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Nancy Reagan dies at 94

Former first lady remembered for advocacy, devotion

CHRISTOPHER WEBER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Nancy Reagan, the helpmate, backstage adviser and fierce protector of Ronald Reagan in his journey from actor to president — and finally during his 10-year battle with Alzheimer's disease — has died. She was 94.

The former first lady died Sunday at her home in the Bel-Air section of Los Angeles of congestive heart failure, assistant Allison Borio told The Associated Press.

Her best-known project as first lady was the "Just Say No" campaign to help kids and teens stay off drugs.

When she swept into the White House in 1981, the former Hollywood actress partial to designer gowns and pricey china was widely dismissed as a pre-feminist throwback, concerned only with fashion, decorating and entertaining. By the time she moved out eight years later, Mrs. Reagan was fending off accusations that she was a behind-the-scenes "dragon lady" wielding unchecked power over the Reagan administration — and doing it based on astrology to boot.

All along she maintained that her only mission was to back her "Ronnie" and strengthen his presidency.

Mrs. Reagan carried that charge through the rest of her days. She served as a full-time caretaker as Alzheimer's melted away her husband's memory. After his death in June 2004 she



HARAZ N. GHANBARI, ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this June 2, 2009, file photo, President Barack Obama escorts former first lady Nancy Reagan after signing the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission Act, during a ceremony in the Diplomatic Reception Room of the White House in Washington.

dedicated herself to tending his legacy, especially at his presidential library in California, where he had served as governor.

She also championed Alzheimer's patients, raising millions of dollars for research and breaking with fellow conservative Republicans to advocate for stem cell studies. Her dignity and per-

severance in these post-White House roles helped smooth over the public's fickle perceptions of the former first lady.

The Reagans' mutual devotion over 52 years of marriage was legendary. They were forever holding hands. She watched his political speeches with a look of such steady adoration it was

dubbed "the gaze." He called her "Mommy," and penned a lifetime of gushing love notes. She saved these letters, published them as a book, and found them a comfort when he could no longer remember her.

After Reagan was shot by John

Please see **REAGAN**, Page A2

ELECTION 2016

3 file for county coroner

EDITH BRADY-LUNNY
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BLOOMINGTON — Incumbent McLean County Coroner Kathy Davis faces two challengers in her first effort to be elected coroner.

Davis was appointed coroner by the McLean County Board in November 2014 to replace Beth Kimmerling, who resigned the post. Davis is seeking the Republican nomination.



Davis

Gary Morefield of Arrowsmith, a former deputy coroner, and Dale Township Fire Chief Ryan Gibson also are running as Republicans. With no Democrat candidate, the top GOP vote-getter in the March 15 primary likely will take the position in November.



Gibson

Educational background is a key qualification for the coroner's position, according to Davis, who holds a doctorate of nursing practice.



Morefield

Please see **CORONER**, Page A2

Reagan kept ties to Central Illinois

KEVIN BARLOW
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EUREKA — When Eureka College President David Arnold heard Sunday morning that Nancy Reagan, 94, had died, he paused for a minute before turning on the TV to watch tributes to the former first lady.

"I just had a flood of memories," he told The Pantagraph. "She was a terrific woman."

President Ronald Reagan, a 1932 graduate, and his family remained active supporters of the college. Nancy Reagan visited Eureka on seven occasions between 1967 and 1992, but as her health failed in recent years, college officials went to visit her in California for special presentations.

In 2009, for instance, Arnold presented her with an honorary doctor of humane letters degree in a private ceremony at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley,

Calif. The degree recognized her extensive work with several causes, including raising awareness about Alzheimer's disease, which afflicted her husband.

While her health may have prevented her from traveling, it didn't change who she was, Arnold said.

"We also had a chance to visit with her for a dinner at another event in 2010 and she was absolutely as sharp as a tack," he said. "While she was physically failing, mentally, she was very much with it and had an understanding and an interest in terms of national events."

The college will have a public memorial service in the days to come, he said.

Nancy Reagan visited Bloomington-Normal, as well, mostly in connection with her husband's run for the White House in 1980. The



Former first lady Nancy Reagan holds an honorary degree presented to her by Eureka College President David Arnold in April 2009 at the Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, Calif. President Ronald Reagan was a 1932 graduate and the Reagans were active supporters on the college.

EUREKA COLLEGE, FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

Please see **TIES**, Page A2

Madigan mulls mine rules case

ALAN SCHER ZAGIER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. LOUIS — Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office is considering legal action against the state's natural resources agency for what prosecutors call a failure to follow the terms of a court-brokered plan to toughen oversight of coal mines.

The tougher regulations were part of broader reforms touted with much fanfare two years by the administration of former Gov. Pat Quinn. They followed criticisms by environmentalists who alleged the state

Please see **MINE**, Page A2



ABBY A9 OBITUARIES A6
COMICS B6 SCOREBOARD B5
CROSSWORD B9 TV LISTINGS B10

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