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## BUSINESSMAKERS

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**CHARLES E. SIMMONS**

### PROFESSION

Real Estate Entrepreneur

[\(/taxonomy/term/41501\)](#) | [Civic](#)

[Leader \(/taxonomy/term/41521\)](#)

### FAVORITES

Color: Grey, Black, Red, and Khaki

Food: Lima Beans, Cornbread, Chicken, and Fish

Quote: None

Season: Spring

Vacation Destination: Jamaica; Hawaii; and Cruises

### BIRTHPLACE

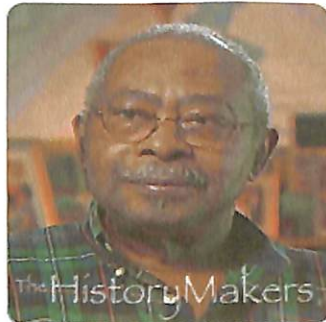
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina  
United States

### INTERVIEW DESCRIPTION:

**Search Occupation Category:**

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### BIOGRAPHY | INTERVIEW DATE: 1/29/2007

Real estate developer Charles Edward Simmons, Jr. was born an only child on December 6, 1928 on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina to Estella and Charles Edward Simmons, Sr., Gullah natives of Hilton Head Island. Simmons' parents owned many acres of farmland, and his father was a shrewd businessman who owned the only ferry transportation service to Savannah, Georgia from Hilton Head Island before the bridge connecting Hilton Head to the mainland was built in 1956. He also operated a bus service that catered to laborers and schoolchildren.

Simmons attended elementary school in the Spanish Wells community but later would be in the last graduating class of the Penn Normal Industrial and Agricultural School on St. Helena Island. This school was begun in 1862 as an experimental program to educate Sea Island slaves freed at the beginning of the Civil War.

After graduation, Simmons was drafted into the United States Army where he served for two years. In 1952, Simmons entered South Carolina State University where he was President of the Commercial Club and a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. He received his B.A. degree in business in 1956.

Simmons became the Director of the Beauford-Jasper County Equal Opportunity Commission and was the liaison between the land developers and the residents of St. John's Island, South Carolina. While the corporation began to develop the upscale town of Kiawah, he worked to ensure employment opportunities for local residents. In 1976, Simmons went to work for Hargray Telephone Company as a technician. He then retired in 1993.

Simmons owns Simmons Properties. He is also on the Trustee Board of the Penn Center, a founding member of the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association, Inc. (NIBCAA) and is the President of the Spanish Wells and Native Island Property Owners Association.

Simmons lives on Hilton Head Island with Rosa, his wife of fifty-four years. They have four adult children, Charlesetta, Palmer, Greg and Benjamin.

# Island legend honored



DELAYNA EARLEY \* Staff photo

**H**ilton Head Island Mayor Drew Laughlin presents a sign honoring Charlie Simmons Sr., also known as 'Mr. Transportation,' to Simmons' descendants during a ceremony Wednesday at the Honey Horn Discovery House. Charlie Simmons Jr., left, and his son, Palmer Simmons, accept the sign for the naming of Charlie Simmons Sr. Memorial Bridge, which crosses Jarvis Creek on Spanish Wells Road. Simmons Sr., an island native, was instrumental in transporting goods and people to and from the island before a bridge was built to Hilton Head, according to the town.



JAY KARR • Staff photos  
A Hilton Head Island road named for Charles Simmons Sr. was changed by the builders of the new Silver Moss development, pictured here.

## Family disappointed Captain Sim Drive renamed Developers: Park will be new tribute

By REBECCA LURYE  
rlurye@islandpacket.com • 843-706-8155

An oversight by developers and a Hilton Head Island family nearly erased a small piece of history from Spanish Wells Road this month.

A street named for the late Charlie Simmons Sr. disappeared with the construction of a new main drive for the Silver Moss development, disappointing family of the iconic ferry-operator and those who remember how he shaped the island by transporting residents, school children and midwives from Savannah before bridges connected Hilton Head to the mainland.

Developers said it did not occur to them to transfer the name "Captain Sim Drive" to the new road inside the gated community, which is now called "Lavender Circle." Likewise, Simmons' family said it never occurred to them that the sign may be taken down, so they never asked the developers to preserve it when they sold the land, part of about 10 acres of marsh-front property, to Silver Moss.

However, soon after the sign

**"I think there'll be more good than bad out of this whole thing."**

Palmer Simmons, grandson

was returned to the town about three weeks ago, developer David Brown realized some residents missed the old name.



Charles Simmons Jr. and his wife, Rosa, are photographed on Wednesday beneath a wall hanging honoring Simmons' father, Charles Simmons Sr. The native islander and ferry operator was known as "Mr. Transportation."

Though he thought it too late to rename the street again, he sought to make it up to Simmons' memory by dedicating the neighborhood's park to and naming it after the native islander. A plaque will educate future residents of the 48-home community about the man who went by "Captain," "Mr. Transportation" and "Mr. Hilton Head."

"It's better than nothing," his son, Charles Simmons Jr., said Wednesday. He added that his fa-

ther wouldn't have cared about the change one bit.

"Nothing bothers him too much. He takes everything in stride," Simmons Jr. said of his late father.

Simmons Sr. lived to see his family name their private road for him, shortening Simmons to Sim because the sign couldn't accommodate all the letters of his moniker.

Today, two commemorative

Please see TRIBUTE on 4A