

## 'The Restless Spirit'

THREE YEARS had elapsed since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. But as comic-critic Mort Sahl put it last month, on the third anniversary of Mr. Kennedy's death, "he is a restless spirit even now."

If so, there was ample reason for the restlessness. An outpouring of books, articles, lectures, radio and TV declamations — ranging from relatively rational to utterly reckless — had created an atmosphere of national confusion, doubt and suspicion.

A year-end Lou Harris poll indicated that only 33 percent of the American public now believed the Warren Commission's essential conclusion — that Lee Harvey Oswald had been the lone assassin.

But it was not merely that a new wave of doubt had washed up; the doubt was of a different caliber.

As emotionalism rose, and the quality of the discussion deteriorated, the assassination suddenly became a favorite topic for cocktail party conversation. And it soon ranked with flying saucers and extrasensory perception as a sub-



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ject of consistent radio call-in curiosity.

With the new doubts had also come another development — an increasing predilection for gossip and ghoulishness.

Then, at year's end, the well-known disaffection between the Johnson and the Kennedy clans was exacerbated by two literary events: publication of a parody-play "MacBird," (in which LBJ's Macbeth is unequivocally portrayed as the murderer of JFK's Duncan), and a highly publicized legal flap over the pre-publication and serialization of William Manchester's "Death of a President."

Three weeks ago, Mrs. Kennedy touched off the tumult she had sought so strenuously to avoid by announcing that she would seek an injunction to block publication of the Manchester book.

She charged that Manchester had not only broken his contract, but grossly violated her privacy, in passage after passage of personal, sob-sister sensationalism which Kennedy associates described as "horrible, nauseating and disgusting."

But then, for the next two weeks, reporters, columnists and commentators throughout the country proceeded to print and utter precisely those portions of the book that Mrs. Kennedy had found most embarrassing.

Finally, an agreement was reached between the President's widow and Look magazine, the serializer, under which many of the offensive passages (already printed) would be deleted.

But LBJ was still, according to Newsweek, hurt and unhappy over what he regarded as an unfair and inaccurate appraisal by Manchester of his behavior in the immediate aftermath of Nov. 22, 1963.