



## STEWARDS OF CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY

by Valerie A. Hepburn, PhD, President & CEO, Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation



It's impossible to imagine Coastal Georgia without the influence and generosity of the Jones family. When Howard Coffin brought his young cousin Alfred W. Jones, Sr. in to manage the newly formed Sea Island Company in the 1920s, one could never have envisioned the plethora of milestones that the family company and its many iconic properties, programs and services would achieve over the next 90 years. The family's business accomplishments were noteworthy enough to earn the company recognition as both a National Family Business of the Year and a Georgia Family Business of the Year. Yet, this is not a tale of business but rather a story of the Jones family's deep and unwavering commitment to conservation and philanthropy that has had a lasting impact on the quality of life across this region.

A leader in the nation's automobile and transportation industry, Howard Coffin recognized the beauty and value of the coastal barrier islands. The Midwesterner purchased Sapelo Island and shortly thereafter acquired Sea Island while buying additional land on St. Simons. Along with being his business colleague, A. W. Jones, Sr. was like a son to the childless Coffin. When his cousin died in the late

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**THIS PAGE:** Alfred W. Jones, Sr., Bill Jones III, A.W. Jones Jr., photo courtesy of Sea Island Archives. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Sally and Bill Jones III, photo by Johnson Pictures, Inc.



1930s, Mr. Jones inherited the business and vast holdings of land. Since that time, three generations of Jones family members remain among this community's most distinguished advocates and stewards for conservation and community service.

If you have enjoyed the incredible beauty of Cumberland Island or the delightful mixture



of business, residential and recreation that is Jekyll Island, thank the Jones family. A. W. Jones, Sr. played a leading role in securing the designation of Cumberland Island as a national seashore and in crafting the transformation of Jekyll into a Georgia State Park. His work as a conservationist won him recognition by the U.S. Department of Interior. Jones, Sr. worked with Bishop Arthur Moore to arrange for the purchase and establishment of Epworth by the Sea, the beautiful Methodist retreat and conference center located on the banks of the Frederica River. Annually, the Brunswick-Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce confers the A. W. Jones, Sr. Award to recognize outstanding civic service and leadership.

A. W. Jones, Jr. assumed increasing responsibility for Sea Island in the late 1950s, and became the company's president in 1966. During his tenure, the reach, prestige and economic impact of the company grew significantly. Raised in this community, Jones, Jr.'s love of the outdoors remains legendary and his faith and generosity were unrivaled. The family made land donations to many churches on St.

Simons Island, several of which are adjacent to Fort Frederica. In addition to supporting organizations of faith, those land donations ensured a conservation buffer around the historic fort and its stunning acreage on the river which Jones, Sr. had helped earn designation as a National Monument.

The family worked with local leaders to establish Brunswick Junior College in 1961. Buildings on the campus of the now College of Coastal Georgia proudly display the Coffin and Jones names. A scholarship honoring Jones, Jr. is

awarded annually. A. W. Jones, Jr. also helped found Frederica Academy, with the company donating the land on which the St. Simons Island preparatory school now sits. Through spouses, siblings and children, the Jones legacy of generosity continues to actively ripple throughout the currents of our communities. Support for the United Way annual campaign was a priority for A.W. Jones, Jr. and it remains so for Bill III, both personally and professionally. Though Sea Island's corporate ownership has changed hands, the organization continues its employee and employer commitment to the community organization. This year, Sea Island was recognized as the Top Workplace Giving site for United Way. *(continues)*

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Bill III became company president in the early 1990s. He and his wife, Sally, established The Broadfield Foundation, which continues to make charitable investments in a host of worthy causes, from kids and animal welfare to church steeples and Temple windows. Their faith is a central focus, and the Jones family serves to advise and support both Faithworks and The Gathering Place.

In 2005, Bill III helped lead an organizing committee in the formation of the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation. With a goal of growing philanthropy across the Coastal region, he served as chairman during the organization's formative years. As chairman emeritus, he continues to nurture the growing philanthropic enterprise. Bill III is now serving on the executive council of the newly formed Coastal Georgia Partners in Philanthropy. He remains the "go-to guy" for collaborative charitable initiatives, such as the purchase of Cannon's Point and the ongoing operations of the Golden Isles Career Academy.

