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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

60 - Min. - *Pre-Martin Luther King - Mar*

Marilyn Stapleton
Congress. Goodling
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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TO: White House Staff
FROM: Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld

Mrs. Ford will be featured in her first extensive, exclusive television interview on "60 MINUTES," this Sunday, August 10 at 9:30-10:30 P.M. on the CBS Television Network.

The show will be aired on KMGH-TV on Channel 5 at 9:00 P.M. in Vail, Colorado.





CONVERSATION WITH BETTY FORD ON "60 MINUTES"

SUNDAY, AUGUST 10

First Ladies come and go, and all of them leave their mark on the White House in some manner. But seldom, if ever, has the White House had a First Lady as candid and as willing to speak her own mind as Betty Ford.

Mrs. Ford will be featured in her first extensive, exclusive television interview on "60 MINUTES," this Sunday, August 10 (9:30-10:30 PM, ET) on the CBS Television Network.

The interview, conducted by CBS News Correspondent Morley Safer in the casual atmosphere of the White House third floor solarium, took place just prior to the Ford's departure for their European tour.

"It's almost a rule of political life that the higher a man gets in politics the less outspoken his wife becomes. She becomes a mouse," said Safer. "It seems that it's been just the opposite with Betty Ford."

Mrs. Ford, not a lady to be easily intimidated, and a person who handled the rapid transition from quite suburban housewife to the not-so-private life of First Lady, replied: "You can ask me any question. I'm perfectly willing to answer and give you my ideas. And I'm sure my husband won't mind at all." And then she proceeded to talk about her formula for a happy marriage, how she would react if she learned that her daughter was having an affair, her thoughts on marijuana, what psychiatric help did for her, her views on women's

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rights, and her current project as far as influencing the President is concerned.

Later Safer reflected on their conversation. "This First Lady is not afraid to speak out," he said, "even on the most controversial of issues. She handles it all with thoughtfulness and a sense of purpose -- but even more refreshing -- with a sense of humor."

Don Hewitt is the executive producer of "60 MINUTES."

* * *





HOLD FOR RELEASE
6 P.M. SUNDAY, AUGUST 10

"60 MINUTES"
"THE FIRST LADY"

SUNDAY, AUG. 10, 1975
9:30-10:30 P.M, EDT
ON THE CBS TELEVISION NETWORK

A CONVERSATION WITH BETTY FORD
WITH
CBS NEWS CORRESPONDENT MORLEY SAFER



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60 MINUTES

"THE FIRST LADY"

MRS. FORD: I told my husband if we have to go to the White House, "Okay, I will go. But I'm going as myself. And it's too late to change my pattern. And if they don't like it, then they'll just have to throw me out."

SAFER: Washington can be an awfully tough town on a political wife. Would you agree?

MRS. FORD: Well, I agree. But you see, I had twenty-six years of experience as the wife of a Congressman. And I did learn a little bit in that twenty-six years. You know, I wasn't sitting around being a dummy.

SAFER: One ex-wife, the ex-wife of a Congressman said, "He'll do anything for his country, his party and his family in that order."

MRS. FORD: Well, I think a Congressional wife has to be a special kind of woman. I don't think that all women, really, can adjust to this type of life.

SAFER: But would you advise your daughter, for example, to marry a politician given the years you've been through it in Washington?

MRS. FORD: That's a hard question.

SAFER: Would you advise against marrying a politician, put it that way?

MRS. FORD: No, I would not advise her against marrying a politician. I wouldn't pick one out for her though.

SAFER: What are the pressures on a woman living in this town?

MRS. FORD: The pressures are many. And it depends on the family, or the size of the family. The type of husband that you have. Whether he's a wanderer or whether he's a homebody. I think that there are some women that probably have their husbands around the house more than they'd like. And then there are those that wish their husbands were home more.

SAFER: Did you ever have any doubts about your husband and some of the attractions in this city?

MRS. FORD: I have perfect faith in my husband. But I'm always glad to see him enjoy a pretty girl. And when he stops looking, then I'm going to begin to worry. But right now, he still enjoys a pretty girl. And he really doesn't have time for outside entertainment. Because I keep him busy.

SAFER: There was a time in your life here where you felt that you needed some help.

MRS. FORD: This is true.

SAFER: Some psychiatric help.

MRS. FORD: Yes.

SAFER: Was that, do you think, a function of being in Washington or what? Why did you feel you had to go and see a psychiatrist?

MRS. FORD: Well, I was advised by the doctor who was treating me for my neck and shoulder and back, that perhaps, psychiatric help could help me in getting over this problem. And on his advice I went to a psychiatrist. And I found it very helpful, because apparently I was -- I was really giving too much of myself and not taking any time out for Betty. It was all going to the children and my husband. And consequently, I was a little beaten down. And he built up my ego.

