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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 30, 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR JACK COURTEMANCHE

FROM: 

TOM GIBSON *TG*

SUBJECT: Book entitled First Lady

I am referring to your attention a request from Thomas L. Dunne, Executive Editor and Publisher of Thomas Dunne Books. Mr. Dunne is requesting a few words of introduction by the President for a book entitled: First Lady: A Portrait of Nancy Reagan by NBC News and Chris Wallace.

If we may be of assistance, please let us know.

Thank you.

Tom -

*This should be done by your
Office since it is the President.*

TG

6/2/86

Told Tom Gibson to TD

404565

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ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, Incorporated

175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y., 10010

Telephone: (212) 674-5151

TO: Mr. Reagan

May 27, 1986

President Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President Reagan,

As you may have heard, we will be publishing a book entitled FIRST LADY: A PORTRAIT OF NANCY REAGAN by NBC News and Chris Wallace this fall. The text of the book is based on the many hours of interviews conducted for the NBC White Paper about the First Lady which was aired last year.


The book will contain over two hundred photographs, most of them in color, presented as a large format hardcover with an estimated first printing of 100,000 copies. The First Lady's press office has been tremendously helpful in supplying us with much of the photography, and I think it is fair to say that the volume shows Mrs. Reagan in a positive light, both as a First Lady and as a person. I enclose some sample spreads to give you an idea of the flavor of the book.

I am writing in the hope that you will be able to spare a little time from your terribly busy schedule to write anything from a paragraph to a page or two for the book. The two main themes which emerge from the text are the complex and demanding responsibilities of being First Lady, and the deep and affectionate relationship you have shared for over thirty years.

If you are able to spare some moments to write a few words by way of introduction to the book, that would be wonderful. If you cannot take the time, I will of course understand. In any event, you and the First Lady will receive the first copy of the book to come off the press.

With personal best wishes for your continued success and good health.

Sincerely,



Thomas L. Dunne
Executive Editor
Publisher of Thomas
Dunne Books

P.S. Since they just came in, I also enclose a set of uncorrected galleys of the text, which you might enjoy glancing at.

THE WHITE HOUSE
CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

INCOMING

DATE RECEIVED: MAY 29, 1986

NAME OF CORRESPONDENT: MR. THOMAS L. DUNNE

SUBJECT: REQUESTS A WRITTEN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK
ENTITLED, "FIRST LADY: A PORTRAIT OF NANCY
REAGAN" BY NBC NEWS AND CHRIS WALLACE AND
ENCLOSES SOME SAMPLE SPREADS

ROUTE TO: OFFICE/AGENCY	(STAFF NAME)	ACTION		DISPOSITION	
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LETTER AT ALL TIMES AND SEND COMPLETED RECORD TO RECORDS
MANAGEMENT.

It was a White House correspondent's nightmare come true. The President of the United States was standing three feet up the hill, beckoning me to come with him. Normally, that would be a rare opportunity, not a problem. But a problem it was, because at that moment, the First Lady of the United States was standing three feet down the hill, asking me to join her. It was a moment worthy of Talleyrand-- and I hope I did not shame him. Addressing the First Couple of the United States, standing uneasily between them, I said, "If you think I'm going to choose, you're crazy. You two work it out."

The occasion was a fine spring day in April, 1985 at Rancho del Cielo, the Reagan ranch in the Santa Ynez mountains of California. I was there along with a producer, two camera crews, a light man, and a unit manager, shooting an NBC News documentary on Mrs. Reagan. It was supposed to be an opportunity to see the First Lady in an informal setting-- what her life was like away from the White House, the designer dresses, and the fancy receptions. But I had gotten more informality than I bargained for. And in the four months I spent with Nancy Reagan, for the documentary-- it was one of the several key incidents that told me alot about her.

We had a good day at the ranch, shooting pictures of the First Couple riding, her serving him lunch ("Just like usual," he said to her with a wink"), and driving in a pick-up truck.

Now it was time to do an extensive interview with Mrs. Reagan on her personal life. While she ducked into the ranch house to get ready, the President started talking about an outhouse he had put on the hill next to his home to store his tools.

"Come see it," he said, and we headed up the hill, just as Mrs. Reagan walked out of the house and asked where we were going.

"I want to take Chris up to the outhouse," the President said.

"But the camera crew is ready. You're holding up everything." Mrs. Reagan replied, "the worshipful gaze she focuses on her husband in public nowhere to be seen.

That was when I bowed out-- wanting no part of this First Family Feud. But Mr. Reagan stood tall, "It will only take a moment."

"But everything's ready," Mrs. Reagan said with some exasperation. And then, "All right, but don't spend too long there."

It may not be Eugene O'Neil, but there was a clear sub-text to this family spat; Ronnie, I've spent 20 years standing in the background, having TV crews push me out of the way to cover you. Now, for once, a reporter is here to talk to me. The cameras are here to take my picture. Please, darling, don't muck it up.

The idea for a documentary on Nancy Reagan came out of a dinner I had in January, 1985 with NBC News president Larry

Grossman. We started talking about how Mrs. Reagan had grown in the job-- from a very rough start when she was severely criticized for spending too much time on clothes and china-- to a point where she was widely praised for her campaign against drug abuse. Her husband had just won 49 states in his re-election effort, but some polls showed that the Reagan with the highest approval rating was named Nancy.

It seemed to us there was an interesting story here-- or rather, several interesting stories: how Nancy Reagan had turned around her image; whether there was a real change in the woman or just clever public relations; whether she was actually the behind-the-scenes influence on policy that had long been rumored; how to understand this loving wife who had such stormy relations with her children.

NBC News spent the next four months covering those stories. We took our cameras to places the Reagans had never before allowed them: a weekend at Camp David; sending the President off from the White House family quarters to make a major speech. We accompanied Mrs. Reagan to the Vatican where she discussed her anti-drug campaign with Pope John Paul. Most important, we talked to the people who know Mrs. Reagan best-- to her family (except for her daughter Patti, who refused), to friends, and top Reagan staffers. By far the greatest insights, though, came in several extensive conversations with Nancy Reagan herself, in which she talked more frankly than she ever had before about her personal life, her political clout, and her growing willingness to "go public" about her role. We ended up with the first prime-time documentary on a First Lady-- not a tour of the White House, but a serious

examination of her role and views.

This book is the fruit of those interviews: not a formal biography, but rather an oral history of Mrs. Reagan taken from twenty-eight perspectives-- a portrait of the First Lady by the people who know her best. Right here, I want to recognize the work of Executive Producer Robert Rogers and Producers Paula Mashore and Rhonda Schwartz. They did several of the interviews and came up with most of the ideas.

As a political reporter, what interested me most in this project was how to find out if Mrs. Reagan was as powerful as people said she was. The answer was: even more powerful.

I had heard that she regularly called a few top Presidential aides to discuss politics or her husband's schedule. But as I talked to people in the White House, I discovered that the network was much wider and far more important. I learned that Mrs. Reagan called the Personnel Office to suggest appointments--that she spoke to campaign officials to discuss the nuts and bolts of the re-election effort. Most important, top aides told me--and Mrs. Reagan later confirmed--that she played a key role during the 1984 campaign in turning around the President's policy toward the Soviets--ending the hardline rhetoric and sending out feelers for negotiations--in no small part to blunt Democratic charges that Mr. Reagan might get the country into a war. The First Lady generally sided with moderates over hard-line conservatives--more interested in seeing her husband win than in ideology.

I also found that most people around Mrs. Reagan were

afraid of her. I reduced one top official to stuttering simply by asking, "Are you a little scared of her?" The people who felt confident of their relationship with her were the most honest. Campaign strategist Stuart Spencer talked about what a tough enemy she could be--that after he backed Gerald Ford against Reagan in 1976, she treated him as a "leper," refusing to talk to him for years. Son Ron said, "She can be a handful. I mean, she's not always the easiest person to get along with....I don't think I'd want her to be my boss."

