

The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail



The RSA's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail Ross Bridge complex in Jefferson County, Alabama, surrounded by the residential and commercial development it has spawned over the past decade.

THE ROBERT TRENT JONES GOLF TRAIL

Its History and Economic Impact



MARK FAGAN

WITH A FOREWORD BY DAVID G. BRONNER

NEWSOUTH BOOKS

Montgomery

ALSO BY MARK FAGAN

Retirement Development: A How-To Guidebook

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TO THE PEOPLE OF ALABAMA

Author's Note

I wrote this book about the Retirement Systems of Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail to document in detail the history of the most significant economic development project in Alabama over the last 40 years. Also included is an in-depth economic analysis of the impact of this project from a historical perspective.

No other development activity in Alabama during this period has contributed more to the history, economy, image, and culture of the entire state than the Golf Trail project. Automobile manufacturing plants, the U.S. Defense Department and NASA, and the cultivation of tourism on Alabama beaches have been important developments, but their impact has been concentrated more in the areas where the activities were based. No single development in the past four decades has changed the overall landscape and image of Alabama more than the building and promotion of the statewide Golf Trail and the RSA hotels, spas, and conference centers, along with the subsequent associated housing and commercial development.

This significant component of modern Alabama's economy was subject to being buried in microfilmed newspaper and magazine articles in public libraries. This book is published to capture the massive project's history and make it available to economic developers, researchers, professors and students in business schools, and the general public.

— MARK FAGAN

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Foreword

My Vision for a Golf Trail in Alabama

DAVID G. BRONNER

I started managing the pension fund for state employees and state teachers in Alabama in 1973. I recognized that to make the pension fund stronger, the economy in Alabama needed to be stronger. By 1990, I was growing frustrated with the economic conditions in Alabama.

I wanted to improve Alabama and help ourselves so others would want to join us. I wanted to feature Alabama's natural beauty. I wanted to enhance the image of Alabama. I wanted to promote economic development in Alabama. I wanted something of which all Alabamians could be proud. I wanted something no other state had.

I decided to build world-class golf courses and world-class hotels to increase tourism and create residential and commercial development.

I envisioned a series of golf courses and hotels all through Alabama that could be called a "golf trail." The golf trail concept would be needed to get people to come to Alabama from long distances and to spend ample time in the state. To sustain play on the courses, we would need them in our more populated areas. But a golf trail concept dictated that we have sites within a short drive of each other. This meant building some courses in the more rural scenic areas to prevent long driving

times and provide a connection for all of the sites.

I decided not to do 18-hole complexes, but to do 54-hole or 36-hole complexes. I wanted each site to be different. I wanted to choose spectacular land and give the architect a clean slate to design the courses without regard to using the best property for real estate development along the golf holes. I wanted pristine golf to attract tourists from all over the nation and world.

I wanted the best golf course architect. Robert Trent Jones Sr. had a career of six decades designing golf courses and he had already worked on well over 400 courses around the United States and two dozen foreign countries by the time I approached him to help us. Jones quickly understood that I was serious about developing a series world-class golf courses as a golf trail and that I wanted the courses to be difficult and memorable and to compare with any other championship courses in the world with beauty and quality. He readily agreed.

Once we built the golf courses, we would need nice places for people to stay while playing our courses. I wanted accompanying hotels with facilities as nice as any in the world. I wanted them to have architectural beauty and attractiveness.

I wanted the local people at each site to have

ownership and for it to be “our” site and not RSA’s or SunBelt’s site. Because of this, I wanted each site on the golf trail to contribute resources such as land, access roads, and utilities. I wanted local participation from the beginning to build in this sense of proprietorship so the local community would be committed to helping the site succeed.

The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail

In the end, we developed the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail (the Trail)—11 golf sites with a total of 26 golf courses (468 holes) and eight resort hotels with a total of 2,065 rooms. The hotels have 20 restaurants and lounges and five of these hotels have world-class spas that provide complete spa treatments and salon services. The hotels use thousands of square feet of meeting space to host hundreds of national and international meetings each year.

We used the 47 television stations and 100 local newspapers owned by the RSA to promote the Trail. We have put information about the Trail in front of millions of people for many years. People

Dr. David G. Bronner has served as CEO of the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) since he joined the organization in 1973. He holds PhD and JD degrees and was assistant dean of the University of Alabama Law School before coming to RSA. He has guided RSA from \$500 million in assets to its current \$38 billion under management. He envisioned the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail and directed RSA’s investment in its golf complexes, hotels, and spas. He also financed the television stations and newspapers that have provided free advertising for Alabama, helping tourism spending in Alabama increase by almost \$9 billion a year.

wanted to come to Alabama because they heard of it through our promotional efforts.

The courses on the Trail are as nice as any in the world. Robert Trent Jones Sr. called the Trail his biggest accomplishment. Bobby Vaughan and Roger Rulewich deserve the most credit for the construction of the golf courses on the Trail.

Our hotels compare favorably to hotels anywhere in the world. Our hotel at Ross Bridge is modeled after the hotel in Banff Springs in the Canadian Rockies and our hotel in the Shoals is similar to the one at Lake Louise in Canada. Our Grand Hotel and our Battle House Hotel are examples of great old historical hotels that we have restored to their original grandeur. Our Renaissance hotel in Montgomery, modeled after the Plaza in New York City, is a state-of-the-art modern property with an adjoining performing arts center that is as nice as any theatre on Broadway.

The service at our hotels has produced many awards. The 2014 guest satisfaction surveys at Marriott and Renaissance hotels in North America rated four of our hotels in the top five of their 448 full-service hotels. The Renaissance Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa was named the number one Marriott or Renaissance hotel in North America for golf satisfaction. The Auburn/Opelika Marriott Hotel and Conference Center at Grand National finished second for golf. The Marriott in Prattville at Capitol Hill finished fourth and the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort in Point Clear finished fifth for golf experience.

Mobile’s Battle House Renaissance Hotel & Spa has been named one of the “Top 500 Hotels in the World” for 2015 by *Travel + Leisure* magazine. The Battle House’s overall score ranked higher than all these famous hotels: Beverly Wilshire, Ritz-Carlton Fort Lauderdale, Disney’s Polynesian Resort,

JW Marriott Marquis Miami, InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta, Ritz-Carlton Lodge Reynolds Plantation, Ko'a Kea Hotel & Resort in Hawaii, Four Seasons St. Louis, ARIA in Las Vegas, Ritz-Carlton New York Battery Park, St. Regis Houston, and Four Seasons Resort Dallas. The internationally renowned travel publication called the Battle House a "beaux-arts landmark in the city's historic downtown," blending "old-world grandeur with modern amenities, including a new 10,000-square-foot spa." The magazine's "insider tip" also encourages patrons to "order the seared salmon salad under the Trellis Room's restored stained-glass cathedral ceiling." The Battle House is the only Alabama hotel on the 2015 list.

