



Ana's Miracle

Ana's Miracle is the story of how our family was separated by death and adoption during the Civil War in El Salvador and our journey to reunite.

Dedication:

This e-book is dedicated to Ana Milagro Escobar. Milagro means miracle in English. Her name is the inspiration for this e-book and our blog. While we never knew her, we will never forget her sacrifice for us. We love you, always.

Introduction:

My name is Nelson/Roberto. I was one of the many children who were separated from their families during the Civil War in El Salvador. Thanks to the help of [Pro-Busqueda](#), I was reunited with my family during Christmas of 1997. This e-book is a collection of blog posts written by the children of a family that was torn apart. We are writing this to tell our story and share our experiences.



[Eva](#)

There is something you should know about my family first: we are not the type of people that quit easily. Not that kind... we have been fighters throughout our lives...

Pain and suffering are two words that my family know really well and how can I start to tell my own story (which is my family's, as well) without using these kinds of words? Well, I wish I didn't have to, but these words exist in what we have to tell...

I have to begin by talking about how hard it is to lose someone you love. Even when you are only 3 years old and are not aware of a sense of loss, you still suffer, and it hurts deep in your heart. Growing up without the guidance and care of a mother is truly a tough. You always feel there is something missing, something gone. You constantly feel that you need something in your life, but you don't realize what that something is. There is a lonely feeling that stays with you no matter if you are happy or sad... It is something more, something incomprehensible.

But I don't feel cheated by God or life. They gave me the purest love I could ever have, my Grandma. The best, the nicest, the most caring and loving person on earth... she was my support through all of those difficult years. But the thing is, WHY?

Wondering why has been a deep thought during my life, and now I know it is a question without an answer. However, it is the most important question we have asked ourselves...

I guess this is the reason why we are telling our stories: so that maybe we can understand and help others understand what we went through and how, after all, it has become a MIRACLE...

As my brother said, Ana Milagro is the name of our mother, which means MIRACLE. If you think about it, a miracle is full of power, full of hope, full of blessings, and I like to think that this is the legacy she gave to us...this is her story, the story of a MIRACLE...

Post: [Eva's Introduction - By Eva](#)



[Ernesto \(Toto\)](#)

Have you ever fought for a cause? No matter what it is? Maybe to help people or save animals or something else altogether? Well, those people who fight for a cause are the secret heroes of the world. These people are kind and strong. They like to help and want to change the way that the world works for others.

Regardless of whether they will ultimately make a difference or not, they try. Against all odds, no matter what they might risk or lose, they keep following those strong feelings. This is something I will never forget about my mother, Ana Milagro Escobar. She had strong feelings that moved her to pick up arms and fight for others, fight for her cause, fight to try to change her world, and fight to give us a better life. Her will to fight made her such a strong woman and that I will never forget.

I ,too, would like to help others as she did, and helping others was indeed her cause. Even though she didn't change the world, she got a chance to make things better for us, a chance to try and make a better world, and a chance to give us the opportunity she never had. That means a lot to us.

So, the purpose of this blog is to remember the strong woman who changed things for us, who made this miracle happen. I could never forget about all the love she gave us. She always stayed true. I'm so proud of this woman, my mother.

Post: [The fight for a cause \(Ernesto's Introduction\) - By Ernesto](#)

“Losing one's family obliges us to find our family. Not always the family that is our blood, but the family that can become our blood.”

Sean Connery – Finding Forester



The other day I saw the movie Freedom Writers. It's a story inspired by the real lives of Long Beach teenagers during the early 90's. The film was really good in that it made me think about my own family and our story. In the movie, the students kept diaries to write about their life experiences. It made me want to write down some of my own experiences.

For those who aren't too familiar with the story, my parents were both revolutionaries in the civil war in El Salvador. They were both fairly important in the group that they fought with. During the war, I was separated from my family and adopted in the United States.

[Nelson/Roberto](#) Fifteen years later, I was reunited with my birth family thanks to the efforts of my grandmother. That was in 1997 and since that time, we have become a big family. I frequently visit my family in Central America and they have come to the U.S. on several occasions to visit me as well.

I'm writing this blog with the help of my siblings to tell our story. We want to write our thoughts and feelings about the things we went through. We also want to help my adoptive mother as she writes a book detailing the events that brought us all together. We have been through so much over the years and we are so lucky to have found each other.

This year marks an important year for our family and our story. It was 25 years ago that I was separated from my birth family and this Christmas it will be 10 years since we were reunited. A lot has happened during that time and it has not always been easy, but now we can look back and reflect on these incredible events.

This is our story, this is Ana's Miracle...

Post: [Introduction - by Nelson/Roberto](#)

Please feel free to share this e-book with friend or family. We wrote this book as a way to share our story and remember our mother. If you have comments or questions, you can visit our blog at <http://anasmiracle.blogspot.com> or email us at anasmiracle@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you and we hope you enjoy our story.

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Part 1: Separation

My story begins even before I was born when my father, Luis Noel Coto, and my mother, Ana Milgro Escobar, were around 20 years old. My parents were born in El Salvador, a small country in Central America. My father and mother were both the youngest of eight siblings. My mother had seven sisters and one brother; my father had seven brothers and one sister.

