



# AUGUSTA MARRIOTT

AT THE CONVENTION CENTER

## 20 YEARS

A special advertising section of  
*The Augusta Chronicle* celebrating the  
platinum anniversary of the riverfront hotel

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# Celebrating 20 Years

It was 1988. Millions had been spent to complete an exciting new project – Riverwalk Augusta – and interest in downtown revitalization was high. Based on a study and master plan completed by Augusta Tomorrow, Bankers First, led by CEO Monty Osteen, was ready to develop another downtown project, a riverfront hotel and convention center. Also championed by then-Mayor Charles DeVaney, the city of Augusta had also procured a \$7.5 million federal Urban Development Action Grant to help support the project.

Then, disaster. Bulldozers were on site, yet at that time, banks were leery of investments in pricy new hotels and the group could not identify the funding they needed to keep the project viable. With the federal UDAG monies about to be pulled to go to a revitalization project in Ohio, developers knew they had to act quickly. “Something needed to be done,” said Osteen. “To see the master plan come to fruition and to get into the hospitality business in any way in Augusta, we had to have a first-rate hotel and conference center.”

A meeting was called and leaders of industry in Augusta were invited. Billy Morris, chairman and CEO of Morris Communications Co., pledged his support. With his leadership, others followed. Augusta Riverfront LLC was formed to operate the complex, and in partnership with the city, moved the project forward.

Public-private partnerships like the one that built the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center (formerly the Radisson Riverfront Hotel) are rare, but not unheard of. Prior to meeting with local business leaders, the original developers of the riverfront



Construction of the hotel that became the Augusta Marriott started in 1990.

hotel project had traveled to cities such as Lexington, Ky., to learn from similar initiatives. “No two are exactly alike,” said Osteen. “In a lot of ways, we were plowing new ground. But we had a significant advantage over a lot of cities, because of the riverfront property. Not a lot of them had that luxury and amenity. It was a big part of the success of the project.”

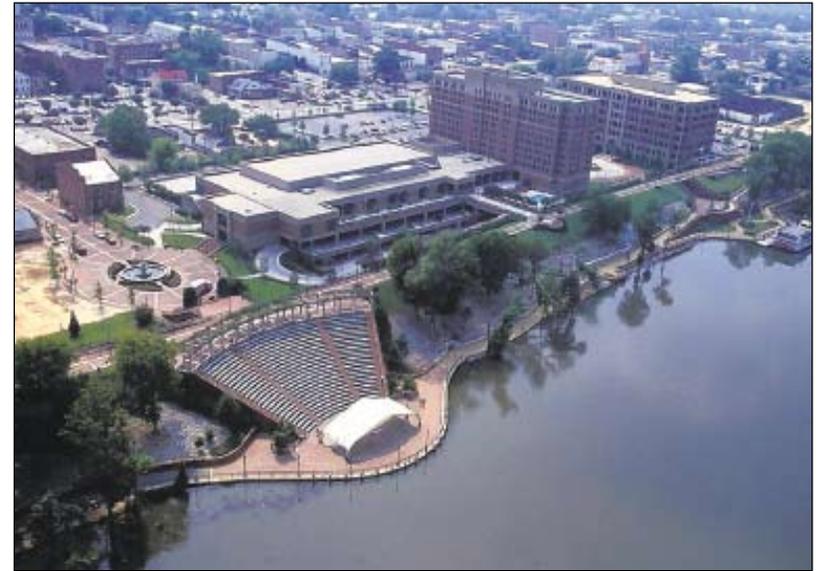
The hotel complex opened in 1992. Since then, the city and the community have seen the benefits of that initial investment. “The Marriott has been a huge benefit to our community as it has provided a major revenue source for the city by allowing us to play host to many major conferences over the past 20 years,” said Augusta Mayor Deke Copenhaver.

Revenues paid back to the community in taxes and fees have totaled in the millions of dollars, with an average of \$2.3 million annually. And with the construction and opening of the new Augusta Convention Center (the official name of the facility that has been referred to as the TEE Center), revenues, economic development and the number of visitors to this area are expected to increase. That’s also not considering the economic impact to the city of all the guests over the past 20 years – and counting – who have or who will stay at the Marriott and enjoy the many amenities of the area, from shopping and

dining to entertainment and cultural attractions. Through 2009, the Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau estimated the total economic impact of these hotel stays at \$435 million.

The Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce has been a supporter of the hotel project since its inception. “It’s certainly immeasurable when you have a facility such as the Marriott in your downtown area that is a convention facility and generates so much revenue for the downtown area and region,” said Sue Parr, president/CEO of the Augusta chamber. “To have that type of venue certainly impacts us greatly. It’s really a very important ingredient to a downtown that’s growing and thriving.”

An Augusta without a Marriott and convention center on the river is unimaginable. Now, as the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center prepares for its 20th anniversary of service to Augusta and the rest of the world, its impact, its service and its reputation will continue to impress guests and visitors alike for years to come. “It took a lot of hard work and great partnerships to get this project off the ground,” said Paul Simon, president of Augusta Riverfront LLC. “And now the public-private partnership that built the Marriott is expanding with the opening of the new Augusta



The Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center is part of a vibrant riverfront complex.

Convention Center and parking deck. This type of growth will continue to benefit the private and public sector, create job opportunities and help make Augusta a true destination attraction. I see a bright future ahead.”

— Danielle Moores

## By the Numbers

- More than **1,000** events a year
- **372** rooms/suites
- More than **100,000** square feet of convention space with the opening of the Augusta Convention Center
- **850** parking spaces with the opening of the new parking deck
- **250** employees
- **1.3** million occupied rooms since opening

*Congratulations  
to the  
Augusta Marriott  
Hotel at the  
Convention Center  
on celebrating your  
20th Anniversary*

The Augusta  
**Chronicle**  
augustachronicle.com

# Letter from Paul S. Simon

I'm a great believer in letting people know when they're appreciated for what they've done.

The 20th anniversary of the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center is a day many of us have been waiting for. It is the result of many years of hard work by the original visionaries who saw the potential of our downtown and what a full-service hotel and convention center complex could bring, by Vice President and General Manager Darryl Leech and his wonderful team, by our mayor and commissioners, and by you, the community.

Without their support, and yours, this project would never have broken ground. Initially proposed as privately funded, with support from a federal Urban Development Action Grant obtained by the city of Augusta, the project would have foundered due to a lack of sufficient funds had then-Mayor Charles DeVaney, Augusta Tomorrow and developer Monty Osteen of Bankers First not approached local civic-minded businesses and leaders.

In 1989, Augusta Riverfront LLC, a consortium of local business leaders led by Billy Morris, and the city of Augusta formalized an agreement for a riverfront hotel and convention center. That partnership has continued to flourish. With an initial investment by the city of \$9.9 million, to date, the community has received a return of \$32.4 million from property taxes, business improvement district taxes, parking fees, city easement, sales taxes and hotel/motel taxes. Now, we are moving into a new partnership with the construction and opening of an expanded convention center, officially known as the Augusta Convention Center (what has been referred to as the TEE Center). The Augusta Convention Center expands our convention space to more than

100,000 square feet. According to the Strategic Advisory Group study commissioned by the Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau, the \$50 million project, which includes a parking deck, is anticipated to have a \$25 million annual impact, generate \$1.42 million in state and local taxes its first year, plus \$515,000 more in hotel, mixed-drink and sales taxes, and create job opportunities.



Simon  
If success can be measured, the success of this project has surely met the mark – and then some.

Some said it couldn't be done, which makes the success of the project to date even more satisfying. I want to take this opportunity to thank again all those who have been involved over the years, including: Billy Morris, the late Charles DeVaney, members of the Augusta City Council, Monty Osteen, Augusta Tomorrow, Hale Barrett, the late Dr. Louis Battey, Bill and Dessie Kuhlke, Bill Bailey and John Starr of Bailey & Associates, and Georgia Power. Your support brought this project to fruition and has helped ensure its continued success and growth.



Monty Osteen, then-Mayor Charles DeVaney and William S. "Billy" Morris at the 1992 ribbon cutting for the Radisson Riverfront Hotel, which is now known as the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center.

