

Tuesday
February 24, 1976

MRS. FORD'S REMARKS
STAND UP FOR AMERICAN RALLY
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

Over a century ago, Walt Whitman wrote a poem called "I Hear America Singing". His words celebrated Americans at work and at play. Whitman heard those songs during a difficult period in our history, but he understood the songs were stronger than the troubles.

In 1976 on the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we too must listen for the good sounds of America--working, dreaming and achieving.

Everywhere you go in America, you can see the greatness of this land and the people.

We see Americans who care about each other and who reach out to those who are hungry, sick or in need. Over and over we've seen the compassion of Americans for their neighbors and people around the world.

Americans are generous with their time, talents and money to help fight poverty, improve schools, support churches and eliminate disease.

This is the year to celebrate the goodness of America and her people.

We see Americans strong in their beliefs and dedicated to ideals.

We see Americans who love the land and work to preserve it.

We see Americans who live far from other people who find their freedom in solitude.

We see Americans living and working together in cities and towns who find their freedom in cooperation.

We see young Americans eager to try new ways of solving problems and new ways of honoring our ideals.

We see Americans varied in their customs, faiths and hopes--united in a love of freedom.

We see a land full of contrasts---cities and wide open spaces---mountains and deserts---forests and plains---joined together by a working political system.

And all of these visible signs of America and the songs we hear from the people are what the Bicentennial celebration is about.

Rejoice is an old-fashioned word, but it captures what I hope we feel this year. We should rejoice in our individual freedoms, in our free enterprise system and in our representative government.

We are still striving to translate our ideals into reality, but we should pause to rejoice in the progress we have made.

The past two hundred years prove a government of free people can prevail over conflicts. Let us celebrate this anniversary by rejoicing in our successes and being challenged by our failures.

In 1976, let us listen to the good, strong sounds of our country---so that we may be inspired to search and work for an even better America.