Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan. (Book Reviews)


Few books have been as anxiously awaited by presidential scholars as Edmund Morris' biography of Ronald Reagan. After winning the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1980 for writing The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt, Morris was recruited by Nancy Reagan and Michael Deaver to pen an authorized biography of Ronald Reagan. Based on his reputation and on his being the first biographer ever to be granted such access to an incumbent president, Morris was able to negotiate a $3 million advance from Random House for the Reagan manuscript.

Conservatives undoubtedly hoped that Morris' book would elevate Reagan's status to that of a great president on par with FDR and worthy of a place on Mount Rushmore. This book will not accomplish that goal. Reviewers have inevitably spent more time discussing Morris and his fictional technique than anything he may have written about Reagan's domestic and foreign policy achievements. The reason is simple: Morris did not write a biography of Reagan or an in-depth study of his presidency; he wrote a memoir of his fictional and real self observing Reagan.

How can this be explained? First, the foreign-born Morris is not a scholar. He worked as an advertising copywriter in London before immigrating to the United States in 1968. His project on Theodore Roosevelt was originally a screenplay titled "The Dude from New York." Only after it was rejected as a screenplay did Morris turn it into a biography. His interests lie in literature, music, and foreign language; in...

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A Memoir of Ronald Reagan. By Edmund Morris. By Edmund Morris. About Dutch. This book, the only biography ever authorized by a sitting President—yet written with complete interpretive freedom—is as revolutionary in method as it is formidable in scholarship. When Ronald Reagan moved into the White House in 1981, one of his first literary guests was Edmund Morris, the Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer of Theodore Roosevelt. Morris developed a fascination for the genial yet inscrutable President and, after Reagan's landslide reelection in 1984, put aside the second volume of his life of Roosevelt to become an observing eye and ear at the White House. Dutch: A memoir of Ronald has been added to your Basket. Add to Basket. Buy Now. And however Ronald Reagan conducted himself before and during his presidency this book makes it patently clear that his cardboard image was not the real Ronald Reagan. Ronald Reagan had a mastery about him and he had to work hard for it, for America and of course for himself. Although the book is long, in my mind it's not long enough. There are several gaps in time, the Vietnam years and during the Carter era being examples. I wanted a blow by blow account of what Reagan was up to during these periods and what he might be thinking. All right then, was the book enjoyable?