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ANTHONY V. PUGLIESE III

# Renaissance Man

By Diane Feen

**A**nthony V. Pugliese III is larger than life. And it's not a matter of stature. It's solely due to his accomplishments, sweeping visions and artistic appreciation.

To know Pugliese is to know that feet and inches don't matter – personality and intelligence do this down-to-earth family man – and accomplished business tycoon – acts on his creative impulses yet knows how to navigate the business world like a modern day Magellan.

What makes him especially unique in the business world, however, are his priorities.

"The most important things in life are family, loyalty and your word. Those things are more important than anything else – money never comes first."

The other trait that makes him a rarity in the business world is his innate creative ability. As an art student at Arts High School in Newark, New Jersey, he studied mechanical drawing, painting and design. But instead of heading off to college Pugliese did what came naturally – he went into the pool business with his father, Anthony V. Pugliese Jr.

"In the winter you couldn't build pools so we started rehabbing vacant buildings in Northern New Jersey and Newark. Then we started buying industrial parks and office buildings," said the father of four.

It wasn't long before Pugliese's business skills and boundlessness led him to South Florida. He invested in buildings in Boca Raton, Delray Beach and the Florida Keys. Pugliese also found a venue that married his creative right brain with his analytical left brain. And the results were pretty spectacular.

"We designed a 135,000 square foot building in Boca Raton that won the 1986 National Association of Office & Industrial Parks Award. We also won an award for best brochure design for an office building," he said (he uses the collective we quite often as a way of inclusiveness).

The Crystal Corporate Center on Military Trail may have garnered Pugliese accolades from his peers, but it's his philosophy and pledge of honor that continues to garner him humble followers and co-workers. "I've never met a person who's more brilliant in all ways and walks of life. He's a handshake kind of guy, his word is his honor," said Mel Urban, of CSS Building and Design, Inc.

If you talk to anyone who knows Pugliese, you will hear the same adjectives – wonderful, intelligent, funny, creative, productive, fair, honest, humble, caring and a good friend. There's also a sense of awe at his worldly accomplishments.

He has amassed millions of square feet of retail, industrial and commercial properties, holds patents in IP video technology, electronic ticketing and automated self-storage. And Pugliese's latest acquisition (or real estate prodigy) is a project known as Destiny. This lush 41,300 acreage of land in Central Florida (that is three times the size of Manhattan) is being heralded as the first eco-sustainable community. The Destiny motto is to conserve, recycle and preserve – and its ambitiousness and credo seem to be borrowed from the Al Gore playbook.

"We are going to change the way people live at Destiny, they will be able to embrace a green lifestyle," said the proud papa of this gargantuan project **More >>**



## ANTHONY V. PUGLIESE III CONT'D.

that will house 250,000 people. The Destiny brochure reads "Land is our past, our present and our future." And according to Pugliese, sprawling congestion is not what he is after, but something greater in scope. "It is our vision to insure a major pristine piece of old Florida is saved through the thoughtful preservation of tens of thousands of acres of land that we named Destiny."

But that's not the only thing he does with his time. Pugliese collects rare slices of popular culture that are true testaments of time and space. He owned Marlon Brando's fedora from the movie, "The Godfather", the witch hat worn in 1939 by Margaret Hamilton in "The Wizard of Oz," and the bowler worn by Odd Job in the movie, "The Goldfinger." In all 800 precious pieces owned by Pugliese were recently sold at an auction in Las Vegas by Guernsey's Auction House. The Odd Job bowler fetched \$130,000 and the witch hat worn by Hamilton brought in \$208,000.

According to the Pugliese Pop Culture catalogue the auction "marked Pugliese's intention to refocus his efforts to help protect and preserve our great natural heritage by supporting the Audubon Society....and to develop Destiny, Florida's first Eco-sustainable community."

There are other dimensions to this multi-tasking dreamer as well. In his spare time he enjoys painting. "Some guys like to play golf, I like to paint," he says. But one gets the idea that Pugliese's artwork is akin to the colorful and expressive side that takes up residence in his cerebral cortex.

In the Pugliese work environment there are signs of his creative genius everywhere. Dispersed throughout the wood paneled rooms that make up the Pugliese Company headquarters are oil paintings by the boss himself. Most are hung at dizzying heights that soar above the innumerable offices occupied by loyal Pugliese employees. There are colorful paintings of

zaftig women as well as pastoral nature scenes. There's also a collage of human forms in orange, blue and green that is a metaphor for his belief that "time melts away."

