



Z Krewe: The History

"In the beginning George said let there be Mardi Gras and it was good. Then Z Krewe was formed and it was Z best." This was the inscription engraved on a plaque that was presented to the manager of Trumpets on May 4, 1994, Z Krewe's inaugural meeting and official birthday. "George" is a reference to George Mitchell who revived the Mardi Gras! Galveston celebration in 1985.

But Mardi Gras! Galveston was forever changed when John and Chris Moen, Joe and Donna Bumpas, Tom and Joyce Aiken, and Jim and Nancy Manlove began to debate the qualities of the perfect krewe. Our founders wanted a krewe that would be, first and foremost, dedicated to perpetuating the spirit of Mardi Gras and all its grand traditions; where the organization's structure would keep it running smoothly without internal strife, and where any man could be king and any woman could be queen. This would be a krewe grounded in fairness. For months, they met and developed the original bylaws. Discussions moved quickly from A to Z.

Jotting ideas on the backs of bar napkins, they came up with the name of Z Krewe and all the witty words beginning with "Z" that make up the "Zanie" lexicon. They chose Z Krewe so that we could be Z best, have Z best balls, throw Z best beads, and so on. The name Z Krewe also coined a catch phrase in answer to the question, "What does the Z mean?" The phrase is, "It's a Zecret!" However, the inspiration was ignited when a certain member of a certain little old band from Texas came into the bar. Thank heavens! Or we could have been just another krewe with mythic proclivities.

"Zanies" are what we call our Z Krewe members. Webster spells it "zany" but we zaniily spell it "Zanie!" It means a comical person given to extravagant or outlandish behavior; one who acts the buffoon for the amusement of others, characterized by being absurdly ludicrous in style and dress... in other words, Z Krewe!

The first distinct zany identities were two zanies considered our annual krewe captains. These two head cheerleaders, known as Big Daddy and Big Momma, lead the Krewe into Carnival and make sure the traditions of food, libation, music, and fun are upheld. These Zanies are not royalty, but hold a special place in the life and spirit of Z Krewe. Big Daddy, chosen by all the previous Big Daddies, chooses his Big Momma from among the female members. Substantial bribes and much attention are lavished on Big Daddy as he searches for his Big Momma.

Of course, what would any Mardi Gras Krewe be without royalty? When Z Krewe was founded, it was established that any man could be king and any woman could be queen. The king cake, a Mardi Gras tradition that began in France during the 12th century, ensures the impartiality of royal selection. In Z Krewe, all regular members can try for the prized gold babies. Hopefuls select a slice of cake, hoping a gold baby is buried inside. The king and queen are selected by pure chance and the luck of drawing the right slice of cake. Reigning as king or queen allows an individual to play an important part in this centuries-old tradition. Only our kings, both past and present, can wear a sword or the emblem of a sword. Only our queens, both past and present, can wear the symbol of the chalice.

The remaining royal court is comprised of those who draw the green, purple, white, and black babies. Ladies of the royal court are titled Royal Zaftigs; Zaftig meaning voluptuous woman. Our royal men are titled Royal Zoots; Zoot meaning a flashy sharp-dressed man.

Although official Mardi Gras colors are purple (representing justice), green (representing faith), and gold (representing power), Z Krewe chose gold, green, and black as its colors...TO BE ZANY! Black represents the mystery and mystique of Z Krewe and Mardi Gras. Gold is reserved for King and Queen Zanie, while their royal court is composed of green-, purple-, white-, and black-clad Zoots and Zaftigs. White represents those who have gone before, the Second Line waiting for us in the hereafter.

The inaugural Z Ball was held at South Shore Harbour Resort in League City in 1995. Z Krewe made a grand debut that evening that would proclaim to all that we only go Z Best. It was a beautiful evening with three bands and two separate buffets, one with a complete pig holding an apple in its mouth. King and Queen Zanie I were crowned and robed with beautiful trains designed by Danny Morgan Studios of Galveston. Z Krewe got off to a first-class, if over-budgeted, start.

So, how to we raise some much needed money? By throwing a party! Thus was created Zestival, which is what we continue to call our Saturday bashes during Mardi Gras. Those crazy Zanies, Jim and Nancy Manlove, held the first Zestival in their apartment home, which was conveniently on the Strand. Furniture was cleared, a four-piece blues band was hired, and food and libations were served. It was a mega-event with over 100 people...and one single solitary bathroom! But the party helped put Z Krewe back in the black where it's never strayed. Zestival I & II attract over 600 ticket holders each weekend of Carnival and are Z Best parties available to Mardi Gras revelers.

Z Krewe is now a not-for-profit organization with many old Mardi Gras traditions full of pomp and circumstance, zaniness, and fun. With a regular membership of 150, and ambassador members from all around Texas and as far away as South Carolina and Minnesota, Z Krewe is still creating new traditions each year.

The concept of Z Krewe is not to have one leader, but to perpetuate the spirit of Mardi Gras by drawing from its ranks of many fine men and women who bring new ideas and energies that will ensure our stability and creativity for decades to come. Active committees and outstanding leadership has kept Z Krewe on the right track as a first-class organization. Members continue to build camaraderie and friendships as they work together on special projects and first-class events. In our first decade, Z Krewe, has donated thousands of volunteer hours to many community programs and events, and over \$50,000.00 to local charities and to scholarships for students to attend local community colleges.

Whether Zanies are painting the streets green or cooking up pancakes for schoolchildren on Fat Tuesday, Z Krewe is known as the zaniest krewe of Mardi Gras! Galveston. Along the way, we have made a difference in the lives of many!

It's what they call lagniappe! *Laissez les bon temps rouleur!*