SAFER: The psychiatrist did.

MRS. FORD: Yes, he did.

SAFER: You said you're going to start lobbying for a salary, what part of the job is the toughest? Is it simply this sort of thing, the 'paste-on-smile' as you described it yourself once?

MRS. FORD: I think the publicity and constantly being before the public and never really feeling that you can go out and take a swim in the pool because you're going to get your hair messed up. And you have to come back and face somebody for tea or some sort of program. So it's confining.

SAFER: It's almost a rule of political life, though, that the higher a man gets in politics, the less outspoken his wife becomes. She becomes a mouse. It seems that it's been just the opposite with Betty Ford. The higher your husband's gotten, the more, really controversial things have been said.

MRS. FORD: I know. But my -- what I've spoken out on were issues pertaining to women. I'm not getting into the political issues that ---

SAFER: Well, the Equal Rights Amendment was a very hot political issue.

MRS. FORD: It still is. And we're going to get it. I'm perfectly willing to tackle a political issue as long as it doesn't disturb my husband and he didn't step on my toes. I feel that the Equal Rights Amendment ought to probably pass in our Bicentennial year, 200 years. What could be greater than to pass that?

SAFER: Do you find the more strident voices of so-called "liberated women" the advocates, a little bit hard to take?

MRS. FORD: I must admit that, yes. I'm not the type that's going to burn my bra or do something like that. I really don't feel that strong about it. I feel that the liberated woman is the woman who is happy doing what she's doing, whether it's a job or as a housewife, it doesn't make a bit of difference. Just so she, inwardly, feels that she is happy and that she is liberated.

SAFER: But without meaning to be rude for a minute, surely, the most unliberated woman in this -- in the world is the wife of the President of the United States....in terms of the bonds that tie her, forgive me, to his shadow.

MRS. FORD: I don't feel unliberated when I'm sitting here talking to you. You can ask me any question.

I'm perfectly happy to answer and give you my idea. And I'm sure my husband won't mind at all.

SAFER: Okay. Do you ever say to him, "You really weren't very good today?"

MRS. FORD: Yes, I do. (LAUGHS) I'm probably his world's either worst or best critic. I watch everything. And I check everything. And quite often, I check if he's going to be on television, I check his shirt, his tie, his suit. The whole works.

SAFER: What are the things about him, the things he does, the habits he has, that you like least?

MRS. FORD: Well, after twenty-six years, I guess we've learned to live together and accept each others habits. I've learned to correct mine, I think, that were, perhaps, aggrevating to him. And I think he's -- I really think that he's tried to correct his. I believe a marriage, you see, should be a seventy-thirty proposition. You don't go into marriage as a fifty-fifty thing. You go into it, both of you, as a seventy-thirty proposition. In other words, I'm giving seventy, he can give thirty. He's giving seventy, I give the opposite. And when you're going overboard like that, trying to please each other, you can't help but be happy.

SAFER: As doubtlessly happy a marriage as the Ford marriage has been all these years, what's -- what are the issues that we really --

MRS. FORD: We've had our fights.

SAFER: Over what?

MRS. FORD: Oh, very minor details, probably because I was late..

SAFER: You've got a reputation for that?

MRS. FORD: No, more, no more.. It's all gone. I beat him everywhere..

SAFER: But what? Did you ever fight over money?

MRS. FORD: No. Never had any money to fight over..

SAFER: But did you -- did you ever have words with him, strong words, over political stands?

MRS. FORD: No, I would not say strong words. I would say that we've had disagreements over political stands..

SAFER: I think that everyone would be fascinated to know what is the issue that you sat Jerry Ford down and said, "Listen, I want you to listen...?"

MRS. FORD: Well, a lot of it had to do with, perhaps, putting a woman in the Cabinet..

SAFER: You won that one..

MRS. FORD: Yes, I won that one. And I'm working on another. If I can get a woman on the Supreme Court Bench, then I think that I'll really be -- have accomplished a great deal.

SAFER: Getting back to my original question which was the more power a politician gets, the more of a mouse his wife becomes. And among the things you have spoken out about are abortion, which is kind of a taboo subject for the wife of the President. It's one of the ---

MRS. FORD: (INDISTINCT) -- Ask a question you have to be honest, exactly how you feel. And I feel very strongly that it was the best thing in the world when the Supreme Court voted to legalize abortion, and in my words, bring it out of the backwoods and put it in the hospitals where it belonged. I thought it was a great, great decision.

