

Man Shows Up at San Diego Church 34 Years After Abduction to Mexico

A man who was abducted as a child, taken to Mexico and robbed of all his money in a harrowing trek back to the United States more than three decades later has found refuge at a San Diego church that is trying to reunite him with his mother in Wisconsin.

David Amaya Barrick, 37, was arrested by U.S. Border Patrol agents last month but freed after convincing authorities of his U.S. citizenship and contacting his mother for the first time since his 1979 abduction—only to vanish again for several days.

His mother, Kathy Amaya, 60, was so distraught by his disappearance that she called San Diego police last week to report him missing.

He ended up at the Iglesia de Cristo Minesterios Llamada Final, where church officials said on Tuesday they were trying to arrange a reunion with his mother, who lives in Eau Claire, Wis.

“We are going to find a way to get him to his family,” said Pastor Freddy Rivas. “The grace of God brought him to our shelter and the grace of God will get him to his family.”

Barrick was abducted from Chicago by his father and taken to Mexico, where he was left with his paternal grandparents. He grew up in the north-central Mexican state of San Luis Potosi, seeing his father a few times, then made his way to the northeastern city of Monterrey, where he studied music.

Last week, he illegally crossed into California from Mexico

with undocumented immigrants and was arrested by the U.S. Border Patrol about a mile east of the Pacific Ocean. In detention, he told Border Patrol agents that he was born in a Chicago hospital and is a U.S. citizen.

He also told the border agents he had been beaten and robbed of his money, cellphone and Mexican identification before entering the United States.

The agents checked out his story and were able to locate his birth certificate and his mother—putting the two in touch over the phone in an emotional long-distance call. Because Amaya speaks only Spanish, agents acted as translators.

“When the Border Patrol agents told me they found my mother, I could not believe it. I started crying,” Barrick recounted in an interview with Reuters on Tuesday, speaking through an interpreter. “I arrived in San Diego with nothing, nothing, and now I have a family.

Amaya recounted being stunned to hear from her son after 34 years.

“He thought I abandoned him, they told him I abandoned him,” Amaya said. “The phone call was a miracle, I looked for him for so long.”

After putting mother and son back in touch over the phone, the border agents arranged for Barrick to stay at a downtown San Diego shelter. But when Barrick got there, he was turned away, Rivas said.

“He was wandering around downtown with his pockets empty and he saw our catering truck,” Rivas said. “He was standing and staring at the food and I knew he was hungry. I started talking to him and he told me his story.”

Rivas said he fed Barrick and brought him to the church, where he is staying until he can be reunited with his mother.

“We talked to her this morning and she was so happy,” Rivas said. “She kept saying, ‘After 34 years, I’m going to see my baby.’”

Reporting by Marty Graham; Editing by Steve Gorman and Paul Simao

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