During the 1970s, El Salvador's government was very hard on its people. This was a country in which 5% of the population controlled 95% of the wealth in the country. Times were hard for my parents.

During high school, my father was inspired by his high school teacher to fight the injustice in their country. After high school, he joined the revolution with a group called the FPL, which was a small part of a larger group known as the FLMN. He met my mother and they began dating soon after. He began talking to her about the revolution and how she should join. She did just that, even though her family advised her against it.

My father was a bodyguard in the FPL. He spent many days learning how to do martial arts and how to be a soldier. My mother worked in strategic planning and was responsible for coordinating many of the different cells. This was a lot of responsibility for someone so young. They were married soon after and had two weddings. One was a public wedding; the other was a wedding at arms.



Luis and Ana's wedding November 25, 1978

During the war, my father was in a gunfight in the mountains of El Salvador and was shot extremely close to his heart. Inches away from death, he lay in the mountains for three days without medical attention. Had it not been for one of his brothers who gave him blood, he would have died.

He was smuggled across the border to Nicaragua where they were able to treat his wounds. He managed to survive the operation but needed a safe place where he could recover. My mother arranged for him travel to Cuba where he would be safe. After four months of recuperating in Cuba, he returned to Nicaragua to meet up with my grandmother - Ana's mother - Mama Chila and his two children.

While my mother and father were off fighting in the war, my grandmother had taken over the job of looking after my brother and sister. To avoid the war, they were currently living in Nicaragua with plans to move to Costa Rica. My father rejoined them and a few weeks later my mother came to visit.

My sister recalls this visit in one of her posts.

After thinking a lot about what I should write next, the day I saw my mother for the last time came to my mind. A lot flashes through my mind; the vision I have is so blurry. I do remember that day...

I've never talked about it before to anyone, maybe because I didn't trust my memory. But now it seems to flow in my mind and makes sense after all. Oh God, I was just 3 years old...

The last time I saw her, on the day she came to visit, I remember having the feeling that I hadn't seen her for so long. I remember she was in a rush, kind of nervous, maybe anxious, but looking at her was like looking at an angel. I couldn't have been happier to have her back.

I remember her bringing a lot of presents for me, my brother Ernesto, and my Grandma. At that time, there was just my brother and I; we didn't have any other siblings yet. I remember I loved all of the presents, but all I wanted was to be with her. She was having a conversation with my father and they seemed very serious. Their faces had an expression of anguish that I couldn't understand at that moment, and now I think that maybe they knew they were not going to see each other again.

After that, all that I remember is my mom packing her bag the next day. She had a perceptible sadness in her eyes, a sad look that will never fade of my memories. Still, she was calm and peaceful, a peace that only someone who is doing the right thing can have. She came to me and hugged me for so long. I don't remember the words she said to me, but I do remember her looking at me with such love. I can say it was with the same love that I use today to look at my beautiful daughter: as if you were looking at the most precious treasure you could have. My brother Toto was standing there; interesting enough, he was also calm. He wasn't crying, but he had those puppy dog eyes, maybe because he wasn't aware of what was happening and was trying to understand, or maybe it was just a preview of his strong but calm personality.

I wish I could remember more about her. After watching her say good-bye, all I remember is that I cried, cried from the deepest part of my heart, like I am crying now. I remember all I could say was: "Don't go, Mom, don't go..."

Post: [The Last Time I Saw Her - By Eva](#)

Shortly after our mother left, she urged our grandmother to take the children and move to Costa Rica where they would be safer. In 1980, Mama Chila packed up the family to live with my aunt Vilma, who had been in Costa Rica since 1978. Mama Chila brought with her Vilma's two children, Evelyn and Jacqueline, as well as Ana's two children, Eva and Ernesto. I had not been born yet, and our father Luis had returned to fight in the war.

Earlier that year, Vilma had married a man named Eduardo, who was the son of her employer. It was not the best arrangement because Eduardo did not treat Vilma well and occasionally threatened to deport her if she ever left him. Mama Chila and Vilma both worked during the

day to provide for the children. Eduardo, who was not as ambitious, stayed around the house most of the day.

Months later, back in El Salvador in May of 1981, I was born. My mother and I lived in El Salvador for three months before it became unsafe to live there anymore. The national newspaper ran a full page bulletin of the most wanted people. My mother was one of the twenty-something people identified. After that, we knew we had to leave.

My mother was supposed to meet up with my father and the rest of the family in Costa Rica, but it never happened. Unhappy with her family's quality of life, she began expressing her desire to leave the movement. Before she had the chance, however, she was reassigned to a new mission: she was to go with five other people and kidnap a businessman in Honduras.

During the war, it was common practice to kidnap people; it was one of the ways the rebels financed the war. I lived with my mother in a safe house where they held the business man. They had to get jobs and pretend to be a family so as not to attract attention.

From time to time, my mother would write my grandmother and send her supplies. One day, a messenger arrived with one such letter from my mother. Little did they know that this would be the last letter they would ever receive from her.

September 23, 1981

Dear Mom, [Mama Chila]

I hope that when you receive this letter you are in good health, as well as everybody around you. Mom, the person who carries this letter will ask about the kids and how he can help you. I want you to tell him everything that the children need. I will stay here meantime. I don't know how long, but I hope that you can understand my situation. I want to see my children more than anything, but right now I can not.

