

# MEDIA KIT

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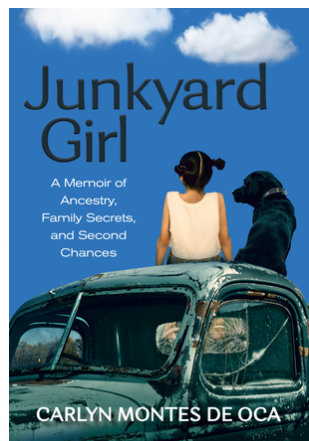
# ABOUT THE BOOK

## Carlyn Montes De Oca grew up surrounded by secrets...

She never knew her dad was a Marine during World War II or that her grandmother hired kidnappers to bring her mother back home after her parents eloped. Her parents took an even bigger secret to their graves... Carlyn's identity.

In 2019, at age 57, a consumer DNA test taken for fun revealed that Carlyn's mom and dad, immigrants from Mexico, were not her biological parents and that her entire extended family, including 63 first cousins, all knew the truth but never told her. In that instant, the reality Carlyn had lived with her entire life shattered. This revelation fueled her year long journey to find the answers to "Who the hell am I really and where do I belong?" Questions that led her to unearth a truth she could never have foreseen.

***Junkyard Girl*** explores the powerful impact of long-held secrets and the complex relationships between immigrant mothers and their native-born daughters. This is a coming-of-age story later in life; a tale about loss and discovery, betrayal and forgiveness, and the true meaning of an American family.



### PUBLICATION DETAILS

**Title:** Junkyard Girl

**Subtitle:** A Memoir of Ancestry, Family Secrets, and Second Chances

**Author:** Carlyn Montes De Oca

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Distributed by Ingram

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10% of proceeds from book will benefit Animal Protection New Mexico to help in their efforts to make humane the new normal.

*"Utterly engaging from start to finish, an astonishing story of a secret adoption and a beautifully rendered tale of complicated family dynamics, the secrets we keep and the gifts we give to each other. Carlyn has beautifully, and honestly, detailed her inner life, conflicts, and emotional journey of discovery and resolution — all with a healthy dose of humor."*

—Maria Jacquemetton, Emmy award-winning television writer and producer

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Carlyn Montes De Oca, MTOM**, is the multi award-winning author of *Dog as My Doctor, Cat as My Nurse*. A former film editor on movies such as *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* and *Three Men and a Little Lady*, Carlyn holds a bachelor's degree in communications and a master's degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

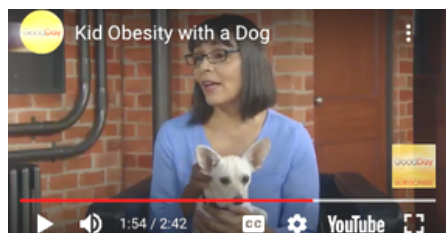
Today, Carlyn is an animal-human health expert, popular blogger, and passionate animal advocate. She is the founder of The Animal-Human Health Connection where she focuses on educating others about the powerful ways human health, happiness, and longevity are improved through our connection to our animal companions.

Montes De Oca has appeared on CBS, ABC, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and other media and she gave a dynamic TEDx talk—*The Life-Changing Power of the Animal-Human Health Connection*.

A longtime resident of Northern California, Carlyn now lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico with her husband, Ken Fischer, an award-winning sound editor, and her beloved rescue dog, Grace. Discovering she was adopted turned Carlyn's world upside down. Adopting Grace, a dog desperately in need of a second chance, set it right again.

**Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, TikTok:**  
**@carlynmdo** **YouTube: @Carlyn Montes De Oca**  
**website: [www.AnimalHumanHealth.com](http://www.AnimalHumanHealth.com)**

***Carlyn on CBS News and  
KUSI Good Morning San Diego***



## TALKING POINTS:

- Why Taking a DNA Test Is More Dangerous than You Ever Expected
- The Road Less Traveled — The Journey of a Late Discovery Adoptee
- How an Animal Rescuer Discovered She Was the One Who Was Rescued
- The Anatomy of a Secret: Healing After Being Kept in the Dark
- I Was an Angry Latina at Odds with My Mother — Then I Discovered Her Unmatched Act of Courage
- 5 Ways to Survive Being Told You Are Adopted
- The Gift of an Imperfect Family
- Is Blood Really Thicker than Water? A Late Discovery Adoptee's Story

**SEE MORE AT <https://animalhumanhealth.com/media-press/>**

# Q&A WITH CARLYN



## TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

I'm a Southern California girl who now lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I grew up loving animals and dreamed of adventures like those I read about in books and movies. My love for film eventually led me to become an editor at Lucasfilm.

