

A Mother's Day Sampler of Five With-It Women

By URSULA VILS,
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Ah, Mother.

A gray-haired woman in a rocking chair, as artist James Whistler depicted his mother?

Not in 1986.

Today's mother more likely is involved with PTA, car pooling, Little League, ballet lessons and getting the dog to the veterinarian—while finding time to work part time and join in the anti-nuclear movement.

Or she is a neatly tailored (the neckline bow and smart earrings are just the right feminine touch) professional woman dropping her 4-year-old at a Montessori school. In certain socioeconomic circles she is the sleek woman who, looking as good in a skintight bikini as her 18-year-old daughter, rushes off faithfully to her aerobics workout.

Worries About Children

Today's mother also is the Latina who works as a domestic. Here illegally, she worries not about what deportation would do to her but about the lost educational and economic opportunities it could mean for her children.

And the mother of 1986 is the single parent who prefers poverty-level wages to being on welfare. She worries about what her children do during her long workdays—and can only pray that they stay out of gangs and off drugs.

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Today, Mother's Day, the Westside Women's Clinic will present "Generations of Women Helping Women," a salute to five women, their mothers, one's grandmother and, in some cases, their daughters at a garden brunch in Brentwood. The multigenerational honorees span ages 22 to 93.

They represent community activities, public service, the arts, business, sports, the professions. Two of the honorees' mothers are immigrants who worked in garment factories to help support the family and educate their daughters. Another became a nurse with the help of others who saw her potential and encouraged her to pursue an education. One is the daughter of politically active parents. One, whose interests range from health to hunger, belies the image of the conventional Southern belle—as do her mother and grandmother.

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Carrie Miller sat in the comfortable family room of the Riverside



Rose Ochi, executive on mayor's staff, shows City Hall to mother, Grace Matsui, who came here from Japan as an arranged bride.

home she shares with her husband, Saul, and, when they're home, their five children.

On one side of the fireplace loomed a large television screen, the kind favored by hard-core sports fans. Nearby a clutter of trophies effectively blocked sight of the brick fireplace.

Miller cast a humorously rueful eye on the trophies, which include a number of silver awards—the kind that have to be polished regularly. Is that part of her job as mother of one of the best-known sports clans in Southern California?

She nodded affirmatively. "One hundred forty trophies and 125 plaques," she said. "As of last count."

No doubt that count has changed already. Daughter Cheryl Miller, 22, was graduated Friday from the University of Southern California, where she picked up another array of trophies from what probably has been the most illustrious basketball career—male or female—in Trojan history.

Cheryl Miller has captured almost every high school, university and media award available to her, including a few previously reserved for male athletes, plus numerous civic honors. Her most cherished, however, is the Olympic gold medal she won as a member of the championship U.S. women's basketball team at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

"Cheryl spoke to a high school group in Hudson, N.Y., and relived her own Olympic experience," Carrie Miller said. "Cheryl said it didn't matter that she was black or white. She was an American and she had achieved her highest goal.

"Everybody had tears in their eyes. Cheryl said that what the Olympics proved was that we all are Americans, that she is an American, and nothing else mattered."

Cheryl comes from a patriotic family. Her father, whose children seem to have inherited his abilities as a musician and ballplayer, retired from the Air Force as a chief master sergeant.

The Millers' eldest son, Saul Jr., 29, is a professional musician with the Airmen of Note, the No. 1 Air Force jazz band.

But sports seem to dominate. Son Darrell, 27, is a backup catcher and outfielder with the California Angels. Cheryl, facing the end of her playing career for lack of women's pro basketball teams, plans to go into sports broadcasting. Reggie, 20, is a star basketball player at UCLA and Tammy, 18, who will be graduated from high school next month and plans to enter college in the fall, shows her athletic abilities in track and volleyball.

'Always a Miller Represented'

Carrie Miller is the kind of mother who makes chocolate chip cookies, Reggie's favorite, when she knows he is coming home and who puts spaghetti and chili in small containers for Cheryl to take back to campus.

Carrie spends hours in her silver van, traveling to teach Sunday school at the First Baptist Church of Arlington (near Riverside), transporting Tammy to the library, driving to Los Angeles for Cheryl's and Reggie's games (four trips a week during basketball season) and attending each child's athletic events ("It's a family thing. There's always a Miller represented at our games when we play," said Cheryl).