I could only send you some of the things you asked for because, as you know, my economical situation is difficult.

On a different note, I want you to explain why you left Nicaragua and what you told those people. Finding out that you are there [in Costa Rica] was a great surprise for me because I don't know your reasons. Can you tell me where Luis is? I haven't see him since I was there.

Some people are telling me that Toto is a cry-baby and is drinking too much coffee. Please don't make them spoiled kids. Remember that they are with you for now, but they will be with me again one day, and you know how I am with them.

I want to let you know that Haydee is going to move into her own house in October, and we are thinking about selling the apartment. Dalila says not to sell it, and Tita says sell it to buy a house instead. My advice to you is to sell it and have the money sent there because here [in El Salvador] the situation is getting worse every day. It [victory] is not going to be as soon as we thought. Maybe it is going to take 2 years or more and, for that reason, it is better that you sell the apartment and try to start over there.

Even we [in the movement] don't know how the situation is going to be, and if my sisters left the country, they wouldn't have anywhere to go. However, if you are there, they will have somewhere to go in an emergency. Dalila might move in when Haydee leaves because, if not, we will lose the apartment.

Regarding the power of attorney, I advise you to do it there with the help of a lawyer. Then send it back to the country [El Salvador]. I don't advise going in person because it is too dangerous. Passing through Honduras is too risky. They let you go inside but do not let you go out. Something bad could happen. Everybody who goes inside the country is checked and interrogated. I want to tell you that some female cousins of Haydee's midwife went there, were taken out of their house, raped, and killed. For that reason, it is better that you do not go, although you I know want to see your daughters. But it would be far worse being so close but dead.

Try to solve the apartment problem staying there [in Costa Rica]. Come to an agreement with them [your daughters]. You can call them by phone or write to them, but don't let them know where I am because that could be risky. Please tell Vilma the same. She should not write things that could compromise me ,because every letter coming out of the country is read. The same goes if you call by phone. Be careful, because the risk is with your daughters who are there [El Salvador].

Tina called 5 months ago and she said that she had written several times to Vilma, but Vilma didn't answer. Even more, she thinks that the letters were never received because of the situation of the country. I explained to her that you were fine, and I told her not to worry. I promised I would write to you, but I don't know if her letters were received. Tita says that Raulito of Andreita wants to buy the apartment. He wants to get a loan. We told him that you wanted 8,000 colones for it. I think that is a very good deal. But if you still find someone who wants to buy it, sell it. Please do what I tell you, because you know better than anybody that I am always truthful with you. Even if you do nothing with the money but spend it on food, that money is still yours.

Lupe of Andreita came to ask for clothing and shoes. She said because you always brought her cloth and shoes, she misses you. Andreita also came. She has become a fat woman and asked us to send her regards to you. They still live in "Tierra Blanca" [white land]. Alicia lives in "La Santa Lucia," and she rents a house there with a young men and Yolan. She wasn't able to get to the United States. Isabel of Andreita is pregnant. La Lupe was looking for a job because Roque's salary is not enough.



Baby Nelson/Roberto and older cousin

I sent you photos of the baby. His name is Roberto Alfredo. Tell the kids that he is their little brother. I trust god that they will meet him soon. Tell me what Eva says about her father, if she misses him, if she still remembers me. I am fine, although I had some problems because of the childbirth, but it was nothing serious. The baby looks like Eva.

I will see if I can send you money monthly, so tell me what you need and how much money you spend. I sent you some things inside of the suitcase. If you need the suitcase then take it, if not send it to me because I need it.

The things which I sent are:

3 panties for Eva
Socks for Toto
1 pan and spoons
2 blankets
1 lotion
1 soup
1 talc
1 blouse for you (Dalila sends it)
Underwear for you
1 pair of shoes (Tita sends them)
3 towels
2 pair of pants for Rene
2 shirts
Socks
Handkerchiefs
Shoes
1 jacket
Other things

Now I must I say goodbye to you.

The daughter who misses you so much,

Mila

P.S.

Send me Vilma's phone number. I will see if I can call from time to time in order to see how you are. If Luis should call Vilma's mother in law, she shouldn't tell him where you are. She should tell him that you left the country.

Post: [Mila's Last Letter](#)

We stayed in that safe house for almost 6 months before the Honduran government found out where we were living. They stormed the house and killing everyone in the house. This was 1982, 3 days before my first birthday. My mother, who was not in house at the time, somehow managed to get to a phone and make one last phone call.

Eduardo sits at home watching television. It's about 3:30 in the afternoon. My aunt Vilma and grandmother Mama Chila have not come home from work yet. Eduardo lazily flips through the channels, waiting for the two of them to come home so he can eat. Just then, the phone rings. He glances over at it, wondering if he should bother picking it up. Reluctantly, he stands, waddles over to the phone, and picks it up.

"Hello?"

"Hello...is this Eduardo?" an agitated voice replies on the other side.

A little surprised by the tone of her voice, he replies, "Yes...who is this?"

"It's Vilma's sister, Mila," she says nervously

"Mila! How are you? We haven't heard from you in so long..."

Cutting him off Ana says, "Eduardo, I'm sorry but I don't have much time. Is my mother there? It's really important."

