

## Pat Croce Brings the Spirit of Philadelphia

# to the Soul of Key West

By Carmen Elizabeth Greger

**P**at's always had passion, but now he's got soul. *Pirate Soul*, that is, a state of the art pirate museum that houses his huge collection of authentic pirate artifacts. It sits next to the Rum Barrel, Croce's new bar and restaurant (opened February 8th this year) that offers more than 100 types of rum as well as outrageous vintage pirate dishes and traditional continental cuisine. This Pirate Museum Complex rests right in the heart of the ever-sunny, Mecca of multiplicity, Key West. It's definitely worth the voyage!

Pat's piratical rendezvous is just another example of fully engaging his 'can-do' attitude and manifesting his dreams and passions into nothing less than positive realities for all to revel in. With the convenience of living his passion through his work, wherever he goes, whatever he does, business and pleasure readily coalesce. Retirement is highly doubtful. "When your work is your passion, who needs to retire," he says with a kind-hearted hint of 'aaargh'.

Whether diving for the treasures of life in the blue Key West waters, or wading in the regular events of daily life, he's an optimist, believer, and doer. He truly 'walks his talk' which is a self-claimed fundamental key to his successes.

Croce is a unique blend of wild and straight-laced, like a self-tamed rebel with a cause. He's his own 'rags to riches' story. His resume speaks for itself. We are all aware of the famous career catapult from the 'training room to the board room', which lead eventually to his writing best-selling inspirational books, hosting a nationally syndicated television show, world-wide speaking engagements, owning a museum and bar/restaurant; but he can now add Grandfather to his list of 'accomplishments'. Yes, Grandpa Pat's little 'Paz' will no-doubt grow up to be as proud of him as he is of her.

Like a keg of fine rum, he's gotten better with age; he's wiser, more focused, less maniacal, but still just as driven as he ever was. He's a spiritual and compassionate man deeply connected to his roots whose enthusiasm is more contagious than the common cold. "I am a spiritual person. I believe God granted me with gifts, treasures and assets that I have to use or else lose," says Croce.

The following interview that I had the great pleasure of doing with him was conducted over a series of conversations between his jet-setting to LA to discuss an IMAX deal for his



pitch with JM Cousteau to do a pirate movie and his journey to Key West for Pirate Museum and Rum Barrel business meetings.

This guy's got no 'off-button', or if he does, I can't find it. Not only does this extraordinary jewel of a man have a heart of gold, but he has a whole chest full of treasure. Don't miss the opportunity to check out his one of a kind, interactive exhibit at 524 Front Street, Key West and afterwards, enjoy a bite to eat at the Rum Barrel Bar & Restaurant. If you're not planning to venture down the coast, visit [www.PirateSoul.com](http://www.PirateSoul.com) & [www.RumBarrel.com](http://www.RumBarrel.com) for a virtual tour.

**PF: Do you still wake up every morning and say, "I feel Great!"**

PC: I think it. I say, "Today's going to be a great day." I really wake up with a positive, energetic mindset every morning.

**PF: So what happens if you wake up and you don't actually feel good?**

PC: It never happens.

**PF: You're obviously a major motivator, but who motivates you?**

PC: I read a lot. I love rags to riches stories and documentaries. I'm always looking for seeds of motivation from a variety of sources every day.

**PF: I'm sure you consider yourself a great leader, but how so specifically?**

PC: Well you can only judge yourself as a great leader if you have great followers. That's the key. A leader has to be a great communicator and has to communicate his vision to his or her followers. When I create a vision, whether it's a great sports medicine company, a championship parade for the Sixers, the Rum Barrel Bar & Restaurant, or Pirate Soul Museum Complex, I require people who are going to buy into my vision. I have to paint a vivid vision, communicate it, extensively and continually, to the people with whom I want to work. Then I have to walk the talk with a sense of integrity so that people know to follow me and that I'll lead them down the right path.

**PF: What are the top three of your 110 strategies for 'feeling great every day'?**

PC: Get out there and hug someone. Walk barefoot on the beach. Extend compliments. If you give it, you get it. Compliments are like boomerangs- when you throw out a compliment, it comes back to you.

**PF: Give us a preview of the Seven Secrets of a Self-made Leader?**

PC: Paint the vision, know what you want to accomplish, communicate the vision with passion, have a zealous attitude, and really walk the talk. People will know if your toes aren't pointing in the same direction as your tongue; you don't get a second chance to show them that. I'm a big believer in celebrating the journey of life and celebrating the little triumphs. We all need to celebrate the little achievements and not get stuck so often on the negatives. I believe that success begets success. People like to celebrate and

will fall into that emotionally positive, enthusiastic role.

**PF: What are three flaws in our society as you see it?**

PC: Wow, I've never been asked this before. Good question. I never look for flaws. People are too negative. They don't extend a helping hand as much as they could, whether it's holding a door for someone or general Good Samaritan kinds of things. Also, we put people on pedestals in the entertainment or sports world when they don't deserve to be. Maybe a teacher, or policemen or a nurse should deserve to be up there. I think we associate success with money; we are obsessed with money. Many of the sports and entertainment celebrities make so much money, and many of them become role models when many of them should not be.

