

Elegant
**ISLAND
LIVING**

REFLECTING SAINT SIMONS ISLAND'S FINER LIFESTYLE / APRIL 2015

**Comfort
& Castle**



HISTORY AT THE HELM

FOR THREE GENERATIONS,
A LOVE OF PLACE.

The history of the King and Prince is an 80-year arc of landmark existence on our Island.

The King and Prince began as a small, seaside dance club in 1935. In 1941, the first handful of guest rooms made it a hotel. And during the war years, patriotism made it a U.S. Navy radar training and coast-watching facility.

History moves along defining milestones. For the King and Prince, that milestone arrived in 1980, when business partners and Harvard Business School roommates Mike Sturdivant, Sr. and Earle Jones purchased the aging property. Their hospitality-centered vision for the Resort was realized over the years in physical changes that honored its history, enhanced the guest experience and shepherded the King and Prince into its place as a cherished oceanfront legend.

A NEW GENERATION

When Mike Sturdivant, Sr. died in 2012 and Earle Jones in 2013, the hospitality industry lost two wise and admired luminaries. Yet the families' love and guidance of the King and Prince experience is constant. Mike Sturdivant's son, Gaines Sturdivant, is President of MMI Hospitality Group, overseeing the company's collection of hotel and dining investments. "My father was the essential Mississippi gentleman. He infused an authentic sense of Southern charm and social graces to the King and Prince," said Gaines Sturdivant. "I never arrive to the Resort without feeling his genteel presence and his gentle thumbprint."

FROM THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA TO THE GEORGIA COAST

In 2013, Mike Sturdivant's grandson, Micajah Sturdivant, was named President of the MMI Hotel Group with responsibility for the King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort. As a young boy, Micajah's earliest visits to the King and Prince were during his family's annual summer visits from their Mississippi home to St. Simons Island. "Those were long miles on Highway 82, straight east to Georgia,"

Micajah Sturdivant
President, MMI Hotel Group

he remembers of the gatherings that continue today. "And I couldn't wait to get here!"

As a teen Micajah worked in the Sturdivant family's vast farming operations in Glendora, MS. As a student at Ole Miss, he would head out on Highway 82 again to work long summers at the Resort as a dishwasher and later as a front desk clerk. "Those guest-service, ground-level experiences were invaluable in understanding the complexities of operating a resort and the satisfaction of delighting guests." After college, Micajah received his MBA from Harvard Business School, the third generation of Sturdivants to do so.

He joined MMI in 2006, a year in which intensive thinking began that sought to envision the bold and dramatic renovations needed to take the Resort into the future – plans that would not come to full fruition for many years.

"It was exhaustive work by the MMI and Resort teams, but it was a labor of love," says Micajah. Early on in the process was a personal letter from Micajah to guests seeking their inputs, thoughts and ideas. "My grandfather always said that our guests are our one true boss. We had to get it right for them in ways that reward them now and also resonate with future generations."

Working with top architectural and design firms, a brilliant reimagining of the Resort took shape that would embrace the property's historic char-



ECHO Bar at the King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort, adjacent to ECHO oceanfront restaurant.

acter while rethinking all the essential components of the guest experience. The oceanfront pools were completely redesigned and re-opened in 2011, followed by dramatic renovations to the

Resort's historic Delegal Room and its meeting rooms in 2012. And in 2013, came the most stunning changes of all.

THE PAST AND FUTURE NOW HAVE AN ECHO

"St. Simons Island has many great restaurants. From the very beginning of our planning, the goal was to ensure that the restaurant here at the King and Prince returns to the top of the list," said Micajah.

Approached through the Resort's stunning new atrium lobby with its gleaming marble-matrixed floors and warm, welcoming furnishings, ECHO restaurant and bar arrived to high praise in 2014. That year, the readers of *Elegant Island Living* voted ECHO "The Best New Thing About St. Simons" and the Island's "Best New Restaurant."

But why the name ECHO? It was Micajah's idea. "ECHO is a harkening back to the King and Prince's home front service during World War II as a U.S. Navy coastal radar training center. While everything about ECHO is fresh and new, an important era in the Resort's history is honored in its name," stated Micajah.

Local residents and guests who have dined at the Resort in past years will find ECHO dramatically new and different, yet wonderfully welcoming with the majestic, panoramic oceanfront views that have always been the location's trademark.

Working with a premier restaurant designer, Micajah and his Resort team have achieved a rare balance of up-tempo energy and relaxed appeal at ECHO. And the new spring menu, authored by Chef de Cuisine James Flack, is

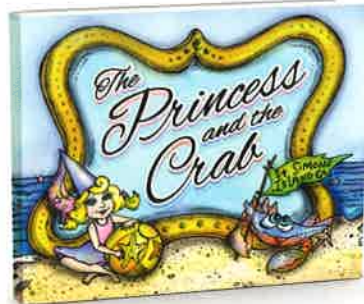
sensational and can be enjoyed inside, outside or at the bar. ECHO is open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Learn more at echostsimons.com or call 912.268.5967.



TURNING THE PAGE

Love can be a very creative and inspiring emotion. Such is the case with Grace Gore Sturdivant who first visited the King and Prince Resort with her then-boyfriend Micajah during an annual Sturdivant family vacation to the Island in 2008. The two married in 2009.

In 2013, Grace had an idea for a unique birthday gift for her husband: write a children's book that weaves the Resort, our coast and St. Simons' history into the narrative.



Her innovative birthday gift idea will soon give birth to a new hardbound book, *The Princess and the Crab*, to be published

and available for purchase this month at the Resort. A delightfully inspired re-imagining of the beloved princess-and-the-frog fable (with a loveable, wise crab as the co-star), the book is wonderful, whimsical and wise. While the tale is fun, Grace's use of historic Island sites in the unfolding story brings learning to the book's magic and meaning. Adding to the book's appeal are its delightful illustrations by ED Hose of St. Simons Island.

A doctor of Audiology and co-owner of Essential Play, Grace lives in Jackson, Mississippi with her two little princesses, Eleanor and Garnett, and her prince charming, Micajah.