

Autobiography

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Ingrid & her twin sister Phyllis.



"The Magic Lady" with photo of Dad.



Jim Croce and Ingrid Jacobson 1963



Jim & A.J. Croce



AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Growing Up

When I grew up in Philadelphia, people were as passionate about Sinatra and linguini as they were about politics and religion. Our apartment, across from Rittenhouse Square, was near the Philadelphia Art Museum, the Liberty Bell, Theaters, Symphony, Restaurants, The Latin Casino, small folk clubs and Dick Clark's American Bandstand. The excitement of the city, its people, food and music were my inspiration and motivation to pioneer the growth of San Diego's downtown community—especially the Gaslamp Quarter. Starting when I was eight years old, I worked at my Grandmother Mary's dress store in South Philadelphia. After school I helped the seamstresses sew and steam clothes, I sat by the cash register and watched my grandmother collect the money, and I happily assisted in the selection of the latest fashions on our buying trips to New York City. My mother Shirley, "The Magic Lady" played piano on her own local television show. In addition to being young, sexy and glamorous, she had this wonderful passion for cooking amazing meals and throwing spectacular parties at the drop of a hat. I learned to cook with her and started singing in local clubs and on television by the time I was ten. My father, Sidney Jacobson was a general practitioner with his medical office in our home. By the age of fifteen I was employed as the "junior art therapist" assisting my dad at the University of Pennsylvania where he did his residency and began his psychiatric practice. As a teenager I was energetic and always busy with studying, singing, painting, playing field hockey, softball and practicing my dance routine to become a "regular" on American Bandstand. I couldn't decide whether I wanted to be a gymnast, a psychiatrist, a fine artist or a singer on the Hit Parade. But, more than anything I wanted family, especially after my parent's divorce when I was five.

Meeting Jim Croce

Just as I was turning sixteen, my sweet mother died at only 36 years old. I left Girl's High School and my gymnastics class forever and moved to my father's home in the suburbs. At Springfield High, while I was transforming from a cartwheeling cheerleader into a passionate folk singer, I met Jim Croce. It was on a snowy night two days before Christmas in 1963 when I was auditioning with my band "the Rumrunners," to be a contestant in an upcoming "hootenanny" at the WDAS radio station in Philadelphia. From the moment Jim and I fell in love, good food, friends, art and music graced every facet and nearly every moment of our lives. We married in 1966 and after I attended RISD and Moore College of Art, we moved to New York City to promote our Capitol album *Jim and Ingrid Croce*. Through the folk movement of the sixties, we wrote our own music and toured playing for our suppers in small clubs. We ate our way across the country from collard greens at college concerts in the South to Maine lobster at The Ship's Fare. When our album failed to get public acclaim we left New York City and moved to the countryside in Pennsylvania. There, Jim worked construction and drove a ten-wheeler while I sold my art, painted, potted and planted our garden with zucchini and thyme. In between writing "You Don't Mess Around with Jim," "Operator" and "I'll Have to Say I Love You in a Song," there were blueberry blintzes, homemade gnocchi, and squash-blossom frittatas to be enjoyed. And, as I like to call it, "The Original Croce's Restaurant" was born.

The birth of our son, Adrian James Croce

When we discovered we were going to have a child, Jim became even more determined to make music his profession. He sent a cassette of his new songs to his friend and producer in New York City, in hope that he could get a record deal for his first professional solo album. Then the greatest gift of all, our son Adrian James came to us in September 1971. The family I had dreamed of was finally ours. Just two short years after Jim Croce's songs topped the music charts, his plane crashed in Natchitoches, Louisiana. When Jim died on September 20th, 1973, A.J. was a week away from celebrating his second birthday. He never got to know his father but Jim's music played on and his words "There never seems to be enough time to do the things you want to do" rang truer than ever.

Aftermath of Jim's plane crash

After Jim's passing I had no idea how I was going to make it. I kept trying to clarify and redefine my personal vision for family, career and a home and followed many circuitous



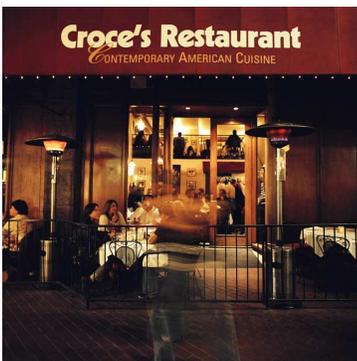
Jim Croce & Maury Muehleisen



Ingrid & A.J. Croce



Jim and Ingrid 1973



Croce's Restaurant & Jazz Bar

routes. At first, A.J. and I spent some time in San Jose and Quepos, Costa Rica. When I returned to San Diego in 1974, I developed a Head Start program for Costa-Rica, opened a children's school in Point Loma and wrote a children's book, "Mirandome." When our son Adrian James was almost four, he suffered a brain tumor syndrome and went blind. His bravery was my inspiration. It gave me courage to fight a long and difficult litigation to attain the rights to Jim's music. Over several years following his illness, A.J. miraculously gained sight in one of his eyes. While I was busy as a single mom doing my best to raise our son alone, run my school and protect our royalties, A.J. taught himself to play piano and started writing songs. Practicing 8-10 hours a day from the age of six, he honed his talent and found his passion and profession early in life. (www.ajcroce.com) From 1977 to 1981, I served as Vice-Consul of Costa Rica in San Diego and wrote and sang my own songs, completing two solo albums, and establishing my first publishing company, "Time in a Bottle." I sat on the board of the Woman's Bank and traveled to the Wailing Wall where A.J. took his rites of passage. I had become a serious runner and after our trip to Israel, I did my darnedest to run off the hummus and falafel at the 1983 Stockholm Marathon. But still, I had not found my way. Once litigation was over, I was on the road promoting my two albums. In 1984 I became unable to sing due to a failed vocal chord operation. Without music, I was lost and once again, had no idea what I was going to do!