**PF: How do you define success in general and what elements specifically in your life make you successful?**

PC: Success is the ongoing achievement and process of your goals. It's the ability to work with people. I enjoy people. That's one of the ways I charge my batteries. I feed off people when I hear and feel the passion and vision.

**PF: 'They' should do a movie on you, chronicling the events of your adventurous self-made life, would you be up for it? And if so, who would you have produce it?**

PC: I really never thought of it, Carmen.

**PF: It must have crossed your mind; Pat you need to do it.**

PC: I think there are better stories out there.

**PF: That's one of the reasons you need to do it; you're so humble and different and inspiring. You're a regular guy, a 'rags to riches' story. I saw that M. Night Shyamalan wrote a little piece on the back of one of your covers.**

PC: Oh yeah, that was great. He called it the blue-collar book for the self-made leader. Tomorrow I actually have to fly to LA for a meeting. JM Cousteau and I are pitching a pirate movie for IMAX. Then I have to head to Key West for some business meetings there.

**PF: You say, "Lead powerfully, but not by force and with attention to one's intention." This makes me think of Gandhi, can you elaborate on this statement for us?**

PC: Oh, I couldn't even clean Gandhi's sandals. He's a stone cold leader. Focus on the dream. Focus your attention on your intention. What is it that you intend to accomplish? Figure it out and then you can focus in on that, otherwise you're mindset gets diluted.

**PF: How are you different now than you were 10 years ago?**

PC: Obviously I'm wiser because I've had that shot with the Sixers. I'm more experienced because I've done the national syndicated TV show Pat Croce Moving In and commented for the Olympics. My children are older and doing very well. Also I'm a grandfather now.

**PF: That's wonderful, congratulations!**

PC: Yeah, my Granddaughter is three months old.

**PF: What's her name?**

PC: Pascale. My name's Pasquale, and I am the namesake. 'Paz' in Spanish means peace. Pascale is the name, Paz is the nickname.

**PF: Last time I was in your office your bike was parked next to your desk. Do you still ride your Harley?**

PC: I stopped last year

**PF: Really? For good?**

PC: I don't know, at least for right now.

**PF: Why is that?**

PC: I just didn't have the passion I had for it before and I got a little gun shy after that serious motorcycle accident I suffered. I biked after the accident, but now I have less passion for it and there's so much more to do. I usually do things geared towards my passion.

**PF: What is the highlight of your life so far? It seems like you've had so many.**

PC: Oh, the highlight has to be the birth of my kids. I've had other highs since then, including beating the Orlando Magic in 1999 to advance to the second round of the playoffs with the Sixers because it was the first time they made the playoffs after an eight-year drought. It felt so good that people believed in a dream! Holding my little granddaughter three months ago was really so cool!

**PF: How do you find time for fitness and what specifically do you do?**

PC: That's the first thing I set in my schedule. Every morning, when I get out of bed, yeah, I feel great, but I make myself feel even better. This morning I ran five miles. Tomorrow I'll go to Summit Sports Training Center and lift for an hour. I'll do some weights and really work my core hard. Then Saturday I'll do an hour of aerobic conditioning or get in another run. I mix it up. I lift three days a week with hard, high-intensity lifts, and the other four days I'll do some sort of aerobic training.

**PF: So, do you use a trainer?**

PC: No, I was one of the forbearers of personal training before there was such a thing as personal trainers. So no, I don't need anyone training me, but I enjoy having training partners. Right now, Larry Platt is my regular victim!

**PF: If you could dream anything true, what would you dream?**

PC: I believe dreams do come true. Therefore I would wish for no hunger in the world.

**PF: If you could motivate one specific person in the world to do one specific thing, who and what would it be?**

PC: Oh this is good. I want to make an impact here...the Pope because he'd be the only one I know who could get peace in this world.

**PF: What is your biggest fault?**

PC: My impatience.

**PF: Your greatest achievement?**

PC: Finding Diane as my wife. No...getting her to marry me.

**PF: Your biggest fear?**

PC: Harm to my family.

**PF: Your motivational speaking career must give you great satisfaction.**

PC: It takes me all over the world. I motivate a large number of people to get off their butts and achieve their goals. I let them know they have the power to have an impact directly with the person next to them. If I can do it, they can do it.

**PF: Democrat or Republican?**

PC: I'm a registered Democrat right now, but I go with who I believe in and who I feel like helping.

**PF: How do you feel about President Bush?**

PC: He appears to be a little stubborn. I believe in listening more. Like with the port authority thing, if all of Congress is against it, why is he for it? It doesn't make sense to me.

**PF: What, if any, retirement plans do you have?**

PC: I don't know the word 'retirement'.

