

Zulu 2011

03/01/2011 by [Sue Strachan \(https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sue-strachan/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sue-strachan/)



Marylou Uttermohlen Photograph

Anthony "Tony" Barker |!!!|

The scene in early February: The Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club on North Broad Street.

What's going on: The clubhouse, normally a place for Zulu members to meet and socialize, has now become the site of a photo shoot for King Zulu 2011. The photographer's lights are positioned just so, and the King is being styled (it's the only way to say it) by another Zulu

member. The King good-naturedly deals with the perfecting of a sash or tie, as well as random, teasing comments from Zulu members who just happen to be there. Adding a historical perspective is the wall of photographs of previous Zulu Kings.

The subject of all of this attention is Anthony “Tony” Barker, technically King-Elect at this moment as Zulu Kings don’t assume their title until the Zulu Ball, which takes place a few days before Mardi Gras. But even as King-Elect, Barker is enjoying every minute.

The King-Elect’s calendar starts filling the day he’s elected in late May. Taking a look at the most recent calendar of Zulu Carnival activities Barker had 11 events to attend in January, 14 in February and his coronation on March 3, along with that of his Queen, who happens to be his wife, Chanel. It culminated with the parade on Mardi Gras, Tues. March 8.

Barker is part of a long line of distinguished Zulu Kings. He is actually the 102nd King Zulu. Founded in 1909, the group evolved out of a group of laborers who organized a club called “The Tramps,” many of whom belonged to Benevolent Aid Societies. Members paid dues to these groups as a form of insurance for hard times and funerals. Today, Zulu is known for its community activities as well as for its parade on Mardi Gras. Of course, no mention of Zulu could go by without mentioning its famed decorated coconuts, an innovation introduced in 1910 that remains a favorite Mardi Gras parade throw.

Back to Barker, who when asked about what it’s like to be King Zulu for 2011, says with a smile, “It’s good to be king.”

Age: 53 **Family:** Wife, Chanel; three children: two daughters, Charniece and Adrean; one son, Anthony Jr. **Born:** Wayne, Mich.; Family was originally from Franklinton, La. **Education:** Finished high school at Franklinton High School; bachelor of science in accounting from Southern University; master’s degree in information services from Tulane University.

Profession: I work in the logistics department for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Department of Homeland Security, at Louis Armstrong International Airport. I

sometimes work the floor – I actually like it. **Favorite book:** The first Steve Harvey book, *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: What Men Really Think About Love, Relationships, Intimacy, and Commitment*. My wife gave it to me. **Favorite movie:** *Jaws* **Favorite music:** Jazz, like Norman Brown, as well as Earth, Wind + Fire and the O’Jays. **Favorite food:** Seafood

Favorite restaurant: Charlie’s Steak House **Hobby:** Sports – I like watching and playing.

Favorite vacation spot: Las Vegas

How long have you been a member of Zulu? 18 years. And I’ve been riding in the parade every year.

Has your family been involved in Zulu? I'm the first one in my family. But I do have in-laws who were part of Zulu before me.

What other Zulu (Mardi Gras) characters have you portrayed? I was the Zulu Mayor in 1998.

Tell me about your election? I was one of five candidates – originally it was seven. In recent years, it has grown from two people to a lot of people running for king. I feel very honored to have been chosen.

There is nothing like a Zulu election. We enjoy it because it's like competing in a regular election – trying to persuade Zulu members to elect you. When the voting machines are in the building, people crowd in to vote while the candidates are trying to get to these people saying, "These are my qualifications," even when thousands of leaflets have been sent out. Then, you are out there all day long – in May. It's hot.

What's your favorite Zulu memory? It was May 2010, when they called out the election numbers and announced me as King-Elect for 2011.

What is your favorite parade? Zulu! I first saw it when I was 18 when I first moved back to Louisiana.

What are your official King throws and symbol? I will have a King bead and coconut. My symbol is a leopard.

If not riding in Zulu, what parade would you be watching? If I wasn't riding in Zulu, I wouldn't be out watching a parade!

What does Zulu mean to you? Zulu, to me, is a brotherhood of predominantly black men from all walks of life coming together to not only fraternize, but also to help the community. We do a lot of community activities, such as Christmas and Thanksgiving baskets and Toys for Tots.

What does Zulu bring to the community? I think Zulu brings enjoyment, a little caring along the way – going back to Zulu's community activities. This year we gave away more toys [Toys for Tots] than we have in past years – something like 300 to 400 bikes. We made a lot of kids happy this past Christmas.

True Confession: I'm a giving person. The community service of Zulu is one of the reasons I was attracted to Zulu and keeps me in.

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