Slightly annoyed, he replies, "No, they haven't returned home from work yet, but they should be home soon. You should call back later."

"No, there is no time; can you give her a message?" Her voice is shaking now; someone is yelling in the background.

"Yes, of course; what's wrong?" Eduardo questions.

"They found us; I don't know how." She sounded scared now. "I have to go. Tell Mama Chila I love her and..." she pauses slightly "tell her to take care of my kids..."

The phone clicks, and Eduardo, not knowing what to make of this, stands for a second listening to the dial tone. He hangs up the phone, puzzled by what just happened and sits back down to watch TV.

Post: [Phone Call - By Nelson/Roberto](#)

Sometimes I wonder what it must have taken to make that phone call. She must have known when she made the call that she would never see her children again. I can't even imagine what that must have been like.

That would be the last thing we ever heard from Ana. We don't know what happened to her after that and, most likely, we never will.

Part 2: Adoption

After going through the safe house they found me in a back room. They did not know what to do with me so they put me in an orphanage. I would live there for the next year before I was adopted

When the gunfire stops a woman lays dead, face down in the door way. Two men have been shot as well. They lie slumped over rifles by their side. As the police go through the house I'm found crying in my crib. Next to me are two other girls. Social services is called in to deal with us. As I'm being taken away a newspaper photographer stops us to take a picture. One police officer is holding me while the male officer next to her tries to get me to smile. It almost works. I look blankly into the camera, completely unaware of what has just happened and what is to come.



[Newspaper picture of Nelson/Roberto](#)

I'm taken to a private orphanage in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. This will be my home for the next year. I will spend most of my days in a crib staring out of the window on the third floor of this clay building. I won't learn how to walk or speak very well. I won't eat very well either but I will be fed.

During this time a notice is put into the paper asking anyone who might be missing a child to come forward and claim me. No one does, so six months after I arrive I am legally put up for adoption. I will wait another six months before I meet my parents.

Post: [The Orphanage - by Nelson/Robert](#)

Sometime during my stay at the orphanage my adoptive parents were deciding to adopt. They had just begun the process and did not expect to have a child for another year. Then one night they got a phone call around 9:00 p.m. informing them that there was a child ready for them. This was no ordinary adoption. Most adoptions usually involve months of paper work, a picture of the baby with background information, name, age, and at least a month to decide. They were not given any information about me and had until 3pm the next day to make their discussion. Thankfully, after a long night without much sleep, they decided to adopt.

The next day they went to the adoption agency to inform them of their choice and were told that they would have to fly to Honduras within the next few weeks. This was sometime in April 1983 and they had to be down in Central America by May. As they rushed to get everything ready for the trip they found out that they would need FBI clearance in order to travel to Honduras, a process that normally takes four or five weeks. To their surprise someone pulled some strings for them and Senator Kerry's office was able to get them clearance in two days.

A few days later they flew down to Honduras. They were provided with a place to stay and a lawyer to help them with all the paper work. Again, this never happens. As the adoption went on the people involved were very hush hush and wouldn't tell my parents anything. They mentioned something about a gunfight but wouldn't say why I was up for adoption or why they were trying to get me out of the country so fast. My adoptive father speculated that I was the illegitimate son of the president or something like that.

They eagerly awaited the day when they would be able to meet me for the first time. Then in late May their dream came true.

It's May 1983 and I have just turned two. My adoptive parents had arrived in the country a few weeks earlier. Today we will meet for the first time.

My soon to be dad wakes up early and starts making coffee. My soon to be mom lays in bed a few more minutes listening to the radio before joining him. They are tired from a long night of nervous sleep.

"What do you think he will look like?"

"We will know very soon." My mother replies.

They shower and dress quickly in anticipation of what is to come.

My dad paces nervously waiting for the social worker to arrive. "Why do you think they wouldn't let any picture be taken of him? Do you think there might be something wrong with him that they don't want us to know about?"

"I don't know honey we will see soon enough."

"Where are they? They should have been here by now." my dad says anxiously

In a comforting voice my mom says "They will come. Try to relax" while she tries to hide her own anxiety.

"I'm going to call to make sure" My dad hurrys off to make the call. He returns shortly. Unable to hide his disappointment he reports "She's not home."

Then the door bell rings. Finally the social worker has come to take them to the orphanage.

As they arrive at the orphanage with its ragged chain link fence, they are greeted by one of the staff members. Not wasting any time my dad asks her, "What is he like?"

Shaking her head slightly she answers. "He's a sweet little boy but he will cry and cry if he is not fed first."

"Oh?" my mom inquires, her eyebrow lifting slightly.

"Don't worry he's really nice" she replies quickly "but he doesn't talk much. He only knows how to say agua. That means water and he says it when he's hungry or when he needs anything else."

As they walk through the rooms filled with cribs, some of the children poke their heads up to see the visitors.

"I wonder if we could adopt more than one." My dad wonders aloud.

"Most of these children aren't up for adoption. They live here until they are old enough to work in the fields with their parents. Here we are." The staff member stops at the last crib on the third floor. "Oh and one more thing..." she says as a smile crosses her face "he really loves Coca-Cola."

This is the moment my had parents had been waiting for. As they approach the crib they see me lying down in a cloth diaper and an old t-shirt. I look up with a blank expression on my face not knowing what to expect.

