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*Last Updated: 03/05/2024*

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It's far better to have Nancy Reagan behind you.

Michael Deaver:

I think none of us really realized the public scrutiny or the media scrutiny that would be put on every little thing we did and said. There were some nasty articles. I don't think it was really a lot of anti-Nancy personal press in California. I don't think there's been that here, really.

Some of those people basically disagreed with her husband's philosophy. And so they might have used her to get back at Ronald Reagan and what his policies were.

I still think one of the turning points was when Nancy Reagan--aside from finally sitting down with her staff and telling them that she wanted to cut out all this other business they kept trying to force on her and just concentrate on drug abuse--came out to the Gridiron in old clothes and sang, "Second Hand Clothes" to the tune of "Second Hand Rose." The media in Washington changed their idea about Nancy Reagan overnight.

Nancy is a very direct person. She is not one who would like to sit around and think about an issue. She'd just as soon get it on the table. I know Nancy's upset about the whole Bitburg thing. So am I. I can't think of anything I feel worse about in my life than that. But she's not mad at me. If Nancy were mad at me about this, believe me, Mike Deaver would know it.

Lyn Nofziger:

All the criticism of her fixing up the living quarters was just outrageous because, one, she didn't use tax money, and two, the living quarters hadn't been fixed up in years. The floors, for instance, had <sup>not</sup> ~~never~~ been done since Harry Truman's time. To jump on her for that, for the new dishes which were contributed by a foundation, it just seemed to me that there were people out there looking to get her.

Stuart Spencer:

She was, to a degree, insecure, and you

could see it. The media could see it, definitely. But I have another theory. Ronald Reagan came in with a mandate. Ronald Reagan was hot property. Ronald Reagan had a lot of successes, and when you look at Washington, you look at the system we have have, where you have the government and the press and they're in basically adversary <sup>ial</sup> positions. There was no way the media could get at Ronald Reagan. He wasn't vulnerable. He was very successful. My theory is that the media decided that every day can't be puff-piece day, and a job was done on Nancy Reagan. She was more vulnerable.

She wasn't prepared for that sort of thing. She was in a state of shock. Being governor of California is a wonderful thing, but it's the minor leagues compared to the presidency of the United States. The capital press in Sacramento is not the capital press in Washington.

Richard Wirthlin:

When Nancy Reagan first came into the White House, there was a spate of stories

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that highlighted her spending. Republicans, whether they're coming to the White House in 1980 or 1972 or in the fifties are always viewed as the party of the more wealthy and affluent.

The press took the china issue and made it symbolic that this would be a regal presidency. They used Nancy Reagan very much as that symbol. When we asked people what they liked and disliked about Nancy, her perceived penchant <sup>for</sup> <sup>her</sup> to like expensive surroundings was much more prominent than it is today.

The attack had a chilling effect on Nancy. She tended to retreat, to be more defensive, to be more guarded. That provided in itself some reinforcement perhaps, at least perceptually, for some of the charges that were made.

But she's a tough, strong person. She was not at all happy or satisfied with the way she was being portrayed. She recognized that she could help both the president and a lot of people by taking a more active or a more public role on some things that she's always felt very concerned about.

The perception was much more dominant that she was somewhat snobbish, that she was aloof, that she was more interested in putting

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on a state dinner than anything else, that she was pushing for expensive china, which I think was clearly a bum rap. But there were reasons, far beyond Nancy Reagan, for those impressions to be reinforced.

Queen Nancy was the image that was being portrayed. She took the charge of being Queen Nancy and said, "How ridiculous." She borrowed a page from the president's book and used humor to defuse the charges: "I would never be anointed. It would mess up my hair." She had the ability and the grace under pressure, if you will, to rise above those kinds of charges.

Donnie Radcliffe:

Little things that might not have seemed so important or monumental when he was governor, they felt were blown up out of proportion. I think there were several things, several ways in which they got off to a bad start. One of them, before he even became president, was a flurry over the choice of her press secretary. Mrs. Reagan also made some sort of unthinking remarks about having a gun

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at her bedside table. There were reports that the Reagans wanted the Carters out of the White House so that they could do the redecorating. Whether or not any of that was true, it started them off wrong.

The problem was that people felt that Mrs. Reagan was not concerned about what the problems of the day were, the economic hardships of a certain group of people in this country. For a lavish decorating program to be undertaken almost immediately after the Reagans entered the White House seemed so frivolous. I don't think their friends helped them very much.

There's a popular view that there has to be a lightning rod for Ronald. Sorry. I know that's a popular view and I think it really isn't an accurate one. I think she generated those stories and those opinions by her own actions and her own attitudes.

I think Ronald Reagan did come in as an extremely popular man. He came in to establishment Washington and immediately was acceptable, something Jimmy Carter was not. But in Nancy Reagan's case, I don't really understand the thinking that she took the flak for things that couldn't be said about him. It just doesn't make any sense.

