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1981-1989

Folder Title: Tom Dunne St. Martin's Press Book
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Last Updated: 03/06/2024

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 25, 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR JACK COURTEMANCHE

FROM: TOM GIBSON *TG*
SUBJECT: Book entitled First Lady

I am referring to your attention further correspondence from Thomas L. Dunne.

We previously forwarded his request for an introduction by the President for a book entitled First Lady: A Portrait of Nancy Reagan by NBC News and Chris Wallace.

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

Thank you.

7/1/86
Edc called TOM GIBSON
and said NO need for
the President to
do forward
JLSG

THE WHITE HOUSE
CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

INCOMING

DATE RECEIVED: JUNE 20, 1986

NAME OF CORRESPONDENT: MR. THOMAS L. DUNNE

SUBJECT: FORWARDS LAYOUTS FOR BOOK "FIRST LADY" AND
REQUESTS THAT THE PRESIDENT WRITE A FEW WORDS
BY WAY OF A FORWARD TO THE BOOK

		ACTION		DISPOSITION	
ROUTE TO: OFFICE/AGENCY	(STAFF NAME)	ACT CODE	DATE YY/MM/DD	TYPE RESP	C COMPLETED D YY/MM/DD
**TOM GIBSON		ORG	86/06/20		/ /
	REFERRAL NOTE:				/ /
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COMMENTS:

ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENTS: MEDIA:L INDIVIDUAL CODES:

MI MAIL USER CODES: (A) (B) (C)

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*ACTION CODES:      *DISPOSITION      *OUTGOING      *
*                  *                  *CORRESPONDENCE: *
*A-APPROPRIATE ACTION *A-ANSWERED      *TYPE RESP=INITIALS *
*C-COMMENT/RECOM      *B-NON-SPEC-REFERRAL *      OF SIGNER      *
*D-DRAFT RESPONSE      *C-COMPLETED      *      CODE = A      *
*F-FURNISH FACT SHEET *S-SUSPENDED      *COMPLETED = DATE OF *
*I-INFO COPY/NO ACT NEC*                  *      OUTGOING      *
*R-DIRECT REPLY W/COPY *                  *                  *
*S-FOR-SIGNATURE      *                  *                  *
*X-INTERIM REPLY      *                  *                  *
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MANAGEMENT.

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TWX: 710-581-6459

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, Incorporated

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

Telephone: (212) 674-5151

Tom Gibson

June 19, 1986

407911

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

Dear Mr. President,

Futher to my letter of May twenty-seventh, I am happy to enclose a jacket proof and a very muddy xerox of the layouts for FIRST LADY. We will be adding about twenty more photos, but this is close to the finished design. Please bear in mind that all of this photography will be in sharp color and printed on coated stock. The book, by the way, will be printed in the USA. This is significantly more expensive that doing it overseas, but I felt we dare not manufacture a book about the First Lady of the United States in Yugoslavia or Hong Kong! I also enclose a typescript of Chris Wallace's introduction, which I trust you will enjoy.

Sir, I will completely understand if you cannot spare the time to write a few words by way of a forward to the book. Indeed, your duties are so great, I am embarrassed to impose on your time. If, after looking over the enclosed material, you do think you could jot down a few thoughts, I would greatly appreciate knowing that they will be coming so we can allow space in the front of the book. In order not to delay the publication, we would need the text in about three weeks. Thank you for your consideration. I will, of course, be sending you and the First Lady the first two copies of the book to come off the press, and I do hope you will both be pleased with the final book.

With best wishes for your continued success.

Clair

6/30

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Dunne
Executive Editor
Publisher of Thomas
Dunne Books

PRESERVATION COPY

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

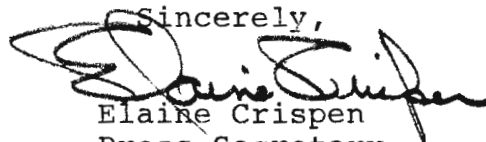
June 30, 1986

Dear Jill:

Attached please find the five replacement photographs that you requested. We have done our best to reproduce the pictures exactly, however, the photo of Mrs. Reagan and Charlton Heston is now horizontal instead of vertical. It seems as though the original photo that we sent to you was blown up and cut vertically. That particular photo was a special order and we do not have any more like it in the files. I hope that the picture will still be of use to you.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



Elaine Crispen
Press Secretary
to the First Lady

Ms. Jill Grafflin
Editorial Assistant
St. Martin's Press, Inc.
175 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10010

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, Incorporated

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

Telephone: (212) 674-5151

June 24, 1986

Mary Gordon
The Office of the First Lady
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Gordon:

Enclosed please find five photographs of Mrs. Reagan that have scratches which will show up badly. As we discussed, we would greatly appreciate it if you would make new prints for us. I understand the inconvenience this request poses for you. However, we are committed to maintaining a single, high standard of quality in the production of FIRST LADY and we need your help at the moment to do it.

