Lola Salud is a success story in San Fernando, Pampanga. My grandfather died after three years marriage and left her with two step children and my dad who was three years old, my Tita Pising, two, and Tito Sinong, one. She was also the eldest of eight children. She sent all her brothers and sisters to prominent schools like Holy Spirit and Ateneo, and so with her children and step children. They all became prominent in their fields and were high society figures.

Everyday, Lola Salud and I would sit on the veranda watching people pass by. She invited everybody, rich or poor, to drop by for merienda. Then she would tell me the stories of her life and of the lives of the people who dropped by, not gossip, but about the struggles and battles they won to survive. She told me how she led her family to survive the prewar, the World War, and the liberation with her entrepreneurial skills selling butterballs and making cakes to sell during the Japanese war, selling cabbages in the market. She shared how she started the “calesa” business by investing in horses and feeding the horses while taking care of the children. What is amazing is that she never complained or felt sorry for herself. Her life was God-centered and she shared everything she had. She especially loved sharing her best talent: cooking. Known to all as the famous Doña Salud Dayrit vda de Santos, the best Kapampangan chef, she studied cooking in Spain, France, and Italy when they traveled by ship to deliver the sugar to Europe. She remembered all birthdays and volunteered to cater parties of friends for free. She hosted parties on the weekends cooking for everybody. Both rich and poor attended, the poor using the same plates from the finest bone china from Spain.

Her smiles and open heart amazed me. She was solution-based, unassuming, nonconfrontational. Everyone was her friend, even a simple red egg vendor was significant to her. Everyone loved her.
She led by example. Among her best mentoring was simple advice, which I took to heart.

She said:

Never say namumulubi na ako, nor have I no money. Your life is like a bamboo that bends: your life will be where you bend it. If somebody hurts you, do not fall for it. The more you get angry, the more he gets satisfaction. The best vindication is to be happy and healthy, this kills them. You cannot bring anything when you die. Share everything, so that when you die, you have a lot of good memories to bring. You only bring with you what you ate, the happiness and joy, the battles you won in your life, and the memories. The rest will go to junk and garbage. When people talk about you, good or bad, be flattered instead of getting angry, the fact that they talk about you means that you are interesting. God gives you only what you need. So if you share with other people, you will have added abundance from what God will provide to give to them through you. The best blessing is that you win hearts and friends who can support you when you are in need. Wealth is connections not money, and connections are effective only when they are payments for the unsolicited support you initiated to share with them even before you ask help from them. It is debt of gratitude. If you use money for connections, there will always be somebody who can give greater than what you have given, so it is a no-win situation. Spend time helping the sick and dying and the sinners to bring them back to God. They will be your greatest investment. When they die, you have invested in angels who will be spiritual helpers to you. And since they are nearer to God, they are the best intercessors as they know your needs and your wants better.

At 87 years old, Lola Salud died gracefully and peacefully, making sure she thanked everybody. The whole town stopped to pay homage; even the people from all over the Philippines and abroad found time to be there. All sectors of society were there, the whole cathedral was
packed with people sad, some crying. Nuns and priests from different parts of the Philippines joined the mass. We did not realize she was a sponsor of congregations and sent priests to school. The bishop officiated the concelebrated mass together with these priests. She gave me a small goodbye gift: a package for education. She said, “Life is all about having an open mind learning to listen, learn from others, keep acquiring knowledge, and find happiness and joy from the fulfillment to share with others. Never complain nor be envious, God gives you so many blessings everyday. God only gives you what you need for the day and what you deserve, what you cannot have is not meant for you.”

Lola Salud is me now, I am now the mentor to my kids and share the same tips and live it. I am an achiever, a working Mom on top of my career. I single handedly brought up my children, and I am an integral part of their formative age. With all the awards of my achievements in my profession, my greatest career is to be a mom to three girls and one boy who are also empowered, self-made, self-motivated with a civic heart and with a God-centered life. Lola Salud’s mentoring has a multiplier effect, resulting in a ripple effect benefiting me, my children, their families and the community from generation to generation. Since she died in 1970 up to now, she is still receiving mail from all walks of life.

Marian Santos-Nash is 2010 University of the Philippines Distinguished Alumnus Awardee for “Women Empowerment” and featured in Panorama as The Woman with Impeccable Optimism. She is a hands-on mother of four siblings, while managing to excel in her career path as CEO, Entrepreneur, International Consultant, and an Advocate for NGOs, GOs, SMEs, as well as micro and macro industries.