

## Mitch Henck: Mom taught me to think, laugh and root with passion

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I never truly felt the importance of Mother's Day until this year, when my mother died April 19. It may sound sappy, but she was always my best friend. As soon as I started talking, Mom was there to listen. And, boy, did I listen to her.

She told me about the world and how it works. I remember asking her at bedtime how Hitler was allowed to come to power. She said, "Because people didn't pay attention. That's why you have to know what politicians do and say, because the same thing could happen here."

A passionate Democrat, my mother influenced my young mind with some rather bizarre statements. While reading my first adult book, "The Day Lincoln Was Shot," by Jim Bishop, when I was 8, I said, "Mom, Mary Todd Lincoln ended up in a sanitarium." My mother said in a deadpanned response, "Not surprising. She married a Republican."

During Watergate, I watched the hearings with her for hours at a time. We even listened to them in the car. I used to imitate Sen. Sam Irvin of North Carolina for the family and even developed a fairly good Nixon voice. Mom would glow with approval.

The most passionate and loyal Indiana University sports fan on the planet, Mom would pace and smoke during basketball games. She didn't like it when they lost and could reveal a temper that rivaled Coach Bobby Knight.

My senior year in high school, I was arrested for ticket scalping in Lexington, Kentucky, before an Indiana vs. Kentucky game. I bailed myself out of jail and ran 13 blocks to Rupp Arena for the second half.

After the game, my friend Rodney called Mom and said, "You better sit down. Mitch has been arrested. He missed the whole first half." Still steaming from the Indiana loss, my mother replied, "He missed the only good part."

Not a Purdue fan, my mother told how her father's best friend never forgave Abraham Lincoln for approving the land grant that created Purdue's campus. Relax Purdue fans, Mom earned her master's degree from there.

A teacher for 35 years in the third and fourth grades, Mom coached sixth-grade boys basketball for a short time. Friends gathered at the house when she was featured in a local TV sports segment.

Mom loved Bernie Sanders and wasn't always pleased with my evolution to the political center. But the truth is, I was just questioning everything as Mom taught me at bedtime all those years ago.

As many of you can understand, the toughest part is wanting to pick up the phone and tell Mom about something exciting and having to catch yourself. Recently, while watching "Elvis and Nixon" at the theater, I had a Watergate flashback. I actually turned in my seat to share a laugh with Mom about Kevin Spacey's portrayal of Nixon.

But my mom wasn't there. Thankfully, her soul will rage in me as long as I'm here. I love you, Mom.

*Mitch is a Madison, Wisconsin based commentator, broadcaster and standup comic.  
The Mitch Henck Show is broadcast live 8-11a.m. Monday-Friday at [www.mitchhenck.com](http://www.mitchhenck.com).  
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