Twenty years later, I burned out from the long hours the film business demanded and pursued another love—health and wellness.

After receiving my master's degree in Chinese Medicine, I opened an acupuncture practice in Marin County, California. Here I learned a big secret—pets can have a powerful impact on human health and wellbeing; the topic of my award-winning book—***Dog as My Doctor, Cat as***

## ***My Nurse.***

Three years ago, after taking a DNA test for fun, I learned an even bigger secret—I *was adopted*—a startling revelation that still wakes me up in the early hours feeling blindsided.

Most people know what it feels like to lose a loved one but not what it feels like to lose your-self.

Losing my identity at age 57 shook me to my core and fueled an urgent need to find the truth of my origin story at whatever the cost.

Like an amateur detective, I spent the following year unraveling clues not only in the present but also hidden my past. The result became ***Junkyard Girl: A Memoir of Ancestry, Family Secrets, and Second Chances.***

## **PLEASE SHARE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE BOOK *JUNKYARD GIRL.***

***Junkyard Girl*** weaves two stories together; the first begins when I took a DNA test and discovered I was adopted, then learned my entire extended family (including 63 first cousins!) all knew about it but never told me. As I grappled to restore my identity, I researched for clues and interviewed anyone who knew anything about my adoption.

The second story focuses on growing up as a first-generation Latina, the fraught culture war I had with my hard-working immigrant parents, and how I dreamed of having a different mother. That dream came true when I discovered my birth mother was still alive in a state hospital in Chicago. I may have dreamed of having a different mother than the one I had but I soon learned that one should always be careful for what they wish for.

## **WHY DID YOU WRITE *JUNKYARD GIRL*?**

When you're a writer and learn a seismic secret, like discovering that the family you grew up with is not your biological family—what else can you do but write a book?

Until I went through this experience, I never thought about what identity meant. When you've lived five decades on the planet, you usually know who your family is and where you come from. I never expected to hear the words—*Carlyn, you're adopted*—or to feel the intense flood of emotions disrupting my psyche. But I also knew that the only way past this was through it.

# Q&A WITH CARLYN , cont.

Writing *Junkyard Girl* was my life raft across the choppy waters of the unknown.

When I finished my memoir, I knew that not only was this a powerful story, it also might be a resource for others in the same boat. If I can help at least one person feel a little less lost as a Late Discovery Adoptee (LDA), then I've done a good job.

## **HOW DOES THE REVELATION OF YOUR SECRET ADOPTION IMPACT YOUR DAILY LIFE?**

It's been three and a half years since *the big secret* was revealed and a day doesn't go by that I don't think about it. I no longer feel the gamut of painful emotions as I did the first year of my discovery. Grief, anger, and sadness are off taking a nap and gratitude has taken their place. Growing up as a first-generation Latina, I had a fraught relationship with my immigrant parents. I longed to be more American, whereas they were very proud of their Mexican heritage. We were at odds and I often sat with my dogs, looking up at the clouds, wishing I had a different life.

On my fact-finding journey, I found my birth mother, but she was not

the parent I daydreamed about as a child. I also learned about a shocking act of selflessness that my adoptive mother did on my behalf. She reached out to a complete stranger and offered to raise her unborn daughter - *me*. I may not have appreciated the parents I grew up with, but since my adoption discovery not a day goes by that I'm not grateful to my adoptive parents for giving me a chance at life.

## **HOW WILL NON-ADOPTEE READERS BENEFIT FROM THIS BOOK?**

Approximately 7 million Americans are adopted. Whether it's a parent, sibling or friend, many know someone who is adopted. Not only will adoptees resonate with this story but their loved ones will too. This memoir also touches on themes such as the complex relationships between immigrant mothers and their native born children, topics that will resonate with countless readers in similar circumstances.

*Junkyard Girl* is a memoir that reads like a novel, so if you are curious about family secrets and want to read a gripping page turner you will also enjoy this book.

## **WHAT DO YOU HOPE READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?**

There are nearly 153 million orphans worldwide and over 20 million are waiting to be adopted. If my adoptive parents hadn't stepped up, I would be a statistic.

There are people who think adoption is wonderful; some believe it's a terrible idea; and many who think something in between. Adoption isn't a perfect system. My adoptive parents may have been tough taskmasters, but I'm grateful to have had a second chance at life.

Discovering you are a late discovery adoptee is a rocky path not easily traveled. I hope this book will not only help LDAs but also their loved ones to understand the challenges they face after hearing the words—you are adopted.

