



By Maggy Hurchalla, left, next to her sister, and former U.S. Attorney General, Janet Reno, at a Literacy Council luncheon in Stuart. PHOTO BY DAVID LANE 2005

Growing up with 'Janny'

Janet Reno's sister recalls their idyllic South Florida childhood.

Palm Beach Post Staff Report

Editor's Note: Janet Reno, the nation's first female attorney general, died at age 78 on Monday after suffering for years from Parkinson's disease. The announcement was made by her sister, Maggy Hurchalla. Hurchalla is a respected environmentalist and former Martin County commissioner. Here are excerpts from a Michael Browning profile of Hurchalla in 2005 in The Palm Beach Post, where she remembers growing up with her beloved sister "Janny":

Maggy Hurchalla and Janet Reno grew up in South Florida in the 1940s. Their father, Henry Olaf Reno, was the son of Danish immigrants to Wisconsin who changed their name from Rasmussen to Reno because it was easier to pronounce. They chose the name at random, off a map of Nevada.

The family was drawn to Florida by the giddy land boom of the mid-1920s. Henry, a would-be farmer, ended up growing roses and gardenias, and working as a police reporter for The Miami Herald for 43 years, dividing his time between blooms and homicides.

Their mother, Jane Wood Reno, also a Herald writer, was an astounding, self-possessed woman, a true original who built the family's house in south Miami from the oolite foundation up, with her own hands and a \$25 set of plans. Janet Reno lived there in her later years.

Hurchalla is the third of four children, whose nicknames for each other all end in "y:" Janny, Bobby, Maggy, Marky.

What was it like, being the younger sister of the girl who would grow up to be the top law-enforcement officer of the United States?

"She was very fair. When Bobby and Marky and I fought, she would just sit on us," Hurchalla said. "I'm extremely proud of her.

"Janny was the responsible one. I'm the middle kid, so I didn't have to be responsible. I could always say, 'Let's go a little further!' when we got on a muddy road... . Janny had to dig us out, so she had to figure out whether we should or shouldn't go a little further. If daddy couldn't make it home, Janny milked the cow."

"We are, in a sense, an anachronistic family," Hurchalla recalled. "In South Miami, we were on 20 acres with an old barn with a milk cow named Suzy, a pony named Tony, two donkeys, pigs, chickens, turkeys and a goat.

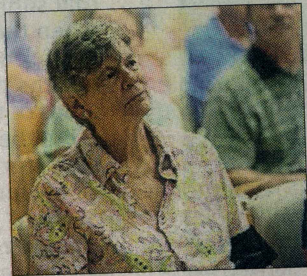
'Janny'

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"We bathed every school night, but we didn't have any hot water. We had to heat water on the stove. We couldn't afford a telephone, because phone companies charged by the mile. But when my dad went to work for The Miami Herald, they paid for a phone

so they could keep in touch with him."

"It was child's heaven," Hurchalla recalled. "You'd find cow skulls under palmetto bushes. You'd find neat, old pieces of farm equipment. There's nothing that tastes as good as the cream at the top of a bucket of fresh milk, nothing like reaching under the warm feathers of a hen for fresh-laid eggs."



Former Martin County Commissioner Maggy Hurchalla. RICHARD GRAULICH/
THE PALM BEACH POST