SAFER: You've also talked about the young people living together before they're married.

MRS. FORD: Well, they are, aren't they?

SAFER: Indeed, they are. Well, what if Susan Ford came to you and said, "Mother, I'm having an affair."

MRS. FORD: Well, I wouldn't be surprised. I think she's a perfectly normal human being like all young girls, if she wanted to continue and I would certainly counsel and advise her on the subject, and I'd want to know pretty much about the young man that she was planning to have the affair with; whether it was a worthwhile encounter or whether it was going to be one of those --- She's pretty young to start affairs.

SAFER: But, nevertheless, old enough ----

MRS. FORD: Oh, yes, she's a big girl.

SAFER: I mean would it surprise you, though, given the way the -- the way you brought these kids up, and the President brought them up, would it surprise you if that happened?

MRS. FORD: No, I think there's a complete freedom among the young people now. And in some cases, I'm not so sure that, perhaps, there would be less divorce.

SAFER: Have you worried about your children, about your children -- I don't know, going wrong, about drugs?

MRS. FORD: No, I really haven't, because we've always discussed it and I would have detected it. And immediately, I would have done something about it. We brought them up with a certain moral value that where their friends might be taking drugs now, I'm not saying that they haven't tried it, because I'm sure they've all probably tried marijuana. The last time I said that I got the devil from one of them because he said, "How do you know I've tried marijuana? I've never touched it before." And I said, "I don't know. I just supposed that you probably had." But it's not habit, it's nothing that we've had to have.....

SAFER: Do you think that Betty Bloomer would have been the kind of girl who would have at least experimented with marijuana when you were growing up?

MRS. FORD: Oh, I'm sure I probably would when I was growing up at that age, I probably would have been interested to see what the effect ... I never would have gone into it as a habit or anything like that. It's the type of thing that the young people have to experience, like your first beer or your first cigarette, something like that.

SAFER: You know, you've spoken out on a number of things, the fact that you've sought psychiatric help. You've spoken on drugs, on abortion, all kinds of things that used to be considered taboo, I guess really were taboo for ---

MRS. FORD: But also didn't -- the fact that I had the cancer operation and the publicity of that saved a lot of people's lives.

SAFER: Indeed, was that a conscious thing when you decided to ---

MRS. FORD: Definitely. I felt that if I had it, many other women have it, because I had no idea of it whatsoever and it came about as a complete surprise. One day, like that, and the next day I was in the hospital. And I thought that there are women all over the country like me. And if I don't make this public, then their lives will be gone, they're in jeopardy. And I think it did a great deal for women as far as the cancer problem is concerned. It isn't difficult if you face up to it. And you can find a power that's strong enough, that will carry you through those things. And this is the power that I have found, has carried me through a lot of things.

SAFER: Power being what? A religious feeling?

MRS. FORD: Yes, it's a religious feeling, a belief in God. And knowing that there is God and depending on Him.

SAFER: Do you pray? Does the President pray?

MRS. FORD: Definitely, both of us. The President has his special prayers that he says at night, I know, before he goes to sleep. And I have mine.

SAFER: Then we turned to a subject we've all been concerned about ... Betty Ford's health.

And I think that a lot of people would like to hear it from you, how are you?

MRS. FORD: Really and truly, I never have felt better. I feel absolutely marvelous. My weight is down and I like to be lean and trim. The doctors reports have all been absolutely clear. There's not been one iota of question in all of the tests that they have run on me every three months. There hasn't been any sign, whatsoever, of a cancerous reoccurrence at this point.

Now, this doesn't mean that I'm going on forever. Because some people go three years, some people go four years, but I feel great. And I'm convinced in my own mind, that I'm completely cured.

SAFER: And how about your back, that pinched nerve that you did have to take some ---

MRS. FORD: Well that still does give me trouble, but I've had that ten or eleven years and I don't expect, you know, everybody can't be perfect. You all have to suffer a little to appreciate life.



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60 MINUTES

"THE FIRST LADY"

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- SAFER: Washington can be an awfully tough town on a political wife. Would you agree?
- MRS. FORD: Well, I agree. But you see, I had twenty-six years of experience as the wife of a Congressman. And I did learn a little bit in that twenty-six years. You know, I wasn't sitting around being a dummy.
- SAFER: One ex-wife, the ex-wife of a Congressman said, "He'll do anything for his country, his party and his family in that order."
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- SAFER: But would you advise your daughter, for example, to marry a politician given the years you've been through it in Washington?
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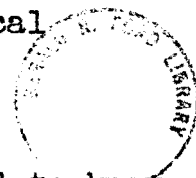
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