

THE HARRIS SURVEY

Jackie, Bobby Hurt Image Over the Book

By LOUIS HARRIS

One in every three Americans says he "thinks less" of Jacqueline Kennedy as a result of the controversy over William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President."

By nearly 2-1, people reject the claim that Mrs. Kennedy's right to privacy might be invaded by publication of the full account of the assassination of President Kennedy.

Sen. Robert Kennedy also lost some standing, with 20 percent saying they "think less" of him now because of the book episode. Significantly, the better-educated and more affluent are more critical of the Kennedys.

Despite the personal criticism, no more than one person in every three is prepared to believe the Kennedy family was trying to control the writing of history. People believe the matter was handled with a lack of dignity and propriety.

"She told him he could go ahead and do it and then changed her mind," a Baltimore housewife said. "That isn't right."

A professional man in Greenfield, Mass., put it this way: "Mrs. Kennedy was a pawn. She let herself be used by members of the family to further their own political careers."

A salesclerk in Georgia took Mrs. Kennedy's side: "She had enough backbone to object. She risked an unfavorable reaction, but that's more in her favor."

FOLLOWED CLOSELY

A rather high 69 percent of the public says it followed the book controversy closely. However, barely a majority of the less-well-educated and lower-income people read about the episode, compared with nearly nine out of every 10 people in the more affluent and upper-income group.

It must be concluded the controversy has had an effect on Robert Kennedy's political future. For example, among people who did not follow the disagreements and the lawsuit Mrs. Kennedy filed, Sen. Kennedy runs slightly ahead of President Johnson as the choice for the Democratic nomination in 1968. But among people who followed the controversy, an overwhelming 59 percent prefer Mr. Johnson.

The group most critical of the Kennedys is the growing body of affluent Americans.

MOST TOLERANT

While it can be argued that people in this group tend to be the most conservative and Republican-minded, nonetheless, they are also the most tolerant segment of the public on such issues as civil rights and the introduction of new ideas into politics and the national life.

QUESTION: "As a result of the controversy over the book, "The Death of a President," do you think more of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, less or has it made no difference in your attitude toward her?"

Table with 3 columns: Think More, Think Less, No Difference. Rows include Nation-wide and By Education (8th grade or less, High school, College).

In the case of Robert Kennedy, 20 percent of the public said they thought less of him for his part in the episode; 6 percent thought more of him, 74 percent said it made no difference.

However, an analysis of the preference test between Kennedy and President Johnson (reported yesterday as 56 to 44 percent in favor of L.B.J.), according to whether or not they had followed the book controversy, is revealing:

Table with 2 columns: L.B.J., R.F.K. Rows include Nation-wide and By book episode (Followed controversy, Did not follow it).

Significantly, people who either did not hear of the Kennedy-Manchester differences or did not follow them closely tend to favor Kennedy over President Johnson by almost precisely the margin Kennedy was ahead in the nation as a whole in November, 54 to 46 percent.

But those who did follow the episode veered sharply toward President Johnson as their choice by 59 to 41 percent. In fact, 77 percent of those who say they think less of the senator because of the controversy favor President Johnson.

HURT RFK

While it is true the more affluent and better informed followed the dispute, and these people have always been less favorable to Kennedy, nonetheless, the implication of these results is inescapable: The Manchester book episode has hurt Robert Kennedy.

On the key charges in the book controversy the public tends to take a position that neither the Kennedys nor Manchester was right. The public rejects the notion Mrs. Kennedy's privacy was invaded and, also, does not agree that the Kennedy family was trying to control the writing of history.

QUESTION: Was Mrs. Kennedy's Privacy Invaded?

Table with 2 columns: Was Invaded, Not Invaded. Rows include Nation-wide and By Education (8th grade or less, High school, College).

QUESTION: Were Kennedy's trying to control writing of history?

Table with 2 columns: Were Trying, Not Trying. Rows include Nation-wide and By Education (8th grade or less, High school, College).