**PF: You're going to live in your triangle, right?**

PC: Right, I could be retired right now if I chose to be. Really, I need activity. It keeps me going, my juices flowing. So I have a lot of projects that are either invested in or started; that's what excites me. When you can choose what you want to do, isn't that retirement?

**PF: Which five famous people of any era do you most respect?**

PC: Jesus Christ, Thomas Edison, Abraham Lincoln, Mother Theresa, and Oprah.

**PF: Have you ever been on Oprah?**

PC: No, I met her once. We were working out in the gym together in NY two years ago, while I was on my Lead or Get Off the Pot book tour.

**PF: Which five Philadelphians of any walk of life do you most respect?**

PC: Ben Franklin, Julius Irving, My Father, Michael Smerconish, and Sister Mary Scullion of Project Home.

**PF: Which charities are you actively involved with?**

PC: Maternity Care Coalition, Project Home, Mercy Neighborhood Ministry, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, American Red Cross, and Multiple Sclerosis Society.

**PF: What is your role in and opinion of the Philadelphia casino proposal/plan and how will this impact Philadelphia?**

PC: I'm a partner with Donald and Pete Ciarocci of Chickie and Pete's, Boyz to Men and Jerry Seigal of Magee Hospital. We put together quite a group and we're one of five applicants for two licenses. I think it's pretty cool because our project is in the Nicetown section, the old Budweiser plant and I think it can revitalize the neighborhood. I understand that 54% of the profit goes to the state and the city.

**PF: Could you turn a criminal into a saint?**

PC: No.

**PF: Ever think about lecturing behind bars to the prisoners?**

PC: Never thought of it. But that's cool. It's a good idea.

**PF: Do you think you were a pirate in a former life?**

PC: Yes.

**PF: How did your fascination begin and who is your all time favorite pirate?**

PC: When I was a kid, my Mother gave me a ruler that I still have in my safe. I carved a skull and bones in the back of it. I always loved the movie Captain Blood with Earl Flynn. I have his jacket from the movie as a matter of fact. I just always had a passion "for the brethren of the christ," so when I started making money I began collecting and wound up with the greatest piratical collection in the world. I put it under a roof in Key West, which is a piratical Caribbean island. I had the museum designers who did the Holocaust Museum put it all together. And, I had the opportunity to do it with my daughter Kelly. It's way cool! Now I can share all these great artifacts and exhibits with everyone in a most unique setting. I just love the pirate attitude- whatever it takes to go for the gold!

**PF: Key West has always had a place in my heart. What about it most attracts you?**

PC: The quiriness. It's one human family from Cubans to Bohemians to whites, to blacks to hippies, yuppies and gays, blues enthusiasts and the bikers. Everyone lives in harmony; you can be what you want to be. Key West has a great ambiance. It's got the blue coral water, where you can scuba dive, snorkel, and do water sports. The people are so interesting and the sunset festival every night is outrageous!! It's really a great place to visit. Of course, our Rum Barrel Bar & Restaurant just opened. My daughter Kelly and son-in-law, Jeff, run it. Key West is truly an incredible place, and the Pirate Soul Museum is definitely a must see. There's nothing else like it the world!

**PF: How specifically do you most want to be remembered?**

PC: As a great brother, husband, father and friend who had an extraordinary power to make people feel great.

**PF: What do you like best about Philadelphia?**

PC: The people. I love the passion and the pride of the people of Philadelphia.

**PF: Your favorite Philly area restaurant?**

PC: Kristians, down in South Philly.

**PC: Coffee shop?**

PC: I don't go to coffee shops. Who needs it?

**PF: Physical Therapist?**

PC: Doug Dannehower

**PF: Bookstore?**

PC: Borders in Bryn Mawr

**PF: College/University?**

PC: West Chester

**PF: Park?**

PC: Fairmount Park

**PF: Neighborhood?**

PC: Italian Market

**PF: Workout Facility?**

PC: Summit Sports Training Center in Rosemont Square Shopping Center in Bryn Mawr.

**PF: Media Person?**

PC: Angelo Cataldi

**PF: Pro Coach?**

PC: Andy Reid

**PF: Entertainer?**

PC: Will Smith

**PF: Your general food intake on any given day?**

PC: I start with a big bowl of cereal. I mix three cereals together with a handful of raisins and low fat milk, and I add a banana. For lunch, for example I have tuna fish or chicken salad on whole wheat with tomato and lettuce. For dinner, give me pasta with fish or a nice lean filet mignon. I definitely have variety in my diet.

**PF: What about sweets?**

PC: Oh, give me a peppermint patty or a chewy chocolate cookie for dessert and I'm a happy camper.

For more information on and adventures with Pat Croce and his many endeavors, visit [www.RumBarrel.com](http://www.RumBarrel.com) and [www.PirateSoul.com](http://www.PirateSoul.com). Pat's book *Pirate Soul*, a totally unique non-fiction pirate book with 30 inter actives will be released this summer.

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