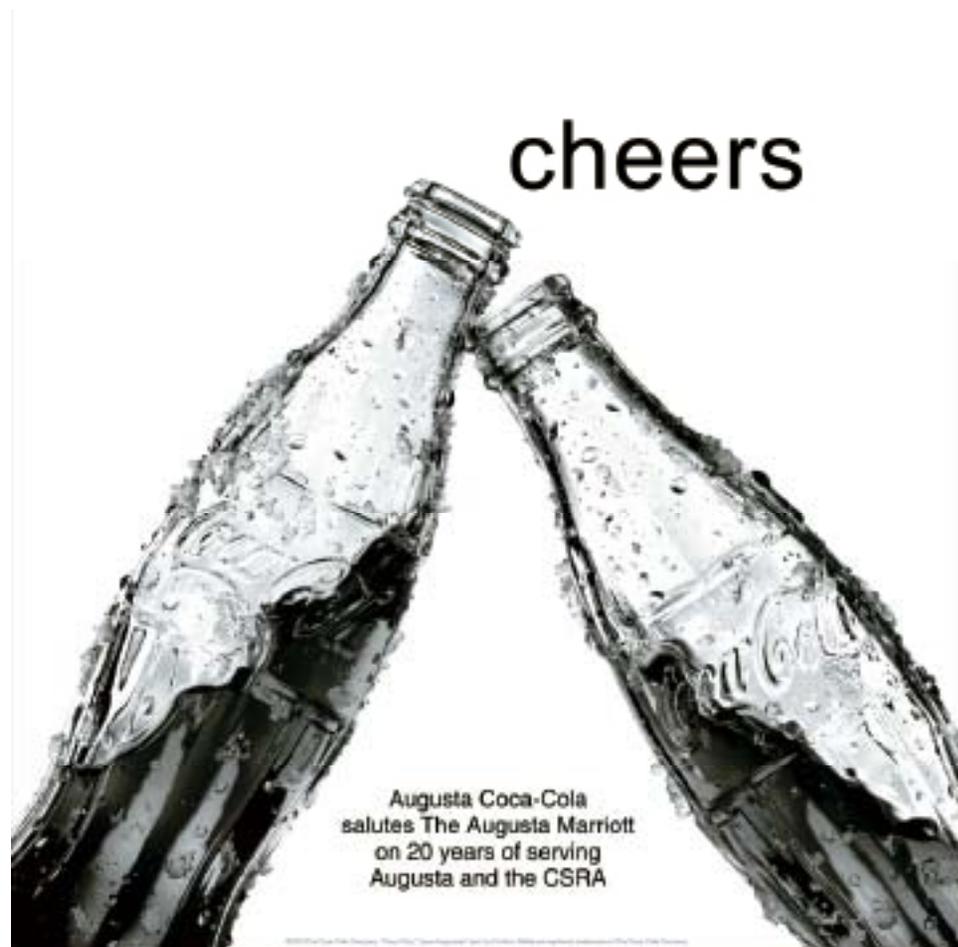
As we move forward on an expanded partnership with the city with the opening of the Augusta Convention Center and parking deck, I would also like to thank the members of the Augusta Commission, City Administrator Fred Russell and Mayor Deke Copenhaver for their work and commitment to this project.

Thank you again to Darryl Leech, who was hired as vice president and general manager before the doors even opened. I appreciate your leadership, your hard work, your loyalty, your dedication to the success of this hotel and convention center, and most of all, your friendship over the years.

And to the team – the employees who keep our facility running smoothly day in and day out – you have my appreciation for the good job you do every day.

Finally, to our community, thank you for your support of this magnificent facility over the past 20 years. The Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center has certainly changed the face of downtown Augusta, and we thank you for your role in making this happen.

