The Founding of First Ladies Studies

A Tribute to Lewis L. Gould

EDITED BY

DANA COOPER

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2025

Dr. Lewis L. Gould

Dr. Lewis L. Gould is the Eugene C. Barker Centennial Professor Emeritus of American History at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the founder of First Ladies Studies and the first to offer a course on the subject in 1982 at UT-Austin. In addition to his long teaching career, Gould wrote more than a dozen books, including *The Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, The Modern American Presidency, American First Ladies: Theirs Lives and Their Legacies, Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Creating the Modern First Lady, Helen Taft: Our Musical First Lady,* and *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment*. The book on Mrs. Johnson was the first attempt to demonstrate a first lady's substantive impact on American society rather than simply serving as a biography. In 1998 Gould was named editor of the Modern First Ladies series published by the University Press of Kansas. Gould is a Lifetime member of the First Ladies Association for Research and Education and the first winner of the Gould award, an annual award given by FLARE for contributions to First Ladies Studies named in his honor.

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Contributors

Dana Cooper is Professor of History at the Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. She is the author of *Informal Ambassadors* and co-editor of *Motherhood and War* as well as *Motherhood and Antiquity*. Her teaching interests include women's, diplomatic, gender, and transatlantic history.

Stacy Cordery is a Professor of History at Iowa State University who traces her career-long scholarly interest in First Ladies to the first college class ever taught on the topic—a course she now offers at Iowa State. She is a FLARE Board member and served as bibliographer for the National First Ladies Library for seventeen years. Cordery has written book chapters on several First Ladies and lectures widely and comments regularly on First Ladies for news outlets such as NPR, CNN, C-SPAN, Smithsonian TV, and the History Channel. Her four books include biographies of Alice Roosevelt Longworth and Juliette Gordon Low, and her newest biography, *Becoming Elizabeth Arden: The Woman Behind the Global Beauty Empire* which was published by Viking in the fall of 2024.

Debbie Cottrell is President of Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas. Prior to becoming President in 2019, she was the Vice President for Academic Affairs at TLU, served as provost at William Peace University in Raleigh, N.C., associate dean and director of graduate programs at Smith College in Northampton, Mass., and professor of history and assistant dean of the faculty at Cottey College in Nevada, Mo.

Myra G. Gutin is Professor Emerita of Communication at Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. For the past 40 years, her research has focused on American First Ladies. She is the author of *The President's Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* and *Barbara Bush: Presidential Matriarch*. Myra was a contributor to *Report to the First Lady*, a book about the history and functioning of the Office of the First Lady that was presented to Laura Bush and Michelle Obama. She has authored book chapters, articles, and opinion pieces about first ladies and is currently at work on a biography of Betty Ford. A frequent media commentator, she is the immediate past president and one of the founders of FLARE.

Kristie Miller is the author of *Ellen and Edith: Woodrow Wilson's First Ladies* (University Press of Kansas, 2010). An author, journalist, and former teacher, she works to write women back into history. Her other books include *Isabella Greenway: An Enterprising Woman* and *Ruth Hanna McCormick: A Life in Politics, 1880-1944*. She is also coeditor of *A Volume of Friendship: The Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Isabella Greenway, 1904-1953*, and *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1880-1960*.

Katherine A.S. Sibley is Professor of History and Director of American Studies at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Her work on first ladies includes *Southern First Ladies: Culture and Place in White House, First Lady Florence Harding: Beyond the Tragedy and Controversy,* and *A Companion to First Ladies*. She wrote and performed a short play on Florence Harding's life in Marion, Ohio. Her current project is a biography of Michelle Obama.

Nancy Kegan Smith is an author, archival consultant, and Retired Director of the Presidential Materials Division at the National Archives and Records Administration. She started her career at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in 1973 as an archivist and retired in 2013 as NARA's Director of the Presidential Materials Division. She is co-editor of *Modern First Ladies – Their Documentary Legacy* and lectures on first ladies, presidential libraries and access to Presidential records. She is the co-author of *U.S. First Ladies: Making History and Leaving Legacies* and *Remember the First Ladies: The Legacies of America's History-Making Women*. She is a founder and current

President of the First Ladies Association for Research and Education.

Nancy Beck Young is the Moores Professor of History and Director of the Center for Public History at the University of Houston in Houston, where she is a historian of twentieth-century American politics with interests in public history and digital humanities. Some of her books include *Two Suns of the Southwest: Lyndon Johnson, Barry Goldwater, and the 1964 Battle between Liberalism and Conservatism*; *Encyclopedia of the U.S. Presidency*; *The Documentary History of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidency;* and *Wright Patman: Populism, Liberalism, and the American Dream.* She co-authored with Lewis L. Gould, *Texas, Her Texas: The Life and Times of Frances Goff*.

Welcome from the FLARE President

Nancy Kegan Smith

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the First Ladies Association for Research and Education's first major online, open access publication – *The Founding of First Ladies Studies: A Tribute to Lewis L. Gould.*

In 2019 when establishing an association of scholars and those interested in studying first ladies was just in the "thinking" stages, the founders—including Myra Gutin, Nancy Kegan Smith, Diana Carlin, Molly Wertheimer, Anita McBride, Katherine Sibley and Elizabeth Natalle—were united in their desire to honor Dr. Lewis L. Gould—the pioneer, founder and father of the field of First Ladies Studies. Each of the founding members coming from a variety of backgrounds including history, communication studies, archival and governmental service, and service on Presidential and a first lady's staff had been affected and influenced by Gould's teaching, scholarship, mentoring, writings, friendship, and encouragement. Throughout his career he pushed back against the idea of a male-centric history that left out the study of first ladies, their significant contributions, and their impact on the country and sometimes the world. As he said in his keynote remarks for the first ladies conference at the Ford Museum in 1984 which remains relevant to this day: " We will only understand the past of our Presidents and ourselves most fully when we grasp it in all its richness. A history that excludes First Ladies, or the contribution and lives of women generally, will be a record that is limited, false, and wrong."

In 2021 when we launched the First Ladies Association for Research and Education we created a FLARE award, the Gould Award, in his honor to be given annually to an outstanding first ladies scholar. In preparing FLARE's first major online publication we decided to focus on Dr. Gould both from the personal impact he made on the lives and careers of a selected few of his many students and mentees, and his broader significance in establishing the field of First Ladies Studies as an academic discipline. In the authors' essays we learn the important lessons that he imparted:

- The importance of original research
- Persistence and hard work

- Objectivity
- Academic rigor
- Passion
- Mentorship
- Collaboration

The essay by Katherine Sibley after Dr. Gould's 1984 Keynote address, updates the reader on the many developments from 1984 to today in the fulsome field of First Ladies Studies.

Thank you to Dr. Gould for his inspiration, Dana Cooper the editor, and Elizabeth Natalle and Diana Carlin for their work on the Monograph. In 2025 FLARE is moving forward with its plan for establishing the first journal devoted to the study of first ladies.

Welcome Message from the Editor

Dana Cooper

Dear Readers, Scholars, and First Ladies Enthusiasts,

Welcome to this monograph, which celebrates the history of First Ladies Studies. The fact that there *is* such an area of study devoted to First Ladies owes its existence to one individual, Dr. Lewis L. Gould, who had the vision, position, and fortitude to see presidential spouses as not only critical to understanding the presidency but as independent and separate individuals, who were worthy of validation and examination. Consequently, this monograph serves as a tribute to Dr. Gould who worked to legitimize the study of American First Ladies as a serious area of scholarship. Dr. Gould may well have been the first to recognize the tremendous work that First Ladies put into their roles as, arguably, the leading spouse and highest profile wife in the United States. His meticulous research revealed to him the incredible honor this position held and the myriad ways these women honored their role with their work. And so, he honored them with *his* words and his work, delving into their actions, analyzing their efforts, and producing published works as he broke new ground as a scholar; thus, he validated the work of these women and studying these women as a real work itself.

Following the establishment of the First Ladies Association of Research and Education (FLARE) in 2021, the organization chose to create open access publications to extend its reach and depth by offering the first-ever scholarly publication focused exclusively on this outstanding group of women. By expanding the research and education mission of the only organization dedicated to the study of First Ladies, this monograph and a forthcoming e-journal are uniquely positioned as extraordinary contributions to this scholarly field.

Therefore, it is appropriate that this monograph seeks to honor Dr. Gould by hearing from those who worked with him most closely and were influenced by him, not only as students of the craft but as those who were lucky enough to enjoy his distinct approach to mentorship. From several students at the University of Texas at Austin, whose lives were changed because of his dedication and passion, to others who worked with him at various points in their respective careers, a clear theme emerges. Dr. Gould looked out for those around him, found ways to assist their

growth as intellectuals, and supported their budding careers. His words and actions changed their lives just as his words and actions breathed life into a field of study that few others saw as real or even worthy of study. Clearly, a study of how this all came to be from those who were pioneers is an appropriate way to set the stage for encouraging more r e s e a r c h on this important topic, some of which will be included in FLARE's forthcoming publication devoted to the study of First Ladies – the first journal of its kind. (Please see the call for papers at the end of this monograph.) Interest in the study of First Ladies will only grow in the coming years and may need to be adapted to include a first gentleman at some point in the future.

This volume is presented in two sections. Part I is structured as an overview of the field of First Ladies studies and begins with Dr. Gould's call to academic arms, of sorts, in 1984, when he spoke publicly about his vision for this specific area of study at the first-ever First Ladies conference that was held in April of that year at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. How fitting it is that in April 2024, yet another significant First Ladies conference was held at the Ford Presidential Museum some four decades later. Dr. Gould's keynote address from the 1984 symposium opens this volume in an effort to set the stage as it existed some 40 years ago. Following this important look back is an overview by Dr. Katherine Sibley in which she provides a summary of significant research and important publications in the field of First Ladies Studies. While there is much to do in terms of scholarship going forward, her synopsis illustrates the great work and progress that has taken place to date.

Part II presents a series of essays from Dr. Gould's students, mentees, and friends extolling his exceptional kindness, teaching, and guidance that so many experienced under his tutelage. The volume closes with a reflection from Dr. Gould about how he got from the first class on first ladies in 1982 to today in an academic sense. In true Dr. Gould fashion, he remains quite humble about what he has done with his life and career; thus, this tribute seeks to verify all that he has done for this field and what he has meant to so many people along the way. It also serves as an inspiration to those of you who will shape the future of research within future pages of the e-journal.

Future journal volumes will publish original scholarship on the lives and legacies of these important individuals who have contributed so much to American history, culture, and political spheres. May this monograph serve as a thanks to the individual who cut a new path for us to follow, just as so many First Ladies have done themselves.

Part I:

An Overview of First Ladies Studies

Keynote Address
1984 First Ladies Conference

Lewis L. Gould

Dr. Gould delivers the Keynote Address at the "Modern First Ladies: Private Lives and Public Duties" conference on April 19, 1984. Photograph courtesy of The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum.

Writing about Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover in 1929, Mary Roberts Rinehart, the novelist, observed that "the public interest in the lives and duties of our First Ladies is equaled only by the general ignorance of their lives and a misapprehension of their duties and special privileges." Envious of presidential wives, she went on, "we are constantly attempted to pierce the veil of mystery that quite unintentionally surrounds them."[1]

Thanks to the energy and creativity of Mrs. Ford, we have an unparalleled opportunity in the next twenty-four hours to hear three former First Ladies talk about their impact on and personal response to a unique American institution. We shall also learn how journalists and presidential wives have interacted, how the pressures and pleasures of the White House affect the children of presidents, and we will also gain insights into the private lives of Presidents and their spouses. This conference is particularly timely because of the growing scholarly interest in First Ladies. After too long a neglect and no little mystery, students of the presidency and of women's history are recognizing that looking at First Ladies can offer insights and perspectives on many aspects of American history and society.

As research proceeds, important historical continuities and precedents for modern First Lady activities regularly come to light. When comparisons are made among the redecorating and cultural plans of contemporary First Ladies,

very few observers recognize that these concerns go back at least to the early years of this century. Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Mrs. William Howard Taft, and the two Mrs. Woodrow Wilsons started the tradition of musicales, with the appearances of artists arranged through the Steinway Piano Company.[2] Mrs. Grace Coolidge invited Sergei Rachmaninoff to play at the White House three times by 1927. Other artistic guests of Mrs. Coolidge included Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Ethel Barrymore, and John McCormack.[3] A determined but unsuccessful effort to have Liberace appear at the White House to play for the Trumans in the early 1950s is documented in the Social Office papers of Bess Truman.[4]

Previous First Ladies also pursued redecorating and refurbishing campaigns for the White House. Mrs. Coolidge attempted to collect period furniture for the mansion when she found few original pieces there. "I searched the attic and the storehouse to little avail," she recalled, and then secured a resolution from Congress making a public appeal for historic treasures.[5] Mrs. Hoover sought out antiques and had reproductions made of James Monroe furniture from originals at the Monroe Shrine in Fredericksburg, Virginia. A continuing problem of money held back these restoration efforts as Congress did not appropriate much for the First Family on a regular basis.[6]

Historical study is also disclosing the variety of ways in which First Ladies affected their husbands while in office. Edith Kermit Roosevelt, according to her stepdaughter Alice Roosevelt Longworth, took daily walks with Theodore in the White House gardens, where she had "a very calming influence on him."[7] Mrs. William Howard Taft was directly consulted about her husband's Cabinet, and said of one candidate: "I could not believe you to be serious when you mentioned that man's name. He is perfectly awful and his family are even worse."[8]

One of the least recognized First Ladies in this regard was Bess Wallace Truman. Generally regarded as a retiring contrast to Eleanor Roosevelt, she declined to continue Mrs. Roosevelt's weekly press conference for women reporters and told a friend that she wasn't going down in any coal mines.[9] Publicly she placed the emphasis on the helpmate side of her relationship. But the President called her "The Boss," and as a Democratic Party activist, India Edwards, wrote in her memoirs, "'The Boss' was a good name for Bess Wallace Truman. Harry S. Truman consulted her about small and great matters. . ." In the evenings the President brought papers upstairs to talk over with her.[10]

As Chief Usher James B. West put it, she probably "had more influence on political decisions than Mrs. Roosevelt had on social issues."[11] Mrs. Daniel can tell us whether enough of her mother's letters survive for possible publication. The ones I have seen suggest that Mrs. Truman had some interesting political opinions. "What's going to happen to the poor old Democratic Committee?" she wrote a friend in February 1970. "It sounds sort of hopeless to us out here and out of touch."[12] The excellent exhibit in the Ford Library begins with Lou Henry Hoover, a neglected and overshadowed First Lady. A trained scientist, sponsor of the Girl Scouts, she delivered a radio address on behalf of her husband's relief program in 1931.[13] But Mrs. Hoover's contributions have, of course, receded into obscurity because of the impact of Eleanor Roosevelt on the institution. In her twelve years in the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt established a new, activist model for presidential wives, which she carried on into a political career in her own right after her husband's death in 1945.