The Trail hosts LPGA events annually at Magnolia Grove and Capitol Hill. The Trail hosted its first PGA event in July 2015. The Barbasol Championship was the first PGA tournament in Alabama since 1990. It was played at the Lakes Course at Grand National in Opelika with a four-year contract. The tournament was broadcast on television for four days to more than 110 countries. This tournament was included in the FedExCup competition with 300 points awarded to the winner.

The Trail has given Alabama recreational and hospitality amenities comparable to anywhere in the world. The retirement opportunities in Alabama have become as attractive as at any place in the nation.

The RSA hotels on the Trail helped to revitalize downtowns in Montgomery and Mobile. Alabama now has cities that can compete favorably for large conferences and conventions. The meetings of these large groups introduce to Alabama tourists who might never have visited without such attractive accommodations.

We are now finished with developing golf

courses for the Trail in Alabama. I do not think the Trail with its golf courses and hotels will be duplicated because nobody will want to risk the money. It has given Alabama something not found in any other state.

The Trail gave Alabama a tool for recruiting industry and enhancing the image of the state. The relationships built in the local areas helped us all work together to bring industry, to construct and remodel buildings, and to erect housing. These relationships have produced a tremendous economic benefit for Alabama.

I have worked on many investments and economic development projects during my four decades as CEO of the RSA. The Trail hotels, golf courses, and ancillary development compose the project of which I am the most proud.

The Trail's History and Impact

This book is worthy of the history it recounts. I am delighted to have such a great book on the story of the Trail. This book is a testament to all the people who worked so hard on the Trail. This book does a marvelous job of presenting the story of the Trail, including all 11 golf sites and 8 hotels. It documents all the work done by the many people that have helped to develop and operate the Trail.

It is the reference book about the Trail. It could be considered the encyclopedia of the Trail. It could be used in teaching business law, finance, and political science.

When you read further into *The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail: Its History and Impact*, you will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of this mammoth project that has greatly impacted the history and economy of Alabama over the last 25 years. The history and impact of the Trail as ex-

plicated in this book will enhance the experience of the visitors as they visit our golf courses and hotels.

The Author

Nobody is better prepared than Dr. Mark Fagan to write the history and impact of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. He saw something nobody else saw with his vision for attracting retirees for economic development. His research on the economic impact of retirees contributed significantly to the concept of developing the Trail as a strategy for economic development in Alabama. He cared enough about Alabama to work hard to help the Trail become a reality.

Fagan has developed a national reputation for his work on retiree migration and retirement areas. He first worked with the older guys who were the former experts and learned from them. Eventually, he became “the guy.”

Fagan provided great assistance through the years for the development of the Trail. He did the projected economic impact studies for many of the sites on the Trail. These studies were used to gain approval from the necessary parties. These studies were also used to justify the Trail as a component of the tourism and retirement industry which allowed for the use of state money to construct ac-

cess roads to some of the clubhouses on the Trail.

He met with state and local officials to gain their support for sites on the Trail. He recruited developers of retirement resorts to sites on the Trail. He wrote articles and made presentations about the Trail. Fagan directly helped with the negotiations for the Trail sites at Silver Lakes and the Shoals. He was intensely involved with the negotiations for the proposed course at Orange Beach that was not built due to a lawsuit over the desired land. He worked hard for four years during the resulting legal battle.

Dr. Fagan has produced many academic documents and written several articles on the Trail. For this book, he reviewed all of RSA's Trail-related legal documents and photos. He interviewed the developers that gave the land for the sites on the Trail. He interviewed many of the politicians who were involved in making the official decisions regarding aspects of sites on the Trail. He interviewed people working for RSA, SunBelt Golf, and PCH. He interviewed people that had contracts for working to construct the golf courses and hotels on the Trail.

Dr. Fagan was from the beginning and remains an articulate and influential champion for the Trail. We are fortunate to have his additional contribution in this book to record the history of the Trail's development so that it can be better understood for generations to come.

Preface

Why This Book?

The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail (the Trail) is a unique economically targeted investment of a pension plan for public teachers and state employees—the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA). The investment produced a public/private partnership for economic development and for diversification of the pension fund in addition to a return on its investment. It was designed to create jobs and tax revenue by enhancing image and quality of life for various forms of economic development (tourism, manufacturing, and retirement).

The development was led by RSA's maverick Chief Executive Officer Dr. David G. Bronner, who initially took criticism about the project but perhaps ended up doing more for the state's economic well-being than anyone in recent history. According to Bronner, "Ideas without money remain ideas." Bronner contributed the vision, leadership, dedication, and management expertise to actualize this project. RSA provided the money. This effort was revolutionary and will positively impact RSA and the state of Alabama for many years to come.

Robert Trent Jones Sr. was selected as the golf course architect because of his 60 years of professional experience. Jones has designed hundreds of golf courses around the world in every time zone. The sun always shines on at least one of his courses, which means golfers are playing on his courses 24 hours per day, seven days a week.

The mammoth Trail project has been compared in complexity to the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge. More dirt was moved in its construction than in the building of the Panama Canal.

The Trail is the world's largest collection of golf courses constructed as part of one project. To start at the Shoals in northwest Alabama and wind southward through the state visiting each of the 11 sites, ending up at Magnolia Grove in Mobile, would be a 760-mile trip. The Trail golf courses cover 5,700 acres of variable terrain that includes mountains, plains, lakes, rivers, and coastal wetlands, totaling more than 100 miles of golf. An ambitious golfer could play 36 holes per day for 13 days without playing the same hole twice. The collective amenities include more than 540,000 square feet of clubhouse and building space, 40 lakes, 11 parking lots, 40,000 sprinkler heads, and 120 miles of concrete cart paths.

The Trail includes 8 Marriott/Renaissance Hotels (with a collective 1,898 rooms, 166 suites, 326,000 square feet of meeting space, and 20 restaurants and lounges), and 5 world-class spas (with a collective 57,000 square feet and 38 treatment rooms) providing complete spa treatments and salon services. These hotels host some 2,500 national and international meetings each year. There are 3,133 direct employees on the Trail (1,003 for golf, 2,000 for hotels, and 130 for spas).

These hotels represent six of the eight Four

Diamond Hotels in Alabama, with three offering resort-style amenities in addition to typical full-service hotel amenities. Each RSA hotel represents the “best in class” in its respective market.

Additional commercial and residential development surrounds the Trail sites. Six of the Trail sites have substantial private housing, two have planned residential communities currently under development, and the other three sites have housing developing nearby. Approximately 8,000 houses have been built on access roads to the golf complexes or on property directly adjacent. Private hotels, restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, and other retail outlets have developed around the Trail sites.

This collective development has created jobs in banking, construction, real estate, insurance, retail, recreation, and health care. New tax revenue generated from the development includes ad valorem, lodging, sales and use, income, utilities, fuel, tobacco, and liquor.

