

Michael Allen Lightman, Sr.

As Carnival Memphis celebrates our 81st Anniversary, Michael Allen Lightman, Sr. has been chosen to reign as King to honor a very exciting and vibrant industry in the Mid-South that is a showcase of our community's assets - The Movie & Film Industry.

The legacy of the Lightman family in the Movie & Film Industry started in 1915, when King Michael's grandfather, M. A. Lightman, Sr., saw people lining up to watch a moving picture show in a storefront. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Lightman opened his first movie theater in Sheffield, Alabama and later grew the company into a chain of movie theaters throughout the south, making Memphis his base. Almost 100 years later the company has become a successful fourth generation run firm and the 11th largest cinema circuit in the country. Generations of Memphians have grown up not only going to the movies, but "going to the Malco." The company has built some of the most well-known buildings in the area, including Studio on the Square and the Paradiso Theatre.

While very involved in the family business, King Michael Lightman was more interested in the physical theaters and the shopping centers that were developed around them. Because of these interests, he made the decision not to follow his father and brother into the movie theater business. Michael Lightman entered into the real estate business in 1967 working for Schumacher Mortgage Company. In 1970 he started his own commercial real estate company with the founding of Michael Lightman Realty Company.

Long before Highway 385 (Nonconnah Parkway) was envisioned or FedEx had any thought about building their headquarters at Winchester and Hacks Cross Road, our King had a vision of where Shelby County growth was going to take place. Over forty years ago he strategically acquired land east of Memphis on and around Winchester Road. Over the years the company has developed shopping centers with large national tenants including Target, JCPenney, Lowes, Costco, Best Buy and Dick's Sporting Goods, to name a few. That vision has served him well over the last several decades. Today, as President and owner of Michael Lightman Realty Company, he oversees a successful commercial real estate firm with approximately 2.5 million square feet of shopping center, warehouse and apartment building space.

Our King has served on the Board of Directors for the Orpheum Theatre and the Memphis Arts Council and is a member of Temple Israel, Spring Creek Ranch, the Racquet Club of Memphis, Ridgeway Country Club and the Jewish Community Center.



The Lightman Family - Suzana, Michael, Jr., Aidan, Sienna, Adam, Ainsley, (standing) Joanie and King Michael

A life-long Memphian (he spent his first year in Little Rock, Arkansas), King Michael Lightman graduated from White Station High School and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business from the University of Georgia in Athens. Following college he served in the Army Reserves and after his six month basic training started his real estate career. Our King is incredibly active whether he is on the tennis court, playing golf, hiking, riding bikes or snow skiing. King Michael and his wife Joanie are also one of the last couples on the dance floor at Carnival events.

King Michael and his family have a long-standing Carnival history. He has continued a family tradition as a member of the Mystic Society of the Memphi, as were his parents, M.A. and Jean Lightman. His mother served as a Memphi Duchess in 1962 and his aunt, Jean Lightman Levy, was a Duchess the following year. King Michael is married to the former Joanie Ball and they have a son, Adam, and a daughter, Ainsley. Michael also has a son, Michael Jr., from a previous marriage and two grandchildren that will serve as Royal Pages, Sienna and Aidan. All three Lightman children were members of the Carnival Memphis Royal Court.