

Claude Chafin



One would never suspect that the non-confrontational, peace-at-any-price, demeanor of King Claude Chafin actually hides his Hatfield / McCoy roots. His grandfather Andrew was raised by "Devil Anse" Hatfield and his great-aunt Levicie Chafin during the feud at the turn of the century in the wild and rugged hills of West Virginia.

Perhaps that calm-as-still-water demeanor was influenced by a mother he considers a saint or a sister he considers a second mother. Or perhaps it was influenced by constantly moving to new cities, new schools, and new friends due to his father's job with NCR. Or that demeanor could be the result of being raised with three siblings, each learning to share early in life.

We doubt it.

The reality is that King Claude's mild and reserved demeanor probably is most influenced by a true southern lady and authentic Tupelo Honey, his wife Tay. According to King Claude, Tay has more to do with the attitudes, social graces, energy and ambitions of King Claude and their five children - Scott, Allan, Brad, Claude and Taylor - than anything that occurred years before in the mountains of West Virginia. She also influenced his love for Carnival and for fund-raising for Children's Charities.

King Claude and Tay were married in the spring of 1972; and Scott, Allan and Brad came with Claude as a package deal. Later, son Claude, born in 1975, and daughter Taylor, born in 1979, completed the family and set the stage for grandchildren. Scott has two sons, Logan and Corey; Brad as a son, Cole, and a daughter, McKennah; and Allan has son Samuel. Meanwhile, young Claude and Taylor are involved in promising careers; Claude at the White House in Washington and Taylor in Atlanta with T. J. Madison, an advertising firm. All share a devout love for Carnival and family.

King Claude and Tay became involved with Carnival in 1994 when they joined The Memphi. At the time, Claude was equally involved in a thriving fire protection business and in the industry's national trade association, along with local boards for Brooks, Lausanne School, Germantown Rotary Club, where he was President and District Governor, and SRVS. At the same time, Tay was deeply involved in teaching art to city school children at The Brooks Museum and in volunteer work for the Junior League and numerous local charities. Carnival became their combined social outlet and the cornerstone of all of their friendships. They were Memphi Duke and Duchess in 1996; Claude was Memphi's General Chairman in 1998 and Ouro (King) in 2000 when he also joined the Memphi Board of Regents.

2000 was a big year for King Claude. In addition to being Memphi's Ouro he also sold his business and retired; and he has devoted most of his free time to Carnival ever since. He is consumed with Carnival's Children's Charities initiative and considers that initiative as the best thing to happen to Carnival Memphis since Everett Cooke and Arthur Halle revived it in 1931. Says King Claude, "I like to say that Carnival spends 51 weeks a year raising money for our Children's Charities and one week a year in celebration."

His escape - some say his passion - is spending time in their Charleston, South Carolina, home where both King Claude and Tay investigate and love the architecture, culture, and history of one of America's grandest cities. Their fondest memories of Charleston, however, are the weekend visits of family and friends and showing off their favorite sights and restaurants. He will assure all who will listen that come June 15th, four days after Carnival ends, he and Tay will be on the road to Charleston, where they will reside until Charleston's famously hot August weather drives them back to Memphis. On their return King Claude hopes to resume his love for Children's Charity fundraising - without the attention he has received this carnival season - but with the same energy and devotion.