Stories of love, angst, laughs and memory from the Tiki Tiki Blog as told by our editors and contributors.
A few years ago, I learned a science fact that has really stuck with me: Because a female baby is born with all of the eggs, or ova, she’s ever going to need, her future children were, in a sense, also created and carried in the womb of their grandmother.

That kind of blew my mind, to imagine that the cell that would become me, was once contained inside my grandmother’s body as she grew my mother’s body.

Imagine it.

Also, fascinating to me is the fact that our mothers, and their mothers, and their mothers before them, gave us an exact copy of their mitochondrial DNA, the structure in our cells that creates energy and power.
If that isn’t maternal and grandma-like, to give us energy and power even down to the cellular level, I don’t know what is.

And so, these facts are appropriate tidbits as the lead-in to this book, a celebration of abuelas, the source of power in so many of our familias Latinas.

Many of the contributed essays and ideas that come to the Tiki Tiki have to do with las Abuelas, las Titas, las Mimas. While it is human phenom that our grandmothers leave a lifelong impression on us, it feels especially emphasized in our Latin culture to revere, and even fear, our grandmas.

My own maternal grandmother, whom I called Mama, has been gone for a decade, but her spirit and essence is a constant companion. I can so easily recall the softness of her skin, the sound of her chanclas on the terrazzo floor, the clink of gold medallions on her necklace. When she hugged me, she literally squeezed the air out of my lungs. She made me believe I was magical and she was at turns delightful and impossible.

My other Cuban grandmother was an easier spirit, a funny and frenetic little woman who didn’t stay still for long. She gave me the nickname “Carucho” and to me represents complete motherly selflessness and devotion. She was a woman who lived for her children — even when they were senior citizens themselves — but still enjoyed the zest of her own life.

I imagine my daughter will forever remember her own Abuelita’s penchant for gold bangles, her Coco Mademoiselle perfume, her hearty laugh and the no B.S.-approach to grandmothering.
Tributes to Abuelas

For you, we have gathered seven essays by talented writers who honor their Latin grandmothers — Puerto Rican, Colombian, Cuban and Mexican — through beautiful words of tribute.

Issa M. Mas writes “The Horror of Mealtime” recounting funny and dramatic childhood dinner-time struggles with Abuela.

Alexandra Rosas Schultze writes “The Reach of a Small Moment” about the sweet compliment Abuela delivered to the 4-year-old Alexandra, a moment that has carried Alexandra through a lifetime.

Jennifer Ramón-Dover’s grandmother used to wait outside for Jennifer each day as she got off the bus after school. Jennifer used to roll her eyes at the over-protectiveness. Now, she misses it. Her essay, The White Butterfly.
Cuban author and playwright Teresa Dovalpage shares an excerpt from her book *Habanera: Portrait of a Cuban Family*. The passage is about "An Abuela Called Muñeca," a beautiful grandma who carried on an affair in front of her young granddaughter.

Lydia P. Harris writes “Searching for Abuelita in the Kitchen,” an essay on her desire to learn her deceased grandmother’s easy way in the kitchen, before the lesson becomes forever unavailable.

In "My Mother As Abuela," Lisa Quinones-Fontanez marvels at seeing her mother patient and tender as a grandmother, far different from the woman she was as a mother. Her mother as grandmother allows Lisa to see and understand her mother better.

Maria Aquilino had a Cuban grandmother and a Mexican grandmother -- Guantanamera and La Curandera -- each strong and spiritual. In "Mis Abuelas," Maria writes of the gift these women passed on to her.
For a long time, I thought I had two names. First, there was Issa Maria Mas. Then, and this was the one I heard most from my Grandmother — who was my main caregiver growing up — there was “Ai Dios mio, dame paciencia!”

Abuela would say that so often, it took me a while to realize that what she was really doing was pleading to God for the patience not to strangle me! Mealtimes were especially difficult for us.

“Issa, comete la comida ante que se te enfrie.”

“But Granma, I’m not hungry.”

“Te vas a morir. Comete la comida.”
“Granma, I’m not gonna die. I had lunch.”


