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DAVID LAUDERDALE

dlauderdale@islandpacket.com
843-706-8115

REMEMBERING THE MARCH

Islander grew tired of 'so-called' freedom

Arthur Frazier knew a thing or two about freedom long before he made the trek from Hilton Head Island to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom 50 years ago.

Freedom rolled down like a mighty stream in his family lore.

"Hilton Head Island was the first place in the South where slaves could be free," Frazier told me in his booming voice as we talked in his yard 13 years ago. "People knew if you could just get here, you would be free."

His grandmother, then little baby Amy Miller, was the youngest of three children of Caesar and Moriah Jones in the bateau when they stole away to Union-occupied Hilton Head at the outset of the Civil War.

"The baby was crying, and Caesar told his wife to throw the baby overboard," Frazier said. That's how badly they wanted freedom. "Moriah put the baby under some sort of mattress that was on the boat, and that's how we got here. Without her, I would not be standing here."

So, yes, Arthur Frazier knew a thing or two about freedom when he listened to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I

Please see **FREEDOM** on 4A

LOCAL/STATE

FREEDOM

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Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

Yet when he retold the old family story about rowing to be free, he added: "I always say 'so-called free.'"

HARSH BLOWS

Our representative at the March on Washington was the quintessential Gullah man. What he made of a life that began in 1914 on a remote sea island was what he pulled from it with wit, wisdom and sweat.

As a child, he was free to dig ditches for 60 cents a day. As an adult, he was a farmer, ferryman, longshoreman, entrepreneur and preacher.

His wife, Earline Campbell Frazier, was born on Hilton Head and educated at Penn School on St. Helena Island and Savannah State. She taught school for more than 35 years.

"I once worked 30 days and 30 nights straight until my wife came to the dock and took me home," Frazier told me about his days as a longshoreman in Savannah. "Sometimes I was so tired when I got home, I tell you I wouldn't get up if my grandmother rose up out of her grave."

As a ferryman, as soon as his head would hit the pillow, someone would knock at the door and beg him to take a baby to the hospital in Savannah.

As a store owner, children going next door to the island's first consolidated elementary school would stop in for candy and soda water. They called him Mr. Fraidge. They called his Amoco station built by his father, "Fraidge Store."

The store, on U.S. 278 near Spanish Wells Road, is now a seafood and vegetable business operated by a Campbell relative. The school next door, which was not integrated until 1971, has been torn down.

Frazier could smile easily, but life dealt him some harsh blows.

His only son, Phillip, was murdered. He walked with two canes after



File • Staff photo

Arthur Frazier is shown with his pet cow, Miss Earline, at his home on Jonesville Road in October 2000. It amused him that the 15-year-old cow, then believed to be the last one on Hilton Head Island, starred that fall in a fundraiser for the Hilton Head Island High School All Sports Booster Club.

"Hilton Head Island was the first place in the South where slaves could be free. People knew if you could just get here, you would be free."

The late Arthur Frazier

losing a leg in a car wreck. In 1985, he was shot at his store, the bullet going through his cheek and lodging in his neck.

One of his responses was to convert the garage area of his business into Frazier's Temple Holiness Church, where he preached every Thursday night.

PART OF CHANGE

The family that arrived crouched in a bateau ended up buying 100 acres of farmland on Jonesville Road for \$5 per acre.

Arthur Frazier bought his piece from his grandmother, Amy. When he died in 2003, Arthur Frazier was buried in his side yard beside his wife and son.

He was glad when the bridge opened to Hilton Head in 1956, but sad when they paved Jonesville Road many years later. Fine homes and new neighborhoods now fill land where his cows

and goats once roamed.

Arthur Frazier went to his grave proud that he marched on Washington.

He wanted to be a part of history. He wanted to be a part of change. And a friend told me he wanted to make sure the island was well represented during an electrifying moment for the nation.

Arthur Frazier knew that the freedom his family found a century earlier was "so-called" freedom. He grew up in a society where African-Americans didn't have equal access to education, jobs, housing, health care, utilities, capital — even the right to vote.

Arthur Frazier didn't have to make that long trip to Washington in the hot summer of 1963. He was hoping to take the "so-called" out of freedom.

Follow columnist David Lauderdale at twitter.com/ThatsLauderdale.

Before the bridges

Hilton Head considers ways to honor two men who kept the island well-supplied

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By DANIEL BROWNSTEIN
dbrownstein@islandpacket.com
843-706-8125

Well before the first bridge to Hilton Head Island was built in 1956, two native islanders helped connect the remote barrier island with the rest of the world.

Many in the native island community would like the Town of Hilton Head Island to memorialize Charlie Simmons Sr. and Arthur Frazier, two men who worked around the clock to ensure islanders had the supplies they needed to survive on an island far from the nearest department store or hospital.