If for some reason you cannot make new prints, would you please return the enclosed photos to us. Thank you again for your help.

Sincerely,



Jill Grafflin
Editorial Assistant

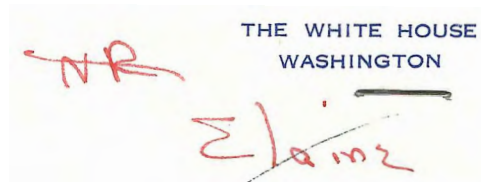












Mrs. Reagan:

If you have a spare moment,
I thought you might be
interested in this latest
version of the Chris Wallace
book and how they are using
the photographs.

Please return to me, since I
do not have an extra copy.

~~Elaine~~

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, Incorporated

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

Telephone: (212) 674-5151

June 19, 1986

Ms. Elaine Crispen
Press Secretary to Nancy Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Elaine,

I am happy to enclose a jacket proof and a set of rather muddy xeroxes of FIRST LADY. The jacket colors will be modified somewhat, but this is close to the final proof, and I wanted you to see we are moving forward. When you look at the layouts, please keep in mind that this is a copy of a copy and all the pictures will be in sharp color and on coated stock. This is about 98% final; we will be adding about twenty more photos and making a couple of substitutions. Still, this is close to the finished product. I do hope you are pleased.

The last thing I will be bothering your busy office for will be caption material for a number of the photos. I am particularly concerned that we have the dates and names correct. It would be disastrous if we were to have the First Lady toasting the wrong Chinese leader or welcoming Mr. Sadat to the White House the year after he was assassinated. We should have the final, final photo selection in hand in about a week, and I will have Margaret Schwarzer here touch base with you or Mary Gordon about the most convenient way for us to secure the caption information from the Press Office.

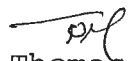
I also enclose the typescript of Chris Wallace's introduction.

Finally, I thought you would want to know that the book will definitely be printed in the U.S.. This is almost 50% more costly than having it done overseas, but I wouldn't dare have a book of this kind printed in Hong Kong or Yugoslavia!

Thank you once again for all of the invaluable help your office has provided.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,


Thomas L. Dunne
Executive Editor
Publisher of Thomas
Dunne Books

P.S. You should know that I have written President Reagan to see if he might spare the time to write a brief preface. I haven't heard back one way or another, but did want you to know I've sent him a letter.

TLD/mks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

examination of her role and views.

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

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

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

I also found that most people around Mrs. Reagan were

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chris Wallace's -
unedited introduction
to FIRST LADY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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May 7, 1986

Ms. Elaine Crispen
Press Secretary
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Elaine,

*Down, Rome
Spain, Portugal*

Welcome back; I hope your trip was enjoyable. I spoke with Mary Gordon this week, and she told me that you were in the process of reading our FIRST LADY script. Tom and I would appreciate it if you would clarify a reference on page 113 of the manuscript; in the second line from the top a "big trip" is mentioned, but it is not specifically named. Could you please tell us which trip you think is being discussed here?

Mary is being a great help with the photographs; thank you both for all your assistance.

With best wishes,

MARGARET
Margaret Schwarzer
Editorial Assistant



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Margaret:

Attached are the six
photographs that you requested.
I have included the "official
portrait" of the First Lady
that is currently being used.
The one that you requested
is no longer in use.

Let me know if you need
anything else.

Mary Gordon



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

OK GER NR

May 30, 1986

Mrs. Reagan:

RE: Chris Wallace Book

The publishers sent in the attached photocopies of photographs and asked if we could supply them with original prints, since the ones from which they made the photocopies were not "first generation" I'll be sending these to them unless you have some objection.

Elaine



For Immediate Release

Oct 8, 1983

C17609-13 / Photo by Michael EVANS

The President and Mrs. Reagan horseback ride with son,
Ron, and daughter-in-law, Doria, at Camp David today.

color photo



For Immediate Release

July 14, 1985

C30224-06 / Bill Fitz-Patrick

Mrs. Reagan greets President Reagan in his hospital bed at Bethesda Naval Hospital on Sunday Morning.

color photo.



Came through Pictoria Parade
130 W 42nd St. NYC.

Caption: The President and Mrs. Reagan show
their new pickup truck - a 1985
Ford Ranger - A joint Christmas
present. It will be kept at a ranch
(Rancho del Cielo) near Santa
Barbara, CA. (Feb. 1985)

color photo



Credit: Pictorial Parade

Caption:

President and Mrs. Reagan take a stroll
down the corridor outside the hospital
room at 12:30 pm - April 3, 1981

color photo



Came through Pictorial
Parade

Caption:

Washington D.C. May 3rd 1983 (JW-228/2)
Mrs. Nancy Reagan dances with Gene Kelly at
the Music Center in Los Angeles, Saturday (April 30th).
Mrs. Reagan was attending a benefit dinner following
a performance of the Joffrey Ballet.

color photo