“I am not too skinny. And I’m not hungry!”

“Ai Dios mio, dame paciencia!”

This could go on and on for what seemed like forever to me, until one of two things happened:

a) I would either eat some of the food just to make her stop torturing me, or b) my Mother would come in from work and rescue me from that never-ending struggle.

Option A was my least favorite solution, because no matter how much I ate, Abuela was never satisfied.

“Muchacha, no comiste nada.”

“Granma, how can you say I didn’t eat ANYTHING? Don’t you see some food missing from my plate? Didn’t you see me put it in my mouth?”

“Pero todavía te queda tanto.”

“Of course there’s still so much left on my plate, I’m one 11-year-old girl! You put enough food on there to feed a truck full of grown men!”

“Malcriada,” she would sneer at me.
It took me a very long time to truly understand the term “malcriada.” You see, “malcriada,” the way Abuela meant it, was used to remind me that I was being too sassy for my own good; a smart aleck. The funny thing is that the exact translation for “malcriada” is to say I was “raised wrong.” It was an odd thing to say considering she was the one raising me. This was merely one of the many contradictions and complexities I had to fight every day of my life.

This battle had been an ancient one. From the stories she would tell, she had been trying to get me to eat since I was a toddler. She would sit in front of my highchair and make the spoon fly around like an airplane to distract me so that she could catch me when I least expected it and stuff some food in my mouth. From what she says, sometimes I ate it. Sometimes, I would spit it out at Suki, the dog.

“Ai Dios mio, dame paciencia.”

Now, it wasn’t that I didn’t like Abuela’s food. Actually, she was a really good cook. It’s just that I think in Puerto Rico, during the time Abuela was young, they must have served food in gigantic pots, filled all the way to the top, and you were forced to Eat. It. All. She must never have gotten used to the fact that we ate on normal-sized plates in New York because she still piled on the food as if I was going to be in the desert for the next week without a meal.

No matter how many times I told her that it wasn’t that I didn’t like what she cooked, it’s that I wasn’t hungry, or that there was too much food on my plate, she still insisted that she had made me one of my favorite dishes and so I should be happy to eat it. All.

“Comete la comida, Issa.”

“I’m full.”
“Pero a ti te gusta el bacalao.”

“I know I like it Granma, I just don’t want anymore.”

“Pero si no comiste nada.”

“Granma, how can you say I didn’t eat ANYTHING?!”

These days I can’t stop eating until every last grain of rice is gone. When I get as big as a carnival side-show act, and become a woman who is so huge that she has her own zip code, I will blame it all on Abuela. It won’t matter though. To her, I will always be “demasiada flaca.” Ugh.
Issa M. Mas is a freelance writer who publishes the site, Single Mama NYC and the resource site, Your Single Parenting. She lives in her native New York City with her son.
De la Sierra Morena
Cielito Lindo, vienen bajando
Un par do ojitos negros
Cielito lindo, de contrabando
From the Sierra Mountains

My beautiful sky, they come down
A pair of blackest eyes
Pretty little heaven, which I cannot have

I sit cross legged on the floor, holding the baby doll that my Spanish grandmother has bought me.
My grandmother sits behind me and sings softly as she patiently runs a wide toothed comb, that she every now and then dips into a mason jar of rhubarb water, through my jungle of curly almost black hair. She takes the smallest sections of my hair, wets it down with the rhubarb water, and then curls it into corkscrews around her little finger.

She sings this song to me every morning – it is a peaceful, wistful melody.

“Be sure to smooth your hands over your baby doll, your munequita,” my grandmother instructs me in Spanish as she combs my hair, “you want her to feel safe.” I immediately rub my hands over my baby doll’s head, I want her to feel safe.

The intention of the rhubarb water, boiled down to a thick juice made from the plants that she grows in her garden, is to give highlights to my hair.

“Now, when you go outside to play in the sun and your hair dries, you’ll have Shirley Temple rings,” I hear her promise me in Spanish.

When she finishes, she asks me with her soft, slow voice to please help her up, if it’s not too much trouble, from where she has been sitting.

