

**From:** "Isabel Maxwell" <[REDACTED]>

**To:** [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED],  
[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED],  
[REDACTED]

**Cc:** "Isabel Maxwell" <[REDACTED]>

**Subject:** re: London Sunday Times - Relative Values on Mom and Isi

**Date:** Sun, 11 Apr 2004 06:30:39 +0000

---

hi everyone , happy easter sunday from israel!

i purchased the sunday times for a month online so that i could send you the magazine article that came out on us today.....

waaaaaaa - well, ce n'est pas mauvais...., obviously some mistakes, idiotic ones, like maman, did you really say "ghislaine" instead of "christine" ? (I changed it here below myself) ?!! And of course, i said precisely that Michael was \*not\* on life support but that came out differently here....

Also, there is no photo, so i can't see what t hat looks like..... so you'll have to let me know, those of you who get the actual magazine...

Much love, i'm going to Jerusalem this afternoon to have the second seder of Passover with Jacky Schimmel's family, close to the King David..... Ian and Kev, i'll 'report' back on that one! :-)

Tomorrow is a day off for j ews and christians alike so i'll most likely be back here in Herzliya at my lovely girlfriend's home by the beach. Then the next day, Tuesday, back to work with a vengeance...

:-) more anon

Isi/Mom  
xoxoxoo

The Sunday Times Magazine

<<http://images.thetimes.co.uk/images/grey.gif>>

<<http://images.thetimes.co.uk/images/trans.gif>>

April 11, 2004

Relative Values: Elisabeth Maxwell, the widow of Robert Maxwell, and their daughter Isabel  
Interview by Ann McFerran

<<http://images.thetimes.co.uk/images/trans.gif>>

Elisabeth Maxwell, 83, is the widow of the Labour MP turned publishing magnate Robert Maxwell. He died at sea while cruising on his yacht in 1991, after which it became clear that prior to his death he had underpinned his corporate expansion with hundreds of millions of pounds from his companies' pension funds. Since then, Elisabeth has devoted herself to Jewish-Christian relations, and has founded an international scholars' conference on the Holocaust, Remembering for the Future. She has also published an autobiography, A Mind of My Own. She and Robert had nine children: Karine, who died of leukaemia aged 3; Michael, who died at 21 following a car accident; Anne, 56; Philip, 55; the twins Isabel and Christine, 53; Ian, 47; Kevin, 45; and Ghislaine, 42. Elisabeth lives in London.

Isabel is an IT entrepreneur and peace builder - she is on the board of governors of the Peres Center for Peace. She divides her time between Israel and the United States, where her son, Alexander, 19, lives.

ELISABETH: I almost lost my twins, Isabel and Christine, when they were three weeks old, to what was known then as infantile cholera. My husband was in Berlin, and he rushed back to find that the only doctor who could save them was on holiday. Bob fetched this man from his house, literally by the scruff of his collar; and at the hospital, in the nick of time, the twins were given a drug that was still at the experimental stage. Later, Isabel would say that her father gave her life twice.

The twins were known as "the twins", not as individuals. They talked to each other in a language only they could understand. They were very naughty and up to every conceivable kind of mischief. At 6am they would wake up the whole household with their terrible noise. Their father would go to their room and smack them, but when he left, they'd laugh their heads off. Once, they were playing in the loft, and they made a fire to cook with and set fire to the loft. We were sitting downstairs when we smelt burning, and Bob said: "It's those twins."

Isabel got on very well with her father, but in her late teens she lied to him and he told her: "I've lost my confidence in you. Confidence is like virginity - you only lose it once." She was terribly hurt and felt she was in disgrace.

We tried to encourage the twins to be individuals, but if we separated them they got sick. Though Christine was bright, she did not cope well in exams, but Isabel did. Then, as they grew up, we realised they were very different. Isabel became tough, while Christine was more sensitive and emotional. Today, Isabel is very decisive; she has a hardness to her, although she is also very vulnerable.

