

The original documents are located in Box 45, folder “Sixty Minutes Interview Shown October 10, 1975” of the Betty Ford White House Papers, 1973-1977 at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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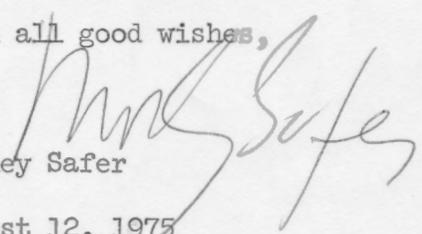
CBS NEWS

A Division of CBS Inc.
524 West 57 Street
New York, New York 10019
(212) 765-4321

Dear Mrs. Ford:

This is a belated note of thanks for your generosity, graciousness, and candor. I also want to assure you that the reaction to the interview around CBS has been overwhelmingly positive.

With all good wishes,


Morley Safer

August 12, 1975

P. S. I was particularly pleased to see the way Susan stood up for her mother.



Mrs. Betty Ford



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524 West 57 Street
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NEW YORK,
N.Y. 10019

CBS NEWS

HOLD FOR RELEASE
6 P.M. SUNDAY, AUGUST 10

"60 MINUTES"

"THE FIRST LADY"

SUNDAY, AUG. 10, 1975

9:30-10:30 P.M., EDT

ON THE CBS TELEVISION NETWORK

A CONVERSATION WITH BETTY FORD

WITH

CBS NEWS CORRESPONDENT MORLEY SAFER

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60 MINUTES

"THE FIRST LADY"

MRS. FORD: I told my husband if we have to go to the White House, "Okay, I will go. But I'm going as myself. And it's too late to change my pattern. And if they don't like it, then they'll just have to throw me out."

SAFER: Washington can be an awfully tough town on a political wife. Would you agree?

MRS. FORD: Well, I agree. But you see, I had twenty-six years of experience as the wife of a Congressman. And I did learn a little bit in that twenty-six years. You know, I wasn't sitting around being a dummy.

SAFER: One ex-wife, the ex-wife of a Congressman said, "He'll do anything for his country, his party and his family in that order."

MRS. FORD: Well, I think a Congressional wife has to be a special kind of woman. I don't think that all women, really, can adjust to this type of life.

SAFER: But would you advise your daughter, for example, to marry a politician given the years you've been through it in Washington?

MRS. FORD: That's a hard question.



SAFER: Would you advise against marrying a politician, put it that way?

MRS. FORD: No, I would not advise her against marrying a politician. I wouldn't pick one out for her though.

SAFER: What are the pressures on a woman living in this town?

MRS. FORD: The pressures are many. And it depends on the family, or the size of the family. The type of husband that you have. Whether he's a wanderer or whether he's a homebody. I think that there are some women that probably have their husbands around the house more than they'd like. And then there are those that wish their husbands were home more.

SAFER: Did you ever have any doubts about your husband and some of the attractions in this city?

MRS. FORD: I have perfect faith in my husband. But I'm always glad to see him enjoy a pretty girl. And when he stops looking, then I'm going to begin to worry. But right now, he still enjoys a pretty girl. And he really doesn't have time for outside entertainment. Because I keep him busy.



SAFER: There was a time in your life here where you felt that you needed some help.

MRS. FORD: This is true.

SAFER: Some psychiatric help.

MRS. FORD: Yes.

SAFER: Was that, do you think, a function of being in Washington or what? Why did you feel you had to go and see a psychiatrist?

MRS. FORD: Well, I was advised by the doctor who was treating me for my neck and shoulder and back, that perhaps, psychiatric help could help me in getting over this problem. And on his advice I went to a psychiatrist. And I found it very helpful, because apparently I was -- I was really giving too much of myself and not taking any time out for Betty. It was all going to the children and my husband. And consequently, I was a little beaten down. And he built up my ego.

SAFER: The psychiatrist did.

MRS. FORD: Yes, he did.

SAFER: You said you're going to start lobbying for a salary, what part of the job is the toughest? Is it simply this sort of thing, the 'paste-on-smile' as you described it yourself once?



