

# ROOTS: Morning in America, Dawn of New Era

America was just beginning to embrace Ronald Reagan, the nation's 40th president, in December 1981. Although President Reagan signed a top secret document in December that authorized the CIA to recruit and support rebels in Nicaragua, the Iran-Contra scandal was not to emerge until years later.

The hosiery industry was encouraged and endorsed the Reagan agenda. In North Carolina, the Carolina Hosiery Assn. members were looking forward to a membership meeting featuring Christopher C. DeMuth, administrator for Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget.

DeMuth's visit was coordinated through the office of U.S. Rep. Jim Broyhill whose chief of staff was Phil Kirk, now president of NCCBI. Tickets were sold on a first-come-first-served basis and limited to 300, the promotional material emphasized.

DeMuth also served as executive director for the Presidential Task Force on Regulatory Relief.

Country music queen Lynn Anderson entertained hosiery personnel in Western North Carolina during the annual "Hosiery Holiday Jamboree." She promised more than a "Rose Garden" and over 3,000 of her hosiery fans and their families responded.

Mills in Fort Payne, Alabama, and North Carolina were on a roll. V.I. Prewett was building his "family of mills" in Fort Payne

and serious marketing strategies were being implemented by second-generation leadership in mills who were setting up their own sales force. Names like Walmart and Kresge (later Kmart) were creeping into the vocabulary. Hugh Gaither at Ridgeview was building a brand for white athletic socks.

The era of selling through New York-based agents was coming to an end. Some companies like Neuville Mobil Sox were pushing their identifies as manufacturer---retailers were pushing to eliminate "middle men."

In 1981 MTV made its debut and played music videos 24 hours a day on cable. The influence on teenage fashion has been enormous. Popular entertainment in 1981 featured Harrison Ford in "Raiders of the Lost Ark", and "Chariots of Fire" and farewell performances of Katherine Hepburn and Henry Fonda in "On Golden Pond."

In December 1981, out in rural Louisiana, parents welcomed a newborn and named her Britney Spears.

The world was soon to change forever. Solidarity was forcing the Polish government to go on the defensive and within four years the Berlin Wall would disappear. First Poland, then East Germany and eventually the Soviet empire would become melted into the West.

December 1981. The Reagan years had arrived and it was "morning in America." It was a new day for our industry.



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