***The 58th SAG Life Achievement Award***

SALLY FIELD: Thank you. Oh, God. Thank you. Oh, lord in heaven, actors all standing on their feet. Oh, gosh. Okay.

In the fall of 1964, I was standing in front of a camera on a freezing cold beach in Malibu, and I said my first lines of dialogue as a professional actor. "You see before you me, Gidget." I was 17, fresh out of high school. I didn't have an agent, and I was working under what's called the Taft‑Hartley Law. A few months later, the show is picked up and all of a sudden I was a star of a television series, and I became a member of the Screen Actors Guild.

I remember so clearly putting that little paper card in my wallet, quietly thrilled to call myself an actor. I first found the stage when I was 12 years old in the seventh grade, and after that I never left the drama department, back, you know, when schools actually had drama departments. I found this magic on stage. It was the one place I could be freely me, more than any other place.

When I got off stage, I felt shy and careful and hidden. I would think and rethink everything before I could say or do anything. But on stage, I never knew what I would say or do. I would surprise myself. I wasn't looking for the applause or attention, even though that's nice, sometimes.

It was never and it's never been about a need to hide myself behind the characters of other people. Acting to me has always been about finding those few precious moments when I feel totally, utterly, sometimes dangerously alive.

So the task has always been to find a way to get to that, to get to the work, to claw my way to it, if necessary. Struggling to climb my way out of the box of situation comedy in the '60 and '70s, took a fierceness I didn't know I had.

But, honestly, I was a little white girl with a pug nose, born in Pasadena, California. And when I look around this room tonight, I know my fight, as hard as it was, was lightweight compared to some of yours.

I thank you and I applaud you, and I know that for you, just like for me, it has not been easy. But you know what? Ah, easy is overrated.

I've flown on wires and surfed in the ocean, rode on horses in wagon trains and fast cars. I've had multiple personalities, worked in a textile mill, picked cotton. I've been Mrs. Doubtfire's employer, Forrest Gump's mother, Lincoln's wife, and Spiderman's aunt.

I've done scenes wearing 50 pounds of period dresses, been fully clothed, semi‑clothed, and totally naked.

Huh, Jeff? Don't you know.

But sometimes ‑‑ sometimes, oh, God, thank you, I have been lucky enough to be a part of projects, to work on projects whose screenplays were so good that my hands shook the first time I read them. Projects with such deep and complicated characters that the process of understanding them, of owning them somewhere inside changed me. They opened and revealed parts of myself I would not have known otherwise.

I worked my whole life. I've ridden the highs and tried to learn from the lows. And in all of these almost 60 years, there is not a day that I don't feel quietly thrilled to call myself an actor.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for this great honor from you, the people I most wanted respect from in my life, actors. Thank you.