

# A Woman's Influence

(Excerpt from "WOMEN: America's Last Best Hope")



Pat Tillman was a professional football player who gave up a three-year, \$3.6 million contract with the Arizona Cardinals of the National Football League to enlist in the Army. Pat and his brother Kevin both joined the Army Special Forces right after 9-11. Several media outlets approached the brothers requesting to cover their basic training and deployments but Pat and Kevin wanted no special treatment or attention. They told the Army they wanted to be considered soldiers doing their duty, no more, no less. That in and of itself is remarkable, but Pat Tillman was a remarkable young man.

Pat's former coach, Dave McGinnis, said, *"Pat knew his purpose in life. He proudly walked away from a career in football to a greater calling."*<sup>1</sup>

Pat's agent, Frank Bauer, said he was a deep and clear thinker who never valued material things. In fact, in 2001 Pat turned down a \$9 million, five-year offer sheet from the Super Bowl champions, the St. Louis Rams, out of loyalty to the Cardinals, and by joining the Army, he passed on millions of dollars more.

Michael Bidwill, vice president of the Cardinals said, “*He was a brave man. There are very few people who have the courage to do what he did, the courage to walk away from a professional sports career and make the ultimate sacrifice.*”<sup>2</sup> He then stated, “*He is a hero.*” I think America would agree. I was, like so many other Americans, completely inspired by Pat Tillman’s story. And while the media continued to run the story and lauded Pat Tillman as a hero, one thought kept coming to my mind—he must have an amazing mother.

I guess everyone has heroes and people that we admire. I’m sure Pat Tillman had many people in his life that influenced and inspired him but I know his mother had to have been one of the greatest influences in his life because I know the power of a mother’s love and I know how much *my* mother influenced me.

When I was about 7-years-old I came into the house after playing outside to get something from my room. As I reached my bedroom door, I heard someone talking softly in my mother’s room down the hall. I went closer to see who it was and there was my mother on her knees, beside her bed, praying. I will never forget that sight as long as I live.

We had prayed together often as a family but I had never seen my mother praying alone before. Later that evening I told my mom I had seen her praying and asked her if she does that a lot.

“Everyday,” she answered. “Sometimes several times a day.”

I remember thinking that seemed like a lot of praying and felt sure I would have run out of things to say. Then I looked up at my mom. “What do you pray about?” I asked.

“Well,” she said, “I pray for you and your sisters. I pray for your dad. I pray for our neighbor who lives alone. I pray that God will help me be a better person. I pray for a lot of things.”

“Wow,” I said. “I didn’t know there were that many things to pray about.”

My mother smiled and hugged me then I went back outside to play with my friends. It was just a quick conversation but my mother’s words left a lasting impression on me. “I pray for you.” *My mother prayed for me.* Even at a young age, that meant a lot to me. And as I grew older, when I was in a tough spot, struggling on a test or faced with a difficult decision, I would remember my mother was praying for me and somehow, it gave me courage. It reminds me of something Abraham Lincoln once said about his mother. “*I remember my mother’s prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life.*”

That’s just how I feel. My mother’s prayers have clung to me all my life. They still carry me on. My mother was such an incredible influence in my life. A mother’s influence is a powerful thing. George Washington said, “*My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her.*” What an endorsement that is!

Abraham Lincoln gives further credit to *his* mother's influence. “*All that I am or ever hope to be I owe to my angel Mother.*”

Napoleon Bonaparte gave substantial credit to the influence of women when he proclaimed, “*Let France have good mothers, and she will have good sons.*” And Oliver Wendall Holmes credited a woman's influence when he stated, “*The real religion of the world comes from women much more than from men – from mothers most of all, who carry the key of our souls in their bosoms.*”

The greatest influence we have on this nation is through the rearing and nurturing of our own children. After all, who was it that taught George Washington? Who was it that inspired Abraham Lincoln? And who was it that raised Pat Tillman to have such pride in his country that he would give up so much to fight for it? It was their mothers. It is women who are the greatest influence in America and it has always been so from the very foundation of our nation.

Feminists have done a good job of convincing the people of America that the women who lived prior to the foundation of N.O.W. were oppressed, downtrodden little weaklings that had absolutely no say in anything. They give you the impression that women during the American Revolution were just pathetic bystanders, abused by their husbands, the system, and a cruel sexist world. This is how our history textbooks portray the women of the Revolution. We are told the women were purposely left out of the process but I want to assure you that none of that is true. In fact, it couldn't be further from the truth.