The Trail has evolved into an international tourist attraction. The 10-millionth round of golf was played on October 23, 2013. Golfers have come from every state and many foreign countries to play the Trail.

In the 25 years since this mother of all golf trails was conceived and its development launched, golf trails of some form have started in 28 states and Canada. However, only one state actually built new courses as a “Trail.” The other golf trails are marketing programs for preexisting courses. None of the states constructed hotels in conjunction with their golf trails.

Since the Trail opened, tourism spending in Alabama has increased from \$3 billion per year in 1990 to \$11.8 billion per year in 2014. The Trail has averaged over 500,000 rounds of golf per year since

1993, with half of the rounds played by out-of-state golfers. Some 170,000 people in Alabama are now employed in the hospitality and tourism industry. The Trail is the only substantial tourism attraction to be developed in Alabama during that period.

RSA has invested almost \$3 billion in media companies, including Raycom Media (47 TV stations in 37 markets and 18 states, covering 12.7 percent of U.S. households); Community Newspaper Holdings (niche publications, newspapers, and websites serving more than 150 communities in 24 states); and Magic Media (the seventh largest outdoor advertising company in the U.S. with 13,000 displays and billboards across the nation). As a result of this investment, by 2015 Alabama had received approximately \$1 billion in free publicity in the form of television ads, radio ads, newspaper ads, and lighted billboards for promoting tourism in Alabama.

SunBelt Golf, which manages the Trail for RSA, has spent millions of dollars marketing the Trail worldwide and the Trail has received thousands of positive stories in newspapers and magazines around the world. Professional golf tournaments on the Trail with players from over 25 countries have resulted in more than 200 hours of worldwide television coverage of sites on the Trail and Alabama.

The Trail has received numerous media awards and high rankings in the tourism industry for quality of products and services. Over 300 signs have been placed on Alabama highways and interstate highways with directions to complexes on the Trail.

The Trail has contributed to an increase in the number of retirees residing in Alabama. Retirees have stayed in Alabama and kept their income and assets in Alabama. Retirees have relocated to Alabama and transferred their income and assets to Alabama. These retirees are full-time tourists

and their continued spending contributes to the economic stability of Alabama.

The Trail has helped to grow, diversify, and stabilize Alabama's economy. It has also enhanced the image of Alabama, which has brought more outsiders to the state and contributed to industrial and commercial expansion.

Development of golf courses, hotels, and spas on the Trail along with the ancillary residential and commercial development coupled with the unprecedented promotion of Alabama through the RSA media companies and resulting free publicity have combined into one of the most significant historical events in Alabama in the last 100 years. The economic impact in communities with sites on the Trail as well as the statewide economic impact on the tourism industry in Alabama is unprecedented.

Information in This Book

This book is written as a narrative from my perspective. I worked on various aspects of the Trail and lived the experience of closely watching it develop.

This book documents the Trail with specific information about the development process at each of its sites. The Trail's story has been told piecemeal over the years in newspapers, magazines, television stories, marketing literature, media advertisements, newsletters, and annual reports, but this is the first book to document the development comprehensively.

Information is presented on my economic development research as a prelude to the development of the Trail. RSA and its investments are explained including the events leading up to RSA's investment in the Trail. Financial information about the construction of the Trail is included as well as the major parties involved in its development.

Detailed information about the development process at each site includes the political process toward the final agreement at each site. Finally, specific information on the economic impact and image enhancement of the Trail is delineated.

Each site has a history of its own and was a unique blend of public-private partnerships that demonstrated participatory planning for community development. Information on the chronological development at each site includes the politicians involved in the development; workers involved during construction; development of the hotels, spas, and housing; and the impact of hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. Pre-construction photos, early-stage construction photos, and photos of politicians at closing ceremonies are used to illustrate the historical development of the Trail.

My Background for Working on the Trail

I am Department Head Emeritus for Sociology and Social Work and Professor Emeritus at Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama, where I worked from 1981 to 2014. I received my doctorate in Social Policy, Planning, and Administration with a doctoral minor in Human Resources Management from the University of Alabama in 1981. My primary focus for doctoral education was in planned and naturally occurring community development.

I was most interested in the older population as a client group. I had developed an interest in alternatives to long-term care in the late 1970s and had begun researching services to help people remain in their homes longer in their life instead of spending the end of their lives in nursing homes.

I researched alternatives to skilled nursing facilities and these included congregate housing facilities,

assisted living facilities, attended living facilities, condominiums with services, in-home services, and natural support systems. I was teaching a course on human development through the stages of the life cycle and really liked learning about active adults in older age.

My major research has been on the economic impact of retirees and how they can be attracted. I am the author of *Retirement Development: A How-To Guidebook*. Most of my 111 publications and technical writings (see Appendix) since 1981 have focused on the economic impact of retirees, organizing for retiree attraction efforts, community assessment, marketing communities to potential retirees, and the mature market.

My undergraduate minor was in economics and I had retained my interest in economic activity. I began to merge my interest in long-term care with my interest in economics and combined those with my interest in community development which was the focus of my doctoral studies in social work with a macro view of social services.

The Center for Economic Development at JSU, under the leadership of Pat Shaddix, the director, and Dr. William Loftin, dean of the College of Commerce and Business, received some grant money to form a research team to assist counties in northeast Alabama with economic development in early 1985. Northeast Alabama consisted of primarily rural counties with small towns and abundant natural resources but limited manufacturing capacity.

My colleague, Dr. Adrian Aveni, a sociologist, and I agreed to work together on the economic development opinion survey as a part of the research team. Dr. Ted Klimasewski, a geographer, was the team leader, and we were joined by Dr. Tom Baucom and Dr. Howard Johnson from geography, Dr. Wil-

liam Fielding from finance, and Dr. Harry Holstein from archaeology.

We called the study that we produced for each county/municipality an “economic best-fit analysis” in which we sought to determine their best strategy for economic development based on their infrastructure, resources, and markets. I worked with these researchers to produce 13 different reports on economic development from 1985 to 1989.

We determined that these counties/municipalities did not have the capacity to compete in what we called “smokestack chasing” or the “silicon chip sweepstakes.” Many of these entities could not realistically compete with the other 30,000 communities nationwide for the 300 plants that were relocating each year. We also discovered that they had limited resources for promoting their areas for economic development. They did not have the necessary infrastructure (labor, manufacturing buildings, roads, water and sewer capacity, resources, markets, etc.) to compete in the manufacturing industry.

However, we determined that they did have what tourists and retirees wanted: moderate climate, lower crime rates, lower living costs, abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities, and friendly people. Their resources were freshwater lakes, mountains, forests, and safe communities. We began suggesting the “RITE” Strategy for Economic Development (see “Introduction”), of which retirees are a key element. “RITE” became our mantra for creating jobs in rural areas.

