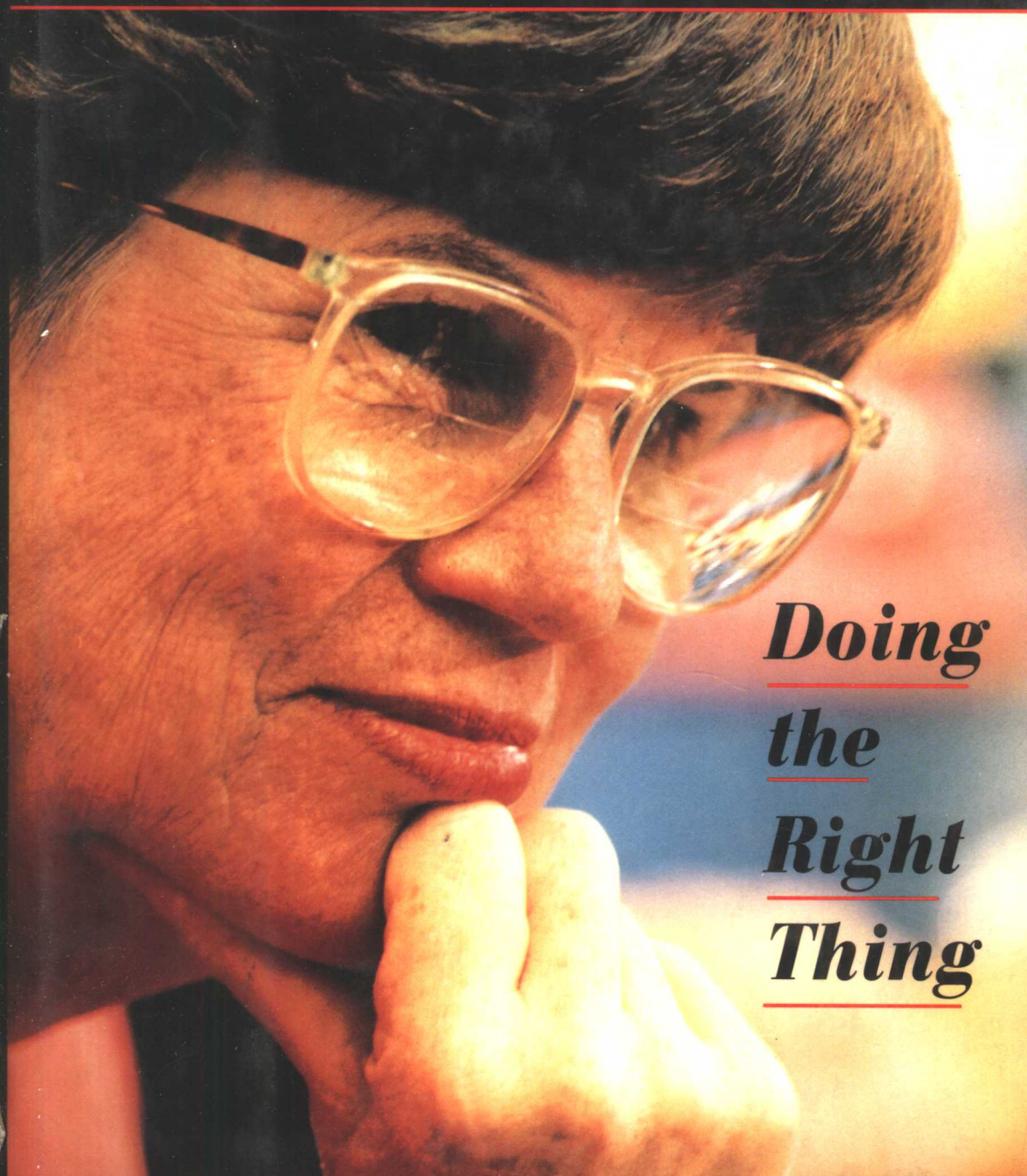


JANET RENO



*Doing
the
Right
Thing*

Paul Anderson

Washington Correspondent, *The Miami Herald*

JANET RENO

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the
Right
Thing*

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*To my wife, Janet L. Fix,
and our son, Tate*

Excerpt from "Janet Reno" from "Capitol Steps" parody lyrics. Copyright © 1993, Strauss and Newport.

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Acknowledgments

Janet Reno didn't want this book to be written—at least, not yet.

Her reaction when I first told her about it in August of 1993 was to laugh one of her big, deep laughs. "Oh, c'mon," she said. "I haven't even been here six months yet. This still seems so ephemeral to me."