The women of the Revolution were strong, committed and resilient, not downtrodden weaklings. Our founding mothers have been completely misrepresented in the feminist version of American History. The sacrifices and selfless contributions of women in the founding of this great nation have been completely ignored.

Isabelle Katz Pinzler, special counsel for the National Organization for Women writes “Last week we celebrated the Declaration of Independence in which the Founding Fathers observed that ‘all men are created equal.’ Let's pray that we are not headed back to a time when that was understood to mean only men.”<sup>3</sup>

Feminists consistently use statements like these to discredit our founders but the truth is women were an incredible influence in the founding of America. It is said that behind every good man is a good woman. Well, our Founding Fathers were *great* men and right beside them, stood *outstanding* women! Within America's founders were some of the greatest women who ever lived on American soil. They were the mothers, the homemakers, the patriots who forged this nation with their sacrifices, their devotion, and their insurmountable influence—especially in their own homes.

The wives of the founders were in the fight for freedom just as much as their husbands. And since it was the mothers of the founders who instilled in

them the idea of all men being created equal, they certainly wouldn't have written themselves right out of the process. In fact if it were not for the women joining the fight for independence, the struggle would have been in vain.

The women of the Revolution were equal to their husbands in so many ways. They were treated with utmost respect—honored and revered by their husbands and their children. Benjamin Rush, one of our Founding Fathers, attested to this when he stated, *“The women of America have at last become principals in the glorious American controversy. Their opinions alone and their transcendent influence in society and families must lead us on to success and victory.”*<sup>4</sup>

The women of the Revolution weren't left out. They have never been left out. Women have been and always will be a prominent and significant part of our nation's history. The women of America played a vital role in the founding of this great country. The influence these women had in their homes alone was enough to move a nation. But their participation in the American Legacy didn't stop there. Their contributions had such a far reaching impact that they influenced our nation for years to come.

## *Abigail Adams*

Abigail Adams is a perfect example. The influence she had in her home not only raised patriots, it led to the sixth president of the United States—John Quincy Adams.



In 1775 as war raged around her Boston home, Abigail courageously cared for her young family alone while her husband was away, serving his country. Her son, John Quincy, later spoke of this time as *“the space of twelve months (in which) my mother, with her infant children, dwelt, liable every hour of the day and the night, to be butchered in cold blood.”*<sup>5</sup>

You see, the Founding Fathers weren't the only ones who made sacrifices and suffered losses. When the signers of the Declaration of Independence put their names on that historic document, they pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor but their wives and children were just as vulnerable to British persecution as they were. These men wouldn't have made such a life altering decision without consulting their wives and families. These women knew what signing that document meant. It was their lives, fortunes and sacred honors on the line just as much as their husbands'. They knew the sacrifice and they stood by their husbands.

Revolution, freedom, independence—these were all common subjects of discussion in colonial America. It was discussed at the dinner table, in the fields and in the churches. These men and women didn't walk into the war for independence lightly. They knew what they were up against and they knew what it would cost. The wives of the signers knew very well what they were getting into and they encouraged their husbands to do their duty, knowing the danger it would put them in and the sacrifices they would have to make.

Many of the women of that time were Quakers and Christians who were adamantly opposed to war. And yet, they realized this battle was not only inevitable, it was divinely directed. John Quincy spoke of just such a situation in his own family. He recalled, *"My mother was the daughter of a Christian clergyman, and therefore bred in the faith of deliberate detestation of War... Yet, in that same spring and summer of 1775, she taught me to repeat daily, after the Lord's Prayer, and before rising from bed, the Ode of Collins on the patriot warriors."<sup>6</sup>*

Abigail instilled a love of God and Country in her children. She stood courageously against the evils of her day, and supported her husband all throughout his long life of public service. Abigail was a strong supporter of the battle for Independence. She frequently opened her home as a headquarters for the Minutemen and even offered her own pewter spoons to the troops to convert into bullets. Her son spoke of this experience saying there were *"some dozen or two of pewter spoons; and I well recollect going into the kitchen and seeing some of the men engaged in running those spoons into bullets for the use of the troops! Do you wonder that a boy of seven years of age, who witnessed this scene, should be a patriot?"<sup>7</sup>*

I certainly don't. Abigail had considerable influence on our nation in great part because of the effect she had in her own home. She is a perfect example of the far-reaching impact and influence of the American homemaker showing great courage through all her service and sacrifice. Abigail, like so many of the wives of the patriots, was left much of the time to care for her home and family on her own. From 1774 to 1778 Abigail rarely saw her husband due to his public service.