MRS. FORD: I think the publicity and constantly being before the public and never really feeling that you can go out and take a swim in the pool because you're going to get your hair messed up. And you have to come back and face somebody for tea or some sort of program. So it's confining.

SAFER: It's almost a rule of political life, though, that the higher a man gets in politics, the less outspoken his wife becomes. She becomes a mouse. It seems that it's been just the opposite with Betty Ford. The higher your husband's gotten, the more, really controversial things have been said.

MRS. FORD: I know. But my -- what I've spoken out on were issues pertaining to women. I'm not getting into the political issues that ---

SAFER: Well, the Equal Rights Amendment was a very hot political issue.



MRS. FORD: It still is. And we're going to get it. I'm perfectly willing to tackle a political issue as long as it doesn't disturb my husband and he didn't step on my toes. I feel that the Equal Rights Amendment ought to probably pass in our Bicentennial year, 200 years. What could be greater than to pass that?

SAFER: Do you find the more strident voices of so-called "liberated women" the advocates, a little bit hard to take?

MRS. FORD: I must admit that, yes. I'm not the type that's going to burn my bra or do something like that. I really don't feel that strong about it. I feel that the liberated woman is the woman who is happy doing what she's doing, whether it's a job or as a housewife, it doesn't make a bit of difference. Just so she, inwardly, feels that she is happy and that she is liberated.

SAFER: But without meaning to be rude for a minute, surely, the most unliberated woman in this -- in the world is the wife of the President of the United States....in terms of the bonds that tie her, forgive me, to his shadow.

MRS. FORD: I don't feel unliberated when I'm sitting here talking to you. You can ask me any question.



I'm perfectly happy to answer and give you my idea. And I'm sure my husband won't mind at all.

SAFER: Okay. Do you ever say to him, "You really weren't very good today?"

MRS. FORD: Yes, I do. (LAUGHS) I'm probably his world's either worst or best critic. I watch everything. And I check everything. And quite often, I check if he's going to be on television, I check his shirt, his tie, his suit. The whole works.

SAFER: What are the things about him, the things he does, the habits he has, that you like least?

MRS. FORD: Well, after twenty-six years, I guess we've learned to live together and accept each others habits. I've learned to correct mine, I think, that were, perhaps, aggrevating to him. And I think he's -- I really think that he's tried to correct his. I believe a marriage, you see, should be a seventy-thirty proposition. You don't go into marriage as a fifty-fifty thing. You go into it, both of you, as a seventy-thirty proposition. In other words, I'm giving seventy, he can give thirty. He's giving seventy, I give the opposite. And when you're going overboard like that, trying to please each other, you can't help but be happy.



SAFER: As doubtlessly happy a marriage as the Ford marriage has been all these years, what's -- what are the issues that we really --

MRS. FORD: We've had our fights.

SAFER: Over what?

MRS. FORD: Oh, very minor details, probably because I was late.

SAFER: You've got a reputation for that?

MRS. FORD: No, more, no more. It's all gone. I beat him everywhere.

SAFER: But what? Did you ever fight over money?

MRS. FORD: No. Never had any money to fight over.

SAFER: But did you -- did you ever have words with him, strong words, over political stands?

MRS. FORD: No, I would not say strong words. I would say that we've had disagreements over political stands.

SAFER: I think that everyone would be fascinated to know what is the issue that you sat Jerry Ford down and said, "Listen, I want you to listen...?"

MRS. FORD: Well, a lot of it had to do with, perhaps, putting a woman in the Cabinet.

SAFER: You won that one.



MRS. FORD: Yes, I won that one. And I'm working on another. If I can get a woman on the Supreme Court Bench, then I think that I'll really be -- have accomplished a great deal.

SAFER: Getting back to my original question which was the more power a politician gets, the more of a mouse his wife becomes. And among the things you have spoken out about are abortion, which is kind of a taboo subject for the wife of the President. It's one of the ---

MRS. FORD: (INDISTINCT) -- Ask a question you have to be honest, exactly how you feel. And I feel very strongly that it was the best thing in the world when the Supreme Court voted to legalize abortion, and in my words, bring it out of the backwoods and put it in the hospitals where it belonged. I thought it was a great, great decision.

