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*Last Updated: 03/05/2024*

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agenda, even though we're doing the work.

We set our own agenda. And it was visibly <sup>done</sup> ~~set~~. She went out on the road. She invited the press to come with her. She took the camera that you were <sup>using</sup> ~~shining~~ on her and turned it around and <sup>focused</sup> ~~shined~~ it on a cause-- something she could do something about.

We're talking <sup>about</sup> ~~g~~ probably, a thirty point rise in the polls, what Dick Wirthlin calls a thermometer rating. Dick explained to me that it's very unusual for a known public figure to change much on that rating, more than three or four points, and hers changed twenty five, thirty points. I think people got a better idea of who she really was, that she's an interesting, vulnerable, multi-faceted person who certainly does care about people.

I don't think there's anything she's afraid of. She still has very good judgement about herself ~~and~~, what she's good at and what she would shy away from, and what suits her. What kind of events are appropriate for her. She has a very keen focus. If some great event presented itself and I went to her and said, "I think you ought to get involved in this, what do you think?," she would know what questions to ask to assess whether it was right for her. She's always had that good

sense.

I only wish that Gridiron dinner appearance had been televised. It was the most stellar moment of <sup>the events</sup> single ~~moments~~ burned in my memory. It's one of ~~the most important~~.

Here were six hundred publishers, major political columnists, writers in Washington, who were believing what they had been writing and reading. They thought of her as sort of a brittle, unfeeling person. There was a skit about Mrs. Reagan, making fun of her, called, "Second Hand Clothes." All of a sudden, onto the stage comes a rack of clothes--Seventh Avenue--and the clothes part and this character comes between the clothing and it's Nancy Reagan dressed in the most outrageous outfit--a skirt that didn't match, the blouse with the feather boa, a big floppy hat, and yellow rain boots, and she takes over and sings the song that, basically, makes fun of her. She says, "I did some really colorful things last year that you all have <sup>ribbed</sup> ~~digged~~ me about and I have a sense of humor about it. I can put it in perspective."

When I was sitting there, waiting for her to come on, it was the only time I've ever experienced what I'm sure was high blood

pressure. I had these poundings in the back of my head. One publisher sitting next to me looked back at the head table and noticed that Nancy Reagan wasn't there. The publisher leaned to another guy and said, "Nancy Reagan isn't up there. I'll bet she's ticked."

She walked on that stage and people were so astonished, they just rose from their seats and started screaming. And when she sang this song and took this plate which represented the china and smashed it on the floor, it didn't break, so they screamed for an encore. You could feel the attitude change.

She stuck her neck out so far to do that. I think what got her through it was that she kept it a secret from the president. She had her clothes sent over secretly that afternoon. She went over and rehearsed very quietly. It's the only major story I know that never got leaked in advance. Nobody knew about it except two or three people at the Gridiron and two or three people on the staff. She kept thinking, "I'm going to do this. The president's going to fall off his chair." And he darn well almost did. I think she got a lot of enjoyment out of that.

She has a very endearing, gentle sense of humor. When we first went to her, the

Gridiron people suggested that she make fun of the press. She recognized right away that Nancy Reagan can't do that. She said, "I'll make fun of myself." And that turned the whole thing around.

I think a fainter heart would have shriveled up and never left the third floor of the White House. She cared about ~~doing something and cared about~~ what people thought. She never stopped caring.

I remember on a recent summer she had three speeches in a row to groups like the P.T.A. and Lions to thank them for helping her on this big ~~chemical~~ project she was involved in. It occurred to us as an afterthought, afterward, talking on the plane, that she had ~~just~~ addressed in <sup>just</sup> ten days something like fifty thousand people. She was so self confident she would walk in there with a couple of cards in her hand and get up there <sup>and</sup> ~~she'd~~ speak extemporaneously. She'd speak for fifteen or twenty minutes. She had a message, <sup>and</sup> ~~you know?~~ She is a woman of substance. ~~She~~ <sup>and</sup> deserves to be seen that way.

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~~CHAPTER FOUR: First Lady (CONTINUED)~~

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Lyn Nofziger:

I suspect that Nancy has about as much as she wants to have. Nancy is not Rosalynn Carter. She doesn't view herself as the deputy president. She doesn't want to sit in on cabinet meetings or those sorts of things. But she certainly has a strong interest in the things that he does. She has a <sup>N</sup>~~strong~~ interest in the people around him, and judges the people around him on the basis of whether they serve him well. But can Nancy get someone fired? I don't think so. Ronald Reagan makes those decisions. Can Nancy get somebody hired? Probably at some levels, and maybe at some very high levels, but not totally. She's not the president and I don't think anybody at the White House thinks she is, nor does she. There may be some people who are afraid of her, but I don't think that there's a sense of fear in the White House about Nancy. I've not seen that ever.

You take the call. Of course, you take the call. But that doesn't mean that you get on the phone and say, "Yes, Mrs. Reagan. Yes, Mrs. Reagan. Yes, Mrs. Reagan." If you take

the call, then you listen. She's a very smart woman. Her input is worth listening to.

How much trouble are you in if she's down on you? I suspect it depends on who you are. I think you can make too much of that. I don't know of anybody, on the White House staff, on the governor's staff, who has not continued to function if Nancy was upset. The president makes the final decisions. And they're not always the decisions she thinks he ought to make. But certainly her view is taken into serious consideration, as it should be.