Historians, biographers, and journalists are still trying to establish the exact scope of Mrs. Roosevelt's effect on American history. Like her uncle, Theodore, whose behavior she mirrored in many ways, she is not easily categorized. A book of essays about her, appearing this spring, touches on such issues as youth, race relations, feminism, and world peace.[14] She accomplished so much because of her energy and personal commitment. As her friend Molly Dewson wrote: "If Mrs. Roosevelt did not hit two birds with every one stone, she never could have carried out her schedule."[15]

Her schedule included regular weekly press conferences for women reporters in Washington from which men were excluded. She championed the cause of residents of Appalachia, Black Americans before Civil Rights became fashionable, and women in and out of the Democratic Party in a male-dominated government. She became a kind of ombudswoman to the nation who could respond when a couple in Skidmore, Texas, in 1936, needed hospital care for a baby with a punctured lung. After the infant died the First Lady saw to it that money was provided to the destitute couple for the infant's funeral.[16] As Mrs. Johnson said of her in 1964, "She was never afraid to speak up against wrong, no matter how many brickbats it brought down on her head."[17]

A period of relative calm in First Lady activism followed Mrs. Roosevelt's tenure. Mrs. Truman exercised her

influence out of the public's view, and Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower, as her son puts it, "felt her role was to push" her husband forward "and to give him all the emotional support he needed, although they would never talk about his business at home."[18] Between 1961 and 1963, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy made the White House a center of fashion, culture, and historical restoration. She did so by her example and not as an active advocate of the goals she pursued. Interest in the First Lady reemerged in the early 1960s, however, as the public came to see a presidential wife as a potential patroness of the arts and symbol of elegance and sophistication."[19]

Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson entered the White House in November 1963 with college training in history and journalism, experience in operating a radio and television station in Austin, rich political knowledge gained from an involvement in her husband's campaigns, and an activist's energy akin to Mrs. Roosevelt's. "How does she do it all?" one of her friends asked Mrs. Clark Clifford. "Don't you know?" came the reply. "Lady Bird has pigeonholes in her mind that open and close at will. That's why she never forgets anyone or overlooks anything."[20] Getting settled in the White House, helping the President's election effort in 1964, and finding a focus for her wide-ranging interests consumed the first year as First Lady. There were, however, hints of what was to come. On April 20, 1964, she told the YWCA national convention that a good home environment for children "encompasses a really massive attack on the part of city-dwellers to demand long- range, imaginative efforts to make our cities clean, functional, and beautiful."[21]

Following the election, Mrs. Johnson considered more specifically what programs she might sponsor as First Lady. On a campaign trip with Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall earlier in the summer, she found a common interest in conservation issues, and these talks resumed at the Johnson Ranch in late 1964 and early in 1965. At the same time friends in Washington, D.C. and New York—Elizabeth Rowe, Katie Louchheim, and Mary Lasker, were telling her "to extend your interest in the White House's beauty to the whole city."[22]

A concern with the quality of the environment came naturally to Mrs. Johnson. Since childhood she had responded to nature—"things," in her words, "like walking through the piney woods of East Texas listening to the wind sighing, or along the banks of Caddo Lake with the gnarled cypress trees heavy with moss, and well, the whole

beautification picture of our diverse country. . .”[23]

In February 1965, the announcement of her formation of the First Lady’s Committee for a More Beautiful National Capital and her interview in *U.S. News and World Report* tapped a latent public interest in the appearance of the American landscape. Presidential concern for a message about Natural Beauty lent the direct weight of the administration to Mrs. Johnson’s cause. In May 1965, a White House conference on Natural Beauty heard the First Lady attack ugliness as “an eroding force on the people of our land.”[24]

Mrs. Johnson’s recently opened beautification files reveal how wide a range of environmental talents and experts she drew on between 1965 and 1969. From the appearance of service stations to the location of freeways, from the California redwoods to the placing of parks and the improvement of schoolyards in Washington, the First Lady’s activism enlisted Walter Washington, future mayor of the Capitol City, Wolf von Eckhardt, Lawrence Halprin, Laurence Rockefeller, a host of Cabinet and senatorial wives as speakers, and innumerable private citizens who wanted to make their communities better and help her.[25] Mrs. Johnson became a public advocate for beauty, catalyst for urban change in Washington itself, and a legislative liaison in efforts to pass and implement highway beautification measures.

In the summer and fall of 1965, for example, she sat in on strategy conferences, called swing votes in Congress, and rallied groups that favored the Highway Beautification Act. Her energetic staff, Bess Abell, Sharon Francis, Cynthia Wilson, and especially Liz Carpenter, carried the word still further. Liz reported on October 4, 1965, how, in her words, “I put on my best Joy perfume and tightest girdle” to call on two wavering Texas lawmakers as the key vote approached. A Bill Mauldin cartoon at the time showed a roadway festooned with billboards, one of which read: Impeach Lady Bird.”[26] Presidential support, congressional desire to do something for Mrs. Johnson, and the merits of the bill led to success in October 1965. “Lady Bird scored a notable victory,” wrote a member of the Pennsylvania Roadside Council.[27]

At the time people recognized that Mrs. Johnson was creating new possibilities for a First Lady. In historical perspective her contributions to the activist tradition approach those of Mrs. Roosevelt, and explain why she ranked

third among all First Ladies, behind only Eleanor Roosevelt and Abigail Adams, in a recent poll of historians and other scholars.[28] Working directly on legislation, rallying grass-roots backing for bills and later administrative decisions, and serving as the visible embodiment of a national policy, Lady Bird Johnson demonstrated that a First Lady could now do more than serve as a feminine conscience or fact-finder of a presidency. It was now conceivable that she could be a functional and integral part of the office itself.

Five and a half years later, in August 1974, Mrs. Betty Ford became First Lady under abrupt and unique circumstances. The resignation of President Nixon and his departure for the West Coast with Mrs. Nixon deprived Mrs. Ford of any kind of orderly transition to her new responsibilities. In addition, the brief duration of the Ford presidency itself allowed her much less time to develop her own style and priorities as the President's wife. Yet in her two and a half years in the White House, Betty Ford was able to take her place among modern examples of First Lady activism. During a period of rising popular debate about the place and role of women in American society, Mrs. Ford spoke out for her conception of what the scope of feminine participation should be. "I tried to be honest; I tried not to dodge subjects. I felt the people had a right to know where I stood," she later said.[29]

Among the things she stood for were the Equal Rights Amendment, the 1973 Supreme Court decision on abortion, and more women in public life and high government office. "In a year when women are continuing their climb into public visibility," *Newsweek* commented in December 1975, "Betty Ford seems the symbolic woman of the year."[30] She wrote state legislators on behalf of the ERA and lobbied with others over the telephone. "I realized you're under a lot of pressure with the voters today," she said to a Missouri lawmaker, "but I'm just calling to let you know that the President and I are considerably interested." Opposing groups picketed the White House, and she responded: "I'm the first First Lady ever to have a march organized against her."[31]

Controversy surrounded her as it had few First Ladies since Mrs. Roosevelt. When she commented on 60 Minutes about a possible response to a hypothetical love affair of her daughter, one clergyman felt compelled to denounce "a gutter type of mentality." Another told the press that he favored "chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage."[32] The *National Review* accused her of rewriting "the Ten Commandments over nationwide TV."[33]

In Washington seven women dressed in black appeared on television and said in unlikely chorus: "Betty Ford will be remembered as the unelected First Lady who pressured second- rate manhood on American women."[34]

Despite these criticisms, Mrs. Ford emerged within a year of becoming First Lady, according to pollster Lou Harris, as "one of the most popular wives of a President to occupy the White House."[35] Candor and openness struck an approving chord in the American public. "At last, a real First Lady!"[36] said one positive telegram to the White House. Mrs. Ford was unabashedly human in her reactions to being First Lady. "One of the most refreshing things about her," concluded CBS newsman Robert Pierpoint, "was her determination to be her own person."[37] That the experience was occasionally difficult for her then and later was clear. Major surgery, two assassination attempts on her husband, and a narrow defeat in a presidential election would have tested anyone's resilience. But she displayed the same qualities that she recently conveyed to an interviewer: "I enjoy the moment for the moment, take everything out of what I'm doing one step at a time, and when it's gone I will have that time to the fullest."[38] Her legacy to the institution will likely be more in her example than in the success or failure of the causes she championed. When historians ranked her sixth among all First Ladies in early 1983, they testified to the impact of her character and personality in stretching the range of questions within which the President's wife could make a substantial difference.

"Jimmy and I were always partners," Mrs. Rosalynn Carter told a reporter last summer, and it was her visible role as surrogate, confidante, and joint policymaker that added a further dimension to the participation of the First Lady in the presidency. The roots of the Carter's political partnership went back to the operation of the family peanut business in Plains, and the connection was strengthened during the Georgia governorship and in the race for the White House in 1976. Just as Harry and Bess Truman had talked over issues thirty years before, the Carters, as she recalls it, "sat in the rocking chairs on the Truman Balcony," just as we did at the governor's mansion at 4:30 every afternoon, and we talked."[39]

Unlike the Trumans, however, the Carters, made their close working relationship a highly public matter. "It was only natural," President Carter has written, "that when we arrived in Washington, she would pursue these kinds of

activities, acting on many ceremonial occasions as my surrogate."[40] Mrs. Carter sat in on Cabinet meetings, at her husband's express invitation. "The Cabinet meetings were a great help to me," she writes in her memoirs, and she "never considered" not attending them because of press criticism. She resisted what she calls the "not very subtle implication that Cabinet meetings were no place for a wife."[41] She also attended strategy sessions at Camp David, advised on appointments, and served as an official emissary of the President overseas. In her first two years as First Lady, she made 248 speeches or public comments, gave 154 press interviews, attended 641 briefings, and visited 36 foreign countries. By 1979 *Newsweek* called her "the most influential First Lady of modern times."[42]

Proximity to the President also facilitated the substantive objectives of Mrs. Carter's time in Washington. As she prepared to become First Lady in late 1976, she was told that her ability "to influence public policy is now dramatic."[43] A supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment and an advocate of the rights of the elderly, she concentrated the bulk of her attention in the policy area on improved care for the mentally ill. Sensitized to the problems of mental health in their Georgia campaigns, she chaired a gubernatorial Commission for the Mentally and Emotionally Handicapped. She came to the White House in 1977 with the belief, in her words, "If we don't care for the mentally ill, we're not likely to care about the people whose problems are less severe."[44] Mrs. Carter became the honorary chair of the President's Commission on Mental Health and testified before a Senate Subcommittee considering mental health legislation, the first First Lady to appear before a congressional panel since Eleanor Roosevelt.[45] Her work culminated in the Mental Health Systems Act of 1980, and she was ranked fifth among all First Ladies in the 1983 poll.

"I loved being in the White House," Mrs. Carter has said, "I felt as if I could do something for people." Her service as First Lady, as a presidential surrogate, posed in a direct way the perennial issue of what the American people want the wife of a president to do and to be. Reporters still address the issue of whether the First Lady, about whom the voters do not have a choice, should be an active part of a presidential administration. To questions about whether First Ladies should be paid, Mrs. Carter says simply: "I was on the stage as much as Jimmy was."[46] Beyond actually being president, or having the institution of First Lady formalized into the functioning of the office, Mrs.

Carter took the role of surrogate, partner, and advocate to the current limits of its capacity in our system of government.

This brief review of the contributions of these three First Ladies reveals, I submit, that the nation has been fortunate to have had such talented and dedicated persons occupying this institution. The variety and interest of these women as personalities in their own right is also most impressive. Historians have understandably treated the presidency as a men's locker room. There is some truth in that perspective, but also much distortion. We know enough about the development of human beings over a lifespan to recognize that marriage is an evolving, growing relationship. By ignoring First Ladies, we have truncated the humanity of presidents and diminished them as men. Our grasp of the presidency is poorer for that action.

But we also have, and this is more important, downgraded a group of women who have fulfilled a unique responsibility. It is too simple to say that their role has been symbolic. It has been wisely said that we live by symbols. How we view the First Lady is how we expect women to act, marriages to work, families to grow, and Americans to live. In the most profound sense, the study of First Ladies holds up a mirror to ourselves. And for this male historian, it has also shown the unstated and often unconscious chauvinism about the achievements of women that permeates our society. Seeing a woman, a First Lady, only in terms of the man she married reduces her individuality and diminishes her as well. History and circumstances make it necessary to evaluate First Ladies as helpmates, appendages, surrogates, and partners of the presidents, but these categories should not be barriers to seeing presidential wives for what they were and are—autonomous human beings with as much claim to the attention of the student of our history as their masculine counterparts. We will only understand the past of our Presidents and ourselves most fully when we grasp it in all its richness. A history that excludes First Ladies, or the contribution and lives of women generally, will be a record that is limited, false, and wrong.

Thus, we owe Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Carter, and the other participants our warmest thanks for their willingness to participate in this symposium. They do so in the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt, who said of her autobiography, "Anything which adds to the future understanding I hope will have value."[47] I know that the

comments of our First Ladies here will have value and insight, and we all await with anticipation their contributions this afternoon. Thank you very much.

Notes

(**Editor's Note:** To preserve the formatting of Gould's original essay, the notes are included at the end of the essay rather than at the bottom of each page.)

1 Mary Roberts Rinehart, "A New First Lady Becomes Hostess for the Nation," *World's Work*, 58, March 1929, 34.

2 Irwin Hood (Ike) Hoover, *Forty-Two Years in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934), 289-299: Thedore E. Steinway to Bess Truman, August 20, 1945, Ste Folder, Box 20, White House Social Office Files, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

3 Ishbel Ross, *Grace Coolidge and Her Era* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1962), 161-162.

4 Mrs. Truman's correspondence as First Lady is contained in the White House Social Office Files, Truman Library. The correspondence is arranged alphabetically.

5 Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, "Making Ourselves at Home in the White House," *American Magazine*, 108, November 1929,160. November 1929, 160.

6 Bess Furman, *White House Profile* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1951), 313.

7 Michael Teague, *Mrs. L.: Conversations with Alice Roosevelt Longworth* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1981), 112; see also, Sylvia Jukes Morris, *Edith Kermit Roosevelt* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1980).

8 Lawrence F. Abbott, ed., *The Letters of Archie Butt* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Page & Co., 1924), 234.

9 Jhan Robbins, *Bess & Harry: An American Love Story* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), 78.

10 India Edwards, *Pulling No Punches* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 111.

11 James B. West, with Mary Lynn Kotz, *Upstairs at the White House: My Life with the First Ladies* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973), 77.

12 Bess Truman to India Edwards, February 18-19, 1970, Truman Family Correspondence, Box 3, Indian Edwards Papers, Truman Library.

13 "Mrs. Hoover Lads Girls Relief Work," *New York Times*, March 24, 1931.

14 Joan Hoff Wilson and Marjorie Lightman, eds., *Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

15 Joseph P. Lash, *Love, Eleanore: Eleanor Roosevelt and Her Friends* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1982), 107.

16 Eleanor Roosevelt to Mrs. Percy Pennybacker, July 8, 1936, July 14, 1936, Mrs. Percy Pennybacker Papers, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas, Austin.

