

Is USM Hiding Something about the Parking Garage?

HATTIESBURG – As David Tisdale’s USM [presser points out](#), a celebratory opening of USM’s new five-story parking garage – a structure capable of accommodating 1,200 vehicles – occurred on the morning of 7-April-2011, complete with USM president Martha Saunders and USM vice president of student affairs Joe Paul driving an antique vehicle through a yellow ribbon to mark the occasion (see Steve Rouse’s photo below).



According to Tisdale, the new open-zone garage, which was designed by Albert & Associates Architects of Hattiesburg, and built by Hattiesburg’s Finlo Construction (see license plate on antique car above) and L&A Construction, includes security lighting, handicapped spaces, 10 code blue phones, more than 50 video cameras, a fire monitoring system, and an elevator. Tisdale also notes that this new garage is the first multi-level parking facility on a university campus in Mississippi.

Perhaps the most intriguing item in Tisdale’s story pertains to the financing details of the new structure. According to Tisdale, “[v]ehicle registration fees fund the construction cost of the \$15.5 million structure, financed through the university’s first public/private third party construction partnership, Eagle Parking LLC. This developer consortium is composed of five local companies and a consultant.” A USMNEWS.net investigation, however, uncovered some interesting details about the corporation behind the financing of the new structure.

The insert below contains information obtained from the Mississippi Secretary of State’s office (SoS-MS). It shows that an LLC under the name mentioned above was formed on 12-January-09, but that entity has since changed its name to “Eagle Parking & Development, LLC.” Also of interest is the name of the LLC’s “registered agent” – Lee Sims, of Sims Road in Hattiesburg.



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Name History

Name	Name Type
Eagle Parking & Development, LLC	Legal
Eagle Parking LLC	Prev Legal

Limited Liability Company - Domestic - Information

Business ID: 943371

Status: Good Standing

Creation Date: 1/12/2009

Dissolve Date: 1/11/2029

State of Incorporation: MS

Principal Office Address: No Address

Listing Address: No Address

Registered Agent

Agent Name: [Sims, Lee](#)

Office Address: 100 Sims Road, PO Box 16749
Hattiesburg MS 3940-46749

Mailing Address:

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Another document obtained from the SoS-MS by USMNEWS.net indicates that the LLC's name change occurred on 3-May-2010, about one year ago. That document is inserted below.



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Name History

Name	Name Type
Eagle Parking & Development LLC	Legal

Reserved Name - Domestic - Information

Business ID: Reserved Name

Status:

Creation Date: 5/3/2010

State of Incorporation: MS

Principal Office Address: No Address

Listing Address: No Address

Applicant

Applicant Name: No Address

Applicant Address: No Address

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The insert below is a copy of a press release from Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour's office dated 22-August-08. It announces the appointment of Hattiesburg's Lee Sims to the State Board of Contractors.

Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 22, 2008

GOVERNOR BARBOUR APPOINTS SIMS TO STATE CONTRACTORS BOARD

(JACKSON, Mississippi)-Governor Haley Barbour has appointed O. Lee Sims, of Hattiesburg, to the State Board of Contractors, which works to protect licensed contractors and the public against unlawful and fraudulent acts of contractors.

"With his extensive contracting work, Lee brings a unique perspective to the board and I look forward to his good works in this capacity," Governor Barbour said.

Sims is president of L&A Contracting Co., where he has worked for 36 years. He is past president of the Mississippi Road Builders Association and serves as a board member for the University of Southern Mississippi Foundation. In addition, he is an executive board member for the Pine Burr Area Council Boys Scouts.

Sims attended the University of Southern Mississippi. He and his wife, Delma, have been married 6 years. Sims has four children, Brent, Morgan, DeAnna, and Shelby.

Barbour's presser also indicates that Sims is the president of **L&A Contracting** in Hattiesburg, and that he served, at that time at least, as a member of the USM Foundation Board. One additional document obtained from SoS-MS, which is inserted below, indicates that Sims is the principal of another Mississippi LLC - Southern Concrete Pumping.

The screenshot shows the Mississippi Secretary of State Business Services website. The search results for 'LEE SIMS' are displayed in a table format. The table has two columns: 'Officer Name' and 'Corp Name'. The search results are as follows:

Officer Name	Corp Name
ESSIE LEE SIMS	SIMS OUTREACH CENTER
Kathleen S. Sims	PC TIMBERLAND INVESTMENT COMPANY
	Phum Creek Administrative Corporation, Inc
	PLUM CREEK INVESTMENT COMPANY
	PLUM CREEK LAND COMPANY
	PLUM CREEK MARKETING, INC.
Lee H Sims	Barganier Davis Sims Architects Associated, P.A.
LEE SIMS	L.L. TRUCKIN-EDWARDS, INC.
	RADIUS AVIATION, INC.
	RADIUS, INC.
PERRY LEE SIMS	PERRY LEE SIMS
Ferry Lee Sims	PERRY LEE SIMS
Sims, O. Lee	Southern Concrete Pumping, LLC

Records Returned 1 to 13

The final insert in this particular report is a copy of Ray Sims' obituary (see below). As the insert states, Ray was the chairman of the board of **L&A Contracting**. It also notes that one of Ray's two surviving sons is Lee Sims.

Obituary

Ray A. Sims Sr. | [Visit Guest Book](#)

Ray A. Sims, Sr.

Services will be held at 2:00 p.m. Friday at Temple Baptist Church for Mr. Ray A. Sims, Sr. age 79, of Hattiesburg. Mr. Sims died Tuesday, May 11, 2010 at his residence. Entombment will be in Roseland Park Mausoleum. He was Chairman of The Board of L & A Contracting Co. A member of Temple Baptist Church. He was preceded by his wife, JoAnne Sims, Survived by 2 sons Lee Sims and Ray Sims, Jr. both of Hattiesburg; 2 daughters Cindy Sutherland and Janet Blanton both of Hattiesburg. 12 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. Visitation will be 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. Thursday at Hulett-Winstead Funeral Home in Hattiesburg, MS. Memorials may be made to Ray & JoAnne Sims Presidential Fund USM Foundation.

Long-time followers of USMNEWS.net will recognize Ray Sims as the individual who sold the old Albertson's building to USM, during the Shelby F. Thames administration (2002-07), for use as a new nursing school that the Thames administration was planning at that time. That controversial saga, wherein USM paid Sims \$1.2 million for the facility, is recounted quite well [here](#). Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the current parking garage situation is potentially as controversial as the Albertson's saga. It appears that the parking garage plan is one that may result in a massive transfer of wealth - in this case from past, current and future USM students - to the Sims family of Hattiesburg.