During that time Abigail was faced with the mounting pressures of war and had to bear many difficult challenges without the comfort and support of her husband. Disease fell on the small town where Abigail's family lived and she and her family became infected with it. While Abigail was still recovering from illness herself, she opened her home as a hospital for the sick. So many people had been infected with the disease that Abigail had a difficult time finding a well person to look after the sick. Her mother died from the illness and her youngest son was on the edge of death himself. Abigail spent several days and nights tirelessly nursing him back to health. Her devoted care saved her son's life.

Abigail had a thirst for knowledge and was a fluent writer. She loved reading and was determined to educate herself by reading a multitude of books in poetry, drama, history, theology, and political theory. She also taught herself and her children how to speak and read French which came in very handy when her husband was asked to serve as Ambassador to France.

Abigail Adams was a remarkable woman who lived an epic life in the most significant time in American history. The contributions she made to this nation were given in love and devotion for her husband, her home, her children and her beloved America. But Abigail is just one example of the great American women who helped build this nation. There were so many remarkable women of that era. Martha Washington is another excellent example.

## *Martha Washington*

During the years of battle with the Revolutionary War, Martha spent each winter at her husband's encampment. She occupied much of her time repairing the soldiers' clothes, darning their socks and visiting with the soldiers, especially those who were sick or wounded. Each year she remained at the camp until the spring battles began again. Martha was known for her cheerful nature and was a great comfort to her husband and his men as well as an example to the wives of the other soldiers. She told them, *"Whilst our husbands and brothers are examples of patriotism, we must be patterns of industry."*<sup>8</sup>

One of the officers at the camp said of Martha, *"She reminded me of the Roman matrons of whom I had read so much, I thought that she well deserved to be the companion and friend of the greatest man of the age."*<sup>9</sup>

One of the high society ladies of the day said of Mrs. Washington, *"She seems very wise in experience, kind-hearted and winning in all her ways. She talked much of the suffering of the poor soldiers, especially of the sick ones. Her heart seemed to be full of compassion for them."*<sup>10</sup>

Edmund Pendleton had the privilege of meeting Mrs. Washington when he traveled with her husband to the Second Continental Congress. He later remarked of the meeting, *"She seemed ready to make any sacrifice, and was very cheerful, though I know she felt very anxious. She talked like a Spartan mother to her son going to battle. 'I hope you stand firm—I know George will,'*



*she said. When we set off in the morning, she stood in the door and cheered us with good words. 'God be with you, gentlemen.'"<sup>11</sup>*

Martha stood by her husband through all his service, supporting him and often, courageously cheering him on. She once said of her husband, "*I cannot blame him for having acted according to his ideas of duty in obeying the voice of his country.*"<sup>12</sup>

Martha was not at all interested in public life, and yet, because of her husband's service, she was continuously thrust into it and she handled each challenge with grace and flare. After becoming First Lady, Mrs. Washington went to great lengths to assure that the receptions and events held in the Capitol were worthy of the highest European court. She wanted our new country to be respected and she achieved her purpose.

Martha took little satisfaction in "*formal compliments and empty ceremonies*" and declared that "*I am fond of only what comes from the heart.*" Abigail Adams, who sat at her right during parties and receptions, praised her as "*one of those unassuming characters, which create Love and Esteem.*"<sup>13</sup>

Though Martha suffered much pain and disappointment, including the loss of every one of her children, she remained strong and kept a cheerful disposition. She once told a family member, "*I am still determined to be cheerful and happy, in whatever situation I may be; for I have also learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon our circumstances.*"<sup>14</sup>

That is the heart of a real woman. It is certainly not the kind of woman feminists have portrayed in their bleak stories of the sad, downtrodden women. I wish feminists would learn from the dedication, commitment, sacrifice and good nature of women like Martha and Abigail. Our nation would be a much happier place if they would. But Martha and Abigail are just two examples of the courageous women of the time. There are so many more. Some of them may not be as prevalent in your mind, but their influence and contributions were immeasurable. They were the women who stood at the foundation of this nation and we could not have become a nation without them. Here are the stories of just a few of them.