17 Lady Bird Johnson, *A White House Diary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 106.

18 John S.D. Eisenhower, *Strictly Personal* (Garden City: New York: Doubleday & Co., 1974), 10.

19 Though Mrs. Kennedy's White House Social Files are not yet open for research, there is interesting evidence available at the Kennedy Library regarding her impact on artistic and cultural issues. See, for example, Barbara Donald to August Hecksher, November 21, 1962, Box 39, August Hecksher Papers, White House Staff Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston.

20 Katie Louchheim, *By the Political Sea* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1970), 224.

21 *Addresses By the First Lady: Mrs. Lyndon Baines Johnson, 1964*, pamphlet in Lyndon Johnson Library, Austin, Texas.

22 Elizabeth Rowe to Lady Bird Johnson, December 8, 1964, First Lady's Committee for a More Beautiful National Capital, Formation of the Committee, Box 1, White House Social Files, Beautification, Johnson Library.

23 Henry Brandon's "A Talk with the First Lady," *New York Times Magazine*, September 10, 1967.

24 "Beautification Summary." The Committee for a More Beautiful National Capital, 1965-1968, p. 13, author's copy.

25 "Beautification Summary," passim, provides a good overview of Mrs. Johnson's work, but see also, Joseph Judge, "New Grandeur for Flowering Washington," *National Geographic*, 131, April, 1967, 500-539; Sharon Francis, Oral History, Johnson Library, Lawrence Halprin to Mrs. Robert Shackleton, April 25, 1967, Capital East-Inner Blocks, Box 5, White House Social Files, Beautification, Johnson Library.

26 Elizabeth Carpenter to Lady Bird Johnson, October 4, 1965, Highway Beautification, Box 14, White House Social Files, Beautification, Johnson Library; "Signs Along the Road," *New Republic*, October 2, 1965.

27 Hilda Fox to Maurice Neuberger, November 3, 1965, Box 7, Maurine Neuberger Papers, University of Oregon, Eugene.

28 Douglas Lonnstrom, "Results of First Ladies Poll," Siena College, 1982, author's copy. All subsequent references will be to this document.
29 Betty Ford, with Chris Chase, *The Times of My Life*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 205.
30 "Woman of the Year," *Newsweek*, November 29, 1975, 19.
31 Ibid., 22; Shelia Rabb Weidenfeld, *First Lady's Lady: With the Fords at the White House* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), 86-87.
32 "On Being Normal," *Time*, August 25, 1975, 15.
33 "Betty Ford's Gaffe," *National Review*, August 29, 1975, 1008.
34 "A Fighting First Lady," *Time*, March 3, 1975, 20.
35 "Votes for the First Lady," U.S. House, *Congressional Record* (November 14, 1975), 36645.
36 "On Being Normal," 15.
37 Robert Pierpoint, *At the White House* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), 188.
38 Barbara Goldsmith, "One Step at a Time," *Parade*, May 1, 1983, 7.
39 "Mrs. Carter Speaks Out," *New York Times*, July 14, 1983.
40 Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 32.
41 Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady from Plains* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 175. I am grateful to Mrs. Carter, and her associate, Madeline MacBean, for making portions of her book available to me for use in this talk.
42 Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter in Search of the Great White House* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), 453; "The President's Partner," *Newsweek*, November 5, 1979, 36.
43 Bertram S. Brown, "First Lady Initiatives," December 1976, p. 2, a paper prepared for Mrs. Carter, copy furnished to the author by Dr. Brown.
44 Mary Gail Miesch, "Rosalynn Carter: An Issue-Oriented First Lady," December 1982, seminar paper, p. 8, University of Texas at Austin, author's copy.
45 Ibid., 15, 21.
46 "Mrs. Carter Speaks Out," *New York Times*, July 14, 1983.
47 Eleanor Roosevelt, *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), v.

First Lady Scholarship Since the 1984 First Ladies Conference

Katherine A. S. Sibley

As most readers of this monograph well know, American first ladies have been long overlooked by scholars and authors alike. Until relatively recently, in historic treatments, textbooks, literature, and in the press, they have been ignored, gossiped about, or at best, seen as mere reflections of their husbands. As Elizabeth Thacker Estrada, a scholar of U.S. women's history, noted that decades after President Zachary Taylor left office, "General Taylor's horse, Old Whitey, received more public attention than did his wife." This was so even while Taylor had affirmed, "Margaret was 'as much of a soldier as I was!'"[1]

Early works that touched on first ladies, written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, tended to emphasize the society contours and domestic duties of the White House, such as Elizabeth Ellet's *Court Circles of the Republic, or, the Beauties and Celebrities of the Nation Illustrating Life and Society under Eighteen Presidents* (1869), or *Memories of the White House: The Home Life of Our Presidents from Lincoln to Roosevelt* by W.H. Crook (1910). Such works did not highlight the kind of activism that first ladies are known for now or that first ladies were engaged in even then. Crook was writing while activist First Lady Helen (Nellie) Taft was in office, and Julia Grant, who entered the White House as Ellet's book appeared, was no shrinking violet herself.

Moving through the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and World War II, First Ladies like Ellen Wilson, Edith Wilson, Florence Harding, and, of course, Eleanor Roosevelt, were highly visible and active in their own ways. Its author, the first fulltime female journalist to serve the White House during the 1960s, was Marianne Means.

[1] Elizabeth Lorelei Thacker-Estrada, "Margaret Taylor, Abigail Fillmore, and Jane Pierce: Three Antebellum Presidents' Ladies," in Katherine A. S. Sibley, ed., *A Companion to First Ladies* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley- Blackwell, 2016), 176.

Yet it wasn't until the last year of the Kennedy Administration, as women's labor contributions were finally being recognized with laws for equal pay in 1963—even while activists like Pauli Murray and Betty Friedan noted the continuing exclusion of women from so many roles—that one of the first books focused on first ladies appeared.[2] Inspired by Mrs. Kennedy," she wrote,

> I have selected eleven other First Ladies who played vital roles in shaping their husbands' lives and tangentially, their nation's destiny. A few were responsible for prodding their reluctant husbands toward the White House. Our wartime First Ladies gave their husbands the kind of wifely support which made it possible for them to carry out their awesome responsibilities. One became "acting President" during her husband's serious illness and another became her crippled husband's eyes and ears during the White House years. . . [they] are women of strong will and nimble wit, and they made their presence felt.[3]

We may take exception to the tone ("wifely") and the emphasis on their *auxiliary* nature, but the argument is valid sixty or more years later: first ladies were important in getting their husbands into the White House, acting for them, undertaking missions on their behalf, and advising them. The twelve she chose included some of the first ladies that we would still appreciate as some of the most activist and significant: Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, Dolley Madison, Sarah Polk, Mary Lincoln, Helen Taft, Edith Wilson, Florence Harding, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower, and Jacqueline Kennedy. Means could not rely on the archives and sources we have now, and her book thus lacks the scholarly apparatus that more recent scholars can fully engage. For example, the papers of Warren G. Harding (including much about Florence) were not available from the Harding Memorial Association until 1964, and his rich and insightful love letters could not be accessed until 2014. Even if she had wanted to write a more scholarly book, Means was limited to what was available at the time.

With archives opening and the feminist movement shifting both society *and* scholarship, things began to change in the 1970s. New specialty fields, like social history and women's history, contributed to the development of what is now First Ladies Studies. Since then, we have seen an explosion of books, journal articles, documentary films, television treatments, museum exhibitions, and social media sites dedicated to the discovery and explication of the lives of women

[2] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Equal Pay Act of 1963, https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/equal- pay-act-1963; Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963); Pauli Murray, "Letter to A. Philip Randolph," August 21, 1963, Box 39, Anna Arnold Hedgeman Papers, National Afro-American Museum, and Cultural Center, Wilberforce, Ohio, cited in Kyle Brooks, "The Morning After: Black Women and the March on Washington," *Black Perspectives*, December 12, 2022 https://www.aaihs.org/the-morning-after-black-women-and-the-march-on-washington/

[3] Marianne Means, *The Woman in the White House: The Lives, Time and Influence of Twelve Notable First Ladies* (New York: Random House, 1963), xii-xi .

who served in the role that has no Constitutional provision. The National First Ladies Library and Museum, established in 1996 in Canton, Ohio, generated interest in the scholarship and preservation of first lady artifacts. Other physical sites that house artifacts and serve researchers include the Smithsonian, the National Archives and Records Administration (which oversees the sixteen Presidential Libraries), and the Library of Congress. In 2021, the First Ladies Association for Research and Education (FLARE) created another avenue for promoting and accessing the scholarship of first ladies.

It was really the decade of the 1980s, however, that saw the academic transformation and reshaping of our field, as some of the earliest serious biographies, like Sylvia Jukes Morris's study of Edith Roosevelt, appeared.[4] In 1982, Robert Watson and the Sienna College Research Institute launched the first regular polls of first ladies among scholars, ranking these women in history just as presidential polls had done for their husbands. First ladies themselves contributed as well with their autobiographies, beginning in 1978 with Betty Ford's, and followed by volumes from Rosalynn Carter and Nancy Reagan, as well as Margaret Truman's and Julie Nixon Eisenhower's 1986 biographies of their mothers. More came in the 1990s and 2000s from Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, and Laura Bush.[5]

The most significant instigator of this shift in historiography in the 1980s was Betty Ford's own First Ladies Conference co-sponsored with Rosalynn Carter, which she called at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum on April 19 and 20, 1984, and which FLARE recently marked by holding its own first national gathering there in 2024. While the First Lady then in the White House, Nancy Reagan, was unable to accept Mrs. Ford's invitation and Lady Bird Johnson was unable to attend due to illness, Rosalynn Carter and a number of presidential children, including both Johnson daughters, were in attendance. Of special interest to our field, however, was the appearance of historian Lewis L. Gould, of the University of Texas at Austin, who gave the keynote speech.

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[4] *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Portrait of a First Lady*, (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1980).

[5] Betty Ford, *The Times of My Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978); Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady from Plains*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1984); Nancy Reagan, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1989); Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Truman* (New York: Macmillan, 1986); Julie Nixon Eisenhower, *Pat Nixon: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986); Barbara Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir* (New York: Scribner, 1994); Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003); and Laura Bush, *Spoken from the Heart* (New York: Scribner, 2006).

Gould was even then a pioneer, teaching the first course on first ladies in the nation and authoring early scholarly articles on the topic in such prestigious journals as *Presidential Studies Quarterly* and *The American Scholar.*[6] He would also publish an excellent and much-referenced edited volume on first ladies, part of a stream of such works by other pioneering scholars in that era, including those of Betty Boyd Caroli, Myra Gutin, Nancy Kegan Smith, and Carl Sferrazza Anthony.[7]

Even more significantly, Gould went on to mentor many students and contributors to his University Press of Kansas Modern First Ladies series, a groundbreaking set of volumes reflecting the fruits of this new scholarship on individual first ladies. The first of these books authored by Lewis Gould, in 1988, *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment* was groundbreaking in that it was not just biographical in nature but examined a first lady's agenda on an issue of importance. Others began appearing in the 1990s, around the time that then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton ceremonially opened the First Ladies Library in Canton, Ohio, next to the historic home of Ida McKinley. Gould would succeed in developing a field where one existed only in fragmentary form. Through careful and kind editing of new work and his intentional efforts to connect his authors with one another, Gould created opportunities for further research and collaboration among the young scholars writing dissertations and monographs on first ladies. He introduced people, in other words, who had been either plowing alone or who were only just beginning to put down seeds in lonely corners of the profession. Seventeen books so far have appeared in the Kansas series, most of them coming out in the 2000s to mid-2010s, when the field really began to blossom. Building on the works by some of the pioneers mentioned earlier, this set of scholarly volumes succeeded in not only underlining the lives of individual first ladies but contextualizing them, taking them off their all-too-customary pedestal and placing them

[6] Lewis L. Gould, "Modern First Ladies in Historical Perspective," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 15 (1985), 532- 540; Lewis, L. Gould, "First Ladies," *The American Scholar* 55 (1986): 528-535.

[7] Lewis L. Gould, *America's First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford, 1987); Myra G. Gutin, *The President's Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, Conn., Greenwood, 1989); Nancy Kegan Smith and M. C. Ryan, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1989); and Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of the President's Wives and Their Power, 1789-1961* (New York: Quill/William Morrow, 1990).

and their significance within their own times.[8]

Outside of the series, other scholars also enriched our understanding by opening up the lives of earlier first ladies who were not in the purview of Gould's series, or pulling away at the myths surrounding more modern occupants of the East Wing who had traditionally been marginalized, caricatured, or otherwise captured without benefit of their full complexity.[9] This explosion of new works well fit the times, as Rosalynn Carter, who published her own biography in 1984, foresaw in Grand Rapids: "the role of the first lady has changed as the role of women has changed, and it will probably never be the same again."[10] The Women's Movement shifted not just roles in the workplace, but in politics, in culture, and in society, and under the stewardship of Gould and others, First Ladies Studies significantly benefited from the rich array of new analyses these new times brought. Indeed, as historian Nancy Beck Young, one of Gould's students, has attested, "first ladies . . . provide a barometric reading of attitudes toward women's 'proper' role in society at any given moment in time." As Gould well pointed out at the 1984 Conference, "in the most profound sense, the study of first ladies holds up a mirror to ourselves."[11] And so too, will the existence of a first gentleman,

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[8] These books include three by Gould himself: Louis L. Gould, *Edith Kermit Roosevelt, Creating the Modern First Lady* (2015), *Helen Taft: Our Musical First Lady* (2010), and *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady* (1988), as well as the others in the series: Kristie Miller, *Ellen and Edith: Woodrow Wilson's First Ladies* (2015); Mary C. Brennan, *Pat Nixon: Embattled First Lady* (University Press of Kansas, 2011); Maurine Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Transformative First Lady* (2010); Sarah L. Sale, *Bess Wallace Truman: Harry's White House "Boss"* (2010); Katherine A. S. Sibley, *First Lady Florence Harding: Behind the Tragedy and Controversy* (2009); Robert Ferrell, *Grace Coolidge: The People's Lady in Silent Cal's White House* (2008); Myra G. Gutin, *Barbara Bush: Presidential Matriarch* (2008), Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Mamie Doud Eisenhower: The General's First Lady* (2007); Scott Kaufman, *Rosalynn Carter: Equal Partner in the White House* (2007); Gil Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton: Polarizing First Lady* (2006); Nancy Beck Young, *Lou Henry Hoover: Activist First Lady* (2005); Barbara Perry, *Jacqueline Kennedy*: *First Lady of the New Frontier* (2004); James G. Benze, *Nancy Reagan: On the White House Stage* (2005); and John Robert Greene, *Betty Ford: Candor and Courage in the White House* (2004). At least two more, on Laura Bush and Michelle Obama, are in the works.

[9] Two treatments of earlier first ladies are Catherine Clinton, *Mrs. Lincoln: A Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010) and Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2007). In this period Carl Sferrazza Anthony wrote two books on lesser appreciated First Ladies: *Nellie Taft: The Unconventional First Lady of the Ragtime Era* (William Morrow Paperbacks, 2006), and *Florence Harding: The First Lady of the Jazz Age and Death of America's Most Scandalous President* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999). More popular First Ladies also got new treatments in such books as Sarah Bradford's, *America's Queen: The Life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis* (Penguin Publishing Group, 2000) and Jane Jarboe Russell's, *Lady Bird: A Biography of Mrs. Johnson* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

[10] Judy Klemesrud, "Examining the Role of the First Lady," *New York Times*, April 20, 1984.

