

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellen Urbani Hildebrand was born into a raucous family of Irish and Italian immigrants in Philadelphia. Always open to new experiences, she transformed herself at the University of Alabama into the epitome of a Southern belle. After college, she ventured to Guatemala as a Peace Corps Volunteer, where she spent the early 1990s post-civil war years teaching in the guerrilla-controlled mountains, the setting for her memoir *When I Was Elena*. She returned to the United States penniless, with tuberculosis, and married to a fellow Volunteer. They camped on the bank of an Oregon river while Ellen awaited graduate school admission; she received her MA in Art Therapy. Her work designing arts programs to assist cancer patients in coming to terms with illness and death was the subject of an Oscar-qualified documentary in 2000, titled *Paint Me A Future*. She now resides in Portland, Oregon with her husband and two children.