

The original documents are located in Box 40, “10/14/76 - Remarks Upon the Presentation of the Medal of Freedom to Miss Martha Graham” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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S.F.
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

REMARKS AT MARTHA GRAHAM MEDAL OF FREEDOM AWARD

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1976

IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, EACH OF US HAS
CELEBRATED THE SPIRIT AND VITALITY OF AMERICA. THE PERSON
WE ARE HONORING TONIGHT HAS BEEN DOING THAT FOR AS LONG
AS MOST OF US CAN REMEMBER.

WHEN MARTHA GRAHAM BEGAN HER CAREER IN MODERN
DANCE, SHE NOT ONLY RAISED PEOPLE'S EYEBROWS, SHE RAISED
THEIR SIGHTS. A TRUE PIONEER, SHE CONTINUALLY BROKE
NEW GROUND AND CHALLENGED OLD ASSUMPTIONS.

HER INNOVATIONS WERE SO ORIGINAL THAT ONE STARTLED
TRADITIONALIST WAS REPORTED TO HAVE ASKED HER, "HOW LONG
DO YOU INTEND TO KEEP THIS UP?" TODAY AMERICA IS
THANKFUL THAT SHE IS STILL KEEPING IT UP.

MARTHA GRAHAM NOT ONLY EXPANDED THE HORIZONS
OF MODERN DANCE, SHE ALSO MOVED INWARD TO CONVEY THE
DEEPEST TYPES OF EMOTION. IN DOING SO, SHE CREATED
WHAT ONE CRITIC LABELLED "AN ORIGINAL WAY OF COMMUNICATION."

LONG BEFORE THE PHRASE "BODY LANGUAGE" ENTERED
OUR VOCABULARY, MARTHA GRAHAM WAS USING THE HUMAN FORM
TO EXPRESS HUMAN FEELINGS.

MARTHA GRAHAM'S NAME HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH
MODERN DANCE. IN ADDITION TO HER WORK AS A PERFORMER
AND CHOREOGRAPHER, SHE HAS PROVIDED INSPIRATION AND
COUNSELING TO GENERATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING
MISS BETTY BLOOMER FROM GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN.
HER PUPILS LEARNED THAT SELF-DISCIPLINE IS NOT AN OBSTACLE
TO CREATIVITY, BUT A VEHICLE -- THAT HARD WORK DOES NOT
DETRACT FROM INSPIRATION, BUT RATHER ALLOWS IT TO REACH
ITS FULLEST POTENTIAL. MOST OF ALL, THEY LEARNED TO
MEET ANY SITUATION WITH COURAGE AND COMPLETE HONESTY.

OVER THE YEARS, AS A GREAT DANCER, MARTHA GRAHAM
HAS RECEIVED MANY, MANY AWARDS. TONIGHT, SHE
RECEIVES AN AWARD AS A GREAT AMERICAN.

HER VISITS AROUND THE WORLD HAVE GIVEN A NEW
MEANING TO THE WORD "AMBASSADOR."

SHE HAS SHOWN VERY CLEARLY TO ALL THE WORLD WHAT IS
POSSIBLE WHEN PERSONAL GENIUS IS ALLOWED TO FLOURISH UNDER
ARTISTIC AND POLITICAL FREEDOM. IN AMERICA, THE ARTS
HAVE BLOSSOMED AND WE ARE JUSTLY PROUD OF THE GREAT STRIDES
WE HAVE MADE. LAST YEAR, IN THE AREA OF DANCE ALONE,
THERE WERE MORE THAN FOUR TIMES AS MANY PROFESSIONAL DANCE
COMPANIES AS THERE WERE IN 1965.

BUT THE CONTINUED SURVIVAL AND GROWTH OF THE ARTS
IN AMERICA REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST THE GENIUS OF THE ARTISTS.
IT ALSO REQUIRES THE FORESIGHT AND GENEROSITY OF BOTH PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE SOURCES OF SUPPORT.

TONIGHT, I TAKE PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING THAT I INTEND
TO SEEK FULL FUNDING FOR THE CULTURAL CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM
OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. THIS WILL PROVIDE 12 MILLION
DOLLARS IN NEW FEDERAL MONEYS FOR THE ARTS NEXT YEAR AND
APPROXIMATELY 50 MILLION DOLLARS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS.
BECAUSE THESE GRANTS WILL BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF ONE
FEDERAL DOLLAR FOR EVERY THREE RAISED FROM OTHER SOURCES,
IT CAN SERVE TO GENERATE 200 MILLION DOLLARS IN NEW SUPPORT
FOR THE ARTS.

MANY PEOPLE HERE TONIGHT WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN
PROVIDING THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT THAT ENABLED THE
MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE TROUPE TO INSPIRE AMERICA AND THE
WORLD. LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT WE IN THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT ARE GOING TO DO OUR PART TO ENCOURAGE THE
MARTHA GRAHAMS OF THE FUTURE.

TONIGHT, HOWEVER, THERE IS ONLY ONE MARTHA GRAHAM,
AND ALL OF AMERICA IS VERY PROUD OF HER.

AND NOW, MARTHA GRAHAM, WOULD YOU PLEASE
JOIN ME.

(wait for her to join you and then say---)

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO PRESENT YOU WITH ONE OF
OUR NATION'S HIGHEST HONORS, THE MEDAL OF FREEDOM.

LET ME READ FROM THE CITATION:

"DANCER, TEACHER AND CHOREOGRAPHER, MARTHA
GRAHAM HAS CAPTIVATED THE WORLD WITH HER MAGIC AND HAS
LEFT A LEGACY OF IMAGINATION WITH ALL WHO HAVE WITNESSED
HER TALENT. HER ENERGY, CREATIVITY AND DARING HAVE
OPENED NEW DOORS OF EXPRESSION IN DANCE. HER
FOLLOWERS AND FRIENDS ADORE HER, / AND HER COUNTRY, THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IS PROUD TO PROCLAIM HER A
BRILLIANT STAR AND A NATIONAL TREASURE."

(PRESENT AWARD)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MARTHA GRAHAM.

(RETURN TO YOUR SEAT FOR TOAST)

TOAST

LET ME CONCLUDE BY PROPOSING A TOAST TO OUR
HONORED GUEST WHO HAS PERSONIFIED THE SPIRIT OF OUR
COUNTRY WITH HER IMAGINATION, HER ENORMOUS TALENT,
AND HER QUIET DETERMINATION -- A GREAT ARTIST AND A
COURAGEOUS AMERICAN -- MARTHA GRAHAM.

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