Their mother, who became a registered nurse with the help of a teacher who gave her a ride to high school and others who saw to it she had jobs to help pay her way, is at once proud and modest about the success of the Miller children. Asked how the Millers, married 30 years and, Carrie Miller said, "between 50 and 60" years of age, channeled their children into positive activities, she replied:

"It's not a matter of doing anything. Please see **MOTHERS**, Page 12



GARY FRIEDMAN / Los Angeles Times

Goldie Rosenfield and daughter Billie Heller discuss Heller's feminist and political advocacy work on a stroll in Beverly Hills.



BRIAN GADBERRY

Mary Ann Mobley, center left, mother Mary Williams, grandmother Mary Farish, daughter Clancy Collins work to aid others.

MOTHERS: Five Women and Their Families

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thing right. We were always involved in church and Sunday school, and often we'd go on an outing to Lake Elsinore or somewhere. It's a matter of being involved with them, a lot of luck and help from a lot of people.

"You do a lot of loving, a lot of talking, a lot of coaching. It takes a strong father. In this family Daddy sets the rules; I come along behind and explain. I'm the go-between."

Cheryl Miller alluded to a popular story that her father devoted all his energies to helping improve her basketball.

"When I was growing up, from seventh grade to my junior year in high school, people thought I only had a father," she said. "While Dad was with me, Mom went to Reggie's games.

"But my mother loves to hear the details of everything we do, and she'd just put me to bed and let me talk until I'd unwind and fall asleep. My family is my motivation and my mother keeps me down to earth—she taught me that if you think you're at the top you've got a long way to fall.

"My mom is really special. I consider my mom my heart and my conscience."

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In her 47 years, Rose Matsui Ochi has put together the attributes of two cultures and two generations of women and seemingly come up with the best of both.

The catalyst in bridging the gap between her grandmother, a proper, well-born Japanese lady, and herself, an American professional woman with a law degree and a dedication to public service, has been her mother, Grace Mutsuko Matsui, a dynamic 79.

Grace Matsui came to the United States in 1928 as the arranged bride of Japanese importer Roy Matsui. She came from a Japanese family of the samurai class, attended high school (rare for a Japanese woman of her time), wore Western dress (pleated skirts, leather shoes).

Prominent Guests

Her father, a doctor, and his cultured wife entertained prominent people in their home. Grace Matsui remembers that her mother conversed with statesmen and diplomats, including such highly placed men as those who represented Japan at the post-World War I peace treaty talks at Versailles. Her American granddaughter followed in her footsteps earlier this year when Rose Ochi was among those who greeted Japan's Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in Los Angeles.

Would Grace Matsui's mother have done what her daughter did: become a lawyer? Matsui, a naturalized citizen who understands English well but is shy about speaking, answered without hesitation.

"In Japan, no," she said.

Matsui encountered a hard life in the United States. Mother of five (two sons are deceased), she brought up her children without the support system of a family—mother, sisters, relatives. At the outbreak of World War II the Matsuis were interned, first at Santa Anita, then in Arkansas.

At war's end Roy Matsui faced deportation. Ensuing litigation ate up the family's savings. Matsui worked at jobs far less rewarding than the importing business.

"He would go off to work at

menial jobs but he'd go off with a white shirt, tie and hat and wearing a suit my mother had made," Ochi remembered.

Grace Matsui got work in garment district sweatshops to augment the family income, especially when Ochi was attending UCLA.

"Look at her hands, gnarled, joints swollen now from years of hard work, and the Japanese take such pride in having nice hands," Ochi said. "But she did so much sewing. She did piece work—and maybe she earned as much as \$1,500 a year."

'Nobody Knew I Was Poor'

While Matsui worked for a well-known manufacturer who gave her remnants with which to make dresses for her daughter, Rose Ochi worked "in a very fine home. I cleaned the house, took care of the kids and worked as a girl Friday. Nobody ever knew I was poor. After all, I lived in Bel-Air and I dressed well."

Ochi was graduated from UCLA in 1959, received a general secondary credential in education and physical education from Cal State L.A. in 1967 and taught in East Los Angeles, where she developed a concern about the lack of quality educational opportunities for minorities. She returned to earn a degree at Loyola Law School to prepare herself to become an advocate for change in public policy.

