



# CHRIS PINTO

## *Makes Safekeeping His Business*

By Max Warfield

**Chris Pinto contemplates life in the most comprehensive way. He is exceedingly empathetic to the needs of others, yet he unapologetically gives his own interests prominence as well. He pre-plans everything.**

For the 40-year-old Torontonain, 2017 was a foundational year for his view of a beautiful life. His path back then was carefully orchestrated; however, reality had other ideas. It was a summer filled with shock, pain and heartbreak. But now, as he reflects, his profound thoughts percolating, he will tell you that he wouldn't have it any other way.

As the oldest child with ten siblings, Pinto often dreamed of playing in the NBA, being an MMA fighter or a rapper. Yet, it was the security business that ultimately called him, a career central to his heart too.

Pinto identifies as a man who loves to protect and be there for others, and at the suggestion of his wife, pushed his progression from bouncer to bodyguard and security jobs. He

combined his experience with connections that he had made over the years and started his own business.

"Security is preparation," says Pinto. And yet, life brings its own surprises too. On a warm summer night just a year after his business launched he was badly injured in a traffic accident on his motorcycle. While most would be focused on their wounds and level of discomfort, Pinto fretted

about his work responsibilities as the ambulance's shrill siren grew in his ears.

He never made it to his post that night and that troubled him much more than his horrific wounds. "Where would his business go?" he wondered. "Who would Chris Pinto the daunting security man and bodyguard be now? How would he provide for his family?" A few months and thirteen surgeries later, he became a below-knee amputee.

During difficult times, the all-important support system was there for him. Friends, brothers, cousins. His wife and son faithfully made arduous trips to St. John's Sunnybrook. The travel burden was one of the hardest issues of his recovery days he remembers, but he compartmentalized and remained laser-locked on his recovery.

A famous actor once said, "I made up the name Cary Grant, and then I became him." It's as if Pinto is motored by a similar inner drive, having conceived his own refrain to live by. As he chooses how to expend his energies, an inner voice prods him along: "Be unstoppable. Be undeniable. Be unlimited" (now spelled unlimb-ited, he jokes).

The hospital was an uneasy place for Pinto and he took the earliest leave possible. He would do much of his own rehab at home.



“When I was learning to walk again, falling and getting back up, banging back and forth through the condo halls, and crying at setbacks, my neighbours were very forgiving — just poking their heads out every once in a while.”

To become unstoppable, he was off to the gym, a place he went to infrequently before his injury. “My cousins and brothers would show up daily to pick me up and put me in the car, even on days I didn’t feel it,” he shares. “Later, as my motivation elevated, it grew into a new feeling. It was hard at first. It’s a choice and I had to make it happen.” Four months later Pinto stepped up to his business’s entryway, ensuring all was safe. Way ahead of schedule, he fulfilled his responsibility. He made it to his post.

Today, Pinto’s security business — Upper Echelon Services — which employs his 16-year-old son, is expanding. His employees project professionalism, look sharp, do their job well and provide services that have branched out to lifestyle management.

He travels to Miami once a year for a protective skill workshop. “I take part every year. Gun training, pistols, emergency medical, stop the bleeding, hand-to-hand combat — and marine-style obstacle courses with ropes and ladders and barricades. And then there’s the running. “With a running blade prosthesis that ParaSport Ontario made possible through its Play to Podium Equipment Fund, I ran my first mile ever in my life... as an amputee. I’m always pushing myself to that next level. This is what undeniable is. My leg — yes, but I earned all of the credentials to do my job... like everyone else.”

Pinto plays basketball to stay in shape. “We just won the championship,” he grins. “Most people



don’t realize that I’m an amputee unless I tell them.”

He is his own harshest critic, yet carries it with an easy smile. “For a long time, I put energy into other things and not myself. Now I have a very good gauge of where I need to put that energy — and how much. Last season was my first working with the Toronto Raptors. It was great. I was on the road, made a lot of connections, amazing. Being on the road was a challenge. I had to bring an extra leg, tools to adjust things... just in case. One night I had to sprint to the other side of the court to subdue a scuffle.” His mind’s eye remembers the occasion: “I got down there fast!”

Pinto has always thought of himself to be a man of the people — seeing that things are the way they should be. “That’s especially true now that I’m an amputee,” he declares. “An injury is a liability for some. I had to lean-in extra hard to prove myself. I understand and I also have perspective. I’m fighting for everyone else. I know it’s a long road for a lot of people.”

He loves to travel too, for business or pleasure. His wife and son accompany him whenever possible. “I usually meet two or three amputees each trip — at least. I always go up and talk to them. I stop what I’m doing. Like, my wife and I are having breakfast, and an amputee walks



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by and I’m up and gone!” he laughs. “I love to help people. Just talk. Give them things or fix something,” he explains.

Remembering one particular man on one of his trips, Pinto’s speech slows and softens when he speaks of an amputee man he saw in Mexico sitting in a heap in a cart that his son was pushing. “I have reflective moments. A lot of it is perspective. For me, I just pushed through. A lot of it was blocked out. I made a choice from a young age about how I wanted my life to be. I grew up not necessarily poor, but hard. It’s how it is. It was difficult. I didn’t have much. You have to find your purpose. I chose to get a job and not do anything illegal. Just seeing what some people’s choices can do to their life, I came to know what I didn’t want. You are what your choices are. You may have to change the way you do things. I grew to ask myself, ‘does this align with my goals?’ I could have done something else, but security was always there inside of me. My wife is a big reason I am where I am.”

Pinto is very proud when he notices his son watching him and how he carries himself. “My son doesn’t complain much. If he gets down, he always gets right back up... lessons from my security business,” he laughs. “But in my line of work, and my life, I have to be flexible. I have to be able to change and adapt. Of course, my son will make his own choice, but he can be part of a legacy that we are building, a family business. It will last as long as we take care of it.”

Pinto believes the concepts of a successful security business gives all that he needs to succeed in life. Be prepared, as well as his mantra of Be unstoppable; Be undeniable; Be unlimited. “When I break it down it’s about not caring about what others think about you. Handle what you need to handle and take care of what you need to take care of. You gotta go all the way in. And then if it doesn’t work, at least you can say it didn’t work and try something else. And be there for each other. Be who you needed

when you were growing up. Be that person.”

Things are that simple to Pinto, the profound and thoughtful man. Although he’s not glad that he lost his leg, he now sees it as providential. Whether things happen for a reason or not, Pinto is assured that “you don’t need a lot in life; that’s what I’ve learned. Getting to that sense of security is the tough part.”

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Max Warfield was born in Ridgefield, Connecticut, now making his home on the southern shores of Lake Ontario.



A correspondent for the *Lockport Union Sun & Journal* and the *Niagara Gazette*, Warfield has also written and published numerous novels.