In talking to people about the First Lady, one word kept coming up again and again: when she wants something, Nancy Reagan is "relentless." I was to learn that first-hand. During the work on our documentary, Mrs. Reagan was a total pro. She gave us surprising access to her daily life and never applied any pressure as to what we would say. But there was one exception: she wanted Frank Sinatra on the program.

We had been following her for several weeks when Mrs. Reagan suddenly asked if I was going to interview Sinatra. I was a little surprised--I didn't think of Sinatra as a close friend of hers, and I wouldn't have thought she would suggest him, with his alleged link to the Mob, as a character witness. But she said that they had talked, and he was willing to do it. Every few weeks after that, she would call--or have an aide call--to ask how we were doing with Sinatra. The conclusion I came to was that Mrs. Reagan had never quite gotten over her girlhood crush on Sinatra, and if a documentary was being done on her life, she wanted Frank in it.

The problem was that President Reagan and Pope John Paul were far more cooperative than Sinatra was. We talked to lawyers, agents, and secretaries and each had a demand: there could be no editing of Mr. Sinatra's interview; we had to submit the questions in advance to Mr. Sinatra; Mr. Sinatra would consent to an interview in his Las Vegas dressing room on a certain night. And, as I say, every few weeks I'd get a call from Mrs. Reagan or an assistant asking how the interview was coming.

By this point, we had shot the rest of the documentary and decided to tell Mr. Sinatra thanks, but no thanks. But I then had the unpleasant duty of informing Mrs. Reagan. It is remarkable how quiet the other end of a phone line can get.

But before you try to pigeonhole Mrs. Reagan, let me confuse you. Because the First Lady is also one of the most vulnerable, warmest, funniest people I have ever met. Doug Wick, the son of close Reagan friend Charles Wick, described her as "one of the greatest lunch dates in America." I know what he meant.

We went with Mrs. Reagan to Arizona one day to see her ailing, 88-year-old mother. I was riding on an Air Force DC-9 with her--and we ended up spending the entire four-hour flight together chatting. There are not many members of your own family with whom you would want to spend that length of time. With Mrs. Reagan, it was easy.

First of all, unlike most public figures, she does not talk just about herself. She asks what's on your mind, and, even more unusual, remembers the next time. She's interested in everything--Washington gossip, the latest movies, how your kids are doing. And she has a remarkable ability to fasten her big, doe-like eyes on you--and make you feel very important.

Mrs. Reagan also projects a vulnerability that is appealing and genuine. She may be a woman who has talked with Emperors and dined in palaces--but there is still a lot of little Nancy Davis in her. Mrs. Reagan did not have a storybook childhood. Her father left the family when she was a baby, and her mother--who was an actress--left soon after. Nancy was brought up by an aunt and uncle. She remembers visiting her father once and, after they got into an argument about her mother, being locked in the bathroom. Finally, when Nancy was seven, her mother married a wealthy Chicago surgeon, Loyal Davis, and reclaimed her.

Perhaps as a result, there is a sense of frailty just beneath Mrs. Reagan's glittery surface. During a long interview at the California ranch, she began to cry as she talked about the death of Dr. Davis in 1982 and about how much she missed him.

But possibly even more poignant were her comments about relations between mothers and children. Mrs. Reagan calls her mother everyday, no matter what she is doing or where in the world she is. "It's always been difficult for me to understand how children could turn against their mother or

be separated from their mother," she said. "For all those others who had their mothers, I wanted to say to them, 'You're so lucky...you've had all those wonderful years that I never had.'"

It is one of those strange contradictions in life that Mrs. Reagan has often had strained relations with her own children. Son Ron had an explanation, saying Mrs. Reagan's childhood has "given her the desire for a close family and a family structure that's idealized in a certain way and one that no family can really live up to."

The most interesting development we found during the time we spent with Mrs. Reagan, however, was that after years of playing "Wife of...." she was finally ready to step forward and let people understand her true role in the Reagan phenomenon. I can't overstate what a big change this was for her.

I had interviewed Mrs. Reagan in March of 1981, shortly after she became First Lady. She was the ultimate politician's wife--saying the kinds of things that had long set feminists' teeth to gnashing. Her life "began," she said, when she "met Ronnie." How would she balance her role as wife with her new responsibilities as First Lady? No question--she said--the role of wife, of making Ronnie comfortable, would always come first--and, in fact, was the most important part of being First Lady.

The woman I interviewed in 1985 still did not meet Betty Friedan's standards--but she had a very different sense of

herself. She was proud of what she had accomplished in her campaign against drug abuse. And, for the first time, she wanted people to know she was a key part of her husband's success.

Mrs. Reagan's interest in drug abuse is revealing, because I believe it started out largely as a public relations effort. Mrs. Reagan had long had a vague interest in the drug issue--along with the Foster Grandparents program and other good works. But in late 1981, when the "Queen Nancy" controversy was reaching its height, Presidential pollster Richard Wirthlin and Reagan strategist Michael Deaver decided to try to dispel that image with a big push against drugs.

The First Lady was soon touring the country, hugging kids who had beaten drug addiction and urging parents to get involved. And in the course of this campaign, several interesting things happened. First, Mrs. Reagan saw that she could have an impact. Mike Deaver told me she realized "that she is in a position for the first time in her life to be more than just Mrs. Ronald Reagan--that she can do something with her life independently which can make a change for the good."

In addition, the anti-drug effort was a big success--and part of Mrs. Reagan seemed to blossom with the applause. During the making of the documentary, I asked the First Lady if she had become more self-confident. "Yes," she said, "because I think, maybe, more people like me. And if I think people like me, I'm better."

There was a dramatic illustration of that when Mrs. Reagan went to the Vatican to discuss her anti-drug campaign with Pope

John Paul. She had met the Pope before, but always as the wife of the President. This time, she was meeting him in her own right to talk about her own project. Her aides pointed out that she wore a business suit-- instead of a long dress and veil-- because she was there on business. And after her Papal audience, she was glowing with excitement. "It was," she said, "one of the most moving, wonderful experiences I've ever had. I've met him twice before, but this was the first time alone." By alone, what she ment was: without her husband.

I don't mean to overstate here, because Mrs. Reagan is still a traditional wife-- devoted to her husband, fiercely protective of his interests, and clearly willing to take a supporting role. It's just that she now realizes there's plenty of spotlight left for her.

Whenever Mrs. Reagan had been asked before about her White House clout, her answer, in effect, was "Who me?" But after I had gotten a number of top advisers to talk--on camera-- about what an important player she was, I decided to try to get her to come clean.

Just beofre a long interview in the White House family quarters, I took Mrs. Reagan aside. "We have all these people calling you a tough, savvy politician," I said. "If you get on T.V. and giggle, you're going to look a little silly." But I don't think the pep talk was necessary, because it was soon evident that the First Lady had come to the same conclusion.

"I think I'm aware of people who are trying to take advantage of my husband," she said. "All of my little antennas go up." What happened when she saw that? "I try to stop it."

Mrs. Reagan then told me how she wanted to cut the deadwood out of the Cabinet after the 1984 election. (She doesn't win them all. The President asked the entire Cabinet to stay on.) As I said earlier, she acknowledged playing a key role in the turnaround in Administration policy toward preparations for Mr. Reagan's first debate with Walter Mondale, in which he gave a fumbling performance. Were any changes made? "Well," she said with a broad smile, "the second debate was better, wasn't it?"

Mrs. Reagan will never satisfy the feminists-- but, in a sense, she has been liberated during her years in the White House-- liberated by her new popularity and the confidence that has generated-- liberated

by her greater awareness of the platform she enjoys-- liberated by the simple fact that she'll never have to face another election.

And so, as the Reagan years play out, we will have to assess not only the President's place in history, but also Mrs. Reagan's. What will her place be? My guess is that she won't be loved--or hated-- as Eleanor Roosevelt was. Her public persona is too reserved, too dispassionate for that. She won't be idolized as Jacqueline Kennedy was. We're no longer that innocent. My guess is that she will be respected-- as a very good wife working hard at the many aspects of a demanding job. And, as the years pass, my guess is that we will be surprised to learn how much influence she had on key decisions.

