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MRS. GERALD R. FORD

The wife of the 38th President of the United States is first a wife and mother, a woman with a strong belief in the importance of a strong family unit. But she is also a woman with a great many personal interests as well, ranging from the Arts and mentally retarded children to womens rights.

Elizabeth (Betty) Bloomer Ford is 57 years old, a petite woman with carefully groomed auburn hair and a sense of style. She has been married to Gerald R. Ford since 1948, the year he first ran and won the seat as congressman from Grand Rapids, Mich. The President and Mrs. Ford are the parents of four children: Mike, 25; Jack, 23; Steve, 18; and Susan, 17.

During her husband's administration, Mrs. Ford hopes to focus on American-made handcrafts and goods. Christmas at the White House this year, for example, centered around a handmade crafts and quilts theme, emphasizing goods by craftsmen across the country and focusing on natural woods, pine cones and greens.

Already, entertaining at the White House emphasizes American-made products, starting with the purchase of American wines for official dinners. Centerpieces at these dinners for foreign dignitaries utilize some aspect of American handcrafts, from the use of handmade antique wooden decoys to the borrowing of collections of handmade American crystals and porcelains to use as centerpieces.

Mrs. Ford was born Elizabeth Anne Bloomer in Chicago, Ill., and moved to Grand Rapids at the age of three. After graduating from a Grand Rapids high school in 1936, Mrs. Ford attended the Bennington School of Dance in Vermont for two years. She majored in modern dance there, studying under Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman and Hanya Holm.

Her early professional career was spent in New York, also studying in a more intensive dance course under Martha Graham and eventually as a member of the Martha Graham Concert Group. She also modeled part-time during this period.

She returned to Grand Rapids in 1941, organizing her own dance group and taking a job as a model and fashion coordinator for a department store. As a volunteer, she became involved with teaching movement and dance to crippled and handicapped children.

After her marriage to Gerald Ford and subsequent move to Alexandria, Va., Mrs. Ford concentrated on raising the family and being wife and helpmate to congressman and eventual Minority Leader Ford. And in 1973, with only one child left in high school, she was thinking seriously of going back to work, if she could find something part-time. December came, and the job found her -- wife of the Vice President. And August, 1974 brought the more-than-full-time job: First Lady of the United States.

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