Paul S. Simon  
President, Augusta  
Riverfront LLC



# Marriott Memories

Local Augustans share their memories and congratulations on the 20th anniversary of the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center

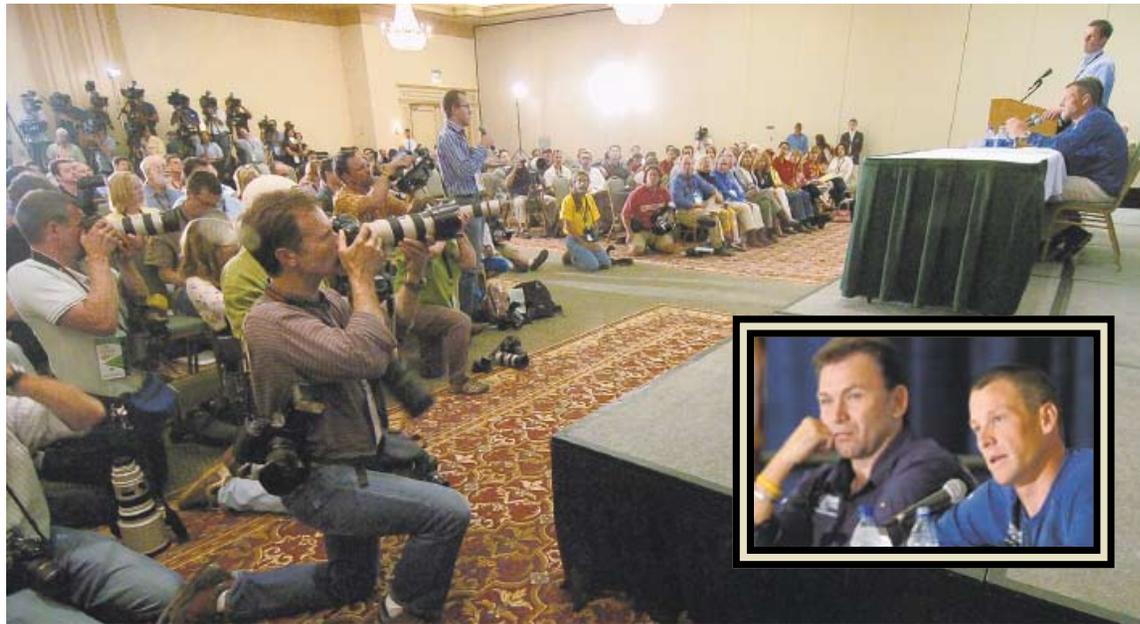
“It (the ESI Ironman 70.3) is a very big event, one of largest that the Greater Augusta Sports Council puts on. It wouldn't be possible without partnership of lots of folks in the community, including the Marriott. Just seeing the athletes coming in and out, running up and down and running by the river. I was very impressed by the hospitality and the organization and the ease that the location gave the athletes and the participants...and proud to be from Augusta, proud to see that type of service happening to our guests in town to put on an event. That's why they want to come back – the hospitality...20 years is impressive – and I'm confident there will be 20 more great ones.”

– Brinsley Thigpen, CEO,  
Augusta Sports Council

“My first impression of the Marriott was back when it was the Radisson – that's where I stayed when I interviewed for my job here. So I have a very good impression of the first day that I arrived here for the interview. And then, the main thing that we see at the Development Authority is the cooperation of the staff of the Marriott. Many times they (companies we work with) are going to be spending the night and usually they will end up staying at the Marriott. We will ask the Marriott to do something if a very, very good company is in town, and we'll make sure the Marriott pulls out all the stops. It's always very nice of them to do, but it also really does help us a great deal in putting our best foot forward. Just do 20 more years – at least 20.”

– Walter Sprouse, Executive  
Director, Development Authority  
of Richmond County

“I moved to Augusta 20 years ago, so when I came down here, when I was interviewing for a position here, it was November, about four months before the hotel and conference center opened. Then it was the Radisson. So, when I was interviewing for a director of sales position with the convention and visitors bureau, I did a hard-hat walkthrough of the conference facility and hotel. It was very, very exciting to see what was happening, what was taking place on the Riverwalk. The excitement and the activity I saw actually helped me make a personal



Among the many memorable moments that happened at the hotel complex, on Monday afternoon, April 18, 2005, cyclist Lance Armstrong, right, accompanied by team director Johan Bruyneel of the Discovery Channel Pro Cycling Team, announced that he would be retiring after that year's Tour De France before the start of the Tour de Georgia.

THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE

decision in my life to relocate to Augusta, because I saw the potential in the facility and the project. The group does a fantastic job, not only with the private facility but also the public facility. They do a great job with management, and I wish them continued success.”