SAFER: You've also talked about the young people living together before they're married.

MRS. FORD: Well, they are, aren't they?

SAFER: Indeed, they are. Well, what if Susan Ford came to you and said, "Mother, I'm having an affair."



MRS. FORD: Well, I wouldn't be surprised. I think she's a perfectly normal human being like all young girls, if she wanted to continue and I would certainly counsel and advise her on the subject, and I'd want to know pretty much about the young man that she was planning to have the affair with; whether it was a worthwhile encounter or whether it was going to be one of those --- She's pretty young to start affairs.

SAFER: But, nevertheless, old enough ----

MRS. FORD: Oh, yes, she's a big girl.

SAFER: I mean would it surprise you, though, given the way the -- the way you brought these kids up, and the President brought them up, would it surprise you if that happened?

MRS. FORD: No, I think there's a complete freedom among the young people now. And in some cases, I'm not so sure that, perhaps, there would be less divorce.

SAFER: Have you worried about your children, about your children -- I don't know, going wrong, about drugs?



MRS. FORD:

No, I really haven't, because we've always discussed it and I would have detected it. And immediately, I would have done something about it. We brought them up with a certain moral value that where their friends might be taking drugs now, I'm not saying that they haven't tried it, because I'm sure they've all probably tried marijuana. The last time I said that I got the devil from one of them because he said, "How do you know I've tried marijuana? I've never touched it before." And I said, "I don't know. I just supposed that you probably had." But it's not habit, it's nothing that we've had to have.....

SAFER:

Do you think that Betty Bloomer would have been the kind of girl who would have at least experimented with marijuana when you were growing up?

MRS. FORD:

Oh, I'm sure I probably would when I was growing up at that age, I probably would have been interested to see what the effect ... I never would have gone into it as a habit or anything like that. It's the type of thing that the young people have to experience, like your first beer or your first cigarette, something like that.



SAFER: You know, you've spoken out on a number of things, the fact that you've sought psychiatric help. You've spoken on drugs, on abortion, all kinds of things that used to be considered taboo, I guess really were taboo for ---

MRS. FORD: But also didn't -- the fact that I had the cancer operation and the publicity of that saved a lot of people's lives.

SAFER: Indeed, was that a conscious thing when you decided to ---

MRS. FORD: Definitely. I felt that if I had it, many other women have it, because I had no idea of it whatsoever and it came about as a complete surprise. One day, like that, and the next day I was in the hospital. And I thought that there are women all over the country like me. And if I don't make this public, then their lives will be gone, they're in jeopardy. And I think it did a great deal for women as far as the cancer problem is concerned. It isn't difficult if you face up to it. And you can find a power that's strong enough, that will carry you through those things. And this is the power that I have found, has carried me through a lot of things.



SAFER: Power being what? A religious feeling?

MRS. FORD: Yes, it's a religious feeling, a belief in God. And knowing that there is God and depending on Him.

SAFER: Do you pray? Does the President pray?

MRS. FORD: Definitely, both of us. The President has his special prayers that he says at night, I know, before he goes to sleep. And I have mine.

SAFER: Then we turned to a subject we've all been concerned about ... Betty Ford's health.

And I think that a lot of people would like to hear it from you, how are you?

MRS. FORD: Really and truly, I never have felt better. I feel absolutely marvelous. My weight is down and I like to be lean and trim. The doctors reports have all been absolutely clear. There's not been one iota of question in all of the tests that they have run on me every three months. There hasn't been any sign, whatsoever, of a cancerous reoccurrence at this point.

Now, this doesn't mean that I'm going on forever. Because some people go three years, some people go four years, but I feel great. And I'm convinced in my own mind, that I'm completely cured.

SAFER:

And how about your back, that pinched nerve that you did have to take some ---

MRS. FORD:

Well, that still does give me trouble, but I've had that ten or eleven years and I don't expect, you know, everybody can't be perfect. You all have to suffer a little to appreciate life.