Bonita Granville Wrather:

I think the criticism of her lifestyle is erroneous. She's always been a lady who is well dressed, has grace and style, and ~~I think~~ she brings that to the White House. And that's very important. <sup>After all,</sup> We have all the other countries in the world looking at us. ~~We're the biggest nation in the world.~~

Letitia Baldrige:

She was the governor's wife. I've noticed people who have been very big fishes in the small seas in their home towns who deal with the press constantly. There's nothing like the White House. Everything changes. Every single movement you make, every flick of an eyelash, is scrutinized. It is the classic gold fish bowl. I remember in the Kennedy years, Mrs. Kennedy used to devise every route possible to get out of the White House grounds without being seen by the press and the public.



Sheila Tate:

It was the day ketchup was declared a vegetable for school lunch programs that the White House china story broke. I haven't thought the same of ketchup since.

Maureen Reagan:

I've always told her that if she was married to anybody in the world but Ronald Reagan, she would not be against the Equal Rights Amendment. Nancy Reynolds and I told her that years ago, back in the seventies. You have to understand. Here's a woman in this particular relationship who has had all of the freedom that you can have to make all of the choices. I just feel that if she had not had that kind of freedom, perhaps she would be out on the street marching with the rest of us.

What do I say to the Betty Friedans and other feminists who criticize? I suggest that they go back and read their own books.

~~(END CHAPTER SIX, END Nancy and Controversy)~~

*The First Lady's Causes*~~*The Cause*~~CHAPTER SEVEN: ~~Good Works~~

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Nancy Reagan:

Drug abuse is a very serious problem. Among the youth, among the working people. It's the most democratic problem that I know of. It crosses all lines. There are no social, economic, political, color lines. It crosses everything.

I feel very strongly about marijuana. I think it's a good deal more harmful than most children ~~think it is~~<sup>do</sup>. I've been to Day Top Village in New York a few times, which ~~I think~~ is doing a wonderful job. All those young people in there started on marijuana. I asked them if they were for the legalization of marijuana. Every one of them said "no," which is interesting. I didn't really expect them to say "no."

When it first started out in the sixties, this was all a brand new thing, and a frightening thing. Nobody knew quite how to handle it, and they were embarrassed. They thought their child was the only child on drugs. And some of them were too busy with their own lives and they didn't get involved

with their children's lives. They weren't wise enough to notice the little tell-tale signs that happen. As we've progressed more into the seventies and eighties, we're more aware. Parents are more aware, more scared, as well they should be.

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You can't be pessimistic about anything. You always have to be optimistic that you can solve something, anything in life. I think the fact that these parents' groups have sprung up voluntarily, all over, is a great sign that parents are getting involved, are becoming more knowledgeable. They're not only becoming more knowledgeable, but it brings their families closer together. There's been a tendency for the families to split apart. Now they're pulling together.

The administration has to cut everything. Otherwise, we're all going to go down the tube. But the drug program can sustain itself. The drug program hasn't been cut out of all funds. It has funds, but the most important thing is that the parents and corporations, business people, all become involved, all know what's happening to the people who are working for them, or their children, and do something about it.

Am I really committed to this issue? Of course I am. Because it's so dangerous. Because we do stand a chance of losing a whole generation to drugs. It's a very, very dangerous problem <sup>we're all facing.</sup> ~~that we have.~~ 151

It's not just our country that has this problem. Everybody who came here to see my husband, when he would be having meetings with the men, I would be having coffee with the wives, and the wives would always bring up drugs. At first, I thought, maybe, it was just because they knew I was interested in the drug problem, but then it became obvious that they were aware that this was happening in their country. <sup>is</sup> They wanted to know. They were asking for advice. So that was the next logical step. If you could catch it for them right at the beginning, then, maybe, you could do a lot of good.

I hope I made them aware of the whole global aspect of this and gave them some suggestions and ideas. We've been at it longer than <sup>many</sup> they have and I hope I <sup>was able to help,</sup> ~~gave them some ideas.~~

Nobody wanted me to do it, the drug issue. I guess they thought it was kind of a downer. It's not a ~~really~~ cheery subject.

I think I've brought it to a height of

awareness that it wasn't before. I <sup>hope</sup> think that more people are aware of how bad <sup>the drug problem</sup> it is and how widespread it is and how dangerous it is, which they weren't before. I don't see as many comedians, now, making jokes about it, thank goodness. It's not a funny ~~joke~~. I see more programs on television about it, hear more people coming forward and talking about what it's done to their lives, to their relationships, to their jobs.

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It's my understanding that there was no money cut. There was money given to the states in block grants, but money was not cut. That's number one. Number two, I don't believe ~~in~~ <sup>with</sup> anything <sup>problem</sup> ~~that~~ money is the <sup>whole</sup> answer. Money doesn't buy love or affection or attention or involvement, all those things that there have to be. Money doesn't buy those things. Only <sup>provide</sup> people buy those things, and, particularly, parents.

Dr. Barbara Kellerman:

It's a volunteer work of a particular kind. It tends to fall into categories that, for lack of a better word, I would describe as

being of a feminine nature. They have to do with health. They have to do with beautification. They have to do with young children. They're the kinds of supportive, nurturing, prettifying tasks and roles that have, historically, been associated with the woman's role in this particular culture.