Ed Rollins:

When Mrs. Reagan is concerned about something, we know that her concern always relates directly to the president. So when she's concerned about something, we respond to her, and respond to her very quickly.

He's an awfully nice man, and I think that she sometimes feels that he may be a little taken advantage of by either his staff or members of the cabinet or what have you, and she certainly wants to make sure that doesn't happen.

I think she certainly gets concerned about rhetoric sometimes. She's probably the one person who's always looking out for his long term image. The two of them have made a very heavy commitment to spend a significant portion of their life here, and I think that she's very concerned about his place in history.

There's no question there've been certain members of the cabinet she thought were becoming negative to the president and she probably weighed in pretty heavily on some of those. ~~I think~~ <sup>As</sup> far as the White House staff itself, I don't know of anyone that she's ever gone out and tried to get fired or anyone in particular that she's tried to get hired. I do <sup>believe</sup> think that she has expressed opinions. There's been a time or two in which I've made statements that have caused her some concern.

I don't think anybody ever wants to be in trouble with the First Lady. She's not a petty or vindictive <sup>sort of</sup> ~~type~~ person, but ~~I think~~ if she doesn't think that you're particularly competent, you've got to remember that she's the one <sup>who</sup> ~~that~~ gets to talk to him first every morning and last every night. My predecessor



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in this job, Lyn Nofziger, and she had good periods and bad periods. The First Lady had some concerns about some of the things I've said, but certainly has backed me fully.

It's very important as the White House team moves forward with its agenda that it realize the warning signals when Mrs. Reagan is concerned about something. It's a concern that either is bothering the president or it's a concern that better have some attention. When my secretary walks in and says, "Mrs. Reagan's on the line," I certainly take the call very quickly. After my heart starts beating again, I certainly listen very attentively.

Richard Allen:

She makes her influence felt directly to a circle of intimates to convey her views on matters. I think that this is wholly within bounds for a First Lady. She's a strong willed First Lady. I think good presidents are served by strong willed ladies--that is, good assertive presidents who know where they're going, know where they've come from.

She can make her influence felt with a range of actions from a telephone call

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expressing concern or perhaps making a contribution to the solution a given problem. An arched eyebrow and all of these gestures and communications have significance.

This is not a case in which a strong willed and very capable First Lady is reaching over her husband's shoulder to try to control the ship of state. But in questions that she has an instinctive feel for, she makes her views known. I think that's utterly welcomed. My wife does it, everyone's wife does it. We find as the years accumulate that our wives gather more wisdom and their reaction becomes very important to us.

Nancy Reagan obviously has high regard for certain individuals whose fortunes she would push. It's only natural that she should do that. I'm sure she talks to the president about it. I've seen it in pre-White House days when she would address him very directly and begin to persuade him and then lay out a case. It was always very interesting for me to watch that. I was rather amused by it at first and then I began to take it more seriously, not because I thought being on Nancy Reagan's good side was important. I don't <sup>believe</sup> think one ought to operate that way, although there are <sup>others</sup> ~~many~~ who may

feel that this is an important operating methodology. I just went about doing my job as I saw fit. She never happened to be at an intersection with me. Let's say that it's infinitely preferable working for President Reagan to have Nancy Reagan on your side than having her on the other side of the street.

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Without making invidious comparisons, I would say that Nancy Reagan will rate as one of the best and most effective, certainly most influential, for a good cause, First Ladies in modern history.

Michael Deaver:

You know, you sit over here in the West Wing of the White House and you start out here at 6:30 in the morning and end up at 8:00 or 9:00 o'clock at night, and your entire life is consumed by his schedule and the priorities of that day or the priorities of the week or the foreign visitors or the legislative schedule or whatever it is, and you forget that a half a block away, you've got a very integral part of what makes this man tick. Nancy is in many respects as much a part of what people think about this presidency as any First Lady in a long, long time.



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I don't think she spends a lot of time on the issues. ~~I think~~ Nancy would agree with George Shultz and with Ronald Reagan and with George Bush that it's better to be talking to the Soviets than not talking to the Soviets. I think that would be her position. And I ~~think~~<sup>believe</sup> that's a very smart position. But it isn't the kind of thing that she would come over here and spend a lot of time on. She might have dinner with the Shultzes or with the Bushes and something like that might be discussed, but that's not the kind of thing she'd make a big issue of over here in the West Wing of the White House.

I think she's more confident about going out on trips and making speeches. ~~I think~~ anybody, once you begin doing that sort of thing, ~~you~~ develop<sup>s</sup> a confidence. She takes an extraordinary amount of time in the preparation of those remarks. There's a lot of people you can say to, "I've got to go over to the whatchamajiggers association; write me ten minutes, will you?" And they get it and I look at it in the car on the way over. Not Nancy Reagan. She goes over every dot and every crossing of every "t" and works very hard to be sure that that's something that really is

her own statement. *That's what being a First Lady is all about.*

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James Rosebush:

James Rosebush was  
Nancy Reagan's chief  
of staff.

If you can trust the polls, they say that she is respected <sup>and</sup> loved by the American people. In fact, she has a rating that indicates she's the most popular First Lady for seven administrations.

The people like her. She's certainly comfortable in her role. I think she sees that there's a job to be done that she can do. She's very happy about the fact. She's very pleased she can contribute to a major social problem, and she's seeing results on that. She's comfortable, and I think the American people are comfortable with her, too.

