

INTERVIEWING "RONALD WILSON REAGAN"

HOWARD W. BERGERSON
Sweet Home, Oregon

Ronald Wilson Reagan/I groan, son: end all war!
(idea suggested by Kimberly Marie Johnson)

As a rule, VIPs are likely to be interviewed only by other equal or lesser VIPs. But there is an even stronger rule, little known and indubitably of less consequence, that only VUPs are ever observed interviewing a Big Name in the literal sense, and like all bizarre aberrations in nature it is observed only rarely. I am not speaking of interviewing a Big Name in the figurative sense as Barbara Walters would do, which really means interviewing the actual person. No, I speak of interviewing only the Name itself, which in the present instance is composed of eleven distinct letters of the alphabet: A, D, E, G, I, L, N, O, R, S and W. For the benefit of those who want a technical name for this kind of wordplay, the interviewee's half of this interview is called a lipogram on the name RONALD WILSON REAGAN, which means that the interviewee utters no words except those which can be spelled using the alphabetical letters in his name.

I prevailed upon many of my friends, and sometimes on strangers, to help me get properly psyched up for this task. It took a while to achieve that quasi-trancelike state necessary to be able to look upon a collection of eleven letters of the alphabet as metaphysical flesh and blood, and carry on a conversation with this entity. I am tempted to claim that the dialog has not come into existence in a purely mechanical way, and that it is informed by a deeper source. Perhaps that is because it has been a crash effort involving the burning of too many midnight candles, and this feeling will evaporate in the clear light of day . . .

In the dialog presented below, the words uttered by the interviewer (not constrained to be a lipogram) are indented.

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Mr. President, I'd like to begin this interview with a few questions of a personal nature. Do you get saddle-sore when you and Nancy ride on the ranch?

Riding saddle-sore on roans and sorrels (and giddier drolleries) are window dressing in a window on an all-engrossing loneliness saddening a sworn-in leader.

Where are you going to spend your next vacation? Nova Scotia? Acapulco?

No, nor in a Rio Grande inn, nor in Oslo, nor in Saigon. Nor will I go as an eagle goes (an eagle landed on Luna!). Longings, or wondering awe, I allow, will lead a lorn leader downward, seaward. I see a seaside's eddies in or near Galilee, and I sense naiads singing sad adagio glissandos (as rendered on a woodland organ's woodwinds).

What is your reaction to critics of your Presidency? How does a former actor feel about the awesome responsibilities of the Presidency, with all the world his stage?

Derision or a dressing-down is as degrading as dredging sewage alongside a noose on a gallows ladder. I ignore; no one sees a lone leader's real sorrows.

Let's talk about domestic policy. You have been roundly criticized for appointing James Watt as Secretary of the Interior. Are you considering replacing him with a less controversial person?

No, no longer. Now I need sages, seers, angels and wags in a glowing eerie garden, growing dogwood, dandelions, daisies, goldenrod, irises, roses, gardenias, wood lilies, wild ginger and rosaries; a garden in a glade in a serene woods, gladdening wrens, orioles, swallows, owls, wild geese (also ganders and goslings), golden eagles, and swans on red, orange, green and indigo lagoons; a gnarled woodland wearing rain and needing wind, snow and gales, as well as lions, lionesses, deer, weasels and earwigs. Long ago we were wearier wanderers landing on a New World's soil; we saw a garden, an Eden, no less -- and also a sidewinder!

Mr. President, would you care to comment on the state of the economy?

We dwell in a land renowned as a garden rewarding all, as a goddess awards all adorers a solid largesse -- a largesse as large as all new-age oil wells and all olden gold-laden galleons welded as one. Alas, a land's indwelling largesse is now endangered, growing idle as do old oil wells or long-gone argosies' glories galore. Now low-down niggardliness reigns -- lower-down greediness laid siege earlier -- and we are enraged! Dollar woes and neediness are no longer a slain dragon, or else are a dragon no one in golden eras slew as well as we now desire.

You have said of your ranch, "Everybody has their Shangri-La, and this is ours." In view of the widespread poverty and suffering in the current recession, do you really believe that everyone has their own Shangri-La?

Well, I see organ grinders grinding in gondolas in green lagoons, and Genoese gondoliers singing golden oldies. I see old English dowagers in garlanded gowns. I see Norwegian wassailers and gangland goons and ringleaders wining and dining gilded lilies and goldenrod-adorned gold-diggers in Sweden's swirling-snow season. I see Osage Indians, leg-

ended igloo-dwellers and negro godsons all swooning on well-endowed, willing negresses' legs, loins and derrieres in wingdings in Algerian and Rangoon seraglios. All world-wide diseased and gangrened agonies, real or alleged, are in large degree one-sided ogres dwelling in wee dense senseless noggins.

But sir, all of your examples pertain to other countries. What of Shangri-Las in the United States?

I also see wilderness woodlands and rangelands in an indigo Oregon dawn -- and glad dwellers in an Eden and a Wonderland, no less; and gladder weddings in Niagara, and adoring ones wedding-ringed and drowsing or snoring on gossamer eiderdown. I see sod widows in glad rags, engaged ladies in gewgaws, green-eyed grass widows in droll sarongs. I see wiggle-wagging go-go girls galore wearing snoods, earrings, negligees and sandals, all regaling Dodgers and Orioles owners, rodeo insiders, ironsided sires and ornerier legionnaires, and all gorging on eggnog, egg rolls, sardines, snails and onions, raisin and slaw salad, sage-seasoned noodles and sirloin, and orange-ade and ginger ale. I see swaggering soldiers drooling on sillier giggling lassies in lingerie in Glendale swingers' orgies; I see gigolos and well-read Los Angeles signoras riding in El Dorado sedans; I see lewd leering sailors desiring sordid sirens in dingy singles saloons; I see randier gridiron idols serenading, gorgonising and winning dowried dolls in San Diego soirees, all swallowing gin, lager, ale and wine.