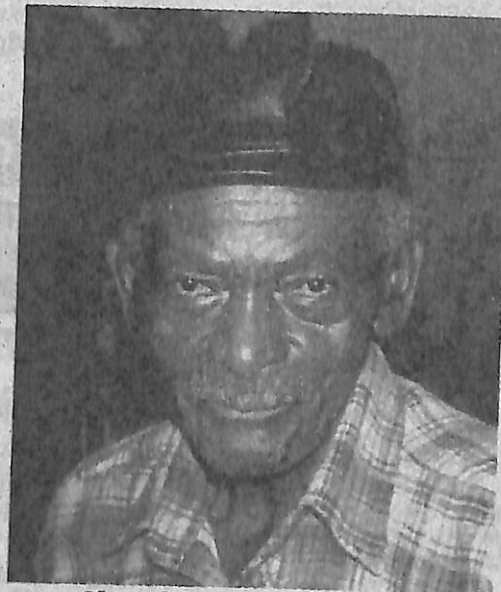
Both ran ferries and filled countless other roles, such as merchant, banker, public works department and ambulance service before development brought those modern institutions to the island.

Bill Ferguson, who represents the native island communities on Hilton Head Town Council, wants to build a monument honoring the contributions of native islanders — beginning with Simmons and Frazier — at Mitchelville Beach Park.

Ferguson said the entire community owes a debt of gratitude to the two men, not just the dozens of native island families and affluent visitors who used their services.

“Without them, Sea Pines and Port Royal wouldn’t be here as it is today,” he said, “because (the developers) used these fellows as an instrument of transportation before the bridge was built.”

Ferguson’s idea involves renaming the park to something like “Mitchelville Memorial Park for Native Islanders.” Last week, Mayor Tom Peeples asked for



Charlie Simmons Sr.



Arthur Frazier

Before the bridges to Hilton Head Island were built, native islanders Arthur Frazier and Charles Simmons Sr. operated ferries. The town is now exploring a way to memorialize the contribution of Frazier, Simmons and other native islanders.

Please see BRIDGES on 7A

File photos • The Island Packet

BRIDGES

Continued from 1A

Ferguson's help to build consensus among the island's black community for a potential name.

"It's a sublime piece of property with a generic name on it," Ferguson said of the park.

The town built Compass Rose Park in 2008 as an homage to Sea Pines founder Charles Fraser and others instrumental in making Hilton Head a premier resort.

But some believe not enough is being done to highlight the history of native islanders, many of whom are the direct descendants of freed slaves, said Emory Campbell, former director of the Penn Center and owner of Gullah Tours.

"Despite what National Geographic says, this island does have a soul," Campbell said referring to the magazine's 2007 ranking of beach communities that slammed the island. "It goes back a long way to even the Indians. History is so important. Folks who are coming in now are looking for history and unfortunately don't know how important this island is to United States history."

Hilton Head was home to the South's first freed slaves, and Mitchelville, a fully functioning village for those released from bondage, was the nation's early experiment at Reconstruction.

After the Civil War, the island was a close-knit agrarian community. Families were rich with land that produced crops and estuaries that provided a bounty of shellfish, but were cash poor and largely disconnected from the mainland.

Simmons, who worked on fer-

ries as a young boy, began his own service in the 1920s using a sailboat to get between Hilton Head and Savannah. In 1927, he upgraded to the Lola, a 33-foot boat with a 15 horsepower engine.

He transported wealthy northerners to Honey Horn, then a hunting preserve, and helped islanders haul their produce, seafood and livestock to Savannah, where he sold the cargo at City Market and used the proceeds to fulfill families' shopping lists.

Simmons died in 2005 at the age of 99.

Frazier came along a bit after Simmons. In 1944, he began operating a boat service between Jenkins Island — near where the J. Wilton Graves Bridge today connects to Hilton Head Island — to Buckingham Landing, where the Sea Trawler restaurant recently opened. He

also owned several trucks and a barge that could carry cars.

When he was drafted for World War II, residents successfully lobbied the government to give him a waiver because his services were so vital to their way of life.

In 1968, Frazier lost a leg in an automobile accident, and in 1985, he was shot in the face during the robbery of his convenience store along William

Hilton Parkway. The cream and rust-colored commercial buildings he owned still stand and are home to a produce market and a massage parlor. A wooden, homemade sign still marks Frazier's Holiness Temple.

He died in 2003 at the age of 89.

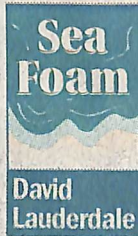
"I knew them both," Campbell said. "They were outstanding men."

