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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
AWARDS DINNER OF THE
AMERICAN MOTHER'S COMMITTEE, INC.

THE SHOREHAM-AMERICANA HOTEL

7:25 P.M. EDT

Mrs. Lewis, Congresswoman Boggs, Mayor Washington, Mrs. Marriott, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me thank you for this very beautiful, this very impressive book which I understand is inscribed to both Betty and myself, and I can assure you, as a stand-in for her, that she wants me to express on her behalf our appreciation for this thoughtfulness.

I thank not only you, Mrs. Lewis, but the American Mother's Committee and the many hundreds of people who helped to write -- as you told us 500 or more -- and the tremendous job of research that they did on this occasion. It is a very, very fitting contribution to our Bicentennial.

No birthday is complete without credit to the mother, and on this nation's 200th birthday we recall the achievements of all American mothers, past and present, who contributed to our nation's progress. Of course, Betty is highly honored that she was chosen among those from Michigan to be included in this volume.

I am proud, not just of her own accomplishments but because I know Betty represents so many American mothers who hold their families together and help to hold this nation together. Every mother faces a different set of challenges. For Betty -- if I may add a personal note -- I know it was the challenge of raising four wonderful children when my duties in the Congress often called for me to be away from home and Lindy Boggs, I can assure you, can verify that experience.

As your organization so rightly recognizes, a successful mother must embody virtues such as love, courage, cheerfulness, patience, compassion, understanding and the ability to make a happy home for her family.

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Those characteristics are every bit as important today as they have been throughout our nation's history and indeed throughout the history of civilization. In fact, at a time when the value of family life is being questioned by some and when the strains of contemporary life seem to threaten the family structure, I believe those virtues are more important than ever before.

Every American mother bears, as we all know, a great, great responsibility. As your Conference theme states, the past cannot be changed; the future is still in your power. It is in the family that a child's character is formed and ethical standards developed. It is up to you and your husbands to see that America's children are raised in an atmosphere of morality as well as love.

It is up to you to see your children take joy in living and develop strength and self-confidence. It is up to you to see that the next generation of all Americans will carry with them throughout their lives the values that have made America a great free nation. Mothers and fathers establish within their own homes the duties of their children, and they help their children to recognize the obligations that come with being a responsible citizen.

In this Bicentennial year, all Americans must rededicate themselves to the values on which this country was founded, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights and that among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

You give your children life to teach your children the meaning of liberty, its duties as well as its privileges, and you put them on the path to finding their own personal happiness. This combination of responsibilities is what makes motherhood a career in itself, a strenuous, rewarding job.

But, as millions of Americans demonstrate, American mothers prove every day the career of raising a family need not exclude other careers. Today, mothers are more likely to be working than ever before, five times as likely as 1940. More than half of all mothers with school-age children were in the labor force last year, a higher rate than for women without children, but whether or not they work outside their homes, America's mothers make countless contributions to their families, to their communities and to their nation.

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Tonight, the American Mother's Committee honors that contribution and chooses one American mother who embodies the best in all American mothers. It was John Quincy Adams who said, "All that I am, my mother made me." That thought was repeated by Abraham Lincoln, Ralph Waldo Emerson and many others, and as Mother's Day this Sunday draws near, it is a thought that should be in the hearts of millions of Americans.

I know it will be in mine and in yours. On behalf of your children and your families and your nation, I thank you.

Now the National President of the American Mother's Committee will announce the name of the 1976 National American Mother.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 7:33 P.M. EDT)