

# MIZZOU

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## Alumni Profile

### Opening childhood's box

Like any parent, Connie Savitt Sandler loves her children. After the innumerable hugs, tears, celebrations and tribulations of childhood, Sandler wanted to ensure that her three sons and daughter always remembered their childhood. She made it as easy as opening a box, and in the process created a few new family memories — from smack dab in the middle of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

“I always wanted to be in the audience of *Oprah*,” says Sandler, BJ '73, of Minneapolis. But she could never get tickets. One day, she visited the show's Web site, and saw that they were looking for gifts from the heart at holiday time. Sandler had made memory boxes for her children, so she wrote about four paragraphs about them on the online form.

“I had saved everything,” Sandler says. She filled four solid-wood boxes with items such as birth announcements, hospital bracelets, preschool artwork, report cards, sports awards, birthday party invitations, mother's day cards, and band, orchestra and dance programs — plus carpet and wallpaper samples from their childhood rooms.

“One day, I was at work and saw my cell phone ring,” Sandler says. “I went to retrieve my messages and the message was from a senior producer at *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. I thought



Connie Savitt Sandler, BJ '73, appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* after the show's producers learned of the memory boxes she created for her children.

it was a joke.”

No joke, though. After jumping through a few hoops with producers, the media mogul flew Sandler and — as a surprise — the Sandler family to Chicago for taping. The show aired the day before Thanksgiving 2008.

“It was truly magical,” Sandler says. “After the show aired, I heard from people I hadn’t seen or talked to in 30 years. I don’t think I’ll ever experience anything like that again.” — *Sarah Garber*

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