During one of our conversations, I asked Mrs. Reagan whether she felt she had grown in her time as First Lady. "I don't know how you could help but grow," she said. "I mean, in a way, even the negative things that all happened in the beginning were probably part of a growth process." And then we had this exchange:

Question: How do you explain the fact that people seem to like and be impressed with Nancy Reagan now?

Answer: I hope they like me. But I think it's been a process of getting to know me. And that took a long time.

It did take a long time-- for all of us-- and for Mrs. Reagan herself.

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First Lady

First Lady

*A Portrait of
Nancy Reagan*

by NBC News and White
House Correspondent
Chris Wallace

St. Martin's Press
New York

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1

Before the White House

NANCY REAGAN

*W*hen I was four, my mother left me in Bethesda, Maryland, and went off touring. She had to. She had to earn a living and she couldn't take me touring all over the country with her. When she would get a play that ran for a while in New York, then I'd go to New York and be with her. But the times in Bethesda with my aunt and uncle and my cousin Charlotte were very happy times. I have pictures of us on the Fourth of July with Ginger, our wirehaired terrier, and a bike all decorated for the Fourth. Charlotte and I put Fourth of July costumes on, and it was happy—except that I missed my mother.

It was a real ache. My aunt and uncle were nice, but your mother is your mother, and nobody can fill that spot. It was hard on me and it was hard on her.

I went to New York once on one of those occasions when I could visit her and stay with her. She was in a play. I've forgotten what it was. But it was a play in which they were very mean to her—oh, they were awful to her. And I got so upset that, sitting up there in a box, watching, I began to cry. I guess I created quite a commotion. Then, when I went backstage, I wouldn't talk to anybody because they'd been mean to my mother. And Mother had to finally take me aside and say, "Nancy, it's just make-believe. They're really nice. That was all just make-believe. They don't really feel that way about me."

Another time I visited my real father and he locked me in a bathroom. I'm sure that afterwards he felt badly about, well, lots of things that had happened. I was always reluctant to talk about it when he was alive because there was no point in hurting him. But this was a visit, and I remember something had been said about my mother that I didn't like. We got into an argument and I was locked in the bathroom. Ever since then I can't stand a locked door.

My stepmother, his wife, was a nice woman, and she came and got me out. But when we were first married, I remember my husband was going to lock a door and I wouldn't let him—he never knew this story. I said, "No, please, I don't want the door locked." And he couldn't understand why, and then I told him the story.

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It wasn't all marvelous for a little girl. But there were nice times, too. My aunt and uncle were darling people, and so was my cousin. But I didn't have my mother.

When finally we were together, maybe I appreciated it more than if that hadn't happened to me. And it's always been difficult for me to understand how children could turn against their mother or be separated from their mother voluntarily. I never could understand that, particularly during the sixties when all the turmoil and so on between parents and children began. I had a hard time understanding that. For all those others who had their mothers, I wanted to say to them, "You're so lucky, you're just so lucky, you've had all those wonderful years that I never had!"

When my mother met Loyal Davis and brought me to Chicago, it was like the happy ending to a fairy tale. She came to Bethesda to tell me that she'd met this wonderful man and she wanted to marry him, but she wouldn't marry him unless it was all right with me. And I often think, What in the world would have happened if I had said no? I think she would have gotten around it somehow, but I said yes, of course, and we went to Chicago. And I really couldn't have asked for a more wonderful father. He was a hard act to follow, but I think, with my husband, I followed it pretty well.

I graduated from college at a time when a lot of Smith graduates were getting married. I had people say to me afterwards, "You know, the rest of us stayed back there in Chicago and got married and had children and settled down. And you didn't—you went off to New York and Hollywood and to making movies and doing plays"

I hadn't found a man I wanted to marry. And I couldn't sit in Chicago and do nothing. I stayed with Mother until my father went overseas, and I stayed on with Mother for almost a year. And then, when he came back, I left Chicago. I hadn't found the right guy. So you do something, and acting was the only thing I knew. I mean, I'd been raised around it. Whatever you do, you want to do it as well as you can and accomplish as much as you can. That was inside me.

I liked acting. Not enough to keep on after I was married, but I liked it. It was fun and I met some great people. I met my husband that way.

I think I was pretty good. The first movie that really kicked it off was *The Next Voice You Hear*. I was sent to New York for a promotion tour. I remember going to Radio City and taking a picture of the marquee with my name up on it, and, oh, I was impressed. But I think my favorite picture was one with Ray Milland and Johnny Hodiak, *Night Into Morning*. I liked that picture the best.

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There wasn't any big decision I had to make after I knew I was going to be married. For me, the real fulfillment came with marriage, a home, and children of my own. That was completing the whole thing for me. And I had the best of two worlds. I'd had a career that I was happy in and fairly successful in, and I had the marriage. I can't say to somebody else, "You should do it my way." I know what made me happy, and when I say, my life began then, that's what I thought. Maybe that's not true for somebody else but it was for me.

DR. RICHARD DAVIS

Our childhood together dates back to the thirties and forties, when we were growing up in Chicago. We were particularly blessed with two splendid parents who were devoted to one another and to us. We had a very stable home and the opportunity for an education. And we had some wonderful young friends.

My first memory of Nancy was probably when she was in the third or fourth grade. In those days, she wore a school uniform: a tunic, knee socks, and a beret. At the beginning of the school year, my father and I would walk her to the corner of the drive and get her off to school. She had a bouncy gait, was very vivacious, and was a happy child. She would speak to everyone on the way. With each step, this tunic, which was too short, would sort of pop up in the air and we'd see her bloomers. Father would say, "Richard, Nancy has on those dreadful midnight blue bloomers, doesn't she?" And I would dutifully agree. And then he'd say, with a big, broad smile, "Isn't she just the most wonderful child?"

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We played some outrageous games. We had one called "Help, Murder, Police!" This was a very precarious game. We'd both get on the highest piece of furniture and then jump on a sliding stool. And this went on and was very carefully timed for Dad's return home. By that time, we were totally exhausted, feigned broken arms and legs, and, of course, the great surgeon had to heal us. Then we went on with the evening's activities.

I have some of the most pleasant memories of the summers. We spend two summers with Mother and Dad as guests of Walter Huston and his wife in the San Bernadino Mountains. The days were filled with a lot of outdoor activity—hiking, riding, swimming, tennis. Of course, those were pre-television days, so we all entertained one another at night. Each of us read aloud from a novel during the six weeks—or sometimes poetry, Shakespeare. My father invariably put us all to sleep, and then Walter Huston would say, "Well, that's all right, Loyal. I hope you're a better neurosurgeon than an actor." There were many, many happy times during those summers.

One summer, we wrote, directed, and actually photographed our own little play. Nancy played opposite the great Walter Huston. She had a bathing suit on and was wrapped in a very elaborate sheet. At one point, he said, "Nancy, you're doing this far too demurely. Be more wicked and evil." And Nancy looked at me. I was photographing all this with a home movie camera. Neither one of us knew what demure meant. We found out later on. But I think if she ever made what we call today a career decision about drama and the theater, it was probably back in those really very terribly happy days in the thirties.

She really adored Dr. Loyal, her new father, so to speak. There was a great relationship between the two of them even when she was small, which she carried on all through her adult life. They were extremely close. The family, the whole concept of the family, and the camaraderie, the laughter, the enjoyment of one another, has been extremely important to her—as a youngster and throughout her adult life.

Dad was an extraordinarily devoted person, to his wife and to both of us. He was a rock-hard disciplinarian. When he asked either one of us to do something, we always did it to the best of our ability and we did it promptly. He was extremely fair. He was never unreasonable. But he thought basically that children with privilege should have responsibility. And we were reminded, not constantly, but often enough, that we had the responsibility to be excellent and to strive, to meet the challenges, in anything we did.