My mom hands me a Paddington bear with a blue raincoat and red hat. I play with it curiously. It's the first stuffed animal I've ever had. They pick me up and hold me. I'm not sure what to make of this. They take turns holding me and playing with my long, curly brown hair. Now comes the hardest thing they have had to do so far, they must leave me behind to finalize the adoption.

They place me gently back in the crib and say good bye. They will be back for me tomorrow once it is official. Back in the car my mom turns to get one last look at the orphanage. She sees me in my window on the third floor. I'm standing up looking out from my window, holding my Paddington close, wondering who these people are and if I'll ever see them again.

Post: [The Orphanage - by Nelson/Robert](#)



The next day they finalized the adoption and a week later take me back to the US with them. The judge who oversaw my case required that my father mail her updates every six months. My father diligently sent letters for almost two years. While talking to another parent about their experience he learned that these updates were not part of the normal adoption process and he promptly stopped. This last twist just highlighted the mystery of the entire process.

I grew up knowing that I was adopted. My parents were always very clear about the fact but they couldn't tell me who my parents were or when I was born. This was very hard for me growing up since it meant it would be next to impossible to find my birth family. My Adoptive father had this newspaper article that someone had gotten for us. The article had a picture of a man who had been killed around the time that I went into the orphanage. As I was

growing up he would look at the picture and try to see if there was any resemblance between us.

It was I think the uncertainty of not knowing was the hardest emotion to deal with. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't fight the feeling that something was missing. It felt as if the first two years of my life I didn't exist. That somehow I had just appeared in the my parents house. There was this black hole that can be somewhat explained in this post.

Yesterday was my friend's birthday. We went out to eat for 3 hours and had lots of fun. I love getting together like this for birthdays and my birthday. However, this wasn't always the case. Growing up I never knew when my real birthday was and it always bugged me that everyone else knew theirs. Some people even knew the exact time of birth. I had no idea. I used to look at calendar and feel like it was blank.

I did have a birthday that my adoptive parents gave me when I was adopted. Growing up this is what we celebrated but it always felt so ...hollow and fake. Even though we had cake and everything it never felt like it was mine. Don't get me wrong I still enjoyed my birthdays and of course loved the presents...who doesn't?

Looking back on it now I think those feeling of emptiness were really part of something bigger. Your birthday, while not being terribly important in the larger scheme of life, is an important part of your identity. It's something so simple that people take it for granted. Whenever someone asked how me how old I was I would say something like "I'm 15...I think" It was that little bit of uncertainty that bothered me so much. I could be 15 or 14 or 16. I never knew.



Now that I know when my birthday is, I feel a sense of pride when I tell people. After 16 years of uncertainty it feels so good to be able to look someone in the eye and say, "I was born on May 22, 1981 at 2pm in San Salvador" I think that is why I make such a big deal of it now and the reason why I have two birthdays. I'll joke with friends and say "today is my second birthday, what did you get me?" Of course they always come back with "you only get one" Hey, it doesn't hurt to try.

Post: [My Birthdays - by Nelson/Roberto](#)

In 1992 my grandmother decided it was time to look for me. Even though it was still risky she returned to El Salvador in hopes of finding someone who might know what happened to her daughter and grandson. She received little help from old friends of my parents. It took her almost year to find an organization that would help her.

My Sister writes of our grandmother:

Never afraid, she never gave up on any situation in her life. She never gave up looking for my brother either and in this story she is the angel God sent to earth to take care of all of us. She is an example of a person who never forgets and never leaves her blood behind.

She used to talk about Roberto a lot. The thing she worried about the most was if he was with someone who loved him. It was what she really cared about because she always said she has a lot of love for him. She would always say: Where is Roberto? Is he loved?

Finally one day she announced she was going to El Salvador to look for him even though she knew it was risky. She started the journey with my aunt's help and went to knock on every door she could possibly remember of people my mother was involved with. A lot of them were slammed in her face... One day, her reward came unexpectedly. The years and years of wondering where he was, if he was OK and what kind of boy would he be, finally ended for her.

Post: [The Angel Sent By God - by Eva](#)

An organization called Pro-Busqueda agreed to help my grandmother look for me. During the war in El Salvador, members of the government would punish rural farmers for helping the rebels by stealing their children. These babies would then be put up for adoption. This organization was formed to help families of missing children reunite with their families. Even though my case was a little different, they agreed to work on the case.

Part 3: Reuniting

Pro-Busqueda spent four years going through newspapers and whatever government documents they could get their hands on to try and find me. They finally completed their research in 1997 after doing an Internet search to find our phone number. My dad got the phone call around 9:30 at night in the summer of '97. He was contacted by a man working for the Physicians for Human Rights and given a copy of all their findings.

My parents told me soon after when I got home from summer camp. It is a day I remember clearly and will never forget.

It was the last day at Camp Frank A. Day August 1997. I stayed up all night, most of which was spent in tent 7A. I remember stopping by the bathroom on the way back to my tent and meeting up with Waldyka. He had been up all night as well. The grin on his face told me he knew where I went all night.

Shortly after that the bugle went off and now more people were up. Everyone was hanging out in front of 7B talking about how much fun they had. I couldn't find a place to sit with all the people so I climbed up into Lizzy's bed on the top bunk. I was so tired that I fell asleep on her bed. Just when I had fallen asleep the bugle went off again and it was time for breakfast.

