

## Her career path: architect, plumber, teacher . . . Mom

Written by CAROL POMEDAY  
Wednesday, 08 May 2013 15:35

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In 2004, Adria Batista Noll was a successful architect designing mountain homes for a developer in Santiago, a city of 1 million people in the Dominican Republic, an island in the Caribbean.

She loved her career, but something was missing.

At age 36, she wanted a family, but wasn't dating anyone. A friend suggested she try eHarmony International, an online service that matches people based on compatibility.

"I was looking for a serious relationship, not just someone who wanted to have fun. And I wanted him to be Catholic," Adria said.



"I had given 11 years to my career and worked all through college and was ready for the next step. I live each period of my life fully. When I had kids, I wanted to concentrate on my family."

Craig Noll, who grew up on his parents' dairy farm in the Town of Belgium and has his own plumbing business, was also looking for a partner and was ready to start a family.

"Nobody around here wanted me," he joked.

The two were matched by eHarmony. After one month of communicating online, Craig went to Santiago in January 2005 to meet Adria and her family.

"I was very nervous," Adria said. "I made two girlfriends go with me."

There were definitely sparks.

Three months later, the couple met in Orlando, Fla., where Adria's father, uncle and other relatives live.

In June 2005, Adria came to Belgium on a three-month tourist visa to meet Craig's family and stayed. Craig proposed in September and they were married a month later, on Oct. 29, 2005, at St. Nicholas Catholic Church in Dacada.

Adria wore a borrowed wedding dress supplied by a cousin. Their reception was the last

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event held at Smith Bros. Restaurant in Port Washington before it closed.

Nine months later, their son Augusto was born, and 18 months after that their daughter Avaette came into the world.

Adria learned she was pregnant with Augusto when she took a pregnancy test a few days after their marriage to begin the process for citizenship, which took four years.

“I was shocked (she was pregnant) and so was my husband,” Adria said. “He said we have to do it (the pregnancy test) again.”

The second test was also positive.

When their daughter was born, their family was complete, Adria said.

Being a mother is the most fulfilling thing she has done, she said.

“I changed my life, gave up everything for this,” Adria said. “I feel very happy. The most important thing for me now is my kids and family.”

However, she also missed her profession and applied to several architectural firms, hoping she could work from home, but they wanted her in the office.

In Santiago, she had her own company and did most of her design work at home. She also taught computer-aided design classes.

She became a United States citizen in 2009 and now has dual citizenship.

Adria became an apprentice plumber in her husband’s business, Anchor Plumbing, figuring it would help her as an architect.

“But when the economy got bad, my husband had to lay me off,” she said.

“I was praying, ‘What can I do that I can stay with my kids and work?’ Spanish class came to me like that.”

She started giving weekly lessons two months ago to children ages 4 to 8. She is also teaching a Spanish enrichment class this month at Rosemary School in Fredonia, where Augusto is in first grade. Avaette is in 4-year-old kindergarten at Ozaukee Elementary School in Fredonia.

“I feel young again,” Adria said. “When you teach kids, you try to be a little bit that age. You play more. I don’t make a lot of money, but I feel happy.”

“I didn’t know if one day a week would be enough for them to learn anything, but the little ones know their colors and numbers to 100. I give them homework, so their parents are learning

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Spanish, too, because the kids need help.”

Her children are also in her classes and have become more fluent because they have other children to talk to, she said.

Her goal is to also teach teenagers and adults, with an emphasis on speaking the language as well as reading and writing it, and perhaps hold classes in workplaces.

Adria, who is fluent in English, Spanish and Italian, speaks both Spanish and English to her children.

“My husband (who doesn’t speak Spanish) tells me I should always speak Spanish to the kids, but I feel I’m not being polite when we’re around people who don’t know Spanish,” she said.

“When I get mad at them and don’t want other people to know what I say, then I speak Spanish. I like them to respect adults. I try to teach them good manners, and I teach them about what I was before when I lived in the Dominican Republic.”

Adria recently went on her first trip without her family after winning two tickets to the Billboard Latin Music Awards Show in Orlando, Fla. Her children saw her on Telemundo, a Spanish TV station, during the red carpet pre-show event. She and a friend were in the front row of spectators.

Adria said she had a wonderful time, but called her family two to three times a day because she missed them.

She may return to her architectural career when her children are older, Adria said, but her career now is as a mother and Spanish teacher, both of which she finds amazingly fulfilling.

“I like it when they (Augusto and Avaette) give me kisses and hugs and when they say silly things,” Adria said. “I like everything about being a mother.”

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Adria Batista Noll, who left an architectural career in the Dominican Republic to marry Town of Belgium plumber Craig Noll, finds being a mother to her son Augusto and daughter Avaette even more fulfilling. Photo by Sam Arendt