Julio’s story

I was born in the late 1960s in the east of the country, in a small village named Las Ovejas (The Sheep) similar to the little animals with wool. Baabaa

Eastern Guatemala shares the borders of Honduras and El Salvador.

I am an only child, I do not have full brothers and sisters, I have four half-siblings on my father's side. When I was 4 years old my father left the house, and never came back.

In 1976 Guatemala had an earthquake, more than 25,000 people died. The president of that time was a military man, he had a phrase that said, "Guatemala is wounded, but not to death."

The house where I lived with my mother was made of adobe (uncooked earth bricks). It collapsed, we had nowhere to live, so we went to live in my grandparents' house, a few months later the Red Cross donated a small wooden house to us.

We, along with much of the country, lived in extreme poverty; on the other hand, the country was in the hardest period of the internal war. One of many stories was that the situation was so hard that we only had one pair of shoes, when our toes bumped into us, they cut off the tip so that we could remove our fingers, a style like the shoes worn by the Romans, and on many occasions we did not wear shoes. (DC: note, this is Google translate which I am leaving as is.)

We did not have enough food, and I had to work at a young age. I started when I was 8 years old.

That same year I started school in the morning and worked in the afternoons.

My first job was in the tobacco fields, planting plants, cleaning the area and putting on fertilizer. A large percentage of children worked in the afternoons, the size of our hands was the exact one to take the fertilizer and put it on each plant. When the plants were large, the worms came to eat the leaves, so we grabbed them with our hands, put them in small cans, took them out of the tobacco field, and put them in a larger can to burn them. We did not use any type of protection masks or gloves.

When I finished primary school, I enrolled in the Municipal Institute to study secondary school, and at the same pace I worked in the afternoons. I walked 4 kilometers there and 4 kilometers back, I ate breakfast at 4:30 am, I left the house at 5:00, and we came back at 2:00 in the afternoon, we just ate a little and went out to work and came back again at 7:00 at night. The place where I grew up did not have electricity, I did my schoolwork with candlelight or with kerosene gas lamps.

Personally, I consider that most of us who grew up in those years never had the opportunity to play with toys, our toys were work tools, we never went, nor did we have the opportunity to be young, as children we became men, and I am sure that's why we appreciate, value and love what we do and have.

When I was 14 years old, I left home for the first time to work in Puerto Barrios, a city near the Atlantic Ocean. Because I didn't have enough financial resources, I didn't finish high school, I just dedicated myself to work.

In those years growing up in my village, I had a variety of jobs, farmer, hunter helper, house builder helper, chicken bus helper, I was also a cowboy, a fisherman, a house painter, a painter of Mausoleums in the cemetery, municipal employee and many more trades, to be able to survive. The money I earned was not just for me, it was for household expenses.

When I turned 18, I left the village to go to the city. I had an opportunity to work in the government, in the Ministry of Agriculture, as an inventory manager, I took advantage of the opportunity, with a better income and better options, I studied at night, that way I finished high school and graduated as an accountant.

I was always restless, I have always liked to work and be productive, I did not like the pace of work and after 4 years, I resigned to start working in the finance area in various private companies, this was from 1989 to 2004, great adventures, great learning and much more, enough stories to create some best sellers.

I always worked in the finance area, especially in production costs for large and small companies in the area of ​​Maquila (in Textiles), Lithography, ice cream, tortillas and chips, purified water, coffee, dairy products, at this time I also worked 1 year in El Salvador selling hams, meats, and other products.

Working in one of these companies I enrolled in the university, what I earned was not enough to pay for a private university, I enrolled in the state university, but I was never on time to start classes. In my normal schedule I managed to arrive on time, but the company I worked for told me that they needed worker students, not student workers, so I only attended a year and a half.

In 1989 I met Teresa Cordón, and since then we have maintained a friendly relationship for a little over 30 years. In 2004 I did not have a job, and Teresa needed administrative support in her company, I worked with her for 6 months and that's how I met Deborah Chandler and Mayan Hands. Mayan Hands had similar needs at that time and that's how I started a relationship with them that has lasted for almost 18 years.

So that's my short story for my first half-century of life.