## *Laura Collins Wolcott*

Laura Collins Wolcott was the wife of Oliver Wolcott—a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Oliver was very much involved in public service, which left Laura to care for their home and family. During much of their married life, almost the entire burden of directing Oliver's home and affairs rested on the shoulders of his wife. Laura managed the family farm, educated

their children and governed the home so that Oliver could devote his energies to public service. In a letter to Laura, Oliver wrote, “*I only wish that the cares which oppress you were less.*”<sup>15</sup>

Oliver loved his wife dearly and wrote her often expressing his concerns for her and the family. It reminds me of all the e-mails of encouragement my husband sends me while he is away serving our country in Iraq. I have such admiration for women like Laura because I know what is like to be left behind and carry the burden of the family, the home and finances while your husband is away in service to his country. But I also understand her commitment and dedication to the cause because I feel as duty bound as my husband to serve our country and as hard as the separation is, I proudly and humbly accept the responsibility because I love America and all she stands for just as much as Laura Wolcott did. I make the sacrifice for the same reason she did—so that our children—and our children’s children—can have the same blessings of liberty that we have and so they too can live in a nation where we are free. And with that hope, all the sacrifices are worth it. So the very thought that our textbooks make women like Laura out to be pathetic little house slaves, barefoot and pregnant, infuriates me. That’s just not who these women were. And once you get to know them you will realize just how capable, instrumental and influential they were.

## *Eliza Adams*

Eliza Adams, for instance, was the second wife of Samuel Adams. Samuel devoted almost all his time to public affairs and left very little time for providing financially for his home and family. Eliza supported her husband in all his service even when they lived with meager means. They were never wealthy as some Founding Families were, but they always seemed to have enough for their needs. One biographer stated, “*For years now, Samuel Adams had laid aside all pretence of private business and was devoted simply and solely to public affairs. His wife, like himself, was contented with poverty; through good management, in spite of their narrow means, a comfortable home life was maintained in which the children grew up happy and in every way well trained and cared for.*”<sup>16</sup>

Sam and Elizabeth Adams and their children, including a son who was imprisoned, sacrificed and suffered much for the cause of freedom. Even the family dog, a big Newfoundland named Queue, got involved in the War. Queue was “cut and shot in several places” by British soldiers, because every time a red uniform passed by the Adams farm Queue viciously attacked. As Eliza Adams’s biographer wrote: “[Queue] had a vast antipathy for the British uniform . . . and bore to his grave honorable scars from his fierce encounters.”<sup>17</sup>

In a time when many people spoke against slavery but were constrained by laws that forbade them from freeing slaves, Samuel and Eliza Adams courageously stood for what they knew was right urging everyone to free any and all slaves, and then set the example by promptly freeing all slaves the moment they came into possession of them. John Adams wrote of his cousin, “*... Samuel Adams . . . never planned, laid a scheme or formed a design of laying up anything for himself . . . The case of Samuel Adams is almost without a parallel as an instance of enthusiastic, unswerving devotion to public service throughout a long life.*”<sup>18</sup> And Eliza, unwavering, stood with him. What an amazing woman!

## *Sarah Clark*

Sarah Clark is another example. She was the wife of Abraham Clark who was also known as “the poor man’s lawyer” because of his habit of service without pay. (You don’t see *that* much today.) Though he started out as a poor farmer, his reading and study made him prominent and he was elected to Congress and signed the Declaration of Independence with the New Jersey delegation. All the signers of the Declaration of Independence were threatened and hunted by the British but Sarah and Abraham paid an especially cruel price for their commitment to freedom.

The British captured two of their sons who were serving under Washington; 25-year-old Thomas and their young teenage son Isaac. The British threw the young men into a prison ship in the harbor. They then informed Abraham Clark that his sons would not be given food until he publicly recanted his signature on the Declaration of Independence.

Abraham gladly offered his life, his freedom and all his possessions, but they were not accepted. The British demanded that he recant his allegiance and support for independence or his sons would slowly starve. Abraham and Sarah determined that they could give up their lives and their fortune, but they simply could not give away their sacred honor—even to save the lives of their dear sons. Abraham never signed the recantation. I can just envision Sarah Clark sitting in complete despair, utterly torn over the circumstances that lay before her. And Abraham, by her side—equally distraught, comforting her. We just have no idea of the sacrifices these women made.

When word came to Congress of the mistreatment of the Clark boys, they sent a notice to the British fleet stating that if the mistreatment of American prisoners continued, British captives would start being treated in the same manner. The British treatment of prisoners improved after that and Sarah’s sons were eventually released alive and well.

