



# CHARLES ALBERT CRESPO

DEC 24, 1941 - AUG 16, 2022



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**A**l Crespo, a long-time investigator and public critic of the Florida film industry and its machinations in Tallahassee, as well as public corruption in the City of Miami, and who through his blog The Crespogram for 10 years exposed official ineptitude and malfeasance, died August 16 at his home in Miami Shores at the age of 80. Born in Havana, Cuba on December 24, 1941 to Albert and Alice Crespo, he was the last of the two direct descendants of the earliest families to settle of Key West in 1816-17. He was also the grandson of Pablo Crespo-Perez, an honored Cuban Revolutionary hero from the Spanish-American War. He will be buried in Key West's historic cemetery among his family.

Prior to returning to Miami in 1984, he spent 20+ years in state and federal prisons for armed robbery and armed bank robbery. Upon his return, he was fortunate to find a new life working in the South Florida film industry, in no small part because the film industry functions on merit and not on resumes. For nearly 30 years he worked his way up from a production assistant to line producing and production managing for almost 100 TV commercials, as well as scores of music videos. This work gave him the opportunity to work with some of the most creative and talented actors and musicians of the last 30 years including Oscar, Emmy, Grammy and World Music Award winners. In 1998, seeking a new creative challenge, Crespo undertook a multi-year project reporting and documenting social unrest across America. In this effort, he also worked as a contract photographer for the Associated Press. His project resulted in the publication of a coffee-table photo book, *Protest In The Land of Plenty*.



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While covering the 2000 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, Crespo was shot with rubber bullets several times in the head by Los Angeles police. He became the lead plaintiff in the federal lawsuit *Crespo et al. vs. Los Angeles Police Department*, the American Civil Liberties Union case that set new guidelines for how police deal with the news media during protests and demonstrations.

In 2010, in response to newly-elected Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado's firing the City's film commissioner and replacing him with an incompetent political appointee, he launched *The Crespogram Newsletter*. It did not take Crespo long to discover, like others before him, that Miami City Hall was a festering hotbed of malfeasance and public corruption.

Crespo soon earned a reputation for breaking news stories that mainstream media ignored, including an alleged \$400,000 bribe offered to then-Mayor Regalado by then-Miami Police Chief Miguel Esposito in 2011, the theft of 11 revolvers from the Police Department's "secure" facility in 2016, and the Department's use of a rotting storage container under Interstate 95 in downtown Miami to store police evidence

Perhaps Crespo's most significant accomplishment was informing the community not only about the almost daily corruption at Miami City Hall, but making the exposure possible by mastering the process of accessing public records. He was relentless in the pursuit of public records: In 2017, the Downtown Development Authority, an agency of the City of Miami, agreed to settle a lawsuit for public records by paying Crespo's attorneys \$10,000.

In November 2020, as a result of the pandemic and the discovery that he had inoperable liver cancer, Crespo announced his retirement. In the last months of his life he crafted several episodes of what he hoped would become a dramatic television series based on the stories he had written in the *Crespogram Newsletter*. With suggestions from several close friends, he agreed to give the series the working title *It's Miami, Bitches!*, the tag line that ended so many of his posted stories.

Crespo never ceased to understand and appreciate the trust that so many Miami city employees – especially police officers – demonstrated in support of his efforts to uncover corruption via the silent and essential contributions they made by providing



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him papers, audio tapes and first-hand information on how the City's bureaucracy functioned.

While he might have been a bank robber earlier in life, Crespo never flinched from that reality through to his final days. When politicians whom he exposed attempted to discredit him, he would remind them: "Yes, that's true, but unlike you, I wore a mask." There will be no memorial service. In lieu of flowers, Crespo requested everyone vote at every opportunity. "Remember, we still live in a democracy," he said. "Evil and corruption exist not only in Miami but throughout the nation, and the votes of caring citizens is democracy's best protection."



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