I am grateful to her for the cooperation, albeit limited, she subsequently gave me. She decided to give me no greater access than she gives any other journalist who writes about her and the activities of the Department of Justice. But she allowed family members and friends to be interviewed, if they wished, and she agreed to answer specific questions when I needed to clarify facts about her family history and career.

Dozens of people have graciously provided time and recollections, during my ongoing reporting both for the *Miami Herald* and for this book. Among them are the following:

Charlotte M. Acquaviva, Julie Anbender, Caroline Aronovitz, Ernest Brown, Bob Butterworth, Tom Cash, Michael Chmura, Bill Clinton, Sandy D'Alemberte, Marie Driscoll, Sam Dubbin, Bettina Dudley, Dante Fascell, Roy Furman, Jeanine Jacobs Goldberg, Bob Graham, Erwin Griswold, Lani Guinier, Lisa Hardeman, Philip Heymann, Webster Hubbell, Maggy Hurchalla, Patricia Ireland, Tom Jipping, Harry Johnston, Marcia Kanner, Dan Kavanaugh,

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I am also grateful to my *Herald* colleagues for their assistance, encouragement, and patience with this project, most especially executive editor Doug Clifton, national editor Frank Davies, political editor Tom Fiedler, Liz Donovan, Margaret Kempel, Gene Miller, and Peter Slevin.

Also, this book couldn't have been written without relying on the outstanding work that so many at the *Herald* and the late and lamented *Miami News* performed in covering Reno and her office over the years.

Other writings I found helpful were Sidney Blumenthal's excellent article about Zoë Baird in the *New Yorker*, February 15, 1993; Glenn R. Simpson's story of lobbyists spreading rumors about Reno in *Roll Call, The Newspaper of Capitol Hill*, March 4, 1993; *Capitol Games*, Hyperion, 1992, by Timothy W. Phelps and Helen Winternitz; *The Florida Handbook 1993-1994*, Peninsular Publishing Co., by Allen Morris; *The FBI: Inside the World's Most Powerful Law Enforcement Agency*, Pocket Books, 1993, by Ronald Kessler; *Knights of the Fourth Estate*, E. A. Seemann, 1974, by Nixon Smiley; *Miami*, Pocket Books, 1987, by Joan Didion; *Miami, City of the Future*, The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987, by T. D. Allman; and *Miami, The Magic City*, Centennial Press, 1991, by Arva Moore Parks.

I had a lot to learn about the difference between writing for a daily newspaper and writing a book. I am grateful to my editors, Jan Cook and Hana Lane, for their extremely patient guidance in that learning experience. In a pinch, Jan also proved that former *Herald* staffers never lose their reporting skills.

Finally, I am forever grateful to my wife, Janet L. Fix, whose savvy, suggestions, and support made this book possible. She, too, helped with some reporting. I only hope that someday I can make up to her the long hours I spent at the computer terminal in our

spare bedroom while she prepared for the birth of our first child. Tate Perry Fix Anderson's early arrival on December 30, 1993, caused a deadline or two to slip, but not too badly.

Paul Anderson
Bethesda, Maryland



This, the earliest photo of Janet Reno from 1939, shows her getting an outdoor bath in a tin washtub. (© *The Miami Herald*)



Reno's father, Henry Olaf Reno, joined *The Miami Herald* in 1925 as a police reporter, a beat he would own for forty-three years. (© *The Miami Herald*)



Reno's mother, Jane Wood Reno, was also a journalist, alternating between *The Miami Herald* and *The Miami News*. Here, she testifies before the Kefauver Committee in 1955 at hearings to investigate baby-selling practices in Miami. (Photo by Mike Freeman © *The Miami Herald*)

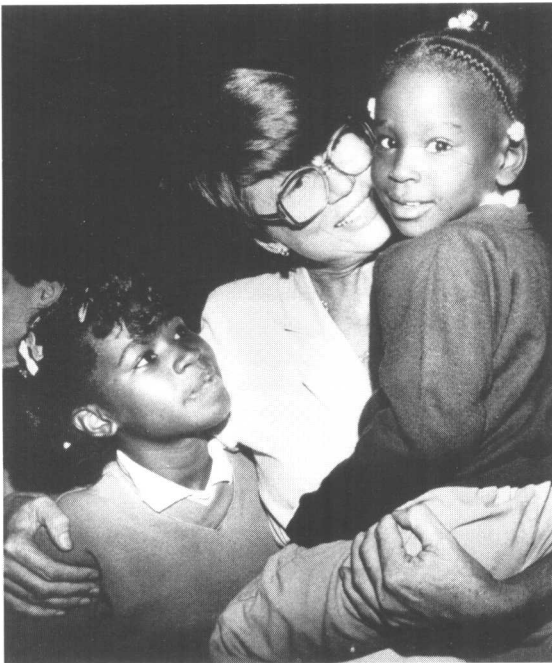


Jane and Henry Reno see their daughter Janet, then thirteen years old, off to spend a year at school in Germany, where she lived with her uncle in the old Danube town of Regensburg. (© *The Miami Herald*)