[11] Nancy Beck Young, "The Historiography of Lou Henry Hoover," in Sibley, ed., *A Companion to First Ladies* West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 423. Gould's closing remarks at the "Modern First Ladies: Private Lives and Public Duties" are quoted in Stacy Cordery and Nancy Kegan Smith, "It's About Time: Lighting the Legacies of First Ladies," *East Wing Magazine*, June 21, 2024 https://www.eastwingmagazine.com/p/its-about- time-lighting-the-legacies.
2018); and Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *Ida McKinley: The Turn-of-the-Century First Lady through War, Assassination, and Secret Disability* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2013).

when and if that happens.

Firmly established as a field, First Ladies Studies grew in the second decade of the twenty-first century to include an outpouring of new works by authors and editors who now meet regularly in conferences, list-servs, CSPAN series, and other outlets. Biographies and academic analyses continue to appear,[12] as do volumes that organize groups of first ladies by such categories as historiography, power and politics, and slaveholding practices.[13] And as the third decade of our century began, a group of interdisciplinary scholars including communication scholars, historians, First Ladies' staff members, and archivists launched FLARE in June 2021, designed to connect all practitioners in the field, from journalists to curators to archivists to teachers and scholars, and others interested in first ladies by means of panel discussions, networking, conferences, and other opportunities.

The bibliography of first ladies books has only grown since FLARE's founding, with the recent release of new classroom texts, trade books, and biographies, not only on popular first ladies like Jacqueline Kennedy, but on less-appreciated ones like Edith Wilson, Patricia Nixon, and Nancy Reagan.[14]

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[12] Biographies and analyses in this decade include Elizabeth J. Natalle, *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018); Amy S. Greenburg, *Lady First: The World of First Lady Sarah Polk* (New York: Knopf, 2019); Lisa McCubbin, *Betty Ford: First Lady, Women's Advocate, Survivor, Trailblazer* (Gallery Books,

[13] Jill Abraham Hummer, *First Ladies and American Women: In Politics and at Home* (University Press of Kansas, 2017); Kate Andersen Brower, *First Women: The Grace and Power of America's Modern First Ladies* (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2017); Jeanne E. Abrams, *First Ladies of the Republic: Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, Dolley Madison, and the Creation of an Iconic American* (New York: NYU Press, 2017); Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Ties that Bound: Founding First Ladies and Slaves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Susan Swain, *First Ladies: Presidential Historians on the Lives of 45 Iconic American Women* (Washington: CSPAN Publishing, 2016); and Sibley, ed., *A Companion to First Ladies*.

[14] Diana B. Carlin, Anita B. McBride, and Nancy Kegan Smith published both a trade book, *Remember the First Ladies: The Legacies of America's History-Making Women* (San Diego: Cognella, 2024) and with the same publisher, a textbook, *U.S. First Ladies: Making History and Leaving Legacies* (2023). Other recent works include Heath Hardage Lee, *The Mysterious Mrs. Nixon: The Life and Times of Washington's Most Private First Lady* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2024)); Katie Rogers, *American Woman: The Transformation of the Modern First Lady, from Hillary Clinton to Jill Biden* (New York: Crown, 2024); Rebecca Boggs Roberts, *Untold Power: The Fascinating Rise and Complex Legacy of First Lady Edith Wilson* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2023); *Carl Sferrazza Anthony, Camera Girl: The Coming of Age of Jackie Bouvier Kennedy* (New York: Gallery Books, 2023); Julia Sweig, *Lady Bird Johnson: Hiding in Plain Sight* (New York: Random House, 2021); Karen Tumulty, *The Triumph of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2021); and Katherine A. S. Sibley, ed., *Southern First Ladies: Place and Culture in White House History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2021). The field shows no signs of slowing down. For instance, one of the newest additions is the 2025 *Cambridge Companion to First Ladies* edited by Lisa Burns and Teri Finneman.

Prominent First Ladies like Eleanor Roosevelt and Michelle Obama continue to fill shelves.[15] This brief review has by no means attempted to cover exhaustively the world of First Ladies scholarship; there are certainly more texts that could be included, and future scholars are counted on to continue writing and compiling history. It is important as well to note that books themselves are hardly the only well of historical and new material. Databases in university libraries, for example, contain citations for hundreds of journal articles from a range of academic disciplines that analyze and document American first ladies from a range of perspectives. First Ladies Studies is an interdisciplinary field that spans the humanities and social sciences.

Along with books and articles, there are a number of new streams for first ladies scholars and enthusiasts to explore, including podcasts, television series, and the aforementioned Substack web-based publication, *East Wing Magazine*.[16] Meanwhile, our First Ladies themselves continue to contribute to the outpouring, as noted earlier, with new books in the last few years from Jill Biden, Michelle Obama, Melania Trump, and Hillary Clinton.[17] Who knows what the next forty years of First Lady scholarship will bring, but unquestionably, they will broaden and deepen our field ever more, building on the works of pioneers like Lewis L. Gould.

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[15] A sample of Eleanor Roosevelt coverage includes: Susan Quinn's *Eleanor and Hick: The Love Affair That Shaped a First Lady* (New York: Penguin, 2017); Patricia Bell Scott, *The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship: Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Struggle for Social Justice* (New York: Knopf, 2016); Blanche Weisen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume 1: 1884-1933*; *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume II: The Defining Years, 1933-1938*; *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume III: The War Years and After, 1939-1962* (New York: Viking, 1992, 1999, 2016); and the classic of Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994). For Michelle Obama, the collection is varied and includes Heather E. Harris and Kimberly R. Moffitt, ed., *Michelle Obama and the FLOTUS Effect: Platform, Presence, and Agency* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2020); Amanda Lucidon, *Chasing Light: Michelle Obama Through the Lens of a White House Photographer* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2017); Elizabeth J. Natalle and Jenni M. Simon, ed., *Michelle Obama: First Lady, American Rhetor* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2015); Peter Slevin, *Michelle Obama: A Life* (New York: Random House, 2015); Rachel Swarns, *American Tapestry: The Story of the Black, White, and Multiracial Ancestors of Michelle Obama* (New York: Amistad Press, 2012); Kate Betts, *Everyday Icon: Michelle Obama and the Power of Style* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2011; and Liza Mundy, *Michelle Obama: A Life,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

[16] Podcasts include Alan Lowe, "American FLOTUS," (2024); Quinnipiac University, "The First Ladies: Second to None," (2024); CSPAN, "First Ladies: In Their Own Words," (2022); and George W. Bush Presidential Center,"Ladies First" (2018). TV series include both documentaries, like, CNN's *First Ladies* (2020) and *First Ladies Revealed* (2017), and C-SPAN's *First Ladies: Influence and Image* (2013); as well as docudramas, such as Showtime's *First Ladies* (2022). Jennifer Taylor's *East Wing Magazine* newsletter debuted in 2023 and may be found at https://www.eastwingmagazine.com/.

[17] Jill Biden, *Where the Light Enters: Building a Family, Discovering Myself* (New York: Macmillan, 2019); Michelle Obama, *Becoming* (New York: Crown, 2018) and *The Light We Carry* (New York: Crown, 2022); Melania Trump, *Melania* (New York: Skyhorse, 2024); and Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Something Lost, Something Gained: Reflections on Life, Love, and Liberty* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2024).

Part II:
Tributes to Lewis L. Gould

Lewis L. Gould: Mentor and Friend

Myra G. Gutin

I grew up in a home where Eleanor Roosevelt was venerated. My mother would frequently tell me about Mrs. Roosevelt's good works and would end her comments by saying, "This is what a woman can do." My mother had grown up with Mrs. Roosevelt as the First Lady. She was impressed with Mrs. Roosevelt's efforts on behalf of the New Deal, her advocacy for young people, African Americans, and Marian Anderson. Later, she got to know the First Lady through her daily column, *My Day*, radio broadcasts, and lecture tours. The crowning glory was when Mrs. Roosevelt became a delegate to the newly formed United Nations and worked on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There was no one that she respected more.

I took those words to heart. I earned my Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Michigan and when the time came for a dissertation topic, I decided to write about Mrs. Roosevelt. My dissertation advisor, Dr. Howard Martin, advised me to broaden my scope and look at the communication styles of a group of first ladies—that would include Mrs. Roosevelt. In my naiveté and excitement, I decided to study the communication styles of all the first ladies after suffrage, thus beginning with Florence Harding and going up to the incumbent First Lady, Nancy Reagan. I expected the research and writing to take about 18 months. It took five years. There was not a lot written about first ladies at the time I began my work, and I had a number of professors and others in my field who asked, "Why would you want to study *that* topic?" It happened that the topic fascinated me and that the material was rich in possibilities.

My degree was awarded in August 1983, and I thought I was settling into a career that included teaching group communication, interpersonal communication, nonverbal communication, etc. However, shortly after I finished my dissertation, I began receiving telephone calls from reporters who wanted to discuss the First Lady. Slowly, those calls, and the need for further research, began to dominate my work. What we would later call the field of First Ladies Studies was starting to emerge. Though progress was slow at first, research works began to appear: Betty Boyd Caroli published *First Ladies* in 1987, and Carl Sferrazza Anthony published *The First Ladies: The Saga of the President's Wives and Their Power, 1961-1990* in 1990. My book, *The President's Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* was published in 1989. Of particular note was Lewis L. Gould's book *Lady Bird Johnson and*

the Environment, which appeared in 1988. Lew's book was the first non-biography of a first lady to be published.

During the fall of 1983, Dr. Martin contacted me about a conference that was going to be held at the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids in March of the next year. It seemed that First Lady Betty Ford was calling for the first national conference about First Ladies. Moreover, Dr. Martin had learned that Dr. Lewis Gould, the Chair of the Department of History at the University of Texas, who was doing major research on Lady Bird Johnson, would be speaking at the conference, and he thought that I should meet Dr. Gould, if possible. I thought this was a good idea and signed up for what would turn out to be a memorable conference and a memorable personal meeting.

The excitement was palpable when I took my seat in the audience that March morning. Dr. Gould began the conference by providing a keynote address. He told the audience:

> We have . . . downgraded a group of women who have fulfilled a unique responsibility. History and circumstances make it necessary to evaluate First Ladies as helpmates, appendages, surrogates, and partners of the presidents, but these categories should not be barriers to seeing these wives for what they were and are—autonomous human beings with as much claim to the attention of the student of our history as their masculine counterparts.

I was mesmerized as Dr. Gould clearly laid out the parameters for the field of First Ladies Studies. For those who may have encountered resistance to their work on first ladies, he gave us the basis for our arguments about the importance of our research. When the session concluded, I gathered my courage and went up to speak with Dr. Gould. He could not have been more gracious. I told him about my dissertation and my interest in first ladies. He gave me his card and said, "We should talk and be in touch, write to me." I did, indeed, often contact him and for the next 20 plus years. He was my mentor and friend.

I wrote a long article about Barbara Bush for Lew's 1996 book titled *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy*.[1] I learned a great deal from that experience. Besides the fact that Lew did not like contractions, he was a stickler for attribution, and he responded in a timely manner, which was very helpful. I found that even when he was critical, Lew was kind and couched his constructive criticism in language that would be encouraging. Needless to say, many critics do not spare the writer.

[1]The second edition of *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy*, edited by Lewis L. Gould, was published in 2001.

The Barbara Bush article led to Lew's invitation to write a biography of Mrs. Bush for the Modern First Ladies series that he was editing for the University Press of Kansas (UPK). Two incidents that took place during the writing of my book, *Barbara Bush: Presidential Matriarch*, illustrate Lew's gentle mentorship, patience, and commitment to research.

I had been writing to Mrs. Bush for years, asking for an interview so that I could pose some questions to her face-to-face. I had received letters from her secretary telling me that she had a crowded schedule and that she was on a book tour speaking about her autobiography. Lew encouraged me to continue to pursue Mrs. Bush because the interview would give my book increased legitimacy. I kept writing with the same negative result. When I reported this to Lew, he told me, "Write to her and let her know that whether or not she participates in your book, history is going to be written." I sent off that letter, and this time, I was granted an interview. This was a great lesson in persistence and has proved to work in other situations.

There were rumors about George H. W. Bush having an affair with one of his staff members. I spent a great deal of time chasing down the rumors, but could never find a credible source that would absolutely confirm the charge of marital infidelity. I asked Lew if I should include it in the biography. This was a question of how one should handle sensitive, possibly salacious material, and I was nervous about including an allegation that was never proven. I was also concerned about how Mrs. Bush would react. I knew she had been hurt by the speculation. Lew told me that the rumors were part of the story of the Bushes and to omit them would raise questions about the thoroughness of my research. Clearly, there would always be events and people that might cause collateral damage and hurt family members and friends. He urged me to be thorough, to reread the work, and speak with other biographers and historians who had confronted the possibility of an affair. Lew stressed academic rigor and keeping an open mind. He kept encouraging me to leave no stone unturned. I did this and still came away with no definitive conclusion. I wrote and rewrote this short section many times until both Lew and I were satisfied that I had covered the topic in a fair and balanced manner. In the book, I wrote that there had been rumors of a long-term affair swirling around Mr. Bush, but these stories had never been confirmed. It was my finding that scholars and historians could not decide if the woman in question was just Mr. Bush's "work wife" or if there had, in fact, been an affair. I finished the section by observing that decades had passed since Mr. Bush had been in office and no one—scholar, researcher,

or reporter—had unearthed any evidence of an affair. This was an excellent lesson in dealing with nuanced and potentially sensational or salacious material.

I do not believe that any of us who were doing research about first ladies in the 1980s and '90s realized that Lew's pioneering efforts were giving rise to a new field of study. He kept encouraging many of us to keep working, to keep sharing information as the American public was becoming more aware of and interested in the presidential spouse.

In the 1980s, Lew edited the Modern American First Ladies series for the University Press of Kansas, proof positive that this was indeed a substantive area with much to teach us. The burgeoning interest in First Ladies Studies also led to the founding of the National First Ladies Library in 1996. Today, First Ladies courses are taught at many universities and colleges. There has been an explosion in scholarship on the topic and *East Wing Magazine*, an online magazine solely devoted to the activities of first ladies began publication in 2023. All the arrows point to Lew Gould as the person who started this revolution.

I never expected to be an historian of first ladies. I have enjoyed a fulfilling career and have marveled at the growth of the field. I have had the opportunity to meet several First Ladies and members of their staffs. I began to teach a course about the First Ladies at Rider University in 1990. I have had the chance to visit the White House and serve as a media commentator on the activities of the First Lady. Perhaps my greatest professional achievement was being involved in the founding of FLARE, the First Ladies Association for Research and Education in 2021 (yet another outgrowth of Lew's work), and I was honored to serve as the inaugural president of the organization. Another proud moment was having FLARE name its highest award in honor of Lew.

I owe a great deal of my success to my mentor and friend, Lewis Gould, and I am forever in his debt.