I was the major contributor for the retirement component of this strategy. I started researching retiree migration and retirees’ economic impact in 1986. My task then became to determine the economic impact of tourists and retirees on a specific area. I began reviewing the literature and found very little outside of demographic information on retiree

migration. I compiled a manual that presented this literature review in 1988.

I found a dearth of primary data on the actual economic impact of retirees. One model showed what impact 100 new industrial jobs would have on a community. I began collecting primary data through surveys of in-migrant retirees to selected communities in Alabama. I then duplicated the industrial-jobs model for retirees. We started receiving national recognition from the news media for our research efforts and the policy position that certain rural communities could benefit economically from bringing in affluent retirees to their community.

My Involvement with the Trail

The time I have spent studying, working, enjoying, and writing about the Trail has enriched my life. The Trail provided a conduit for one of my main professional research interests. Writing and compiling the information for this book has been the culmination of the research and service components of my professional career in tourism development, retirement migration, and non-manufacturing economic development strategies.

JSU released me half-time from 1988 to 1992 to serve with the Alabama Advantage for Retirees Program at the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs as a program developer to attract retirees for economic development. We provided technical assistance to 94 local communities and facilitated the communication of inquirers with local people who could provide the necessary information about retirement in their area. Local areas organized their efforts to respond to those inquirers; this is really where the program is being implemented.

I met Dr. Bronner through my work with this state program when we sought his assistance for financing some large planned retirement communities in Alabama. I continued to research retirement places throughout the 1990s. I researched large planned retirement communities and continued to work with the media on stories about retirees and retirement areas. It is gratifying that Dr. Bronner cites my work on the economic impact of retirees as a contribution toward the conceptualization of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail.

I was intimately involved in the negotiations for Silver Lakes, the Shoals, and the unbuilt course at Orange Beach (with its four-year lawsuit). I also analyzed projected economic impact for the Silver Lakes, Capitol Hill, Cambrian Ridge, and the Shoals sites and the unbuilt Orange Beach site. I provided the justification for four sites (Cambrian Ridge, Silver Lakes, Highland Oaks, and Magnolia Grove) on the Trail as components of the tourism and retirement industry for road-building funding by the Alabama Industrial Access Road Authority. I assisted with the housing components around Grand National, Silver Lakes, and Lakewood. I have written 18 articles about the Trail that were published in some form.

From 1991 to the present, I followed the construction progress of each golf course and hotel on the Trail through the weekly news clippings and monthly newsletters provided to me by RSA. I visited each golf course and hotel during their construction. I have played all 468 golf holes on the Trail. I have stayed at all of the RSA hotels, eaten at all of the restaurants, and visited all of the spas. I am probably the world's biggest fan of the Trail.



The late Bill Stephens, right, with Fagan, left, and Rick Glover at Grand National in 2006.

Acknowledgments

Dr. David Bronner, chief executive officer at RSA, shared with me his 64 books of press clippings on RSA and the Trail. He gave me constant support for this project. He gave me contact information on major players involved with the Trail. He was always willing to discuss this project and what it has meant for Alabama. He wrote the foreword for this book. More importantly, he shared his vision of the Trail with me in 1990 and worked with me in many ways throughout the last 25 years as the Trail rolled out. He inspired me with his hard work and dedication to RSA and Alabama. This book is a tribute to his accomplishments; there would be no Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail without his leadership.

William (Bill) Stephens served RSA for 30 years in different capacities including chief of legal and deputy director. We worked on the legal aspects together for four years during the Orange Beach lawsuit and appeal. He provided access to all of his

legal documents regarding the Trail. He provided guidance during my early research for this book. He discussed the developmental history at each site on the Trail with me. He discussed the major players and their roles. We also discussed the investment policies and strategies of RSA through the years. He was a good friend who always had time to listen to my concerns. Bill Stephens passed away in December 2013. He is sorely missed. We had discussions about this book project up until a few days before he died. He wanted to see this book completed for the historical significance.

Heather Haun, confidential executive assistant to Dr. Bronner, has assisted me with my communications with Dr. Bronner for many years. She has informed me of events, set up meetings for me, and given me contact information. She was always available to assist me with my research process for this book and to give me support when needed.

Bobby Vaughan and I met in 1991 during negotiations for Silver Lakes. We shared information about the Trail during the years of the initial development of the Trail. We spent time together talking about the Trail when we would see one another at special events on the Trail. He discussed with me, through the years, various aspects about the Trail and its operations. He provided me with information about the early years of the construction of the Trail.

William (Bill) Kelly, director of ERS at RSA, discussed legal aspects with me for this project. I met Bill when he joined the legal staff at RSA and he provided support to me during the end of the lawsuit at Orange Beach in 1996. He provided information to me about the investment policies of RSA and gave me supportive information for this project.

Hunter Harrell, director of private placement at RSA, worked with me at critical times during negotiations for Silver Lakes, the Shoals, and Orange

Beach. She provided inducement agreements for each of the deals for the golf complexes on the Trail. She assisted me in getting any documents I needed for the accuracy of my information for this book.

Mike Pegues, director of communication at RSA, and I discussed the historical development of the Trail on many occasions. Mike also provided the aerial photos of the Trail sites. He provided a timeline of significant events at RSA which was helpful to me during my research for this project. He worked with me on the summary impact articles on the various sites on the Trail for the monthly *RSA Advisor*.

Leura Canary, director of legal at RSA and Jo Moore, assistant legal counsel at RSA, discussed the legal aspects of the development of the Trail with me.

Don Yancey, RSA deputy director, discussed my book on the Trail and shared stories with me about his experiences through the years with the major players involved. He took time to listen to my concerns and offer suggestions as to how I could best get this project completed.

Marc Green, chief investment officer at RSA, was very helpful to me during our discussions about the economic impact of the Trail.

Tisha Woodham and Emily Johnson, executive assistants to Dr. Bronner, copied clippings of articles, mailed me literature for RSA, and were always helpful with any request I presented for this book.

Joseph Toole, director of real estate at RSA and Steve Timms, director of construction and development at RSA Real Estate, discussed with me the technical details of construction and provided information and pictures of real estate on the Trail.

Deborah Kirk, creative services in Communications at RSA, provided many excellent photos of the Trail and RSA investments.

Roger Rulewich, who did most of the design work for the golf holes on the Trail, provided slides on construction for Silver Lakes, Oxmoor Valley, Cambrian Ridge, Hampton Cove, Grand National, Highland Oaks, Capitol Hill, and Magnolia Grove. He discussed with me the design and construction process of the golf complexes on the Trail. He was very supportive of my efforts to do this project.

Niall Fraser, director of golf at the Lakewood Club, discussed the entire construction process for the Trail with me. I met him in 1992 when he came to work on Silver Lakes. He helped to get me started playing golf. He invited me to Hampton Cove for a tour while it was under construction. He was very supportive of my efforts to do this project. He provided input for the writing of this book, contact information and introductions to Roger Rulewich, Ben Turner, and Barb Reed, and feedback during the writing of this book.

