Spring Forum Will Bring Former First Ladies to Grand Rapids

Springtime will bring Betty Ford, Lady Bird Johnson, and Rosalynn Carter to Grand Rapids to lead a two day conference entitled, "Modern First Ladies: Private Lives and Public Duties."

Mrs. Ford, who is serving both as active chairperson and participant, has invited Mrs. Reagan and all former First Ladies as well as several daughters and one granddaughter to participate in the conference. "Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Johnson, and I feel the addition of daughters and grandchildren who lived in the White House will definitely enliven our discussions and enlarge our perspective," she said.

The conference, scheduled for April 19 and 20, will be held in the Ford Museum auditorium. There will be two sessions, the first on the afternoon of the 19th, a Thursday, and the second the morning of the 20th. Sessions will be in panel form with participants interacting with a moderator. A reception and banquet in honor of the participants will be held the evening of the 19th. Because of limited seating, conference attendance will be by invitation. However Director Don Wilson, who is working with Mrs. Ford on the program, promises a diverse audience. The First Ladies forum "is bound to produce a great deal of excitement throughout the community as well as outside Grand Rapids," Wilson said, "and we are anxious to have an audience that reflects that fact."

When she comes to Grand Rapids Betty Ford will have definite goals in mind. "I want this conference to be a substantive and serious inquiry into the evolving role of the First Lady - her public duties, her special interests, and the joys and tensions of an extraordinary responsibility that diminishes but never ends."

The Gerald R. Ford Foundation is acting as cosponsor. Peter Secchia of the Foundation executive committee and Museum curator Will Jones are in charge of local arrangements.

A temporary exhibition, to open at the Museum the evening of April 18, will recall special activities that First Ladies sought to serve and promote.
Audiovisual Collections
an Expanding Resource

Today, American presidents are the focus of a blitz from media determined to record their every word and gesture. Even retreat into the White House living quarters does not always bring respite. The thousands of Ford family photographs by David Kennerly testify to that.

The audiovisual assault that now attends the American presidency began with Lyndon Johnson. Before Johnson, presidents and their staffs were largely uninspired by audiovisual opportunities. President Johnson, however, perceiving the new technology as a profound means for education and persuasion, opted to employ it in behalf of his programs and himself. He, more than any president, institutionalized the media.

Johnson became the first president to employ a full-time personal photographer, Yoichi Okamoto, although other presidents — going back to Lincoln — had photographers at their disposal for occasional portrait and public relations work. A civilian who had worked for the United States Information Agency, Okamoto enjoyed the unprecedented opportunity of "almost total access." He was allowed to walk into any office in the White House without knocking, photograph whatever seemed important, and stay for as long as he thought necessary.

The appearance of Yoichi Okamoto was only one element in Lyndon Johnson's effort to assure full audiovisual coverage for all White House acts and action. A U.S. Navy motion picture crew was assigned to film trips, visits of foreign heads of state, and other noteworthy events. Coverage was further enlarged when a second military unit was directed to take off the networks and airways every Johnson appearance and every White House story.

When, eventually, the physical product of all this audiovisual activity descended upon the embryonic Johnson Library, it unsettled technically innocent archivists used to handling paper records. In a short time, however, presidential library staff would acquire both the expertise and equipment to meet the challenge plus the resolve to confront future audiovisual avalanches.

What Lyndon Johnson wrought, all his successors left in place. A few statistics — a blessed few — demonstrate the effect. Of the eight active archives in the presidential library system, three — Johnson, Nixon, and Ford — hold 74% of the total number of still pictures. Statistics on other audiovisual types are equally imposing. The Johnson, Nixon, and Ford archives contain 95% of all video tape and 60% of all audio tape. Additionally, the Ford collections include 800,000 feet of color motion film, being a complete record of Gerald Ford's public appearances as president.

