

# The Real Meaning of Mother's Day

Contributed by Linda Chavez  
Friday, 09 May 2008

Remember when Mother's Day was a simple affair? The kids woke Mom up with breakfast in bed -- Froot Loops floating on a sea of slightly pink milk -- and handmade cards. Everyone was especially nice to one another so Mom could enjoy some "peace and quiet," commodities in short supply in most mothers' lives. Maybe Dad cooked dinner or everyone went out to a restaurant, the kind with endless supplies of soft, warm rolls that filled everybody up before the overcooked roast beef soaked in brown gravy arrived. All mothers were "Queen for a Day" in those less-harried times.

Maybe it's just me, but Mother's Day seems to have become a much more complicated affair these days. First, there's the choice of deciding whose mother we're celebrating. In multi-generation families, especially those who live in relatively close proximity, are adult children obligated to spend time with their own mothers, even when they are moms (or married to moms) themselves? Let's see, in my family alone, I count eight mothers: mine, my husband's, my two daughters-in-law, their mothers, and, in one case, their mother's mother, plus me. You need a professional logistics expert just to arrange a schedule for each mom in this crew to spend time enjoying her own Mother's Day while fulfilling her obligations to honor the other mothers in the family.

I've been fretting about this all week, when suddenly I realized: Mother's Day isn't really for moms at all; it's for children. When the kids are young, they're eager to show Mom they can take care of her, just as she takes care of them every other day of the year. When they get older, even when they become mothers (or their wives do), the phone calls, cards, or visits are a way to say, "I still remember all you did for me."

This insight came to me as I was reading a short book a friend of mine, John Kramer, passed on: "The Road Taken: A Memoir -- One VW Bus, One Widow, Nine Kids." The story is the remarkable tale of John's mother, Therese Powers Kramer, who became a widow at 41 but still managed to finish her college degree -- and chose to celebrate her achievement by taking her nine children on a bus tour of Europe. The story is poignant but hilarious, mixing in reflections on her husband's slow death from heart disease with antic tales of kids walking in on naked tourists having a pillow fight, or getting their heads stuck in balustrades in Paris hotels.

What struck me about the book, however, wasn't so much the extraordinary achievement of John's mother -- that goes without saying and is amply demonstrated in her beautiful writing -- it was how much John loves his mother. His passing on his mother's memoir was his way of showing her how much he loves her. I'm not alone in that estimation. Humorist Erma Bombeck, whose best-selling "Motherhood: The Second Oldest Profession" was her funniest book, wrote in a preface to Mrs. Kramer's memoir: "Do you know what your son John did? He has such love for you that he wrote to tell me about your book and the life that inspired it."

Children -- even when they're adults -- need a way to express their love for their mothers. It was easy when they were young and could fashion a statement out of construction paper and glue. It gets harder when their lives become filled with new duties and obligations.

When we grow up, we need to find a new way to say "I love you." And for those moms on the receiving end, we need new ways to hear what our children are telling us. It may not be soggy cereal or a handmade potholder but, instead, a long-distance phone call or store-bought card. We may not get the luxury of a whole day when we are the center of attention, but for those few minutes when the kids are wishing us Happy Mother's Day, we know they are telling us how much we still matter in their lives.

Linda Chavez is the author of "An Unlikely Conservative: The Transformation of an Ex-Liberal." To find out more about Linda Chavez, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).

COPYRIGHT 2008 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.