

## Former Prime Minister of Canada Brian Mulroney

In the spring of 1987, President Reagan and I were driven into a large hangar at the Ottawa Airport to await the arrival of Mrs. Reagan and my wife, Mila, prior to departure ceremonies for their return to Washington following their highly successful state visit to Canada. President Reagan and I were alone except for the security details. When their car drove in a moment later out stepped Nancy and Mila looking like a million bucks. And as they headed towards us President Reagan beamed, he threw his arm around my shoulder and he said with a grin, "You know Brian, for two Irishmen we sure married up."

I mention this anecdote again because it reflects a unique Reagan reality. She really, always, was on his mind. We all know of Ron's great love and admiration for Nancy and the elegant and constant manner in which he publicly expressed it. One day at the White House, after another absolutely glowing tribute by President Reagan to his beloved Nancy, I said privately, "You know Ron, you're going to get me and all the rest of us here in a whole lot of trouble with our wives because we can't keep up with you." And the president chuckled and looked at me with that Irish twinkle in his eye and said, "Well Brian, that's your problem, not mine."

To illustrate this absolutely unique partnership and relationship, let me share with you today a letter he wrote to Nancy on their first Christmas together in the White House on December 25, 1981.

Dear Mrs. R,

There are several much beloved women in my life and on Christmas, I should be giving them gold, precious stones, perfume, furs and lace. I know that even the best of these would fall far short of expressing how much these several women mean to me and how empty my life would be without them.

There is of course my "First Lady." She brings so much grace and charm to whatever she does that even stuffy, formal functions sparkle and turn into fun times. Everything is done with class. All I have to do is wash up and show up.

There is another woman in my life who does things I don't always get to see but I hear about them and sometimes see photos of her doing them. She takes an abandoned child in her arms on a hospital visit. The look on her face, only the Madonna could match. The look on the child's face is one of adoration. And I know because I adore her too. She bends over a wheelchair or bed to touch an elderly invalid with tenderness and compassion just as she fills my entire life with warmth and love.

There is another gal I love who is a nest builder. If she were stuck for three days in a hotel room she'd manage to make it home sweet home. She moves things around - looks at it, straightens this and straightens that -- and you wonder why it wasn't that way in the first place.

I'm also crazy about the girl who goes to the ranch with me. If we're tidying up the woods, she's a peewee power house at pushing over dead trees. She's a wonderful person to sit by the fire with, or to ride with, or just to be with when the sun goes down and the stars come out. If ever she stopped going to the ranch, I'd stop too because I'd see her in every beauty spot there is and I couldn't stand that.

Then there is a sentimental lady I love, whose eyes fill up so easily. On the other hand, she loves to laugh and her laugh is like tinkling bells. I hear those bells and I feel good all over even if I tell a joke she's heard many, many times before.

Fortunately, all these women in my life are you - fortunately for me that is, for there could be no life for me without you. Browning asked; "How do I love thee - let me count the ways?" For me, there is no way to count. I love the whole gang of you - Mommy, First Lady, the sentimental you, the fun you, and the peewee power house you.

Merry Christmas you all - with all my love, lucky me.

Theirs was a love story for the ages. As First Couple, Ron and Nancy Reagan represented America with great distinction. They had a magnificent sense of occasion. They had style and grace and they had class. Some of you may have heard my reference to lines from William Butler Yeats when talking in other circumstances of what the Reagans meant to us all. Today those same golden words tumbled across continents and down the vista of the years, as we think of Nancy reunited finally with her beloved Ronnie. Yeats wrote, "Think where man's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was that I had such friends."