

**SEXUAL  
POLITICS**

# 'I became a born-again virgin... for my husband'

Rebecca Rodriguez, 33, found a unique way to restore her virginity

**L**OSING YOUR VIRGINITY IS something you should feel happy and positive about. But I never got over the fact that I lost mine at 16 to someone I didn't love. And my desire to reclaim my purity became an obsession.

I grew up in Mexico, where women are expected to be virgins when they marry.

I moved with my parents to California when I was ten, but Mum often said: "If you're not a virgin, no man will love you."

However, it didn't stop me having sex with my first boyfriend when I was 16.

I became pregnant and, ashamed and scared, I confided in Mum. Her anger simply reinforced my guilt and I was barely allowed to leave the house from then on.

My school didn't want pregnant girls setting other pupils a bad example, so I was bussed to a special school for girls who were expecting babies.

My self-esteem plummeted. After I gave birth to Mark, I returned to my old school. But I couldn't shake off the feeling that now I was different from other girls.

When I was 18, I met Ben.

He was 19 and worked in a restaurant. We became friends. I was attracted to his calmness and patience, as well as his looks. We fell in love and had sex for the first time after six months. This time I felt special and cherished. But I couldn't help wishing Ben had been my first.

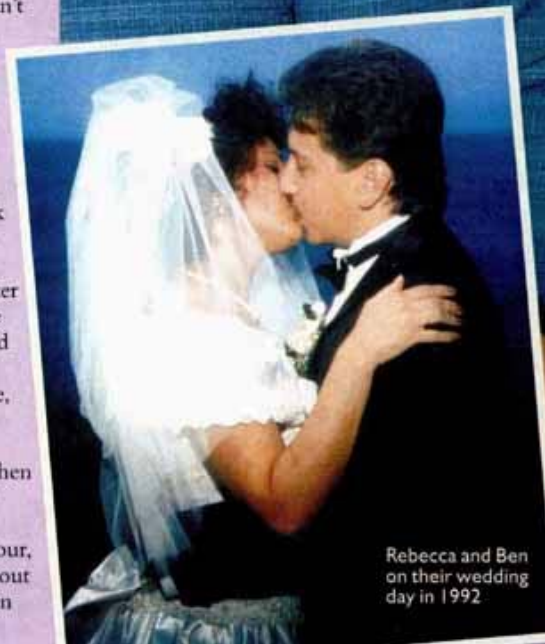
We married in July 1992. The fact I wasn't a virgin didn't bother Ben, but it upset me. I'd have done anything to get my virginity back.

We settled into a happy, fulfilling relationship and both found work as restaurant managers. Ben was a wonderful dad to Mark and to our two daughters, Jen and Randy.

Sex was wonderful until after Randy's birth. Then, because pregnancy and childbirth had put pressure on my vaginal muscles, I lost sensation there, which really spoiled my pleasure in love-making.

I tried exercises to strengthen my vaginal muscles but they didn't help.

Then, when Randy was four, I watched a documentary about vaginal tightening and hymen replacement surgery.



Rebecca and Ben on their wedding day in 1992



Rebecca said she wanted to give Ben a "precious gift" – her virginity

Excited, I realised this might be the solution to both my problems – I'd feel like I'd regained my virginity, and it could also improve my sex life. I felt I had to go for it.

I told Ben my plans. "I want to give you my virginity as a gift," I explained. But he didn't want me to do it. It took me two years to persuade him.

Finally, in September 2001, we visited Dr Matlock of the Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute in Los Angeles, who had pioneered the procedure.

Dr Matlock said he could reconstruct my hymen by pulling skin over to cover up 75 per cent of the entrance to my vagina.

During sex my husband would be able to break the hymen. Dr Matlock said he

lose my virginity all over again.

However, Dr Matlock warned we'd have to wait eight weeks before making love, to make sure I'd healed properly. I also had regular check-ups.

I'd originally planned for Ben and I to book into a hotel and enjoy a romantic meal. I was going to buy sexy underwear. I wanted losing my virginity to Ben to be very special.

But eight weeks without sex heightened our desire. One evening Ben kissed me and, as we stared into each other's eyes, we knew it was time.

It took four or five attempts to make love successfully. It was painful but I didn't care. I felt I'd reclaimed the innocence I'd given up at 16.

I knew technically I wasn't

**'I'd regain my virginity and improve my sex life. I had to go for it'**

could also tighten the vaginal muscles stretched by childbirth.

He questioned my motives, but assured me he performed both operations all the time. He said South American women often requested the surgery, perhaps because of the cultural importance attached to virginity.

It cost £5,000, but self-worth is priceless. I felt anything that helped our sex life would help us all as a family.

We had some money put by and saved up the rest by going without a holiday that year.

In October 2001, I had the operation. I wasn't scared as there were no serious risks, apart from the usual ones from having a general anaesthetic.

The procedure took two hours and I returned home the same day. I'd told the children I was going into hospital because of a bladder problem, to spare their embarrassment.

I wore a catheter for three days and was a bit sore for the first week. But I felt elated and couldn't wait to have sex and

a virgin, but in my mind I finally felt at peace. My self-worth was restored and I was complete.

Ben was the first man I'd ever loved and the operation allowed me to give him a precious gift.

The vaginal tightening was also a success and our sex life was amazing. Even Ben noticed an improvement.

I decided to be open about my experiences and told Mark, now 17, and Jen, 14. They were embarrassed, but understood my reasons. I'll tell Randy, eight, when she's older. I haven't told my mum and, to be honest, don't know if I ever will.

I can't change the past but, thanks to this operation, I've been able to change the way I feel about it.

My problems were caused by previous generations' attitudes. But I've been able to put all that to rest now.

I'd recommend the operation to any woman who's unhappy because her husband isn't the first man she slept with. ■

By Catriona Whittlesley

PHOTOS: SPLASH