

The original documents are located in Box 4, folder “Gown Presentation, Smithsonian Institution, June 24, 1976” of the Frances K. Pullen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20560

June 10, 1976

Suggestions for Mr. Ripley's Remarks - First Ladies Hall, June 24, 1976

The addition of a new gown to our Collection of Dresses of the First Ladies of the White House is a memorable occasion for the Museum and for the millions of Americans who treasure this collection above all other costumes collections. Today, Mrs. Ford will continue a tradition begun in 1912 when the then presiding First Lady, Mrs. William Howard Taft, graciously presented to the Museum one of her gowns. It was the first for exhibition which was hopefully planned to include dresses worn by every First Lady of the White House. Mrs. Taft's interest in the project and her generosity were instrumental in accomplishing this objective. In a very few years, dresses representing all the former First Ladies were received for the Collection and from the time of Mrs. Taft to the present, each First Lady has generously given a gown to continue the Collection. With today's addition, the Collection represents every administration from President George Washington to President Gerald Ford.

As bicentennial visitors pour into the Museum of History and Technology, the exhibit to which they most often ask to be directed is the First Ladies Hall. They come not only to admire the handsome gowns, they come because these gowns symbolize for them the women who wore them. It is the women who give life to the Collection. For students of American Costume, the

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gowns are an interesting panorama of fashion, but to many who have no more than a passing interest in fashion, the Collection seems to provide an intimate acquaintance with each lady represented. And the gown of the reigning First Lady is always the most popular dress in the Collection. It is on behalf of these people as well as the Smithsonian Institution that today I say thank you, Mrs. Ford for your addition to this Collection.

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MRS. FORD'S REMARKS
BALL GOWN PRESENTATION
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE
June 24, 1976

MR. RIPLEY,

1.

I'M DELIGHTED TO HAVE

ONE OF MY FAVORITE DRESSES

IN THIS VERY SPECIAL COLLECTION.

WHEN I BROUGHT VISITORS TO THIS HALL,

NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS

DID I EXPECT TO EVER BE HERE MYSELF.

I'VE OFTEN HEARD CHILDREN IN THE HALL

2.

POINT AND ASK: WHO IS THAT LADY?

SURELY, THE ANSWER ISN'T BETTY FORD.

IT'S GOING TO TAKE A WHILE

TO GET USED TO THE IDEA

I COULD COME OVER TO THE SMITHSONIAN

AND SEE MYSELF.

BUT LET'S FACE IT,

I CAN'T HELP BUT BE THRILLED.

LIKE SO MANY AMERICANS,
I'VE BEEN EDUCATED AND ENTERTAINED
BY THE MANY WONDERS OF THE SMITHSONIAN.

I JUST WANT TO SAY THANKS
TO ALL WHO WORK SO HARD
TO KEEP THE SMITHSONIAN
SUCH A FASCINATING AND GROWING TREASURE HOUSE.

YOU REALLY ARE DOING A FABULOUS JOB,

5.

AND I'M VERY HONORED TO BECOME

PART OF THE INSTITUTE.

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