MORLEY SAFER TALKS WITH FIRST LADY BETTY FORD

SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, ON "60 MINUTES"

Catapulted from suburban housewife to the nation's First Lady not quite a year ago, Betty Ford has rapidly established a reputation for candor and a willingness to talk about just about anything. In fact, she and CBS News Correspondent Morley Safer did just that in an interview conducted in the White House solarium late last month. Their conversation, which delved into some controversial areas like equal rights, abortion and marijuana, some personal areas like psycholanalysis and Mrs. Ford's surgery last year, and life at the White House, will be broadcast on "60 MINUTES," this Sunday, August 10, (9:30-10:30 PM, ET) on the CBS Television Network.

The third floor solarium, overlooking the Washington Monument, is a comfortable room usually filled with overstuffed bright yellow furnishings. On the day of the interview, CBS News did some reddecorating -- adding several large videotape cameras, sound and lighting equipment and streams of coaxial cable.

When Betty Bloomer Ford arrived for her conversation with Safer, which was to take place casually over the course of a Monday afternoon, she never once betrayed what must have been her astonishment at the new decor. And later, as the veteran correspondent and production staff withered under the hot television lights, Betty Ford was her usual self -- cool, calm and very candid.



2. . .

"She is a lady in an important position, with a great deal to say," said "60 MINUTES" Executive Producer Don Hewitt about the interview. "But," he continued, "when Betty Ford says it, she sparkles."

* * *





July 25, 1975

FIRST LADY BETTY FORD SITS FOR FIRST EXTENSIVE TELEVISION
INTERVIEW ON "60 MINUTES," SUNDAY, AUGUST 10

Betty Ford, First Lady for just one year, sits for her first extensive television interview in a candid conversation with CBS News Correspondent Morley Safer on "60 MINUTES" Sunday, Aug. 10 (9:30-10:30 PM, ET) on the CBS Television Network.

"This is an unusual interview with a very unusual woman," says Safer. "She is open, honest, and completely frank as she discusses her attitudes about her roles as First Lady, wife, and mother -- and as an independent person in her own right."

The interview was conducted in the third floor solarium at the White House.

Other segments of the August 10 edition of "60 MINUTES" are to be announced.

Don Hewitt is executive producer of "60 MINUTES."

* * *



6 pm 8/15

These are indeed strange and uncertain times.

You try to stay on top of things by looking for signals. .trying to determine if any patterns are developing. .you seek out barometers of what is happening and what's about to happen.

But as it often turns out. .you look one way and find a note of encouragement. .only to turn around and discover your cup of hope is rusting around the edges.

Two cases in point from the last five days. . .

Shortly after 9:30 last Sunday night. .the sun rose over the White House. .and the light it cast was warm and nutritious.



It was Betty Ford on television talking like a real, live human being.

The President's wife without even a hint of a loss of dignity saying she wouldn't be surprised if her daughter had an affair.

Not saying she would encourage it. .not passing it off as an issue of no concern.

Saying simply and honestly. .that she wouldn't be surprised.

Lord it was refreshing!

So there we were. .recharged and heady with such ambrosia. .undaunted by the sanctimonious shrieks of protest. .and along comes the saga of Sarah.



Sarah is a pin-up. .24 feet long
. .true. .but still a pin-up. .not
unlike those in army barracks. .
locker rooms. .bedroom walls. .and
any place else where men work or play.

Anyplace. .except a construction
^{site}
~~site~~ where the General Services
Administration is in charge.

To the construction workers. .
Sarah was a pleasant diversion from
the demands of their labor. .

To the GSA. .she was an
embarrassment . .or would you believe
inappropriate.

That's the reaction to her
attributed to GSA administrator
Arthur Sampson. .INAPPROPRIATE?

Folks. .don't you know that a
pin-up at a construction ^{site} ~~site~~ is



about as inappropriate and as threatening to the national moral fiber as a hot dog and a cold beer at a ball game.

