

July 1, 1976

Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Ford

THE WHITE HOUSE

Mrs. Gerald R. Ford

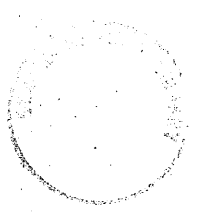
Since her husband became President in August, 1974, Mrs. Betty Ford has been involved in activities promoting the arts, securing passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and focusing attention on the problems of the handicapped.

Her strong interest in the arts comes from her own career as a dancer. Mrs. Ford began studying dance at age eight in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She studied and taught at a dance school there until her graduation from high school in 1936. In the summers of 1936 and 1937, she attended the Bennington School of Dance in Vermont. There she studied under Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Hanya Holm, Charles Weidman and other well-known modern dance innovators. She continued her dance career with Miss Graham in New York City, eventually as a member of the Martha Graham Concert Group. (In May, 1976, she returned to Bennington to dedicate the college's arts center.)

In 1941, Mrs. Ford (then Betty Bloomer) returned to Grand Rapids and became fashion coordinator for a department store. (Her strong interest in American fashion was recognized by the Parsons School of Design in March of this year, when she received the school's annual award.) During her years as a fashion coordinator, she formed her own dance group and taught dance to handicapped children.

On October 15, 1948, she married Gerald R. Ford. His election to the U. S. House of Representatives from Michigan's 5th District only a few weeks later meant a move to the Nation's Capital. The Fords lived in Alexandria, Virginia from those first years until they moved into the White House.

The Fords are the parents of three sons and one daughter. Most of Mrs. Ford's energies during the 1950's and 1960's were focused on her family, her church (Episcopal) and the political duties of a Congressional wife.



Her husband's confirmation as Vice President in 1973 brought new responsibilities, which increased when he became President. As First Lady, Mrs. Ford has shown her interest in American handicrafts through unique centerpieces at State dinners and Christmas decorations. Items from antique weathervanes to dolls have been used as focal points for decorations.

Her commitment to equal rights has been demonstrated in her public remarks and her open lobbying for more women in her husband's administration. She has spoken with diverse groups from homemakers to economists about the need for the Equal Rights Amendment.

During 1976, the First Lady also has been involved in various Bicentennial events, including appearances in Philadelphia, Florida, Arizona and the opening last week of an exhibit on women during the Revolutionary era.

Mrs. Ford also has campaigned for her husband and recently attended two state conventions on his behalf.

During the Ford Administration, numerous state visitors have been entertained at the White House. Among recent guests were the President of France and the King of Spain.

Two of the Ford children, Jack and Susan, live at the White House with their parents.

Mrs. Ford was born on April 8, 1918, in Chicago, Illinois. Her parents, Hortense and William Stephenson Bloomer, moved the family to Grand Rapids, Michigan, when she was three.

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