

# Life in the White House

When the Fords moved into the White House, they brought a relaxed, informal style to the residence. The new first family was warm and open by nature, their personal style did not change with the trappings of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

The Fords hosted 33 State Dinners in their 30 months in the White House. Mrs. Ford enjoyed featuring American art at these very formal functions, including Steuben Glass and Native American baskets.

Life on a more personal level continued while living at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The First Lady was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1974 and underwent a mastectomy. Mrs. Ford was the same candid person when discussing her cancer as she was on all subjects. Joyful times were also plentiful during the Ford's White House years. Mrs. Ford went all out with plans for their first Christmas in the White House, and Susan, the only one of the four Ford children who lived in the house, held her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party and high school senior prom at the White House.

## **Domestic Issues**

While in the White House, President Ford had many domestic issues to deal with, too. According to *The New York Times*, the new President had inherited "the worst inflation in the country's peacetime history, the highest interest rates in a century, ... a stagnant economy with large-scale unemployment in prospect and a worsening international trade and payments position." President Ford proposed several measures designed to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil and in 1975 the Energy Policy and Conservation Act was enacted.

One of Gerald Ford's first priorities was to find a way for Vietnam draft resisters to earn re-entry into the U.S. Shortly after taking office he announced a program that symbolized his willingness to move beyond past disputes and bridge the emotional chasm opened by the Vietnam War.

## Gallery Seven Activity

### *Life in the White House Activity Description*

#### METHOD

You may have your students complete one or more sections of the Life in the White House activities while at the Museum. The three sections include: The White House Model, Entertaining at the White House, and Head of State gifts.

#### SUGGESTED PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

- Lead a brief classroom discussion about the White House. This can include some history of the house and that it is used as a home and office.

#### SUGGESTED POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

- Design invitations and table settings for a Head of State dinner.
- Using a world map, have students locate the country of origin for each of the gifts drawn. For extra credit: Who was the leader of that country during the Ford Administration? Who is the leader now?

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### Life in the White House

President and Mrs. Ford and their daughter Susan lived in the White House.  
Susan even had her high school prom at her house – the White House.

Look at the White House model:

- Can you find a second oval room? What color is it?
  
- What do you think that oval room is used for?
  
- View the presentations about the different rooms in the White House.
  
- What room do you like best?
  - Why?
  
  - Can you tell two things the President and First Lady might use the room for?
    - 1.
  
    - 2.