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Real Jersey in Small Doses

The Morning Call

PEOPLE | Pat Battle gets up well before dawn to go to work as the co-anchor of NBC's "Weekend Today in New York." The alarm sounds at 3 a.m., and it takes a while for the television journalist to shake off the last remnants of sleep as she goes through preparations for the show.

Even after 11 years as an early morning broadcaster, Battle says she and her colleagues continue to find getting adequate sleep difficult and elusive.

"Many times, on my way into the station, I pick up our stage manager. ... Invariably, our conversation turns to the topic of how much sleep we each had the previous night. Once we arrive at the studio, everyone else chimes in on that topic," says Battle, who lives in Teaneck with her husband Anthony Johnson, a reporter for WABC-TV in New York, and their three children.

"It's just part of the job, though. You have a professional responsibility | ➤

"I enjoy being around horses, they're such beautiful animals," says Pat Battle, being greeted by Copenhagen at the Bergen Equestrian Center in Leonia.

to fulfill, and you have to look and sound bright and connected — no matter how you feel.”

A native of Neptune Township, Battle began her career as a reporter for the Asbury Park Press, in Asbury Park. She describes newspaper reporting as “a source of invaluable experience in learning the nuts and bolts of reporting and one of the best places to prepare for a career in television news. Writing about zoning rules and related subjects might be boring, but you learn the ins and outs of city and state government in ways that serve you so very well.”

Her broadcasting career has included a stint at WCAU-TV, an NBC-owned station in Philadelphia, and more than three years as a reporter for WCBS-TV in New York. She joined NBC 4 New York in 1996 and, in addition to the weekend anchor position, Battle serves as the station’s New Jersey senior correspondent. She reports on issues affecting the Garden State, as well as breaking news.

Throughout her career, Battle has seen how news events influence people’s lives. Some, she will admit, have strongly affected her as a journalist and mother. “For weeks

after the tragedy of 9/11, my son, who was 3 years old at the time, used to build a tower with blocks and then knock it down with a toy airplane. He’d tell me, ‘Mommy, the building fell down but nobody was hurt,’” Battle recalls. “That sent a message to me that children have their own way of processing news. ... That’s why I think it’s so important that people talk to their children and see what it is they’re feeling. Kids are never too young to be affected by the world around them.”

In 2010, Battle was diagnosed with breast cancer. “Initially, I wanted to have surgery done and keep the whole thing as a private matter,” she says. “But during a trip to Toronto, my husband and I talked about it. He gently suggested that I go public with my story. It was such a personal issue, I didn’t feel comfortable with doing that at the time, but now I’m so glad I did.”

Five years later, the 55-year-old Battle is cancer free and says she has a stack of emails “over 4 inches thick from hundreds of women who have written

to thank me for sharing my story. My experience encouraged so many women ... to get a breast exam and understand how important it is to have an annual checkup.”

Despite the many demands on her time — in addition to her career and family life, she is involved with numerous charities — Battle manages to squeeze in a bit of fun time just for herself.

“I started horseback riding three years ago and I love it,” she says.

Once a week, she rides at a New Jersey stable and has discovered she is equally at home on the trail as she is on a news beat. “I enjoy being around horses, they’re such beautiful animals. I clean up after them, do grooming, sweep the barn and whatever else is needed,” she says.

Some might be surprised to see Battle cleaning out stables. That’s because this fashion-forward anchor is also known as one of the best dressed women on daytime television.

But what viewers don’t know, she says, is that “on many occasions, especially in the summer, no matter what people at home see me wearing (on TV), on my feet I have on a pair of flip-flops that are just plain comfortable.”

— *Guy Arseneau*



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PAT BATTLE

Trainer Carly Eastern, left, walks with Pat Battle and Copenhagen as they head back to the barn after a riding session.