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**Folder Title:** Nancy Reagan: Salvation Army  
(Parvin) Dec. 1, 1982  
**Box:** 436

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(Parvin)  
November 24, 1982  
10:30 a.m.

MRS. REAGAN: SALVATION ARMY AWARD  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1982

-- Thank you. You know one of my most vivid memories as a child in Chicago belongs to the Salvation Army. I can still see those snowy sidewalks full of Christmas shoppers and hear the ringing of a Salvation Army bell. And many others besides me have similar warm recollections. To millions of Americans, the Salvation Army represents the spirit of giving all year round. So I'm genuinely honored you've awarded this special gift to me, the Citation of Merit.

-- I've learned a lot about the nature of giving lately. I've visited drug treatment centers where children are learning to give of themselves once again, after drugs had taken their personalities, their health, their families and their self-respect. I've also met with Foster Grandparents who are so full of love and life's generosity that they truly embody the joy of giving. There is a deep current of goodness and giving in America. And what I've been trying to do is help that current flow where it can be most useful.

-- Let me first say a few words about drug abuse. I wish I could tell you all the accounts I've heard -- stories of pain and hurt so raw they bring tears to your eyes. Not only are the children suffering, but the parents feel anguish and desperation as well. One mother recently wrote to me pleading, "I'm begging

you to help me save my son." How do you reply to such a heart-wrenching plea? Yet for all the stories of heartache I hear, I also find more and more instances of success over drugs.

-- I want to tell you about one of those instances -- a story of giving and the nobility of a mother's love. Not long ago I received a letter from a mother who poured out the pain of her son's drug problem. She stood by him time and time again, because she knew that deep down the kid who kept ending up in jail wasn't really her son, but some incarnation of the son she once knew. She suffered a terrible auto accident spending months in the hospital, and when her son came to visit her he was stoned. She even had to beg the doctor to release her from the hospital early so she could get her son out of jail. He was arrested once more, and using a walker because of the cast on her body, she again went to free her son from jail, for she wanted to save her son more than anything else. The mother's sacrifices finally welled up in the boy and he said to her. "Mom, you still love me after all I've done to hurt you, don't you?" She said that was the turning point. All of us involved in the drug abuse problem are looking for the turning point -- the point where we can get the kids who are on drugs off them, the point where we can prevent other children from using them in the first place.

-- The turning of a child against drugs requires giving. It may be the giving of a parent, a friend, a minister, or a Salvation Army counsellor, but giving of oneself is the key. And I know

this is a concept that needs no explanation to the Salvation Army.

-- Foster Grandparents also are synonymous with giving. As I told a group of them at the White House several weeks ago, Sir James Barrie once said something that captures their spirit perfectly. He said, "Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves." I'd say that quote fits the Salvation Army pretty well, too.

-- The Foster Grandparents program combines the time and love of older people with the special needs of children, children who crave that time and love. There is a wonderful rapport between the generations. The young and the old cannot resist the warmth each offers the other. And I would be hard put to tell you which generation benefits more from the exchange.

-- There are thousands of touching stories to tell here. Several dozen are in my book, To Love a Child, at your local bookstores . . . makes a great Christmas present. You'll forgive me for plugging the book but all proceeds go to the Foster Grandparents program. But let me tell you about one of the grandparents in the book, Grandma Ruby. After her husband Peter died, Ruby was virtually paralyzed with grief. She lost 20 pounds and couldn't face food. She was helpless, not even understanding how a checking account worked because her Peter had always taken care of it. Her life was disintegrating. One day

she looked at Peter's old leather chair and sank to her knees, burying her face in the seat. "Dear God," she prayed. "Give me a reason to live or let me die."

-- Grandma Ruby found that reason in her work with young girls who'd been molested. She brought sunshine to the lives of others and her own life is now bright as well. Let me read you part of a letter she sent me. She wrote, "I have received many letters from girls and women all over the country, thanking me for my work and also asking prayers and help for lives that are still hurting. God has surely blessed me and is giving me much to do in my old age." Well, I think the girls whom Ruby helps would say they are the ones who are blessed with Ruby's generosity.

-- I know the Salvation Army understands what I've been speaking of today. Someone said that we must not only give what we have; we must give what we are. Well, in countless ways every day the Salvation Army gives of itself. It gives faith, love, and a helping hand to those who are reaching out. I'm honored to be here today and I am deeply honored to receive this citation. Thank you and God bless you for all you're doing.

(Parvin)  
November 24, 1982  
9:20 a.m.

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(Parvin)  
November 23, 1982  
4:30 p.m.

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1982

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Insert A

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