A mother’s heart is a treasure trove of the bright and beautiful kind. It is a gift that thrives through loving and giving.

My mother, the late Milagros Salgado Dayrit—who founded Miladay Jewels together with my late father, Vincent P. Dayrit, in 1966—made me a recipient of this gift as she mentored me through life. More than a success story, Miladay is a beautiful tale of love.

When we were very young, before we even went to school, our mother began teaching us the value of hard work and its rewards. While children our age were playing with A-B-C blocks, our first language lessons were learned through precious gems. Our color wheel and geography lessons were inspired by the colors and sources of gemstones like the translucent blue of aquamarines from Nepal, the deep green of an emerald from Colombia, the bloody red sheen of Thai rubies, the iridescent white of Japanese cultured pearls, the dazzling brilliance of diamonds mined in the African continent.

Her mentoring started early on when we were little children. Our jewelry business started in the garage of our humble home. Our bedroom was her jewelry showroom. We were a family that worked together and played together. My mom made the experience so enjoyable that I didn’t think of joining any other business but our own family business. She instilled in me a deep love and passion for family. If there is anything I enjoyed most, it was pleasing my mother and serving the family. This is a happy trait I carry to this day.

Through her selflessness and thoughtfulness, she showed me what true love is all about. Her love for God, spouse and family, employees and friends, were deeply felt. I will never forget witnessing how she and Dad sacrificed to build enterprises to make sure their five children
and even their grandchildren would be well provided for, beyond their own lifetime. Their generosity didn’t stop there. They went a step further. They taught us to be good stewards. Through their tireless guidance and communication, we learned to take care of everyone and everything they left behind, and how to continue to make these grow.

Although she passed away in 1997 at the age of 59, I still obey her wishes and dreams. I am fortunate that she took the time to convey them. Living a life of obedience gives me that much needed direction and inspiration to face the challenges of everyday life. I received confirmation from the Bible on this which said “Obey your parents and your life will be good.” We are an extremely close-knit family because of her and I am eternally grateful for this. At work or play my four siblings, Jaqui, Mark, Christine, Yvonne, and I are like best friends who love and enjoy each other so very much. She told us to take good care of each other. “You take care of the family and the family business will prosper. You destroy the family and you’ll destroy the business.”

Mentoring is all about values. My mother made sure we grew up with values as solid as diamonds. Early on we were taught that integrity, reliability, trustworthiness are an integral part of our personal and business ethics. It is the highest tribute to her that our company Miladay Jewels was awarded Most Trusted Brand in 2006 and 2007 through a survey conducted by the esteemed Reader’s Digest. This is an affirmation of what we, as our mother’s children, stand for.

Through example she also taught us to keep simple, be practical, not extravagant; and live within our means. Her words were, “A centavo saved is a centavo earned.”

She constantly reminded us never to waste resources, and never to waste relationships. She encouraged me to welcome friendship, to be kind and compassionate to others especially the less fortunate.

I learned from her that we should begin and end our day with a salutation to God, from whom all good things emanate.
Michelle Dayrit-Soliven is the president of Miladay Jewels and a columnist for the Philippine Star. With her unique flair and innate creativity, compassionate and bubbly personality, Michelle has been a scintillating force in stirring their jewelry business into the right direction since 1997. She credits her family and loyal employees as the main source of inspiration for continuing to create beautiful investments to wear. She is married to Benito Soliven III and they have an only child, Vincent, 14.