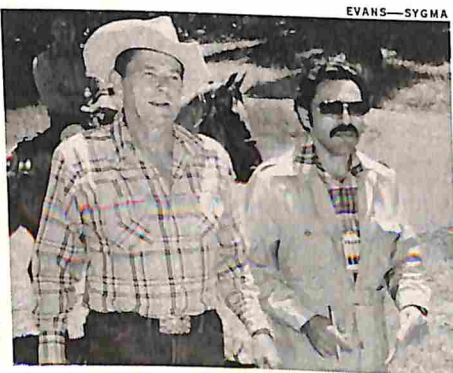


A Letter from the Publisher

Senior Correspondent Laurence Barrett first introduced himself to Ronald Reagan at a Reagan campaign appearance in Elizabeth, N.J., during the state's 1976 primary. "It was no more than a glancing meeting—a handshake and exchange of pleasantries," says Barrett. He did not see Reagan again until almost four years later, when he was assigned to cover the former California Governor's latest campaign for the presidency. Barrett reintroduced himself in Los Angeles last January. In the ensuing months he interviewed Reagan more than a dozen times, as he tracked the candidate on his victorious march to the White House. "The point of it all," says Barrett, "is to find out, as best a reporter can, who that public figure really is. So much of modern politicking is designed for television coverage that you end up dealing merely with a video ghost, unless you attempt to get very close to your subject as often as possible."

To report on TIME's Man of the Year, Barrett got very close indeed. He talked with Reagan at the President-elect's Pacific Palisades home in early December, then met with him again shortly before Christmas for the exclusive TIME interview that is part of this week's cover story. For Barrett, the profession of

Reagan watching is far from finished; he will move to Washington in January to become TIME's White House correspondent. "Reagan is not an easy man to know," says Barrett. "But he is a great talker. His son Mike says that if you ask Reagan the time of day, he'll respond by telling you how to make a watch."



Reagan with Barrett at Rancho del Cielo

Washington Bureau Chief Robert Ajemian was granted unprecedented access to Reagan's Rancho del Cielo near Goleta, Calif. Ajemian spent two days there and wrote the four-page story on the President-elect's hideaway. Reagan had eagerly sketched a plan of the ranch in Ajemian's notebook during the 1976 campaign. Says Ajemian: "Finally seeing it, I understood why he had talked about it so much."

Senior Editor James Atwater, who was in charge of the Man of the Year project, first saw Reagan at the 1968 Republican Convention in Miami Beach. "He projected a vibrant political personality," says Atwater. This week's main story was written by Associate Editor Roger Rosenblatt, who came away from his first meeting with Reagan in December impressed by how relaxed Reagan was and by his good sense of humor. Says Rosenblatt: "He could turn out to be one of the most affable Presidents we've ever had."

John A. Meyers

Cover: Painting by Aaron Shikler.

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CAN YOU HELP SALLY STR KEEP HER NEW YEAR'S RESO

"I know of hundreds of children all over the world who are hungry, poor and without hope for the new year. That's why I am resolved to find someone to help every one of them."

"If you can help me, I can promise you 1981 will be a very special year."

"You can bring an extra measure of joy to your life this year. You can do it the way I did through Christian Children's Fund."

"It started six years ago when I began to sponsor Marites. She was an eight-year-old who was forced to go to work just to survive."

"Since I became her sponsor, I know she has regular meals, warm clothing, and the chance to go to school. Plus something even more important. The comfort of knowing someone cares."

"I received something very special in return. The richness, the satisfaction of giving to a child who desperately needs my help."



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