



Celestial Vestal  
Photo © Pat Jolly



Sunpie's Spell  
Photo © Pat Jolly 2009



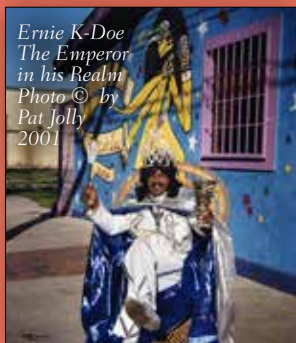
Spirit of FiYiYi at the Backstreet Museum.  
Photo © by Pat Jolly 2018



Northside Skull and Bone Gang  
Photo © Pat Jolly 2018

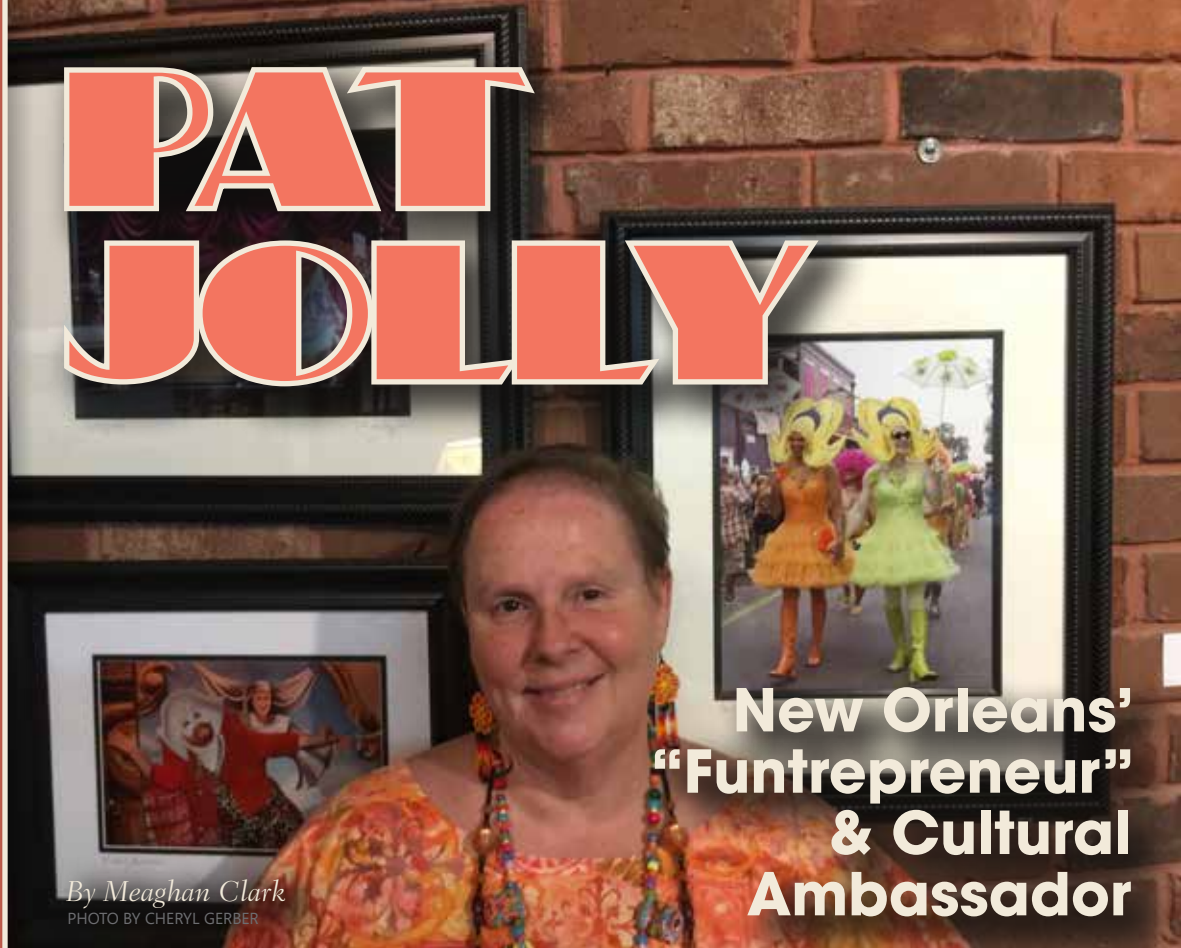


A Man Oughta Do What He Thinks Is Right. Photo © Pat Jolly 2018



Ernie K-Doe  
The Emperor  
in his Realm  
Photo © by  
Pat Jolly  
2001

# PAT JOLLY



## New Orleans' "Funtrepreneur" & Cultural Ambassador

By Meaghan Clark  
PHOTO BY CHERYL GERBER

**P**at Jolly has lots of nicknames – The Night Mayor, Jolly Pat, The Funtrepreneur, Jollyllama, Big Chiefess Jolly, The Contact Intermediary and The Jewel of the Universe, to name a few. And they all fit her perfectly.

A professional photographer, historian, talent agent, artist, cultural ambassador and bon vivant, Jolly represents, documents and supports many cultures and communities in the city. Her photographs of Mardi Gras Indians, artists, musicians, events and everyday life of New Orleans have been bought, sold and displayed all over the world. She is currently working on a database of all her images, classified by subject matter, that will be accessible to other media and future generations.

"I wake up happy every single day and it's this city that gives that energy to me," says Jolly.

