

~Angie Ojea ~
~Proud Mother and Loving Wife-
Instilling Family Values One Day At A Time!!!~

By Katie Shepherd



Angie Ojea has seen her share of adversity, but according to this young mother, such trials and tribulations only made her stronger. “Although there have been tough times in my life, I have been fortunate enough to overcome them and it has given me the opportunity to help others who may be going through similar difficulties. All of my experiences have made me the person I am today” she told us. Now at 39 she claims to be

blessed with a loving husband and four wonderful children. “I have been happily married to Peter for 12 ½ years now and we have two children together, Madelyn, 10 years and Sam, 5 years. I also have 2 wonderful step daughters, Erin, 23 and Lily, 21” she added.

Angie’s no stranger to life in South Florida. As a native Floridian she was born in Miami and moved to Palm Beach County at the tender age of 6. “I grew up in Gramercy Park and lived there until the age of 18” she explained. “I went to North Shore High School and would have graduated in 1985 had I not quit school to become a child bride.” A decision Angie soon came to regret. “My first marriage ended in divorce after only 1 ½ years, due to spousal abuse” she shared. While Angie admits it was one of the toughest times of her life she claims even it helped to mold the person she is today. “I emerged a strong more confident person with a sense of self worth and belonging that no other human being can ever take away from me.” Now as an adult Angie acknowledges that she has very strong opinions about marriage and education. “If I could have done it over again, I would not have quit school to get married. I would have continued my education, maybe gone to college, and just **maybe** had a sense of self, through those accomplishments and independence, that would **not** have attracted a man so eager to take advantage of a young girl with no experience in the world. I was just so determined to be a “WOMAN” before I was ready. Age however did not make it so” she admitted. Refusing to make the same mistakes twice she entered her second marriage with a set of values more compatible to her upbringing. “Marriage is a partnership, equally grounded in respect for one another, and the ability to put aside self for the better of your mate. It is acceptance, choosing your battles and knowing that you could live without the other, but choose not to.” She explained.



True family values are something Angie learned very early on and something she hopes to pass on to her children as well. “My father is a true COWBOY. I remember getting my first pony at the age of 8. It was a Christmas gift and my father drove to Valdosta, Georgia and then home again, on Christmas Eve, just so it would be in our backyard on Christmas morning. A 12 hour round trip ride, for a pony for Christmas

Morning!” she exclaimed. According to Angie her father worked hard pouring concrete and times were sometimes tough, but that didn’t stop them from helping others. “My mother had a heart for families in need, and we always wound up having a family living with us until they were back on their feet and that was no easy task on a single salary, but he wanted my mother to stay home and raise their 3 children” she explained. Still there were times they had as many as six extra people in their household and for as long as six months at a time. “Our house became almost a refuge for families who were struggling financially and had lost their homes. My parents would take those families in and care for them, feed them, clothe them if need be; until they were able to make it on their own. My mother has been the “stand in mother” at births for young girls who didn’t have mothers or whose mothers turned them away after finding out they were going to be unwed mothers” she went on to add.

Angie claims she has no regrets or sense of loss over her childhood experiences. If anything it’s quite the opposite. “She was a strict, but loving mother to the 3 of us. Now my sister, Michelle and her husband have actually carried on the tradition of my mother and have become foster parents for a Christian adoption agency” she proudly stated.

Angie’s second chance to build a happy home came in 1993 when she met her “now husband” Peter while waiting tables at Duffy’s in Lake Park. “We started dating and actually married one month before our 1st dating anniversary” she replied. Their honeymoon didn’t last long however and thankfully this time the change was not at the hands of an abusive husband. “On our very first anniversary of marriage, we were out celebrating with friends and Peter took one look at me and said, “YOU ARE PREGNANT!” I laughed it off thinking, “SURE!! I THINK I WOULD KNOW IF I WAS GOING TO HAVE A BABY!!” The following morning, he insisted I take a pregnancy test and sure enough, I was going to be a mother. We were thrilled. On April 9, 1996, I had my beautiful Madelyn!” she proudly boasted. If that weren’t enough it was de ja vue when 4 years later it happened again “On Christmas Eve, my husband looked at me once again and told me I was pregnant. *How does he do that?* He was right again, and on August 11,2001, I had my wonderful little Samuel.”

Now they are enjoying life in the Heights and as her initial email stated “I have lived in the heights for nearly 11 years and have loved ALMOST every minute of it. One thing is for sure, I would not consider ever leaving before my children have gone off to college, which will be at least another 13 years!” So what was it that drew them to the Heights in the first place? “My in-laws generosity is actually how we wound up being in the heights to begin with. My brother-in-law and his family purchased the lot on Barbara Street and being that his father was a contractor, he built their house. Several years later, my father-in-law purchased the lot next door and built another house with the intention of selling it. I was 8 months pregnant with our daughter when the GREAT FLOOD hit in early 1996. This neighborhood was all over the news due to homes being damaged by flooding (which has since been remedied of course), but it scared people off for awhile and the house just sat empty with no offers for months. One day, he called and asked us if we would be interested in moving in here and making the mortgage payments. We moved in on our 2nd anniversary, when my daughter was 4 months old and have been here ever since!” she replied. “Peter’s parents are two of the most generous caring people one could have the privilege to know” she added.

