

'Vanished'

New Knebel Novel Reflects on CIA

By JEAN KELLY

Former newspaperman Fletcher Knebel sprinkles his novels with characters Washington insiders like to get next to.

Some are top drawer politicians. Others are colorful hangers-on, instrumental in shaping everyday turns of national events.

A "golden boy" from the Truman administration who still is predominant in Washington legal circles makes the pages of Knebel's latest novel, "Vanished."

In Dallas to autograph copies of his latest work Friday the author said his central character is patterned after "a good-looking, successful lawyer."

The character is named Stephen Greer. He disappears from the swank Burning Tree Club just before a presidential election. Since he is a good friend of the man running for president, there is lots of speculation about the reasons for his leaving.

A second plot—and here the author admits his personal interest shines through—involves the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA keeps secrets from the president.

Knebel, who was in Washington 27 years as a newspaper correspondent, said his work there convinced him the CIA has too free a rein.

"It's infiltrating labor, college campuses; it tries to suppress books; it runs a minor army, and even runs an airline in the Congo."

An incident during the Kennedy administration focused Knebel's attention on the agency's supersecret reachings.

"It occurred at a party President Kennedy was giving in his home. A man was standing around, and Kennedy remarked he didn't know him. He asked around and someone remembered hearing the man say he worked for the State Department.

"It turned out he was with the CIA. The president didn't know him. And he showed up in his home!"

Knebel, the author of "Seven Days in May," also is recognized as a foe of the entrenched military establishment.

"I'm antiananything that smacks of military control," he said autographing books at Doubleday Book Store. "The militarists are forcing us into a place we don't want to be."

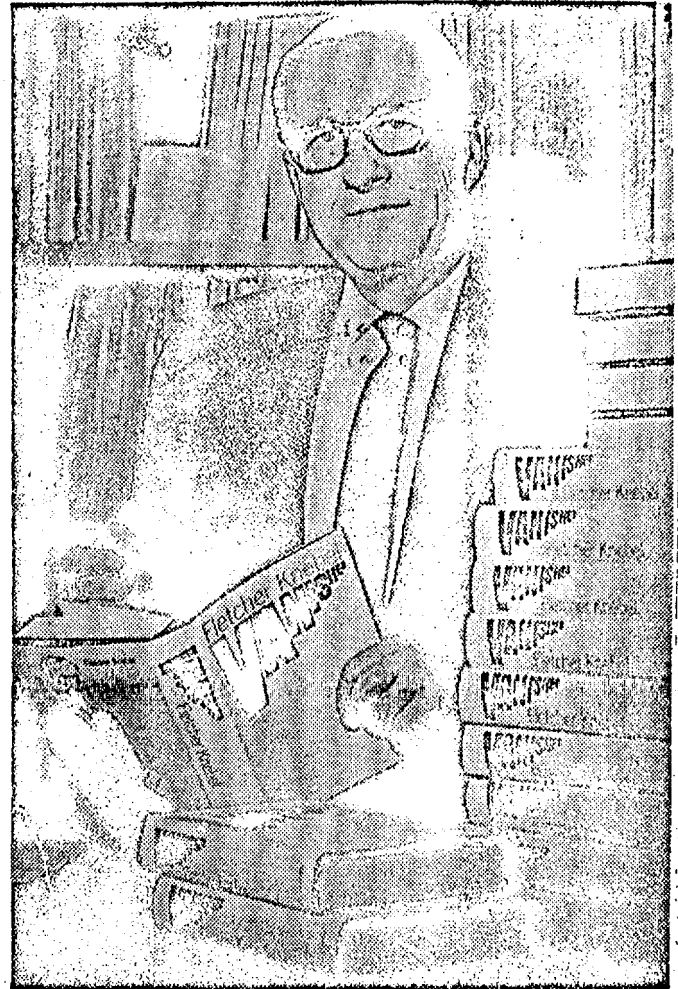
A resident of Princeton, N.J., Knebel said he turned to freelance writing and novels after "30 years of waiting in corridors for reluctant politicians."

He left Washington in 1964 after serving as a bureau man with the Cleveland Plain Dealer and writer for the Cowles publications.

Newspapering is still a favorite subject, however, and two newspapermen serve as models for a reporter in "Vanished."

Knebel said so far he hasn't gotten into trouble patterning his characters after real-life people.

Running head-on into the CIA, however, likely will prove more tricky. The author only grinned when asked if he will be as welcome in CIA offices as he was when researching his book.



—Dallas News Staff Photo by Jack Beers.

Fletcher Knebel . . . Not even the president immune from CIA.

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