He was the key figure in Nancy's life. There's no question about that. She was very open with Dad. The day's activities centered around the dinner table. Some of the topics that Nancy brought up as a youngster and as a teenager were really quite extraordinary. It wasn't that infrequently that we discussed the soul. She asked him one night, I remember, what he thought happiness was. He said, "Nancy, the answer to happiness is almost twenty-five hundred years old and it's basically what the Greeks said. It's the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of one's life." That's a very serious and heavy answer, and I'm sure in hindsight Nancy and I would have a few things to add to that today. But she was always very open with him. She sought his advice, and once she got it, she followed it. She was extremely respectful and courteous, and extremely pleasant, not only with her peers but with older people.

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We were disciplined. A principle was expounded and then the reasons for following that principle were explained. Dad never raised his voice with Nancy. He did with me occasionally.

We were very close, particularly in the summertime. Our educations were rather staggered. Sometimes I was home and she was away, but we were always together at Christmas and holidays.

Nancy was not at all politically minded. I think she became politically aware when she met the President in the early fifties in California. We discussed all sorts of political issues at home, but I don't think Nancy was that deeply concerned about politics. Her love was the theater.

I think there's an element of truth in the talk that Dad was a sounding board at the time the President was turning from Democrat to Republican. He was a good listener and he also gave the two of them advice. Perhaps he helped move the President off center in the sixties when he decided to enter politics. I think ultimately Dad was a really pivotal person in the whole mechanism of decision making. She probably followed the same line of thinking that her father did, which was not really along liberal lines.

One night, during a Christmas vacation, she came home from college and said, "Dad, I really have a heavy problem for the holidays. I have to learn all these sonnets by Keats and Shelley." Dad looked at her. The problem was attacked directly, met head on. She was sent upstairs for her English literature book and brought it downstairs, and the four of us learned parts of these sonnets. He was very pleased with this pursuit of excellence. I turned around and there was Edith, an actress, of course, and she had gotten up from the dinner table and was doing a little soft-shoe number and dancing and had thought up a little rhyme about Mr. Sheets and Mr. Kelly. This was the lighthearted side of our home life, and it was a good counterbalance between a very serious and intent father and a mother who had a really wonderful sense of humor.

2

The Real Nancy

NANCY REAGAN

I'm not going to be like anybody else. I'm going to be Nancy Reagan. I don't think I'm any different than I've always been. But anybody who doesn't grow in this position has got to be pretty dumb. I certainly hope I've grown. I think I have. I don't know how you could help but grow. You're exposed to so many different things, so many different people, so many different experiences. In a way, even the negative things that all happened in the beginning were probably part of a growth process. It widens your whole life, your horizons.

I'm more self-confident, I think, because, maybe, more people like me. If I think people like me, I'm better.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY

*T*here's a difference between self-confidence and being assertive. I think that Nancy Reagan has always intentionally cultivated two roles—one public and the other private. In private surroundings, she will let her opinion be known. In public situations, she is deferential, not in the sense that she feels women should be subordinate in public circumstances, but because she feels that it's her husband who has been elected. They're two personalities there.

She's a wonderful friend. She will really struggle to do you a kindness or help you in anything that you want. I make it a point not to ask powerful people for favors, but if I thought that without upsetting public policy she could be helpful, I would simply ask her. I don't doubt for a moment that she would go out of her way to be obliging.

I recently saw her having dinner with my wife after an operation, in my wife's bedroom. That kind of thing isn't done because of a lack of concern.

Everything interests her; peeves, among other things. And there's a lot of just chat which I sometimes simply come upon walking into a room and hearing conversations at my wife's end of the phone. So there's a lot of what I would call relaxed badiuage.

She doesn't like anybody to criticize her husband. I think she feels that in the case of certain people, there's a sort of transcendent bond that allows certain liberties. George Will, for instance, was at the White House when we were watching *King Lear* with Laurence Olivier. That morning he'd written a very tough "anti-Reagan" piece. Still, the relationship was very civil. On the other hand, there's probably an interfaceable part of her memory that clocks these little things. I wouldn't be surprised, because she is the type. My wife is the same way.

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Biologists tell you that every seven years we become completely renovated biological animals, and it is a continuing subject of scientific inquiry, the extent to which this biological change, the life and death of individual cells, affects your mind. I'm certain that if I were a clinical psychologist and I spent ten hours with her twenty years ago and ten hours with her tomorrow, I'd say there's been a change. But it's true of everyone. I don't see any change in her that reflects the fact she's the First Lady. The changes that I detect would be the changes that you would normally detect in a woman who was twenty years older than she was back then.

The reason she looks adoringly at her husband is because she adores him. The reason she is dressed chicly is because she dresses chicly. The reason for her rather delicate mannerisms is that that's the way she is. Whether she's at a ball or dressed in pajamas for breakfast in a beach house. That's just simply the ways she is.

MICHAEL REAGAN

I think it's true that Nancy Reagan has grown in confidence and has come out more and become more assertive and happier, to an extent. I think the first term for everybody is rough. You're learning so much. Just learning to get around the White House in the first four years is tough enough. The only place she hasn't grown made my wife jealous. When she went into the White House, she was a size 6. She's now a size 4. And everybody wants her dresses.

I think it hurts Nancy to read negative things about herself or about anybody in the family, because sometimes they don't understand the whole story or the whole drift of what was going on, and so they're writing stories or saying things on television, not knowing all the facts.

I've talked to Dad about the same situation when I've picked up the paper and read something about myself. I'll just call Dad and say, "How can they say this?" Dad says, "Just don't worry about it. Let it roll off your back." She is thin-skinned, I think. She absorbs all that. Maybe it rolls off Dad's back; she's there and picks it up with a wheelbarrow.

She's a one-man woman. She lives, eats, and breathes for Ronald Reagan. And she is probably one of the most caring people in the world. She truly cares about family and home life. I think people misinterpret that sometimes as a coldness and it really isn't. She's just more caring than people realize. It's too bad some don't realize it as much as they should.

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BONITA GRANVILLE WRATHER

I think Nancy is a very special human being. And I think she was badly maligned in the early days in the White House by the press. They didn't know or didn't understand her. One thing that's always amazed me is that nobody has ever realized what a fantastic sense of humor she has. Her husband has one, too, of course, but people don't recognize that about Nancy.

I don't believe the media were willing to give her a chance in the beginning; though I think they are now. People realize that she is a very warm, sympathetic human being. I don't think people give her credit for how really intelligent she is, and always has been.

Nancy's anything but frivolous. She's very level-headed, she's very sincere, she's very down to earth, and why she seemed frivolous I don't know. Again, I'm going to blame it on the media. That very first year in the White House was a pretty dreadful one. Not only the loss of her father, Loyal Davis, but that terrible attempted assassination. Her grief was private when her husband was hovering between life and death. Her grief was private when her father died. But once her husband recovered and they started going out, every time they stepped out of a car, every time they walked out of a door into the open, imagine the fear of being shot at. That would inhibit anyone. That first year was a very, very difficult one. It would have been for anyone.

I think everyone is hurt by criticism, especially if it's unfair. She's a very vulnerable lady and she's very sensitive. She responds to constructive criticism very well, but the unfair criticism hurt her terribly. I just hope now that she's toughened up enough to let unfair criticism roll off her back.

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C.Z. WICK

Nancy Reagan has a terrific sense of humor, a terrific sense of style, is very giving, and is very tuned in to the world around her. She's willing to try new things, hear about new things. Above all, Nancy is interested in people, and fun to be with.

I think that the conservative characterizations of Nancy Reagan have missed the point of the person. She's a very curious person. She's a very open and interesting person, and not one to ignore the world around her. The single most fun thing that characterizes any family gathering of our families, or just hanging out with her, is humor. She loves to laugh. She has a very quick sense of humor, and practical jokes and on-going family jokes are part of our relationship.

RON REAGAN

She's old-fashioned in some ways. She didn't grow up in the sixties or anything. She's from another era. She does think that it's better for my father to be out front alone. She's more comfortable that way. She's not as comfortable in the limelight as she is in the wings.

I guess she's a very sensitive person. She's a very private person and I think that's one reason why this has all been a little tough for her. She guards her privacy jealously, and doesn't like intrusions into that privacy. When they happen, her thin skin makes her react. It hurts her.