Most often consulted by audiovisual users are the 300,000 still pictures, the work of White House photographers during Ford's term. When you compare this number, amassed in only 2½ years, with the 128,000 photographs in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, a 12 year accumulation, you can appreciate presidential picture-taking as a growth industry. One of the photographers in the White House was David Kennerly, who benefited from an extraordinary access to Gerald Ford and his family. His work, characterized as "a uniquely intimate and visual record of Ford's presidency," is a historical resource of great value.

The Library houses its audiovisual archives in several storage locations including an 8,000 cubic foot cold vault where low temperature and humidity retard the deterioration of color film. Presently the primary duties of the audiovisual staff, directed by Richard Holzhausen, are reference service and preservation.

Until recently, most researchers working with presidential papers tended to ignore media collections as not particularly germane to their projects. That attitude is changing as researchers realize that recordings, photographs, video tapes, and motion film can enhance understanding of the president and his times.

Ford at Emory University

Gerald Ford was at the Carter Center of Emory University in early November to join Jimmy Carter in presiding at a three day forum on the Middle East.

The two former presidents welcomed statesmen from six Middle Eastern nations, each of whom addressed the forum on his country's goals and problems. The conference schedule then provided for response from policymakers, scholars, and other experts of the region, among them Cyrus Vance, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Philip Habib. National spokesmen included Crown Prince Hasan of Jordan, Syrian Minister of State Farouk al-Sharaa, and senior political advisors to the presidents of Egypt and Lebanon.

This was the inaugural conference of the Carter Center, at the moment a center without a building. President Carter recently indicated that the Carter Center will share quarters with his presidential library. The Jimmy Carter library in Atlanta is to be built with private funds, then maintained and operated by the National Archives and Records Service. Emory University will sponsor the Center and its activities.
Ford Museum Gifts

A selection from the gifts available at the Museum sales desk: *The Presidents: Tidbits and Trivia*, Betty Ford scarf designed by Frankie Welch, *First Ladies Cookbook*, White House Christmas cards, Ford Museum notecards, Christmas tree ornament, Fostoria bowl, Gerald R. Ford bronze medallion, Ford Museum key ring, American flag tie tac, and logo key ring. An order form for these and other items is available from the Museum Sales Desk, 303 Pearl St. N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

Reagan and Glenn Win in Grand Rapids

“Celebration on the Grand” is an annual Grand Rapids event, held this year September 9-11. As its contribution, the Ford Museum offered a free admission day, conducted a political straw poll, and presented a day-long program of documentary films on recent American presidents.

Ten voting machines were set up inside the Museum allowing visitors to vote for presidential candidates and a national proposition to amend the Constitution. Over 2,400 guests took part.

Those expressing a Republican preference gave a decisive victory to President Ronald Reagan, declared candidate or not. The President received 75% of the Republican ballots with the remainder about evenly divided between George Bush and Howard Baker.

Those inclined to support the Democrats spread their ballots among eight “candidates” with John Glenn narrowly emerging the favorite. A potent challenge developed as non-candidate Ted Kennedy finished a close second with 27 percent of the Democratic tallies, three percent behind Glenn. Walter Mondale, with 19 percent of the vote, was third.

Curator Will Jones noted that the preference poll was intended to be educational, not scientific. One of every three persons voting at the Museum was under 18.

Voters were asked their opinion of a proposal to change the United States Constitution to provide for one presidential term of six years. A clear majority reacted unfavorably (1306 to 957).
Kings of the Hill

Lynne and Richard Cheney

There have been many periods when no one was able to master the House of Representatives, the Cheneys tell us, but from time to time certain congressmen would forge the necessary alliances, summon the means to hold them together, and then succeed in "riding the tiger," at least for awhile. Those few who did became "king of the hill." The authors believe their struggle and exercise of power is the key to understanding the House of Representatives.

Kings of the Hill might be characterized as a history of the House and it is to a point, but more accurately it is a record of the epochal struggles of eight men, seven of whom were speakers, to control and dominate that great chamber.

