



Pat Williams

EDITORS' NOTE Pat Williams was promoted to his current post from the General Manager position in April 1996. He also serves as the promotional leader and strategic marketer for memberships at the RDV Sportsplex. Prior to joining the Orlando Magic in 1986, he spent 12 seasons as General Manager of the Philadelphia 76ers. Earlier, he spent four years as General Manager of the Chicago Bulls and one year with the Atlanta Hawks before returning to Philadelphia.

Although Williams has spent over four decades in professional basketball, his first love is baseball, the sport that gained him a scholarship to Wake Forest University, where he received a bachelor's degree in physical education. He went on to earn a master's of science degree in physical education from Indiana University. Williams' professional baseball career began with the Philadelphia Phillies in 1962 and he spent two seasons catching for the Miami Marlins. He moved from the playing field to the front office, when appointed Business Manager of Miami in 1964. He then assumed the General Manager position with the Spartanburg Phillies and was elevated to the position of President of that organization in 1967. He has written more than 85 books, including his most recent which deals with his battle with cancer, entitled *The Mission Is Remission*.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF The mission of the Orlando Magic (nba.com/magic) is to be world champions on and off the court. Orlando has won five division championships, had seven 50-plus win seasons, and won the Eastern Conference title in 1995 and 2009. Off the court, the Orlando Magic gives more than \$2 million annually to its local community by way of event sponsorships, donated tickets, autographed merchandise, scholarships, and grants. Their community relations programs impact an estimated 75,000 youngsters each year, while a Magic staff-wide initiative provides more than 6,000 volunteer hours annually. Over the past 22 years, more than \$17 million has been distributed to local nonprofit community organizations via the Orlando Magic Youth Fund (OMYF-MFF).

The Magic Behind a Mission

An Interview with Pat Williams,
Senior Vice President, Orlando Magic

When you undertook writing your latest book, *The Mission Is Remission*, what was your vision for the book?

I was diagnosed more than three years ago and, like everybody else who is informed that they're dealing with cancer, I was stunned. The initial thought is it's a death sentence. You don't feel good physically and it's a devastating experience.

As the weeks went by, I began to think that there was a reason for this. As a man of faith, it became clear that I had been called into a different world, and I didn't want to waste this opportunity. I think every family in America has been touched by cancer.

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The initial fit for me was in counseling people. Calls started coming in from those who wanted advice, and those continue to this day. I didn't realize there were so many cancer organizations that wanted board members and spokespeople, and I was offered many speaking opportunities.

Then came the fundraising – every organization dealing with cancer is in major fundraising mode. I have agreed with Florida Hospital to help raise \$25 million to build a multiple myeloma center in Central Florida. So if there was a thought that the closing years of my life would be relaxing, forget it. I have to step up and do it.

I wasn't ready to share my story until about a year and a half ago. I felt then that I had a firm grip on what was going on and where I was

emotionally, so I talked with a publisher who agreed to do the book. It took six months to get it together, and I feel good that it's out now.

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What was the origin of the six points you address in the book?

Dr. Robert Reynolds, a highly regarded oncologist in Central Florida, sat me down and explained what was happening. I had the typical questions: What caused it? Why did I get it? What did I do wrong? How long will I live? He said that their job is to keep those affected alive long enough to apply new research and forms of medication that are coming out, which has since happened.

Then he said, you're going to do very well with this. He was a sports fan and a long-time resident, so he knew of me. He then listed these six points, which comprise the meat of the book.

First, he reminded me to write and speak on the importance of optimism and an upbeat spirit – that positive attitude is very important in fighting this disease.

The second point is fitness. I was in good shape physically, which is relevant because there are physical demands that come with the treatment. The cutoff age for a stem cell transplant at a Florida hospital is 65. I was 71 and they waived the age limit because my heart was strong enough. Without that transplant, I would not be here today.

Dr. Reynolds' third point relates to faith, which is vital. He has observed that patients who are anchored spiritually do much better.

Fourth is the love and support of family. We have 19 kids and 14 grandchildren, and this disease has pulled our family together.

The fifth point is having employees who are your teammates. He emphasized that this is very valuable, and I have found this to be so true. Most of those around me are young and they just want to help.

The final point he made is that I had been investing in Orlando from the time I first arrived there more than 25 years ago, and that this investment was about to pay off. The community, media, and everybody I had the fortune to touch through my involvement in basketball have been right there with me through it all.

Do you think your fight against cancer will have even more of an impact than your sports success?

The cancer legacy will dwarf anything I've done. There isn't any bigger issue in this country. We have a great deal of work to do. ●