We know that, as a result of the First Ladies coming here from seventeen different countries, we're getting reports pouring in that these First Ladies are starting media campaigns to alert young people to the dangers of drug abuse. They're more knowledgeable about it. They're working with their own governments to step up efforts to cut the production of drugs. The conference was very

successful.

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As to those stories that Mrs. Reagan was the "star" of that big trip to Europe, I think you have to take the word "star" and look at it carefully. Certainly, the president was tackling the tough issues, and he showed the kind of leadership that people were looking for in the president of the United States. She, on the other hand, had a chance to play a starring role with the people of those countries. She had a chance to get out and talk with them, and dance the flamenco with them, and show interest in their culture. In that sense, she played a starring role, but I think they starred in their own individual ways.

I don't think we've ever faced a situation where we've overshadowed the president. I think that we've complemented him. I think it's exciting when she does something important--gets prominent play and people know about it. That's what we want to do. We want to communicate those things, but I don't think we've ever gotten into a situation where we've <sup>ever</sup> really, seriously, competed with the president.

This has been the first administration

in which the chief of staff to the First Lady also works for the president. I've had one foot in both wings and both interests at heart.

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I think it's a first that people in the West Wing are sitting there and saying, "Nancy Reagan is a plus. She's helping the president, politically." I <sup>expect</sup> think they recognize that, so there's a degree of respect that wasn't here ~~before~~ in previous administrations. ~~I think~~ before it was, "Well, let the East Wing do what they think is best; let the First Lady get involved in charitable programs or, you know, garden parties." Which is not to denigrate what other First Ladies have done, but ~~I think~~ there's a degree of importance here, and I think it's a key point.

Richard Wirthlin:

Who?

Right from the beginning, Nancy Reagan was viewed as a dignified, strong, capable woman, but the public's perceptions have changed. That is, not only do people still articulate those reasons as to why they like Nancy Reagan, but, in addition, four out of ten Americans say that they like Nancy Reagan because of her work with young people, the

work she's doing with drugs and her  
sensitivity to people.

In 1981 and 1982, she was still viewed favorably, but it wasn't as strong as it reads now. About five or six out of ten said they were favorably impressed with Nancy Reagan. Those first two years in the White House were pretty rough ones for the First Lady. Since that time, she has developed a confidence and brought to her public image, if you will, a likeness that wasn't there early. This plus the dedication to a cause that she feels very, very deeply about made Nancy Reagan probably one of the most positively supported First Ladies in the last ten or twelve years.

I think that is an unusual case. It's not unusual to see someone who has a favorable rating initially have that rating erode as time goes on. I can't name a major public figure whose job rating or whose positive impressions improved as dramatically over two or three years as has Nancy Reagan's.

Donnie Radcliffe:

She projected the image of a very well-to-do woman socialite who really had little



concern or interest in anyone who wasn't in her particular social milieu. She was someone who cared about clothes and furnishings and parties and people who were her sort. The ~~common~~ <sup>real</sup> person then didn't come across--that she was that concerned about the common person. I'm not saying she wasn't, but it never came across.

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She's riding very high these days. She was very successful in Europe. She has good press. She did better than the president in her press. She makes no mistakes. She's very professional. She's an actress who does her role well. She follows directions and her staff works closely with her. I think she's very successful right now. She's at the top.

I would like to see more specifics in her drug abuse message. By that I mean, when she is meeting with other countries, or the people from other countries, if she could be more specific about what sort of things have been successful here in her own crusade.

I think she is too general and that she should be more specific and say, "We did this. We had a publisher do comic books for us with a message on the dangers of drug abuse. We went to the National Pharmacists and had them start a campaign."

Does she enjoy all the attention? It would be very difficult for any human being not to enjoy that kind of attention. There is an element of the royal court about life in the White House.

William F. Buckley:

People didn't go around saying Mrs. Truman was a disappointment but Mrs. Truman was a domestic in her husband's household. She wanted really no external visage. Nancy Reagan has a background as an actress, as a performer. And it is inconceivable that she would lead so inconspicuous a life as Mrs. Truman. On the other hand, if her successor were a Mrs. Truman type, I don't think people would rush forward and say what a disappointment she is. They would simply accept the fact that the temperament of the First Lady dominates the question of how she's going to behave.

You ask what is her vision of the role of First Lady, not our vision of the role of ~~First Lady~~. If you accept that distinction, I

*Nancy Reagan's*  
would say her vision of the role of First Lady is, number one, do everything her husband wants her to do and, number two, identify herself publicly with the idealism and social concern of a chief of state.

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She simply wants to be an exemplary First Lady. The idea of what constitutes an exemplary First Lady is not set in concrete. It depends completely on the personality of the individual.

If she had decided she was going to be reclusive in the White House, then that decision would have governed the question of her evaluation.

Ron Reagan:

I've never sat down and tried to rate First Ladies. I'd say that, in terms of what she's done for the White House, she'd have to be way up there at the top. The place was a mess when she got there, really a mess. It looked, you know, real low rent, kind of Holiday Inn--as much as the White House can look like a Holiday Inn. She's really fixed it up. She took a beating because of the china. Well, nobody talked about the fact that they didn't have a whole set of china anymore. The

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last person, I think, that actually bought one for the White House was Lady Bird--maybe it goes back to Jackie Kennedy. When they have state dinners there, people swipe plates and stuff. Little plates disappear into handbags and coat pockets and stuff, so they couldn't have a dinner and have a complete set of china for everybody. She thought it was kind of tacky, so she went out and got some of her friends to donate the money for it.