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Nancy Reagan's interest originally was in the foster grandparents program. It's now in drug abuse. Rosalynn Carter, who was interested in hard policy, still made it a point to become involved with mental health. Lady Bird Johnson was very involved with highway beautification. Jacqueline Kennedy redid the White House. These tend very much to be the same kinds of roles, women's roles more than anything else. It's not just a question of volunteerism.

On the issue of the relationship and the support of their husbands, the nature of that support really differs enormously from First Lady to First Lady, and the nature of that support depends on nothing as much as the relationship to the president.

First Ladies in general have not been strikingly successful in lobbying for their causes. I have to be careful when I say that because, in many ways, they have drawn

attention to their causes and attention breeds success in a way that could never have happened unless they had focused their attention on these particular issues.

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By the same token, when people look back on First Ladies, they don't particularly associate them with their causes any longer. Perhaps Lady Bird Johnson and her beautification, conservation, and wild flowers is an exception to this. My prediction is that unless Nancy Reagan becomes much bolder in her approach to her very genuine interest in drug abuse, and does more for it, she will not finally be remembered for that. She will be remembered for her tie to her husband.

Donnie Radcliffe:

It was a serious effort on the part of her aides because they felt that it was necessary for her to have a significant and meaningful project. And I do believe that she has had a long standing interest, ~~though I do not know how intensive,~~ in drug abuse. But I think it sort of grew without them realizing how successful it was going to become.

<sup>believe</sup>  
 I don't think she had her project well defined when she first came into the White House, because she was talking more about Foster Grandparents than she was about drug abuse. ~~I think~~ <sup>By</sup> the time a year had gone by, <sup>though,</sup> it became apparent that there had to be something more startling, more significant, for her to be involved in and her aides realized that it could well be accomplished through a project on drug abuse.

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Sheila Tate:

She sits there and those big eyes focus on a kid and the kid finds himself telling his whole life story to her, and they both sit there and cry, but <sup>when she</sup> <sup>the kid comes</sup> ~~leaves~~ <sup>saying,</sup> "You know, here's someone so important, and she cares about me." And that's the feeling they got from that. That started building. She would go to prevention programs where she'd learn what the problems were that they were spotting in five, six, seven-year-old kids--basically self esteem problems--and how they were dealing with it. And she was taking that camera, that media spotlight, and she was taking it and turning it around and focusing it on the



issue, which is something she cared about.

That's another thing I can't emphasize enough. Her staff didn't want her involved in that issue. We dragged our feet. We looked for alternative programs. We said, "This is depressing. How will she make an impact?" So we came up with some upbeat things, things she could affiliate with and she'd say, "This is nice, but <sup>drug abuse is important and I want to get involved in</sup> I want to get involved in <sup>fighting it.</sup> drug abuse, and <sup>when's our next meeting with so and so?"</sup>

She kept putting it back on course during that whole first year, and the smart thing was she recognized that if she was going to spend four or eight years involved in an issue, it was going to be something she cared about.

Mary Jane Wick:

She's always had a great concern about drug abuse in the world, not just in this country. And she feels it's a great tragedy what's happened. She has ~~great~~ compassion for individuals, great compassion.

Imagine how terrible it is to be older

in life and feel you still have something to give but you have nobody to give it to. And to be able to share that with somebody young and also have the young person be helped at the same time. It's really a wonderful program which started during the time her husband was governor of California.

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She opened the eyes of people all over the world to the drug abuse of young people because they are the future of our country and many lives are ruined because of that. I'm so proud of her. I really am.

Michael Deaver:

All I can tell you is that I can remember coming back here on an airplane with Nancy Reagan during the transition period and I said, "Have you ever thought about what you're going to do back here?" And she said, "Yeah, I've always wanted to get into the whole teenage drug abuse problem." It was not a last minute thing. It was not an attempt to simply recoup her <sup>popularity</sup> ratings. It was something she felt very strongly and still does feel very strongly about. All you have to do is go to one of those conferences.

William F. Buckley:

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I think her drug effort is extremely important to anybody who had children who grew up during the sixties. I saw a picture of her in the New York Daily News centerfold and the caption was, "Mrs. Reagan Cheers Up Billy Buckley O'Reilly," a nephew of mine who was having trouble with drugs and was in a rehabilitation place and she didn't even know we were related. I learned subsequently from him about the warmth of that exchange.

You have to remember that in California in the sixties, ~~it~~ was the home of the drug culture. You have to remember also that her husband couldn't speak at any college in California for three or four years when he was governor because they wouldn't permit him on campus. So that the impact of the drug culture and all that it tends to suggest in terms of misbehavior and civil misbehavior means a great deal to her as a result of the phenomenon of her having been First Lady of California during its most frenzied status.

I suppose that anything that any public

figure does is subject to the charge of public relations to improve an image. You can say that about Florence Nightingale, that she was concerned about her image. You can say that the Queen of England has really no interest whatsoever in antiques but she feels that she ought to every now and then go to an antique show. *But the First Lady truly, deeply cares about this problem.*

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Bonita Granville Wrather:

Ambition is a wonderful thing. I think that she has become ambitious for the good of our country. Certainly it took a great deal of ambition to plunge in<sup>to</sup> that drug program, ~~she's~~ in and a lot of ambition to get up in the morning and travel on planes and meet with psychologists and psychiatrists and meet with some of the young people who are on drugs and talk to them. It's been heartbreaking for her to see them. I think her ambition is channeled in a wonderful direction. It isn't an ego trip of any kind.