President Bill Clinton points to a reporter during the brief question-and-answer period that followed his announcement, February 11, 1993, in the White House Rose Garden that he had nominated Janet Reno as his choice for attorney general. (Copyright ©1993, Martin H. Simon)

Janet Reno lived with her mother for forty-five years in the house Jane built and took care of her until her death in December 1992. Here they are shown together in 1984. (Photo by Albert Coya © *The Miami Herald*)



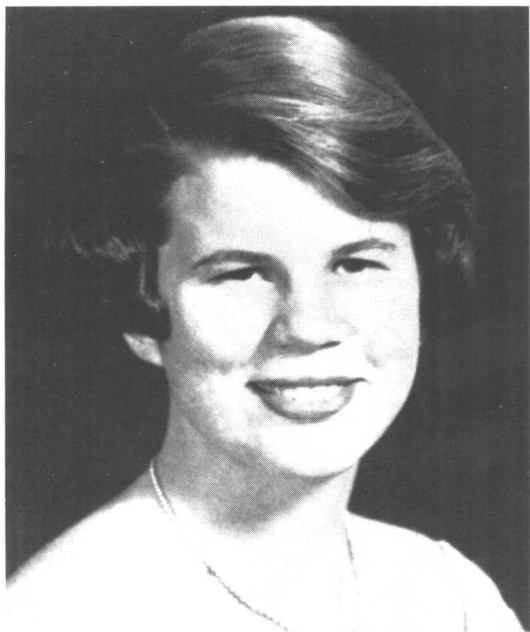
On election night in 1984 after defeating Jose Garcia-Pedrosa, Janet Reno shows her appreciation to some of her youngest supporters, Jamie and Stephanie Ramsey. (Photo by Carol Guzy © *The Miami Herald*)



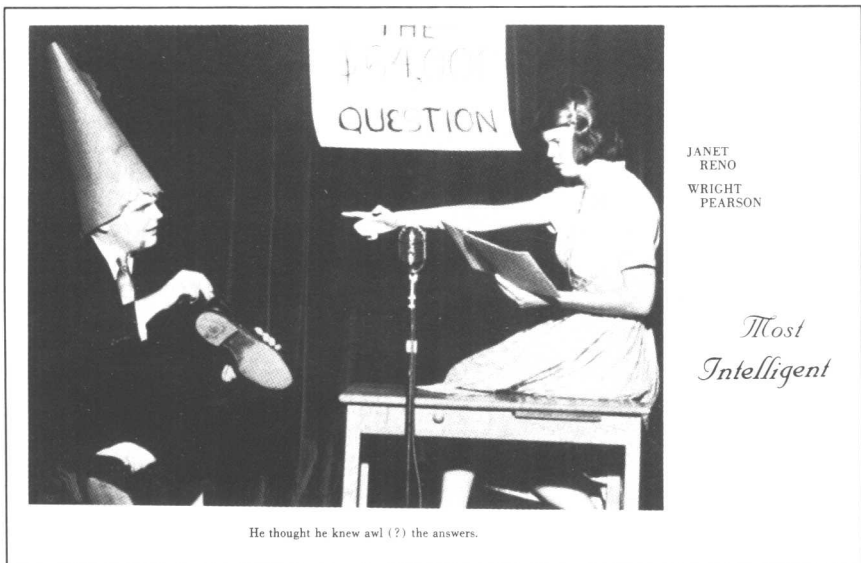
Janet Reno on the day in January 1978 when she was appointed Florida's first female state attorney. (Photo by Bob East © *The Miami Herald*)



Janet Reno chats with her prosecutors, shortly after taking office as state attorney in 1978. (Photo by John Pineda © *The Miami Herald*)