## *Lydia Darrah*

Lydia Darrah was a homemaker and Quaker woman who single-handedly saved Washington's army from ambush. Lydia's home was used by the British army to house their officers.



One night, one of the British officers who was stationed in her house ordered Lydia to see that her family was in bed and asleep by a certain hour, and to admit General Howe very quietly. She was to show the General to the officer's apartment and then be ready to show him out just as quietly when he was ready to go.

Lydia was suspicious and felt there might be some treacherous act in place. So, after General Howe was safely in the officer's apartment, Lydia took off her shoes, crept softly upstairs, and listened at the keyhole. There she heard the two men plan to surprise Washington and take his whole army. Lydia slipped away from the door and went, trembling back to her room.

The next day, Lydia got a pass from General Howe to go to the mill and get some flour ground. The mill was outside the lines of the British army in Philadelphia. Lydia carried her bag for twenty-five miles walking straight to the outposts of the patriot army where she met an American officer and told him of General Howe's plans.

When General Howe's army reached White Marsh to surprise Washington's army, they found the American army so well prepared to receive them that they turned around and marched right back again, without striking a blow. Lydia Darrah's heroic act saved the entire colonial army.

## *Sybil Ludington*

Sybil Ludington, known as the female Paul Revere was the teenage daughter of a Colonial officer.

When the British invaded Danbury, Connecticut, Sybil voluntarily rode deep into the night throughout the countryside on horseback to warn her neighbors the British were coming.

The Colonists held back the British and they never did make it to Putnam County because of the alert that was sent out by Sybil's midnight ride.

Another remarkable woman of the time was Penelope Barker who was famous, or infamous depending on whose side you were on, for instigating the "Edenton Tea Party". At a time when afternoon tea was the standard, it was



a huge statement to refuse it. Penelope and her friend Elizabeth King invited several of their lady friends to come to Elizabeth's home for an afternoon tea—without tea. Penelope told the fifty-one ladies present that she felt it was their duty to support the Congressional ban on English imports by refusing to purchase them. She then encouraged the ladies to sign a document stating their support of the ban on English imports and thereby refusing to purchase anything from England.

Each one of the fifty-one women present that day in October 1774 signed Penelope's document. When news of the "Edenton Tea Party" reached England, the reaction was immediate and intense. One Londoner jokingly asked, "Is there a *female* congress in Edenton too?"<sup>19</sup> There may not have been women in Congress at the time but their impact on our nation was remarkably influential regardless. The Edenton Tea Party became an international incident that nearly bankrupted British companies because the women refused to do business with them. And we all know women are the purchasers. Penelope and her lady friends hit them where it hurts most—in their wallets. Don't tell me *that* didn't send a message.

## *Hannah Hendee*



Hannah Hendee is one of my favorite Revolutionary ladies. She was an extremely courageous woman and well deserving of the title of heroine. In 1780, a messenger from the neighboring Vermont town where Hannah and her husband lived with their two small children came to warn them that Indians were raiding the area under the leadership of the British Army. Hannah's town was next in their path. Hannah's husband told her to take their young son and baby daughter to a neighbor's house and hide there until the raids were over. He then rode out to warn the next town. On the way to her neighbor's house, Hannah was overcome by a band of Indians who rode by and ripped her seven year-old son Michael right from her hands.

Hannah, holding her daughter in her arms, immediately ran after the vicious mob that stole her son but they were too fast for her. Resolute in her

mission to rescue her son, Hannah followed the Indians' path of destruction and burning homes until she finally reached the British camp where they had originated. Hannah's son and several other boys were huddled together in the encampment surrounded by several Indians.

Hannah, upon finding the British officer in charge, walked up to him and demanded the release of her son. The officer, Lieutenant Horton, explained that the boys were payment to the Indians and that they would not be killed but taken to Canada and trained to become Indian Warriors.

"No child will be able to endure the long trek back to Canada!" Hannah cried. "They will die before you reach there! Have you no mercy? Have the British become such savages that they murder children?" Hannah then pleaded, "Give me my son. Don't let him die."<sup>20</sup>

Lt. Horton finally relinquished her son but Hannah didn't stop there. She also demanded the release of every one of the boys who had been stolen from their families in the raids. Lt. Horton finally relented and allowed Hannah to take *all* the boys. Still holding her baby in her arms, Hannah pulled the small, scared and crying boys in around her skirts and walked them back to the town where they were reunited with their families. Such amazing courage is absolutely awe-inspiring. But there are still more.