James Rosebush:

Every year, focusing on this international drug problem, Mrs. Reagan has sought to narrow her focus, and in some ways broaden her focus. It seemed very obvious because of all the requests she was getting from First Ladies around the world to share information and knowledge about what she'd done on drug abuse, to expand it on an international level.

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*?  
Clear up?*

It wasn't suddenly, I arrived on the scene, or 1982 was here and this was a brand new plan. She made a commitment to drug abuse a couple of years before that. In fact, during that first year she was educating herself on drugs. Now, hindsight would say that should have been promoted more. People should have known that she was meeting with those people and so forth. But the fact was she was doing the right thing first, and that was becoming knowledgeable about the issue. The plan was in place all along for her to be able to get out, get to treatment centers and so forth, and she'd been to some treatment centers before.

We gave her the options. We came up with places for her to visit--treatment centers. Our role was basically to say, "Let us be your eyes and ears to go out. You want to travel

around the country. You want to talk to kids. You want to find out about their problems. Our role as a staff is to help you do that." And that's what we did. And that's where we put sixty thousand miles on the plane.

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Watch Nancy Reagan in action. You can't fabricate love. You can't fabricate concern, at least to the degree that she's shown it. This isn't something you can manufacture overnight. You can't, instantly, have the kind of attraction back and forth that she has with kids. She's like a magnet for kids. I've been there. I've watched it. I've seen kids of all ages drawn to her for some reason. I can't put my finger on it. There's a natural attraction there.

I think there are a lot of concrete results. Thousands of parents' groups have formed coalitions to do something: Shut down the head shops; get legislation enacted; meet together to boost each others' morale and get their kids out of trouble.

Just through the television show, "The Chemical People," which she hosted, which was the largest grassroots effort ever undertaken on television, local communities are organized now to fight drugs. Making a national priority out of this issue is what a First Lady of the

United States can really do. I think she's accomplishing that.

She's got a committment in her blood now. She sees the dimensions of the problem, and she wants to solve it. She always asks wherever she goes, "What else can I do?" I think you're <sup>always</sup> going to see her working hard on it.

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~~(END CHAPTER SEVEN, END "Good Works")~~

*Eight The First Lady*  
CHAPTER TEN: ~~Nancy~~ and Politics

Nancy Reagan:

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People say I'm a very savvy politician? Well, that's flattering. True? I don't know. Maybe that gets more into the realm of people, of having a feel for people.

My husband projects tremendous trust in the American people, really tremendous. After how many years in politics always my husband has been underestimated by whoever he might be running against, underestimated by the press. But the people have felt that he was sincere and honest and that there was an integrity there. And they responded to that.

I was upset after the first presidential debate in 1984. I thought they'd gone about it all wrong, and they had. They overloaded him. He knows all those things. They don't have to overload him.

I suggested some changes. The second one was better, wasn't it?

Did Al Haig leave because of me? No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, oh, no. Is it true that after the 1984 election I wanted to clear the dead wood out of the cabinet? I thought



that, in reading history, I'd always been given to understand that at the end of your first term that was a logical time, if you wanted to make changes, to do it. Yes, I did think that. and what happened? Not much.

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Did I want the presidency more than he did? I read that. Not true. I thought I married an actor. He was asked to run for office soon after we got married, and turned it down. He was asked by the Democrats when he was still a Democrat. And when the governorship came along, I went along with it. But that wasn't something I had carved out for our future.

Ed Rollins:

~~I think~~ The president is very pragmatic and he has very good political instincts and, very good people instincts. <sup>But</sup> I think there is no question that <sup>Nancy</sup> ~~she~~ can step back and probably take a little better view of it than he can, being involved in the day to day aspect of it.

She called me from time to time in the

course of the campaign and raised concerns about particular things that might be happening around the country. She has a very good network out there ~~among her friends~~<sup>S</sup>, and, most of the time, when she calls me, she's got very valid points. 171

She was very concerned in the California campaign during the 1984 election that the people out there were probably not being as effective as they could have been and that Mondale was making a very heavy effort ~~out~~<sup>in the state,</sup> there and she wanted to make sure that we were alert to it. We were, but certainly, when she made her call, I went out and rechecked everything again and made a few changes.

She's a darned good, savvy politician. I certainly would value her judgement. I think both she and the president don't like to think of themselves as politicians. He is someone who sort of shies away if you say, "Politically, Mr. President, you need to do this." But I think he has superb people instincts, and she does, too. She happens to be a much better politician with this particular candidate because she's lived with him and knows his strengths and weaknesses so well. But nevertheless, I would certainly always want her on my team.

I don't <sup>believe</sup> ~~think~~ she tries to get involved in the appointment process, but I think that she certainly want to measure people who work for her husband and wants to make sure that their effort is a total effort.