Not too long after that my parents showed up and I had to say goodbye. It had been the best month at Camp Day ever and I didn't want it to end. I took my time saying goodbye hoping to drag out the summer just a little bit longer. As I was saying goodbye, I notice Yoli crying. I'm not sure why this little detail still sticks out in my mind so vividly. Maybe because we had grown close and I had never seen her cry before. I gave her a hug goodbye and we made plans to see each other in a couple of weeks.

In the car my parents told me and my brother that they need to have a serious talk with us after dinner. The thought of them getting a divorce flashed through my mind for a second, but that didn't make any sense and I quickly pushed it away. It was definitely weird. They had never asked to talk like this before but I was way too tired to care.

After we got home I went right to bed and took a five hour nap. My mom wakes me up when its time for dinner. I was still half asleep when I stumbled down to the table of our New Hampshire home. After dinner our mom reminded us "Don't go anywhere we need to talk." My brother and I sat down again and my parents moved so that they are next to me. I remember wondering what was going on?

My father took out a FedEx envelope and placed it on the table. From it he pulled out a magazine or newsletter. It had a picture of a man who was working with children that looked like they were really poor. He pointed to the picture and said to me "This is Dr. "so-and-so" and he works with children in Honduras."

It was at that exact moment that I knew that I had found my family. I don't know how I knew but I did. My father would go on to explain that the Doctor works for an

organization in El Salvador that helps find lost children. I was hardly listening, I just knew what was coming next and it took everything I had not to completely break down into tears. I had been waiting for this for so long. Then he finally says it "...they believe they have found your birth family"

He went on to say that I have a father in Panama a step mother, an older sister and a brother. I was born in El Salvador not Honduras. Both my parents fought in the civil war in El Salvador as guerrillas. During the war my mother went with me to Honduras to kidnap a business man. The government found out about it and stormed the house. They think my mother was the one who opened the door and was killed on site.

These words are like ice to me. I feel numb. I didn't know what to make of that. Growing up, I never imagined having a brother and sister and so many family members. As for my birth father...well I guess I never really thought about him. The only person I really wanted to see was my birth mother. Learning that I would not meet her, the one person I had waited my whole life to see, was too much.

My dad continues, after losing her daughter and grandson, my grandmother, who lives in Costa Rica, went back to El Salvador in 1993 to try and find out what happened to them. With a little luck she found an organization to help her. They have spent the past 4 years looking for me and found our number on the Internet. They are the ones who provided the packet with the newsletter.

The package had pictures too. My parents said they have been looking at the photos and they thought that my biological brother and I look a lot alike. I remember disagreeing with them but it was a group picture and Ernesto was in the back. After seeing a couple of other pictures of him I too agreed we looked a lot like. There were letters written to the lost baby "Roberto." I learned not only my birth name, but I also learned that my real birthday is May 22nd.

The organization wanted me to do a blood test to see if it is really my family. I must have looked at my dad funny when he asks me if I would be willing to do it. Of course I did. I had been waiting my whole life for this why wouldn't I? but truthfully I didn't need a blood test, I already knew.

Post: [We found your family - Nelson/Roberto](#)

Later that week I go in for a blood test. A couple of weeks later the results came it. It was my family. I knew it all along. As soon as the test comes back we start making our plans to fly down to Central America for Christmas. Its already well into October by this point and we were having trouble getting plane tickets down. We finally got our tickets even though the trip wasn't exactly direct by.

Around the same time in Central America, word reaches my birth family that their lost relative might be returning to them.

Everyday I wonder how is that this tiny, frail woman could have been so strong and never broke down. So calm and quite, I never saw her crying...just once...the day she knew Roberto was alive...that day she changed...

Let me tell you she became a different person. Certainly, her sadness was still there but extraordinarily she was happy and you could see it in her eyes. They were never the same any more. Some how she got strength from somewhere and it seemed to me like she started all over again. It was like she could breath again and release part of this pain in her heart. All the effort and pain through all of these years gave her a reward. She had lost a daughter but then she recovered her grandson.

Post: [The Angel Sent By God - by Eva](#)

Over the weeks leading up to our trip we receive even more letters and pictures from family members. One of the more memorable letters comes from my father.

Its 6:15 pm and it's already dark out. I just got home from school and I'm the first one home. I dash up to my room and drop my bag. I fire up the computer and head back downstairs to get something to drink. As I go to turn on the outside lights, I bend over and pick up the mail. On my way back to the kitchen I start to go through it. Bill, bill, junk mail...but what's this?

Tossing the rest of the mail on the counter I'm staring down at a letter addressed to Roberto Coto form a Luis Coto. Its a letter from my father... When we got the original package from Probusqueda there were only letters from my aunt and grandmother. I take a second to look at it before opening it. Its three pages of neatly written cursive. I frown for a second. It all in Spanish and I can't read any of it.

I head back up to my room letter in hand. Half an hour later my dad yells from downstairs "I'm home"

Making my way out into the hall I greet him with a drawn out "HI!"

"How was your day?"

Unable to contain the excitement in my voice I shout down the steps "I got a letter from my dad!"