She can be a handful. I mean, she's not always the easiest person to get along with. I guess it's because of that sensitivity. She's a bit of a perfectionist. I don't think I'd want her to be my boss. I would guess she could be demanding as a boss because of that perfectionism.

She's an incredible phone person. She's always on the phone, ever since I was this big. We had to get more lines put in at home, to satisfy her.

Out at the ranch, Mom doesn't get up at daybreak and go bareback riding through the woods. She doesn't man the tractor or anything. She doesn't do the chainsaw, but she gets out there and neatens up the woods and stuff. I've seen her walk through woods and there'll be dead twigs hanging and she'll get up there and pull these off and kind of get the whole place so it's neat. She's not a big rider or a big outdoors person, not an athlete or anything like that, but she can't help but enjoy the ranch because my dad enjoys it so much and she derives a lot of pleasure from his enjoyment.

MAUREEN REAGAN

She's exactly the same person she was the day she walked into that White House. We all grow, but inside ourselves. The things that we care about, our families and our friends and who we know and what we are, that doesn't change. I have been very upset at the idea that there is this new Nancy Reagan. It's not a new Nancy Reagan. A more confident Nancy Reagan. A more eloquent Nancy Reagan. But, gosh, I hope we're all more confident and more eloquent as years go by.

She's got this closet in the White House, and none of us are ever allowed to see it. She squirrels things away in this closet. Later, things come out of it. When my husband moved to Sacramento, she said, "Does he need a coffee maker?" I said, "Well, yeah, I think so." Rummage, rummage, rummage. We heard this sound, and all of a sudden, out comes a coffee maker.

Nancy Reagan was a career woman. She had a very good career in the motion-picture industry, and she got married. After she was married, she was offered one of the choice television roles of all time and turned it down, saying, "No, I want to raise a family, and I, personally, cannot do both. I know this about myself, and I don't want to take the chance of not being good at either by trying to do two things that I don't think I can put together." Her husband did not encourage her to leave her profession. It was her choice to make. In fact, he was really quite surprised.

DOUG WICK

I've known Nancy Reagan since I was a kid. She's an old family friend. I went to grammar school with her kids. I think she's one of the great lunch dates in America. She's warm, smart, funny, a good friend. Needless to say, I like her.

She's an unusual combination of smarts—interesting, and a good listener. A lot of times people who have much to offer in one camp don't necessarily have a foot in the other, and she can do both. She's one of those rare people who, if you see her in a large group of people, when you speak to her, no matter where you are or who the group is, her eyes never leave your face. Her trick is that she also has that kind of antenna so she knows everything else that's going on in the room while she's talking to you; but she never does that kind of thing where you notice someone's eyes going over your shoulder to see who else is coming in.

I don't think she's comfortable being the center of attention. She's someone who's more of a watcher, a person who's a little bit more comfortable on the sidelines, observing. She seems to have very little interest about wanting to have everyone look at her.

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The First Lady is an extremely complicated woman. When her husband first got into office, I don't think people really understood her. She's very shy, and that was misunderstood as maybe not caring or being aloof. As time has gone on, people have gotten to know her and understand her much better. In a funny way, because of the assassination attempt on her husband, they realized what a caring, deep, feeling person she is.

She's got unfailing instincts about people, and she's someone you can sit at a party with and she'll know everything that's going on in that room, including the kitchen. She can read someone from across the room. She knows who likes them, and who's trying to work some scam on one side or some scam on the other. In that way, I know the President trusts her judgment enormously.

I was working on the movie *Sophie's Choice*, and part of my job was to look for a Sophie—a blond Polish woman, a tragic figure. I thought Mrs. Reagan would be a good candidate, so I called her and asked her if she was interested, and she said it sounded like a pretty good job, but she had this whole other thing in Washington, and she'd have to see how she liked it. So, I bumped into her at the inauguration, and she came sweeping through with a giant entourage and I was in the crowd somewhere and she happened to catch my eye. She yelled across the room, "Keep Sophie on the back burner."

NANCY REYNOLDS

She was wounded by the early press criticism. It made her feel as if she was a sitting duck. Stories were filled with absolute lies in many cases, very prejudicial, skewed stories. I recall the reporters extremely well. I remember some of them, who today are famous authors writing scathing accounts of their interviews of Nancy Reagan. She was totally bewildered, very deeply hurt. She herself feels that she was pleasant and being honest and had invited them into her home. Some would then come out with something that was just so totally off the wall. She was wary and it was not always easy to get her to do interviews. I think if you'd been slapped or stung a few times, you'd say, "Hey, I don't need this."

She's very funny. It's something that she shows privately to her friends and family. She's witty, very sensitive, very current on cultural things as well as on public affairs. She watches all the news broadcasts. She's well read. But she basically thinks of herself as a private person. Her loyalty is legendary. A few weeks after Ronald Reagan became governor, she was on an airplane going to Los Angeles, as she did every weekend, and she was sitting in the front seat and behind her were two men discussing Ronald Reagan's budget. They were criticizing the governor very loudly and you could see the steam beginning to build. Before you know it, she pushed her button and the seat slipped back and she turned around and said, "That's my husband you're talking about, and every bit of the information that you two are exchanging is wrong and incorrect. I would like the chance to correct you." Those two men were so stunned, they just sank about five inches in their seats. Their faces turned red and that was the last we heard from them.

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If people ask her if she feels strongly about something, she certainly expresses herself. I've heard her many times disagree with the President and others. It's like everything else—you win some and you lose some. And she's done both.

It's true that sometimes, as a governor's wife, she would sit in the bathtub and rant and rave at people in private. Those of us who were on the staff could always tell when she'd had a bad day, because she would be in the bathtub having wonderful conversations saying things to people who she felt had been cool and unfair and really mean-spirited to her or to her husband or to her family. And it was one of the ways she blew off steam.

SHEILA TATE

She doesn't like surprises. No one would like to read in the paper that they felt this way or that way about something when they hadn't been consulted about how they really did feel.

She's a perfectionist. If you have failed to provide all the necessary information, then she's not going to feel secure about the event or the interview of whatever she's doing, so she will ask for more information.

I don't think it's a fair criticism that she demands when she should ask. I think that's from people who are unfamiliar with her way of doing things. Perhaps once they got a call and were so flustered that they stuttered and stammered.

Some say she gets along better with men than with women. She never ignored me. She certainly had close men friends, but I think she's interested in everybody.

LYN NOFZIGER

Everybody wants to leave his or her own mark, but I believe she sees what she's doing really as a way of assisting the President, of building with him. We all have our own egos. But I don't think she's ever set out to have people compare her to him, or anything like that.

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MICHAEL DEAVER

She's one of the most special people that I've ever known in the world. She's smart, she's strong, and very intense. She has a side to her that very few people know about. And that is this very strong personal loyalty to people who've been good to her, regardless of who they are.

I remember when my wife Carolyn's father died suddenly. We'd only been here three months. She called me on the phone and said, "Why don't you bring the kids up to Camp David for the weekend?" We got to Camp David, and she took those two kids of mine who had just lost their grandfather and made life wonderful for a weekend for them. She took them bowling, for hot dogs, bicycle riding, whatever they wanted to do. That's the side of Nancy Reagan nobody knows about. In California, during the Vietnam War, once a week, sometimes twice a week, without any press around, she'd quietly go to the Veterans' Hospital and sit there and hold a vet's hand, then go home and call their mothers and cry with them and go back the next week and do the same thing over again. She didn't do it because she was trying to change her public relations image. She was doing it because Nancy really cares about people.

STUART SPENCER

I don't think people realize that she is a vulnerable person. There was an article in the *Washington Star* during the 1980 campaign. It was a cheap shot. That woman was devastated for weeks. People talk about her being tough. They talk about her being involved in the process. Those things are all true, but she's also a vulnerable, sweet little person. A lot of her personal friends see that, but people in the political arena don't.