I am only 4-years-old.

My grandmother walks me to the mirror in the front hallway, and stands behind me. She reaches around, and holds my chin up gently with the tips of her fingers so that I can see myself in the mirror. I feel her quietly looking at me. I look at myself, too.

“Those dark eyes, you have such beautiful dark eyes. And the most delicious laugh. You are like a little doll, you are a munequita.”
I smile shyly back at myself. I believe her.

We stand together, in one reflection, while she moves her hands over my small shoulders. I feel so safe.

She turns me so that I face her, and gathers me so tightly inside her arms and all the ugliness around me is gone. There is peace at my grandmother’s hand, and in her arms. I close my eyes and bury my head— I want to stay there, with my eyes closed, my ears covered, all by her.

The morning above occurred in 1965, two years before my father would have committed suicide on Thanksgiving Day, when I was in the First grade. The morning above occurred on a day when my clinically depressed mother would have spent another usual day of not looking at us, not making eye contact with us, not speaking to us.

As I write this morning, about this small moment in my life, I can see from the distance of years, the power a moment contains.

I still feel how she had me convinced that even though there were 6 of us born to my mother, it was me, who was the special one, me who was the most loved one.

When my grandmother passed away, my siblings and I sought each other out, at her funeral, to confess. We whispered, “You know, I was her favorite.” Fools. I knew deep down it was me who was the favorite.

*De la Sierra Morena*
*Cielito lindo, vienen bajando*
*Un par de ojitos negros*
*Cielito lindo, de contrabando*
I am singing to my youngest son as I work a comb through the curly knots that are his hair. I tell him that the song he hears is the same song my grandmother sang to me while she combed my hair when I was little.

I am hit by an impulse too strong and quick for me to stop that it makes me pull my son into me, and grasp him in an embrace that I need more than he does.

"I love you, mama," his muffled words rise up to me from my chest.

The power of the small moment that my Grandmother created for me has carried me to this very moment here.

Did she know she created this small moment? I don’t know. Did she know that from this morning in 1965 that I’d be writing of that same moment in 2010, 45 years later.

Would she have known the reach of a small moment?

The force of that morning’s memory, makes me stop and look at my children, with eye contact, with words heard, and with words returned, with full burying embraces — I want to give my children moments that will reach to the year 2050 and beyond.
Alexandra is a first-generation American raising three boys full time, while she caters part time. She lives with her husband and children in a small Wisconsin town and writes of the sweet and the funny at her humor site, Good Day, Regular People.
I was lucky: I got to take the afternoon city bus home from high school. Since both my parents worked and my mom’s job was closer to my sister’s grade school, they decided that I would take the public bus home from school every day.

The bus stop was smack dab right in front of my private, Catholic high school, so all my affluent classmates could see us “bus riders” waiting for our slow transportation home.

At around 2:45 every afternoon, the bus came by and picked up the waiting ragtag group. The ride was usually a fun one, filled with lots of teen-age chatter and gossiping. As the bus dropped off each of my bus mates, I hoped the smelly homeless man or the crazy lady with the big hat wouldn’t take the empty seat next to me. Otherwise, it would mean holding my breath or pretending to read one of my homework assignments for the rest of the ride to my stop.
I would reach up to ring the bus bell, letting the driver know my stop was coming, and the big smoggy monster of a bus would pass in front of my house and lurch its way to the bus stop that was only a half-block from my front doorstep.

As soon as the bus passed my house, I would always see the small figure of my grandmother, my Boya — as all her grandchildren called her instead of the traditional, Abuela —, already standing at the steps leading from our front yard to the sidewalk.

My grandmother had lived with us since I was about 7-years-old, which had been great until I started feeling smothered and annoyed by what I had previously treasured as my beloved grandmother’s attention and coddling.

When I would see her already waiting for me on the steps, I would automatically roll my eyes, frustrated that my 70-something-year-old Mexican grandmother still treated me – a mature 15-year old young woman — like a little kid who needed to be watched like a hawk. Ridiculous, I thought.