Eleanor Roosevelt is a kind of an icon now. She's really "big time." As far as Jackie and Lady Bird go, in terms of style, I'd rate my mother with them, sure. If Jackie had come when my mother did, when society wasn't quite amenable to a stylish First Lady, she'd have gotten a beating, too. You know, my mom can dress with the best of 'em--even Jackie, you know. And she has beautified the White House. There's no question about that.

Maureen Reagan:

Before they came to Washington, ~~the~~ she ~~First Lady~~ always had a good deal of control over their lives, over how they spent their time. All of a sudden, she came into a house

that wasn't hers, trying to make it into the home she wanted it to be. She was suddenly giving dinner parties and luncheons that she had not been there to plan, that were suddenly thrust upon her. I talked to her one day about two weeks after the inauguration and I said, "Well, how is it going?" And she said, "Well, it's okay. I'm giving my fourth luncheon tomorrow afternoon and they didn't tell me till twenty minutes ago."

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Well, you can't be an expert at giving State dinners till you've given two or three of them, but once you have, if you learn from what goes on, and you learn the mix of people and what makes them a good event, a good State event, and you say, "Well, good, now I can do that, so now I don't have to worry about the State dinner that's going to be held in April because I know these are the things that work.

You can't be an expert dealing with living in the White House until you've lived in the White House for a while.

Everything she has done has given her another level of confidence. instead of going back and starting at "A" every time, she has gone from "A" to "B" to "C" to "D" to "E" to "F" until now she's up around "X," "Y," and "Z."

~~It's part of her job. She now knows what her job is.~~ The job of the First Lady of the United States is the ultimate corporate wife, and I am not a big fan of the whole system that creates this corporate structure in which we have these non-paid people on whom we depend to do so much of the work that goes on. It seems to me that there should be a salary for the First Lady of the United States because certainly it's somebody <sup>who</sup> ~~that~~ is on call twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, to do a lot of jobs that most of us wouldn't want to do.

There is a definition of a First Lady. It would be the same if it was a First Gentleman. There is a job description. The First Spouse of the United States has the responsibility for the residence of the White House, for the social events, for the tours, for all that comes under that particular bailiwick. That is a massive corporation to be running, and that alone, without the social functions, without looking for the thing that you want to use your office to help people with, without the fact that you also have a family, and that you have brought your own way of life in the White House, that is a massive

<sup>And</sup> job. It's a job that has to be dealt with <sup>every</sup> ~~on a~~  
<sup>day</sup> daily basis. It's something people have to  
understand, that that house doesn't just run  
by itself.

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The First Lady of the United States is a powerful woman. She's obviously got an awful lot of influence over what goes on in her domain, which is that house. I don't know that that translates into policy decisions.

If I have ideas of programs that I'm going to present, as part of what I do, to the chairman of the Republican National Committee, and I sit and talk to my husband over dinner, and I say, "I'm thinking of doing this," and he says, "Well, listen, why don't you take that and go one step further, or why don't you back up and move in that direction, and if you consolidated this particular plan, you wouldn't take as much effort and you'd get much more progress on it," and I get all this refined. Now I take my plan in and everybody thinks I'm brilliant, because I've got this other brilliant person to come along and help me.

Well, the president doesn't just sit there and wait for people to bring him things. He has ideas. He sees things unfolding. He reads. He gathers ideas. So he goes into a

meeting of the economic advisors and he's got an idea about something. Well, he's not going to just throw it out there. No human being would do that. He might sit at dinner the night before and say, "I was reading about this and thinking about this and I was thinking we can move in this direction." And she says, "Well, that's kind of interesting. Yeah, that sounds good to me. But wait a minute. What if you did such and such?" And so he goes down the next day and it all gets into the mix and everybody gets into it, so it's not her idea. It's not her influencing policy, but it's his sounding board. ~~It's the someplace~~ <sup>he</sup> he has to refine his thinking before he has to go into the melee and make it all come together.

But it's like playing telephone when you're a kid. I say it to you, somebody else hears it, and the next thing you know, you have the National Enquirer writing a piece on "Nancy Reagan Creates White House Policy." She doesn't need that. The president doesn't need that. It's not good for the political dynamics of the country. So she's very uncomfortable because she's afraid that people will not listen to what it is indeed that she does do.

I did not know Eleanor Roosevelt.



Unfortunately, she was just a wee tad before my time. The first First Lady that I can remember knowing anything about was Bess Truman. I've know about Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower and Jackie Kennedy and Lady Bird Johnson and Pat Nixon and Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter and Nancy Reagan. That's eight. She's the best.

~~(END CHAPTER FOUR, END "First Lady")~~ Q

## CHAPTER FIVE: The Nancy Reagan style

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Nancy Reagan:

I want more pomp, <sup>though</sup> and I'm not going to criticize any other <sup>administration</sup> ~~president~~. I think the White House and any function that takes place at the White House should have a certain sense of dignity about it. I think the people want it. I <sup>believe</sup> ~~don't~~ think the people want a man to just walk into the room. I ~~think~~ <sup>They</sup> want to know that it's the president.

Do I like "Hail to the Chief?" Yes, I think it's traditional. It's always been traditional and I think it's important to keep that tradition up. After all, this is a very special place. I keep saying that but it is.

