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WHO'S AN AMERICAN
PSYCHO NOW?
BY BRET EASTON ELLIS

The Private Nancy Reagan Only I Knew

The former First Lady hardly needed new friends but she took me in, even though we were almost 50 years apart in age.

For almost 20 years, Nancy Reagan was a cozy, thoughtful, divine friend to me. I met her through her closest friends, Betsy Bloomingdale and David Jones, at a dinner in Los Angeles in the late 1990s, and although she hardly needed any new friends at that point in her life, she gradually opened up some space, even though we were nearly 50 years apart in age.



Everyone has an opinion of Nancy, although there's another Nancy you may not have known. She loved to laugh, and I teased her mercilessly about her particularisms—her abhorrence for long cocktail hours or late dinners, her paralyzing fear of parties that were too large, her embracing—or not—of technology, her brand of glamour that's completely at odds with today's active-wear generation. She smiled and patted my arm and called me alternately "impossible," or "such a bad boy."

As a friend, she was thoughtful and supportive—she gave a fabulous quote about me to the Wall Street Journal when my first book came out, and when I took my company on television selling frozen food, Nancy tuned in to the debut. She had an assistant make an order under an assumed name so that no one would know it was the Nancy ordering, and called me to say that the next time I was paired with a host who was nearly seven feet tall, I should stand on a milk crate. That was the Nancy I knew—she loved politics, she loved to gab on the telephone, she stayed current on gossip, and let's face it, did not suffer fools gladly. Then again, why should she?

By ALEX HITZ for Town&Country, March 2006