

James Edward Bridgers



James Edward Bridgers (Mr. Ed) was born in Princeville, North Carolina. He graduated from Tarboro Colored High School in 1938. Mr. Bridgers attended Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Hampton, Virginia. He also attended Artis Barber College in Wilson, North Carolina.

Mr. Ed has made a living as a self-employed barber. He has owned and operated a convenience store in Princeville for numerous years. Mr. Bridgers worked as a carpenter too, and he has built and repaired businesses and houses he owned. A savvy businessman and entrepreneur, he leases six businesses in Princeville Plaza.

As a member of Eastern Star Missionary Baptist Church in Tarboro, Mr. Ed served as Chairman of the Trustee Board for thirty-five (35) years and served as a Deacon for nineteen (19) years. Currently he is a Deacon Emeritus. Mr. Bridgers has been a public servant for Princeville in the capacity as a member of the Town Board of Commissioners, including eight (8) years as Mayor. Among his first civic contributions was working to secure the Army Corp of Engineers to build a 3-mile levee to protect the town of Princeville from frequent flooding by the Tar River. The dike held back waters until 1999 when Hurricane Floyd dumped in excess of twenty (20) inches of rain in Edgecombe County. As a result, Princeville was submerged in water for days. Mr. Ed was also instrumental in improving the living conditions of Princeville residents by lobbying for and getting streetlights, paved streets and water and sewer lines during his political career.

Although Mr. Ed was no longer in office, as a citizen of Princeville, he continued to visit City Hall to express his opinion. Maybe the most notable situation followed Hurricane Floyd in 1999 when Princeville leaders were requested to vote on moving the town to higher ground. Mr. Ed was adamantly opposed, and his opinion prevailed. In 2005 Mr. Ed said, "When I got married, I had zero. I went into business with zero. I worked hard to get where I am today. I am still a poor man, a self-made man. I did it all in the town that I love. As a young man, I could have gone somewhere else. I came home to make a difference and I hope I did."

Mr. Ed's efforts to make a difference earned him North Carolina's highest civilian honor – the Order of the Long Leaf Pine in 2009. It is an award presented by the North Carolina State Governor to honor individuals with a proven record of service to the state. Additionally, he was inducted into the Twin County Hall of Fame in 2014. Its mission is to celebrate the history, culture, people and accomplishments of men and women in Edgecombe and Nash Counties in North Carolina, past and present, who make significant contributions.

The former Carrie Elizabeth Lawrence, a Tarboro native is Mr. Ed's wife. They have been married seventy-seven (77) years. Mr. & Mrs. Bridgers are parents of two (2) children – Margarella Bridgers Moore of Princeville, North Carolina and James Cullen Bridgers, Sr. of Rose Hill, North Carolina. They have four (4) grandchildren and eleven (11) great grandchildren. They are still residing in Princeville, and Mr. Ed continues to monitor the economic pulse of Princeville.