My adoptive father would tell me later these words made his heart sink because for 15 years he was the only one I called dad.

"Oh..." There is a pause..."What does it say?"

"I'm not sure its all in Spanish"

Over dinner I show my parents the letter. My mom suggests that she have one of her colleagues translate the letter for us. I tell her that I think some of my friends at school could translate it too.

The next day I stuff the letter in my bag as I head out the door. As I'm riding in on the T I stare at it trying to figure out what it says. All I can make out is "Dear Roberto," So I just sit there staring out the window. I always sit in the very first seat on the train. It has a window all to itself and I can get off the train quicker. I've made this 15 minute trip for the past four years but today it seems endless. My leg is shaking in anticipation and everyone getting on the train is taking forever. Finally, I arrive at my stop just in time to catch the last van.

I'm running late. It's 8:20am when I arrive and there is no time to find someone to translate. I'll have to wait until lunch. I'm restless during my classes and I pull out the letter every so often to look it over. I briefly show it to my friend Eric. Finally it's time for lunch.

"Julia!" I call down the hall

She greets me with a smile, "Hey there"

"I got a letter from my father in Panama" I say pulling the letter out of my bag

"Oh wow, that's so cool, what does it say?"

"I'm not sure. I can't read it and I need to find someone who can translate it."

"Maria might be able help you. She speaks some Spanish."

"Really? Hmm, I'll have to ask her"

"She's over there. Hey I got to run I'll catch up with you later" She turns and walks off.

"yup, thanks I'll see you later"

As she's walking away she calls down the hall "Hey,when are we gonna playing soccer?"

I smile. "Anytime just let me know" I turn and head towards the lounge where Maria is sitting.

"Hey Maria are you busy?"

Maria looks up "Not right now. Why? whats up?"

"I got this letter from my dad and I have no idea what it says. Do you think you could help me with it?"

"This is your father in Central America?" she asks examining the letter.

"Yup"

"Yeah sure let me look at it"

Finally, I'll be able to find out what in the letter. It's loud in the foyer so we make are way in to the stair case and sit down on the steps going down to athletic office.

She sits and looks at it for a second. She starts to read it to me but then explains that it's very hard to understand the writing because he is using some words she doesn't know. As she tries to read it I realize that I'm not actually listening to what she is saying. I don't think it's the letter that I'm excited about. It's that I can't wait to meet these people and see what they are like. I will have to wait because it will be another month before I get to meet them.

Post: [Letter From my Father - By Nelson/Roberto](#)

As the days grew closer to when we were to leave my adoptive parents became more nervous. They were worried that I would want to stay with my birth family but that never really crossed my mind. They also wondered what type of people my birth family would be. Would they be a bad influence on me? I'm sure my family in Central America was equally nervous about seeing me for the first time in 16 years.

Finally it was time to fly down. We had an interesting trip down. Unable to get a direct flight we had to fly into Orlando from Boston, then drive to Miami to catch the next plane later that day.

The first thing I remember about that day is sitting on the plane, listening to music, and taking pictures of the clouds. I'm always listening to music, especially on long trips. I don't remember what I was listening to but I think I had really crappy head phones. It always bugs me when I don't have a decent pair of head phones and for some reason this sticks out in my mind. Even though I had been to a few different countries before I had never been to Central America and I really had no idea what to expect.

We arrived late at night and as we walked through the airport I remember going down a long flight of steps on our way to customs. I was still listening to music as we waited to pick up our bags. As we stood there a woman approached me and started to ask me questions, in Spanish. She had a piece of paper in her hand and I believe she wanted me to take a survey. Not knowing any Spanish I just stood there and ignored her. I felt bad because I'm sure I came off as being rude but I had no idea what was going on and all I could think about were the people waiting outside.

We finally cleared customs and head out of the airport. There were people everywhere and most of them were cab drivers asking if we wanted a taxi. We just kept saying "no" and moved forward. Then there was a clearing and that's when I saw them for the first

time. In front of me stood an older version of myself, and by his side was a little girl of 6 years and they hugged me immediately. My little sister got stuck in between me and my father. For a moment I tried to let her out but it was no use, they wouldn't let go. My father had been waiting 16 years to see me and it felt like he would never let me go ever again.



[Meeting for the first time.](#)

After that it's all a blur meeting my older brother, older sister, grandmother, stepmother, cousins, aunts and uncles. There must have been 30 people at the airport waiting to meet us. I have no idea how long we were outside of the airport hugging, crying and trying to communicate with each other. We have a picture from that night. Its blurry and you can't really see anything. All you can make out are lights streaking across the photo.

My mother has said from time to time that this picture describes the emotion of that night and I think she is right. It was just one big blur.

The next thing I remember is piling into a car with my little sister close behind. She sat next to me never letting go. My mother snapped a picture of the two of us. Later we would make a mouse pad from this picture and to this day that mouse pad sits on my desk. As we drove off I remember feeling completely lost, everything looked so different and I had no idea where I was. Even so, I felt safe and "at home." I looked down at my sister and here was this little girl who I had never met but to whom I meant the world. It was a strange feeling and one that I would feel again and again as I got to know my family.



[Nelson/Roberto and Estefany](#)

Since that first incredible meeting I have gone back to Central America several times. I can not put into words the feelings that I have experienced in the past three years, but I can say that this experience has given me a better understanding of who I am and how incredibly lucky I am to have two wonderful families.

