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OF INTEREST

LOCAL AUTHOR, ATTORNEY SHARES DAILY MESSAGES OF MOTHERLY WISDOM

By Sara Hall

As the saying goes, “Mom knows best,” and one local attorney and author agrees wholeheartedly.

M.C. Sungaila of Newport Beach created two books from the daily wisdom her own mother, Jane, sent her in handwritten letters (and later in text messages) over the last quarter of a century. The book series, *Mother’s Thoughts for Day: Twenty-Five Years of Wisdom*, aims to strengthen family bonds and inspire readers.

“My mom has one child and she can only share (her wisdom) with me, but together, we can share it with a lot of others and pay it forward,” Sungaila said during a recent phone interview with Tableau.



In March, Sungaila released an all-new companion journal that will accompany the books. The new personalized and guided journal will give mothers (or any parent, grandparent, or loved one with knowledge to share) an opportunity to create their own collection of loving wisdom for the next generation. Mother's Thoughts also now also has related merchandise, including pillows, mugs, and tote bags, featuring some of the quotes.

The books were also a way for Sungaila to show her mother how much her support and encouraging words have meant to her over the years.

When Sungaila started her professional career, her mother would send her handwritten letters every day at work, usually an inspirational quote or a pep talk of some sort.

The letters came by "snail mail" along with the business mail each day at her office. Each message was on stationery with "Mother's Thoughts for the Day" emblazoned across the top and a positive quote or inspiring observation.

As a young woman in a new and demanding career, it was a challenge to succeed in a big firm. There were a lot of stumbling blocks in the early years, and that's when her mother's messages were the most impactful, she said. On the tough days, her mother's words inspired and supported her in just the right way.

"(The notes) would encourage me to keep moving forward," Sungaila said. "One of the real special talents that my mother has ... she says the right thing, at the right time for that specific person to get over a tough spot."

As technology advanced over the years, so did her mother's notes. She started sending her daily text messages.

Sungaila's career also advanced and she felt more confident as she became an accomplished appellate lawyer. Even as she garnered accolades and took on big, noteworthy cases, her mother still sent the messages and they were still nice to receive.

Reflecting on her mother's advice over the years and how much it meant to her, Sungaila was inspired to share the wisdom with others.

"I thought these were helpful for me, so maybe they would be helpful for others as well," Sungaila said. "This is a nice way to pay it forward, from my family, my mom and me, to other young women."

When she first had the idea of putting together the most universally helpful quotes or advice into a book, her mother was not on board. She felt that she'd written those messages for her daughter, nobody else. But after Sungaila read a few of her mother's own messages back to her, she started to come around to the idea, realizing others might also find support in her words.

Just the fact that Sungaila had the idea to create a book from her messages showed her mother how important those words were to her.





“As parents or friends, we do things and don’t realize how impactful they are,” Sungaila said.

While it was Sungaila’s project, she shared editorial thoughts with her mother and they would review things together.

“It was kind of a joint venture, I wanted her involved,” Sungaila said. “It was fun to do that together.”

Although some messages were “lost to history,” Sungaila had copied or kept a number of the letters and texts over the years. Choosing the most universally helpful messages, Sungaila compiled the first book, published in 2019. It was so popular that she compiled a second book, published in 2020.

Although she’s usually very analytical, publishing the book was more about intuition. She felt like it needed to be shared with others, hopefully encouraging other young professional women.

“The world needed something positive, given everything going on the last few years,” Sungaila said. “I wanted to release it into the world and see what happened.”

In another way of paying it forward, the books have benefited local nonprofits. A portion of the sales of the first book supported the Pacific Symphony’s arts

education program, and both books have benefited Sir Bruno Serato’s Caterina’s Club.

After more than 25 years’ worth of messages, the two books only cover about 35 to 40 percent of all her mother’s notes. Currently, she doesn’t have plans for another book, but a year ago she didn’t have plans for a journal or merchandise, so she’s not completely closing the door to the idea.

“I feel like the series has reached its conclusion with two books and journal,” Sungaila said. “But I don’t want to say never.”

A favorite quote from her mother is: “Every day is a new canvas, paint it the way you want.”

“I like it because it’s a reminder to not get caught up in what others are doing or where others are trying to lead you,” Sungaila said. “They are painting their own picture ... Pick up the paintbrush and do what you want, don’t get painted in another direction.”

Her mother, also a Newport Beach resident, still sends her messages, but not as regularly, Sungaila said. The encouraging messages and supportive advice are helpful at any age. The key lesson is to find the strength to overcome obstacles and strive to achieve your dreams, whatever they may be at any stage in life.

“Keep going, one step after another, and you’ll find you’ve gone pretty far,” Sungaila said.

Learn more and buy the books and journal at mothersthoughtsfortheday.com