Continuing his family's legacy of conservation and service, Bill III serves on the Board of Directors of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. He has been recognized by the Department with its highest honor, the Rock Howard Award. A trustee with the

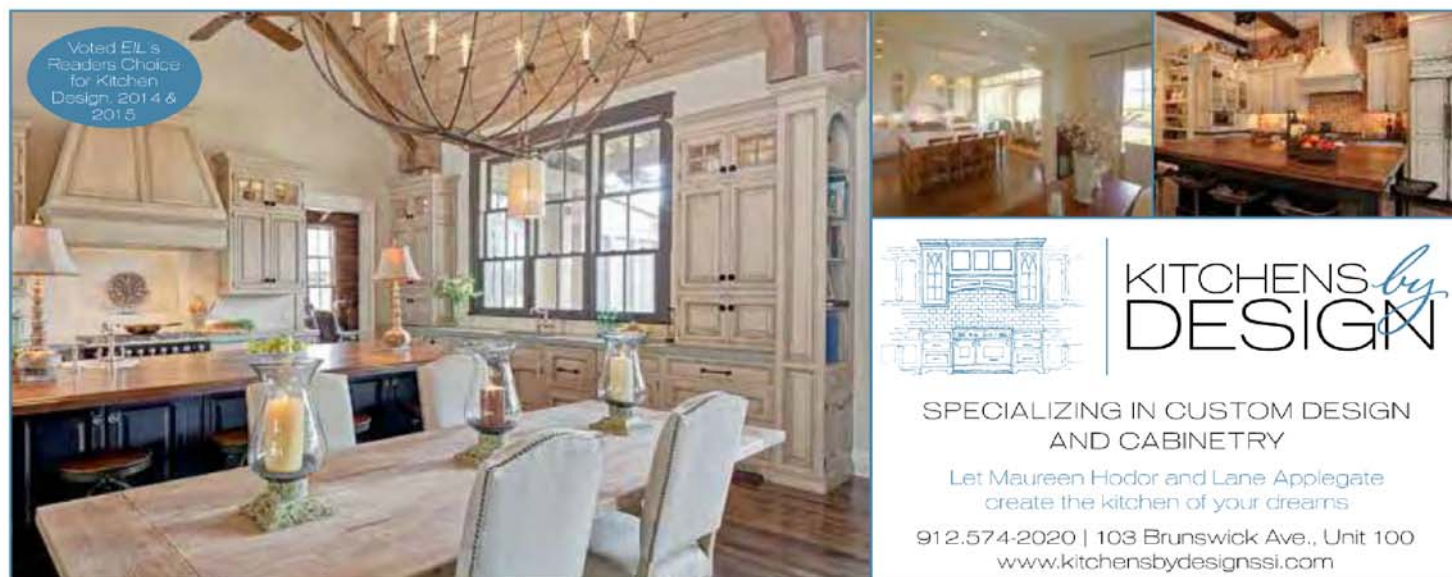
Nature Conservancy, Bill III has steered the donation of thousands of acres of land to state protection. Bill III initiated a voluntary donation program at Sea Island that allows hotel guests to contribute to the St. Simons Land Trust. This program has resulted in a \$1.1M benefit for the SSLT. Bill III's previous voluntary policy leadership roles have included the Georgia Research Alliance, the Georgia Cancer Coalition, the Georgia Historical Society, and chairman of the Georgia Ports Authority. In each role, his significant contributions, intellectual and financial, have brought credit, attention and new investments across the community.

In 2004, Jones, Sea Island and the whole of the Golden Isles accomplished a superlative feat: hosting the G8 Summit. Enlisting volunteers and partners throughout the area, the G8 showcased the hospitality and natural splendor of these barrier islands to the world. Jones III served as honorary chair of the Summit Host Committee. A lasting legacy of the Summit is the A. W. Jones Heritage Center near the St. Simons Lighthouse, made possible in large part by a gift of the Summit Host Committee. Later that year, Jones III was named "Georgian of the Year" by Georgia Trend magazine.

Though Sea Island and its portfolio of opportunities and challenges has changed dramatically

since its early founding by the Coffin and Jones families, one thing that hasn't change is the family's commitment to this community – its conservation and its charitable causes. A.W. Jones, Jr.'s wife, Betty, and sisters Katharine (Kappy) O'Connor and Marianna Kuntz, remain respected advocates for their beloved coastal region. Bill III, and siblings Ann and Jim, are engaged and active across the community, each giving through their own special talents and interests.

The Jones family legacy, still stewarded actively by the current generation, is twofold and profound: the conservation of the majestic beauty of these barrier islands along with steadfast support for improving the human condition. Thanks to the family's early investment in land, its ongoing advocacy for protection of historic and environmentally sensitive properties, and the strategic deeding of so much land to non-profit, religious, residential, and protected ventures, many treasured venues on these islands have been secured. Moreover, a century of compassion and stewardship have strengthened the very fabric of this region – its economy, education systems, faith-based organizations, health and social services, the arts, historic preservation, and much, much more. For all the things that make this region and these Golden Isles so very special, the Jones family deserves our enduring appreciation.



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