

political motivations, delayed the decision-making process. The Review Board was able to secure the LBJ Library's agreement to release the Jacqueline B. Kennedy tapes and transcripts;<sup>28</sup> obtain William Manchester's permission to allow a member of the Review Board staff to review his papers on *The Death of a President*; and secure the cooperation of the JFK Library in approaching the Kennedy family regarding the release of the sealed tapes and transcripts of Manchester's interviews with Jacqueline B. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy.

*a. William Manchester interviews.*

Most of William Manchester's work papers relating to his work on *The Death of a President* are stored at the JFK Library under a 1967 Deposit Agreement. Of particular historical value are the extensive personal interviews he conducted in the early aftermath of the President's death. In contrast to other records in the Collection that shed light on the assassination investigations, the Manchester interviews chronicle the human side of the story. Manchester envisioned that *The Death of a President* would provide "one complete, accurate account about the assassination, . . . that would be based on material gathered while the memories were still fresh."<sup>29</sup> The interviews captured and recorded the early recollections and reactions of people closest to President Kennedy and provide a lens through which the tragedy of the event can be seen and understood in the context of the times.

Beginning in early 1995, the Review Board made repeated attempts to gain access to Manchester's papers at the JFK Library. In June 1998, Manchester agreed to allow a Review Board staff member to review his material at the Library. This review revealed that, while much of the information Manchester obtained from the interviews is incorporated into his book, his raw notes would be of great value and interest to researchers.

Although Manchester recorded some of his interviews on tape, the recordings were not available at the Library. Only the written notes and/or transcripts of his interviews are in this collection. Furthermore, not all of the interviews that Manchester referenced in *The Death of a President* are accounted for in the notebooks and transcripts he deposited in

the JFK Library. Because of their unique historical value, the Review Board regards these interviews as highly relevant to the assassination. This outstanding collection of materials should be made available to the public as soon as possible. At this point, however, Manchester has refused to cooperate and it is unfortunately impossible to open the records without his consent.

The tapes and transcripts of William Manchester's interviews of Robert F. Kennedy and Jacqueline B. Kennedy are subject to a 1967 legal agreement which states that they were not to be made public for 100 years "except... on the express written consent of plaintiff [Jacqueline B. Kennedy]." With Mrs. Onassis's death, her daughter Caroline Kennedy became her representative and is the only person with authority to give consent to open this material.

The Review Board recognizes that the interviews have extraordinary historical value and so it pursued this matter with the JFK Library and with William Manchester. After evaluating whether the the court order could be lifted, the Review Board decided to approach Caroline Kennedy to discuss the possibility of having the tapes and transcripts opened at the Kennedy Library. Caroline Kennedy wrote to the Review Board in late August 1998, informing the Board of her decision *not* to release the material at this time, nor would she agree to allow one of the Review Board members to review the material to determine whether the tapes contained assassination-related material.

The Review Board was very disappointed that Caroline Kennedy declined to even allow the Review Board access to the material. The

*The public was curious, and that curiosity could not be satisfied without revealing what we had decided to omit. At the same time, some political figures described in the manuscript demanded that they be presented in glowing terms. I balked and refused to make changes that would falsify history.*  
—William Manchester, in *Death of a President*

*In my view, the Manchester interviews have an extraordinarily unique historical value and are the most important records not yet released. . . I am hopeful that you might agree to release the material before the Review Board completes its work in September so we can help manage the release in an appropriate manner.*  
—Hon. John R. Tunheim's letter to Caroline B. Kennedy

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Board hopes that she will agree to public release at a later time.

*b. Jacqueline B. Kennedy tapes at the LBJ Library.*

There are six recorded telephone conversations between Jacqueline B. Kennedy and President Johnson within the collection of presidential recordings at the LBJ Library. The Review Board has worked consistently with the LBJ Library to secure their release. The LBJ Library was concerned about donor restrictions associated with the release of these tapes. Finally, in March 1998 the LBJ Library decided to release the six conversations provided that they be opened along with the next scheduled release of President Johnson's recordings. The Review Board understands that these tapes will be released on September 18, 1998, along with the release of the August to November 1963 recordings.

## **J. CONCLUSION**

The Review Board examined a large number of records in its efforts to identify additional federal records and information related to the assassination, many of which are not detailed in this report. For every assassination record that the Review Board located and included in the JFK Collection, the staff literally reviewed hundreds of documents. The need to review every file on a document-by-document basis meant that the Review Board simply did not have time to request additional information and records on every research lead that it received. For those requests that the Review Board staff did make, the Review Board staff team leaders kept notebooks that documented the Review Board staff's efforts to locate additional records at the FBI, CIA, and Department of Defense. To the extent that the public is interested in finding information on the Review Board's additional requests, the notebooks document which records Review Board staff reviewed and which records the Review Board has designated as assassination-related.