

**The original documents are located in Box 5, folder “Feldman, Trude” of the Richard B. Cheney Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

### **Copyright Notice**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

September 15, 1976

Dear Mr. President:

Here's an advance copy of the 4th article (family) in the series based on the interview.

(In case you didn't see others, I enclose same.)

Please read this full article BEFORE portions are taken out of context for promotional items and wire stories.

It was done with the approval of John Carlson and before publication, it was read--and approved of--by Margita White and Janet Ford.  
(to save you time)

The last article in the series is on Religion. Since this has become a major issue in the campaign, is it possible to get better quotes from you in person??

I hope so; and happy reading,

Respectfully,

*Trude*  
Trude



# "OUR PRIVATE LIFE IN THE WHITE HOUSE"

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT FORD

"Daddy, I'm a little short of cash." The blue-jeaned, blue-eyed 19-year-old waited patiently as "Daddy" reached into his pocket, pulled out a \$10 bill, and handed it over.

"Thanks a lot," she said. "You can take it out of my next week's allowance." Then she bounced out of the office, barely nodding to the two men meeting with her father.

A common enough scenario these days—except that the two men were Secretary of State Kissinger and Secretary of the Treasury Simon. The teenager was a tall, slim blonde named Susan, and "Daddy" was Gerald Ford, President of the United States.

President Ford told the story in a recent interview in his White House Oval Office. "I'm a soft touch with Susan," he told me. "She knows I can't say 'no' to her, especially when there are Cabinet members present." Grinning, he added, "That's her gimmick. She knows she can get away with murder when she walks in while I'm in conference."

Not long ago, the president bought Susan her first car, a yellow Ford Mustang. He had also purchased cars for her three older brothers when they turned 19. However, Susan was more excited, he recalled. "She let me drive it around the South Lawn circle [of the White House]—but just once. That's how afraid she was that I'd scratch it or dent a fender."

But if Gerald Ford finds it difficult to refuse a few personal requests from his youngest child and only daughter, there is nothing permissive about his attitude toward Susan's social life. Mrs. Ford said she "wouldn't be surprised" if she discovered Susan was having an "affair." In answer to the same question, the President told me, "I'd protest in a most vigorous way, and I'd counsel her. But I don't think that would happen . . . not the way Susan was brought up."

The Fords have not tried to disguise the fact that they have differing opinions on some issues. But they handle this by talking things over face to face—child and parent, or husband and wife—no punches pulled. "Our family has always had the kind of rapport that lets us discuss the pros and cons of all problems and situations," President Ford explained. "This is better than slamming the door and saying,

**The President reveals how normal White House life can be—complete with dinner table debates, criticism of his neckties and balancing checkbooks.**  
**By Trude B. Feldman**

'You're on the wrong track' . . . or 'Don't speak to me about that' . . . or 'You did something wrong, get out of the house.'

"Handling problems this way has not only helped us solve some of our problems, but has also brought us closer together," he observed.

Differences of opinion obviously have not stood in the way of an ex-

"Under the best of circumstances, marriage requires a special kind of commitment," he added. "Many youngsters, who are just discovering themselves as persons, aren't really ready for it. I won't say everyone should wait as long as we did, but getting married 'late' worked out well for Betty and me."

The president's abiding affection for his wife is still obvious.

Betty Ford has won a reputation for speaking out on thorny issues, touching off the kind of controversy that some observers say has hurt her husband. But Ford wants his wife to tell it like it is, and says confidently, "She seems to be doing all right. Her polls are even better than mine. As a political partner, she is a prime asset."

One reason for this is, he believes, that Mrs. Ford "truly enjoys campaigning—because she likes people." He conceded that she had wanted him to retire from politics in 1976, "but that was before I became president. Now she is as enthusiastic as I am about my presidency and about another term in the White House."

Betty Ford is not the only member of the family who gives political advice to the president. During the primaries, when their son Jack told his dad that his speeches were "boring," the president made changes in his speech-writing staff. Jack, 24, takes part in campaign strategy meetings, is kept informed of major political developments and, as his dad put it, "keeps me posted on what his generation is thinking and feeling—something that is helpful not only in running for office but also in running the country."

The president also appreciates the fact that when Betty and Jack are campaigning on the road, he is free to work in the Oval Office. "Remember the Lebanon crisis last June?" he asked. "I had to stay in Washington to plan and supervise the evacuation of Americans from Lebanon. Betty went to Iowa in my place and the result was that we won the majority of that state's delegates."

The Fords' son Steve, 20, has also pleased his dad on the campaign trail. "He is great—not just among young people, but with all age groups."

The "toughest part" about being president, according to (continued)



*President and Mrs. Ford with (from left) daughter Susan, sons Steve, Jack and Mike, and Mike's wife, Gayle. In foreground, the Fords' golden retriever, Liberty.*

ceptionally harmonious husband and wife relationship—a fact that is apparent to anyone who spends time with Betty and Gerald Ford.

