

# MERV PUTS SMILE ON NANCY'S FACE

**M**edia mogul Merv Griffin has revealed how he put a spring back in the step of former First Lady Nancy Reagan.

Speaking exclusively to The National Enquirer, Merv - former talk show host and creator of TV's Jeopardy! and Wheel Of Fortune - said: "I have been fortunate enough to make Nancy laugh during a time when she hasn't had very much to laugh about.

"I am proud to be a friend of Nancy and I'll always be her friend."

Merv, 80, has been a pillar of strength to 84-year-old Nancy both during the slow decline of her husband, former President Ronald Reagan, and as she has rebuilt her life after his death last year.

"We see each other as often as possible," he said just days after

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accompanying Nancy to the White House reception for Prince Charles and his wife Camilla.

A source said that as Reagan grew increasingly ill with Alzheimer's, Nancy talked almost every day on the phone with Merv, and though her three children Michael, Patty, and Ron Jr. were attentive, she relied on him for steady comfort.

"Merv was the one Nancy turned to during her lowest moments," the source added.

When Reagan died in June 2004 Nancy was devastated. A year later, the former First Lady had a horrendous fall in a London hotel room and was taken to the hospital.

## FAST FACT

After the assassination attempt on her husband, Nancy hired an astrologer to help keep him safe

Friends feared she would never recover, but now say she's almost back to being her normal self again.

A pal said: "Nancy has made a terrific comeback. She's put on a few pounds and has been taking daily walks in her Beverly Hills neighborhood.

"When Ronnie died everyone feared that Nancy wanted to give up. But now that she's had some months to recuperate, she says she wants Ronnie to be happy when he looks down at her, not sad."

Merv even gave Nancy a pet dog - called Duchess - to cheer her up and they celebrated their birthday, on the same day, July 6, together.

Friends say Nancy has also been there for Merv during his battles with prostate cancer.

He was first diagnosed with the disease in 1996, and though it was successfully treated, it returned with a vengeance in 1999.

Although he battled back again he now needs regular check-ups to keep the disease at bay.

He says he is now cancer-free -



**LOVE LOST:** Nancy and President Reagan before his death last year

and is enjoying the chance to spend as much time as possible with her old friend.

A source said of Merv and Nancy's night out at the White House: "It was a special celebrity-filled night and they relived their glory days of being invited to star-studded events. Merv does not go out much and Nancy is just starting to emerge from her shell after being Ronnie's around-the-clock nurse for nearly a decade."

The source added: "Merv is delighted to see that Nancy is in such good shape."