



## Reagan: A Life In Letters

*Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, Martin Anderson*

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Ronald Reagan may have been the most prolific correspondent of any American president since Thomas Jefferson. The total number of letters written over his lifetime probably exceeds 10,000. Their breadth is equally astonishing -- with friends and family, with politicians, children, and other private citizens, Reagan was as dazzling a communicator in letters as he was in person. Collectively, his letters reveal his character and thinking like no other source. He made candid, considerate, and tough statements that he rarely made in a public speech or open forum. He enjoyed responding to citizens, and comforting or giving advice or encouragement to friends. Now, the most astonishing of his writings, culled in *Reagan: A Portrait in Letters*, finally and fully reveal the true Ronald Reagan.

Many of Reagan's handwritten letters are among the most thoughtful, charming, and moving documents he produced. Long letters to his daughter Patti, applauding her honesty, and son Ron Jr., urging him to be the best student he can be, reveal Reagan as a caring parent. Long-running correspondence with old friends, carried on for many decades, reveals the importance of his hometown and college networks. Heartfelt advice on love and marriage, fond memories of famous friends from Hollywood, and rare letters about his early career allow Reagan to tell his own full biography as never before. Running correspondence with young African-American student Ruddy Hines reveals a little-known presidential pen pal. The editors also reveal that another long-running pen-pal relationship, with fan club leader Lorraine Wagner, was initially ghostwritten by his mother, until Reagan began to write to Wagner himself some years later.

Reagan's letters are a political and historical treasure trove. Revealed here for the first time is a running correspondence with Richard Nixon, begun in 1959 and continuing until shortly before Nixon's death.

Letters to key supporters reveal that Reagan was thinking of the presidency from the mid-1960s; that missile defense was of interest to him as early as the 1970s; and that few details of his campaigns or policies escaped his notice. Dozens of letters to constituents reveal Reagan to have been most comfortable and natural with pen in hand, a man who reached out to friend and foe alike throughout his life. *Reagan: A Life in Letters* is as important as it is astonishing and moving.

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