
The Case of the Lost or Found Wallet

27/12/2017



When good will and chances go hand in hand, the world can seem really small.

I had never found something valuable, but this December I found a wallet.

It was there, by the sidewalk, fat and open, of glistening skin, of those synthetic materials that imitate crocodile skin.

There was no one walking ahead of me, so the owner should have lost it, at least, five or ten minutes earlier. Because I don't believe it would last more than that a wallet laying on the street.

It contained a bit over a hundred Cuban pesos, two bank cards, two ID cards, of mother and daughter, and many, many medical papers, including a prescription for eyeglasses.

Those who have had the chance to get a prescription for eyeglasses know how difficult it is, long waits and trips are behind those numbers that would help improve sight.

That prescription alone is worth the pain to try and find the owner; let's not mention the money which is always necessary, even more in December; without forgetting the other steps the lady would have to undergo for a new ID card and bank cards.

Feeling like a CSI character, without Greeson, I set myself to find a way of locating the owner who by now must have been desperate.

I tried to find her number on ETECSA phone directory, but to not avail. No cell phone or land line phone number. I tried to contact some of her neighbors through her ID address, but as it was Alamar Neighborhood, I didn't have a street name to input on the search of the directory.

She was born in Camagüey, so I looked for in the directory of that province the names of her parents, written on her ID card, where it read the wallet owner was 56 years old. That proved also unsuccessful.

After reviewing papers, scrapes of papers, recipes, folded napkins -the usual purses of Cuban women, either handbags, purses of any size and use, they are a phenomenon to study – searching for a phone number, I found a paper strip with three phone numbers next to names, included that of a work center.

The first call was fruitless, the woman's voice, on the other end of the line, told me that she didn't know whom I spoke of, but that I should call her mother who earn her living selling cakes, maybe the woman I was looking for was a client of hers. The other number was in fact that of the baker woman and the third, the phone of her workplace which she had called to her mobile.

She told me to wait that she would call the mother so she accompanies her, with a 120-minute landline telephone t who contacted with me.

No joy I had to wait because hints had ended. If the baker lady didn't call me, it would be impossible to reach the owner of the wallet.

Although her address put her in Alamar, it was almost obvious that she didn't lived there because all her papers appeared issued in another municipality, included many and recent ATM tickets away from Alamar. So it made no sense to travel there.

When my hopes where dropping, the phone rang and on the other end spoke the baker lady. She did remember the lady; I described her looking at the mug shot in the ID card.

The cake Lady and her daughter had met her at Coppelia ice-cream parlor. And while they shared table and ice-cream, they sympathized and exchange numbers. But... the owner of the wallet had not given them hers.

She only remembered that she was a kind person accompanied by her daughter, also very cute. She particularly remembered the latter because, the girl had a mental disability and it was she who had begun the exchange at the ice-cream parlor.

Can you imagine! The last path had just closed and my urgency to find the woman grew more.

Just ending my conversation, someone knocked at my door. Two technicians from the telephone company who came to fix my phone extension, previously reported.

While they focused on the repair, I told my son who had arrived a few minutes after the technicians, about the wallet issue trying to join me on the search using new technologies.

I thought the technicians weren't paying attention to what I was saying but one of them cut half my sentence: "I believe I know that girl, the daughter of the owner of the wallet."

I showed him the picture, just that of the ID card and without doubting he told me the name: "That's the one; she lives two blocks from my house. Everybody knows her over there, because she is very sociable. As soon as I finish working, I will go to her house."

Anyway, what was left to see if the man would go to the girl's house and if, in fact, although chances and coincidences were abundant, it was the same person.

Not even two hours had passed when the phone rang again. It was the technician from ETECSA calling from the woman's house. He put her on the phone and I asked her about her mom's name, which I had not mentioned to anybody.

Almost without breathing she told me the two names and the two last names. There were no doubts; he had found the owner of the wallet.

Next day at dawn, because it was already almost evening when we contact, it was the lady calling at my door.

Without me asking, because just looking at her and see the picture on her ID card, she described to the last detail the content of the wallet. There was no need.

When it came to the turn of the eyeglasses prescription, her eyes were full with tears when she told me it was for her girl -of 28 years - and all the trouble she had gone through to obtain it.

The best was the surprise, the lady's incredulity who, even with the wallet in her hands, could not believe that I had returned it to her.

She told me she had thought it was lost forever; that she had gone to buy a bottle of oil for her mother and when she came to the cash register it was no longer with her.

She told me the desperation that came upon her, for the medical papers, and how she had called the bank immediately to cancel her cards and even had stopped a police car to report her loss.

After knowing how many threads interweave so that she recovered all her belongings and of the chances that in the right moment the technicians arrived, my son arrived and I told my son the whole story, how one of them paid attention to my story and that, on top of that he knew her daughter and they were almost neighbors, the lady was quiet for moment, looking at me, looking at her wallet.

With tears swelling in her eyes again she stuttered: "It's true there are still some good people in this world, and it's really very small the world, can you tell."

I said nothing and just hand her a handkerchief. It was small as sometimes the world is, as her hopes of recovering what was lost was indeed.

Cubasi Translation Staff / Amikal Labañino Valdés