The White House is where all of our history emanated from. All of our presidents, everything happened right here where we are. When you look out the window at the Washington Monument and <sup>the</sup> Jefferson's <sup>memorial</sup> ~~Tomb~~ (cc), it's a wonderful feeling.

I was unprepared for the condition of the second and third floors. I didn't realize it hadn't really been tended to, maintained. It hadn't been painted in something like

fifteen or twenty years. The floors hadn't been done. ~~The doors, the wooden doors,~~ All the varnish was peeling off of <sup>the wooden doors.</sup> them. And this, after all, is the White House, which should look right.

I do not spend that much money on clothes. I do not buy that many clothes. What clothes I buy I wear forever. My husband teases me and says I still have my gym bloomers from school.

It's not true about spending \$25,000 on a wardrobe. Now we get back to all the other First Ladies who have had the exact same problem. I don't know why it always happens. <sup>since it's</sup> ~~That's~~ not true at all. I never paid \$1,600 for any kind of a handbag. That's just untrue.

If I were spending that kind of money, I would think people would have a right to say, what in the world is she doing? <sup>but</sup> I'm not, ~~spending that kind of money.~~ I suppose there's a point that, if it's yours and you want to spend it the way you want to, spend it, but I just would never spend that kind of money on my clothes. They were very wrong about a handbag or whatever. Anybody can say anything they want to say and you have no recourse, really.

We had a party for my husband's birthday and I wore a dress that I've had for twelve years. The dress that I wore to Mrs. Thatcher's dinner I've had for fifteen years.

Letitia Baldrige:

She received a lot of flack for buying beautiful clothes and looking so wonderful. There was so much interest in the designers of her clothes she was made absolutely furious and had <sup>for a while</sup> only one designer, Oleg Cassini, do everything just to keep away all the press interest. It used to be that way in all administrations, a very fashionable First Lady. I'm sure this was true in Dolley Madison's day that the whole world could be falling apart but still the questions would be coming into the White House--what is she going to wear and who made that dress?

The public would be very sad and very disappointed if our First Lady were dowdy and badly dressed. She does represent ~~the~~ American <sup>fashion</sup> ready to wear. She does look like a million dollars. As a matter of fact, all of our First Ladies have looked like a million dollars recently. We've been very lucky, and that

helps the American fashion industry.

There was a lot of flack about Mrs. Kennedy's clothes. That finally disappeared, and it has with Mrs. Reagan.

They both share an equal sense of style, an equal ease at entertaining, a wonderful sense of rightness. When Mrs. Kennedy came into the White House, the White House was in terrible shape and she put it into good shape, thanks to the Fine Arts Committee. Every First Lady thereafter added to the White House and made it better and better, as has Mrs. Reagan. It's been an evolution of style in that house--acquisitions of beautiful historic items and things of beauty in that house. It used to look like a bargain basement on sale day. Now it looks great.

It's fascinating to look at the First Ladies we've had. When you look back in history, the ones <sup>who</sup> ~~that~~ emerge are Abigail Adams who was sort of a feminist and Dolley Madison who was criticized for her beautiful clothes from Paris. James Madison was roundly criticized in the press for bringing back the Vermaise (sp) service of flatware--the forks, knives, and spoons that are used at some of the State dinner functions.

What is sad to see is that the great Vermaise flatware service is subtracted from every year as White House guests pocket forks, knives, and spoons to take home as souvenirs. They're taking priceless museum treasures out of the White House but they don't seem to mind.

Dr. Barbara Kellerman:

When she first entered the White House, there was a tremendous tendency to jump on her for her attention to clothes, for her attention to china in the White House, for her attention to what was considered frivolous, trivial, and somehow not worthy of the contemporary American woman. Nancy Reagan held up with good grace under those early attacks. Women in general are dressing up more than they did in the sixties and seventies. There is a new attention to manners. There's a new attention to propriety.

Jacqueline Kennedy spent a lot of money. When one looks at First Ladies, one really needs to look at them in the context of the entire presidential family and the political impact of the presidential family in this day

and age.

Ron Reagan:

Most movie people are fairly well off. I think it's unreasonable to think that she's going to go out and hang out at truck stops or something. Most of their friends are pretty well off. That's just the way it is.

I don't see her as nouveau riche, in terms of sensibilities, at least. In her present position, it's important for her to put the presidency and the White House in as good a light as she can, and she wants everything to be right., She wants everything to be first-class.

Mary Jane Wick:

Nancy is a very gracious person, <sup>and</sup> ~~she's~~ a person with exquisite taste. She always has had that. She's a very private person and sometimes can be shy. Her friends are very involved in the community and have lived very full lives. Nancy looks lovely in whatever

she's wearing. She also looks marvelous in blue jeans and tennis shoes up at the ranch.

Michael Deaver:

I don't think they live in a grand style. They live in the White House where dozens of presidents have lived.

William F. Buckley:

It has been suggested that the Buckleys and Jerry Zipkin and Brooke Astor represented a kind of New York society crowd that she wants to be accepted by. What do I think of that? Well, I don't think the First Lady has difficulty being accepted in any crowd. At a social level, she's pretty much at the head of the table wherever she goes. I think she gravitates to certain people for reasons obvious, some of them eccentric. Jerry Zipkin is a very unusual human being and she is devoted to him. Brooke Astor she didn't know much before she was elected. She's known us for twenty five years. So there's a sort of mix there.



