

The original documents are located in Box 1, folder “11/22/74 - National Association for Mental Health” of the Betty Ford White House Papers, 1973-1977 at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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BACKGROUNDER on National Association for Mental Health luncheon



About 500 people are expected, and will be eating lunch at round tables in a room about half the size or smaller of the Shoreham's main ballroom. You'll be speaking from a podium at the head table. Kind of an informal setup when you consider numbers attending. The head table is only one step off the floor, and the room is done in bright reds with kind of a cozy look.

Two men whom you have not met will meet you inside the door - Brian O'Connell and Linden Wheeler, national officers of the group. Farther on inside, you'll be met by Geridee Wheeler (no relation to Linden Wheeler), who is the woman who invited you. She is the President-elect and is also Natl Committewoman from North Dakota.

She is short-ish, with blonde, curly hair, very outgoing and nice. She tells me she has met you and talked with you and the President at several RNC functions over the past few years.

The three will walk with you to the head table, where you will be introduced and speak right away. They understand you must leave right after the remarks.

This organization is particularly dedicated and competent, in my opinion. They have one million volunteers from all walks of life - housewives, lawyers, social workers, etc. The age range is generally from 35-55ish, but there are some younger as well. They are really enthusiastic about their cause.

They feel great gains have been made in recent years in public awareness of mental health and its importance, and that one of the reasons has been the willingness of people to talk about their own personal problems in public i.e., you, Margaret Trudeau, Buzz Aldrin, the astronaut, who will be at the head table.

You may want to be aware of the fact that a kook group, the Church of Scientology, rather regularly picks on this group and the Psychiatrists to harrass. Nothing violent, but things like press releases and pickets, etc. We do not expect any problems, but Secret Service has been alerted in any event.

The group is really thrilled you are coming, and were most cooperative.

Pat

Mrs. Ford

Remarks For National Association for Mental Health Luncheon
Friday, November 22, 1974

1
Good afternoon. I want to thank you very much
for your invitation today, and I bring you greetings from
my husband as well. I assume he's asleep in Seoul, Korea
about now but has his furry hat and long johns out
for his trip in a few hours to Vladivostok!

2
I'm delighted to be here today and especially to
be serving as your national honorary chairperson. I have
a special interest in the National Association for Mental
Health, and I'd like to say a few words about that.

I read with interest in your journal this month
a story by Buzz Aldrin, your 1974 Mental Health Chairman,
who I understand is sitting here to my right. For those
of you who haven't had a chance to look at it, it's an
interview concerning Mr. Aldrin's bout and eventual
hospitalization with emotional problems after his great
success as one of the first two men on the moon. (ASIDE)
Mr. Aldrin, I thought it was very interesting, and I guess
you can consider this a plug for your book!

I firmly believe in his thesis that it's important
to get over the taboos that were once placed on the subject



of psychological problems. It's important to get them out in the open -- understood and treated in the public's mind as a physical infirmity. And I think we've made great strides in this area in just the last few years.

When Jerry was named Vice President, and journalists started wanting to do stories about me and the family, I was very frank in telling them I had seen a psychiatrist a few years ago. I went initially because the doctors thought a pinched nerve in my neck might indicate problems that were psychological. As it turned out, my problems were physical, but I discovered inadvertently that the sessions with the psychiatrist were beneficial anyway.

The sessions gave me a sounding board, someone to talk with about the things that were bothering me. And as a mother with four super-active, growing children, and a husband who was out of town alot, there were plenty of things at that period in my life! The sessions filled a need at that particular time and helped me get over a rough spot.

At any rate, the basic point I want to make is that in years past, the fact that one even stepped into a psychiatrists's office was a very "hush-hush" thing. Not so anymore. More and more people are willing to talk about it in the open, and I think this is necessary for the



improved, overall awareness of the importance of mental health in our country.

4. Mental well-being is every bit as important to one's health as one's physical well-being. ~~It is a~~ Vital ~~that we~~ pay as much attention to the health of our minds as to the condition of our bodies.

I want to mention also that I am happy to be your national chairperson for a number of reasons in addition to firmly believing in your cause. The National Association for Mental Health has an excellent reputation for dedication and competence. You have involved one million people in working for mental health on a volunteer basis, and that's an impressive number. And moreover, I have found the people involved in your group to be particularly active and enthusiastic about the importance of the job you're doing.

3. Well, let me just say that I have great admiration for your organization's program and for its focus on research and prevention. It's so important to expand public understanding of the meaning of mental illness and to work on improved assistance for our mentally ill.

You have made great strides in the past few years, and I am grateful to have been invited to meet with you today.



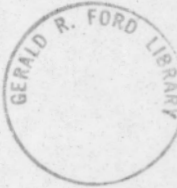
5. In your annual report this year, you included a calendar of red letter days for the Association during the past year. I consider today, the day I formally accept your national chair-person-ship (... and that's a mouthful, isn't it?) -- I consider ^{this} ~~it~~ a red letter day for myself, and am grateful to have the opportunity to do what I can for mental health in our country.

Thank you very much

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

NOVEMBER 22, 1974



GOOD AFTERNOON. I WANT TO THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR INVITATION TODAY, AND I BRING YOU GREETINGS FROM MY HUSBAND AS WELL. I ASSUME HE'S ASLEEP IN SEOUL, KOREA ABOUT NOW

I'M DELIGHTED TO BE HERE TODAY AND ESPECIALLY TO BE SERVING AS YOUR NATIONAL HONORARY CHAIRPERSON.

-2-

IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO EXPAND PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND TO WORK ON IMPROVED ASSISTANCE FOR OUR MENTALLY ILL. YOU HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, AND I AM GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO MEET WITH YOU TODAY.

MENTAL WELL-BEING IS EVERY BIT AS IMPORTANT TO ONE'S HEALTH AS ONE'S PHYSICAL WELL-BEING. IT IS VITAL THAT WE PAY AS MUCH ATTENTION TO THE HEALTH OF OUR MINDS AS TO THE CONDITION OF OUR BODIES.



-3-

I CONSIDER THIS A RED LETTER DAY FOR MYSELF, AND AM GRATEFUL
TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WHAT I CAN FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN
OUR COUNTRY!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH,

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