Barbara Thomas, vice president for communica-



Roger Rulewich and Fagan at Grand National in 2013.



Bobby Vaughan, Robert Trent Jones Sr., and Fagan at Silver Lakes in 1992.

tions at SunBelt Golf, worked with me through the years. We discussed marketing ideas for the Trail and especially early strategies for using the Internet. She also discussed my idea to do this book and gave me her suggestions.

John Cannon, president of SunBelt Golf, invited me to the annual meeting of the Robert Trent Jones Society at Grand National in October 2013, where I was able to hear presentations by Bobby Vaughan, Roger Rulewich, and Niall Fraser about the early days of construction of the Trail. John has discussed the Trail with me many times through the years.

Steve Williams, vice president at SunBelt Golf, discussed various aspects of the Trail with me and provided information on people from out of state playing golf on the Trail.

Bruce Hodges of Vision Insurance has discussed with me many aspects about the Trail through the years. He shared his knowledge about the golf

complexes, RSA hotels, and the insurance for this real estate.

Jim Buckalew, chairman of PCH Hotels & Resorts, provided great direction and strong support during my writing of the book.

Tony Davis, CEO of PCH Hotels & Resorts, reviewed the book with me and provided missing information. He was very helpful and supportive of this project.

Pam Smith, statistician at the Alabama Tourism Department, provided annual reports on tourism spending and lodging taxes in Alabama. These historical reports dated from 1990 to 2014.

Ron Blount has provided me with much information through the years about RSA's buildings. He toured me through the buildings he completed for RSA in Mobile and helped me get historical photos of those buildings.

Barb Reed provided pictures of several of the golf courses on the Trail when they were under construction.

I greatly appreciate the direction and support of Randall Williams, Suzanne La Rosa, Brian Seidman, McCormick Williams, Brandie Johnson, Kimberly Reid, Lisa Harrison, and Lisa Emerson at NewSouth Books for their help in completing and publishing this book. They showed great passion, diligence, and patience throughout the entire process.

I want to thank Debby Jones, Robbie Medders, David Copeland, and Willard Butterworth of JSU for their assistance with my research activities through the years. I also want to thank the late Dr. Harold J. McGee, Dr. Rebecca Turner, Dean J. E. Wade, Donna Smith, Dr. David Watts, and Dr. William Meehan of JSU for their support of my release time from JSU to assist ADECA and RSA with work on attracting retirees to Alabama.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Pam, and our

children, Christopher and Rachel, for bearing with me while I was researching and working on the Trail. They heard more about this subject than they cared to know but were always supportive of my work. Pam was extremely helpful to me in many ways during the writing of this book.

Additional Sources

In addition to the assistance of all those named above, specific chapters of this book drew on additional documents, photographs, interviews, and articles that I have listed here. I express my appreciation to all the additional persons named for their assistance.

CHAPTER 4—OXMOOR VALLEY

I took immediate notice of RSA's announcement of interest in developing a golf complex in Jefferson County because RSA was looking to increase economic development by increasing the number of tourists and retirees in the area near a proposed golf complex. This was in keeping with my previous seven years of research on retirement development and the positive economic impact of retirees on an area. I toured the Oxmoor Valley property on August 21, 1991, with Tom Howard, then USX Real Estate's Alabama regional manager. This was during the early stages of construction. Tom had represented US Steel in the land donation to SunBelt Golf for Oxmoor Valley. He explained to me the terms of the agreement and his plans for continued development around the golf complex. I followed the progress of the courses until they were completed in 1992.

He met with me in December 2013 and discussed the history of the development at Oxmoor Valley and Ross Bridge. He provided information about some of the major players for these developments as well as contact information. He provided

photographs of the formal announcement for Oxmoor Valley.

In December 2013, I also interviewed former Hoover mayor Tony Petelos, then the county manager for Jefferson County, and Anthony Land, director of golf at Oxmoor Valley. By email, Virginia Williams answered questions about City of Birmingham involvement. I also drew on articles in the *Birmingham News* by Charlie Ingram, Andrew Kilpatrick, and Wanda Rutherford.

CHAPTER 5—MAGNOLIA GROVE

I interviewed former Mobile Mayor Mike Dow on the process of gaining approval for Magnolia Grove and about the RSA hotels and office buildings in Mobile. I also talked with Ron Blount and Harold Crenshaw "Pokey" Miller Jr. in early 2014. They supplied me with useful information about the development of the RSA golf complex, hotels, and office buildings in Mobile. Miller, of Daphne, Alabama, is the grandson of Robert Hunter, considered the "father of Mobile golf."

The *RSA Annual Report* for 2007, as well as *The Trail Guide* of 2014 published by SunBelt Golf, featured the RSA Battle House Tower and Battle House Hotel.

Writers for the *Mobile Press-Register* or *Mobile Register*, Kathy Jumper, Gareth Clary, Debbie Breland, Jerald Hyche, Mark Holan, Garry Mitchell, Renee Busby, Russ Henderson, Dan Murtaugh, Lee Davidson, Paul Cloos, Rhoda Pickett, and Andrea James, wrote articles on Magnolia Grove and the Battle House. Jennifer Eckman wrote an article about the Battle House Hotel for *Business Alabama Monthly*. Information from these articles was used to support my understanding of the events described in this chapter.

In addition, my own involvement with Magnolia Grove was extensive, going back to the first

discussions between RSA and its partners for this development and continuing to the present day.

I first visited Magnolia Grove in 1992 when I helped Bronner in the efforts to secure a golf course site for the Trail in Orange Beach. We were working with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to lease property from Gulf State Park for a 54-hole golf complex.

Commissioner James Martin, Bobby Vaughan, and I toured Magnolia Grove so Martin could see firsthand the quality of the golf complexes being developed by RSA and SunBelt Golf. The coastal environment at Magnolia Grove was very similar to the coastal environment of the proposed site in Orange Beach. The golf complex was still under construction at the time of our tour.

My second involvement with Magnolia Grove was on July 1, 1994, when I worked with Sherman Shores of the Alabama Development Office to secure funding from the Alabama Industrial Access Road Authority for a new access road off U.S. Highway 98. I provided the projected economic impact of the golf complex for justification as a tourism industry site which would qualify the site for funding of the new access road.

This road was presented as improving the efforts for development of the additional acres adjacent to the golf complex. The new access road would decrease the distance to the golf complex from I-65 and I-10 by 3–4 miles potentially increasing play due to easier and quicker access.

Mainly, the new road would allow the golf complex to comply with the access road requirements of the PGA, LPGA, Senior PGA, and other organizations for their golf tournament sites. Compliant access roads would increase the possibility of hosting nationally and internationally televised golf tournaments. The funding request was approved.