Mentorship as Scholarship:
An Essay in Appreciation of Lewis L. Gould

Nancy Beck Young

Historians can be pretty conservative and even hidebound when considering what is and is not scholarship. Too often historians limit their definition of scholarship to the single authored monograph and are not willing to consider alternative forms of advancing the discipline. This is at best short-sighted and perhaps even foolish. Scholarship comes in many other forms—collaborative authorship, editorial projects, public history projects, and digital humanities all come to mind—and should be celebrated appropriately. What does not make this list but probably should is mentorship. Indeed, mentorship—done right—is scholarship. This essay looks at the career of Lewis L. Gould as the embodiment of mentorship as scholarship.

I first met Lew Gould in 1986. He was a seasoned, talented historian at the top of his game, and I was a "wet behind the ears" aspiring graduate student. While it might sound like a cliché, it is not wrong to say that he changed my life. More than anyone else he is responsible for setting me on the path to professional success. Among the thousands of large and small things he taught me, perhaps the most important lessons I learned from Lew were to work hard and to never fear taking new scholarly directions. Lew trained at Yale University in the 1960s in Western history and political history, but when I met him some twenty years later, he was at the forefront of launching First Ladies Studies as a professional, legitimate field of scholarship, publishing a series of journal articles, book chapters, edited collections, and a monograph, *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment*.[1]

[1]Lewis L. Gould, "Modern First Ladies in Historical Perspective," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1985): 532–540. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27550241; Lewis L. Gould, "First Lady as Catalyst: Lady Bird Johnson and Highway Beautification in the 1960s," *Environmental Review: ER* 10, no. 2 (1986): 77–92. https://doi.org/10.2307/3984559. Lewis L. Gould, "HISTORY: First Ladies," *The American Scholar* 55, no. 4 (1986): 528–35. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41211363; Lewis L. Gould, "Lady Bird Johnson and Beautification," in *The Johnson Years, Volume Two: Vietnam, the Environment, and Science, ed.* Robert A. Divine, 150-180 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987); Lewis L. Gould, *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988); Lewis L. Gould, "Modern First Ladies and the Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1990): 677–83. http://www.jstor.org/ stable/20700152. Subsequently he has published two more biographies of first ladies: Lewis L. Gould, *Helen Taft: Our Musical First Lady* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010) and Lewis L. Gould, *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Creating the Modern First Lady* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018). It is worth noting that the above literature is but a smattering of the totality of Gould's body of work. He is the author or editor of over 30 books on topics ranging from the history of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, to journalism history, political history, and Texas history.

When I entered graduate school at the University of Texas, Lew understood that my interests lay with modern American political history, the Congress, and the presidency. He did not push me toward this new field he was helping to invent, but instead nurtured me through the graduate school experience and encouraged me to follow my own muse in selecting a dissertation topic.[2]

When I first met Lew in the fall of 1986 I was not yet admitted into the program, but Lew nevertheless permitted me a seat as a special graduate student in his already full undergraduate research seminar on Lyndon Johnson and his times. From the very first day in class, Lew made clear the high standards he expected from his students (undergraduate and graduate). At that time, I had my BA from Baylor University but really had little idea exactly what graduate school was about. Lew kindly explained that as a graduate student I would be expected to perform at a higher level and use things like "primary sources" in my formal writing. He carefully and patiently explained the importance of both reconstructing what happened with the participant's writings and, equally significant, using these materials as the basis for analysis of the larger meaning of these events.

Working with Lew was not for the faint of heart. He told graduate seminars on the first day of class that they should plan on producing one peer-reviewed and published article for each year they were in graduate school if they had any hope of success on the job market. He advised one graduate student that she was spending too much time on contemporary political campaigns and not enough time in the archives studying the politics of the past. Working with Lew meant **WORKING** every day. He cautioned that the flashiest graduate student does not always cross the finish line but instead success would come to those with a fierce work ethic. He explained the secret to success as a historian was willingness to apply one's posterior to a seat at one's desk, either in the archives doing research or at home writing, for at least eight hours a day every day.

Despite or because of his high expectations, Lew was a popular mentor, and as such there were at least half a dozen students working with him in any given year. He never played favorites, but he did give individually and uniquely to each relationship. Here is what I mean: if a student was working very hard and was fully engaged with their training, he met them measure for measure, but if a student was "slacking," he appeared less robust.

[2]Nancy Beck Young, *Wright Patman: Populism, Liberalism, and the American Dream* (Dallas, Tex.: Southern Methodist University Press, 2000).

My evidence comes from the number of "extras" he provided to his most motivated students: introductions to scholars at other universities to help with conference panel building and opportunities for publication, provision of citations to articles and books he thought we should be reading. Students who were less motivated did not seem to receive this bounty, at least at the volume provided to his most active students.

Lew's kindness meant that we were equally willing to reciprocate when asked. When I was researching my dissertation in 1992, Lew asked if I would be willing to spend part of a day while at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library finding a few documents for him about Lou Henry Hoover. Lew wanted materials pertaining to Hoover's work with Girl Scouts while she was First Lady. He also hoped for a few sources about a ceremonial tea Hoover hosted for congressional spouses in 1929. The tea became controversial because in 1928, Chicago area voters had sent Oscar Stanton DePriest (R-IL) to Congress. DePriest was Black and so was his wife, Jessie DePriest. Lew had been invited to contribute a chapter on Lou Henry Hoover to a volume that was being edited, and he wanted to flesh out his manuscript with some archival material.[3] I was the sort of graduate student who when asked to find five documents would seek out at least fifty. I returned to Austin with a very large stack of research materials on Hoover for Lew and I also expounded on how interesting I found her work. Little did I know at the time how that would redound to my trajectory as a scholar some six years later.

My most enduring examples of Lew's generosity while I was still a graduate student come from not one but two opportunities he provided me to co-author with him. These invitations also became teaching examples of how to work on multiple projects at the same time. While I was researching and writing my dissertation, Lew received an invitation to deliver a paper and contribute a chapter on U.S. Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn (D-TX) to a volume on key speakers of the U.S. House of Representatives.[4] Because Lew no longer traveled for research, he needed someone willing and able to travel. Because I was working on a congressional history dissertation, Lew

[3]Lewis L. Gould, "A Neglected First Lady: A Reappraisal," in *Lou Henry Hoover: Essays on a Busy Life*, ed. Dale C. Mayer, 63-77 (Worland, WY: High Plains Publishing Company, 1994).
[4]Lewis L. Gould and Nancy Beck Young, "The Speaker and the Presidents: Sam Rayburn, the White House, and the Legislative Process, 1941-1961," in *Masters of the House: Congressional Leadership over Two Centuries*, ed. Roger H. Davidson, Susan Webb Hammond, Raymond W. Smock, 181-221 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.

invited me to co-author the article. I did all the research that required traveling, which included trips to the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, as well as some work in Rayburn's papers at what is now the Briscoe Center for American History at UT Austin.[5]

Collaborating with Lew on the Rayburn paper and chapter created conditions that put in stark relief Lew's generosity and support for the many female graduate students who worked with him against the unintended chauvinism that still existed in the profession in the early 1990s. When I traveled to Washington, D.C., to deliver the paper that Lew and I co-wrote, the moderator for the session was baffled about how to handle introductions since Lew was not there. The moderator asked whether Lew should be introduced, and I said, "Of course." Lew in absentia received the introduction he deserved, and the moderator proceeded to introduce me. I had officially received my PhD degree just weeks before and had the CV that was typical for a new scholar. The moderator after noting Lew's many distinctions said I was distinguished by my "red suit."

While I was still researching and writing my dissertation, Lew provided me a second opportunity to collaborate with him, but this one developed more slowly than the opportunity to work on the Rayburn chapter. In the early 1990s Lew was invited to conduct a series of oral history interviews with Frances Goff, a fascinating woman who had worked in the Texas state legislature, been the volunteer director of the American Legion Auxiliary's Texas Bluebonnet Girls State program for just over fifty years and had been special assistant in Dr. R. Lee Clark's office at MD Anderson Hospital in Houston, Texas, since 1951. Clark was the first director of MD Anderson, and Goff was his guide for navigating the state bureaucracy, ensuring the success of the new cancer hospital. Lew's work on the project came with funding for him to buy out his teaching and to pay for a research assistant. He hired me as his RA for the project, and initially I spent my time pouring over microfilm reels finding all the available newspaper coverage of Goff's life. I also traveled to Houston to meet with Goff and survey her personal papers in her home.

[5]While I cannot make a direct connection, I think this experience helped pave the way for another opportunity much later in my career. Don E. Carleton, also a professor at UT and the director of the Briscoe Center, began discussing with me some years ago the need for scholarly biographies of the two US House speakers from Texas with research materials in the Briscoe Center, Rayburn and John Nance Garner. Don indicated that I was well suited to take on either project. We agreed that I had a head start on Rayburn given the work I had done on him with Lew, but we also agreed that Garner would be the far more challenging subject and the one for whom a greater scholarly intervention could be made. I've been working on Garner ever since! Choosing the harder path with the potential for bigger rewards is one of the critical lessons I learned from Lew.

Lew used the sources I located for him to frame the oral interviews he conducted and also to begin ghost writing Goff's memoirs. Sadly, midway through the project in the fall of 1994 Goff passed away. By that point, I was captivated by the Goff story and hated that Lew's ghost-written memoirs would not be published. I told him several times that he should reframe and expand the memoirs as a biography. Finally, he told me he would as long as I would co-author with him. He also insisted that I be listed as first author. He explained that another book would mean nothing to him given the stage of his career but could make all the difference for me on the job market. We divided the work equally, and in 1997 *Texas, Her Texas: The Life and Times of Frances Goff* was published.[6]

Good mentoring requires fair and ethical treatment of students even while maintaining high standards. Communicating with Lew while a graduate student definitely followed established patterns based on status in the program. Meetings in his office were always brief and productive. I don't recall spending more than five minutes conversing with him prior to writing and revising dissertation chapters. In the days before email, notes in graduate student mailboxes were de rigueur along with pre-arranged evening phone calls to Lew at his home, typically after 6 p.m. Lew was very formal with students. We always called him Dr. Gould or Professor Gould. When we were MA students, he called us Mr. or Ms. . Once we advanced to the PhD program, he called us by our first names. After we were ABD, he signed his notes, "LLG" and no longer Dr. Gould. As soon as we defended our dissertations, we were instructed that we had to call him Lew.

Lew expected his students to embrace solid archival research as the foundation for excellent scholarship. He was always more than a little suspicious of academics who purported to write serious history without doing original archival research. As such, I became an archives rat, never shying away from time scouring manuscript collections while looking for a new angle on my work. Lew, though, never let his students float about aimlessly in the archives without eventually beginning to write. In my own mind, I had barely started my dissertation research (I had probably been at it a good 6 months) when I received my first gentle reminder that yesterday would have been a good time to start writing that first chapter. Again, his advice proved sage and on target. He told me countless times that you

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[6]Nancy Beck Young and Lewis L. Gould, *Texas, Her Texas: The Life and Times of Frances Goff* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association Press, 1997).

really do not know anything until you start writing, and only with writing can you learn what else you need to find out.

For those who took the time, Lew revealed his humanity, something not true of many PhD mentors, and he demonstrated great care for his students. For example, he was equally capable of discussing sports and politics as he was the finer points of historical scholarship. His command of the details in all venues was impressive. There was probably not a detail he could not recall about his beloved New York Giants and New York Yankees. Unlike many faculty, he demonstrated support for the Texas Longhorns, but he diagnosed—correctly—their difficulties in the 1980s and 1990s with their inability to tackle. His assessments of contemporary politics almost always were delivered with a biting quip, as when he dismissed then President George H. W. Bush for developing his political positions by putting his finger to the wind. His attention to detail also revealed itself on the first day of the graduate seminars he taught when he passed out a 10–15-page, single-spaced bibliography and proceeded to talk both about the arguments of most of the titles listed as well as offering sometimes sardonic observations about the scholars who produced the work.

His care for his students manifested in his nurturing of our scholarship and attention to our lives. Not only did he teach us how to be historians, he also showed great care in critiquing our writing. For seminars, rough drafts were routinely returned in 24 hours, and dissertation chapters in a few days. His comments were copious and smart, ranging from assessment of argument to evaluation of logic and evidence. He was equally adept at the more mundane copy editing required for good scholarship. After sitting through a couple of intense chapter draft review meetings with Lew, I made a list of my various writing tics and tried to edit them away before submitting subsequent drafts.

His care for lives came through for me when he realized the degree to which I was struggling financially in graduate school, so he hired me to clean house for him and his wife, Dr. Karen K. Gould, the noted medieval art historian. I did not have a car at the time, so he picked me up and took me home. I became friends with Karen, who also took a strong interest in my success. We shared an interest in chocolate and clothes and when I was trying to build a professional wardrobe; she gifted me more than a few suits from her closet that I wore for many years with great appreciation. Perhaps too much chocolate is the explanation for why those suits no longer fit me!

More important, she cautioned me about the challenges women still faced in academia and recommended several good books that addressed the topic.[7] Karen and Lew were thrilled when I told them I would be marrying fellow graduate student Mark Young (who was also working with Lew). Thirteen years later, when we had our daughter, they were as happy as can be for us.

Lew's generosity and mentorship continued after we completed our PhDs. He worked very hard and was quite creative in addressing what was a most difficult job market in the 1990s. Almost apologetically, he once told me about his preliminary interview experience for his position at UT. Lew admitted that his first interview, if that is the appropriate description, occurred during an AHA meeting in New York City in the men's room at the New York Hilton. William Goetzmann, a senior member of the faculty at UT and a fellow alumnus of the Yale program, talked to Lew there about the opportunity at Texas. No job market year has looked like that since the market crash of the early 1970s. For his entire career Lew did everything he could to help UT students land well in a much more competitive market where there were far more new PhDs then there were history departments to employ them.

Lew's best advice was to stay active and be more productive than one's peers. He reinforced this message in both serious and humorous ways. When I graduated, he gave me a gift: a tee shirt imprinted with a Carole Cable cartoon from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The cartoon was a riff on the philosopher, René Descartes, showing a (male) scholar wearing a tie and suspenders, no less, sitting at his desk with a bookshelf behind him and a manuscript on the desk in front of him. His thought bubble stated, "I publish, therefore I am." The message was humorous but not subtle. I still own the tee shirt and wear it proudly as motivation to work harder.

Indeed, we discussed next project ideas while I was finishing my dissertation. I recall telling him my idea for a book about the role of Congress during World War II, a topic in which I became interested while writing about Wright Patman (D-TX). Lew taught all his students to start files on potential future projects while in the archives as one would never find that source again. I took the advice to heart, and I found myself intrigued with the role of pragmatic moderates in the war years mediating between liberals and conservatives to both preserve and narrow the

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[7]Paula J. Caplan, *Lifting a Ton of Feathers: A Woman's Guide to Surviving in the Academic World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Emily Toth, *Ms. Mentor's Impeccable Advice for Women in Academia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

scope of the New Deal once the United States became enmeshed in the war.[8] I hoped Lew would also find the idea compelling. I told him my plans one Saturday at his house, and he laughed at me. Not great for the ego of an almost PhD until I learned the reason for his laughter: he had considered a similar topic for his dissertation research but changed gears when he decided to work with Howard Lamar at Yale.[9]

In my own job search, which took several years, Lew decided after a year or two of modest results— campus interviews with second place finishes, a one-year gig, and a prestigious postdoctoral fellowship—before landing a position at a small liberal arts teaching college, that I should expand my scholarly portfolio by doing more work in women's history. He argued that the Goff book was but a start. First, he invited me to contribute chapters to a volume he was editing on First Ladies.[10] Second, he put me in contact with a colleague who was editing a book on women in politics, and I was invited to contribute a chapter on Texas governor Miriam Amanda Ferguson.[11] Most important, he brought me deeper into the work of first ladies scholarship.