Who were those leaders? Interestingly enough, the men Dick and Lynne Cheney chose to write about are largely forgotten today. Their names and perhaps a fact or two about them are familiar, but most of us are ignorant of their achievements in the second most important office in the land.

If pressed, we are apt to summon up the same timeworn particulars about each man. Many will recognize Uncle Joe Cannon, that bewhiskered curmudgeon of bad language and worse habits who, we confidently assert, was addicted to sodden cigars and indiscriminate spitting. And poor Nick Longworth. He should have harbored a bad habit or two because we don’t re-call a thing about him, save the over reported fact that he was Alice Roosevelt’s husband. Speaker James G. Blaine is immortalized for his failed presidential bids and financial transgressions, while Thomas Reed is hardly remembered at all.

Speaker James Knox Polk moved on to the White House, the only "king of the hill" to make that difficult transition, yet his earlier leadership in the House is hardly known.

Now, thanks to the Cheneys, each "king of the hill" is interpreted within the context of how, as Mr. Ford states in his foreword, he "shaped the institution which was the base of his power—the U.S. House of Representatives." Cannon, Reed, and Longworth particularly, are deservedly resurrected and commended for their constancy to legislative purpose and orderly process. The 14 year apprenticeship of Polk, in Gerald Ford’s view, "equipped him to become one of the most effective presidents."

Dick and Lynne Cheney are to be commended as well, for bringing their direct experience, historical understanding, and sharp judgment to bear on eight dynamic men and the unique institution they cherished.

The House itself is splendidly evoked as scenes we can scarcely credit today are recreated from the contemporary record. For those readers whose visual appreciation of representative government rests exclusively with C-Span television, Kings of the Hill will prove a revelation. The House of the 19th and early 20th century was always informal and often in-cendiary, as partisan emotions would erupt into canings, fist fights, the drawing of blood with Bowie knives, even death by dueling in a Bladensburg field. Personal expression took many forms. Once Congressman “Fighting Joe” Wheeler, a much esteemed Confederate cavalry leader, got himself so worked up over Speaker Reed’s parliamentary maneuvers that he jumped on his desk and began bounding to the front, “leaping from desk to desk as an ibex leaps from crag to crag.”

But what most provoked contemporary comment was the unseemly noise and tumult. One dazed member reported that colleagues “talk and buzz while business is going on that much of the time it sounds like a town meeting.” The diplomat, Viscount Bryce, compared the noise to the slapping waves in a Highland lake while Representative John Randolph of Roanoke declared the lower chamber a “temple of confusion.” Randolph, a brilliant if half-demented legislator, personally abetted the clamor by often bringing his fitful coon dogs onto the House floor. Finally, a new Speaker, the young Henry Clay, did what his predecessors feared to do, and gavelled the baying hounds out of order.

This is all great fun but don’t confuse lively narrative with slight purpose. It is a tribute to the Cheney’s serious intention that they enliven without losing scholarly credibility. Kings of the Hill is the kind of readable, serious history that should engage the public’s interest. We need more of it.

While it is not our plan to print book reviews, we do assume an obligation to report books we believe merit the notice of our readers. Kings of the Hill is the work of Foundation board member Representative Richard Cheney and his wife, Lynne. President Ford contributed the foreword.

Grants Made

At its fall meeting the Foundation's Grants Award Committee decided in favor of funding four applicants. Recipients and their topics are:

Martha Derthick (Brookings) and Paul J. Quirk (Ohio State, Brookings), "The Politics of Pro-Competitive Deregulation".

Heinz Eulau (Stanford), "The President and America's Group Life: The Case of Gerald R. Ford".

David C. Mowery (Carnegie-Mellon), "Management of Budgetary and Fiscal Policy Formation During the Ford Administration."

Grant applications will be accepted at any time. Spring awards will be announced in May. Those who wish to apply are asked to contact Don W. Wilson, Director, Gerald R. Ford Library, 1000 Beal Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48109 for an application form outlining requirements.