~~I think that~~ <sup>I</sup> the two of them prefer not talking ahead of the actual election. I remember when Wirthlin and I were briefing the two of them coming across country on the Sunday before the election. It was very obvious that the president, according to the public opinion polls and all private polls, was going to have a tremendous victory. I think that they wouldn't believe it. They just wanted to wait until election day. ~~I think~~ <sup>that's</sup> always been their style. They didn't live as close to the polls or the numbers and what was going around the country as some of us in the day-to-day aspect of the campaign did.

She was not involved in the day-to-day ~~in any~~ <sup>s</sup> aspect of the campaign. She was the person who sat there day in and day out with the president and, basically, had to react one way or the other to what was going on and the charges that were made on the other side. ~~She~~ ~~did not live day to day with the campaign.~~ She

was not calling people in the campaign getting daily ~~updates~~ or weekly updates. We tried to talk to her every couple of weeks to let her know what was happening, and kept her pretty confident that we were doing what was right.

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I think that she felt that it was very, very important, as we started a second term, that we had the very best we could get, and there were some people who had not worked out effectively, as was hoped when we started this administration. I think her concerns were concerns ~~that were~~ shared by many people <sup>who</sup> ~~that~~ advised the president. She wasn't in the forefront. I think she had conversations with the head of personnel here in the White House, and with Jim Baker, and with Stu Spencer about what it was that we needed in the second term.

I think <sup>all</sup> ~~any~~ of us feel this is the big leagues and you ought to be able to play in this league, and if you can't, it's just like the National Football League or NBC News. If you can't cut it, you ought to be replaced.

<sup>The First Lady</sup>  
I think ~~she~~ felt that the staff had probably overbriefed the president for that first campaign debate. There was no question he wasn't as relaxed. I think it had just been the fact that he hadn't been in the arena in a long time. Mondale had fifty three debates in

the course of the primary season before our debate. It'd been four years since the president had. I think she was very concerned that he perform well the second time.

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Walking off the stage, he was the first one to make the comment that his performance in the first debate wasn't a typical Reagan performance. She felt it was imperative that maybe the staff get out of the way and the president just get ready for the second debate, the way that he was most comfortable.

Lyn Nofziger:

I think she's played a very important role in her husband's political career. She's a very smart woman. She is very politically astute. I sometimes think that if there weren't a Nancy Reagan, there wouldn't be a President Reagan or maybe even a Governor Ronald Reagan.

She has been certainly a motivating force in his life. This doesn't mean she controls him, doesn't mean that she tells him what to do, doesn't mean that he's under her influence. But it does mean that they share together <sup>the</sup> a direction in which he goes.

They're a very close couple. They talk things over. But you must remember back in the middle ~~sixties~~<sup>s</sup> and early sixties, a lot of people came to Reagan and said run for governor, run for the senate, one thing or another, and he'd always said, "no." He was happier doing what he was doing. I think that if Nancy had said, "Ronnie, don't run for governor. I don't want you to, ~~run for governor~~. This is the good life," that he could probably have made the decision not to go. The fact that she was very supportive there and has been all along has been an integral part of his campaigns, an integral part of his ambitions, if you will. I think it's made all the difference in the world.

~~I think that~~ She's an advisor, ~~I think that she's~~ a confidante. ~~I think that~~ She is unafraid to tell him what she thinks he ought to hear or what she thinks he ought to do. Once again, it doesn't mean that he does it. It's not a formal role and it's not a role that sees her being active in the White House as a policy person or as somebody who views herself as part of the White House staff or the cabinet. I think Ronald Reagan has been very lucky to have Nancy there.

Stuart Spencer:

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She looks for loyalty to the president and to his programs. I can't say she looks for anything particularly. She commands loyalty, and she feels that anybody ~~that's~~ working for the president should be a loyal person.

She looks for talent that fills spots. When I came back into the Reagan operation in 1980, it was at her behest, basically, and the president's. They were having problems, politically, and she has always viewed me as a good politician, either when I was with ~~her~~<sup>them</sup> or against ~~her~~<sup>them</sup>, which I was in 1976. So they wanted me to come back because they felt they needed the political skills.

She usually works through other people. She informs them of what her thinking is. I think her great strength is the fact that she's a conveyor of information to staff that the president would not convey to them. The president's not the type of person ~~that's~~<sup>who</sup> going to come down in the morning and say, "Stu, you really screwed up." He just won't do that. But he might say to Nancy, "Boy, you know, I think Stu really screwed up on that

one the other day." She'd call me up and say, "Spencer, you really screwed up!" You get the message. You could go for two or three weeks with Ronald Reagan and not know he's mad at you.

We include her in a lot of decision making in the political process when we're in the campaign. If we're having a discussion with the president and we're, maybe, losing the discussion, and we think it's a strong enough point that should be made, we might enlist her help if we can. She doesn't always go with us. Many times, she thinks we're wrong.

I think she's a very good politician. I think she has the skills and the instincts of a politician and she's tactically very, very, very strong. He's probably stronger strategically, but tactically, to get things done, she's very good.

He has the big picture. He understands the strategy of how he wants to get from here to there, and maybe some things that can happen. But she understands better how you get from here to there.