Along with Ray Collins, Bronner and Harry Childers began an annual golf tournament at Magnolia Grove in 1994 to raise funds for the Little Sisters of the Poor in Mobile. These Sisters operate a facility of 92 residents, all over 60 years of age and without the financial means to maintain independence in the community. The Little Sisters live at the home, sharing their entire lives with the residents. Their Sacred Heart Residence on McGill Avenue has provided service since 1901.

The services include medical and nursing care; pastoral services, daily Mass and rosary, and other ecumenical worship; a daily activities program; beauty and barber shops; physical therapy; restorative therapy; occupational therapy; and speech therapy. Residents also have access to landscaped grounds and courtyards.

I attended my first tournament for the Little Sisters of the Poor in 1996 and have missed only one since. I met many of Bronner's friends and associates at this event each year. In 1998 Magnolia Grove began hosting a formal dinner on the evening of the event, a tradition that continues today. This function was held at the end of March each year and became one of my favorite times of the year.

Regular supporters and attendees included Dr. Wally Hester, Bruce Hodges, George Wakefield, Rod Goode, Bob Greenman, Dan Ustain, Dr. Joe Hill, Ron Blount, Ken Blankenship, Leigh Pegues, Tony Baggiano, John Wilkerson, Frank Faulkenburg, Richard Kennamer, Wayland Blake, Frank Bruce, George Landegger, Dr. Jim Benefield, Charles Jinright, Tom Dickinson, Charles Snider, Dave Stone, Grady Meyers, Buck Newman, Glen Pringle, and Marc Green. This event became a regular annual meeting for those supporting this organization.

In the early years, we spent the night following the tournament at motels off I-65. We began stay-

ing at the Adam's Mark Hotel in 2005 following the purchase by RSA. We stayed there until 2008 when the Renaissance Battle House Hotel opened. We have been staying there since 2008, hosting the dinner for the Little Sisters in the Crystal Ballroom.

Ron Blount, who directed the refurbishment of the RSA Hotels in Mobile, gave us an initial tour of the property in 2007 before it was even completed

CHAPTER 6—HAMPTON COVE

John Hays toured me through the development at Hampton Cove in 1991 during its construction. He provided pictures and information during my research for this book. I also interviewed him in 2013, along with Connie Graham, who works in demographics for the City of Huntsville, and Rhonda Miskelley of the Hampton Cove Owners Association. Steve Mack, director of golf at Hampton Cove, was also consulted for this chapter.

Details about the road extension and other aspects of the development appeared in stories in the *Huntsville Times* by Alan Clemons, Marian Accardi, Jill Rhodes, Michael Mercer, Al Bureson, Lee Green, and Mike Pauldan.

CHAPTER 7—GRAND NATIONAL

I reviewed early 1990s newspaper articles by Perry Ballard, Joe Smedley, and Paul Cox and one by Jacqueline Kochak in 2000 in the *Opelika-Auburn News*.

Bobby Freeman, former mayor of Opelika, had toured me around the property at Grand National during construction in 1991. I spoke with him again in February 2014. He discussed this project with me and directed me to people that could help me with information.

I also met with former Opelika Mayor Barbara Patton. Mayor Gary Fuller and his staff were very helpful in providing information: his assistant, Barbara Arrington, Planning Director Jerry Kelley,

and Jan Gunter of community relations.

Henry Stern, retired chamber leader and local historian, was helpful in locating information and pictures. Paul Conner, former Auburn University assistant athletic director, provided pictures of the early days of Grand National including pictures of Robert Trent Jones Sr. at the site. Conner was instrumental in securing the site for the golf complex and worked at the site during the construction of the facility.

John Wild of the Auburn-Opelika Tourism Bureau provided information for the analysis of the economic impact of Grand National. Also, Charlie Duggan, city manager, and David Dorton, public affairs for the City of Auburn, provided helpful information about economic activity in Auburn since the opening of Grand National. Lolly Steiner of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce was also helpful.

Joseph Toole and Steve Timms of RSA provided excellent information about National Village as did Don Conner, Jim Folmar, and Amy Sparks at the sales office. Scott Gronberg, director of golf at Grand National, gave good information about the golf complex and the golfers.

CHAPTER 8—HIGHLAND OAKS

Annamarie S. Martin wrote a nice article about Dothan in the August 1991 issue of *Business Alabama Monthly*. Bill Perkins and Diane Alpeter wrote articles about Highland Oaks for the *Dothan Eagle*. Ken Rogers wrote an article about Highland Oaks for *eprisenow.com* that ran in 2012. These articles were reviewed for this chapter.

Hugh Wheelless Jr., who donated to RSA the land in Dothan for Highland Oaks, met with me and discussed the history of the golf complex and housing development. He provided pictures of the airstrip on the property and aerial photos of the property. He toured me all around the property and shared

historical stories about the development with me.

Wheelless Airport occupied the property that is now developed as the Highland Oaks golf complex in Dothan. Hugh Wheelless Sr. took up flying and during World War II worked in Decatur, as a civilian flight instructor. He later opened Dothan Aviation Corporation and began commercial services with charter flights and crop dusting. He was also a stunt pilot and entertained at air shows.

He managed the Dothan City Airport from 1947 to 1965 before opening Wheelless Airport. This private airport became a public landing site for aviators with an instrument approach and it housed a large collection of World War II bombers. Wheelless Airport had a single 3,500-foot paved runway. Taxiways led to several hangars on the north and south side of the runway. The office of Dothan Aviation was in a building on the northeast corner of the field.

Hugh Wheelless Sr. died in 1970 and his aviation company closed in 1977. All of the former airport buildings and hangars have been removed. The eastern portion of the former airport was covered with new apartments. The ninth fairway of the Highlands Nine was previously the Number Two Five runway.

CHAPTER 9—CAMBRIAN RIDGE

In December 2013, I met with Ernie Smith, former Greenville councilman (1984–1988) and mayor (1988–2000). We discussed the major events during the negotiations and construction of Cambrian Ridge. I have known Mayor Smith since 1993 when I helped Greenville get funding for the access road to Cambrian Ridge.

Dexter McLendon, mayor of Greenville since 2000 and a city councilman 1998–2000, met with me in January 2014 to discuss the early stages of development of Cambrian Ridge. He provided pictures and information about the early days at Cambrian

Ridge. He has spent a great deal of time and effort since 1991 in securing and promoting Cambrian Ridge. He has been very supportive of the Trail in general and shared his positive experiences from Cambrian Ridge with other sites such as Capitol Hill and the Shoals during their development.

Mayor McLendon's assistant, Karen Fail, was helpful to me during my research process on Cambrian Ridge. The Greenville city clerk, Sue Arnold, was also very helpful in sending documents to me.

Gregg Fuller, who worked with the *Greenville Advocate* during the early days of the golf complex, provided historical photos of Cambrian Ridge. David Hutchison provided me with information on economic development in Greenville since the construction of Cambrian Ridge.

