

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charles E. Simmons

PERSON

Simmons, Charles E., 1928-2016

Alternative Names: Charles E. Simmons; Charles E. Simmons

Life Dates: December 6, 1928-May 26, 2016

Place of Birth: Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA

Residence: Hilton Head Island, SC

Work: Charleston, SC

Occupations: Civic Leader

Biographical Note

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. He received his B.A. degree in business administration 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 owned Simmons Properties. He was also on the Trustee Board of the Penn Center, a founding member of the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association, Inc. (NIBCAA) and was the President of the Spanish Wells and Native Island Property Owners Association.

Simmons lived on Hilton Head Island with Rosa, his wife. They had four adult children, Charlesetta, Palmer, Greg and Benjamin.

Simmons was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on January 29, 2007.

Simmons passed away on May 26, 2016.

Related Entries

Penn Normal Industrial and Agricultural School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

H.S.

South Carolina State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Bachelor's

Sea Pines Company [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Liaison

Beaufort-Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

Hargray Telephone Company [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1978 to 1993]

Switchboard Operator

Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Spanish Wells-Jonesville Property Owners Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

President

Penn Center [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board of Directors Member

Penn Club, Inc. [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Simmons Family Holding, LLC [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]