After I had finished my first year of teaching at McKendree College in Lebanon, Illinois, Lew called me to discuss his latest idea, a book series on modern first ladies to be published with the University Press of Kansas. The year was 1998, and I was hard at work on finishing the revisions to my Patman biography. Lew had just read a recently published long biography of a former first lady, and he discussed with Fred Woodward, then the director of the University Press of Kansas, his idea for a series on modern first ladies that would parallel the press's series on presidential administrations. Lew envisioned a series of short, readable biographies that would be useful both for scholars and the general public. Lew planned to revise his biography of Lady Bird Johnson as the first book in the series, and he hoped that I would agree to write one of the first books for the series.[12]

We discussed at length which first lady I might tackle, considering both the historiographic potential and the

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[8]I eventually published *Why We Fight: Congress and the Politics of World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013).
[9]Lewis L. Gould, "Willis Van Devanter in Wyoming Politics, 1884-1897," (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1966).
[10]Nancy Beck Young, "Anna Symmes Harrison," in *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacies*, ed. Lewis L. Gould, 98-108 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); and Nancy Beck Young, "Eliza McCardle Johnson," in *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacies*, ed. Lewis L. Gould, 191-201 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996).
[11]Nancy Beck Young, "'Me for Ma:' Miriam Ferguson and Texas Politics in the 1920s and 1930s," in *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1880-1940*, ed. Melanie Gustafson, Kristie Miller, and Elisabeth Israels Perry, 121-29 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).
[12]Lewis L. Gould, *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

practical considerations for the research. Pretty quickly we settled on Lou Henry Hoover, with whom I had become engrossed while doing dissertation research at the Hoover Library in 1992. So, at Lew's invitation I set out researching and writing a third book before finishing revisions to my dissertation. Working on Lou Henry Hoover was the best possible decision, both in terms of making a contribution to the field and for pragmatic reasons. I was then living in southern Illinois, so travel to the Hoover Library was relatively easy, just over a four-hour drive. Working in West Branch was delightful. The archivists at the Hoover Library were most helpful, and the Hoover papers provided an abundance of material with which to work. I was able to produce a book that argued Hoover's significance in the development of the institution of First Ladies by looking at her use of the radio to communicate with the American people, her policy work with Girl Scouts to address the Great Depression, and her efforts to preserve the history of the White House among other activities.[13]

The theme of this tribute essay might best be summarized as follows: because of Lew, dot dot dot. So many sentences about my professional life and even aspects of my personal life could easily begin with those words, *because of Lew*. He is a visionary scholar who imagined new ways to think about history, especially with regard to First Ladies Studies. Lew is the stereotype of a workaholic who demonstrated what it means to be productive and how to achieve scholarly success. Most important, he is compassionate and kind. In every phase of his professional activities—from his own writing, to his service to his department, and to his instruction of students, undergraduate and graduate—Lew exemplifies everything that is right with this profession. Working with scholars interested in First Ladies Studies, though, and helping them forge a new subfield is his greatest accomplishment. I consider myself lucky to be one of the many scholars Lewis L. Gould mentored to follow this path. It is not too much to say that without Lew there might not be a scholarly field of First Ladies Studies. His mentorship has ensured the growth and maturation of an important field sitting at the nexus of political history and women's history. Because of Lew and his mentorship as scholarship there are not one but two book series devoted to First Ladies Studies at the University Press of Kansas. Because of Lew and his mentorship as scholarship this monograph exists. Because of Lew, dot dot dot.

[13]Nancy Beck Young, *Lou Henry Hoover: Activist First Lady* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

A Tribute to Intellectual Passion

Debbie Cottrell

Almost 40 years ago, I marched into the Garrison Hall office of Dr. Lewis Gould on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin and announced that I wanted to earn a master's degree, write a biography on a Texas woman educator for my thesis, and move on with my life, whatever that might mean. Though that was my plan, and I had no intention of deviating from it, a clarifying conversation with Dr. Gould helped me think bigger—how it might make more sense to consider being a PhD student, how we might think about making sure my intended-project was appropriate, and how I might make sure that my commitment to a serious graduate program and the scholarly pursuits it could lead to had been carefully considered.

In that same conversation, Dr. Gould made sure I understood that he was not interested in working with students who saw graduate programs as long-term pursuits, and he also shared one of the most important lessons of my academic life: Whatever you decide to do, make sure you are passionate about it. Looking back on that conversation, I am amazed at how pivotal it was for me as a young woman considering next steps in her career, how much wisdom was imparted in that relatively brief session, and how much of that conversation has remained with me every day of my life since.

My path from that day with Dr. Gould in Garrison Hall took me to a PhD (he was right), a teaching career at a small women's college, followed by several administrative appointments, culminating with becoming a college president in 2019. At each turn in my career, I have been buoyed by Dr. Gould's combined high standard setting for me and his confidence in me. I have been helped by the network of former students and now esteemed scholars who stay in touch and carry our special connection to Dr. Gould with us. And I have been inspired by the lessons he taught me that help me every day.

Here are a few of them, which I find completely relevant to the journey I am now on as a college president:

1. Lead with passion, and invest your time in the things that you care deeply about. Besides bringing up the "passion" thing in our first meeting, Dr. Gould revisited this theme at other times (probably noting that I might be a bit of slow learner on this front). I remember very clearly having a conversation with him a few years after that first one, to talk about possible dissertation topics. I shared that I thought I had a topic that might work and that its particular attraction for me was that no one else seemed to be working on it—a wide open field for me to step into! To my surprise, Dr. Gould was not overly impressed with my idea. Or at least not on its merits as I presented them. Instead, he smiled and asked me a few quick and direct questions along the lines of "do you care about this topic? Can you live with this topic night and day for several years and maybe beyond? Are you passionate about digging deep into every aspect of this topic? Can you find enough to admire and respect about this subject to keep you going on it?" Well, of course, I had missed all that and quickly realized that I was suggesting a topic that in all likelihood I would ultimately want to abandon. And in his wisdom, Dr. Gould could see that I would be wasting my time (his, too, though I do not think that was his major concern), likely becoming a graduate program causality, and, of course, missing the opportunity to bring to life a topic about which I cared deeply.
2. Never fear the next thing. When I first met Dr. Gould, I do not think the study of first ladies had yet become his focus. His career as a scholar of American political history was well established, and he was a prolific writer and author who could have remained in that area and continued to have a very successful and influential academic career. Yet, he had the courage to step into a realm that not only really did not exist, but also one that not everyone was enthusiastic about. The journey from the Spanish-American War to Lady Bird Johnson is not one that every scholar would take. Yet he did it, and he demonstrated that this new frontier of the history of first ladies was a legitimate field that deserved attention, that could help us understand the history of the United States in rich and meaningful ways, and could contribute to the study of women's experiences with a new and unique lens.
3. Bring others along on your journey. Most of us who worked with Dr. Gould came to understand that he was a

genius at finding projects that could involve us, develop us, and let us have an impact on important historical work. I have come to realize that many times it probably would have been easier if he had just done the work himself and not bothered with convincing us, explaining to us, teaching us, and guiding us. But that was not his way. His way was to make sure we had the opportunity to help write the article, complete the research project, index the book, interview the subject, take part in the conversations, and be part of something bigger than solo projects undertaken in isolation. The generosity of this approach has had a profound influence on me.

4. Enjoy the journey. No matter what else was going on, Dr. Gould not only always seemed to have time for us, he also seemed to enjoy his work with us (even me, and all the things I missed or was slow to understand!). And he always had the funny little anecdotes, the laugh, the "you can't make this history stuff up" approach, the "we're in this together" attitude that carried the day. Somehow, despite the seriousness of our work, the acclaim of his career, his high energy example that was hard to match, the challenges of too-little-time-to-get-it-all done, I always felt that there was a healthy perspective— sometimes even a lightness—to the work that we did with Dr. Gould. It is hard for me to make complete sense of that, though I suspect that it was directly tied to how he had us all working together and how he helped us all find subjects that we cared about. The importance of the work was bigger than any of us, yet we were all taught to see how we could contribute.

5. Extract the unique talent of each individual. After my initial meeting with Dr. Gould, I came to see myself as a scholar and envisioned teaching and contributing steadily to the field of women's history (which is not to say completing articles and books as quickly as he did, or creating whole new fields of scholarship as he did, but at least being a worthy contributor). For many of his former students, that path has been blazed with staggering success. But, for me, the pull of administration and the opportunity to connect what I had studied about women's lives to my own leadership opportunities, a different path unfolded. Though I never left it completely behind, scholarly work did not become my focus. Dr. Gould understood and even encouraged that. He conveyed to me that my opportunity to lead and to utilize my training as a historian in that process was important and worthy of my time. I think we both understood, also, that it seemed (finally!) to pass the passion test for me. As the leader of a Lutheran institution, I am often in conversations that focus on calling,

vocation, discernment, and, guess what? Passion. Many do not realize that what I bring to these conversation is directly linked to my time as a student of Dr. Lewis Gould.

Thank you, Dr. Gould, for your path-breaking work, your steady influence, your commitment to all of us, your life-changing mentoring, and for not laughing me out of your office that long-ago day—when I was both so certain and so wrong! You set the bar high (and fast!), and we—as well as the study of history—are all better for it.

Dr. Lewis L. Gould: Scholar, Mentor, and Friend

Nancy Kegan Smith

In 1968, I entered the University of Texas at Austin as a freshman. I chose this school partly because my uncle, Sigmund Koch, had recently gone there to chair the Comparative Studies Department and give advice on the Harry Ransom Center. It was exciting to be at the University during the Chancellorship of Harry Ransom, who believed in increasing the academic quality of the University by hiring outstanding faculty and creating a world class library called the Harry Ransom Center.

Dr. Lewis L. Gould was a history professor at the university. He was a New Yorker whose father, Jack Gould, had been a well-known television critic for the *New York Times.* His mother was originally from Texas. After graduating from Brown University with an AB, he said that on a "lark" he applied to Yale University for graduate work in history. He was accepted and received his PhD in 1966.[1] The following year, he was hired by the University of Texas at Austin to be an assistant professor in the History Department. Later, he became a full professor, the Eugene C. Barker Centennial Professor of American History, and chaired the History Department. At the time I took a class from Gould, he had written on American politics, the West, the presidency, and the Progressive Era.[2]

I first met Dr. Gould as a sophomore when I took a survey course of United States History 315L from 1865 forward. Taught in Burdine Hall, the course was required for all history majors at the time. It was a big lecture class of over 300 students in a large lecture hall. I remember the first day of class as we all filed into the auditorium chatting with each other, expecting that we would get "through" another required course. But something happened very quickly. As Dr. Gould began his lecture, he caught the attention and interest of the students in the room. Everyone was totally silent as he made history come alive for us in ways we had never experienced before.

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[1]Lewis Gould, e-mail message to author, March 23, 2024.
[2]Lewis Gould, curriculum vitae, n.d.

I found myself looking forward to each class, however, our first face-to-face meeting was not exactly a propitious one. As Gould remembers,

> I do recall the first time you and I met, and it was a funny moment where I had egg on my face. It was 315L in Burdine Hall and I was chattering away and quoted a line borrowed from Wayne Morgan about Thomas Jefferson. Wayne said that Jefferson had the smallest mind and the biggest mouth in American History. You came up after class and told me who your mother was. Did I blush?

My mother was Dr. Adrienne Koch, a professor of early American History and a Jeffersonian scholar who had written numerous books on Thomas Jefferson. This first meeting reminds me of what John Adams said on his first meeting of Abigail, with whom he would have a close and wonderful marriage for over fifty years: "Not fond, not frank, not candid."[3] Gould went on to become one of the people in my life, as in many other lives, who meets the definition outlined in the *Reader's Digest* column, "My Most Unforgettable Character" by significantly impacting my life and career.

Working with Dr. Gould

After my sophomore year, I did not have any contact with Dr. Gould until around 1983, when he started doing research on Lady Bird Johnson at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum (LBJ Library), where I was an archivist. By this time, he had broadened his field of interest to first ladies and their important contributions in their own right. As Gould explains, his interest in first ladies ". . . started quite by happenstance . . . I had become convinced that the tension between Edith Roosevelt and Helen Taft explained much about the split between their two husbands in 1912."[4] While working on his book about Mrs. Johnson, he had decided to create a new seminar course on the First Ladies, which was first offered in the fall of 1982. The course stressed the importance of studying them for their own contributions to the nation and the evolution of the role. It was the first course ever offered at an American college or university on first ladies and was titled "First Ladies of the 20th Century."[5] I was aware of this class because it received attention in the press, especially when Mrs. Johnson came

[3]Margaret A. Hogan, "Abigail Adams: The Life and the Biographers," in *A Companion to First Ladies*, ed. Katherine A. Sibley, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2016), 21.
[4]Lewis Gould, "Becoming a First Ladies Expert," to author, n.d.
[5]Ibid.

to talk to the students in November of that year.

In the audiotape that was made of her talk, Mrs. Johnson is more informal and wistful than normal. She started out talking about the importance of the Children's Garden she created in January of 1969, just before she left the White House. She saw it as a place where Presidents and First Ladies could relax with their grandchildren and children—a peaceful place—and mentioned her great respect for the White House and its staff. She also discussed the horrible way that she came into the first ladyship, with the assassination of John F. Kennedy in her home state. She said that although she was not prepared for the role, they came from the Hill and had a long background of knowledge, experience, training, and friends that they had worked with, and how helpful this association was to them. She went on to talk about her priorities: creating an island of peace for her husband and children and a wonderful opportunity to focus on issues she cared about, including the environment, Head Start, traveling to showcase the President's War on Poverty, and the See America program. She talked about her journalistic background with her degree from the University of Texas at Austin and how that helped to use the press to highlight her and her husband's programs and what good friends she had in the press. The most revealing part is that she talked about her moods—watching from her little dressing room in the White House the black vans and TV crews setting up and knowing that meant there was a crisis happening. She mentioned funny days at the White House, telling Lyndon she wanted to celebrate some Christmases there while he wanted to be in Texas, so they compromised. Some days, she said, were euphoric, like the day President Johnson dedicated a Job Corps Center in San Marcos, and then signed an education bill in an old one-room school he attended as a boy with his teacher having flown in for the event. She said she disliked the separate "hot line" phone in Lyndon's bedroom because when it rang, she knew there was trouble. She discussed hating "seeing the manila folders marked night reading"—which she felt were a personal enemy of hers because she knew it would keep Lyndon up late at night when she was trying to get him to sleep. She ended by saying how grateful she was to have had this experience. It gave her great faith in our country and was also a time of extraordinary progress and tremendous troubles.[6] The class was an incredible experience that Gould made possible for his students—a candid and revealing talk with a former First

[6]Lady Bird Johnson, audiotape of Mrs. Johnson talking with Professor Lewis Gould's class, November 23, 1982 (Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library).

