

Timeline of Elizabeth (Betty) Bloomer Ford's Life and Career

- April 8, 1918 Elizabeth Ann Bloomer (Betty) is born in Chicago, Illinois to William and Hortense Neahr Bloomer.
- 1920 The Bloomer family, including older brothers William and Robert, move to Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- 1926 The young Miss Bloomer begins social dancing lessons with Miss Calla Travis.
- 1932-36 Betty Bloomer attends Central High School in Grand Rapids, MI. She begins lessons in ballet, tap and modern movement and decides she wants to pursue a career as a dancer. She also teaches dance to younger children and works as a model at Herpolsheimer's department store.
- 1934 Betty's father dies.
- Summers, 1937-38 After high school graduation, Betty Bloomer attends Bennington College School of Dance in Vermont. She meets Martha Graham, choreographer and founder of the famous contemporary dance troupe.
- 1939 Miss Graham offers the 20 year old Miss Bloomer an opportunity to attend the Martha Graham School and she moves to New York City. To earn extra money she works as a model at the John Robert Powers Agency.
- 1940-41 Miss Bloomer becomes a member of the Graham auxiliary dance group and performs with the ensemble at Carnegie Hall.
- 1941 Hortense Bloomer Godwin (remarried) convinces her daughter to return to Grand Rapids, Michigan. Betty Bloomer is hired by Calla Travis to teach dance and also returns to Herpolsheimer's as assistant fashion coordinator.
- 1942-47 Miss Betty Bloomer marries William Warren, a friend since school days. The couple moves often as Mr. Warren changes sales jobs. Betty eventually returns to Grand Rapids and once again accepts a position at Herpolsheimer's, this time as the fashion coordinator. The couple divorce amicably.
- August 1947 Betty Bloomer Warren is introduced to Gerald R. Ford, Jr. by mutual friends.

- February 1948 The couple becomes engaged to be married but Ford tells his fiancée the wedding cannot be until Fall because there is something he “has to do first.”
- June 1948 Ford announces his candidacy for the Republican nomination for U.S. House of Representatives, Fifth Congressional District of Michigan. He defeats Bartel Jonkman in the Republican primary.
- October 15, 1948 Gerald Ford and Betty Bloomer Warren wed at Grace Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids. Marrying in the middle of his congressional campaign, the couple honeymoon briefly in Ann Arbor, attend the University of Michigan-Northwestern football game, and then drive to Owosso, Michigan to attend a rally for Republican Presidential candidate Thomas Dewey.
- November 2, 1948 Gerald Ford is elected to his first term as a U.S. Congressman from Grand Rapids.
- December 1948 Betty’s mother dies.
- January 3, 1949 Gerald and Betty Ford move to Washington, D.C. He is sworn in as a member of the Eighty-First Congress; she soon becomes a member of the Congressional Wives Club and helps the Congressman by escorting visiting constituents on tours of the Capitol.
- March 14, 1950 The Fords’ first child, Michael Gerald Ford, is born.
- March 16, 1952 The Fords’ second son, John Gardner “Jack” Ford, is born.
- Spring 1955 The Fords move into their newly completed house in Alexandria, Virginia.
- May 19, 1956 The Fords’ third son, Steven Meigs Ford, is born.
- July 6, 1957 The Fords’ youngest child, daughter Susan Elizabeth Ford, is born.
- 1957-73 Betty Ford is occupied with raising four children. She serves as Cub Scout Den Mother, Sunday School teacher, and member of the PTA. She continues to fulfill the supportive public duties of a Congressional spouse.
- November 7, 1972 Gerald Ford is elected to his thirteenth and final term as a Congressman. Despite Nixon’s landslide victory, the Republicans do not gain many House seats. Realizing he may never achieve his

goal to become Speaker of the House, both Fords contemplate their retirement after 1976.

- October 1973 Spiro Agnew resigns as Vice President of the United States. Congressman Ford is nominated to be Vice President by Richard Nixon.
- December 6, 1973 Betty Ford's husband becomes Vice President of the United States, taking his oath of office in front of a joint session of Congress.
- August 9, 1974 President Richard Nixon resigns. Gerald R. Ford is sworn in as 38th President of the United States, and Betty Ford becomes First Lady of the United States. In his swearing-in remarks, President Ford announces "I am indebted to no man, and only to one woman--my dear wife--as I begin this very difficult job."
- September 4, 1974 The new First Lady holds her first press conference facing 75 reporters. She immediately addresses controversial issues such as legalized abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment.
- September 26-28 1974 Mrs. Ford is diagnosed with breast cancer and undergoes surgery.
- October 7, 1974 The First Lady is open with the public about her diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer, a disease that, until now, was not widely discussed in public. With her cooperation, a complete account appears in *Newsweek* magazine. She helps raise public awareness of screening and treatment options and gives comfort to countless women fighting the disease.
- 1975-1976 Mrs. Ford openly supports the Equal Rights Amendment. Making personal phone calls, she lobbies state legislators to vote for passage.
- July 8, 1975 Gerald Ford formally announces his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976.
- August 10, 1975 The First Lady is interviewed on the popular CBS news program, *60 Minutes*. She shocks some viewers by acknowledging that had she been young in the 1970's she might have tried marijuana; she called the Supreme Court decision upholding a woman's abortion rights a "great, great decision"; and she said she wouldn't be surprised if her 18 year old daughter had an affair. Initial response runs two to one in criticism of her remarks, but within months her approval rating climbs to seventy-five percent and she is applauded for her honesty and candor.

