The original documents are located in Box 31, “5/5/76 - Remarks at American Mothers Committee Bicentennial Awards Dinner” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice
The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
REMARKS AT AMERICAN MOTHERS COMMITTEE

BICENTENNIAL AWARDS DINNER

MAY 5, 1976
LET ME THANK YOU FOR THIS BEAUTIFUL AND IMPRESSIVE BOOK, INSCRIBED TO BETTY AND MYSELF.

I THANK NOT ONLY YOU, MRS. LEWIS,

BUT THE AMERICAN MOTHERS COMMITTEE, AND THE MANY HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WHO HELPED TO WRITE AND RESEARCH THIS BOOK.
IT IS A FITTING CONTRIBUTION TO OUR NATION'S BICENTENNIAL. NO BIRTHDAY IS COMPLETE WITHOUT CREDIT TO THE MOTHER, AND ON THIS NATION'S 200th BIRTHDAY WE RECALL THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF ALL AMERICAN MOTHERS, PAST AND PRESENT, WHO CONTRIBUTED TO OUR NATION'S PROGRESS.
OF COURSE BETTY IS HONORED THAT SHE WAS CHOSEN TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS VOLUME. 

AND I AM PROUD NOT JUST OF HER OWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS BUT BECAUSE I KNOW BETTY REPRESENTS SO MANY AMERICAN MOTHERS WHO HOLD THEIR FAMILIES TOGETHER AND HELP TO HOLD THIS NATION TOGETHER.
EVERY MOTHER FACES A DIFFERENT SET OF CHALLENGES.

FOR BETTY, IF I MAY ADD A PERSONAL NOTE, I KNOW IT WAS

THE CHALLENGE OF RAISING OUR FOUR WONDERFUL CHILDREN

WHEN MY DUTIES OFTEN CALLED ME AWAY FROM HOME.
AS YOUR ORGANIZATION SO RIGHTLY RECOGNIZES,

A SUCCESSFUL MOTHER MUST EMBODY VIRTUES SUCH AS LOVE,

COURAGE, CHEERFULNESS, PATIENCE, COMPASSION, UNDERSTANDING,

AND THE ABILITY TO MAKE A HAPPY HOME FOR HER FAMILY.
THOSE CHARACTERISTICS ARE EVERY BIT AS IMPORTANT TODAY AS THEY HAVE BEEN THROUGHOUT OUR NATION'S HISTORY -- AND INDEED, THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION.

IN FACT, AT A TIME WHEN THE VALUE OF FAMILY LIFE IS BEING QUESTIONED BY SOME, AND WHEN THE STRAINS OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE SEEM TO THREATEN THE FAMILY STRUCTURE -- I BELIEVE THOSE VIRTUES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER BEFORE.
EVERY AMERICAN MOTHER BEARS A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

AS YOUR CONFERENCE THEME STATES, "THE PAST CANNOT BE CHANGED -- THE FUTURE IS STILL IN YOUR POWER."

IT IS IN THE FAMILY THAT A CHILD'S CHARACTER IS FORMED, AND ETHICAL VALUES DEVELOPED.
IT IS UP TO YOU AND YOUR HUSBANDS TO SEE

THAT AMERICA'S CHILDREN ARE RAISED IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF MORALITY AND LOVE.

IT IS UP TO YOU TO SEE YOUR CHILDREN TAKE JOY IN LIVING AND DEVELOP STRENGTH AND SELF-CONFIDENCE.
IT IS UP TO YOU TO SEE THAT THE NEXT GENERATION
OF AMERICANS WILL CARRY WITH THEM THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES,
THE VALUES THAT HAVE MADE AMERICA A GREAT FREE NATION.
MOTHERS AND FATHERS ESTABLISH WITHIN THEIR OWN
HOMES THE DUTIES OF THEIR CHILDREN, AND THEY HELP THEIR
CHILDREN TO RECOGNIZE THE OBLIGATIONS THAT COME WITH BEING
A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN.
IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, ALL AMERICANS MUST

REDEDICATE THEMSELVES TO THE VALUES ON WHICH THIS COUNTRY

WAS FOUNDED:

'THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL; THAT THEY ARE

ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS;

AND THAT AMONG THESE RIGHTS ARE LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.'
YOU GIVE YOUR CHILDREN LIFE. YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN THE MEANING OF LIBERTY -- ITS DUTIES AS WELL AS ITS PRIVILEGES -- AND YOU PUT THEM ON THE PATH TO FINDING THEIR OWN PERSONAL HAPPINESS.

THIS COMBINATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IS WHAT MAKES MOTHERHOOD A CAREER IN ITSELF, A STRENUOUS, REWARDING JOB.
BUT AS MILLIONS OF AMERICAN MOTHERS DEMONSTRATE every day, the career of raising a family need not exclude other careers. Today, mothers are more likely to be working than ever before — five times as likely as they were in 1940.
MORE THAN HALF OF ALL MOTHERS WITH SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN WERE IN THE LABOR FORCE LAST YEAR - A HIGHER RATE THAN FOR WOMEN WITHOUT CHILDREN.

BUT WHETHER OR NOT THEY WORK OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES,

AMERICA'S MOTHERS MAKE COUNTLESS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR FAMILIES,

TO THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND TO THE NATION.
TONIGHT, THE AMERICAN MOTHERS COMMITTEE HONORS THAT CONTRIBUTION, AND CHOOSES ONE AMERICAN MOTHER WHO EMBODIES THE BEST IN ALL AMERICAN MOTHERS.

IT WAS JOHN QUINCY ADAMS WHO SAID, "ALL THAT I AM MY MOTHER MADE ME." THAT THOUGHT WAS REPEATED BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN, BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON AND A HOST OF OTHERS.
AND AS MOTHER'S DAY \ THIS SUNDAY \ DRAWS NEAR, IT IS A THOUGHT THAT SHOULD BE IN THE HEARTS OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS. I KNOW IT WILL BE IN MINE.

ON BEHALF OF YOUR CHILDREN, YOUR FAMILIES AND YOUR NATION, I THANK YOU.