

Endorsements for Ellen Urbani's *When I Was Elena*

"I loved this book. The writing is smart and gorgeous. The storytelling is equal parts sad, funny, insightful, and surprising. I was inspired by this book and also riveted. In it we get the story not only of Elena - the daring, hilarious, kind-hearted Peace Corps worker - but also that of the many women Elena came to know during her years in Guatemala. It's a bold approach, to tell the story of women so different from her, but it works wonderfully and I was as deeply engaged with each of these women as I was with Elena herself. I found myself thinking about each of these women in the hours throughout the day when I wasn't reading their stories, anxious to get back to the book to see what happened next. I highly recommend *When I Was Elena*."

-- Cheryl Strayed, author of *Torch*

"*When I Was Elena* is a powerful and passionate memoir by a gutsy stranger in a troubled land. You will weep for Guatemala and be deeply moved by its women's voices as the author struggles to understand and then to be loving and strong and helpful in an impossible situation. This is a very rich and disturbing tapestry that I hope will make you think about life outside of our privileged bailiwick in those lands where most of the planet's citizens live."

-- John Nichols, author of *The Milagro Beanfield War*

"This astonishing memoir made Guatemala, its paradoxes and thorny complexity, seem new to me. Ellen Urbani Hildebrand does something amazing here: She takes risks in her writing that are even more impressive than her actual journey. She possesses a magical empathy."

-- Francisco Goldman, author of *The Long Night of White Chickens*

"Women's stories so need to be shared, particularly women's hero stories, and that is what *When I Was Elena* is. We need authors who give us our wings; Ellen, as Elena, gives women the notion to take flight. She is a brave and gifted writer with a grand story to tell."

-- Susan Chernak McElroy, author of *All My Relations*

"I had to wipe the tears from my eyes after finishing this wonderful story of a young Peace Corps woman's coming-of-age. Her presentation of the Guatemalans' histories and beliefs was incredible. It's a book I will eagerly share."

-- Pam White, Skyland Books