- October 25, 1975 Betty Ford addresses the International Women's Year meeting in Cleveland, Ohio. In what will be called "the most progressive [speech] made by any President's wife since Eleanor Roosevelt," she expresses regret that discrimination and equal opportunities for women are still far from realized and she encourages all women to work for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. "Being a lady does not require silence," she exhorts.
- January 10, 1976 Mrs. Ford appears as herself in an episode of the popular Mary Tyler Moore Show on CBS television.
- July 7, 1976 President and Mrs. Ford welcome Queen Elizabeth II to the White House for a state dinner as part of the Bicentennial celebration. It is the most glamorous of many state dinners that Mrs. Ford would help plan and host.
- August 19, 1976 President Ford is nominated at the Republican Convention edging out former California Governor Ronald Reagan. He names Senator Robert Dole of Kansas as his running mate.
- Summer-Fall, 1976 Mrs. Ford campaigns in California, Texas, and throughout the Mid-West, making 9 campaign trips in support of her husband's candidacy. Enthusiasts sport buttons that encourage "Vote for Betty's Husband."
- October 14, 1976 Martha Graham, Betty Ford's "idol" and mentor is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Gerald Ford.
- November 3, 1976 Because he is suffering from laryngitis, Mrs. Ford delivers her husband's written remarks congratulating Jimmy Carter as the new President-elect.
- December 19, 1976 Betty Ford receives an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Michigan. She uses her acceptance speech to voice support for the ERA.
- January 20, 1977 Carter is sworn in as the 39th President of the United States. The Fords retire to Rancho Mirage, California and Vail, Colorado.
- March 9, 1977 President and Mrs. Ford each sign contracts to publish their respective memoirs.
- April 11, 1978 After a family intervention, Mrs. Ford enters the Long Beach Naval Hospital for treatment of addiction to alcohol and prescription medication.

- November 1978 *Times of My Life* is published. In this autobiography, Mrs. Ford recounts her life through her years as First Lady and concludes with an unplanned chapter on her admittance to Long Beach and the start of her recovery.
- Fall 1979 Gerald Ford considers another run for the Presidency in the 1980 election but decides not to run. Mrs. Ford applauds the decision.
- 1981 Betty Ford continues to work in support of the ERA. She serves as the National Honorary Chair of the ERA Countdown Campaign. June 30, 1982 sees the deadline for ratification of the amendment; it fails to pass two-thirds of the states and does not become law.
- 1981-1982 Betty Ford and her longtime friend, Ambassador Leonard Firestone, establish The Betty Ford Center for the treatment of chemical dependency at the Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage, California. She leads the way in raising funds and developing treatment programs for the Center.
- October 3, 1982 The Betty Ford Center is dedicated. Mrs. Ford is Chairman of the Board until 2005.
- 1983 Mrs. Ford receives the Susan G. Koman Foundation Award for her support of breast cancer research and education. The Koman Foundation becomes a world leader in the fight against breast cancer. In recognition of her significant contributions to this group, the award is later renamed the Betty Ford Award.
- 1987 Elizabeth Bloomer Ford is inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame for her achievements in the area of Women's Rights.
- February 1987 *A Glad Awakening* is published. This is Mrs. Ford's autobiographical account of her recovery from addiction. All proceeds go to the Betty Ford Center.
- March 2, 1987 *The Betty Ford Story*, a television movie made with Mrs. Ford's cooperation, premieres.
- 1988 In Vail, Colorado, the world's highest botanic garden is named the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens in recognition of Mrs. Ford many contributions to the Vail Valley and beyond.
- March 25, 1991 Betty Ford testifies before the House Aging Subcommittee on Health and Long Term Care. She speaks in support of federal funding for drug abuse treatment programs.

- November 18, 1991 Mrs. Ford is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George H.W. Bush. The honor is bestowed for her contribution to health issues. The citation reads in part: “Her courage and candor have inspired millions of Americans to restore their health, protect their dignity, and shape full lives for themselves...”
- March 7-8, 1994 Former first ladies Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter testify before Congress in support of findings by the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law study encouraging inclusion of mental health and substance abuse treatment benefits in the national health care reform plan. They also co-author a *USA Today* op-ed piece explaining their position.
- October 27, 1999 President and Mrs. Ford receive the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award bestowed by the Legislative branch. The award is given in recognition of “their dedicated public service and outstanding humanitarian contributions to the people of the United States.”
- April 28, 2001 Mrs. Ford receives an honorary degree from Grand Valley State University in Michigan.
- December 26, 2006 President Ford dies at their California home at 93 years of age. Mrs. Ford, her children, and the nation enter a period of mourning, and funeral services are held in Palm Desert, California; Washington, D.C.; and Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- January 3, 2007 Mrs. Ford returns to Rancho Mirage, California. She continues to serve as Chairman-Emeritus of the Betty Ford Center and enjoys her role as grandmother and great-grandmother to her still growing family.

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