

A Tribute to Ms. Ann

My mother and I had some pretty rough times while I was growing up. Looking just like her didn't help. Everyone constantly compared us, from our clothing to the way we carried ourselves to our personalities. No wonder we clashed so much.

Years later, my husband and I found out we were pregnant with our first child. I prayed and prayed during the weeks leading up to the ultrasound that I would have a boy. My husband wanted a girl because, as he put it, there was "way too much testosterone in his family."

My desire for a boy was deeply rooted in pain and anguish. We wagered with each other up to the day of the ultrasound.

As we walked into the lab, my hands were clammy. I was gazing at the black-and-white image on the monitor, and my eyes filled with tears at the sight of the beautiful angel God had given me the privilege of carrying.

My heart raced as the doctor stated, "You're having a girl." I really wasn't surprised because as much as I wanted a boy, in the back of my mind I knew that we were having a girl.

As my husband hugged me with tears in his eyes, his smile was from ear to ear. I put on a facade that I was happy.

However, after getting dressed, immediately I found a place to be alone and secretively called my mother from my cell phone.

When she picked up the phone, I was crying uncontrollably. She managed to calm me down while trying not to panic, assuming something was wrong with the baby. When I said to her: "It's a girl. We're having a girl," my mother began thanking God that the baby was OK.

My silence prompted her to ask what was wrong. I responded, "I

prayed that I wouldn't have a girl because I don't want history to repeat itself and have the same relationship with my daughter that I had with you."

After the words came out of my mouth, I realized how deeply they must have hurt my mother. But, to my surprise, she said: "You don't have to worry about that. You will be a much better mother to your daughter than I ever was to you, because when you know better, you do better."

Those words lifted the huge boulder that had been sitting on my chest for so many years. A major moment of healing had just taken place. The woman I knew growing up was no more.

Stepping into the role of grandmother had changed her immediately. Hearing her words to me changed what I knew my future would be with my daughter.

Ms. Ann (Sharon Ann Phillips), known to her granddaughters as "Ma," is now an awesome role model to the generations that followed her. As a mother of two—Arija, 3 and Elàn, 2—I understand and admire her more and more.

My love for her has deepened beyond words. Though my parenting skills are different from hers, I have learned through her example what a wonderful thing a mother can be.