After giving her a hug and a kiss, I would tell her, in Spanish, “Boya, you don’t have to wait out here for me, you know. It’s only half a block. Nothing is going to happen to me. I can take care of myself.”

She would shake her head and say, “You never know. There are lots of crazy people out there. Somebody might kidnap you.”

I was always in awe at how paranoid she was. At my young age, I never imagined how someone could be that distrustful of everything. I just rolled my eyes (making sure she didn’t see it for fear of getting the chancla thrown at me) and followed her into the house, hoping she had made one of my favorite dishes for dinner.
Some days, the bus would pass by, and I wouldn’t see her in the front yard. I would get excited thinking that maybe she had got caught up watching her favorite telenovela and lost track of time, or maybe she had finally realized I was not a kid anymore and had given up babysitting me. As I jumped off the bus onto the sidewalk, I would happily start my short path home.

Before I could even take one step, there she would be, like clockwork, standing down the block, her small body somehow looking bigger on the sidewalk in front of my house – the sergeant standing guard. All I could do was give one of my big, annoyed teen-age sighs, roll my eyes and shake my head as I slowly made my way down that “dangerous” half a block.

Over the next seven years, my grandmother stood watch as my sister and I grew up and graduated from high school, then moved out of the house to go to college. She even saw me graduate from college — the first woman in our family to do so.

One month after my college graduation, my beautiful, tough, amazing Boya lost her short battle against pancreatic cancer. Seeing her succumb to such a horrible illness was both heartbreaking and overwhelming.

As my family tried to heal the tremendous hole that her death left in all of us, I began thinking back to my bus trips home from school and her constant vigil over me.

Every time I visited my parents on the weekends, I would think of my Boya as I drove up to their house, always expecting to see her come down the steps to welcome me home. Of course, my guardian was no longer there, and I could only dream of those days of walking half a block to her smile, her hugs or even to her lectures.
One day, my cousin Wendy, and I were leaving a restaurant, and I suddenly heard her say “Hi, Boya.” When I gave her a puzzled look, Wendy pointed to the white butterfly that was fluttering around us. “That’s Boya,” Wendy said. “Haven’t you ever noticed that the white butterfly is always around, especially when you’re thinking about her?”

I had not. Yet after that day, I began seeing the white butterfly almost on a daily basis. No matter where I was – at work, at home, out shopping or running errands – the white butterfly was always nearby and would always make me stop and smile. I was comforted knowing that my Boya had never left me – I just had not recognized her presence.

Even today, more than 15 years after her death, the white butterfly still follows me where I wander. I see her everywhere I go, fluttering near me, watching over me as I continue my journey, making sure I always reach home safe and sound.

Gracias, Boya.
Jennifer lives in a multi-hyphenated world. She is a Mexican-Peruvian-American marketing executive living in Los Angeles who has worked in the entertainment industry for over 15 years. Juggling it all is a challenge but she is thankful every day for the support of her loving husband, her beautiful daughter Julia, and her amazing parents and sister.
An Abuela Called Muñeca

Introduction: Habanera, a Portrait of a Cuban Family, started as a memoir. I tried to write as much as I could remember about my childhood in the Cuba of the '60s and '70s, but when I sent some chapters to my mother, who still lives in Havana, she was angry, casi me come viva over the phone!

She argued that she had never cheated on my father nor changed her political ideas the way I was presenting it … and ended up calling me a liar and una cochina in all the senses of the word. True, I had tried to spice things up a bit -- maybe too much. Reality can be so bland and uninteresting! That was when I realized I had to turn it into fiction. But I kept lots of autobiographical material. The chapters about my grandmother, Muñeca, are mostly carbon copies of reality…
Afternoon Affair

My grandma’s name was Eugenia but everybody called her Muñeca (Doll) because of her good looks.

When she was in her early fifties, she didn’t seem one day over forty. She kept her brown hair waist-long and was the proud owner of a mountain-like ass, un culo piramidal, which she wiggled conceitedly.

