

MRS. FORD'S REMARKS
DEDICATION OF THE LITTLE ADOBE SCHOOLHOUSE
MESA, ARIZONA
MARCH 9, 1976

I'm so excited about how you are honoring our Bicentennial year. This schoolhouse reflects the talents, interest and ingenuity of hundreds of students, teachers and parents--but most especially, the students. Your enthusiasm truly is contagious, and the atmosphere feels like a real old-fashioned American celebration.

In this special year, we are celebrating not only what happened in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, but our two hundred years of progress in translating our ideals into reality. We are celebrating the joy and love and tenacity of the American spirit--just what I feel here today.

The inalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence--life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness--have been expressed in many different ways by Americans through these years.

To some, the pursuit of happiness meant building, inventing or trading. And because of them, our cities and countryside are linked by highways and telephones and airplanes--all the visible signs of American ingenuity. To others, the pursuit meant writing, singing or dancing. And because of them we have books and songs and plays--the visible expressions of the American spirit.

To many, many others, the pursuit of happiness meant freedom to build the good life for themselves and their families. And because of them, we have churches and schools and stores--the tangible symbols of our society.

But in whatever way our ancestors pursued their happiness--they shared a love of freedom and its preservation.

I think you selected an important symbol of our American experience--the first school in your town. Whether the Pilgrims in Massachusetts or the pioneers of Arizona, the building of a school said: "We believe in ourselves and we are here to stay."

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By building a replica of the first schoolhouse in Mesa, you shared some of the physical and emotional experiences of your ancestors. You learned about adobe bricks, clothing, and books and gained a sense of the past. Today you must feel as those first Mesa settlers did in 1880--pride of accomplishment. But you can see something more in looking at this adobe schoolhouse and comparing it to your own school. You can see the progress we've made in America.

In Philadelphia, the first citizens had great expectations about what freedom would mean. Today we know our successes and our failures. We can take courage from both and celebrate our own expectations about America.

Yet as we look back with pride and forward with hope, we must seize the present and use our time in America's history wisely and well.

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