Lady's reflections on her time in the White House. With the course and his work on Lady Bird Johnson, Gould was establishing a new academic field: First Ladies Studies.

Around 1983, Gould began his research at the LBJ Library for an essay on Mrs. Johnson that he was asked to write for Dr. Robert Divine's series on the *Johnson Years*. To help Gould in his research, the LBJ Library made the decision to start opening portions of some files. The White House Social Office Files documented Mrs. Johnson's activities as First Lady. The Beautification Files documented both the national activities she was involved in dealing with the environment, including the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, and the activities of the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. I was asked to process materials from both of these files. It was at this time that I really began working with and getting to know Gould. At the same time, I began to deal with Mrs. Johnson in answering some of Gould's questions. Mrs. Johnson was so pleased that he was researching her environmental work. As First Lady, her work had been labeled by the White House staff as "beautification," a term she disliked, "so as not to disturb" the public at a time when women were not expected to take too prominent a role on substantive issues. Gould was taking her work seriously and explaining her important legacy in environmental issues. The association with Gould and Lady Bird Johnson would lead to my lifelong passion for and study of the important work and legacies of first ladies on society and our nation. Many of the renowned researchers came in with a set expectation of what they wanted to write and looked for original resources that backed up their "theory." Gould was a patient and meticulous researcher requesting many records on Mrs. Johnson that he wanted reviewed for public availability. It was clear that he wanted the original research to be the basis of the history he would tell—that he did not have a preconceived theory. Gould would often find one item that would lead him to another, which would allow him to track down yet another item. He never left a stone unturned.

Gould found the files so substantive and voluminous that the essay led to a book on Lady Bird Johnson and her environmental efforts. He told me that a lot of his male colleagues wondered if Mrs. Johnson's efforts to beautify our nation really were significant enough for this length of a publication. He thought that attitude was indicative of how male-centric history was.

The 1984 First Ladies Conference Convened by Betty Ford

Gould's work on Lady Bird and his course on first ladies heightened interest in the topic. In July of 1983, the then Archivist of the United States, Don Wilson, began discussions with Betty Ford on a program proposal for a first ladies conference at the Ford Museum. Betty Ford was very clear about her feelings for the conference, writing that there needs to be "a 'selling' point—some purpose for holding the meeting other than "just getting 1st Ladies together . . . should not just be a couple of days of 'chit-chat.'"[7] The topic, decided by Betty Ford for the first conference ever held on first ladies, was "Modern First Ladies: Private Lives and Public Duties." The conference examined their own contributions and the many roles they had to balance as First Ladies. It was convened by Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter (Mrs. Johnson had to bow out because of illness) at the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids on April 18-20, 1984. Dr. Gould served as the keynote speaker. While I did not get to go to the conference, I did help with some of the behind scenes planning that the Archives and the Ford Library and Museum were doing.

Gould's keynote address received a standing ovation. He stressed the importance of the conference saying:

This conference is particularly timely because of the growing scholarly interest in First Ladies. After too long a neglect and no little mystery, students of the presidency and of women's history are recognizing that looking at First Ladies can offer insights and perspectives on many aspects of American history and society.[8]

In his closing, he makes a powerful statement on the significance of studying first ladies and other women's historical contributions:

History and circumstances make it necessary to evaluate First Ladies as helpmates, appendages, surrogates and partners of the presidents, but these categories should not be barriers to seeing presidential wives for what they were and are—autonomous human beings with as much claim to the attention of the student of our history as their masculine counterparts. We will only understand the past of our presidents and ourselves most fully when we grasp it in all its richness. A history that excludes First Ladies, or the contribution and lives of women generally, will be a record that is limited, false and wrong.[9]

In addition to his speech, Gould served as a moderator for two panels: one with Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter and the other with Liz Carpenter, Diane Sawyer, and Mary Hoyt. As a whole, the 1984 conference facilitated a time for emerging scholars on first ladies to meet and share ideas from what they heard. The planning committee for the

[7]Don Wilson to Mrs. Ford, July 7, 1983, folder "Gerald R. Ford Museum-First Ladies Conference (4)", Elizabeth "Betty" Ford Papers, Post-White House Files, Box 26, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
[8]Lewis Gould, First Ladies Symposium Keynote Address, April 19, 1984, Gerald R. Ford Library, 1.
[9]Lewis Gould, First Ladies Symposium Keynote Address, April 19, 1984, Gerald R. Ford Library, 12.

conference specifically set aside tickets to ensure that invitations would include some high school and college students, representatives from universities and colleges in Michigan, selected local, state, and national officials, and VIP guests including from the White House, the Senate, the Smithsonian and the National Archives.[10] In Betty Ford's opening remarks at the conference banquet, she said:

> We are the first – formal – group effort to try to bring definition to a job that has no job description . . . but has been shaped by traditional and individual preferences. We've made a good start . . . but it's just the first brush—I hope our two days together will focus future attention on what just might be one of the most demanding jobs in the Federal Government-- excepting, perhaps, the job of the First Lady's husband![11]

The National Archives responded to Betty Ford's request, and those of attendees at the conference, for more information on the papers of the First Ladies by deciding to write a book—a guide to first ladies papers— with then Archivist of the United States Don Wilson. The book's foreword explains that "an exploration of the records of first ladies will no doubt elicit diverse insight about the historical impact of these women on their times."[12] I was asked to be the co-editor of a book published by the National Archives on the documentary legacy of modern first ladies. I worked with the Presidential Libraries, the Library of Congress, and some first ladies experts to solicit essays on materials on the First Ladies at the Library of Congress and at the Presidential Libraries from Hoover through Reagan. Of course, this book could not be done without the able help and contribution of Dr. Gould, so I asked him and he readily agreed to write the introduction and afterword. The book, *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy* was published in 1989, composed of short essays on each First Lady covered in the collections, descriptions of the types of materials available, and their location.[13]

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[10]Don Wilson to President Ford, 2/10/84, folder "4/19-20/84", Elizabeth "Betty" Ford Papers, Post-White House File, Box 27, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
[11]Betty Ford, "Mrs. Ford's Remarks at First Ladies Conference Banquet, folder "4/19/84", Elizabeth "Betty" Ford Papers, Post White House File, Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
[12]Don Wilson, "Foreword," in *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy*, ed. N.K. Smith and M.C. Ryan (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1989), vii.
[13]N.K. Smith and M.C. Ryan, ed., *Modern First Ladies: Their Documentary Legacy* (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1989).

Mrs. Johnson visits Dr. Gould's First Ladies class in 1982.
Photograph courtesy of The Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum.

Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment

In 1988, Gould published his ground-breaking book, *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment,* which received outstanding reviews. Most notably, it was the first book ever on the First Lady and a substantive issue, rather than looking at her from a biographical standpoint. In the preface, Gould mentioned that he was asked by colleagues if he really felt that Mrs. Johnson's role in beautification reveals anything that was not "trivial" or "cosmetic." He responded, "on the question of importance . . . the issue itself embodies the assumption of a male-oriented history that what men do is significant and women do is less relevant and consequential."[14] Gould described in detail Lady Bird's tireless work and lobbying to get the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 passed; the efforts of her First Lady's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital for improving Washington, DC, both in public places and in the poorer urban parts of the city; and her constant championing of efforts to preserve and improve the natural beauty or our nation.

Continued Scholarship

After his book on Lady Bird, Gould branched out to study other first ladies and wives of governors. He continued his teaching, including his seminar courses on First Ladies and Lyndon Johnson, until he retired from the University of Texas at Austin in 1998. He received awards for distinguished undergraduate and graduate teaching during his career and estimates that he had more than 10,000 students in his classes.[15] He continued his pioneering work in

[14]Lewis L. Gould, *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), xi.
[15]Lewis Gould, Curriculum Vitae, n.d.

First Ladies Studies with books including *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacy*, *Helen Taft: Our Musical First Lady*, and *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Creating the Modern First Lady*. He arranged a themed issue on Modern First Ladies for the fall 1990 *Presidential Studies Quarterly* and asked me to write an article on Lady Bird Johnson.[16] Along with writing on first ladies, Gould also continued his work as a political and presidential historian writing books and teaching on topics as varied as *America in the Progressive Era,* the *Modern American Presidency*, *Theodore Roosevelt*, *The Republicans: A History of the Grand Old Party,* and *A History of the Republicans,* to name just a few. In 1998, at the suggestion of his wife, Karen Keel, a scholar in medieval art history in the 1970s to the early 1990s, he proposed and became editor of a series of books on twentieth century first ladies for the University Press of Kansas. Gould conceived the series, which grew to over 16 books, with the idea that it "serve as the first place to start about a First Lady, not be the definitive subject."[17]

Gould's Legacy

In considering Gould's legacy, I think it is interesting to look at his book *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Creating the Modern First Lady*. It was published in 2013 as part of the University Press of Kansas's twentieth century first ladies series. In his talk at the National Archives and Records Administration on November 5, 2013, Gould stated that in the absence of other authors, he decided to write the book on Edith Roosevelt for the Kansas series. The consensus theory of Edith at this time was that she was viewed as a model for first ladies, having achieved something close to sainthood. She was a wise mother of five children and a first lady with many achievements, including the hiring of the first social secretary, upgrading the White House with her renovation, and bringing many musical events to the White House. There was a well-known saying about her that she "never put a foot wrong in the White House." As Gould began his research for the book, he saw little reason to question this interpretation and had great respect for her. However, in doing his original research, he discovered facts that changed his view. Gould documented that Edith twice invited singer Mary Leech to perform at the White House, though she specialized in performing songs in a black dialect that were racist. He also found that she repeatedly used and made derogatory comments about African Americans in her letters with her second son, Kermit Roosevelt, and with Warrington Dawson, a reporter and

[16]Nancy Smith, "Private Reflections on a Public Life: The Papers on Lady Bird Johnson at the LBJ Library," *Presidential Stud Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1990): 737-744.

[17]Lewis Gould, e-mail message to author, March 24, 2024.

friend of the Roosevelts' and an avowed white supremacist and southern-born journalist. With his meticulous research, Gould concludes in his book that while Edith did many commendable things as First Lady and enlarged the role she also held beliefs that existed beyond genteel bigotry and were clearly racist. He recommends that her influence on Theodore Roosevelt and his own view and actions on race need to be explored in more detail despite Roosevelt inviting Booker T. Washington to dinner in 1901.[18] The book is one of many examples illustrative of the careful research Gould did in letting the original documents guide him in his conclusions, often changing or adding, to history.

Gould's excellence as a historian and his pioneering work in creating the field of First Ladies Studies are impressive achievements. Through his teachings and scholarship, he has shown us that the work of a true historian is seeing people in all their dimensions and that history is never finished—it is a continuing path. But most important are the countless mentorships, friendships, and the human connections he created in his long career that continue to this day. As with many of those he mentored and became friends with, I was fortunate, indeed, over fifty years ago, to have met him and benefited from his mentorship, teaching, and friendship, each of which changed my life. I have not met a first ladies' scholar who has not been influenced by Dr. Gould in some way—as have all the authors in this volume. I can only end with a sincere thank you to Lewis L. Gould for all he has done for me and so many more—to encourage and inspire us to tell the important story of U.S. First Ladies and their impact on our nation.

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[18]Lewis Gould, "Talk at the National Archives on Edith Roosevelt," (https://www.c-span.org/video/?3160631/edith-roosevelts-views-race, November 5, 2013) 5.

Mentoring from Afar

Kristie Miller

My relationship with Lew Gould began in front of a Xerox machine in the Library of Congress. I was doing research for a biography of my grandmother, Ruth Hanna McCormick, a pioneering female politician in the 1910s and 1920s. My mother had urged me to undertake this task, but I had no idea what I was doing. I knew nothing at all about women's history; it had not been taught when I was at Brown University in the mid- sixties. And I had taken only one requisite history course.

The woman standing in front of me in the Xerox line, Sally Graham, asked what I was researching. "No one you will have heard of," I said. "Ruth Hanna McCormick." "Of course I've heard of her," said Sally. "I'm researching the woman suffrage movement." Over lunch, she told me that her thesis advisor, Lew Gould at the University of Texas at Austin, would be interested in my project, and she suggested I write to him.

In due course, he answered my letter (this was long before email) and advised me that I needed to publish something in a magazine before I tried to publish a book. He recommended I try the *Illinois Historical Journal*. Hanna-McCormick had run for the Senate in that state and was the first woman to be nominated by a major party as a senatorial candidate. I sent Dr. Gould (as I was still calling him) the draft chapter of her campaign. He sent it right back. "This is narrative," he explained, "not history. You need a thesis." He put me through two rewrites until he deemed the piece ready for submission to the *Journal*. "You can tell them I said to send it," he told me. The editor accepted it and called to get my personal information.

"Where did you get your PhD?" she wanted to know. I had to explain that I had only a master's degree and that was in linguistics. A sharp intake of breath ensued. Lew's thorough coaching had led her to believe I had a doctorate in history. The book was published a few years later by the University of New Mexico Press (Hanna-McCormick had lived in Albuquerque the last ten years of her life.) The acquiring editor told me they would not have even considered the book had I not been published in the *Journal.*

I wrote Lew to thank him. "How can I repay you?" I asked. I felt he had given me, freely, what amounted to an entire correspondence course in history. "Mentor someone else," he said. He already had someone in mind. Part of

his genius has been getting his mentees to help each other.

But Lew was not done with me. “Now,” he said, “you need to write some encyclopedia articles.” He was preparing his *American First Ladies* and assigned me Grace Coolidge. That led to invitations from other editors, and I wound up writing twenty more biographical articles. Finally, he asked me to write the dual biography of Ellen Axson Wilson and Edith Galt Wilson for his series on Twentieth Century First Ladies.

Lew Gould is the embodiment of a good mentor: patient, kind, knowledgeable, creative, and seemingly tireless. I owe him more than I can say.

Dr. Lewis L. Gould: "His Heart Is in His Work"[1]

Stacy Cordery

I met Lewis L. Gould under somewhat false pretenses. Because I was a theatre major, I put off until my senior year the dreaded University of Texas requirement of two American history courses. Imagine my jubilation, then, when I discovered, in the fall of 1982, "First Ladies in U.S. History." "First Ladies," I recall thinking, "what did they ever do? This has to be a blow-off course!" My jaunty self-confidence evaporated when I entered the small seminar room to sit at the table with a dozen hardcore history majors. But very soon, a deep and abiding fascination took hold, thanks to the riveting teaching of Professor Gould. It was a metamorphic semester. I found my first archival forays—guided by Dr. Gould—so challenging and thrilling that history utterly trounced acting as my passion. That was more than forty years ago, but every day since then, for me and for my family, Lew Gould has been an irreplaceable mentor, a positive role model, a wise elder, and a very dear friend.