Cuban born, Angie’s husband Peter moved to the states when he was 3. After graduating from Cardinal Newman in 1979 he left for college in Cleveland to study Art.



A talent that continues to support his family to this very day. “He is a very talented artist and specializes in murals and faux finishes. He has been self employed and earning a living doing this for the past 20 years. He has worked for the likes of Sylvester Stallone, Gianni Versace, Sting and the Swarovski Crystal family. His work has been published in Architectural Digest and Vogue where they did a spread on the South Beach home of Versace just a few years before his passing.” Angie admits that it wasn’t always easy however claiming “There were times in the beginning of our marriage that we had to dig in the couch cushions and under dilapidated car seats for change just to buy milk.” Thankfully those days have passed and Peter’s hard work has paid off ten fold. “Over the years it has transpired into a profitable business. Most of the work he does is by word of mouth. He does not advertise, but rather relies on the recommendations of pleased

clients and it has certainly served him well.”

Talent seems to run in the Ojea family. According to Angie their oldest daughter Erin is an incredibly bright and self motivated person. “She got a full scholarship to University of Miami where she studied business. She worked part time while going to college, was a cheerleader for the “CANES” for her first 3 years, and still managed to graduate early and in the top of her class.” Even still, their middle daughter Lilly is no shadow in her sister’s footsteps “Lily is also incredibly bright and is one of the most talented Ballerinas. She dances with such beauty and grace that it brings tears to my eyes every time I see her dance. She has taken ballet since she could walk and has lived, ate and breathed it ever since.” Lilly’s talents are more than proud parents’ ramblings however “Her dedication to her dancing is what lead a scout from the Alabama Ballet to offer her a place with their company, where she has been for the last 3 years. We sure miss her living so far away but she is living her dream right now, dancing professionally. Isn’t that what we really want for our children? To live their dreams? Her beauty and grace also led a local artist to commission her to pose for a painting which was showcased at a Palm Beach Gallery in March of this year.” The younger Ojeas are no exception either “Madelyn has taken Piano lessons for the last 4 years. She loves to sing and quite often performs with her cousin at family functions. She sings while her cousin Cody plays guitar or piano. She loves anything to do with music. Sam, he’s my little clown. His laughter fills a room like nothing you’ve heard before. He’s a happy boy and loves to make people laugh. His stories can sometimes drag into mini-series proportions, but he is so animated that it makes want to listen. If he does not wind up being an actor someday, I will be surprised. He can watch a movie once and recite the lines as if he has seen it a hundred times” Angie proudly stated.

Angie also wears many hats “I made birthday cakes for friends and relatives and the occasional paid birthday cake. It was fun and kept a little cash flow coming in while staying at home” she committed. “When Sam was 4, I put him in pre-school and went to

work part time at an office. I made great money and was still able to be home for the kids before they got home from school. Now I split my days up between 3 jobs, and still, I'm home for my kids when the bus arrives."

Her dedication to her family and her love for life and made her a rare treasure in the neighborhood. "I volunteered my corner after having had the bus stop moved several times due to complaints about the kids in their yards. Now, we have the happiest bus stop in the Heights. The kids can run in my yard, play games and be safe out of the street. They play red light green light, tag and just have fun with each other." She found that it had other benefits as well ". I also found that I get to know a lot more of my neighbors and their kids. I love to see their little faces and greet them in the morning and hear funny stories about what they did during the weekend. I love talking with the parents and getting to know them. I love being the band-aide supplier when they skin a knee. I like that when I get to have lunch with my kids at school that when the other kids see me, their faces light up like, "HEY, IT'S MRS. OJEA" or "HI SAM'S MOM". It's so cool."

While Angie loves the convenience of living in the Heights, as well as the wonderful schools that come with it, she admits that there are always those expected problems. "It certainly has not been all roses living here. My biggest complaints would be, living on a corner, you get trash thrown in your yard, the ever present topic of dogs eliminating in our yards and no-one picking up after them, and people who are disrespectful to owners and their property. With every neighborhood, there are obstacles to overcome, but with a little patience, and an informed community, change can happen. If we would all live by the golden rule....."

So what is Angie's overall opinion of the Heights? "Of anywhere I have ever lived, The Heights has been the most pleasant neighborhood and one my kids will be proud to say they were raised in."

Editors Note: *If you would like to suggest someone for a future Heights profile just email NPBHeights@bellsouth.net. Be sure to include your name and contact information, the name of individual you are nominating and the reason you feel they would make a good profile. We welcome your suggestions.*