But what is your reply to those who criticize your present economic program as ineffectual?

In an old adage's wise words, "In a weasel warren, slanderers are geese and asinine slanderers are sillier geese."

Do you not agree that the burden of unemployment is disproportionately borne by minorities and youth?

Nonsense! A winnowing is needed! No wages, salaries down or nil, and dwindling dollars and earnings will signal a dire ordeal. Raw rigors will anneal and season all idlers' sinews, all dawdlers' soles. Gnawing rigors will also derail all sorrier losers, loners, ragged ne'er-dowells, groggier winos, deadwood, illegal aliens, doddering nonagenarian New Dealers, addled dingdongs, deranged weirdos, renegade swine and insane assassins, redressing gross wrongs, lowdown swindles and worse. Ergo, no dole is all well and good.

Mr. President, let's turn to foreign affairs. How would you characterize the Soviet nuclear threat?

We dwell alongside a window raised on Red godlessness -- a window we will do well in narrowing or do ill or worse in widening. No one sees Noel reindeer sailing in a window raised on godless lands! O no, glowering needle-nosed silo arrows, all-riddling, all-griddling, will soar down. We need no window raised on alien ill-will, or else dread soaring war-engines will angle down on all New World soil and release sidereal

energies assailing legions -- all dear and darling ones, all wailing swains and ladies, all groaning lads and lassies, erasing all solid wooden or iron dwellings, all wineries and granaries, all girdered railroads and golden galleries, all green-girdled dairies and red-lilied gardens downrange, rendering all a singed and reddened, grilled and deadened, endless goriness.

Is anybody in the world in favor of continuing the arms race at its present level?

Well, no one gainsaid all good and wise Lords and all wise and wigged Ladies in London, England, in Leeds, in Glasgow, and Ireland and Wales. No one gainsaid wiser elders in Iowa, Illinois, Oregon, Georgia or Delaware. No wiser Elders or Lords or Ladies gainsaid allied generals in Sweden and Israel or, in eras now gone, in Iran, Laos, India, Indonesia, Dardenelles, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Angola, Aden and Senegal; and no generals (good ones) gainsaid all real good allied world leaders. (One general gleaned nine degrees, all in war engineering!) One liaison general did agree we need odd ideas on a new agenda, and an allied Israeli general said so also.

What can we do to stop the nuclear missile buildup?

I endorse no daring original ideas, growing in non-reason's edginess and dread. Religion's narrow road is good, and worldliness is also needed. War's enders are also war's sowers, and all are as error-ridden as adrenalined riderless wild sorrel nags airing swollen nasal adenoids and gargling sorrier words and worse nonwords, all in a non-reasoning glossolalia. As we are all desiring God's goodness, solo orisons will alone aid in word and lingo diseases so deadening, so dire and general.

Are you telling us, then, that man is inherently sinful and religion is man's only hope?

I'll reword, and raise again an idea I addressed long ago. World war is no one gringo's or one gal's doing. Eros-led Adelines and Adonises galore are engendering a world's end, sown seed on sown seed. Are no world's-end worriers residing in all Eros's reign? And will all need arraignment in a wider, larger world? Do all see a leader -- leonine or senile -- wearing a genial grin and answering in airiness or indwelling disdain? Well, as I read a dog-eared Genesis, I regard elegies sore and dirges gleeless as soon swinging in line. I wager all sad and sorrowing words will soon grow needed. I do indeed see world war as Original Sin's wages in an S. R. O. world.

In other words, we are better dead than Red?

I answer in a single drawled word: Roger! We, as losers in a war, will all die -- or are as good as dead now. In a war or in no war, we, sans ideals, are dead now! In an aligned and realigned slogans-and-ideologies land, God is endangered; ergo, we need a dossier on God also, ere God is dead as a dodo.

These theological allusions are too deep for me. Could you comment on your China policy?

Good dinners on good dinnerware endears one and all, erases ills.

How would you sum up your foreign policy?

I'll now answer as an old agrarian landed granger. We are sworn non-aggressors; we need law and order, we disallow war as lawless and senseless, and in a larger sense we also regard war as, now and again, needed. A needed war is no dead-end or swan song, nor need we ride in war as no-good sinners on genderless geldings! We need androgens and derring-do! We need Old Glories and seasoned soldiers garrisoned world-wide, generals in golden regalia, and raised dander! We need all-seeing world-girdling radar, sea-going sonar and liaison ensigns, newer DEW lines and earlier NORAD warnings, larger arsenals and deadlier arrows in silos, R and D on lasers, and goodlier anger! We need no ring-a-ding dissensions and wild goose rallies, nor do we need addled ding-a-ling diagnoses on wielding dread winged swords and daggers -- or on wielding God's own grenades! Ordained grenadiers alone assess, and ordained geldings alone will wield God's sidereal grenades riding on Odin's arrows. Godless Leningrad warlords and roodless, religionless Red warriors sold on Red-engendered Warsaw agreeings are as sidling sidewinders in loose sand! In nine innings (I disdain gridiron analogies) we will win -- no one is dawdling! We are leaning on oars! We and God will engage all Red raiders, and God willing, we will win odds-on! No one dragoons or goads God!

Editor's Note: Word Ways readers may not realize the difficulty of composing intelligible prose using only eleven letters of the alphabet; Bergerson's task was far harder than Ernest Wright's composition of the E-less novel, Gadsby. To put matters in perspective, I note that Wright had 250 of the 500 commonest words in the English language available to him (as tabulated in Kucera and Francis), but Bergerson had only 75! Logologists should note that he even introduced a long internal palindrome in Reagan's dialog: goldenROD-ADORNED.