She never took me to the neighborhood park where the other grandmothers got together to gossip, knit and exchange recipes. Muñeca refused to be around old people. “Wrinkles are contagious,” she claimed.

She also hated the boys in roller skates that came dangerously close to her high-heeled shoes. She preferred to go to Coppelia, Havana’s most renowned ice cream parlor. It was in El Vedado and we needed to take several buses to get there. But Muñeca didn’t mind the trip.

In Coppelia she met a guy named Ramoncito and they laughed and held hands while we waited in line. Ramoncito was bald, in his forties, and constantly complained about la vieja, a nagging woman who was, no doubt, his wife.

After having a sundae or a banana split, the three of us walked to Antonio Maceo Park. My grandma and Ramoncito sent me to play with other children and they retreated to a bench sheltered by overgrown bushes.

“Run, jump, find someone to play with,” Muñeca said. “You need to get some fresh air! And don’t come back until I call you. Anda!”
I tried to obey her but ended up playing alone most of the times since I was too shy to approach other kids. And yet, that was more interesting that staying home. Though I was barely five years old, I realized that some illicit hanky-panky was going on there. But it never bothered me. On the contrary, being a witness to my grandma’s affair made me feel special, smart and secretly powerful.

The only thing I didn’t like about Antonio Maceo Park was the presence of carrion birds, las aurás tiñosas that 14 circled overhead because there was a garbage dump nearby. They had featherless red heads and yellowish feet and didn’t seem afraid of people. I hid among the bushes when they began to fly too low.

**Don’t Call Me Grandma**

Muñeca had established two strict rules about our Coppelia outings. I wasn’t supposed to call her “grandma” in front of Ramoncito, but “aunt.” “I am Tía Eugenia, remember. Or just Muñeca. Don’t embarrass me.”

And I was to keep mum about Ramoncito. “Don’t ever mention him to your mother or to Ponciano, hear?” she warned me. It was a family habit to add the word “hear?” at the end of sentences when important matters were discussed.

“I know that!” I replied, offended. Despite Ponciano’s opinion, I didn’t consider myself a snitch.
The furtive visits to Coppelia went on for years. I ate chocolate, vanilla and mango ice cream coated with the piquant sauce of forbidden love. When Ma mère asked where we had been for so long, my grandma always had a good excuse ready.

The most common one was that she had taken me to a gathering sponsored by Los Pioneritos (The Little Pioneers) where they taught kids to march and to sing revolutionary songs.
Teresa Dovalpage was born in Havana, Cuba in 1966 and presently lives in Taos, New Mexico, where she teaches Spanish and literature at UNM-Taos. Teresa has a Ph.D. in Latin American literature and is the author of five novels -- three in Spanish and two in English. She also has written a collection of short stories in Spanish and is a playwright. Read more about her at her site, her Spanish blog, and her English blog.
My mother's mother was small but mighty. Her skin already was creased when I knew her. She was creased not wrinkled. Her skin was powdered silk and etched like the delicate lines you find behind leaves.

She was gifted with many things. She could grow a plant from just the leaves of another. Her small house was a virtual rain forest in the barrio where she lived. She was strong, she single-handedly got her large family through the Great Depression and they never knew what is was to go hungry.

My mom has memories of her scouring empty fields for edible roots, plants that grew wild and that others never knew to even consider as a food source. And she could cook! I still remember her tamales, tortillas, wedding cookies...so many good things.

I remember her slapping masa on her table, hands deftly forming disks, then rolling out tortilla after tortilla. She did it so quickly. On New Year's Eve this dough became bunuelos and all of my mother’s family gathered at her little house. We spilled out onto the lawn in front and in back, getting re-acquainted with one another. My sisters, my brother and I with our many, many cousins. My grandmother tied us together and when she passed away those ties snapped. I never see my cousins anymore.
I really miss my grandma on days like these. Days that I worry my daughters aren't experiencing enough of the culture I was lucky to be immersed in. Days that I've spent trying to find the recipe for the dishes my grandma made so effortlessly. She didn't follow recipes, everything she cooked was written in her heart -- you felt her love with every bite.

