in her lifetime or that of her children, Mr. Kennedy talked freely and for the historical record to Manchester in interviews that lasted about 10 hours.

She did not seek or talk to Mr. Manchester again until he had completed his manuscript.

For about two years, until early 1966, Mr. Manchester worked on his book. No member of the Kennedy family supervised or directed his work in any way, nor did they discuss the book with him. He was completely on his own.

In early 1966, Mr. Manchester submitted the manuscript to Senator Kennedy, who asked Mr. Seigenthaler and Mr. Guthman to review the manuscript and make suggestions. They had frequent discussions about the text with Mr. Evan Thomas, of Harper & Row.

While the editorial process was continuing, Senator Kennedy assured Mr. Manchester that he would not stand in the way of publication or magazine serialization once a final text had been agreed upon,

although neither then, nor at any subsequent time, was there any such approval. Mrs. Kennedy or her representatives had not reviewed the manuscript, although her personal approval was required.

In late July the manuscript was sold to Look magazine. However, we were then, and for the next several months, assured that the changes personally desired by Mrs. Kennedy would be made.

It is unnecessary to detail the almost endless series of meetings and conversations which took place all during the summer and through the fall. Mrs. Kennedy's requests were repeatedly made through representatives and by personal appeals. Galleys were edited, and lengthy editorial discussions were held. Despite constant reassurances, however, most of the requested changes were not made.

We continued our efforts to modify the manuscript dealing with personal passages and inaccuracies. The appeals went on, even as prospects grew dimmer, because all concerned knew that, regardless of the merits, legal action would create a painful and difficult situation.

In December, Mrs. Kennedy was finally and irrevocably denied the right even to see the current version of the manuscript. The passages were the same ones that she had been discussing throughout. In fact, as we later learned, most of this material had been retained.

Distress Is Cited

It is impossible to describe the personal distress caused by this refusal after months of discussion, reassurance and promises. Although a lawsuit would be painful, it could not equal the distress caused over this long period.

Moreover, it was now clear that only through legal action could Mrs. Kennedy assert her right and desire to protect her private life and the innocent griefs of her children. Even then there was hesitation. For we all knew how difficult would be the storm that was sure to come.

A controversy, however, would end, while the published material would live forever. We also knew that some of the material might be printed in any event; but it would be transitory and fragmented and, at least, lack the seeming acquiescence of the family of President John Kennedy.

And so the lawsuit was brought.

Now it has been settled among all the parties. Those personal passages of most concern have been deleted or

modified. The recorded interviews will be deposited in the Kennedy Library. We are grateful for that. We all agree that the historical record has not been damaged, nor has the book itself been hurt.

Throughout discussions of changes and revisions, concern was expressed by us and by the publishers regarding passages which were unfair or inaccurate. Detailed memoranda was submitted, specifically objecting to these passages.

Many of the changes recommended in this connection were refused by the author, apparently on the ground that he was entitled to his own view of history. When we were not successful in getting the author and publisher to agree with these changes, we and the lawyers in the controversy felt these points should not properly be made a point of legal suppression.

Thus it is important to note that on the title page of each copy of the book published in the United States or abroad there will appear the following words:

"Harper & Row wishes to make it clear that neither Mrs. John F. Kennedy nor Senator Robert F. Kennedy has in any way approved or endorsed the material appearing in this book. The author, William Manchester, and the publishers assume complete and sole responsibility."

All the parties, publishers and authors, have stated that the material involved is only a small portion of an immense narrative; and we are told it is of little significance. We agree with that. Its only significance was to Mrs. Kennedy and to her children. We can only regret that it was not possible to make the accommodations, which have now so easily been agreed upon, without the ordeal which legal action inevitably and foreseeably brought.

Harper & Row Statement

In the past weeks there have been hundreds of thousands of words written about this controversy. Our position as publisher has been especially difficult because of our respect and admiration for the Kennedy family and for William Manchester, as well as our obligation to him as an author. We are glad that the lawsuit has now been terminated and desire to make this brief statement.

Harper & Row did not ask for the privilege of publishing "The Death of a President." In March, 1964, Mr.

Evan Thomas, Chairman of the Harper Editorial Board, was asked by Robert F. Kennedy, then the Attorney General, if Harper would publish a book about the assassination of President Kennedy. Mr. Thomas was informed that William Manchester had been chosen by Mrs. Kennedy to write the book.

On behalf of Harper, Mr. Thomas told Robert Kennedy that we would be proud to publish the book, and it was clear from the outset that this would not be treated as an ordinary commercial publishing venture.

Instead of the publisher and the author receiving the usual proceeds from the Harper publication, it was agreed that the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library would receive a substantial share of these proceeds.

Accordingly, the Harper share above costs, including normal overhead, and taxes, from all sources, including the Book-of-the-Month Club and paperback, cannot be more than 6 per cent on net receipts from the first 100,000 copies sold of the hardbound edition, regardless of how many copies are sold of any edition.

Also, as initially agreed, the Library receives a substantial portion of what would otherwise have gone to the author.

