

Efrain Martin's Miracles

My family was from a remote village in the highlands of Huehuetenango, Guatemala. When they had no crops, my mother and father would walk down to the big plantations on the coast. They heard about opportunities to get land as part of a church farm cooperative. That's where I was born. We had corn, coffee, bananas, watermelon---everything bloomed because a river went through our land.

One morning, June 1, 1982, my father had a bad dream that the army arrived at Marcello's house (one of the villagers). Dad told Mom to prepare herself but she didn't believe him because he had been saying something was going to happen for some time.



My mother was at the stream washing clothes when we heard the shots go off. My sister Victoria gathered her small children and my brother William and she said, *Quick, run, tell Mom the army has arrived at Marcello's house.* My brother was screaming down to my mother that the army was at Marcello's just as Dad had dreamed that morning. They ran for the cover of the coffee plants but Victoira ran back for her shoes just as soldiers arrived a couple of hundred yards from the house. She ran into an open field with the baby on her back when they shot at her. There was a bullet hole in her blouse. But miraculously she wasn't killed, not a scratch. The baby was fine, too. They moved further into the forest where the trees protect the coffee from too much sun.

We were in the field still, heard the shots and my nephew and I started for home. But my father said, *wait.* My father made us stay in the middle of nowhere for the night while he went to find my mother and sister. Dad brought us sacks to lie on. It started to rain. We had a hunting dog with us. We were afraid he'd bark but we were also glad he was with us. My Dad found my mother and came back for us the next day. That's how we survived our first day.

Three hundred of us villagers had been walking for a month trying to get out of the area. One day a helicopter spotted us because they saw the colorful blouses of the women moving through the coffee fields. They circled and we ran trying to run for the cover of the forest. We spotted a huge tree when they opened fire on the elderly, children, everyone. Mom grabbed us. My Dad stood in front of us. Mom said, *If I die, I'll die with my children, right here.*

The helicopter kept shooting. Then a grenade landed in the middle of everyone. It was right there. But it didn't blow up. In that instant, a heavy cloud came and the helicopter took off.

The next miracle happened four months later when we walked through the jungle to find Mexico. There was so much sickness among the kids---malaria, diarrhea, malnutrition. We found a refugee camp but so many kids were dying that they made stick caskets and the old and many babies were buried in that cemetery--so many were buried there, that we had to make another cemetery. My Mom prayed her heart out day and night. Miraculously, none of my family got sick.

I could go on with miracles. Somehow we ended up in Chicago, another miracle. I went back in 1998. I asked my grandfather, *How is the land? The land is not giving what it's supposed to*, he said, *there is too much blood and tears on it...the land is sad.*



EFRAIN GRADUATED FROM DOROTHY STANG HIGH SCHOOL IN 2007---another miracle.

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