Or as a First Lady. who has the courage, the integrity, and the grace to address herself on network television to a nation of grown-ups . . . and not a bunch of munchkins.



Dear Mrs. Ford,

As a woman, a mother, a wife, and a first lady, you, in my opinion, are magnificent.

Please, be strong under what, I'm sure, is the agonizing weight of criticism. You have a lot of friends and supporters, who, like me, consider you to be awfully good for the country.

Thank you for your candor, your awareness, your complete absence of pretentiousness.

You're dy-no-mite.

Sincerely + appreciatively

J. Vance

P.S. Trophy for dinner, sometime. We'd be pleased to have you.

1 WEST
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"THE FIRST LADY"

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SAFER: Washington can be an awfully tough town on a political wife. Would you agree?

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SAFER: One ex-wife, the ex-wife of a Congressman said, "He'll do anything for his country, his party and his family in that order."

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SAFER: There was a time in your life here where you felt that you needed some help.

MRS. FORD: This is true.

SAFER: Some psychiatric help.

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SAFER: Was that, do you think, a function of being in Washington or what? Why did you feel you had to go and see a psychiatrist?

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SAFER: You've got a reputation for that?

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SAFER: But what? Did you ever fight over money?

MRS. FORD: No. Never had any money to fight over.

SAFER: But did you -- did you ever have words with him, strong words, over political stands?

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SAFER:

Getting back to my original question which was the more power a politician gets, the more of a mouse his wife becomes. And among the things you have spoken out about are abortion, which is kind of a taboo subject for the wife of the President. It's one of the ---

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SAFER:

You've also talked about the young people living together before they're married.

MRS. FORD:

Well, they are, aren't they?

SAFER:

Indeed, they are. Well, what if Susan Ford came to you and said, "Mother, I'm having an affair."



MRS. FORD:

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SAFER:

But, nevertheless, old enough ----

MRS. FORD:

Oh, yes, she's a big girl.

SAFER:

I mean would it surprise you, though, given the way the -- the way you brought these kids up, and the President brought them up, would it surprise you if that happened?

MRS. FORD:

No, I think there's a complete freedom among the young people now. And in some cases, I'm not so sure that, perhaps, there would be less divorce.

SAFER:

Have you worried about your children, about your children -- I don't know, going wrong, about drugs?



MRS. FORD:

No, I really haven't, because we've always discussed it and I would have detected it. And immediately, I would have done something about it. We brought them up with a certain moral value that where their friends might be taking drugs now, I'm not saying that they haven't tried it, because I'm sure they've all probably tried marijuana. The last time I said that I got the devil from one of them because he said, "How do you know I've tried marijuana? I've never touched it before." And I said, "I don't know. I just supposed that you probably had." But it's not habit, it's nothing that we've had to have.....

SAFER:

Do you think that Betty Bloomer would have been the kind of girl who would have at least experimented with marijuana when you were growing up?

MRS. FORD:

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SAFER:

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But also didn't -- the fact that I had the cancer operation and the publicity of that saved a lot of people's lives.

SAFER:

Indeed, was that a conscious thing when you decided to ---

MRS. FORD:

Definitely. I felt that if I had it, many other women have it, because I had no idea of it whatsoever and it came about as a complete surprise. One day, like that, and the next day I was in the hospital. And I thought that there are women all over the country like me. And if I don't make this public, then their lives will be gone, they're in jeopardy. And I think it did a great deal for women as far as the cancer problem is concerned. It isn't difficult if you face up to it. And you can find a power that's strong enough, that will carry you through those things. And this is the power that I have found, has carried me through a lot of things.



SAFER: Power being what? A religious feeling?

MRS. FORD: Yes, it's a religious feeling, a belief in God. And knowing that there is God and depending on Him.

SAFER: Do you pray? Does the President pray?

MRS. FORD: Definitely, both of us. The President has his special prayers that he says at night, I know, before he goes to sleep. And I have mine.

SAFER: Then we turned to a subject we've all been concerned about ... Betty Ford's health.

And I think that a lot of people would like to hear it from you, how are you?

