

## Nancy Reagan

Mrs. Reagan was born Anne Frances Robbins on July 6, 1921 in New York City. Her parents — a Broadway actress and a car salesman — separated before her birth and divorced soon after, leaving their daughter to be raised by an aunt and uncle in Bethesda, Maryland, at age two. Her mother's pursuit of an acting career across the country meant a lonely childhood for the girl nicknamed Nancy. When her mother remarried Chicago neurosurgeon and political conservative Loyal Davis in 1929, Nancy acquired the father figure she had long craved, and six years later the teenager convinced her father to surrender custody rights so that Mr. Davis could formally adopt her. She attended a private girls' school in Chicago and graduated from Smith College as a drama and English major in 1943.

Her mother's influential friends helped her get her first acting roles. She then was signed by MGM as the clean-cut girl next door, which limited her prospect at romantic leads. At the same time, Screen Actors Guild president Ronald Reagan and his divorce from Jane Wyman made headlines in Hollywood. Nancy Davis arranged to meet him over the appearance of her name on a Communist blacklist, which turned out to be a mix-up with another actress of the same name. The two began to date, and for three years the gossip magazines marveled at this "romance of a couple who have no vices." Nancy ultimately won over Reagan, and in March 1952, the two married in a small private ceremony. Nancy became the stepmother to Ronald Reagan's two biological children and adopted son, but she was also two months pregnant with their first child, Patricia Anne. Their son Ronald Prescott was born six years later.

Nancy and her father Loyal Davis influenced Ronald's political shift from the Democratic to the Republican Party. Her guidance helped Ronald Reagan build his political profile in the 1950s. In 1981 Former president Reagan took office. During her years as first lady, Nancy Reagan, helped start the campaign, "Just Say No", a campaign against drugs. From the early days of her husband's presidency, Nancy Reagan decided to focus on the anti-drug cause. She said she came up with the name of her campaign at a meeting with schoolchildren in Oakland, when a girl asked her, 'Mrs. Reagan, what do you do if somebody offers you drugs?' "Just say no," the first lady replied.

Schools around the country formed "Just Say No" clubs, in which students did community service and made pledges to not try drugs. The refrain became the mantra of the anti-drug movement and greatly raised Reagan's profile as first lady. She appeared on hit shows such as "Dynasty" and "Diff'rent Strokes" to deliver her message and made hundreds of appearances around the country. "Without Nancy Reagan, there would not have been the public climate to support drug abuse prevention," said Ivy Cohen, president of the Just Say No Foundation from 1987 to 1997. "She galvanized attention to the issue."