

N'awlins D'awlins Baby Doll Carol "Kit" Harris Spreads the Joy of New Orleans Culture

By Anita Oubre

PHOTOGRAPHY BY L.A. RENO

Carol Harris is the quintessential New Orleans lady. Proud of her heritage and culture, she lives out each day spreading joy within and for that culture. Throughout the city she is affectionately known as “Kit.”

COVER STORY



Valley of the Silent Men Queen's Court 2024 PHOTO BY GUS BENNETT

Born and raised in the Uptown neighborhood of New Orleans, Kit refers to the area around Camp, Valence and Magazine streets as where the “Uptown Rulers” were brought up. “We are children of the river. Our ancestors were Choctaw and our roots run deep,” she said.

Kit experienced the New Orleans culture in a unique way as a child. She is a cousin of the renowned Neville brothers and has an especially close relationship with Cyril who has mentored her throughout her life. She also had a special relationship with the late Eva Lois Perry Adams who was known as Tee Eva, so it was only natural that Kit would be drawn to the Baby Doll culture.

Tee Eva was instrumental in reviving the Baby Doll tradition, along with the late Antoinette K-Doe. They were known as The Ernie K-Doe Baby Dolls. Kit recalls spending many afternoons at Tee Eva’s pie shop in Uptown New Orleans. “I was

driving limos at that time and I would transport her to many of her engagements,” Kit reflected. “She blessed me to join and the rest is history.”

Kit eventually founded her own group, The N’awlins D’awlins Baby Dolls. Her group consists of seven women, the oldest being 85. She enjoys bringing young women into the culture through the decades-old Baby Doll tradition.

“Just like my elders taught me, I enjoy forming relationships with young women and guiding them through life’s issues,” said Kit. “Our mission is to educate and encourage people through dance and celebration.”

Since forming N’Awlin’s D’awlins, Kit has created a number of events that are now synonymous with being a Baby Doll. The Blessing of the Streets is now an annual event held at the New Orleans Jazz Museum where the Doll community

comes together to pray for a safe Carnival Season.

As a longtime second line scene participant, Kit had her first opportunity to reign as a queen in August 2024. She was crowned Queen of The Valley of the Silent Men organization and she selected her court of friends and Baby Doll sisters to accompany her on her ride.

“It was most meaningful to me because this club was the very first second line I attended 36 years ago. It meant everything to me,” Kit mused.

One of ten children born to devout Catholic parents, Kit’s father was an opera singer and her mother was an educator who majored in music. Kit was the third child of the family but the oldest daughter. This role came with responsibilities that she took on early in life.

“I made sure my siblings had clean clothes and that we all got to school on time,” she recalled. “We were clean and we always looked our best.”

Kit reflected on her family values. They attended church every Sunday at Blessed Sacrament on Constance Street. “We would pile into the station wagon and we took up two pews in the church. The entire family went to mass together and that included grandparents and cousins,” said Kit.

Fond memories for Kit include taking the streetcar to Canal Street with her grandmother who was known as Mama Bill. “She made sure we had on our best outfits and that included gloves on our hands and a hat on our head. It was an experience to shop at the fine department stores on Canal.”

Kit attended Blessed Sacrament for



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A group of children from the "Nola Thru My Eyes" program on an outing with Linda Reno (center) Photo courtesy of Kit Harris



Children from the "Nola Thru My Eyes" program visit the New Orleans Jazz Museum with Linda Reno. Photo courtesy of Kit Harris



elementary school and then went on to graduate from Xavier University Preparatory High School. Attending "Prep" was a family tradition. She said that her family members have attended the school for a combined 65 years.

"It means the world to me that I was educated in such a fine institution. That was my roots and where my foundational years were formed," Kit proudly noted.

Later on, as an adult, Kit thought it was of extreme importance to acknowledge Juneteenth within the community and she now coordinates an annual Juneteenth commemoration each summer. "We were not taught about it in school," she stated. "Our parents taught us about the freedom of our people and how the word got to them eventually, but I was surprised to know that was not taught in every family. It's important for us to know our history."

Teaching the culture to the next generation is important to Kit. She has seen too many young people fall victim to negative influences and poor decision-making. Along with her friend, renowned photographer and storyteller Linda Reno, they founded a program called Nola Thru My Eyes.

Kit organized the educational outreach program that Linda facilitates. "The youngsters are empowered and motivated," she explained. "We put a camera in their hands and they get out into the culture and capture the images of people who look like them. It is powerful to see the confidence that builds up in these young people as they learn to navigate the streets in a different way."

"We want our young people to shoot pictures not guns," she added emphatically. "When the city was experiencing so many car thefts we knew we had to find something positive for these young people to do."

Kit enjoys supporting the various second line clubs throughout the city. On most Sundays, she can be found skipping to the beat of a brass band on an Uptown street corner. "Second lines were built out of necessity for our people as a way to raise funds for burials," she said. "Today the



Kit and Ja'Naya PHOTO BY GUS BENNETT

second line is still a necessity. It is a way for our people to release the tensions of the week."

There is usually a young lady at Kit's side, her granddaughter Ja'Niya who she has had the joy of helping to raise. "Ja'Niya is my son's daughter but she is my little girl," Kit proudly proclaimed.

Fifteen-year-old Ja'Niya is a fixture at the second lines with her grandmother. As a child she held onto the back of her grandmother's shirt to the beat of the brass band, and now she leads the way through the crowds bouncing and bopping along the way. She also dresses Baby Doll and performs with N'awlins D'awlins.

Kit also enjoys spending time with her daughter, Dominique Simone, and her son, Justin Harris, who is the third chief of the Wild Tchoupitoulas Indian Tribe.

To Kit the second line is a religious experience and she is thrilled to share that experience, not only with her granddaughter, but with all the children of New Orleans, no matter what age they may be. Her love affair with the culture of New Orleans means everything to her. "I wake up to Baby Doll and I go to sleep Baby Dolling," she stated with pride.

So where can you find "Baby Doll Kit"? If it has anything to do with the local culture, you will surely see her in the middle of it all wearing her signature ankle boots and grinning from ear to ear.

Kit can also be seen every Tuesday at the at the New Orleans Jazz Museum's free balcony concerts where she is a guest coordinator. You can also visit her on her Facebook page and on Instagram at @Nawlins D'awlins. Her website is www.nolathrumyeyes.org