"Betty and I were lucky we weren't kids when we married," the president remarked. "When I look around and see what happened to the marriages of some people we know, I'm glad we married at a more mature age." (He was 35 and Betty was 30 when they married on October 15, 1948.)

# LIFE IN THE WHITE HOUSE

*continued*

Gerald Ford, is to "convince the people around me to say what they actually believe—not only what they think I want to hear. In this respect, Betty sets an example for everyone in the White House."

Mrs. Ford, an early supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment, convinced her husband to vote for ERA when he was a Michigan congressman. "I give Betty credit for educating me on that one," the president said. "She convinced me that women's rights have to be protected and guaranteed by law, just as the rights of racial and religious minorities do, if there is to be genuine equality. She had to work on me in her loving, persuasive way, but I'm glad she did."

The First Lady was also among those who helped devise the strategy that resulted in what many believe is her husband's major achievement—the upturn in the nation's economy.

"Betty kept saying we had to work to get prices down, that we had to think about the millions of American women shopping each day for their families, buying groceries and clothing," he said. "We had the family in mind when we developed our economic program."

While the president takes political advice from his wife and children, he also keeps a close paternal eye on the family's finances. He and Betty started out "heavily in debt" when they were first married, he recalled, and acquired the habit of carefully examining each month's expenditures—a habit he has tried to instill in his children.

Even today, the president questions his family about how they spend their money, and he keeps track of their checkbook balances. "It may sound old-fashioned," he told me, "but every now and then I like to remind them that money doesn't grow on trees."

President Ford, who likes to balance his own checkbook, encountered something of a problem shortly after he was sworn in as president. "I noticed that some of my checks weren't being cashed, checks I wrote for Christmas gifts or for things we bought, or even charitable contributions," he said. "After a while, I learned that some people—including a couple of my nieces and nephews—had framed the checks that bore my signature and intended never to cash them. So now I send presents, instead of checks, to members of my family. And my secretary signs all my other checks."

As we sat in the sun-filled Oval Office, with pictures of Betty and the Ford children surrounding the president, the phone rang. Gerald Ford picked it up, chatted a moment, then said, "Thanks, Betty, I'll walk over in a little while."

Turning to me he remarked, "One of the nicest things about being president is the convenience of living and working near one another. I actually see more of the family than I did when I was a congressman or vice president. We have become even closer than ever before, if that's possible. And we try to live our lives in such a way that even though I'm the President and Betty is the First Lady, we're still husband and wife—and still the parents of our children."

The Ford family togetherness extends—as it does in millions of other families—to buying clothes. While the president doesn't accompany his wife on her shopping expeditions, she likes to help him select swatches of fabric, from which he orders his suits. He purchases three or four suits every other year from Lloyd Livensie in Grand Rapids, Mich., where he has bought clothes for about 30 years. He also selects clothing from a local tailor in Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Ford has veto power over most of the clothes he selects—and she is not afraid to exercise it. Her interest in his appearance has sometimes led her to tease him about his choice of necktie or socks or shoes. Susan does the same—one indication that the Ford family is not in awe of the president or of his office. When he doesn't look quite right, "I get suggestions," he notes wryly, "though they do it in a loving way. But I know something is up when Betty calls me 'Mr. President.'"

Reminiscing about the days when the children were growing up, he talked about the need for parental concern with educational growth. The Fords once belonged to three PTA's at one time because their children attended schools in three different areas.

## Must share child's world

"With kids in three different schools, we often had to draw lots to determine which PTA meeting to attend," he recalled. "But I believe that parent involvement is the secret to a good school—and the PTA gives parents a chance to express opinions. Betty and I both believe that providing the right atmosphere for kids—at school and at home—is what it's all about. You don't just send kids off to school. You have to go with them and share their world."

As for day care centers, the president said that program is vital, especially for the working mother. "It allows a mother to put her child in the proper facilities with good supervision." He said that Congress established some rigid guidelines—on a national scale—imposing them on states and cities, according to the number of teachers or individuals who are with the children.

"I believe the state, rather than the federal government, should make that sort of decision. I'm not in favor of rigid federal control over the number of peo-

ple who work with children in day care centers. I think each state should act.

"The conflict is between Congress, which wants to impose the heavy hand of the federal government on day care centers, which I oppose; or the alternative, which I believe in, that each state can do better than a bureaucrat in Washington, D.C.

"Even though Betty and I are now retired from PTA," he added, "we are still concerned about good schools. Our nation's future depends on a sound education for the kids of tomorrow."

Since Betty and Gerald Ford were both Sunday school teachers, they also believe strongly in sound religious training for all children. According to the president, each of the four Ford children has a slightly different attitude toward religion. "Michael is totally dedicated." (He is completing his last year as a divinity student at Gordon Conwell Seminary in Connecticut.) "Jack has a much more relaxed attitude—religiously speaking, he is the least 'organized' in the family. Yet he does have a conviction and a belief in God. Steven and Susan are both sincere in their religious beliefs, but show it in different ways. Steven's religion takes the form of a love of nature and what God has created. Susan likes to go to church and derives satisfaction from prayer."

