

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
MOTHER'S DAY GUEST COLUMN FOR MAY 11, 1996
TALKING IT OVER/CREATORS SYNDICATE

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Mom's hugs, spirit are a living legacy

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Write to Hillary Rodham Clinton at Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, Calif. 90045.

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Stress

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son and Bobbie

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Mom's hugs, spirit are a living legacy

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For Mother's Day, I thought I'd give Chelsea's mother a day off from her weekly column. Besides, I wanted to write about my mother, Virginia Kelley, who died in 1994. I miss her every day, but especially when Mother's Day rolls around.

I remember, as a small child, watching my mother on a railway platform in New Orleans, sobbing and waving goodbye to me and my grandmother. As the train pulled away, she sank to her knees.

At the time, my mother was studying in Louisiana to be a nurse-anesthetist while I lived with my grandparents in Arkansas. Widowed three months before I was born, she was determined to get the skills she needed to provide for us. The image of her at the train station has stayed with me throughout my life, a powerful memory of her constant love.

Mother taught me about family: hard work, sacrifice and putting your children first, and about always being positive for them even on the bad days. For her, those bad days included my stepfather's alcoholism, the deaths of three husbands, my brother's struggle with substance abuse and her fight with cancer.

As a child, I saw her go off to work each day in an era when it wasn't easy to be a working mother. As an adult, I marveled as she threw herself into politics to help

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Talking It Over



me through victory and defeat, and encouraged my brother in his career while never giving up her unshakable belief that he could recover from his drug problem. And I watched with admiration as she endured her disappointments with good humor and determination, always enjoying life and living it to the fullest, even as she battled the breast cancer that finally took her from us when she was 70 years old.

If you ever met my mother, or saw her on television, or read her autobiography, "Leading With My Heart," you know that in many ways she wasn't typical. She worked before most mothers did — she had to. She wore lots of makeup, including bright lipstick — the brighter the better, she liked to say — and layers of Max Factor. Hillary used to comment that my mother was the only person she had ever met who wore false eyelashes every day.

No matter what adversity she faced, she always tried to enjoy herself, and she loved seeing other people lap up life, too. She never begrudged other people their success and happiness. She

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She loved her work. She also loved parties, Elvis Presley and the racetrack. Even when her health was failing and she was in pain, she insisted on going to Las Vegas to see Barbra Streisand's magnificent concert on New Year's Eve in 1993.

I tried to call Mother for a couple of days after the concert to find out how it went, but I couldn't track her down! She was always out of the hotel room or on the phone. Then, after she got home, she called me. Hillary, Chelsea and I were at the dinner table so we had a four-way conversation. She told us about how great the concert was and what a wonderful time she had.

It was the last time I ever talked to her. Just a few hours later, she died in her sleep. And while I regretted not having the chance to say goodbye before she died, I knew in my heart that we had said all we needed to say. There were no accounts to settle, no words or emotions left unsaid. I feel lucky for that, and even

luckier for the life and legacy she left me: love and respect for family and work, and for other people, regardless of their station in life or how different they seem on the surface.

This Mother's Day will be my third without my mother. I still miss her. I miss our long talks at the kitchen table and on the phone. I miss her laugh and her hugs. I miss the fire in her eyes and her never-say-die attitude. There are still some Sunday evenings when I have the urge to pick up the phone to call her and suddenly realize that I can't do that anymore.

But today, as I watch my daughter and my wife talking and laughing at the dinner table, I know I'll hear echoes of my conversations with my mother. And I'll be grateful for my mother's love and for every mother's love. Our mothers' spirits stay with us always.

Happy Mother's Day.

Write to Hillary Rodham Clinton at Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, Calif. 90045.

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