The Birth of Croce's Restaurant & Jazz Bar in San Diego

I had to find a new profession. Financially and spiritually I needed a job with good people and a worthwhile, fun place to grow. One night I invited a friend to our home to help me write my resume and I made her my blintzas. After taking one bite she insisted she knew what I should do—open a restaurant! I wasn't convinced, but the next day I got a business license, signed a lease and opened my first location. Day by day I learned about the hospitality industry and when my month-to-month lease was up, I got a call from a friend who suggested I look at a space for rent in The Gaslamp Quarter downtown. I hadn't visited downtown San Diego since 1973, when retailers and urbanites were fleeing the city for the sprawling suburbs. In fact, it was when Jim Croce and I had just moved to San Diego and spent our first night out on the town together. We walked down Broadway heading south to the Gaslamp Quarter looking for a good place to eat and a club to listen to live music. Disappointingly, there were none to be found. We stopped on the corner of Fifth and F in front of the Keating Building and joked about opening a "Croce's Restaurant and Bar" to offer great food and live music to San Diego, just like we had done for our friends and fellow musicians in Pennsylvania. But less than a week later, after playing a college concert down South, Jim's plane crashed in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and that dream was gone. That summer in 1985, when I met my friend in the Historic Gaslamp District, I recognized the space for rent was on the same corner where Jim and I had stopped a dozen years earlier. Right then and there I decided to build a restaurant and bar as a tribute to Jim and call it Croce's. I didn't care that the Gaslamp looked like a scene out of HBO's "Deadwood" or a verse out of "Desolation Row". I was passionate about my decision, hooked on the hospitality industry and optimistically, I just kept working. I wanted to build a downtown community like Soho in The Village where Jim Croce and I played our music in New York City. I knew how vibrant a hometown could be, and saw Philadelphia, *City of Brotherly Love* as San Diego's sister city. I imagined our streets filled with great restaurants, live music, entertainment, artists and retail stores. Today that vision has come true—it's hard to imagine how downtown looked back then!

The Growth of Croce's

During my first three years in business downtown, from 1985-1988, Croce's expanded five times, adding Croce's Jazz Bar, a second restaurant, a rhythm and blues bar, Croce's Top Hat Bar and Grille, Upstairs at Croce's, and Croce's Catering and Event Planners. In the late 80's, I became a board member of the California Restaurant Association, San Diego Chapter and The San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau. I learned a lot from the civic work I did with my community, but little did I know back then that my hard work in building a restaurant and bar would lead me to my wonderful husband, Jimmy Rock, who has been my love and partner since we married in 1988.

Croce Publishing

In 1996, I wrote *Thyme in a Bottle*, my autobiographical cookbook with memories and recipes from Croce's Restaurant, published by Harper Collins. Guests to our restaurant and website who purchased the book were encouraging and I re-issued and self-published my cookbook in 1998. In 2003, the thirtieth anniversary of Jim's passing, our son A.J., a talented singer-songwriter and accomplished pianist, and I worked together to produce the first-ever DVD of Jim Croce, "Have You Heard Jim Croce Live" and the CD "Jim Croce, Home Recordings, Americana," distributed worldwide through Shout Factory and Sony. This project was released by CMG (Croce Music Group), which houses A.J.'s record label,



Ingrid and husband/ Partner, Jim Rock.



Avalanche Records & Books and
Time in a Bottle Publishing

Seedling Records, and my CD, DVD and Book label, Avalanche Records and Books. In 2004, we also released "Facets" worldwide, Jim's first studio recording from 1966. In 2004, I worked with my husband Jim Rock and Deborah Ogburn to produce "Time in a Bottle," a photographic memoir of Jim's song, lyrics and our favorite photos. Today, PBS is airing "The Legacy of Jim Croce" with commentary by A.J. Croce and me with segments from our DVD. I have done a piece on Croce's titled "The Soul of Food and Music" which is still airing on Full Focus on PBS as well. And, in 2005, in preparation for our second annual San Diego Restaurant Week, I wrote and financed, *The San Diego Restaurant Cookbook, Recipes from America's Finest City*, released in 2006 and going into its second publication to promote San Diego's dining scene and our annual Restaurant Week event. We are currently re-releasing my autobiographical cookbook *Thyme in a Bottle* for its third publication. A new Croce cookbook with my favorite restaurant recipes renewed by Croce's Executive Chef, James Clark and paired by Croce's GM/Sommelier Chris Miller is planned for 2008.

After all these years, Croce's is my prize. My business passionately stokes my creative and entrepreneurial spirit and at the same time embodies my vision for family and community in a wonderful way. While it's hard work, there's a lot of love here at Croce's and no limit to the good people, food, and entertainment we are able to bring to our everyday lives.