But everyone who knows Pugliese knows that time rarely melts idly away in his orbit. "Anthony is one of the few people who can negotiate a deal and each side walks away feeling like they got what they deserved. Sometimes meetings go on for a long time and Anthony's enthusiasm, focus and sense of humor keep everyone excited about the project," said Michael Weiner, a zoning and real estate lawyer in Delray Beach.

Maybe that's because of the Pugliese mind set. "You should treat people as you would expect to be treated. Respect and loyalty should take precedence over money. Money should never be your God because no matter how much money you have it cannot buy you respect and loyalty."

Pretty heady stuff coming from a man who claims he's not religious or spiritual. But if you were to hear the Pugliese philosophy, you would know that this man of vision is religious in his own context. "Religion is knowing that God is in your heart and your mind. The image you leave behind can only be formed by the image you create while you are alive," he said.

OK so he's not religious, but the man with the street named after him in Pineapple Grove appears to have an artistic appreciation for others religious expressions. There's a colorful oil painting of dancing Gopis outside his office and delicious depictions of Shiva and other deities lining the walls of this museum-like corporate milieu.

Inside his spacious, yet electrifying office is a mélange of collectables usually reserved for museums and galleries. Standing on a shelf behind his desk is the original statue of the Maltese Falcon from the 1941 John Huston film, "The Maltese Falcon" (starring Humphrey Bogart). And perched high above the adjacent wall is a massive

elephant head.

But it is the bronze Perillo sculptures in his office that really tell a more vivid Pugliese story board. There's the Buffalo Hunt, the Mighty Hunter and a few other ambitious bronze's on pedestals throughout his office. And if a person is part and parcel of their surroundings then no one displays a better art form of consciousness than Pugliese. "Sometimes you have to be soft, sometimes you have to be rough, but you have to be able to do both. If you are soft all the time you get buried and if you're hard all the time you are a bastard - the idea is to be fair."

You can say that again. Pugliese is known for being fair in the same way that Gandhi was known for his peaceful continence. "Anthony's word is his honor, you don't need a 65,000 word contract, his word is like God," adds Urban.

But this fearless leader of all things real estate (and beyond) has other interests as well. He owns Green Sky Industries, a recycling company that employs 127 people in New Jersey. He also owns a software company called Video Protein, run by his son Anthony V. Pugliese IV. This web-based patented software manages video cameras from anywhere in the world. "All you need is a camera, that's why they call it, 'plug and play,'" he said.

In his spare time (one wonders where this comes from) Pugliese comes up with story ideas and characters that are made into movies. His film production company, World Films Inc., produces movies with names like "The Butcher," "The Last Sentinel," and "Soft Target." His next film, which goes into production later in the year, is a horror film called, "Grotesque."

The man with the golden touch also has a heart to go with it. When his friends are in need of inspiration he makes up quotes to pull them out of the doldrums. Some go like this, "When life casts its darkest shadow upon you, that's when you must find even the smallest ray of light within to guide you through

the darkness."

And what does this real estate maven do to inspire himself? Well, it seems that Pugliese holds on tight to his family ties. He can be found playing with his five grandchildren at the beach and relishing time with his glamorous (and quite intelligent) wife Laura. The rest of the Pugliese brood includes nine-year-old Roman, 35-year-old Anthony IV, 32-year-old Alvise and 31-year-old Lana.

To honor his grandson, Anthony V. Pugliese V, he is creating the Anthony V. Pugliese V Miracle League field. This playing field will be located in Miller Park off of Linton Blvd. and is being built for handicap children to play sports. The park will be finished in late 2008.

To quantify the accomplishments of the man with the Pugliese heritage (granddad was Anthony Pugliese, dad was Anthony V. Pugliese Jr.) would be like counting the pebbles at the edge of the Grand Canyon. It makes the task seem insurmountable, which leads one to wonder, is this a man that defies description, is he a mere mortal that looms larger than life (and we're not talking feet and inches).

Perhaps, or maybe it has something to do with the fact that his father, Anthony V. Pugliese Jr. once imparted this wisdom at this feet, "You never want to burn your bridges because you never know when you might need to go back over them."

That might be the reason that Pugliese always has a safe port in the storm - a front row seat in the boardroom of life. No matter how high he leaps or how much traction he needs Pugliese always has that steady bridge to propel him forward.

But one thing for sure, he never leaves anyone in the dust on the way there. "Anthony is the most wonderful person - he's loving and caring and has never made an enemy," said Urban. "I've been lucky to meet someone like him." ■