MRS. FORD: Really and truly, I never have felt better. I feel absolutely marvelous. My weight is down and I like to be lean and trim. The doctors reports have all been absolutely clear. There's not been one iota of question in all of the tests that they have run on me every three months. There hasn't been any sign, whatsoever, of a cancerous reoccurrence at this point.



Now, this doesn't mean that I'm going on forever. Because some people go three years, some people go four years, but I feel great. And I'm convinced in my own mind, that I'm completely cured.

SAFER:

And how about your back, that pinched nerve that you did have to take some ---

MRS. FORD:

Well that still does give me trouble, but I've had that ten or eleven years and I don't expect, you know, everybody can't be perfect. You all have to suffer a little to appreciate life.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 21, 1975

Dear ,

Thank you for _____ about my appearance on the "Sixty Minutes" interview. The concern which inspired you to share your views is appreciated.

I wish it were possible for us to sit down together and talk, one to another. A talk that would probably find us on the same side in our approach to what is right for our children.

I consider myself a responsible parent. I know I am a loving one. We have raised our four children in a home that believes in and practices the enduring values of morality and personal integrity. As every mother and father knows, these are not easy times to be a parent. Our convictions are continually being questioned and tested by the fads and fancies of the moment.

I believe our values to be eternal and I believe them to be the values of my children. But we have come to this sharing of outlook through communication, not coercion. I want my children to know that their concerns, their doubts, their difficulties -- whatever they may be, can be discussed with the two people in this world who care the most -- their mother and father. On "Sixty Minutes," the emotion of my words spoke to the need for this communication -- rather than the specific issues we discussed.

It is difficult to adequately express one's personal convictions in a 15-minute interview. I believe our children's lives will say more than words about their dedication to honor, to integrity, to humanity and to God.

You and I -- they and I -- have no quarrel.

Sincerely,

Betty Ford



CBS MEMORANDUM

FROM: Suzanne St. Pierre
TO: DON HEWITT and MORLEY SAFER
DATE: July 2, 1975

Betty Bloomer Ford, as she appears today, is a strong, alive and intelligent woman. She is open and candid and has a sense of balance and humor about herself and her husband even though he is President of the United States. This is blended with obvious fondness and affection towards him.

She is an unusual First Lady. Not since Eleanor Roosevelt has there been one who has spoken with such candor on political issues. She has expressed her opinion about several controversial subjects - the Equal Rights Amendment (the White House mail ran heavily against her), abortion, marijuana, social mores, her relationship with her husband, her views on psychiatry and her own emotional condition. And no one can remember when a President's wife has given a full-fledged White House press conference such as the one Mrs. Ford gave last September.

She is also a traditional woman - in many ways the wife of a famous man. She has raised her children to be a credit to herself and her husband - who is still in love with her after all these years. One friend called that not only smart, but practically brilliant. A religious woman, she reads a scriptural passage every day.

She and her family are described again and again as normal, but in such a way that "normal" sounds exotic. Perhaps she is no different from a lot of good, strong, courageous American women - that she represents the best of us - and that is what cheers us most - that we know there are a lot of Betty Fords in America that help to keep us together and give us strength as individuals, as families, as communities and as a nation.

Reading about Betty Ford is very touching and inspiring - not for sad reasons - but because she is a courageous woman who has not only survived the role of First Lady, but thrived on it. She has controlled that role rather than it controlling her. One of our first glimpses of her strength and openness was at the time of her breast operation. By



DON HEWITT and MORLEY SAFER

July 2, 1975

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her behavior she took away the embarrassment and secrecy from what until then many had regarded as almost a shameful social disease.

Possibly she used to be more retiring and self-effacing and not as quick to be candid about controversial subjects. One senses this from some of the earlier publicity on her. It did not define her as easily or with such uniformity as the articles today do. Possibly that impression was because of her manner of speaking which is slow, hesitating and deliberate. Possibly we just didn't know her and were wrong in our judgment. And possibly she has changed - blossomed - felt more at ease to find herself and be herself. Betty Ford surprised us.

SSH

