

The Patron Saint For Missing Kids

by DIANE on AUGUST 30, 2008 (Content from <http://dianediamond.net/the-patron-saint-for-missing-kids/>)

When Senator Barack Obama traveled to the Middle East not long ago he had more than presidential politics on his mind. He was also on a secret mission to help an Illinois constituent get back her four kidnapped young daughters. Obama slipped a note to the Palestinian Prime Minister about Colleen Bargouthi whose husband had refused to send their girls home after a visit to his family in Palestine. The Prime Minister said he'd look into it. Senator Obama should have turned to my pal, Bazzel Baz.



Bazzel Baz moments after rescuing young Lily Snyder from a hut in Costa Rica - circa 2003

He's got an unusual name and an even more unusual vocation. He clandestinely rescues those missing children that authorities can't find or have given up trying to reunite with their custodial parent. Baz has long operated in the shadows but now he's allowing me to publicly reveal his name and tell his story.

Bazzel Baz is a former CIA agent who takes on the most impossible cases. And he doesn't charge the heartsick family of the missing a penny. With volunteer help from other retired intelligence officers, Baz travels all over America and the world, covertly getting in and out of countries some of us can't even pronounce. His goal is getting children back to where they belong. So far, Baz and the boys have a 100% success rate. They've safely brought home 53 children.

Baz, an unmarried man who is a doting Uncle to two nieces, founded the Association for the Recovery of Children. Unlike the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children which recently got 40 million dollars from Washington, Baz gets no government funds. He pays for his rescue missions out of his own pocket using his savings or the money he earns from writing Hollywood screenplays.

You can't make up this stuff, folks. Somebody should make a movie about Bazzel Baz.

Why does he do it? Because, he says, after what he saw happen to children during his days in Special Ops in places

like Somalia, Afghanistan and Iran he understands he has unique talents that could make a difference. He knows how to get in and out of a place nearly undetected.

“I should have been dead three times over,” he told me. “And now, I have this tradecraft I feel I have to do something meaningful with.”

Baz and his operatives work with surgical skill. After carefully studying each case they quietly move in on the target. They contact local law enforcement and tell them what they are up to. They never go in armed, they don't break any laws. And their average mission time is about ten days. On average, mainstream law enforcement takes years not days to return a missing child. That's *if* they return the child at all.

“Amazing what you can do when you don't have to worry about all the red tape,” he says.

I wonder if the terrified children ever resist rescue, afraid of the strange men who've come to help them home. Baz says they're careful not to wear hoods or appear scary in any way.

“Diane, every single child – when they see us – they are ready to go. They just get it.”

When Baz and his team went to Costa Rica to rescue five and a half year old Lily Snyder, whose father and half-brother had kidnapped her from Ketchum, Idaho, his first words were comforting. “Lily,” whispered Baz, “Your mother sent us and she loves you very much.” And a calm Lily whispered back, “I know. I've been waiting for you.” As for the men who illegally took her away? They are back in the states – in prison.

75% of their efforts are on behalf of mothers who've had their child torn away. 25% are fathers who needed help, like the deployed soldier whose wife ran off with another man and took the kids with her. Every case is a noble cause to this man with the strange sounding name.

I call him Baz the Magnificent, a sort of patron saint for impossible cases. Only after years of stealth operations has he come around to the notion that he could use some financial help. His Association for the Recovery of Children recently declared non-profit status, meaning donations are not only welcomed but desperately needed.

“I'm looking at four boxes full of cases right now. I know where the child is ... 35 kids we could go rescue. We just don't have the money right now.”

Does he ever consider charging the parents for his services, at least to cover costs?

“That doesn't sit right with me,” he says. “If you take money from a parent you're in it for the wrong reason.”

Maybe the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children could send some of that 40 million bucks Bazzel Baz's way.