Presently she is executive assistant to Mayor Tom Bradley and director of the city's Criminal Justice Planning Office.

Ochi said she sees her mother as "a hothouse flower" and herself as "a weed." Nonetheless, in her later years Matsui, the hothouse flower, gardens ("She can graft anything, three or four things on the same tree"), travels extensively, does Japanese calligraphy and painting and writes poetry.

She enjoys Japanese singing and, Ochi said, "She takes food and flowers to older people. After all, she is only 79."

Ochi, wife of architect Thomas Ochi, has no children, "but I have my mother's nurturing qualities. What did I learn from her? Dignity, resilience, to enjoy living, to make a contribution. She is a giver. . . . She just keeps going around the corner and opening that next door."

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Yolanda Nava and her mother, Consuelo Chavira Stepsis, mirror the success story of Rose Ochi and Grace Matsui.

Stepsis, 76, also was an immigrant who worked in the garment district to support her daughter. And in both the Matsui and Stepsis families there is a solid commitment to education.

As a single parent, Stepsis—who had quit school after the eighth grade to help her family financially—went to night school to earn a high school diploma. Nava, in high school at the time, remembers her mother wearing cap and gown for commencement.

Nava, 41, got her degree in U.S. history from UCLA, where she also earned a community college teaching credential and continued as a Danforth Fellow for two years.

Wife of state Sen. Art Torres ("but I am always 'Nava'"), she has been a television journalist for 11 years and is host of "Latin Tempo," a nationally syndicated TV news magazine that focuses on the Latino community and was seen locally on Channel 4 until recently. She has been honored

widely as an outstanding young woman and outstanding Latina. She is active in a variety of cultural and community endeavors.

For the moment, Nava and her son, Joaquin, 10, and daughter, Danielle, 4, are living with Stepsis until the Legislature adjourns and the Torreses resettle in a home of their own. The children are getting a double dose of Stepsis' theories of child rearing—one from their grandmother, the other from Nava, who shares her mother's philosophy of discipline.

"Of course I was always proud of Yolanda," Stepsis said during an interview in her modest Silver Lake home. "But if you let a child get away with everything, you spoil them. I was particular about who she went out with and what time she got home. . . . She obeyed. She was a good girl."

"I am probably more permissive than my mother was," Nava said, "but I expect a lot of my children. I remember my mother's analogy that a child is like a tree, that to make it grow perfectly you have to shape it and prune it and prop it up."

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In its list of today's honorees the Westside Women's Clinic describes Billie Heller as "women's rights advocate and community activist."

Nice, but it's only the tip of the iceberg. Heller, who declines to tell her age because she finds it disadvantageous in advocacy for the elderly, has been a leader in feminist, political and environmental causes, a founder of the Older Women's League (an outgrowth of the displaced homemaker movement in which she was involved) and a convener of the original Grey Panthers of Los Angeles County.

She also has been a resource person for the Ralph Nader organization, active in Women For: and the National Women's Political Caucus and a journalist who covered the United Nations Decade for Women conference last summer in Nairobi.

She comes by her activism naturally. Both her parents, Goldie and Sampson Rosenfield, were leaders in the Democratic Party in the '30s and '40s, and one of Billie Heller's earliest memories is being photographed in the arms of "Will Rogers or (former Gov.) Culbert Olson or Helen Gahagan Douglas—somebody like that."

Broadening the Perspective

Heller speaks of her participation in centers, clinics for women, pro-abortion marches, broadening the perspective of women's rights to a younger generation unaware of the fierce battles feminists fought to achieve progress for women.

Goldie Rosenfield, 84, summed her daughter up well.

"You walk in where angels fear to tread, honey," she said.

Rosenfield, an enthusiastic community volunteer in her younger years and a woman who worked alongside her husband in his letterpress business, claims she is "not active with anything now. I have been reading a lot. I'm very lonesome" (since her husband's death in December, 1984).

"My husband and I were very close," Rosenfield said. "We were married 57 years, 5 months and 26 days. . . ."