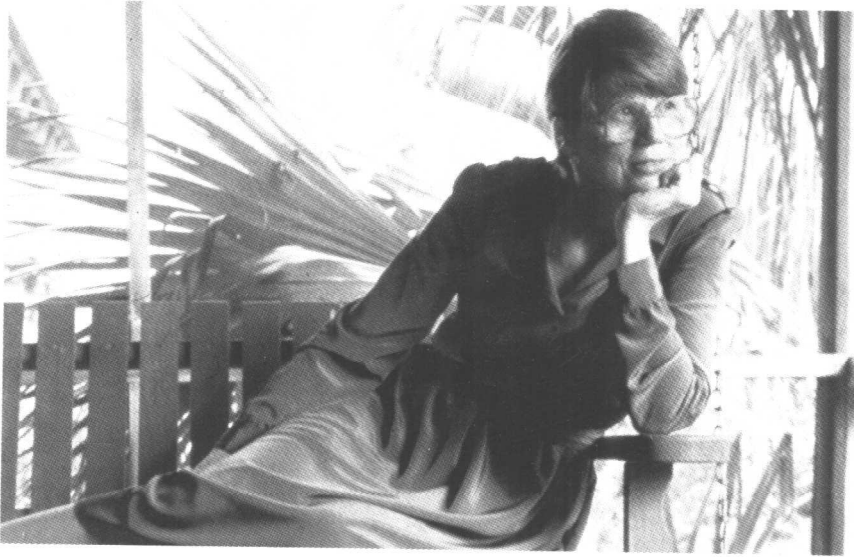
From the *Cavaleon 1956*, the Coral Gables High School yearbook. The caption for Reno's senior year photo (left) read: "JANET RENO . . . debater and scholar. In both, extraordinary." (Photos by the Pilkington Studio, Coral Gables, Florida)



JANET
RENO
WRIGHT
PEARSON

*Most
Intelligent*

He thought he knew awl (?) the answers.



Janet Reno relaxing on the porch of the quirky, slant-roofed bungalow her mother built that remains her true home. (Photo by David Walters © *The Miami Herald*)



Janet Reno faces the Senate Judiciary Committee at her confirmation hearings in March 1993. (Photo by Patrice Gilbert)



Janet Reno holds her first press conference as attorney general, March 1993. (Photo by Patrice Gilbert)

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PROLOGUE

Substance, Not Spin

Janet Reno's long, purposeful strides carried her across the courtyard and up the steps to the plain stone platform. It was just after noon on Tuesday, April 6, 1993. Barely spring, the day was overcast and chilly, and most of the cheering audience wore wool and topcoats. Reno wore only a lightweight navy knit suit and a simple red blouse, the kind of understated outfit she favors.

She stepped behind a podium emblazoned with the Justice Department seal, an American bald eagle in flight. Around her in the drab brick courtyard at the center of the Justice building, nearly a thousand employees had gathered to hear the first speech from their new boss. Others were watching from the surrounding office windows.

It was her twenty-fifth day on the job. She started to speak, then paused as her amplified voice echoed off the granite walls around her.

"I'm the new kid on the block, and I thought I should let you know my hopes and dreams and how I do things," Reno began. "While I'm the attorney general, we will address each issue with one question: What's the right thing to do? . . .

"Let us leave here today resolved to ask that of ourselves and others as we seek justice, remembering that sometimes doing the

right thing is very politically unpopular. Sometimes it will be painful, for it will, of necessity, hurt someone. But with strength and courage, let us face that question unafraid and together seek justice for all.”

The eleven-minute speech carried the emotional wallop of the coach’s talk at a homecoming pep rally. Cheers and applause rang through the courtyard. A confident, smiling Reno stepped down from the platform and walked through the crowd to shake hands. Barbara Burley, a short, stout woman from the Antitrust Division, squeezed up next to the towering Reno to have a picture taken by a coworker. Reno smiled broadly and paused for a pair of shots. Burley quivered with delight after Reno moved on to greet other workers.

“She’s EX-cel-lent,” Burley said, enunciating each syllable. “After all the talk about the ‘Year of the Woman’ in Washington, this makes it real. She’ll bring a different touch. It’s good for the department.”

Reno won the hearts of her audience that day with a simple statement of what she believes. As her words forecast, the year ahead would at times be painful. She would find that standing on principle can be lonely. And she would learn some hard truths about political reality in the nation’s capital.

Janet Reno is a remarkable woman whose intelligence, conscience, and capacity for work are all too rare in American politics, even in Washington, D.C. As a prosecutor from an ethnically and racially diverse city at Ground Zero in the war on drugs, she is uniquely qualified to serve as attorney general. She has captured the public imagination with her legendary intransigence on matters of personal principle. But integrity can be an inconvenient attribute in the political world, one that could spell her downfall.

Her place in history was assured the moment she was sworn in. During a visit to an elementary school early in her tenure, a young girl asked Reno how many women had served as attorney