The First Lady has no problems of that sort. I suppose if she decides that she wanted to be accepted by the fellows at All Souls College in Oxford, she'd have certain problems. But the kind of life she has, she has no difficulty whatever in making out.

Bill Blass: Fashion designer Bill Blass is a longtime Nancy Reagan friend.

I've made clothes for Nancy Reagan for years. There is something special about the lady in that she literally cannot look bad in anything. It's amazing because she's small and, in theory, we make clothes for mannequins that are quite tall. Yet she can really adapt almost any style to her own particular way of wearing clothes. She's an extremely easy gal to dress.

She's extremely easy to work with because she has very definite ideas about what she looks well in and about what is appropriate to her role as First Lady. That's her total awareness of the role she's playing. This applies to daytime as well as evening.

I suspect that Mrs. Reagan is not really

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a trend setter in the sense we in fashion relate it. What she is, she adopts what is the best from several designers. She wears clothes to her own way of life and to what is becoming to her. She has a marvelous awareness of what is appropriate to her as First Lady.

I think Nancy Reagan already has had a tremendous impact on fashion in that she has a sureness of her taste that relates to a great many women across the country. Pretty clothes, feminine clothes, she obviously dresses to please the president. Therefore, a lot of women follow suit and dress to please men. Chauvinistic remark, I know.

Nancy Reagan also has had an effect on people's appreciation, not only of fashion but of entertaining and running a house. She takes a vital interest in not just clothes but in running a very beautiful house, one of the most beautiful houses in the world, and doing it superbly.

How often do I design something for Nancy Reagan? We send her videos of the shows. Obviously, she can't come to the shows herself and, seasonally, maybe twice a year, we plan things that she needs. It's not done on any planned basis. It just depends entirely on her

travel plans, entertainment plans, her public plans. We'll talk on the phone about it. If I'm in Washington, I'll go over and lunch with her and we'll discuss it then.

It certainly isn't at all evident that she's demanding in the role we play together as one of her designers. The special occasion dresses that I best remember that I make for her are the ones that she wears to the gala preceding the inauguration. The first time she was in black which we thought was appropriate because she was not going to wear black for any of the other ceremonies. This season she wore red. As you know, she loves red. But I'm always amazed. She'll drag out a dress that's five or six years old, even older, and wear it.

She is partial, of course, to certain styles and colors. She likes red. And I think she very wisely chooses red, white, and black very often. She's amazingly good at colors. Strange colors, an odd shade of green or something of that sort, she looks well in. But she does rather restrict it to black, white, and red.

Without really being conscious of it, I must have made clothes for her under a different label than I have now. Even before.

she was the First Lady of California, she had purchased clothes of mine. I've seen, of course, a great deal of concern on her part, not only for her husband but for the nation, which is perfectly obvious. It's very difficult for me to judge whether she seems more assertive or ambitious because she has never seemed that to me and she doesn't seem it to me now. She's sure of herself, which is a damned important thing to be.

It's always very difficult to make comparisons between a First Lady and any of the First Ladies who preceded her. I suspect that since Mrs. Onassis, there has been no one <sup>who's</sup> ~~that has~~ <sup>an</sup> had ~~the~~ impact in fashion as much as Mrs. Reagan. But that's because <sup>we</sup> she has always dressed well and has always been interested in clothes, just as Mrs. Onassis was, too.

I suspect quite honestly that the things she's happiest in are the things she wears in Santa Barbara on the ranch. Obviously, jeans and a cotton shirt are her favorite.

Of course, she enjoys dressing up. But show me a woman who doesn't. There are special occasions, special times, when any gal wants to look great. She's not an exception.

I think one of the things that Nancy

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Reagan has tried to emphasize from the first is that the role of First Lady does demand a certain dignity and a certain style, not only in dressing but in attitude. She's a master at that. She's, well, representing our nation. And for that, I think, bravo for looking well.

(END CHAPTER FIVE, END "The Nancy Reagan style")

## CHAPTER SIX: Nancy and Controversy

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As I look back on it, I'm sure I'd probably do things differently.

Since no money was coming from the taxpayers, nothing seemed wrong to me about redoing the White House. Nothing had been done on the third floor in thirty years. There are cracks in the walls. It needed painting. It needed maintenance. It needed furniture taken out of storage. I'm a nester. I like to fix things up. But nothing was being taken out of the taxpayers' pocket, so it didn't seem to me wrong. The china was donated to the White House. I didn't buy china. <sup>The</sup> ~~Poor~~ people who donated the china have often thought of it. They never got the credit they really were due.

We've tightened our belts in many ways. We're not spending as much money. We're just pulling in. You have to.

Was the 1982 Gridiron Dinner the turning point? Yes. I remember I was scared to death. My husband didn't know anything about it. We had rehearsed up here without his knowing anything about it. We had two rehearsals, as I

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remember. The outfit was unbelievable. It was every crazy thing you could possibly think of, rubber boots, mangey. It was something. At the end of the dinner when the entertainment was going on, I excused myself from the table and went backstage to change. I'm sure he must have thought, "Where in the world is she? She's gone for such a long time." And when I came out, I was scared. But then it seemed to go well, and I thought to myself, "I hope he thinks it's going well."

I'd hoped to blunt all of this stuff that had been said that was not me, to put it more in perspective and get people back on the right track. They applauded.

~~I never said anything about Richard Allen. I never did.~~ I have opinions of different people. If I feel they're hurting my husband, <sup>or</sup> if I feel that they're trying to end run him or use him or whatever, then I'll say something.