She is a conservative. They're like minded, ideologically, but she is always concerned about the fact that you can't govern



unless you have public approval, and she recognizes that fact. And to keep your approval ratings up, your perceptions have to be up. She wants him to be able to govern, to accomplish the things that he wants to accomplish, and he's only going to be able to do that if his approval ratings are <sup>good</sup> ~~up~~.

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She didn't make life tough for me after I supported Gerald Ford over her husband in 1976, but I got several messages in the back channels <sup>so</sup> that <sup>I</sup> I knew very well where she stood. I don't think I saw her from that period until 1980. I don't think I even talked to her in that period of time. I was the leper.

In 1980, I didn't want to get involved in an effort like that with all the problems that were potentially there unless I knew I had the support of the principals. I think my biggest single problem after the seventy six campaign was more with her than it was with him because he is more forgiving, in a lot of ways, than she is. So I wanted to make sure that that base was covered. I knew her feelings were stronger than his about what happened in 1976.

I think he would have probably gotten

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elected governor in 1966 with anybody else as his wife. He was a hot property in California. He was a new face. They were looking for a change and his timing was excellent. I don't think he'd have become president of the United States without Nancy Reagan. Because of her drive, her support system, she gave him through the good and the bad. He spent a lot of time on the road between 1974 and 1976, looking for the nomination. And then it was grasped away from him, so to speak, by circumstances. And then they came back, in 1980, and she was there the whole time. Tremendous support system.

Ronald Reagan maintains that the office seeks the man, and that's the major disagreement that he and I have. If you want to be president, you go get it. I mean, if you really look at Ronald Reagan's record from 1966 on, he was running for the presidency in 1968. He went out and he went after it. He wanted it badly.

In the last campaign, the president was at the top, Jimmy Baker was next, and then we all fed into Jimmy and he fed it into the president. As we were developing our ideas and concepts, we'd feed it back to Nancy if we felt there was a problem. Some parts of the

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political process, like precinct organization,  
phone banks, coalition building, etc., etc.,  
she understands. Other things she doesn't  
understand, but she <sup>knows</sup> ~~understands~~ how her  
husband likes to operate. She know how he  
looks best, <sup>and</sup> ~~she knows what~~ how, he's feeling,  
and you just have got to keep her plugged in.

I wouldn't emphasize the toughness. I  
think she can be tough, but she's a very sweet  
person, too, and a very warm person. I  
wouldn't want to construe that she's just a  
tough woman. There are a lot tougher women in  
this process than she is.

If you ask the question, "Are you  
generally favorably or unfavorably impressed  
with the president?," you'll probably get  
numbers in the high seventies. When we use  
something called a feeling thermometer, which  
is a very different rating, the president's  
ratings have been quite close to Nancy's.

I think the extent to which Nancy Reagan  
brings a dimension of concern about important  
issues to the forefront, issues that are  
widely supported by a large number of  
Americans, to that extent, it does help the  
president. There's no doubt in my mind that  
Nancy Reagan is a strong political asset to

the president of the United States.

I don't think there was a lot of concern inside the White House that Nancy was becoming a political problem. But I do recall having conversation with some of the political pros outside of the White House at that time. They said Nancy Reagan <sup>could</sup> ~~can~~ never be a major help to the presidency, <sup>and</sup> therefore, she should simply keep a low profile. If that counsel had been followed, I think it would have been a disaster for both her and the president. I'm of course personally pleased that she went a very different and much more active route.

As I said earlier, Nancy has very good political instincts. In the latter part of eighty three and the first part of eighty four, Nancy reviewed with me at length how she viewed the potential democratic contenders, and gave me as good and as clear and as helpful an analysis of Mondale and Glenn and Hart as any of the so-called political pros. In fact, her judgements and her instincts in some ways were even more closely attuned to what the realities turned out to be than some of those who are paid for their political judgement.

In October of eighty three, she felt that Glenn simply would not get the nomination

and she didn't see the hard phenomenon of the <sup>a</sup> January before the New Hampshire primary when he really did emerge. She did tag Hart as someone that could give Mondale a run for his money. She felt that Mondale would likely be the opponent. She <sup>believed</sup> ~~felt~~ his biggest vulnerability was his tendency, his penchant to attack, and do it in a way that would alienate rather than gain support. She was right on target on that particular judgement.

I think she's an excellent pol, especially when it involves making judgements about people's assets and liabilities. She's able to size up political motivations rather quickly. She's been involved, very much in the background, in politics for eighteen, nineteen <sup>or</sup> years and she's learned a great deal in that period.

Nancy Reagan is a realist and she's also very willing to make some tough decisions on personnel. I think that I realized that for the first time when there was a change in the 1980 campaign staff. Nancy Reagan felt very strongly that a change should be made. She's willing to make and suggest some tough decisions.

