

## **Perry Labelle – General Flameous 1995; Vulcanus Rex LXIX (69th) 2006; Artist extraordinaire!**

Perry was born in Tucson, Arizona in 1956 and moved to Minnesota when he was only 3 with his mother and three brothers. At 6 years of age, Perry's mother gave him a set of paints and he created his very first work of art – a Batman poster! Perry's mother called him an "artist" and with that accolade, set Perry on the road to bigger artistic creations!

While attending Central High School, Perry got a gig to help spruce up the halls and walls of Como Zoo using his artistic talents and it is believed that some of his artwork can still be seen in the old zoo building! After graduating from Central in 1974, Perry attended the Minneapolis School of Arts and Design and excelled with his artistic talents! (And let the record show his granddaughter Isabella, is following in her grandfather's footsteps of a higher education adventure and will be attending the exact same school this year!) Following his formal schooling, Perry soon found his calling at the "other zoo" – the brand new Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley which Perry helped to open in 1978. Perry is credited with creating many of the life-like enclosures for the native and exotic animals. From huge rock and tree formations crafted from concrete, to realistic animals such as gorillas to colorful bird replicas were created by Perry's hands and have been seen by millions of visitors to the Minnesota Zoo! Perry retired from the Minnesota Zoo in 2013, and in his 35 years at the zoo was recognized as one of the best for creating exhibits and displays in the country!

Perry's first real involvement in Winter Carnival activities goes back to his junior high school days where he would skip school with his older brothers and go look for the hidden medallion after faithfully following the clues in the printed paper of the St Paul Pioneer Press. They never found it but like so many other medallion hunters, they "came pretty close"!

Perry took a more "hands-on" approach with Winter Carnival and began competing in the snow sculpting competition in the mid 1980's. Joined by his wife Jeanne and a couple of other friends, Perry's team created many memorable snow sculptures and were proud of the fact they won many of the "Fan's Choice" awards. Perry's creations were also featured in many of the news media spots promoting the St Paul Winter Carnival event! Perry's "hands-on" experience with the snow sculpting continues to this day but he no longer competes but helps guide the younger sculptors and helped create many of the structures such as the large Vulcan caldron that lights up the night at the Vulcan Snow Park!

In 1995, Perry was selected as General Flameous, the "Keeper of the Flame" and became a key member of the Vulcan Krewe. With over 300 appearances and parades during the year, Perry embraced the legend of the Winter Carnival and literally lit the way for the Vulcan Krewe that year. Following his year of fun, Perry helped produce the "Coming Out" for the next Vulcan Krewe with a spectacular event that is still talked about today! In 2006, Perry was selected to be Vulcanus Rex for the 2006 Winter Carnival. Once again, Perry used his artistic talents to "suit" his Krewe members with a look similar to the Knights of the Round Table. Perry hand-crafted his own sword (and many other swords used by other Kings and even Royal Guards)! Perry's most memorable experience during his reign involved the support of the Bridge View School for special needs students. Perry and his Krewe did many special events supporting the school from offering fire truck rides to grilling for all the guests at the annual Fun Fest event. Support for Bridge View School continues to this day with each new Krewe following in Perry's leadership.

Following his commitment to Fire & Brimstone, Perry's artistic talents have been called upon by all Winter Carnival legend characters in regards to creating new designs for knighting medals, buttons, medallions, banners and other print graphics. And while Perry might be limited with the new-age computer designs, he still puts pen to paper for concepts and then his "Cyber Ninjas" take over and bring his vision into physical focus! Through Perry's creative and artistic efforts, thousands of dollars have been raised in support of Fire & Brimstone activities and also for the benefit of the St Paul Winter Carnival. And all of his efforts have been complimentary – at no cost!

But the true love of Perry's life is his wife Jeanne! Married since 1986, Jeanne can often be found at Perry's side and embraces the Winter Carnival legend as much as Perry does! Jeanne has been both an inspiration to Perry and his best critic – and while Perry can be very humble, Jeanne is his greatest cheerleader!