From Dr. Gould I learned lessons that shaped my career as a historian. They began early. He encouraged my fascination with my paper topic from the First Ladies class by allowing me to pursue it in an independent study in the spring. While I analyzed the professional relationship between Eleanor Roosevelt and a woman's club activist from Texas named Anna Pennybacker, Gould taught me about historical empathy decades before it became a disciplinary buzzword. I doubt that he knows what an impression this gentle instruction made on me. In the independent study paper, I had spent a not inconsiderable number of sentences describing Pennybacker's slow decline into poor health: her growing physical fragility, her often-voiced frustration with her own worsening mental acuity, and her diet, so circumscribed that at the end she existed principally on goat's milk. Dr. Gould peered at me over the top of the last page of my paper. His face took on a look of compassion, aimed equally at Mrs. Pennybacker and my own jejune self. Not every detail, he said, required telling. Fine historians know how to maintain their subject's dignity while remaining true to the historical record. How, he asked me, did these bleak particulars add to

[1]"Every man is proud of what he does well; and no man is proud of what he does not do well. With the former, his heart is in his work; and he will do twice as much of it with less fatigue. The latter performs a little imperfectly, looks at it in disgust, turns from it, and imagines himself exceedingly tired. The little he has done, comes to nothing, for want of finishing." From a speech before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 30 September 1859, by Abraham Lincoln (Dr. Gould's favorite president).

the tale I was telling about the relationship between two accomplished women? At that moment, I saw that it was possible in history, as in life, to divulge too much. To ruin the story, but worse, to write what could cause shame—to the author. Every historian must select carefully from more information than can ever be published. I learned as an undergraduate that there are times when she writes most who writes least.

This he practiced himself. In what I still consider to be a paragraph of masterful understatement, Gould explained lucidly why his *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady* would not stray from her substantive policy efforts:

> Yet Lyndon Johnson has a reputation as a man who was, at intervals during his marriage, unfaithful to his wife. He is supposed to have had an affair with Alice Glass Marsh between 1938 and 1941; and one other involvement is depicted as having shaped his presidential plans in 1960. Talk about additional relationships with the wives of aides and friends drift across his life at other times. Extramarital romances are easy to believe but, by their nature, hard to document. Mrs. Johnson seems to have taken the position that her husband's dalliances, if any, were inherently temporary. Patience and calm were the best answer to any rival. "In her realm," Nancy Dickerson observed, "she had no peer; she knew it, he knew it, and so did everybody else." How long it took and how painful a process it was to reach this degree of self-assurance no one but Lady Bird Johnson will ever know. In the absence of credible documentation, such matters are perhaps best left to the "confidential sources" and "anonymous informants" from whence they usually come. The evolution of Mrs. Johnson's character as a wife and public figure emerges clearly enough without them.[2]

Dr. Gould told me that I thought like a historian. Thus emboldened, I drove from Austin to Bloomington to enter the doctoral program in Theatre History. Alas, my advisor-to-be at Indiana University had left for Europe a fortnight earlier, taking my funding with him. Dr. Gould then threw me a burnt orange lifeline by inviting me to apply for the Ph.D. program at UT. He formally became my doctoral advisor. I could not have been more fortunate. Chief among the many important lessons he taught his graduate students was that a rising tide floats all boats. In what can be a cutthroat, angst-ridden time of feeling as though the goal you are desperately trying to achieve is receding daily, one's dissertation director can either be a bully or a coach. Throwing his weight around and encouraging competition among his students was not Lew's way. From the very start, he urged us to learn about each other's topics, so that we could share any research that might be of value to our colleagues. And then he modeled how that worked through his own liberality, distributing sources, ideas, and support of every kind.

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[2] Lewis L. Gould, *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999

The book that established my trajectory as an author happened for two reasons. First, Lew suggested the topic of Alice Roosevelt Longworth, because he knew that Blanche Wiesen Cook had already embarked upon her three-volume biography of my initial subject, Eleanor Roosevelt. And second, because another of Lew's graduate students, Sally Hunter Graham, took Lew's advice to heart. At the Library of Congress, she struck up a conversation with another researcher. Somehow, their discussion wound its way around to my topic, and the other scholar, Kristie Miller, turned out to be the best friend of Longworth's granddaughter. From that grew my treasured friendship with Miller, access to the exceptionally generous granddaughter and the documents in her basement, and the first of three books with Viking/Penguin. Had Sally Graham been schooled by the type of professor who believed that graduate student survival depended upon ruthless rivalry, rather than by Lew Gould, who taught us that collegiality and cooperation get everyone to the finish line, humanity intact, my entire life would have been much different.

Dr. Gould recommended me for my first teaching job, and when it was offered, told me that my dissertation would not conclude as planned with Alice Roosevelt Longworth's death in 1980. Instead, it would end in 1906 when she left the White House, because that enabled me to sail into that visiting assistant professor position Ph.D. in hand. Best. Advice. Ever. There are many doctoral advisors who seem to hold on to their students for years and years. Dr. Gould kept his eyes—and mine—on the prize: a completed degree and a real job.

Another lesson connected to writing and circumspection was driven home with the publication of his *Grand Old Party: A History of the Republicans*. If I could distill Lew Gould's teachings down to three maxims, they might be these: 1) employ diligent, extensive, wide-ranging, creative, and honest research; 2) apply unflinching analysis, especially when the research fails to fit one's preconceived notions; and 3) always attempt scrupulous objectivity. When his *Grand Old Party* came out in 2003, I had no idea what his personal politics were, despite having known him for two decades. From his Introduction I learned why. He believed, and wrote, "that it is possible for scholars to write fairly about all aspects of American politics."[3] His philosophy as a historian was his philosophy as a person: "In the case of politicians of any party, it is most fruitful to assume a basic sincerity of their views, to believe that they meant what they said about policy issues, and to judge them by their actions and outcomes, rather than by their assumed motives.

[3]Lewis L. Gould *Grand Old Party: A History of the Republicans* (Oxford University Press, 2014), x.

Naturally, Republicans and Democrats often fall short of their ideals, but working on the premise that they identified with their stated positions is the most revealing and informative way to proceed."[4] To assume that others try, without deliberate mendacity or mean ness, to do their best—until proven otherwise—I have learned from Lew, is a recipe for a happy life free of paranoia, suspicion, and a ceaseless and wearying vigilance for hidden ugliness.

His own approach to research proved exceptionally productive. "If you write five hundred words a day, you'll have a book in well under a year," he has always told me. Before his retirement in 1998 as the Eugene C. Barker a Centennial Professor Emeritus in American History at UT, he wrote twenty-two books, co-authored five more, edited seven and co-edited two—and that's not counting articles and all the other shorter essays he has written in his long career. Furthermore, his classroom teaching—particularly his recapitulation of William Jennings Bryan's Cross of Gold speech—routinely drew applause from students. This I know firsthand.

My record is not remotely close, but Lew has never compared, never questioned, never insinuated, never done anything but help me accomplish what I have wanted to do and then led the celebration of every achievement! Lest there be any doubt of the longevity of his support, it was Lew, with his wonderful wife Jeanne Robeson, who suggested the topic for my latest book, *Becoming Elizabeth Arden: The Woman Behind the Global Beauty Empire*. Arden was neither a politician nor the First Lady, and the bulk of her career happened beyond the Progressive Era. I find it inspirational that Lew's own scholarship ranges widely, and includes many different topics grounded in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era political history he learned at Brown University and at Yale. He also wrote a book about his father, *New York Times* journalist Jack Gould, one about a photojournalist named Jimmy Hare, one on the 1968 presidential election, one about a Civil War soldier, another on an influential female Texan. And of course, as the essays in this FLARE monograph attest, he founded the field of First Ladies Studies. Dr. Gould was never interested in making "mini me's" out of his graduate students. He wanted us all to discover what would make us happy, and then offered us sources, advice, and cheerleading.

When I sailed into that First Ladies course in the fall of 1982, I did not know it was the first such class ever offered anywhere on the History of First Ladies. I did not know that I was present at the birth as Lew Gould created

[4] Ibid.

a new field of scholarship. I certainly did not know that he had never taught a blow-off course! And I never could have guessed that Dr. Lewis L. Gould would change my life so thoroughly and so positively. My esteem for him is matched only by my gratitude.

Epilogue

How I Became a First Ladies Scholar: A Reflection

Lewis L. Gould

How did I become the answer to the historical question of who taught the first college course on first ladies? The class began by accident, but the realization that first ladies deserved such a course had deeper roots.

In the early 1980s, I was a typical male political historian writing about men. At that time in my research, I was immersed in the rivalry between Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft that led to the Republican rupture in the election of 1912. I decided that the tension and animosity between Edith Roosevelt and Helen Taft was a large element in the ultimate break. The more I considered the influence of the two spouses, the sharper their role became, until it became clear to me that I had to treat these women as independent and autonomous persons doing their own things. That was a dramatic shift for me, and it set the stage for the first first ladies course.

I was in my second year as chair of the History Department at The University of Texas at Austin, in the autumn of 1981. Because of my administrative duties, I only had to teach one course in the first semester of 1982-1983. I had to have a course description ready for pre-registration before the Spring 1982 semester. What to teach? Not the large lecture section of the American History survey course with 300-500 students that I had taught since coming to Austin in 1967. Too time consuming for a busy chair. The upper division course on the Gilded Age and Progressive Era with over one hundred students would not work either. A small honors seminar for undergraduates numbered History 350L would be just the thing. And since I believed first ladies required serious inquiry, I considered a seminar under the title "First Ladies of the Progressive Era." Immediately, a problem arose: Mrs. Roosevelt, Mrs. Taft, and the two wives of Woodrow Wilson would leave me ten or eleven weeks short in the semester.

I looked at the list of twentieth century First Ladies from Florence Harding to Rosalynn Carter. Since Nancy Reagan was in the midst of her service, I ruled her out for lack of historical perspective. If I put the Wilson women in a single week, I came up with fifteen weeks. There I had a potential course. I called it "First Ladies of the Twentieth

Century" and submitted it for the Fall of 1982. The very efficient University of Texas News and Information Service issued a news release. Even before I had done more than preliminary research, I found myself in demand for media interviews and comments. I took advantage of a visit to friends in Kansas City in the summer of 1982 to seek out primary sources at the Truman Library.

Students had to get my permission to take the course. I followed a policy of first come, first served. One young student who came to the History Office was a senior who had earlier transferred from Indiana University as a theatre major. She had to fulfill the legislative requirement to take six hours of American History. Stacy Rozek, now Cordery, thought that a course on first ladies would be the way to discharge this requirement. She tells it better than I can.

This was a heady time to be at UT. We were laying grand plans to celebrate our centennial. Don Carleton, the new director of the University's Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, was gathering manuscript collections with his customary dedication and energy. Nearing a decade after his death, Lyndon Johnson was an exciting subject for fresh historical research then. My colleague, Robert A. Divine, was editing a series of books on "Exploring the Johnson Years." He invited me to go to the LBJ Library and see what might be there about Lady Bird Johnson. I did so and found there were seventeen boxes on her beautification work alone. I soon concluded I had enough for an article or two and probably a book.

Forty years on I remember only two things about that first seminar. I had learned during research for a previous book that a manuscript collection in the archives seemed to have numerous letters from Eleanor Roosevelt. I urged Stacy Rozek to verify how many were there. She did so with speed and efficiency, reporting back that there were hundreds of such missives. I knew I had met a student with a rare talent as she has abundantly proved. She is only one of now many able scholars who study first ladies.

Second, I had met Mrs. Johnson when she had been a guest in one of my other classes, so I got up the nerve to ask her to attend the seminar. I was pushing on an open door. Her 70th birthday would be that December, and she was in the midst of establishing what would become her National Wildflower Research Center. Happily, publicity would help both of us. Just before Thanksgiving, Lady Bird Johnson appeared. She was not alone! Trailing her Secret Service detail were camera men from the LBJ Presidential Library and eager reporters from the CBS Sunday Morning News. Strangers had been calling to ask if "just this once," they could attend! I declined, but I was beginning to glimpse a little of what life in the spotlight entailed for these women.

Our part in the CBS Sunday morning news was reduced to about ten seconds. As I told my mother on the West Coast, "do not blink or you will miss it."

Not long after, I received a phone call from the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. Betty Ford planned to host a conference on First Ladies and First Families in April 1984. Would I like to be considered as the keynote speaker? I learned that the Ford people had called around to presidential libraries looking for a first ladies scholar. When they reached the LBJ Library, there I was. From Grand Rapids, the concerned Ford staff wondered whether I could handle an audience of several hundred people. Since I had been lecturing to 500 undergraduates for many years, I told them I thought I could handle it.

The Ford Conference was a wonderful experience. I recall it as a hectic time with speeches and discussions and talks among a band of emerging first ladies scholars. It instilled a sense of common purpose that has never ended. I send my best wishes to friends who met for the 40th anniversary of that wonderful time in April of 2024.

A final, but important few words of thanks to conclude. The University of Texas at Austin was a special place to teach from 1967 to 1998, as these former students reveal. The LBJ Library had an excellent staff who made research and teaching classes there a treat. My late wife, Karen Keel Gould, had the idea for the Modern First Ladies biographies with the University Press of Kansas in 1998, a series that pulled together a wonderful group of writers from various fields who set a high standard of research and scholarship. And now, in my retirement, Jeanne Robeson sustained me while I called up these memories.

Dr. Gould moderates a session about the First Ladies and the Media with Liz Carpenter, Diane Sawyer, and Mary Hoyt at the "Modern First Ladies: Private Lives and Public Duties" conference in 1984.
Photograph courtesy of The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum.

Journal of First Ladies Studies

Call for Papers

The First Ladies Association for Research and Education (FLARE) invites submissions to a new e-journal, *FLARE's Journal of First Ladies Studies*, which is scheduled for launch early in 2026. The journal welcomes scholarly submissions on any aspect of the study of first ladies, including work that examines them within a historical context, adopts a comparative perspective, presents a theoretical approach, or offers an interdisciplinary framework for analysis in fields such as communication, history, women's studies, sociology, political science, material culture, and historic preservation.

Inquiries about potential articles in the journal should be directed to the journal's editor, Christopher J. Leahy, Professor of History at Keuka College, at cleahy@keuka.edu.

Submission Guide:

Please submit article manuscripts by email, as a Microsoft Word-compatible attachment:

- The preferred manuscript length is 4,000 to 8,000 words, exclusive of endnotes.
- Please use 12-point type for both text and notes.
- Double-space text and notes, with notes placed at the end of the manuscript text.
- Author's name and institutional affiliation should be placed on the title page only.
- Illustrations or figures that enhance the article are welcome.
- Please follow the Chicago Manual of Style.
- Please include a working postal address, with telephone and email information for home or office.

The refereeing process for manuscripts is double blind. Referees are specialists most appropriate to each manuscript. We have no quotas of any kind with regard to authorship, topic, chronological period, or methodology; submissions determine what we publish. Authors must guarantee in writing that the work is original, that it has not been previously published, and that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere in **any** form.

Our Mission

The mission of FLARE is to create and sustain a network to promote and publicize research and education relevant to the contributions, lives, impacts, and lasting legacies of U.S. First Ladies.

https://flare-net.org

FLARE is a 501(c)(3) educational organization.