I talk to her quite frequently. In a

number of those discussions, we review the things that I know she's interested in. She's interested in the president's job rating, the mood of the country, ~~to some extent in a general profile.~~ She's <sup>also</sup> interested how her job rating, <sup>is doing.</sup> ~~on her measures are going.~~ 183

She has a good deal of sensitivity about communicating messages. The president is identified as the great communicator. Well, Nancy Reagan has an awfully good sense as to what kinds of messages can be communicated clearly and which cannot. I think she recognizes correctly the importance<sup>ce</sup> of leadership not only as an end in itself but the importance of having someone who is viewed as a strong leader to open up other options that wouldn't be there to a person who is viewed as less consistent and less strong. She views politics, again correctly, as a personalized activity--that is, people judging people and whether or not they trust an individual, whether or not they believe that individual is since<sup>re</sup>. These are things she ranks relatively high.

Whether or not to run for a second term was an open question for Nancy until quite late. I think she was finally persuaded by November or December of 1983. She was still

very open on whether the president should run and how she felt about that until sixty days before he announced. From what I know, they sat down, reviewed it together, looked at the pluses and the minuses, the challenges that would come running for a second term. By November, by December, Nancy had pretty well decided that, given the president's feelings, she would support his running for a second term.

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Mary Jane Wick:

I think when you live in Washington, you have to talk politics. You couldn't possibly live here for four years and not discuss politics. We just discuss things in general and perhaps what's current. There are many issues she's interested in. I think their views are shared.

President Reagan:

Neither one of us ever really set out to do what we find ourselves doing. When the

group came, in 1965, after the sixty four election when I had supported the candidacy of Barry Goldwater, I had always thought that my contribution could be that, being a performer and thus well known and maybe able to attract an audience, I could support people and causes I believed in. Never did I ever think that I would want to hold public office. And this group came after the party had been so torn apart in the dissension of that campaign. California was so split and they said that maybe we could have a hand in bringing them together. They kept emphasizing that I could win.

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Our first reaction was, you know, "Don't talk foolishness. Go find a candidate and I'll be very happy to do everything I can to help him. But, no, that's not for us. That's not our way of life."

Well, they kept on and they kept on until we couldn't sleep. It seemed to be such a total change of our entire life that finally I said, "What if they're right?" and "What if this is something and we wouldn't be able to live with ourselves if we keep on saying no?"

So the deal I made then, with perfect confidence that it would not result in my running for office, was, "All right, if you'll



set it up so that I can accept all the speaking engagements here in California, not just political, chambers of commerce, things of that kind, but let me do it for the next six months. I'll come back and tell you before the six months is over, whether you're right, that I should be the candidate or whether there's <sup>W</sup>somebody else. And I'll continue doing what I've been doing in the past."

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And they did that and I did my best out there. When people would come up after a speech and say, "You ought to do this," and I'd say, "no," and I'd start talking to someone else. I finally came home one night and said, "They're right. I think I do have the best chance of winning."

We almost decided between ourselves that, when I finally gave in and said, "Yes," I did it with the idea in mind that it was only for the election, that when the election was over I could go back to doing what I was doing.

Sometime after I'd become governor, and we were sitting in the living room, all of a sudden it came to both of us that what we were doing made everything else we'd ever done seem dull as dishwater--that was the expression she

used. And it was true. I had never anticipated sacrificing something I loved doing for something that was really going to be a chore, But instead of just talking about the problems from the outside, to actually deal with them and to have a hand in solving them--well, one man who was a governor back when I was a performer had said to me about his job, sometimes he went home feeling ten feet tall. We both felt that way about it.

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~~(END CHAPTER TEN, END "Nancy and Politics")~~

CHAPTER <sup>Nine</sup>~~ELEVEN~~: The Assassination Attempt

Nancy Reagan:

I remember everything about it, 188  
everything ~~about it~~. I'd gone out to lunch and  
for some reason, which I still don't  
understand--we'd almost finished lunch--I  
said, "I think I'd better get back to the  
White House," and I got up and left.

I came home and I was upstairs and the  
Secret Service man came up and said, "I'd like  
to see you." I went down and he said, "There's  
been a shooting but your husband's all right."  
Well, I was halfway down the elevator and I  
said, "I want to . . ." and he said, "No,  
it's all right. He's all right. They'll be  
bringing him back here. He's all right." I  
said, "I want to go," and we started out. We  
got there and they were waiting for me in the  
hospital to tell me that he had been hit.

I can remember the sound in the  
hospital. I can remember the confusion, the  
voices, the people running back and forth, the  
police telling people to get away.

I can remember being put into a little  
room--I think maybe three people could've

gotten into it--where I still would have been if Paul Laxault hadn't come along and said, "Don't you think we could put Mrs. Reagan in another room?" I remember wanting to see my husband and being told I couldn't, and then finally seeing him and the wonderful humor and strength that came through when he lifted up that thing and said, "Honey, I forgot to duck." I remember everything, going into the operating room, the smells, everything.

I don't think that's something that goes away. I think you both have your own separate traumas. I'm sure he has his, but I have mine.

You learn to live with that. You have to. You know that everything's being done that can possibly be done, but, you know, everything's gotten so much worse all over the world.

I was pretty beaten down. Then, my father was ill. I lost weight. I knew all the rumors going around that I was ill, and I couldn't tell them really why I was losing weight.

As I look back on it, I think I was in a state of shock much longer than I realized I was. My husband, I think, realized it more than I did. He was the one who suggested that

I go to England for the Prince of Wales' wedding because he felt that if I got away and went to a royal wedding--and when am I going to get to a royal wedding again?--that it would be good for me. But it was his idea.