Arthur Frazier remembered as valued community member

Thanks to Juanita Gadson of Hilton Head Island for sharing a glimpse into the celebration of the life of venerable Hilton Head native Arthur Lee Frazier, who passed away May 13.

Mrs. Gadson said the funeral service Saturday, May 17, at the Hilton Head New Church of Christ on Spanish Wells Road was beautiful.

Mr. Frazier, born on the island in 1914 to the late Daniel L. "Lemon" Frazier and Katie Miller Frazier, started the first ferry between Hilton Head and the mainland. He later operated a ground transportation business and a store on William Hilton Parkway across from Wild Horse Road. He also was a retired longshoreman, farmer and preacher. Mr. Frazier was the only citizen from Beaufort



County to attend the 1963 March on Washington, and he helped form the island chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Many native islanders like Mrs. Gadson knew him as "Fraidge," a kind man who ran "Fraidge Store" next to the island's first consolidated elementary school.

As a child, she and other students bought cookies and candy at the store. She remembers the Mary Janes and Squirrel Nut Zippers.

"I became friends with him when his wife, Earline, got sick," Mrs. Gadson said. "She was a school teacher. Mr. Frazier had a

lot of love in his heart for people and that's what we need, and that's what I saw in him."

Mrs. Gadson said Mr. Frazier was respected for what he stood for and for what he brought to the island through years of great change.

She drove out to The Packet's Bluffton office to share photographs from the service, and this handwritten note:

"The going-home service of Mr. Arthur Frazier was presented by the Rev. Benjamin Williams and others at the Hilton Head New Church of Christ.

"May the Lord be with us always.

"As a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Frazier, I want to express my appreciation for the friendship of this long-lived native of



Special to The Packet

The Rev. Benjamin Williams participated in the funeral service of Hilton Head Island native Arthur Frazier.

Hilton Head Island."

Among others assisting in the service were Elder Sandy Pusha,

Prophet Isaac Chisolm, Sister Betty Roundtree, Bishop John Miller, Sister Laura Campbell, Prophet Henry Jones, Willie Morris (president, International Longshoremen Association), Apostle Elijah Murray, the Rev. Isaac W. Wilborn Jr. and pallbearers Otis Willis, Angelo Frazier, Thomas Patterson, John Campbell, Kurtis Brown and Quincy J. Campbell.

The passing of Arthur Lee Frazier on May 13 brought closure to the life of another pillar in the foundation of Hilton Head Island. His contributions to the survival of islanders prior to the building of the bridge in 1956 are well documented and imbedded in the memory of many who knew him.

He was a minister, a prominent businessman, a farmer, a lumberjack, a historian, among other roles. However, most important, he was a strong family and community man. He believed in family unity and community responsibility.

The family uses this as a medium to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to the community for its expression of support during his

illness and passing. Special thanks to the responsive, sensitive and caring medical team, nurses and staff of Hilton Head Regional Medical Center, Dr. Deborah Ligon of Beaufort-Jasper-Hampton Comprehensive Health Services, Hilton Head Island Fire and Rescue and to those who visited, called, sent cards and/or prayed for him and us. Thank you to The Island Packet for the editorial recognition of his life.

We are better prepared to move on with our lives now because of your support and the fond memories Arthur Lee Frazier has left for so many of us to feast on.

**Daniel L. Frazier IV
Savannah**

6/2/03

Arthur L. Frazier

Arthur Lee Frazier, 89, of Hilton Head Island died Tuesday, May 13, at Hilton Head Regional Medical Center.

He was born March 19, 1914, on Hilton Head, the son of the late Daniel L. and Katie Miller Frazier. He was married to Earline C. Frazier, who also preceded him in death.

He received his education in the public schools of Hilton Head. He had various careers.

Mr. Frazier started the first island ferry between Hilton Head and the mainland, and later started a ground transportation business that covered most of the Lowcountry area. He was a retired longshoreman and one of the island's more prominent businessmen before 1980.

In later years, Mr. Frazier became a minister and established Frazier's Temple.

He was a member of the International Masons Pride of Hilton Head and was instrumental in the early years of the Hilton Head branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

He was proud of being a part of the March on Washington in 1963

and of his advocacy of the first bridge to Hilton Head Island.

Survivors include a brother, Irvin Frazier of Maryland; a sister, Amy Pusha of Savannah; and other relatives.

He also was preceded in death by a son, Phillip C. Frazier.

A wake will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. today in the sanctuary of the Hilton Head New Church of Christ.

Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at the church. Burial will follow at 85 Jonesville Road on Hilton Head.

Marshall's Wright-Donaldson Home for Funerals is in charge of arrangements.