


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.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN. 

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 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.

AND NOW MRS. LOHR, THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF
THE AMERICAN MOTHERS COMMITTEE, WILL ANNOUNCE THE NAME OF
THE 1976 NATIONAL AMERICAN MOTHER.

END OF TEXT