Post: [Meeting for the first time - by Nelson/Roberto](#)

Since our first meeting I try to visit my family in central america about twice a year. My adoptive family sometimes makes the trip with me. We have truly become one big extended family. Its been a truly amazing journey and I'm so lucky to have had such wonderful adoptive parents who supported me all these years and when I went to meet my birth family.

Looking back now I am in awe of how well everything has turned out for us. However, I know that our story is unique and that so many other families don't get the closure we got. My heart goes out to them and to those families who have been torn apart by war.

Nelson/Roberto - 2007

epilogue:

One of the things that really bothers me the most since I lost my mother is the fact that Mom and Dad had kids even though they knew they were at risk and their lives were in danger. I used to wonder: Why if I know my life is in danger would I have children? OK, let's say that one child is the legacy of the marriage, but two? and then three? I thought that it was irresponsible of them. Especially since they were actually fighting in the field and part of something really difficult in the middle of the war. And again I wondered WHY?

For so long I blamed my parents for our separation. I blamed them for losing my little brother who I never met. For years and years of seeing my Grandma quietly suffering and for not being there...I guess that is part of the feeling you develop in these situations. I like to think about it as the way I had to comfort myself and to make sense of all the things I didn't ask for. None of this made any sense for me during all my childhood. It took years and years for me to understand...

My last birthday, Margaret asked Roberto and I for an interview to talk about my mother. Margaret knows how difficult it is for us, specially for me, to talk about all of these things. To remember and open up but I knew she really needed me to do that and I agreed. During the interview I tried so hard not to cry. It is always painful to put out my Mom from my heart but there was something Margaret said that made me understand a lot of things that suddenly made sense for me that day: My Mom would never do a thing like this if she hadn't been 100% sure it was the right thing to do! Of course, Margaret was right! And then, everything became so clear to me. In an instant, my daughter Dani came to my mind and I knew why she was doing it and that it was for me, for my brothers, for my family!

Then, I understood that was my Mom's way to do something for other people and that makes me think about how brave she was since she actually DID something. She didn't wait to see the change, she WAS the change, the force to make it real. She fought for something she really believed in and I wonder how many of us can do that without hesitation? How many of us can fight for other people just to make a difference? My Mom was a really brave woman. She had determination and in her plans she knew that us (her children, her blood) would have a different opportunity, a chance to be better and improve ourselves, even if that didn't make any sense at that moment. Perhaps she had a vision of the future that not all the people had back then.

I use to think about me as her living memory since I look a lot like her. I like to think that I am her representation today and let me tell you, that is a huge responsibility because sometimes I am not sure if I am as brave as she was. As strong as she was. As caring and loving as she was but there is something I am sure about. I am so proud to be the daughter of my mother, a woman one of a kind...

Post: [A woman one of a kind - by Eva](#)

I think adoption is one of the most wonderful and at the same time one of the most difficult things I have experienced in my life. The joy of adoption can best be described by the quote that begins this blog.

Losing ones family obliges us to find our family. Not always the family that is our blood but the family that can become our blood.

However, no matter how great my adoptive parents have been, growing up as an adopted child was not always easy. The most difficult emotion I have ever had to deal with was the uncertainty that came from being adopted. I imagine that most if not all adopted persons go through a similar experience sometime during their life.

There is just something about your birth-mother/birth-father that you can never forget or completely let go of. You want to know what they look like, if you look like them and what kind of people are they. But most importantly you want to know: Why was I given up?

To this question there is no easy answer. It is something that I struggled with and watched my friends struggle with. Some were more vocal than others but you just knew even the quiet ones were thinking about it too. You wonder how can the people who gave you life simply give you away? Well I'm sure it's never that easy and I'm sure they never forget either.

I used to sit up at night staring out of my window wishing I could just see my mother. I thought if I could just see her, she would make everything better. These feelings never went away and no matter how hard I tried to fight or ignore them they always came back. But that all changed when I met my birth family.

Being reunited with them was incredible to say the least. I went from not knowing my birthday to having three new siblings and a huge extended family that had been looking for me all along. It seemed to answer all my questions about who I was and if I looked like my parents (I'm practically a carbon copy of my father.)

However I feel like I am very lucky in this respect. I have heard a few stories of people who went looking for their birth parents only to find they had nothing in common and could not relate to each other. I wish I could say "Don't worry, one day you will find your birth parents too and everything will be alright" but I know that's not always the case. Not every adoption story has such a happy ending.

In the end I wonder how much finding your birth parents really matters. Yes finding them did answer a lot of my questions and it did take away the awful feeling of uncertainty but I don't think that's what mattered most. I think what mattered the most was the family that we have become.

I hardly think of my "adopted" family and my "birth" family anymore. When people say "oh you found your real parents" I say no, I found my birth parents. I don't even like to make the distinction between them. I just like to think I have two sets of parents and one BIG family.

Family is more than just being related because sometimes even our own blood doesn't treat us as they should. Family is about caring for people and loving them unconditionally. Family is what we found in them and what they found in us.

Not always the family that is is our blood but the family that can become our blood...

Post: [Being Adopted - by Nelson/Robert](#)

