



A Different Drummer: My Thirty Years with Ronald Reagan

Michael K. Deaver

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"I had come to adore and respect the president like a second father. Reagan was once asked if he thought of me as another son. He thought a minute and said, 'Son, no. Brother, maybe.'"

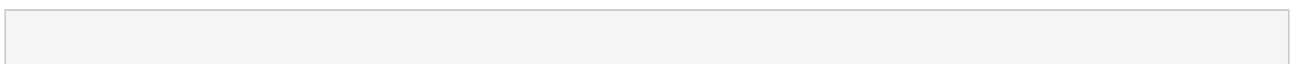
A warm, personal portrait of Ronald Reagan, *A Different Drummer* brims with recollections from a relationship that has spanned more than three decades. Former aide and longtime family friend, Michael Deaver first met Ronald Reagan during his 1966 campaign for governor of California and later served him in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., as the president's deputy chief of staff. Whether it was traveling with Reagan on endless campaign flights, discussing the day-to-day issues in the Oval Office, or surviving the harrowing assassination attempt, Deaver worked with the former chief executive for twenty consecutive years. Now he offers his memories of Ronald Reagan as governor, president, and friend.

In 1964, after Barry Goldwater's unsuccessful bid for the presidency, the Republican Party found itself in disarray, and Michael Deaver, a young party operative, a "red meat conservative," was looking for a new party leader he could believe in. He threw his hat in with a former actor and General Electric spokesperson, a man who would later prove himself capable of joining the disparate elements of the Party and securing the nomination. In what would be the first of many underestimations, the Democratic Party eagerly takes on Reagan. He would not only go on to win the governorship of California, but he would serve two terms. In 1976 he was unable to unseat President Gerald Ford for the presidential nomination but, undeterred, he returned in 1980 and won a landslide victory, leading America to remarkable heights of prosperity and confidence.

Yet as one of the most successful and popular presidents in American history, Reagan remains a mystery even to biographers with total access. In *A Different Drummer*, Deaver writes of the Reagan he has known: a man who was shy and deplored talking about himself, who would rather spend a party talking to a laborer than policy wonks; a man whose convictions remained unchanged over the course of his life, who never used pollsters to decide his position on issues; a man whose idea of relaxation was riding a horse, fixing fence posts, and chopping wood until his muscles ached and his hands blistered. Reagan emerges in this impressionistic portrait as charismatic and unwaveringly optimistic, a devoted husband and dedicated leader, disciplined and tough. As Deaver points out in his introduction, "He worked eight years doing the toughest job on earth; crisscrossed the world; and survived an assassin's bullet, a devastating riding accident, cancer, and brain surgery all after he turned seventy."

Writing not only of their dizzying highs, Deaver also shares the lows, including the tough times that would test the strength of their friendship. Finally, he shares a poignant look at Reagan today as he battles Alzheimer's disease. It is Nancy Reagan's "finest hour," Deaver writes, a validation of the greatest love story he has ever known.

With anecdotes that are insightful, entertaining, intimate, and surprising, *A Different Drummer* sheds remarkable new light on an American icon admired by many and understood by few.



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