Judy Taylor, historian for Greenville, Francine Wasden, executive director of the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce, and Kevin Pearcey, director of the Greenville-Butler County Public Library, were helpful sources of historical information.

I also talked with Kenny Szuch, director of golf at Cambrian Ridge from 1993 to 1998. I became friends with Kenny during my visits in the mid-1990s to Cambrian Ridge to play in his annual tournament called "The Cavalry Charge." Specific information about this prestigious tournament is presented toward the end of this chapter.

The *Montgomery Advertiser* published some stories about the development of this golf complex during the early 1990s. The writers of these stories were: John Gerome, Debra Davis, Hunt Archibald, and Alvin Benn. These articles were reviewed for this chapter.

I also reviewed stories by Katie Taylor and Gregg Fuller in the *Greenville Advocate* about Cambrian Ridge in 1992.

CHAPTER 10—SILVER LAKES

Silver Lakes has been near and dear to my heart since 1991. I was intensely involved with the negotiations and efforts to build a site on the RTJ Golf Trail in the Calhoun County/Etowah County area. My role was to provide communication for Bronner and the leaders in the two counties and to serve as a facilitator for securing an agreement for the development.

I had worked with many communities around Alabama on the Alabama Program to Attract Retirees and had gotten to know Bronner of RSA during that process. I was involved in the early conception of the RTJ Golf Trail through my contribution that it was economically beneficial to attract retirees to an area. I was excited about how the RTJ Golf Trail could increase tourism in Alabama and was very excited to work on getting one of the Trail courses in our area.

July 1991, A. W. Bolt, chairman of Forward Calhoun County, an arm of the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, formed a task force to work with Bronner to find a site for a golf complex in Calhoun County. I served on this task force.

CHAPTER 11—CAPITOL HILL

In February 2014, I met with Jim Byard, the former mayor of Prattville. He was president of the Prattville city council during negotiations with RSA for Capitol Hill. In 2014, he was director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. We discussed the major events during the negotiations and construction of Capitol Hill.

Teresa Lee, executive assistant to Mayor Bill Gillespie Jr., was exceptionally helpful in providing information on Prattville. Joel Duke, city planner, provided data on the growth in Prattville since 1997. Patty VanderWal of the Prattville Area Chamber of Commerce and Jeremy Arthur also helped me

with information requests. Carol Thompson, in economic development for Millbrook, answered my requests with information on Millbrook.

The *Montgomery Advertiser* published some stories about the development of this golf complex and conference center and the Renaissance hotel in Montgomery during the 1990s and 2000s. The writers of these stories were: Jim Plott, Marty Roney, Richard Thompson, Nick Lackeos, Ken Rogers, Melissa Montealegre, Tiffany Ray, William F. West, David Irwin, Sebastian Kitchen, and Mike Sherman. The *Birmingham News* published an article on Capitol Hill in 1998 by Michael Sznajderman. *Business Alabama* magazine published an article on Prattville in 2008 by Lori Chandler Pruitt. *Montgomery Business Journal* published an article in March 2013 by David Zaslowski. These articles were reviewed for this chapter.

On November 17, 1997, I was quoted in an article by Mike Sherman in a *Montgomery Advertiser* article on the projected economic impact of the Capitol Hill complex. He interviewed me about the economic impact of retirees and what retirees were searching for in a retirement destination.

CHAPTER 12—THE LAKEWOOD CLUB

I wrote about Fairhope as a retirement destination in 1989 in *The Guide to Retirement in Alabama*, published by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs to attract retirees to Alabama. I wrote about Fairhope again in 1991 in the “Alabama Chapter” I wrote for Peter Dickinson for *Sunbelt Retirement: The Complete State-by-State Guide to Retiring in the South and West of the United States*.

The *Mobile Press-Register* has published stories about the Grand Hotel through the years. Writers for these stories were: George Talbot, Kathy Jumper, Garrett Clary, Virginia Bridges, Josh Bing, David

Holloway, Dan Murtaugh, Eddie Curran, Tim McDonald, and Connie East Cowan. Alan Hale Samry wrote a nice article about the Colony at the Grand in the *Fairhope Courier* on April 4, 2006. Roy Williams wrote an article on the Colony the *Birmingham News* on August 14, 2008.

Bill and Jennifer Mitchell provided great information about the development of Battles Trace at the Colony at the Grand in Point Clear.

Doug Roberts wrote “A History of Lakewood Golf Club at the Grand Hotel, Point Clear, AL,” the Lakewood Club, 2001. Doug grew up near Birmingham and moved to Fairhope as a young man, becoming night auditor at the Grand Hotel in 1947. He later became assistant manager, then managed the Lakewood Club from 1948 until his retirement in 1985. He died in 2003 at the age of 81.

I reviewed *Grand Traditions: Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Alabama*; Executive Editor, Michael Herzog, PCH Hotels and Resorts, Inc., 2009. Michael is director of food and beverage at the Grand Hotel.

I reviewed *The History of Baldwin County*, by Kay Nuzum, 3rd Edition, 1971, Eastern Shore Publishing Company, for general information about the hotels on the current Grand Hotel property. I also reviewed *Battles Wharf and Point Clear* by Florence and Richard Scott, self-published, 1971, for information about the Gunnison House which stood on the current hotel property.

I interviewed Bruce Hodges (Vision Insurance), Bruce Smith, Kristie Wilhite, Dirk Flad, Niall Fraser, Jim Geram, Jason Polk, Daniel Alldredge, Blair Bateman, Shannon Tieg, Kimberly Cappa, Terry Portemont, and Ela Evans, who are affiliated with PCH Hotels & Resorts. I also interviewed Will Newberry, Pokey Miller, George Bryant, Andrew Jackson, Dave Pruet, George Wilson, Stan Self, Eddie Bo Rogers, Bill Privett, Trey Fouche, Robert

Randall, John Pate, Doug Luce, Andy Williams, Sam Dixon, and John Racciatti, the radio man, who are members at the Lakewood Club. I interviewed Richard Pate about the history of the property for the Colony at the Grand. Lauren Jones, sales and marketing administrative assistant for the Grand, provided some historic photos of the hotel.

I was excited to begin reading of the early efforts in 2004–2006 by RSA and the Daniel Corporation to develop a residential community adjacent to the Grand Hotel and the Lakewood Club property. I made several trips in 2006 to 2010 to watch the construction and progress of this development.

In 2010, my wife and I decided to retire in Fairhope ourselves. I would complete 31 years of work at JSU in 2012. We purchased a condo in the Bayview II building in November 2010 and began slowly moving to Fairhope. We are so happy that we took my own advice about retiring in Fairhope. We truly love living on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. I spent 2010–14 getting to know the Fairhope area. I have played golf regularly at the Lakewood Club and have spoken with many club members about the early days at the Grand Hotel, the Lakewood Club, and the surrounding housing developments.