Robert was largely an absentee father, but he'd insist on the children being at home for lunch every Sunday, which he felt was sacred. Then in the summer we'd hire a yacht and cruise the Mediterranean, and Robert taught the children how to water-ski and lots of other things. He'd insist they keep a log, taking turns. But when the twins misbehaved they were banned from keeping the log.

He was a very tough father, which made it difficult for me, because I had to act as a buffer or he could be too harsh on them. He wanted them to do well at school, and if they got a bad school report there was drama every time. We'd call them "the Maxwell dramas". He'd make such a big scene, then be the forgiving father, which was quite difficult, especially when they were adolescents. One would have done anything to avoid the drama.

Much as he loved them, Robert was also a bully to me and to the children. He came from a family of nine who were extremely poor, and all his siblings were murdered in Auschwitz. His dead mother was the personification of everything that is good. I tried to rival her, which was difficult. I had all these children, trying to re-create for Bob the family he had lost, so he'd always be surrounded by people who loved him. And actually his children were extremely meaningful to him. But towards the end of his life he developed megalomania. People laugh, but it's a serious disease, because you think you're always right and you don't take advice.

In 1991, Bob developed a terrible cold, and he sailed to the Canaries to try and shake it off in the sun. I was just about to leave for Israel to learn Yiddish when I received a phone call from Kevin telling me his father had been found drowned. All the children flew back except for Christine, who was pregnant.

We were stunned, but we stood together. We also realised that we were in a big financial mess, with my two boys Kevin and Ian right in the middle. Everything was taken from us. It was terrible. And at the end of the trial they piled the damages and costs on Kevin. Isabel and her sister found themselves in terrible debt - Bob had given them things as his children, but everything was reclaimed. And Isabel had had a very tough divorce. She was a single mother by then, responsible for bringing her son up single-handedly.

I'd like to know the truth about Bob's death. I don't think he committed suicide. I know he wouldn't have left us in such a terrible mess, involving his children in a way he never should have if he were not sick. But there was no investigation into his death. Why?

Considering all the difficulties she's been through, Isabel's done very well. She's very much in charge of her life, and very successful in her job. She's bought herself a magnificent house in San Francisco; she has a son she's proud of. She is also loyal to the memory of her

father, and to what Judaism represents in her life. All my children were brought up as Anglicans, but Isabel was very taken by the Jewish faith and the politics in Israel, where she was made trustee of the peace foundation. She travels there a lot. Isabel is a very beautiful girl. Working to be in charge of her own life has made her decisive and quite tough.

ISABEL: My family has had its share of tragedy but my childhood was idyllic. We lived in a beautiful house and my mother was busy doing many things – she was mother to us all, she was entertaining guests, she was active in my father's constituency [Buckingham]. And whatever she did, she was always elegant and graceful in the way she dealt with others.

My parents met in Paris during the war. My father was wild and charismatic, an entirely self-made man who'd grown up in a poor Jewish peasant family in Czechoslovakia. He lost his family in the Holocaust, but he had managed to escape to England at 17 and joined the British Army. England became his adopted country and all his life he was proud to be British. Though he later became very wealthy, he never forgot his working-class roots.

My mother is also very imaginative and she did things in an unconventional way, which is probably why my parents took to each other. After the war there was so much chaos, and the trauma of my father losing his family was hard.

My mother filled the role of manager, mother, wife, everything. But that came at a price – her individuality. I got my strong work ethic from her – that you should try and do everything that's within your power to do. She lived her values completely, though she made a lot of sacrifices. I get my reputation for persistence from my mother, but she is also an unusually warm person. As was my father; he was very compassionate, helping a lot of small people, although none of this was reported in the media.

Throughout her life my mother has shown inner steel, which she's needed to face the things that happened to her – like marrying my father. He was a rare person, with a huge personality. We all had to adapt round him. My father was like the sun: blinding. When he was around, you couldn't even see yourself. My mother tried to protect us from that.