## *Rebecca Sherman*

Rebecca Sherman was a gifted woman and the second wife of Roger Sherman—a signer of the Declaration. Rebecca came from a very patriotic family and supported her husband in his service to the cause of freedom. Roger frequently consulted Rebecca in his business affairs and public matters and he greatly relied on her judgment.

Rebecca took care of, and schooled, her husband's seven children from his previous marriage as well as the eight additional children she and Roger had together. Raising 15 children? That alone is an amazing feat. But Rebecca was also a patriot, as much as her husband was, so when she found out that George Washington had commissioned a flag for the new nation, Rebecca didn't hesitate to take part. She went to witness the work first hand and subsequently, had the privilege of sewing some of the stars on our Nation's very first flag. And she did so with great pride and humility.

Roger Sherman adored his wife and valued her counsel. He used to say that he never liked to decide a perplexing question without submitting it for the opinion of some intelligent woman. And Rebecca was the woman whose opinion he desired most. Katharine Prescott Bennett, a descendant of Roger and Rebecca wrote:

*"We always have been a patriotic race, and this marriage brought Aunt Rebecca into still more active touch with all matters pertaining to the interests*

*of the Colonies at this stirring period; and when at last the Declaration of Independence was promulgated, you can fancy the excitement and enthusiasm of the wife of Roger Sherman, the man who had so much to do with the momentous document.*<sup>21</sup> It is no wonder we won the war with women like Rebecca supporting the cause. Our Founding Fathers were American patriots but that alone was not enough to win our independence. They were only able to accomplish what they did because of the support of their wives and families. They just couldn't have done it without them.

## *Elizabeth Annesley Lewis*

Another woman whose story greatly impressed me was Elizabeth Annesley Lewis. Elizabeth was the wife of Francis Lewis, another signer of the Declaration of Independence. Like the other signers, Francis Lewis was considered an outlaw by the British and a price was set on his head, but the British did not limit their efforts to the capture of Francis alone.

Very soon after the British Troops were in possession of Long Island, a British captain was sent with several soldiers to Francis Lewis's home and ordered to seize his wife and destroy their property.

As the soldiers advanced on one side of Elizabeth's home, a British war ship, from the other side, fired upon her house. Mrs. Lewis looked calmly on. A shot from the vessel struck the board on which she stood. One of her servants cried: "Run, Mistress, run." To which Mrs. Lewis replied, "Another shot is not likely to strike the same spot."<sup>22</sup>

Mrs. Lewis remained standing, immovable, as the British soldiers entered her house destroying books, papers, and pictures and ruthlessly breaking up furniture and anything else in their path. Then, after they finished pillaging the house they took Mrs. Lewis with them.

Elizabeth was carried to New York and thrown into prison where she was not allowed a bed or change of clothing and given only enough food to barely survive. She was eventually released when Congress was made aware of the situation and threatened retaliation. But Mrs. Lewis had become very ill from the experience and soon after being released, she died from the mistreatment and illnesses she sustained in prison. Her husband Francis lived without her for twenty-four more years; he never remarried, but lived to know the high and lonely price of an American patriot.

Mrs. Lewis' courageous story was passed on through her family for generations. Her powerful conviction and support for the cause of freedom inspired many of her descendants. One of Mrs. Lewis' granddaughters wrote:

*"In the war of the Revolution, Mrs. Lewis had more than one opportunity of showing the steady purpose, the firmness of nerve that would have*

*distinguished her...To Francis Lewis she was Heaven's best gift. When his adventurous spirit led him to embark on long and perilous voyages, he knew that he left his children to the care of an able as well as a tender mother, who could train their characters as well as protect their interests. The conduct and careers of her children is the best eulogy of Mrs. Francis Lewis.”<sup>23</sup>*

And there it is—the best testament of a woman’s life “the conduct and careers of her children”. And isn’t that how we all want to be remembered? Isn’t our influence apparent? The influence we have in our homes is greater than any evil our nation will ever face. It is stronger than any enemy—more powerful than any foe. All we have to do is take advantage of it. We have the power and ability to create goodness like no other force on this earth. We have the power to move a nation. It *is* within us. It always has been. We start first within our home and branch out from there—just as our founding mothers did. Sarah Franklin Bache is the perfect example of this.