But not following recipes means not having your recipes printed out. And anyone who is lucky enough to know them as you did most likely learned them beside you, not from a print out. Alas, my mother has never liked cooking -- and when she was offered the chance to learn what my grandma could teach her, she declined. She regrets that. I regret that. It's a part of my grandmother that I'd love to have to myself. That I'd love to share with my children and their children.

But one of my aunts knows those recipes. My aunt has my grandmother's hands, my mother likes to say. And I know that she means that everything my aunt puts her hand to she does well. Be it plants or crocheting, sewing...or cooking.

And I am tempted to re-acquaint myself with her, this aunt I respect but also find formidable. I, of the awkward hands, who has a thirst for knowledge.

My aunt doesn't follow recipes either. Any recipe learned from her would be acquired apprentice-like. And while I almost ache for such a thing I feel presumption in even asking. My aunt, the one among many of my mothers family with whom I've lost touch, who even my mom has lost touch with.

But I must. I feel this deep in my heart -- before another lost chance leaves more regret behind it. Before those ties are severed for good. Even though I feel embarrassed at my lack of seeking before now. Even though I feel embarrassed at my awkward hands.

I must reconnect or I face regretting forever my chance to be close to my grandma again.
Lydia Puente Harris is married to an English artist and they have two lovely girls. She enjoys painting, baking, writing, and anything that allows her to be creative. She is a third generation American, whose people hail from Mexico and Spain. Find Lydia at Squidmom.
I am always amazed when I watch my mother kiss my son goodbye. Often, she will not leave my apartment without several hugs and kisses from her only grandson. My mother will give him a big squeeze and kiss him repeatedly on the cheek, “Bye my little pussycat.”

And I roll my eyes because (a) she refers to my 5-year-old son as a “little pussycat” and (b) she never, ever called me anything else other than Lisa – unless esa Lisa counts. And when I witness the exchange I wonder: Who is this overtly affectionate woman who claims to be my mother?

This is not the woman who raised me.
The woman who raised me is one of the matriarchs that everyone fears. um, respects.

Born in Cidra, Puerto Rico her family moved to New York City when she was 9-years-old. My mother is the kind of woman many would describe as “old school,” however her true power rests on the values of two worlds: old and new, Cidra and New York City. A clash of two cultures – whether she realized it or not.

My mother is a big believer in tough love and teaching lessons. She is nobody’s fool. She was quick with a slipper and quicker with her hands. She moved so swiftly, you didn’t realize you were given a cocotazo, until you felt your scalp stinging. She hardly ever said Yes straight out when I asked for something. My mother always answered with a “we’ll see.”

We spent most of my teenage years arguing, clashing the way mothers and daughters often do. When I was about 16-years-old, I yelled: “When I have kids, I’ll never bring them to your house.” To which my mother replied, “I want that in writing.” So I wrote down my words on the back of a bank deposit slip, signed and dated as if it were a legal document.

A few years ago, while having dinner at her house – my mother brought out the note to show my husband. We all laughed – especially because my son (who was 2 at the time) had just spent the night. And currently, my mother picks up my son from the school and watches him until my husband or I come home from work.

I often come home and find my mother reading to my son, in a quiet patient voice; a voice that I don’t recall hearing as a child. There is a small part of me that feels jealous, almost slighted because my mother never read to me.
On days when my son’s therapist cancels a session, I’ll come home and find my mother and son sitting at the table in his room and they are working on fine motor skills like stringing beads or rolling out play dough. I hear her singing to him and her voice is always playful and sweet. Don’t get me wrong – she scolds him, but even when she does it’s not the same as when she scolded me.

I love watching my mother and son together – the bond they have is special. And I’m grateful that my mother kept the note I wrote so many years ago. It makes me realize how wrong I was and how lucky I am to have a mother like her.

And that my son benefits from having her as his Abuela.
Lisa Quinones-Fontanez is a secretary by day, MFA Creative Writing CCNY student/blogger by night and Mommy round the clock. Lisa also is the author of AutismWonderland. Her writing has been featured in Pot Luck Magazine, Being Latino and BronxMama.
My Cuban grandmother, Juanita, known as Guantaramera to her close friends back in Cuba, came to the US in the early 1970s.