A fifth-generation New Orleanian, Jolly hails from a family known for its philanthropic endeavors. An uncle was a Jesuit priest in Asia. Her mother and grandmother were also active members of their communities, hosting fundraisers, feeding the homeless, assisting orphan children and helping people

with disabilities. Jolly credits her family on both sides for being an outstanding role model.

"I think artists should help other artists by freely supporting their endeavors. My grandmother used to say, 'If everyone would hold up a tiny corner, then the whole community would stay up there.' I try and live by that motto," she adds.

A curious person by nature, Jolly has joined several organizations in the city, including Mardi Gras krewes, cultural organizations, and professional groups. She volunteers to make art with students across the city and has touched the lives of many. She struggles to balance her work with her volunteering and other social endeavors.

This year, Jolly is on a mission to complete a very large photography project. With an extensive . . . she might even say "overwhelming" . . . catalog of photos, Jolly's focus is on working to organize them. Having received a couple of small grants from local arts organizations, she will spend much of 2018 organizing her works and getting her photos in metadata order by subject, date, and artist. It's a huge undertaking that Jolly feels compelled to conquer and one which

will require considerable help. Daunting as it may sound, Jolly says this is what she must accomplish eventually.

"I want people to have their photos. I'm sad when attending funerals and I'm not organized enough to give to family members photos I've previously taken of the deceased. A lot of them come from out of town, and that's my only opportunity to put photos in their hands," she says.

As a photographer, Jolly doesn't always receive payment for her work and yet she has decided she wants access to her images to be free for those in the photos and for research or educational purposes. She says if people use her images to make money, she hopes they will send her payment. Calling herself "an eternal optimist," Jolly says she will continue to work on the honor system. Many of the city's top musicians, organizers and community leaders understand the value of the work Jolly does and they have sent letters of support to funders on her behalf.

Along with her cataloging, Jolly will continue to photograph the city she loves. The past year saw many of her images in various shows and exhibitions across the city, including ones entitled "Celestial Vestal," "Sunpie's Spell" and "St. John's Eve Ceremony on the Magnolia Bridge," as part of the Louisiana Photography Biennial held at the New Orleans Arts Center. Jolly is appreciative of the work, the recognition and the awards she receives but keeps a very level head about any fame she has attained.

Jolly's most current work is a piece entitled "A Man Oughta Do What He Thinks is Right," part of "The Deadly Ambiguity of Guns," which is part of a three-tiered international exhibit entitled "Building a Peaceable Community." She was one of 60 artists on exhibit at the New Orleans Art Center satellite gallery through the Prospect 4 citywide triennial of contemporary art and she won third place in the competition.

In addition to being an award-winning photographer,

Jolly has held several different titles and jobs, ranging from working as a cultural ambassador for arts and music organizations to being an assistant with the New Orleans Musicians Clinic Gig Fund post-Katrina, creating weekly gigs and finding housing to help musicians return home. If something needs to be done to help musicians and artists, Jolly is ready to volunteer.

Decades ago, Jolly began a weekly calendar listing of events and gigs for friends and loved ones. It became so popular, she helped craft a similar format for WWOZ radio (which morphed into the popular "Live Wire") and for other media outlets.

Today, Jolly still sends out a weekly email blast listing happenings she thinks her many followers will enjoy, despite it taking a large amount of her time each week. Her influence on reporting and sharing entertainment news can still be heard and felt at WWOZ. Her radio "Performers Spotlight" interviews with local musicians are still broadcast on occasion.

One project Jolly would love to see come to fruition in the birthplace of jazz is a world-class music museum glorifying the history of music and musicians

in "America's most interesting city," as her grandmother always said when introducing herself.

Though she notes that several museums do include works, artifacts, and acknowledgment for local musicians, Jolly emphatically states that the city needs one dedicated exclusively to music. It's a subject she has raised for years and one she isn't ready to let go of.

"It's essential. Music is what drives this city and we need to honor it properly. It would bring so much joy and pride," she adds.

Now a septuagenarian, Jolly doesn't let her age slow her down. During Mardi Gras 2018, she was out from sunrise - catching the Northside Skull and Bone Gang - to sunset attending house parties, photographing creative costumes, the Spirit of FiYiYi Mardi Gras Indians and taking in all the revelry Carnival has to offer. Jolly would like to focus on moving krewes away from throwing plastic beads (unless they're collectibles) and focus on using ones made of recycled or biodegradable materials. A non-marching member of the Krewe of King James, Jolly is proud that they make all their own throws out of recycled materials.

"I love Mardi Gras and was so honored to be Queen of the Phunny Phorty Phellows in 2014. The next year on Twelfth Night, for the countdown on the streetcar, as reigning monarch I was given the scissors to cut the ribbon and proclaim that Carnival had begun! What could be more thrilling to someone who loves Mardi Gras so much," Jolly proudly states.

With a huge grin Jolly added, "I was the staff photographer for Jazz Fest for nine years and now that the festival is just around the corner I am excitedly looking forward to celebrating the newest creations of our astounding musicians in the midst of all that our stellar festival has to offer while enjoying the pleasure of being with good friends. Yippee!!"

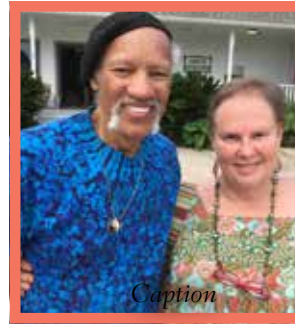
As she sums up, "This is a city full of love, which just goes around and around. It's so compassionate. I couldn't live anywhere else." 🌸



Left: Pat Jolly and her mom, Honey. Below left: Kermit Ruffins Below right: Charles Neville



Caption



Caption