

Viola Kontras-Petikas Eulogy, July, 2006

Good afternoon. My name is Michael Kontras. I am Viola's oldest child.

I am here today, not to mourn my mother's passing, but instead, to celebrate her life. What we saw before us earlier, was simply her shell and does not represent her essence in any way. Today will soon pass. What will remain with us going into tomorrow and beyond, will be mom's spirit and energy, which will now come through all of us.

Mom's life was devoted to her family, friends, and co-workers. She was always seeking to make sure we were okay, often ignoring her own well-being in the process. Her generosity has been experienced by everyone in this room at one time or another. And her generosity was more than matched by her compassion. She was always inclusive and never exclusive. Family gatherings included friends, neighbors, co-workers, and yes, from time to time, even one of our ex-spouses.

Mom was neither liberal nor conservative nor traditional nor progressive. Instead, she embodied the best of all perspectives, and never discounted any new idea or concept. She had the unique ability to discern the most complex issues with grace and ease, always getting to the heart of the matter. She was both teacher and student, always wanting to learn more, so that she could pass the knowledge onto all of us. She was a voracious reader of books and magazines of all types.

Mom was a night-owl. This made for some interesting evenings when I was growing up, because, you see, I'm a night-owl, too. More often than not, I would be up until 12:00 or 1:00 in the morning, and since my room was in the basement, I could hear her when she walked into the kitchen, usually around midnight. She... was preparing to enjoy some quiet time, alone, with a bowl of ice cream. I... had a different plan. Within minutes, we were both eating ice cream and talking about everything under the sun. Our conversation would almost always lead to laughter, which almost always... woke up Yaya (Grandma). Needless to say, Yaya would come into the kitchen, not to join us, but to tell us we were both crazy, and to get to bed. She would then turn around and storm out, grumbling under her breath in a version of the Greek language that neither mom nor I had ever heard before. As soon as she left, we would both immediately start laughing, covering our mouths, hoping she wouldn't hear us and come back! We then continued to eat our ice cream, and we continued to talk.

I could speak for hours about all the wonderful times we shared and I know that everyone here could easily do the same. The stories and events would fill volumes. We all have known her kindness and caring, her intelligence and wisdom, and her love. Her wish was always that we would learn something from her that would enrich our lives. I'm sure I speak for everyone here today when I say, "Her wish has come true."

The quality of our lives can not be measured by material wealth and possessions. It can only be measured by our relationships with each other. No one understood this better than mom. She "walked the talk." Her relationships are her legacy. Knowing this truth, she will dwell within each and every one of us from now on.

God blessed us all when He brought my mother into our lives.

Thanks for everything, Mom.

I love you.