I remember our visits to her home as a child. She had figurines all over her living room, which we were not allowed touch.

“No toquen nada” my mother would warn as we entered her front door.

Immediately we were welcomed with the smell of Goya sofrito creating some magical Cuban dish on the stove, and boy would my mouth water.

While Guantaramera was no taller than 5 feet, her presence was that of the tallest, sturdiest, strongest palm tree you could imagine. She would greet you with a big wet kiss and she always smelled of the perfume Pompeia.
One of the first things we would see when we entered her home was her boveda, or ancestral shine. I found it to be intimidating back then and couldn’t understand why I was so drawn to it, but I would find out why later in life.

For her 99th birthday, I interviewed her and videotaped the interview. I learned things about this amazing woman I had not known before -- she had nine children, but only five lived to adulthood and she had had more than one father to her children. The interview is one of the fondest memories that I keep of her. She lived to be 101-years-old.

La Curandera

Mi abuela Teresa La Curandera I met once on my first, and thus far only, trip to Mexico when I was about 12-years-old.

While at first I was a bit shy, I felt an intense closeness to her, as if I’d known her from the first day I came into this world. She had the most beautiful, and what I then thought were the most mysterious, facial features -- none like I had ever seen before. We didn’t see many Native American-looking people in the 1970’s in West New York, NJ
She chewed tobacco and I was told she liked to tip the elbow (wink). I wonder if it was Mexican-style moon shine that she would sip out of her clay mug?

She was known in town to cure most illnesses and cleanse people of dark spirits by the use of natural herbs, powder and spiritual rituals.

During that visit I remember she taught me how to milk a cow, and couldn’t understand why I had a hard time drinking that milk afterwards!

Her home and farm were very humble, warm and inviting, and I remember just wanting to stay there forever. I recall how much my Dad and Mom just adored her and the sacrifices my Dad made to reunite my Mom with my grandmother.

What a blessing that trip turned out to be, because about two years later we would learn of her sudden death. That was the first time I ever saw my Dad cry.

Over the years I slowly but surely put the pieces to the puzzle together.

I wasn’t crazy like I thought I was as a kid, when I could see and hear people who weren’t really there. I inherited my mediumship/clairvoyance gift from these two blessed woman.

Today in my spiritual work I too work with herbs and have had my own boveda since I was 11-years-old. I’ve learned to embrace this gift and humbly consider myself a work in progress, gracias a mis abuelas.
Maria was born and raised in New Jersey by her Cuban father and a Mexican mother. A Miami resident, she is a registered nurse who was ordained as a Lukumi Priestess, to Ochun in 1997. She does spiritual work and is currently pursuing Reiki, and Energy Medicine/Life Coach certifications.
Abuela Stories Abound

The *Tiki Tiki* launched Mother’s Day weekend 2009, and since then, we have published several tributes to Abuelas. For your pleasure, here are links to the best of the best.

- What Do You Call Your Abuela?
- Being Cuban, One Afternoon at a Time
- The Drama of Old Women and Little Girls
- How Many Points is a Pastelito?
- Abuela Speaks English
- Snagged by Abuelita, or Careful with the Viejas
- Que Pena! Embarrassing Sex Stories (many include Abuelas)
Your Turn

Come over to our Facebook page, and add to the growing list of what we call our Abuelas. So far, we have Yaya, Mamaita, Mami, Oma, Abuela, Nana, Nanita and Granny.

We also hope you will share this love fest for Abuela’s with the women in your life in whichever way is your favorite.

Thank you for celebrating las Abuelas with us during this Mother’s Day 2011.

Carrie Ferguson Weir

editor, Tiki Tiki Blog
Celebrating Abuela Photo Credits - clockwise from upper left:

- Issa M. Mas
- Teresa Dovelpage
- Sylvia Marcela Gomez
- Alexandra Rosas Schultze
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