DONNIE RADCLIFFE

There is an element of the unapproachable about her. I would have hoped that after four years, with this particular press corps that follows her every move, there would be some feeling of rapport that has developed among us. I don't have that feeling. I believe we can have our differences and still have an understanding.

I mean, we might encounter her in a situation where she is walking toward members of the press she knows, and there is not a glimmer of recognition in her eyes. The President isn't that way. Sometimes he'll give you a little lift of the eyebrow, or a little wink. It doesn't mean that we've crossed each other's lines or we've succumbed to each other's charms, but it does mean that there is a human quality there that, with Mrs. Reagan, is missing.

I suppose she thinks she's been burned by the press and therefore she's wary. I don't know if she is really scared, and I do not necessarily subscribe to the view that she is timid and shy. I don't see Mrs. Reagan as that at all. I think she's more aloof and controlled about what the outer Nancy Reagan is.

I would like to like her. I really don't know whether I like her or not. I don't dislike her. I don't know that I would think of her as a close friend. I feel there's a certain detachment about her that makes it sort of difficult to feel a closeness to her. Now, she may be wonderful with her staff, but that's the sort of thing that doesn't get through to ordinary mortals. I still feel there's a curtain there.

I would like to feel that she is a warm, caring person, that I could go and talk about substantial things or concerns with her, but I don't know how that would ever be possible.

JAMES ROSEBUSH

You certainly don't have a person here who's changed herself to fit the occasion, but the experience of the past years has had an impact on her.

She was always willing to take risks—accept challenge—but now she does it with greater confidence. I think she takes all of the public acclaim now with a knock-on-wood attitude because she's not one to rest on those laurels. In the political world, they can evaporate. So I think she wants to work hard to keep the public confidence.

The First Lady is bright, she's hardworking, and she's good to work for in the sense that she knows what's going on. She's very demanding of herself. You want to do your best for her. That's the way I respond to her. I want to do my best for her because she's demanding of herself and she expects good work out of people.

She likes to use the phone a lot more than I do. I've never been one to enjoy talking on the telephone, but that's her way of communicating with people. She's up there on the second floor of the White House, and you or I might get up and walk down to the office at the end of the hall to chew the fat with someone, but her way of communicating is on the telephone.

She has never once said to me, "Jim, you've overscheduled me. You've given me too much. You've made me climb too many flights of stairs." She's got boundless energy.

DR. RICHARD DAVIS

Nancy came to Washington prepared—by parents, a good home, a fine education, and wonderful friends. Sometimes we forget that she was “First Lady of California” for eight years, so she did have experience when she arrived in Washington. I think the first two or three years in the White House caught her off stride. The first thing that threw her was some unfortunate press.

The second was the wounding of the President in March 1981. I remember that, of course, vividly. I had come down on several occasions, and three or four nights after his operation I visited the White House. Nancy had had a really dreadful day. Things were touch and go. We got back here and she seemed to shift gears. She actually took me on a little guided tour. We talked about different things, and finally the tour, so to speak, ended in a beautiful room on the third floor called the Solarium. It has a bay window and looks out over the Monument.

That night, though, it was under renovation and there weren't any lights in the room. It was early spring and the window boxes were filled with daffodils. Here we were standing in this darkness and there were these dancing yellow flowers, which represented to us, I guess, a hopeful future. We discussed a number of things. She expressed her gratitude about all the care the President received from the doctors and nurses. And then she turned to me and said, “Now, Dick, my job this week is to really go over this room and renovate it so the President can recover here. It will make him feel like he's outside once again and, you know, we want to keep all that sunshine and happiness in his life.”

And I thought that really was quite a remarkable thing. She showed no self-pity. She was thinking of a life probably more dear to her than her very own.

3

Husband and Wife

NANCY REAGAN

I can't talk for anyone else. I can talk for me—what makes me happy, what makes my husband happy, what makes our marriage happy. For me, my husband and my family come first. And that makes me happy. I assume it makes them happy.

I think it's easier if you have a definite philosophy that you've held for a long time. I have a feeling that perhaps in the past, there've been some people who maybe haven't made up their minds clearly what their positions are, and that can age you pretty quickly. But if you have a pretty definite philosophy of what you want to do, then it makes things a lot easier.

Ron is that way too. It's what he feels. He has his own instincts about what's right and what's wrong.

Do we ever fight? We disagree. We don't fight. Fight to me means throwing plates and all of that. There's nobody that you're going to agree with all the time, even your husband.

I'm often asked about thirty-three years of marriage, which today sounds like a long time. It doesn't seem like a long time, though. I got to thinking about it, and you're always reluctant to give anybody advice about marriage or how to have a long marriage or whatever, but I've really been very lucky because most men or women, when they get married, like to feel that their husband or wife, if put to the test, if put under tremendous pressure, would act in a certain way, would act with great strength and make you very proud of them. You like to feel that. But very seldom does the average person have a chance to really see that husband or wife under those kinds of circumstances. I've been very lucky in that, because I've seen my husband under very pressured conditions, I know he's never failed. Never failed me. He's always stuck to principles. He's never done anything for purely political reasons. You go back to the assassination attempt. I don't know of many men who would have handled it that well.

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PRESIDENT REAGAN

*H*ow do you explain it? We're happy. I don't know how to answer it. From a man's standpoint, I could say what I think Clark Gable once said to someone, "There's nothing more important than approaching your own doorstep and knowing that someone on the other side of the door is listening for the sound of your footsteps"

I know that during the day, even before this job, whatever I was doing, something would happen in a day and the first thing that would go through my mind was picturing myself telling her about it when I got home.

We talk about everything. Sometimes we disagree on someone or their particular qualifications or something, but never very seriously. It's good to talk about it and have other input. I feel better always knowing that we're in agreement.

MICHAEL REAGAN

I don't think she advises him on decisions he makes as President. But it's important that Dad have her, because she is a sounding board for family feelings. She's an important part of his life. I've always said that, without her, Dad probably wouldn't be President of the United States. She gives him inner strength that he really needs, and that keeps him going every day, knowing that at the end of the day, he has her to go home to.

She sees the people around Dad and she wants them to be from the same mold they're from. I think that's what happens. She may voice an opinion on a person, whether they're doing the job and are looking the part they should play or not. She probably discusses that with Dad. But the ultimate decision on who he's going to have working with him is always up to Dad.

I think he values very much all the advice she gives him. Dad's just a stronger man because of Nancy Reagan, and she's been a very supportive force. Without her support, he would not have run for governor; he would not have run for President.

I think what pulled them through into the eighties was that Dad and the people around him wanted him to run. I don't know if Nancy did. All of us were hurt after he lost to Ford at the end of '76. It was, What do you do, do you start this, do you do that? I think Dad's the one who pulled up his boots and said, No, we're going on. And then everybody supported him.

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You make a negative remark about Ronald Reagan and Nancy's not going to be friendly to you. Her life really is centered around Ronald Reagan. She will do whatever is necessary to insulate him and keep him happy. She does her thing helping with the kids, with the grandparent program and the drug program, which are important to her, but, really, the most important thing to her is Ronald Reagan. So if you consider everything on that basis, then she isn't that complicated.

They do need each other. They both dance to the other one's tune. I mean, Dad is Nancy's strength in his way, and Nancy is his strength in the home life. I think they could live all by themselves and be perfectly happy. That's not to say that they don't want the kids or anything of that nature. But the fact is that now the kids are grown and gone, and their relationship hasn't changed in thirty years. They are the same people who met back in the fifties and got married in 1952. They haven't changed.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY

*I*would say that, at one level, Nancy Reagan has total influence over her husband. That is to say I could not imagine his doing something which forfeited her loyalty or her devotion to him. But it would be very hard to imagine such a thing even in the abstract.

They are in every sense of the word companions. They share their thoughts, they share their peevs, they share their enthusiasms. And when something is brewing, it is coterminously communicated. It isn't something that he sort of announces. So there's never a situation in which all of sudden he accosts her at noon and says, "Something's been cooking in my mind for three months. This is it." They just don't have that kind of relationship.