It's something that you don't forget. I thought, maybe, it would fade a little, but it doesn't. Every time he leaves the house, particularly to go on a trip, I think my heart stops till he gets back.

I really didn't worry before. I really didn't. You know that that's a possibility and so on but you never think it's going to happen to you, and when it does, it's a shock that stays with you.

If the president worries about it, he doesn't tell me. Some things are just too painful to talk about, aren't they? Life is always peaks and valleys and that was certainly a valley.

Did it give me more a sense of mortality? Oh yes. You rearrange your priorities very quickly.

When anyone asks me about the security and Secret Service and doesn't it bother me and so on, I say not at all. I'm very happy to have them. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't have a husband.

President Reagan:

I think that it took her longer to heal than it did me, and I can understand that. I was confident that I was going to be all right and all, but I'm sure it would be harder for me to have to stand by and see someone else and have the worry that goes with it.

Just picture the difference. All right, it's happened to me and I'm there and I know and I'm going to the hospital and so forth, but the difference of someone at home on what's a normal, routine day, and someone walks in and says what has happened--that's got to be a lot worse than it is to the person that it happened to.

William F. Buckley:

The assassination attempt was so tough on her that I think she sincerely regretted that he'd run for president. And it was during that period when at least I had the impression that she was very cool at the

prospect of his running again. Gradually, that fear was overcome. And then, of course, ~~when she decided,~~ <sup>when</sup> ~~that~~ he decided that he wanted to run again, that became dominant in her own thinking. It was that evolution in her thinking.

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She didn't want to risk her husband's life unnecessarily. And she thought that perhaps that was being done. That was during the height of her apprehension that, well, he came very close to dying as we all know. She knew it all along. Her reaction to it was totally protective. Why should he run that risk?

Michael Deaver:

It was a tough time. We had a lot of conversation both in person and on the phone trying to keep her up. But she's a strong willed lady and I think that whole experience, as it did all of us, strengthened her.

It was tough. Her life is Ronald Reagan. And she came very close to losing him. And then she had her father's death a little bit later. But this could have been the big loss of her life. I can remember myself--and her

feelings would have been a hundred fold what mine were--going home and saying to my wife after ten days, after seeing the president ten days after he was shot, I said, "Carolyn, I'll never be the same." If I felt that way, my God, what did Nancy Reagan feel? I knew she couldn't sleep. I knew she wasn't eating. I talked to the doctors about it and I said, "You really have got to get in there because she doesn't look well." And her friends were all coming around, bringing her candy and cookies and trying to give her encouragement and get her to fatten up a little bit.

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Maureen Reagan:

We had lived for years with the knowledge that something like that could happen, but you're never prepared for it. She was not prepared for it. She was not prepared for the fact that--despite his humor and his climbing out of it--he was very seriously injured, much more seriously than anybody knew at that time. I was there a week after the assassination attempt, and I can tell you it was pretty bad. She sat there, in that



hospital, all day long. Every two hours, they would go in and they would physically pound on his back to try to get the lungs to release this fluid that was building up. You could hear this. It was like somebody slapping a side of beef. She just sat there and she said, "That's your father they're doing that to." She sat there all day long with that, day after day after day. That has to take a toll on anybody, much more than I think any of us realized, much less anybody in the public.

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~~(END CHAPTER ELEVEN, END "The Assassination Attempt")~~

Title: Family and friends  
subhead ~~sub~~ NANCY AND Her Children 195-212

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TEN Family, Friends  
CHAPTER TWELVE: Nancy and Her Children  
combine of 13 + 14

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Nancy Reagan:

I think I've been a good mother. Many times discipline is left to the mother because fathers are busy. Certainly, we had a father who was busy. So mother ended up being the disciplinarian, which is not always a happy role. Our children were growing up in the sixties, which was a terrible time to try to raise children for children and for parents both.

I believed in discipline. I did not believe in being permissive or that, if they wanted to color the walls with crayons, it was okay. I didn't believe in that. But I hope they always knew that I was there if there was a serious problem.

Ron didn't plan on getting married the way he did it. He and Doria got to the marriage bureau and there was all this press there. They didn't expect that. So they thought, rather than having to go through this twice, we'll do it. And as soon as they did it, they called us to tell us and explain to us. It's a little misleading, the way it's

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been reported.

Patti was in Paris and they got the engagement ring. As soon as they got back here, they called and we had a very nice wedding and they're very happy.

As far as Michael is concerned, every family has periods of misunderstandings or difficulties or whatever you want to call them. They solve them. The main thing is that you try to solve them and hopefully you do. But you're lucky if you have a private life and you can do it privately rather than in the papers.

I don't believe in talking about family in public.

All I said about Michael was the one sentence about trying to settle a problem and I never said anything more. Again, that was blown up into such a big thing. Every family has their problems at one time or another. And you try to settle them. And that's what you hope for. No family can go through life without problems from time to time. We're all human beings.

I certainly would have tried to stop it if one of my children had gotten involved in drugs. I certainly would have tried. I ~~certainly~~ wouldn't have sat back and said,