

**Ginny Thornburgh's Mother's Day speech, Valley Forge
Military Academy, May 8, 1983 (07:55)**

>> Ginny: It is altogether fitting that General Pearson should have invited a mom to speak on Mother's Day, the first mom of Pennsylvania. I am a mom of four sons, and it is a joyful and very rewarding task to have raised them. But what General Pearson doesn't know about me is that I'm a daughter of a World War I marine, and to feel the patriotism and love of country and high moral standards in this room makes me very proud and would make my father very proud. I am also, General Pearson, the niece of Major General Frank McCoy, whom you may have studied in your military studies, who was a soldier-diplomat during World War I and World War II. And I am the great niece of General Leonard Wood, another great servant of this nation. Those are my credentials.

I have mixed feelings about Mother's Day, and you may, also. A part of me feels that it's just the creation of the greeting-card industry and the florist industry and the candymakers. Even the diamond merchants, I suppose. In looking through the newspapers this week, I came across some mom's ads, and I'll share them with you. The first said, "May 8th belongs to mother." The second one -- "I love you, Mom. Affordable treasures. She's worth it." The third one -- "Enjoy Mother's Day dinner in elegance." And this one -- "Make mom's day special with a Mr. America Waist Trimmer and Back Support Belt."

[Laughter]

Well, my fine sons know that those kinds of things have nothing to do with me or my life, and I would suspect you feel the same way, too, for what is significant and rewarding and difficult is the raising of sons and the loving of sons, not the presents that are accompanying that. Just as long as my sons love me and are man enough to show it, then my life will be content.

I think we also have mixed feelings about mothers, if we are honest about it. There's a general attitude abroad that mother's are sort of the best and the worst of the lot, and you can't live with them, and you can't live without them. I understand these feelings because my mother is living, and I have mixed feelings about that, also. In my opinion, these mixed feelings come from an embarrassment of our own dependence -- dependence on our mothers for food, clothing, shelter, and security -- and our embarrassment that anyone or anything can be that essential to us. You and I prefer to think of ourselves as self-sufficient, and our mothers constantly and daily remind us that we would not even be were it

not for them. There's a beloved song that my father used to sing and some of you know well. My sons have asked me not to sing it this morning, but I'll review the words. I'll speak the words. And the title of the song is "Mother." "'M' is for the million things she gave me. 'O' is for 'She's only growing old.'" Now, that's -- Not many of want to talk about that. "'T' is for the tears she shed to save me. 'H' is for her loving heart of gold. 'E' is for her everlasting kindness. 'R' is 'right,' and right she'll always be. Put them all together, they spell 'mother,' a word that means the world to me." Somehow that song just doesn't capture the essence of my mom or, I hope, of me or of your mother. It is heavy and burdensome and oppressive and non dynamic. It is especially offensive to me the line "'Right,' and right she'll always be." Who wants to hang around someone who's right all the time?

[Light laughter]

Or who wants to be a mother if that's the job description? What mothers are, at their best, is an embodiment of love -- unconditional, nonjudgmental love, love available in times of pain as well as joy. This kind of love is never heavy, never burdensome, and never oppressive. It is the most dynamic and creative force in existence. Listen to St. Paul speak of love. "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful. It is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

What, then, can you and I say or ever say to thank our mothers? What, then, can you and I ever do or say to thank God for creating this force for good, which is best embodied in our mothers? There are a few simple things we can do, and they take very little time. The first is to listen. Just listen. Really listen to your mother. Don't listen passively and with a painfully bored face. Listen actively, believing, as I do, that you owe that to your mother and that she's probably going to say something worthwhile if you're going to be willing to admit it. Listen and then give. Give of yourself. Not gifts. Give of you. Give freely and cheerfully. You know what I'm talking about. Those phone calls that I've had with my sons or you've had with your mom, when the mom does all the talking, and you do the grunting -- the "uhh-uhh," the "huh-uhh." That's not giving. That's not sharing your life. That's not allowing her to know of you, know who you are, and what you feel about and what you're experiences have been. You can uphold your end of the conversation and you uphold your end of life better than that. Listen, give, and lastly say. Say, some simple things

to your mother. It won't hurt to say them. Won't cost a thing. Truly confident people can say these things with ease and with grace. Try them today. Try saying today to your mother, "I was wrong." Or try saying, "I'm sorry." Try saying, "Thanks." Try saying, "I love you."