



Bringing Adam Home: The Abduction That Changed America

Les Standiford, Joe Matthews

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There are two periods of history that pertain to missing and endangered children in the United States: before Adam Walsh and after Adam Walsh. In the aftermath of that six-year old's abduction and slaying in 1981, everything about the nation's regard and response to missing children changed. The shock of the crime and the inability of law enforcement to find Adam's killer put an end to innocence and altered our very perception of childhood itself-gone forever are the days when young children burst out the doors of American homes with a casual promise to be home by dark. And, due in large part to the efforts of Adam's parents, John and Reve Walsh, the entire mechanism of law enforcement has transformed itself in an effort to protect our children. Before Adam went missing, there were no children's faces on milk cartons and billboards, no Amber Alerts, no national Center for Missing and Abused Children, no national databases for crimes against children, no registration of pedophiles-in fact, it was easier to mobilize the FBI to search for a stolen car or missing horse than for a kidnapped child. Such facts may be sad testimony to the weariness of a modern world, but there is also an uplifting aspect to Adam's story - the 27 years of undaunted effort by decorated Miami Beach Homicide Detective Joe Matthews to track down Adam's killer and bring justice to bear at long last. "Bringing Adam Home" tells the story-the good, the bad, and the ugly-of what it took for one cop to accomplish what an entire system of law enforcement could not. Matthew's achievement is a stirring one, reminding us that such concepts as hard work, dedication, and love survive, and that goodness can prevail.

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