The Ford children still get a thrill out of meeting and rubbing shoulders with the famous people who come to the White House. "Still," Mr. Ford reflects, "I think there are times when the kids wish they didn't have to live in this kind of 'goldfish bowl'."

Even though there were "transition problems" in the move to the White House, the children on the whole have adjusted "pretty well," he says. "A 19-year-old girl who has to have Secret Service agents protecting her when she is out on a date, or a 21-year-old boy who has a couple of older men (agents) accompanying him when he takes out a young lady—these are rather unusual circumstances," the President said. "While at college, Jack was used to going and coming as he chose—but now he and the others have struck up friendships with their agents and are doing all right. It just took some time.

"On the other hand, they realize that with the restrictions of a public life come benefits as well."

Thus, son Jack has met stage and screen stars, and has dated tennis champ Chris Evert; daughter Susan, a photo bug, learned to shoot pictures from several top photographers, including Ansel Adams, then landed a job with the Associated Press, *The Topeka State Journal* and the *Topeka Capital Journal*.

The president told me that Susan will return to these publications for on-the-job training while studying photo-

*(continued on page 185)*

# LIFE IN THE WHITE HOUSE

continued from page 86

journalism at the University of Kansas this year. Even Great Britain's Queen Elizabeth specifically asked the Fords to bring their children to the several State dinners given during the queen's Bicentennial visit to the United States. "We'd like to meet your children," the president quoted the queen as saying.

Gerald Ford recognizes that his children's popularity could mean they are sought out not for themselves but because their father is president. When asked how they distinguish real friends from social or political climbers, he said: "They're over 18 now, and they know the score, so I leave it to their judgment. They have managed pretty well so far in that department."

The president shows considerable interest in the boys Susan dates or brings home to the White House. "If there is anyone she seems to be showing the slightest sign of being serious about, I want to know all about him and his family," he told me, adding that Susan didn't have a steady boyfriend and that she has "no intention of marrying until she is much older."

A White House wedding with all its pomp and ceremony does not entice either Susan or her family, the president said, adding: "She has plenty of time to get married. I kid her and she kids me about her boyfriends, but I know she is in no hurry; a White House wedding doesn't mean anything to her. Anyway, it will be some time before she finds the right fellow."

## Fords like each other

The Fords so closely resemble the Christmas-card type of family group that in some circles their very togetherness arouses suspicion. But they're not the product of anyone's image-making. They love each other, of course. Even more important, perhaps, they like each other—and stand up for one another. The president has refused to criticize Betty's outspoken remarks, even when many people thought they could prove politically embarrassing. And Betty has unflinchingly campaigned for her husband, despite her frail physical condition and a basic shyness only her closest friends know about.

It's a long haul from coffee and cake after the PTA to state dinners at the White House. The Fords have managed the transition because they have succeeded in being and remaining themselves—to the point where the president of the United States still does a bed check every once in a while, to make sure that daughter Susan is home safely by the time he is ready to retire. **End**

Sant' Angelo creates

# The Original Look of Eve

Fashions designed to bring out the Eve in you.

Now Giorgio Sant' Angelo, winner of two Coty awards for his fresh-thinking, free-spirited designs, creates another fashion first just for Eve—*The Eve Collection*. In Eve's exclusive floral print, signed by Sant' Angelo. And it's all easy care and machine washable.

Now you can get Eve's great taste by the carton or collection. And designer originals at a most original price.

The patch pocket Overshirt with turn-up cuff, all cotton, \$25.00.

Matching long sleeve cotton "T," \$9.00.

Coordinated slacks with elastic waist and print scarf belt. 50% polyester/50% cotton, \$20.00.

Print scarf, 29" square, \$4.50.

Canvas tote, \$13.00.

Umbrella, \$12.00.



Flowers on the outside  
Flavor on the inside.



Mail To: The Eve Collection  
P.O. Box 60-1956  
Minneapolis, Minn. 55460

LHJ-2

Please send me the following:

Item	Qty.	Check Size			Total Cost
		Sm. 6-8	Med. 10-12	Lg. 14-16	
Shirt Jacket \$25.00					
Slacks w/sash \$20.00					
T-shirt \$9.00					
Umbrella \$12.00					
Tote Bag \$13.00					
Scarf \$4.50					

Total Enclosed \$

Enclosed are two pack bottoms

from Eve Filter or Menthol, plus

Check  Money Order payable to EVE COLLECTION.

Charge:  Master Charge  
 BankAmericard

Account # \_\_\_\_\_

Interbank No. \_\_\_\_\_

Card Expires \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**Money Back Guarantee.** If you are not completely satisfied with any item you purchase, just return it within 10 days for a full and immediate refund.

Offer void to persons under 21 years of age. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery. Offer expires 12/31/76. Good in U.S. only except where prohibited.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

© Eggett Group Inc. 1976

Filter & Menthol. 16 mg. "tar,"  
1.0 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC Method.

WESTERN INTERNATIONAL HOTELS



---

*The Mayflower*

1127 Connecticut Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20036

*Western International Hotels / Partners in travel with United Airlines*