CHAPTER 13—THE SHOALS

I was interviewed several times during 2001 and 2002 by Florence *Times-Daily* reporters Mike Goens, Bernie Deliski, Russell Corey, Robert Palmer, and Dennis Sherrer, who wrote articles on the proposal and agreement for this development. Some of the information in this chapter is excerpted from these articles.

Simpson Russell and I met in 2002, and he got me involved in the negotiations for the project in the Shoals. I assisted him during the negotiation process and the early days of construction. He helped me with the projected economic impact study that I did

with the University of North Alabama to determine the feasibility of the Trail golf complex in the Shoals. He and I worked with Harvey Robbins on the projected economic impact of his proposed housing development adjacent to property he donated for the golf complex at the Shoals. He provided me with documents, information, and pictures when I researched the history of the development of the hotel, conference center, and golf complex.

During the 1990s I did some work on the Shoals' efforts to attract retirees to the area. I found the Shoals to have many desirable amenities. In 2000, the Shoals Chamber of Commerce launched such an endeavor funded by Florence, Sheffield, Muscle Shoals, the Realtors Association, and the Homebuilders Association. In early 2001 the Homebuilders Association donated \$8,000 for an area-wide effort.

CHAPTER 14—ROSS BRIDGE

In December 2013, I interviewed Tony Petelos, mayor of Hoover from 2004 to 2011. He currently serves as county manager for Jefferson County. I also interviewed Sheila (Trimm) Mickler, Hoover city councilwoman 1989–1992.

Barbara McCollum, mayor of Hoover 2000–2004, discussed the approval process for the development at Ross Bridge. She provided photographs of the early days of construction and contact information on those who could contribute information for my project.

I interviewed Jeff Boyd and Dorothy Tayloe of Daniel Corporation. Bobby Vaughan, Roger Rulewich, and Niall Fraser provided information about the golf course construction. Denise Channell-Roberson and Bob Reilly, from the mayor's office in Hoover, provided information about the development. I discussed the history of this development with Tom Howard, the now-retired regional manager for USS Realty.

Eric Velasco, Troy Goodman, Tiffany Ray, Kathy Seale, Dawn Kent, Michael Tomberlin, and Roy Williams wrote articles for the *Birmingham News* during the continued development and expansion of this project.

I received pictures of the golf course construction from Ben Turner of Phillips and Jordan. I was given pictures of the groundbreaking and other pictures around the deal closing from Barbara McCollum.

Sources of Photographs and Illustrations

Except as specified below, all photographs in the book are courtesy of the author and/or were taken by the author. It must be noted that although this book contains many photographs, it is not intended as a coffee-table type book of gorgeous landscape photos of the finished courses.

Such photos do exist and can be viewed at www.rtgolf.com and in the publications about the Trail produced by the Alabama Tourism Department and SunBelt Golf. But the purpose of this book was to document the development and economic impact of the RTJ Golf Trail. Thus I have included many photos of construction, of the people involved in the development, and of the sites of the golf complexes, even when some of the photos are not of the highest quality; they nonetheless document the history of the Trail and I am grateful to the people who scoured their archives to provide photos to me.

Unfortunately, many of the originals of photos taken for media stories during the development of the Trail have been discarded. Also, the development of the Trail occurred during the transition in photography from film cameras and negatives to digital cameras and scans. Photos of the project taken longer ago than seven to ten years were largely prior to the use of high-resolution digital

photography and even when they could be located they often could not be reproduced.

Note also that the map of the Trail golf courses and RSA hotels on page 40 and the site locator maps on the first pages of chapters 4–14 are from RSA. The chapter number icons are derived from hole markers on the Dogwood Course at the Lakewood Club.

Front matter: Pages ii and x, RSA;

Chapter 1: Pages 11, 18, RSA.

Chapter 2: Page 20, *Golf Journal*, letter from RSA; 27, 28, 36, Roger Rulewich (Rulewich).

Chapter 3: All images from RSA.

Chapter 4: Page 56, RSA; 58 and 60, Tom Howard; 61, 62, 63, Rulewich.

Chapter 5: Page 70, Mobile, Alabama City Museum; 71, 72, Rulewich; 73, White-Spinner Construction; 74, RSA; 76 top, Rulewich; 79, RSA; 81, RSA; 82, Jesco Construction; 84 top, White-Spinner Construction; 84 bottom, Mobile, Alabama City Museum; 85, RSA; 90, RSA.

Chapter 6: Page 92 top, John Hays; 92 bottom, Rulewich; 94–104, Rulewich.

Chapter 7: Page 112 top, *Opelika-Auburn News*; 112 bottom, Rulewich; 113 left, Rulewich; 113 right, Paul Conner; 114, Rulewich, 115, Paul Conner; 116 top, Paul Conner; 116 bottom 2, Rulewich; 117, *Auburn Bulletin*; 118 bottom, Rulewich; 128, Rulewich.

Chapter 8: Page 130, *Dothan Eagle*; 131, Hugh Wheelless Jr.; 132 top, Hugh Wheelless Jr.; 132 bot-

tom, 134, 135, 138, 139, Rulewich; 140, RSA.

Chapter 9: Page 143, RSA; 144, *Greenville Advocate*; 145 top, Greg Fuller; 145 bottom and 146 top, Rulewich; 147, Dexter McLendon; 148, Rulewich.

Chapter 10: Page 160 bottom, Rulewich; 164, Rulewich; 165 left, RSA; 165 right, Don Gibbs; 166, Rulewich.

Chapter 11: Page 182, Jim Byard; 183 top, Barb Reed; 183 bottom, Rulewich; 184, Barb Reed; 186 bottom, RSA; Rulewich; 187 top, Jesco Construction; 188, Jim Byard; 193, Jim Buckalew; 202, Rulewich.

Chapter 12: Page 205, Wade Hall Collection, University of Alabama Library; 206, The Marriott Grand Hotel; 207, 208, Jesco Construction; 209–211, RSA; 212, Doster Construction; 214, Barb Reed.

Chapter 13: Page 225, Simpson Russell; 226, Rulewich; 228 left, Ben Turner; 228 right, Simpson Russell; 228 bottom, Doster Construction; 229 left, Ben Turner, right, Simpson Russell, bottom, Doster Construction; 230, Ben Turner; 234, Doster Construction; 236, 237, Simpson Russell; 239, Ben Turner; 240, Simpson Russell; 242, Barb Reed; 245 top, Barb Reed; 254, 255, RSA.

Chapter 14: Page 258, Marji Ingram; 259, Charlie Tickle; 260, Barbara McCollum; 261, 262, Ben Turner; 263, RSA; 264 top, Barbara McCollum.

Chapter 15: Pages 272, 275 top, and 277, Jimmy Grantham; 275 bottom, RSA.

Chapter 16: All images captured off Google.