I never asked the Carters to move out. I mean, never! How would I? Never. The only thing that I can think of is that we were at dinner, during the inauguration. We started from Blair House, as is customary. During the actual swearing in, the White House staff moves the First Family, the Carters in this

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case, out of the White House and us in. And I was saying, I don't know how they do it. It must be a tremendous task to perform in a few hours. Everybody was agreeing and I <sup>just</sup> said ~~just~~ that I really don't know how they do it. Maybe an idea would be if, when we move out, we could move into Blair House and make it a little bit easier.

The "tiny little gun" <sup>that was written about</sup> disappeared quite a long time ago. I had the tiny little gun when my husband was away a great deal of the time and I was alone. I was advised to have <sup>it</sup> a ~~tiny little gun.~~

Am I fudging two years in age? I might. I haven't made up my mind yet. That's a pretty good answer, isn't it? In Hollywood, you were never over twenty five. I progressed beyond twenty five.

Betty Friedan:

Unfortunately, I do not think that Nancy Reagan has done anything to advance the cause of women. That is a very pointed fault or bad mark against her, regardless of specific politics\_Republican, Democrat. Women in the



last twenty years have made this great breakthrough in America. We broke through the feminine mystique. We said, "We are people." We fought for the personhood of woman, and the control of our own lives, our own voice. We demanded and fought for equal opportunity. We aren't finished yet, and there's even a backlash against it.

We were at college together, at Smith. I was editor of the paper and literary magazine and she was an actress. She had the spirit to go to Broadway, to go to Hollywood. As I said to her when I went on the press bus at several conventions before she actually became First Lady, "Nancy, you are a Smith person, and how can you not be for equal rights for women? You were one of the career women before it was even popular." And she said, "Oh, well, I'm for equal <sup>treatment</sup> and so is Ronnie and I'm for rights, but I'm not for the amendment."

Well, that's just specious. When he was elected president and she became First Lady, I went up to her at the Gridiron Dinner and I shook her hand and I said, "Use your power. Be a good role model, now for women and use your power to keep the door open, or open it wide for women."

It just seems to me that's her

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obligation as a woman of her generation, at this time in history, and she hasn't done it. She has not raised her voice. They say she is now one of the most powerful influences in the Reagan administration or on the president. Why has she not tried to stop him from this war on the right of women to control their own bodies and the safe, legal, medical access to abortion? Why has she not tried to stop him when the Reagan administration has given the word that the laws now on the books on sex discrimination in employment and education shouldn't be enforced, or that affirmative action should now be used to restore the supremacy of the white male?

She's not a star in the soap opera. She is the First Lady. And we expect in America that our First Lady somehow embody the values of where women are <sup>at</sup> this time. When you think, fifty years ago, of Eleanor Roosevelt. What a role model she would still be, even today. You think of Betty Ford, who really was gutsy, not only in behalf of equal rights for women but very honest on the question of abortion and what she would do about her own daughter if there were such a need. Even being brutally honest about her own problems with

alcoholism and so on. There was a fine role model there.

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Breathes there a woman with soul so dead, an educated woman in the 1980s, that cannot identify with this great liberation of women to be people? Maybe way underneath, she does. Maybe that's what this supposed new change in image is all about. Maybe she just, somehow, has to be a person and that's why she's moving more, being more serious about matters like drug abuse.

I'm not that much an expert on the life and personal history of Nancy Reagan, but I do recall that her own stepfather was archconservative, arch-reactionary, and she might have had a reactionary influence on Ronald Reagan politically.

She was a career woman before it was fashionable, when most of our classmates were in condominiums, making a career out of marriage and four children and baking their own bread. She went to Hollywood and she went to Broadway, but now, as First Lady, she is an anachronism. She is somehow not only denying her earlier reality but the reality of American women today. What they want to be and what they need to be and what I think they would like represented in the First Lady, who

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should represent the highest standards and values for women, Republican and Democrat.

There is an expectation today that a woman can be and should be all the person that she is capable of being. She wants and values the choice to have children. She will be her husband's wife if she chooses to marry. But she will be a person, seriously committed to her own voice in society. We are not finished yet in this great massive revolution of women to full personhood and full equality. ~~She will use what position or power she has in some way identifying with women.~~ So I say to Nancy Reagan, "Why have you not used your voice in your role in the White House to give a fuller role model for younger women?"

I wouldn't fault her if she's not the same kind of feminist I am. She doesn't have to be a card carrying NOW member. Nobody would expect that of a Republican woman, but Betty Ford, who's a Republican, was courageous and outspoken on behalf of the basic move of women to equality. Here, Nancy Reagan, whose husband's administration is mounting a backlash against women's rights, is not raising her voice against it.

Have her advisors told her, "Look,

American women really didn't vote for your husband in numbers?"

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The Madame Chair<sup>58</sup> Kai-shek role--that's where her press has been lately--that she is propping him up or manipulating him or controlling him. If that is so, so be it. American women have a great hunger for more power. They have been too powerless, and they'll get it whatever way they can. If you're lucky enough to be First Lady, ~~and your Husband's president~~, you should use that role for all it's worth. For good things. ~~But to only be seen as a manipulator, not today. It's not right for a woman, certainly not right for an educated woman like Nancy Reagan.~~

I remember in the turbulent days of China it came out that Madame Chaing Kai-shek, who was Wellesley educated, I believe, was sort of like a Dragon Lady. She was really pulling the strings. It's coming out that Nancy Reagan is one of the most influential people. Well then, in what direction is this influence going?