## *Samantha Franklin Bache*

Sarah was the daughter of Benjamin Franklin and although her primary role was the caretaker of her family and home, Sarah played an active role in the Revolution through her relief work and as her father’s political hostess. In 1780, Sarah led a movement of patriotic ladies in a campaign to raise funds for the American soldiers. Washington’s army was in desperate need of basic clothing necessities.

So Sarah rallied the ladies in Philadelphia and raised the money to purchase fabric so they could make shirts for the soldiers. Sarah opened her home as a cutting house where these ladies spent several weeks cutting fabric and assembling shirts. This group of patriotic women made two thousand and two hundred shirts for Washington’s soldiers just at the time when they were so desperately needed. These women made a difference. They used their own time and talents and they made a difference—from their own homes.

What I find most amazing about this story is that Congress couldn’t provide the American Army with the things they needed. The Bank was broke. The men threw their hands in the air. Then the women stepped in and provided Washington’s army with brand new shirts. It is marvelling to see the miracles created at the hands of women. Women don’t generally look at an enormous task and think it undoable. It is merely a greater challenge—an opportunity to send out the call to rally more troops together to get the job done. That is how this nation came to be. The women weren’t “left out” of the American process... they were knee-deep in it. And despite what you may have



been led to believe, *we* haven't been pushed out of the American process either—we *walked* away. The problem is, N.O.W. and their many feminist cohorts didn't.



For generations women took care of their homes and families as a first priority. But it wasn't their *only* priority. Just look at us today. When someone at church has a baby what happens? The women get together and plan a shower. When a friend is sick or there is a death in the family, women rally with casseroles and Jell-O salads. We make quilts for the homeless shelter, bake cookies for the PTO, visit our elderly neighbors and spend hours cutting, gluing, and decorating our children's homemade scrapbooks. Sara Bach made shirts for the soldiers. We gather diaper wipes and deodorant to make care packages for the troops overseas. We are influencing this nation with our little gifts of love and compassion every day.

One of the descendants of America's eminent ladies stated, "*I am afraid our forebears did not keep with accuracy the deeds of noble women in the days that truly tried the souls of both men and women.*"<sup>24</sup> It isn't that these women didn't contribute in the process of forming our nation, it is just that, for the most part, they did it behind closed doors—in the walls of their own homes. It wasn't out in the open. And more often than not, the courageous, selfless acts of these women were witnessed by their families alone. But that is not inconsequential. In fact, that is the greatest influence we have. It made a difference in George Washington's life, Abraham Lincoln's life, and in Pat Tillman's life. And it will make a difference in your own children's lives.

We *are* moving a nation, just by being who we are. We, as women and mothers, are an incredible influence in so many ways. E.T. Sullivan expresses this quite beautifully.



*“We fancy that God can only manage his world with battalions, when all the while he is doing it by beautiful babies. When a wrong wants righting, or a truth needs preaching or a continent wants opening, God sends a baby into the world...perhaps in a simple home and of some obscure mother. And then God puts the idea into the mother's heart, and she puts it into the baby's mind. And then God waits. The greatest forces in the world are not the earthquakes and thunderbolts. The greatest forces in the world are babies.”<sup>25</sup>*

You are influencing a nation! Tomorrow's leaders are in *your* care. Your deeds do not go unnoticed. They will be remembered for generations to come in the lives of your children, and their children. John W. Whitehead profoundly proclaimed, “*Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.*”<sup>26</sup>

What message are *we* sending? Are we raising patriots as our founding mothers did? Are they witnessing from our own hands and from our own hearts how important this great nation is? We are the hope of America. We have been from the beginning and we will be to the end. Oh please, never underestimate your influence. Never undervalue your importance. God has put the idea in your heart. The future of America is in your hands. And now...God waits.

1. Ex-NFL star Tillman makes 'ultimate sacrifice', NBC, MSNBC and news services, Updated: 3:39 a.m. ET April 26, 2004
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4. Wives of the Signers, Forward
5. Ibid
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8. Great Women in American History, Rebecca Price Janney, Horizon Books p. 245-253
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17. Wives of the Signers, p. 72
18. Ibid
19. Patriots in Petticoats, Patricia Edwards Clyne, p. 8
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22. Wives of the Signers, p. 119-126
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24. Wives of the Signers, p. 170
25. F.M. Bareham, A Mother's Love (c) copyright 2004 by Benjamin Devey
26. John W. Whitehead, The Stealing of America, 1983