In March of last year, Mr. Manchester finished writing the original manuscript of his book "The Death of a President" and he so advised Mrs. Kennedy, Senator Kennedy and Harper. Since that time, the original version, revised versions, galley proofs and page proofs have been available to Mrs. Kennedy and Senator Kennedy. However, they decided not to read the book and relive the tragedy of the assassination. Instead, a number of close friends and associates were delegated to read the book on their behalf.

These representatives cleared a great many comments and suggestions directly with Mr. Manchester and Harper. By the middle of July, substantial revisions were made by Mr. Manchester, in accordance with these comments and suggestions, and on July 28 Senator Kennedy advised both the author and Harper by telegram and letter that members of the Kennedy family would place no obstacle in the way of publication of Mr. Manchester's book.

Prior to July, Senator Kennedy had been informed of the likelihood of an early publication of another book about the assassination. In view of all the facts, Mr. Manchester was told he was free to arrange for serialization of the book in late 1966.

Subsequently, Mrs. Kennedy requested that the start of the serialization be postponed until January, 1967. Look deferred to her wishes and scheduled the serialization in four installments starting in January, 1967.

Serialization Rights

Harper has at no time had any financial interest in, or control over, United States or foreign magazine serialization or publication of the book abroad. Arrangements were concluded by Mr. Manchester with Look magazine, and Senator Kennedy told him that he was pleased with the selection of Look.

It was understood that the book itself would then appear in 1967, at or about the time of the last magazine installment. At the March, 1964, meeting it had been agreed that book publication should not be separated in time from the final installment of the magazine serialization.

Mr. Manchester has worked on this book assiduously and conscientiously for nearly three years. As he neared finalization of the book, Mr. Thomas worked closely with him. Their objective was to produce a unique work which is also a fitting memorial to the late President. In our opinion, they have accomplished this objective.

In settling the current controversy, a few personal passages of concern to Mrs. Kennedy have been deleted or modified by mutual agreement of all parties. The changes that have been made involving a cumulative total of some 7 pages in a book of 654 pages of text that have affected neither its historical interest nor its narrative power.

In our opinion, the book as we will publish it in April based upon access to unique sources will proudly stand as a dramatic account of the fateful days from Nov. 20 to 25, 1963.

The decree which Judge Streit has issued today confirms that Harper & Row will publish William Manchester's "The Death of a President" in early April as planned and that it will be distributed by the Book-of-the-Month Club under the Harper imprint. The text of the book has been agreed upon by Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Manchester.

Manchester Statement

After lengthy discussions, Jacqueline Kennedy, Harper and I have agreed upon April publication of "The Death of a President," which I wrote at her request. In consequence, she has withdrawn her legal action, and Robert Kennedy is waiving his rights in the memorandum of understanding which I signed with him three years ago.

Out-of-court settlements are often called "compromises." In this case a more accurate description would be "a resolution of misunderstandings." Last month, a statement issued by Mrs. Kennedy's office characterized portions of "The Death of a President" as "tasteless and distorted," but that judgment was based upon isolated fragments which had been read to her by associates of the family.

I may say that she has had complete access to my entire manuscript since last March

and has been given every opportunity to read it, yet, as she declared in her affidavit to the court, at that time she had never even seen it.

An Explanation

This may sound baffling, but there is an explanation, and it is quite human. The fact is that those close to her had hoped to spare her the ordeal of a full reading. In retrospect, it seems obvious that had she done so then—had her authority not been delegated to designated representatives of the family—we all would have forgone much anguish.

However, the dilemma has now been resolved. Since filing her court action, Mrs. Kennedy has studied the full text, and I have made certain alterations at her request. Altogether, her suggestions comprised less than 1 per cent of the manuscript—that is, less than seven pages out of a 700-page book. Moreover, during the discussions just completed, additional historical material has been added.

I should like to observe that from the marginal notations on the page proofs examined by Mrs. Kennedy, it now appears quite clear she has raised no real objection to either the taste or accuracy of the original manuscript, and that she has found no distortion in my account of the events of late November, 1963.

None of the deletions which have been made during the last few weeks are political in character. Essentially, what has happened is this: Certain passages which she considered personal were pointed out to me, and I therefore struck them out. I retained all material which I considered vital to the historical record. An attorney acting on Mrs. Kennedy's instructions then initialed each page of the final text, and so did I.

Pledge Reaffirmed

I wish to reaffirm my voluntary pledge to safeguard source material which I gathered during the project. All tapes, documents, exhibits, transcriptions of my 1,000 interviews and my manuscript will be catalogued and then placed under seal for 100 years. This material will be available to no one without my written permission.

Like Jacqueline Kennedy, I am distressed by flagrant publicity. Like her, I cherish my privacy and regret the painful notoriety of the past several weeks, and I am aware that on occasion it has unjustly stung the President of the United States, who has been the victim of unauthorized, false and malicious versions of the manuscript's content.

Once more I should like to express my ardent wish that evaluation of "The Death of a President" be suspended until its publication in book form, when it can be properly judged.

This has been a perplexing affair. But it should be borne in mind that tens of millions of Americans still find it impossible to ponder the Presi-

dent's murder logically. If they are irrational, surely those who were closest to John Kennedy are entitled to the greatest sympathy and compassion.

The catastrophe was insane. It was the nightmare of our generation. One cannot always be sensible about it.