

Respect for everyone



TIM DONOVAN

is the key to Rodney Barreto's success

By Patricia Behnke

Ask Rodney Barreto the secret to his success as a police officer, a businessman and now as chairman of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and he repeats one word: respect.

"It comes from my mom and dad," he said. "They would always tell us to respect people and the environment."

As chairman of the Commission, Barreto balances conservation issues with the needs of the people who live in and visit Florida. His people skills helped him earn an unprecedented fourth term as chairman of the FWC.

Gov. Charlie Crist believes

the Commission made the right decision.

"Rodney's leadership is exemplary," Crist said. "He works in a very progressive mode."

Positive changes made by the Commission make Barreto more determined than ever to work as a team with his fellow Commissioners. He is most proud of creating a positive atmosphere at Commission meetings, which engage the public in important issues facing the fish and wildlife of Florida. It is that open environment that has led the FWC to make important decisions.

"I am very proud to have presided over the rule making that has brought better manage-

ment of fish and wildlife, such as snook, manatees, sea trout, gopher tortoises, deer, turkeys and many other species," he said.

Crist believes it is Barreto's willingness to work long hours that made him the perfect choice for the FWC Commission.

"He's been an overwhelming success because he loves doing the work and preparing for those long meetings," Crist said. "It is one of the pleasures of my job to do the will of the people and make appointments such as Rodney's."

Barreto began his career at the age of 19 as a Miami police officer. He was in uniform only six months before being promoted.

He served as a robbery detective, SWAT trainer and then as a plainclothes officer.

"After I'd been on the job for a little while, I wrote my mom and dad a letter," he said. "I thanked them for the loving home they gave us. I didn't know what it was for people to not have good parents."

Treating people with respect paid off, especially after an incident which changed Barreto's life forever.

"One night when I was working plainclothes in Miami, my partner and I pulled over to a corner where there were about six kids," Barreto said, talking about a night in 1985.

Barreto had his car window open and turned to say something to his partner when he saw a flash come through the car, blowing out one of the windows.

"The bullet didn't hit me, but I jumped out of the car and fired at the gunman several times," Barreto said. "I didn't hit him."

They eventually caught the shooter when a woman from the area gave police his name.

"We picked him up and arrested him," Barreto said, his eyes filling with tears. "This

was predominantly a black neighborhood, and I was a white officer, but we treated one another with respect.

"I built a really cool network of folks just by treating everyone with respect and in a dignified way," he said.

Barreto left the police force and went to work for Monty Trainer, a Miami restaurateur, where he began to make a name for himself in the business world.

Today, he is president of the Barreto Group, a real estate investment and development firm, which also operates a bed and breakfast in Maine and residential clubhouse in Doral. Barreto is also the founding partner of Floridian Partners, a lobbying firm recognized by policy makers and their peers as one of the top public affairs firms in Florida.

As he built his businesses, he took time to become involved in public service, something he continues to this day. Barreto is currently a board member of U.S. Century Bank and of the Baptist Hospital Foundation.

Barreto began working for the not-for-profit Greater Miami Host Committee in the 1990s, where

he helped start the Big Orange, Miami's answer to Times Square's New Year's Eve celebration.

"I felt it was a great way to give back," Barreto said. "I love this community and this state."

But he didn't stop there. As chairman of the 2007 Super Bowl Host Committee, he raised more than \$10 million to support the event held at Dolphin Stadium. Because of his interpersonal skills and dedication, Barreto was asked to chair the 2010 Super Bowl Host Committee and the 76th Annual U.S. Conference of Mayors to be held in Miami in June 2008. It is no wonder that South Florida CEO magazine has twice named him one of the top 100 most powerful people in South Florida.