Open House a Success

About 350 people attended a Library open house on Sunday, October 23. As a complement to Michigan's homecoming weekend Library archivists produced a special exhibit on Gerald Ford's interest in football, as a player at South High and Michigan, and as a coach at Yale and Grand Rapids University. Other sports awards and honors received by Ford were also displayed.

One of the archival items shown was a "Dear Ford" letter from the legendary "Curly" Lambeau of the Green Bay Packers. Whatever professional football is today it was clearly a sport in 1935. Lambeau, writing to proffer a Packer contract, offered $110 a game and the soothing balm that "injured players are paid immediately after each game." It is said the Detroit Lions matched but did not top the Packer bid.

Acquisitions

A small collection of memoranda, reports, and publications has been accepted from Thomas G. Cody, an officeholder in the Nixon and Ford administrations. Cody was executive director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1972-1974, and an assistant secretary in HUD, 1974-1977.

Tom Ford has donated a scrapbook covering both his brother's activities and his own. Tom, recently retired from the staff of the Michigan Legislature, was a four-term representative, 1964-1972, in the Michigan House.

Since early 1978 the Library has received regular archival accretions from President Ford. For the most part, materials from him and Mrs. Ford relate to their post presidential activities and include correspondence, memoranda, briefing books and trip files, as well as a miscellany of printed works and audiovisual and museum items.

A detailed listing of material received and opened appears regularly in Prologue, a quarterly journal of the National Archives and Records Service. Additionally, the Library publishes an annual newsletter for researchers wishing to keep current with research opportunities. This newsletter is available for the asking.

Trustee Brown Dies

Art Brown was a classmate of Gerald Ford's at South High. Their friendship, formed on the football field, endured until Brown died in Grand Rapids on September 26. Prior to his election to the Foundation's Board of Trustees, Art Brown was an active member of the Ford Commemorative Committee, the group responsible for building the Museum. Brown also loaned the Museum a number of unique school and sports items from his personal collection for display in the biographical segment of the Ford exhibit.

Shortly before his death, Art raised $1,000 for the Gerald R. Ford Foundation as chair of a committee of South High's Class of 1931.

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Coming Events

**December**
*Temporary Exhibit*
"Presidential Picture-Taking: Hoover to Ford" (Library)

*Saturday Matinee at the Ford Museum*
"The Journey of Lyndon Johnson" 
December 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31.
Museum auditorium, 2:00 p.m.
Charge of $1.00 per person for everyone 16 years of age and over.

**January**
*Film Series*
January 5, "The Man With the Golden Arm" (1955)
January 12, "Hearts and Minds" (1974)
January 19, "I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang" (1932)
January 26, "The Green Berets" (1968)
Museum auditorium, 7:30 p.m.
Charge of $1.00 per person.

**February**
*Film Series continued*
February 2, "Salt of the Earth" (1953)
February 9, "The Defiant Ones" (1958)
February 16, "Let There Be Light" (1946) and "The Battle of San Pietro" (1944)
February 23, "The Battle of Algiers" (1966)

*Great Decisions '84*
*Film Series*
**February 13 – April 2**
A different film shown every Monday at 7:30 p.m., Museum auditorium. No charge. Cosponsored with the World Affairs Council of West Michigan. The schedule for February is:


February 20, "Central America, Mexico, and the U.S.: Discord over Immigration and Central America."

February 27, "U.S. Security and World Peace: Allies, Arms, and Diplomacy."

Films on American Presidents Spark Interest

Visitor enthusiasm and appreciation for the "Modern American Presidency" film series shown at the Museum has prompted Curator Will Jones to schedule an encore engagement over the fall and winter. Shown during the "Celebration on the Grand" festivities, the nine documentaries feature seven presidents from Wilson to Ford with two films each on Truman and Eisenhower. The other presidents portrayed are Hoover, Roosevelt, and Kennedy.

Gerald R. Ford Foundation

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