Everything changed when I was six and my younger sister died of leukaemia. My mother was devastated. And then, when I was 11, my brother Michael had a terrible accident. It was a huge tragedy. He was unconscious for seven years, a vegetable on life support. I remember we used to go to church a lot and pray like crazy. But at 15 I stopped praying. I realised that even if I prayed until I was blue in the face, nothing would change, and that God must be particularly cruel. After I stopped praying I felt much better. My mother, however, never lost her faith.

As an MP my father was travelling widely, with a large business, and my mother had eight children, with a huge amount going on, and there was no grieving time for my brother because he was technically still alive. We sort of let go of him gradually, and life somehow went on. In hindsight I wish my brother had died right away, so we could have grieved, got over it and moved on. Instead my mother went to see him every day – I couldn't handle that. My father was devastated; he was a man of action who couldn't do anything to save his son. He buried himself in his work and became even more driven and more protective of the rest of us. When we wanted to go out he'd ask lots of questions, especially if we were to use the car. Now I see that death changes people in the same way that money can.

I never expected a silver spoon in my mouth, nor did I get one. We had nice things, but my father was extremely strict. I went to a local grammar school, while my sister went to a private school. My parents' values, which they passed on to me, were all about giving something back to the world. In my teens we'd attend dinners at home with people from all disciplines: scientists, businessmen, Nobel laureates, kings and prime ministers. We were taught that nobody was boring and you could always learn something from anyone, whether they were a dustman or a king. That gave us an ability to be socially at ease in any circumstance, anywhere.

While I was at Oxford, my mother started her own undergraduate course there. My boyfriend and I shared rooms across from the office my mother had, and when she arrived in the morning she'd walk by, whistling loudly. It was all very strange to be studying at the same time as your mother, but I was proud of her for going back to study at the age of 49, and that she went on to become a scholar in Jewish-Christian relations.

Then, in 1980, I went to the States to visit my twin sister, and I fell in love with my former husband, Dale, and never came back to England. I worked in films for 10 years and then moved to San Francisco. I was in California when I heard about my father's death on the radio. I flew to London immediately, and the whole thing was a nightmare. The paparazzi were horrendous. I was very protective of our mother: when we left the house I'd take a tennis racket to push a way through the press. But my mother had us and we had each other, and somehow we coped. My father was highly complex and I don't have rose-coloured glasses about him. But I am proud of him, and I think if he were alive today that he would be proud of us too.

Over the past few years, life has been tough for my mother, and I wish I could wave a magic wand so she didn't have any financial worries. I ring her a lot and come over as often as I can. As parents get old they become the children, and vice versa. With my son I'm a different kind of parent – partly because I only have one child, whereas my mother had nine. And there is a slight difference in values: I'm not going to give up my power to anyone, man or woman.

At 83 years old, my mother is a very engaged person, particularly in her work with Remembering for the Future. People say ours has been an extraordinary life. Certainly big things happened to us. We had a lot of publicity – which we didn't seek and which wasn't the good kind. And we got left with a hell of a minus, which I intend to turn into a plus. But at times I wish I could just get on with my life and not live under the Maxwell shadow. I'm me, not my father or my mother. I just happen to be a Maxwell.

<<http://images.thetimes.co.uk/images/trans.gif>>

<<http://images.thetimes.co.uk/images/trans.gif>>

Print this article <javascript: var printFriendlyWin=window.open('/printFriendly/0,,1-531-1060004-531,00.html','','dependent=yes,resizable=no,scrollbars=yes,height=700,width=625,innerHeight=630,innerWidth=590');> Send to a friend <javascript: var emailWin=window.open('http://www.timesonline.co.uk/\_nlpd/emailAFriend.php?id=2099-1060004','emailFriend1060004','dependent=yes,resizable=no,scrollbars=no,height=350,width=520,innerHeight=550,innerWidth=453');> Back to top of page<[http://images.thetimes.co.uk/images/print\\_icon3.gif](http://images.thetimes.co.uk/images/print_icon3.gif)>