Suppose he asked Jimmy Carter to be special Mideast fixit man. Something like that he'd almost certainly discuss with her because of the bizarre character of it. But I can't believe he would discuss with her in any detail recommendations of who should be the new head of the Federal Reserve Board.

I think she has a very important role in the sense that he would never want to disappoint her, nor would he ever want to surprise her. If, somewhere along the line, he decided to end the agriculture embargo, he'd know that doing so would at least annoy and, in some senses, outrage the hard anti-Communist part of his constituency. In a situation like that, it would be perfectly normal for him to discuss the consequences of an impending decision. It is very unlikely that she would weigh in during that discussion in such a way as to cause him to change his mind.

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It's hard to say how good her instincts are because we don't often talk politics. We talk people. Take the whole matter of whether he would run in 1968. In that year there was an understanding, more or less, that if Nixon failed in the primaries in New Hampshire and Indiana, Reagan would come in rather than let Nelson Rockefeller have it. Of course, Nixon didn't fail in those primaries, but meanwhile a movement had developed. She was at once anxious for him to succeed in any enterprise and terribly afraid that he might be hurt. He didn't declare his candidacy until after he arrived in Miami, and at the time I was quite certain the reason he had finally entered the race wasn't because he thought there was any chance of winning it, but because he didn't want to let down people who had expended that much effort. She, in that situation, almost certainly urged him not to think so much about the people who had supported him as about himself.

They grew up in their early married life fighting Communists in Hollywood. It was a shared experience, one that continues to be extremely strong in Reagan. And it helped form her opinions also.

There's a sense in which she's not that much of a hard-liner. He's very hard-line in his rhetoric, but less in his actions. He's been softer on the Soviet Union in respect to Poland and Afghanistan than Carter was. I can't imagine a situation in which she would say to him, notwithstanding how he feels about the Soviet Union, "We have got to entertain Gorbachev when he comes over here." It's much more likely that he would accept the institutional requirements that he has as Chief of State and simply swing with it.

She believes he's absolutely unique. She probably thinks he belongs on Mount Rushmore. And any failure of the public to recognize this is a failure on its part to recognize that which is obvious to her. In that sense, she is more ambitious for him, but only because of her distinctive appreciation of him. Now is that the same kind of ambition that Lady Macbeth had, or is it something completely different? I think it's different. It's kind of a heliocentric relationship.

BONITA GRANVILLE WRATHER

Nancy and Ronald Reagan are a team. They're devoted to one another, very much in love, and they work as a team and they always have. I understand it. Some people may not because they may not have husbands. My husband, until he passed away, was a partner of mine. We talked about everything. I can't say whether she gives him advice, but I think they talk about everything and they advise each other. When I hear people say, "Well, she's his adviser," that's not so. They just discuss things together.

I know that the President thinks his wife is a good judge of character, and that he values her opinion on everything, whether it's raising children or politics. It doesn't matter. He values her opinion. As, by the way, do all of her friends.

C. Z. WICK

What I know well of their relationship is that she has excellent judgment, and, like any husband and wife, there's interest in what the other does. He knows he can rely on her very solid judgment, but I think that the character of that is his recognizing a smart person who is there for him and who's solid as a rock when he needs some good advice.

She has terrific instincts for people's motives and their personal agendas. She's micro and he's macro. He's the big picture in terms of the whole country, while she's very good with the people who are close to him.

RON REAGAN

He's got great instincts, not so much about what will play well to the country—that's where he comes in, that's where he's very good—but as to how he plays best, how he comes off best, under what circumstances, and in what surroundings.

I can't say whether he discusses things that are classified with her. I would guess he probably wouldn't want to. But they talk about everything else. They're very close. What don't you talk about with your wife?

MAUREEN REAGAN

They have the ultimate relationship. They are each other's best friends. We all want to have that kind of relationship. They try things out on each other, using each other as sounding boards. There's a difference between being an adviser and being somebody's best friend. He refines things that he's thinking about by saying them out loud and talking to her. She refines things she's thinking about in the same way, and they give each other advice in that way. They have always done that, always will. They are absolutely a team. You do not get one without the other, ever.

There're always two parts to everything—the ideas, the ambition, the ability to do it. Then there's the rest of us behind the scenes who sort of make it all come together and make it all work. She has created an environment in their lives that allows him a lot of freedom to go out and explore things that he might not have under other circumstances. But I don't call that a driving force.

My initial reaction is that he would be President no matter what right now because I have a feeling of destiny about this particular enterprise. I think it all became possible because of the relationship they have, and because they both had a great deal of freedom, and because they have this incredible friendship that allows them to talk about things.

NANCY REYNOLDS

Nancy Reagan's only interest is what's good for the President. She has no hidden agenda, no other worries or concerns. She feels that if there are people who have other agendas—and in politics there are always such people—they are definitely working at some sort of disadvantage to the President and she's going to speak up.

They certainly fulfill each other's needs, and perhaps that's the basis for a really successful marriage. They communicate with one another extremely well. And they have such mutual admiration and respect for one another. Based on those two things, they agree on most issues. They share so many things in common, but mostly they fulfill each other's needs, most of the personal needs we all have. He loves and respects her very much, and vice versa. Like most marriages, no one is ever giving fifty-fifty. At one time or another someone has done the eighty-twenty bit or ninety-ten. They've each had an opportunity to be in that position, as all good relationships do. And I think they have the bond, a personal bond, of all the things they've gone through together. It has only strengthened over the years.

SHEILA TATE

First of all, if you know Nancy and Ronald Reagan, you know that he's not going to ever consider her a liability. She's his biggest asset, emotionally, and we knew we could get that story out to the press.

To some degree, I think she was a convenient lightning rod, and when you have a popular President, it's hard to attack him. His wife is vulnerable. People took shots at her.

They're inextricably bound together, but she's certainly carved out an independent niche for herself that she can be proud of in her own right. I think she's probably teased the President about the fact that her rating is sometimes a little higher than his.

Do I feel she's a little competitive with the President? Only on the friendliest basis. We'd say, "We were the lead story on the network news," and she'd say, "I can't wait to tell Ronnie."

She was probably the best person to address the issue of the President's age. She'd been through it before. She's the closest person there is to the President and she knew that it was not an issue. We were out campaigning and she took that issue head on. She would walk over the rope lines when we'd get to an airport and invite reporters' questions, and she would welcome that particular one. She had a very good sense that she could address that question in a way probably no one else could.

LYN NOFZIGER

Nancy's a perfectly normal human being. When things go wrong with her husband, and she thinks somebody's at fault, she gets upset. Then she gets over it. She's protective of him, and that's a good thing. I'm sure all she's concerned about is that the people who work for him serve him well. That's what she's concerned about.

She's more interested in public relations and the President's popularity than she is, let's say, in his sticking to conservative doctrine. Apparently people want it both ways. Nancy goes with what is best for Ronald Reagan, and certainly part of that is, Does he adhere to his principles? We all of us look at the public relations side of it. That's part of politics. But I don't think that she does that to the exclusion of principle.

She is a very important woman. I don't think she's uncomfortable. She feels very strongly that her husband is the President and that he's the man who ought to be taking the credit, the person who ought to be out in front. To that degree, she has put herself somewhat in the background, but that's not an unusual thing for a woman to do.

ED ROLLINS

I think she is a constant adviser. She is without question his closest friend. She certainly doesn't try to get involved in the day-to-day policy decisions, but I think there's no question that when he wants someone whose advice he trusts, he goes to her.

He certainly likes it when she reinforces him. When she disagrees with him, he probably really ponders whether he's going in the right direction or not. So I would certainly say he heeds her advice.

She has as much clout as she wants. If she wants to weigh in on something, it certainly becomes the focus of his agenda, and can certainly become the focus of a lot of other attention around the White House.

Ronald Reagan is to a certain extent a very solitary man. He's unique. He has no ego. He has no need for friends or advisers or what have you. He's just very comfortable with himself. And there's one person in that inner circle, day in and day out, one person who's a constant, whose judgment he values above all. I think that makes her an extremely important part of the team.