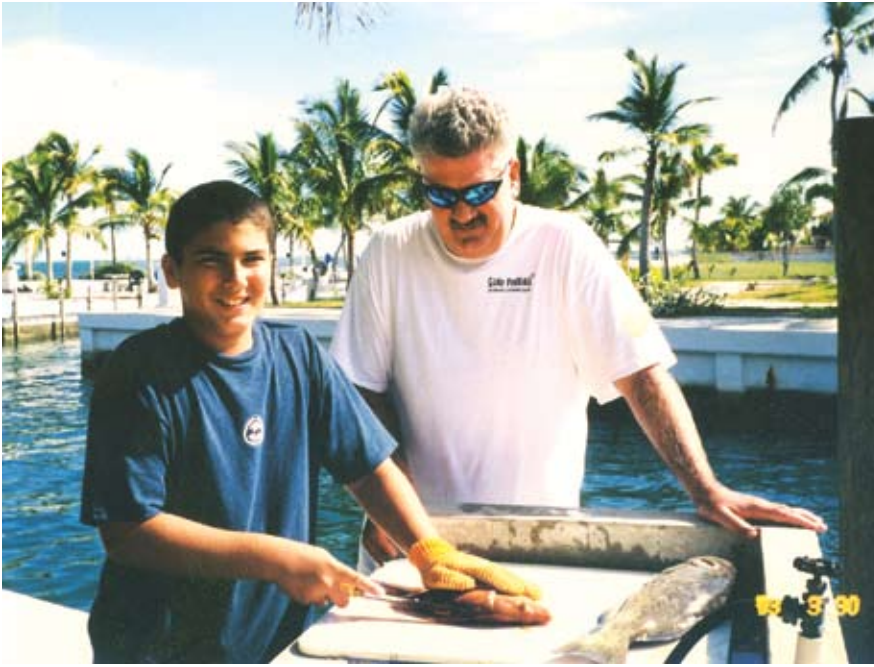
His love of Florida's environment, combined with his business acumen and commitment to giving back, made Barreto Gov. Jeb Bush's choice for appointment to the Commission in 2001.

Crist re-appointed him in 2007 because in Barreto he saw great leadership qualities.

"Rodney uses great judgment," Crist said. "I trust him because he cares greatly for Florida's natural resources."



PAT FORD



Above: Rodney Barreto watches as his son Bradley filets his first fish. Both of his children have grown up with an appreciation of Florida’s vast natural resources. **Facing page:** Gov. Charlie Crist and FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto spend a day fishing with Capt. Rick Murphy from Sportsman’s Adventures.

Barreto describes growing up in the “small town” of Miami in the 1960s as a “simple” time. From hunting in the Everglades to fishing in Biscayne Bay, this idyllic period, before Miami’s boom in the 1970s, created a lasting love of Florida’s environment in the young boy.

When his father, Roger, decided to build a vacation home in Tavernier in the Keys, Barreto said the family went there “whether we wanted to or not.”

“We called it Roger’s Labor Camp,” he said, “because we used to go there and work all the time.”

The time spent together as a family became the most important part of those trips for the family.

“I always felt that giving the kids a place to play and work was a good way of keeping an eye on them,” Roger Barreto said. “It kept them out of trouble and gave them a great appreciation for nature.”

Those early years prepared Barreto for the balancing act required by the FWC in dealing

with both developers and environmentalists who want to conserve habitat and wildlife.

“We all have a seat at the table, and I encourage everyone to pull up a chair,” Barreto said. “We have to look for real solutions based on science and on the best information available. If we can balance it that way, then I think we’re making the right decisions.”

Barreto also believes in establishing a heritage for future generations. When he first took the position as chairman, he

encouraged education and outreach for youth fishing. This interest led to the creation of a Web page, poster and video encouraging Floridians to “take a kid fishing.”

He applies this tradition to his children, Brittney, 18, and Bradley, 16. He and his wife Shelia take the kids and their friends on outdoor adventures, such as fishing, snorkeling, hunting and hiking, teaching them appreciation, respect and good stewardship of the outdoors.

“My daughter is the angler,” Barreto said. “But my son goes quail hunting with me.”

Barreto encourages people to get outside and enjoy all that Florida has to offer. He also believes the FWC’s role will continue to be an important one to the future of Florida’s resources.

“We are so blessed to live here in Florida,” he said. “And I’ve told both Gov. Bush and Gov. Crist that I’ve never worked with professionals who were as committed and dedicated to the cause as FWC employees. It’s refreshing.” **FW**

Patricia Behnke, an editor with the FWC, left the teaching profession to pursue a career in journalism more than eight years ago. She has written about Florida’s environment – both natural and political – and served as editor of several publications in North Central Florida.



FWC Executive Director Ken Haddad and Chairman Rodney Barreto share a light moment before a commission meeting.