I don't think anybody would have criticized Nancy Reagan forty <sup>or</sup> years ago, for just being a clothes horse, for the china that she is buying or whether she's wearing the clothes of this designer or that designer. Even now, as a feminist, I am interested in

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fashion and I think women are still interested in fashion. She can be as fashionable as she pleases. But there's got to be something more than that. I mean, Eleanor Roosevelt was a giant among women. We don't have such an image of Mrs. Eisenhower, but that was in the fifties when the whole country was pulling back from the American adventure.

Lady Bird Johnson, there was quite a woman there. Jacqueline Kennedy, everybody went ga-ga over her fashion and her decorative style, but there was a mind there, that brought poetry and art to the White House. I remember thinking at the time, if she would only stop using that whispery voice. You wanted her to be more.

Betty Ford was a very interesting example of a woman who started out in a very conventional way, but she lived up to the demands and the expectation of women. Is there really something going to emerge in Nancy Reagan where she senses that she could use her power on issues today where women's future is in jeopardy?

Dr. Barbara Kellerman:

The positions of the Reagan administration on women's issues such as abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment has been somewhat hard to determine. They had had a house feminist in that family, but it has not really been Nancy Reagan. It has been the president's eldest daughter, Maureen Reagan.

This has been very carefully done. It was more articulated in the eighty four campaign than in the eighty campaign. Nancy Reagan's role with regard to equal rights and abortion has been relatively quiescent. Intermittently, she has given slightly mixed signals on the subject, but she is a far cry from her two predecessors, Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter, who both came out very strongly for the Equal Rights Amendment. In that sense, if you are a feminist, if you believe in the Equal Rights Amendment, you would see the Reagan administration, and Nancy Reagan in particular, as a step back.

Nancy Reynolds:

Nancy Reagan was considered a very old fashioned, anachronistic wife in the sixties in California. I think a lot of the feminists

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are now wives and mothers and they may have softened a little more. Nancy Reagan hasn't changed, basically. But you know, she's always felt that people should do what they have to do and she would hope that people would respect how she feels.

Isn't it interesting that so many feminists today are saying, "Look, it's fine if women don't want to work and stay home for kids." That's okay. But it has taken the feminists, and I'm a feminist, a long time to come around to saying there is a lot to be said for women who have no interest in a career and who feel that their career is their family and their husbands, when they can financially manage to make it that full time.

So I think that it has moved on the other side a little. Nancy Reagan hasn't personally changed at all. After all, she has two very feminist daughters and she was like all of us with our children during the sixties. We had a lot of confrontations and Nancy Reagan stuck by her guns about how she felt about things. I bet if you interview the children, you will find that they have mellowed a great deal.



*1 or 2 line description of  
the course, very*

Richard Allen: (

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I would say that his is a tendency not to be engaged in staff difficulties and dustups., And hers is not the opposite tendency to get involved, but certainly she's not reluctant to voice her views.

I think she addresses the unpleasant tasks. Ultimately the decisions are his and he must take the responsibility for them.

She played no role at all in the political infighting. There was a decided campaign to have Haig and me engage. Al Haig and I have analyzed this. There wasn't nearly as much substance to the fabled Allen-Haig battles as has met the eye. There was a very well orchestrated campaign by colleagues in the White House to make it appear that we were constantly embattled.

Al has a steel spring personality, and I'm not reluctant to engage, from time to time, on issues or even on procedures. But this was exacerbated and exacerbated deliberately by some individuals in the White House. And I think that the reflection of that as it played in the newspaper came back to Mrs. Reagan.

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Obviously, she couldn't be happy about discord and disharmony in the administration under any circumstances. On top of that, we had an administration that was trying to devote its exclusive attention to domestic affairs for the first year. The secretary of state, Al, wanted foreign policy issues to get a share of attention. I share the president's agenda in trying to keep foreign policy--national security--not inconsequential but on a low key, on the back burner. And that lead to further misunderstandings. Nancy Reagan, I think, was influential but it wasn't because she came to all of the judgements that she made by herself or unassisted. She didn't do that unaided.

I think it was very clear at the time when I was on a leave of absence and the canard and inuendo that surrounded my case were being investigated by the Department of Justice--there were messages that I should resign and my answer was that I certainly would not resign until I knew what the outcome would be. Until such time, I wouldn't address the question of my future--until such time as I was cleared, as I knew, inevitably, I would be cleared.

Then I was repeatedly cleared of these really trumped up innuendos and allegations. I gather that, at one point, she joined some colleagues in the White House apart from those who were defending me and thought it would be best if I left.

But I wouldn't do it. My reputation was at stake, my family, my future, my integrity, my character. And until that was cleared, there wasn't anything that would cause me to leave.

I have no tangible evidence of her role except what I would read in the newspapers. Now Nancy Reagan was not talking to newspapers but there were those in her circle who were. And you couldn't distinguish. This is part of the problem in Washington, the great anonymous source.

I maintained a cordial relationship with Nancy Reagan in the years after my departure from the White House. I see her from time to time, talk to her, and there isn't the slightest hint of bitterness or anything else. I happen to support the president's agenda. I don't support people. I support ideas. I think she and the president know that I do that. Perhaps that has led to a more understanding relationship between us.