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I think the President's toughness is totally underestimated. He has a real inner toughness—when it comes down to things that are really crucial and important, he's there on the line. It's easier for her to make judgments because she's not dealing face-to-face with people the way he is. When a staff person is not serving the President well, the President may still like that person. She's in a little more of an abstract situation. She can make judgments based on performance, where sometimes other factors enter into the President's judgment.

She can be very tough, no question about it.

I don't think he can rely on her any more than he does. He relies on her so much today. The President has had a career—not just his political career but his movie career—in which there have been a lot of people in and out. Making movies, he's had different directors, different co-stars. But for over thirty years, the one constant in his life has been her. Ronald Reagan would be very happy on his mountain top, all alone, with one exception—he'd like to have her with him.

RICHARD ALLEN

The President is the kind of man who, by my observation, in dealing with this able and strong-willed wife, recognizes that she's on his side all the time. He's able to listen carefully and maybe it influences his point of view and maybe it doesn't. He doesn't always give expression to whether he approves of what you're doing, saying, or how you're behaving. It's a very interesting feature of the man.

To see Ronald and Nancy Reagan in circumstances of difficulty, as I have seen them in the pre-campaign days and campaign days when things looked pretty dark at one point, and to watch them operate at the White House, one sees a reflection of a relationship that is clearly, in the first instance, grounded in love and caring about each other. The fact of the matter is that the President misses her if she's away twenty-four or forty-eight hours. It's almost an unbreakable team effort.

There are lots of things that a husband will not want to do in which a wife can help out without her work carrying the connotation of dirty work. I think that's very helpful. I'm pushed frequently by my wife and I think he is pushed frequently by his wife to do things or not to do things.

She steps into a role that he probably at least subconsciously invites her to fill. I think that's very interesting. Every couple that is married knows about those limits on either side. Most husbands invite their wives in. Others do not and live to regret the day. I think President Reagan has invited Nancy Reagan into that realm. She knows what the margin is, the boundary, so to speak, and she operates freely up to that boundary.

MICHAEL DEAVER

Nancy will fight to her dying day to protect Ronald Reagan, whether he's actor, governor, private citizen, or President. She wants to know, Is he getting out on the patio for lunch to get some of that sunshine? What's he having for lunch today? Don't you give him some time in the morning? Give him some time in the afternoon so that he can sit at his desk and think a little bit himself. She is not the kind of person who would call up and say, "You know, I think the SALT talks ought to begin February 2." Her primary concern would be his personal needs.

I'm married. Sometimes I win, sometimes Carolyn wins. The same is true of the Reagan household, as it is in most households. Sometimes they argue and she'll prevail, and sometimes he'll prevail, but it's the most incredible love relationship I've ever seen in my life between a couple.

I suppose anybody who's here wants to leave something of themselves as far as their own mark and I'm sure that's probably true of Nancy. I've said this before. If Ronald Reagan had owned a shoe store, she'd be out there pushing shoes.

DR. BARBARA KELLERMAN

Nancy Reagan's greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses have the considerable charm of being one and the same. Her greatest strength is that she is so tied to her husband that she provides him with the kind of emotional support all of us wish we had. Her greatest weakness is that she is so tied to her husband and she provides him with so much emotional support that I think she is relatively ill-equipped to stand back and say, "You're doing this wrong. You might want to take another look at this."

Don't look to Nancy Reagan to provide Ronald Reagan with a critical perspective. On the other hand, do look to Nancy Reagan for this enduring emotional support.

If we had access to the living quarters, even if we were a fly on the wall of the Reagan apartment in the White House, I think it would be very hard for us to understand fully what goes on. I think in the relationship between two people, one doesn't see orders being given. It's a dynamic, the way all relationships are dynamic. I don't for a moment believe Nancy Reagan orders her husband to do this or do that. She makes her opinions felt in certain ways, the way all women and men do in the context of long marriages and long relationships. Those opinions, in a good marriage, in a good relationship, will be taken very seriously by the other person. It's that kind of power: that's private; power that's abstract, if you will; power that's articulated much more through interpersonal influence than it is through the usual kinds of authority relationships we associate with the word "power."

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Husband and Wife

NANCY REAGAN

I can't talk for anyone else. I can talk for me, what makes me happy, what makes my husband happy, what makes our marriage happy. For me, my husband, my family, come first. And that makes me happy.

I think it's easier if you have a definite philosophy that you've held for a long time. I have a feeling that perhaps in the past, there've been some people who maybe haven't made up their minds clearly what their positions are. And I think that can age you pretty quickly. But if you have a pretty definite philosophy of what you want to do, then it makes things a lot easier.

It's what he feels. He has his own instincts about what's right and what's wrong.

Do we ever fight? We disagree. We don't fight. Fight to me means throwing plates and all of that. There's nobody that you're going to agree with all the time, even your husband.

I'm often asked about thirty three years of marriage, which today sounds like a long time. It doesn't seem like a long time, though. I got to thinking about it and, you're always reluctant to give anybody advice about marriage or



*A family Thanksgiving at
the ranch 1982*

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Husband and Wife

how to have a long marriage or whatever, but I've really been very lucky because most men or women, when they get married, like to feel that their husband or wife, if put to the test, if put under tremendous pressure, would act in a certain way, would act with great strength and make you very proud of them. You like to feel that. But very seldom does the average person have a chance to really see that husband or wife under those kinds of circumstances. I've been very lucky in that, because I've seen my husband under very pressured conditions. I know he's never failed. Never failed me. He's always stuck to principles. He's never done anything for political reasons. You go back to the assassination attempt. I don't know of many men who would have handled it that way.

PRESIDENT REAGAN

*H*ow do you explain it? We're happy. I don't know how to answer it. From a man's standpoint, I could say what I think Clark Gable once said to someone, "There's nothing more important than approaching your



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I could say what I think Clark Gable once said to someone, "There's nothing more important than approaching you own doorstep and knowing that someone on the other side of the door is listening for the sound of your footsteps."

Every birthday is special to the Reagans.

The ranch is the family's real home.

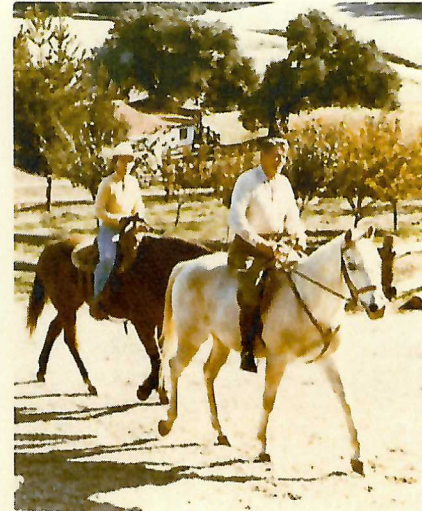
own doorstep and knowing that someone on the other side of the door is listening for the sound of your footsteps."

I know that during the day, even before this job, whatever I was doing, something would happen in a day and the first thing that would go through my mind was picturing myself telling her about it when I got home.

We talk about everything. Sometimes, we disagree on someone or their particular qualifications or something, but never very seriously. It's good to talk about it and have other input. I feel better always knowing that we're in agreement.

MICHAEL REAGAN

I don't think she advises him on decisions he makes as president. But it's important that dad have her because she is a sounding board just for the family feelings. She's an important part of his life. I've always said that, without her, dad probably wouldn't be president of the United States. She



Nancy and Ronald Reagan are a team. They're devoted to one another, very much in love, and they work as a team and they always have.

They have the ultimate relationship. They are each other's best friends.



I think he values very much all the advice that she gives him. Dad's just a stronger man because of Nancy Reagan, and she's been a very supportive force. Without her support, he would not have run for governor, he would not have run for president.

RON REAGAN

He's got great instincts, not so much about what will play well to the country—that's where he comes in, that's where he's very good—but as to how he plays best, just himself. How he comes off best, under what circumstances, and in what surroundings.

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They're always two parts to everything—the ideas, the ambition, the ability to do it. Then there's the rest of us behind the scenes that sort of make it all come together and make it all work. She has created an environment in their



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