If Rosenfield confines her activities to reading, her taste is eclectic. During the course of an interview at her daughter's home in Beverly

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Hills, Rosenfield expressed interest in the Soviet nuclear disaster ("It's an example of how big the planet isn't"), education ("My father sent my brother to college but it never occurred to him that we four girls should have gone, too"), medical programs for the elderly, Social Security ("I bristle whenever I hear anyone attacking it"), David Stockman ("How can he be so blind?") and Rose Bird ("a good part of the opposition is that she's a woman").

Show-Business Family

Heller travels extensively, partly in connection with the job responsibilities of husband, Seymour, president of American Variety International, a diversified entertainment corporation. All three of her children—Bruce, 30; Elizabeth, 28, and David, 26—also are in show business, Bruce following in his father's footsteps as a personal manager and David as a drummer.

Liz is director of music video for MCA Records; her grandmother frets about her working too hard. But Liz is accustomed to making decisions, including at least one about her mother's education.

Heller told how she dropped out of UCLA in her junior year because of illness. She returned for a degree in political science while Liz was an undergraduate—with her daughter's blessing.

"I asked Elizabeth first if it was OK for me to go to school while she was there," Billie Heller said. "In 1979 we graduated together."

Liz Heller, a successful young career woman, remains close to her family despite the long hours and sudden business trips of her demanding job.

"My mother and grandmother," Liz Heller said, "are my two closest friends in the whole world. . . . I look at my friends, and I don't know any who have such a won-

derful relationship with their parents and grandparents."

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It's a long way from Atlantic City to the hunger-ravaged Third World, but Mary Ann Mobley, 1959's Miss America who has made a successful career in show business, has traveled that road with one of her favorite causes, World Vision.

She has made documentaries on hunger in Cambodia, Ethiopia ("World Vision" was there 10 years before it became chic, she said), Zimbabwe, Kenya and Mozambique.

Nor does she neglect domestic needs. She has worked on behalf of the March of Dimes for 23 years, and she and her husband, Gary Collins, have co-hosted its national telethon for five years. She is a member of SHARE, which raises funds for the Exceptional Children's Foundation, and on the advisory board of Santa Monica Hospital's Rape Prevention Treatment Center, to name a few of Mobley's involvements.

It seems that helping others—"putting something back"—is a family custom. Mobley learned it from her mother, Mary F. Williams, a Mississippi businesswoman named one of her state's women of achievement, and grandmother, Mary Stuart Farish, now 93.

Mobley, 47, has stories to tell about each that reveal much of how her own viewpoints were formed.

She loved to visit her grandmother, she said. Her grandfather, William Clancy Farish, had died suddenly at 33, and Mary Farish would let little Mary Ann share her big bed. First they would kneel and say their prayers; then they would talk.

"She would say that the first one asleep would wait for the other under a big oak tree with the fairies and the elves," Mobley said. "She would say, 'You must tell me the

color of your dress so I will know you.' I remember I chose a lot of white satin, and I'd grab a handful of stars to decorate my dress and the toe of my white shoe.

"And my grandmother would say, 'I'll be in lavender chiffon and a big-brimmed hat dipped just over my left eye, and I'll have violets.' She loves violets."

If Mary Farish nourished fantasies that grew into a theatrical career, Mary Williams taught her daughter that strength did not in any way diminish a lady. Mobley remembers a time in Brandon, Miss., when she was to solo in a dance recital. The family was building a new home, and their rented house was surrounded by a sea of mud. Her father was away on business.

"Mother got me into the car and assured me we would get to the dance recital," Mobley said. "It was raining and we got stuck in the mud. There was no one there to help us. Mother repeated firmly that we would get to the dance recital.

"She saddled a horse, put me up behind her and got me to the dance recital.

"Some people don't understand that kind of strength. I was taught that I must be a lady but that I had to develop my own strengths. Strength does not mean telling someone off in foul language. It means to survive with grace."

Mobley sees that kind of strength developing in her 17-year-old daughter, Clancy ("Mary Clancy, really. Gary insisted on following the family tradition of naming the first daughter 'Mary'").

A senior at Westlake School for Girls, Clancy traveled with her parents to Ethiopia last year. Her response was to make a documentary film, "Ethiopia: A Teen-ager's Perspective," that has been shown on national television and to church and youth groups around the country.