– Barry White, President and CEO,  
Augusta Convention  
and Visitors Bureau

“I actually met with Darryl Leech (vice president and general manager of the Marriott) when I was trying to prepare for my interview to become general manager of the River Golf Club, to get pointers from him on what I could bring up in the interview to promote the golf course here and to get a better lay of the land in downtown Augusta and how we could generate revenue by crossmarketing with the Radisson at the time. I was trying to do my homework, before I even had the job, trying to be proactive. Since we work with them on a weekly basis, we recognize what a positive addition they've been to Augusta. We hope others in the area appreciate the hotel and what they've done for the economy of Augusta and the image of Augusta.”

– Chris Verdery, Director of Golf,  
River Golf Club

“The chamber was instrumental in securing a new conference here in the community – our Georgia Association of Chamber Commerce Executives in March. This is a convention that we had bid on for quite a few years, and we didn't seem to get their attention, but in working with the Marriott, we just every year really tried to make a very compelling case that Augusta was where this conference needed to visit.

“We worked very hard to bring this conference, so it was a proud day when we walked through touring it and the executive director of GACCE said she had no idea we had this kind of facility here in Augusta, and she understood why we were trying so hard. The Marriott went above and beyond and their persistence paid off.

“On behalf of the Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce, congratulations and thank you for the great job that you do and the services that you provide for downtown and for our region. It's wonderful to have a facility anchored by hotels that again not just serve our community and local customers, but have a key role in our continuing economic prosperity. We wish them many, many long years.”

– Sue Parr, President and CEO,  
Augusta Metro Chamber of  
Commerce

“I've been counsel to the Morris interests for a long time, and so that's how I got involved in it. I was their lawyer. We were an investor in the hotel at the time. I think that the community ought to really be proud of what Billy Morris and Paul Simon have done with that project. I'm certainly proud of it and pleased to have an elegant hotel when we have a guest in town who needs an elegant hotel.

“I think it's one of the few projects I've ever seen that never gets shabby. Every time something gets the slightest bit worn it gets replaced. And I think that the Augusta Convention Center is just going to make it better and pay off for the community as well.”

– Hale Barrett, retired, Hull Barrett

“The growth of the facility through the completion of the Augusta Convention Center will make Augusta a Southeastern destination for even larger conferences and events in the future. I have many fond memories of welcoming visitors from throughout the world to our great city at Augusta's premier riverfront hotel. I would like to personally congratulate everyone at the Marriott for the milestone of 20 years of service to our community.”

– Deke Copenhaver, Mayor,  
City of Augusta

“We got so excited about it because of the potential it was going to have for downtown Augusta, not just the Marriott but the office building also. So we made a company decision to lease space in the office area for a period of 10 years. This was after the work that was on the esplanade there on the river, so we were happy to be involved in it, and excited about how it was going to begin to redevelop downtown Augusta, and it has actually done that. I can't believe it's been 20 years. The only thing that tells me it's been 20 years is my body.

“Sometimes when you get involved in these things you're not sure if it will work out or not, but fortunately this did work, and it was something great for downtown Augusta. It's just been a great success. Congratulations goes to Billy Morris, who had the foresight to take the risk and get involved in this. It certainly has opened a lot of doors for Augusta, and with the addition of the Augusta Convention Center, it's going to prosper even more.”

– Bill Kuhlke,  
Kuhlke Properties

“Twenty years ago, I was delighted to have had the opportunity to be part of a project that would mean a great deal to the revitalization of downtown Augusta. Our family has been a member of this community for many, many years, our corporate offices are based here, and we believe in this downtown and in Augusta.

“Today, the public-private partnership that built the Marriott is continuing to impact our local economy and bring others into our city through the opening of the new Augusta Convention Center. We are excited about the future and our continued growth.

“We congratulate all those who have been involved in this project over the years, as well as the management and staff of the hotel and convention center for their work and dedication. The ribbon cutting we held 20 years ago with Mayor Charles DeVaney and other local leaders was a special moment. This project will continue to have a positive impact on the growth of our city.”

– Billy Morris, Chairman and  
Chief Executive Officer, Morris  
Communications Co. and Publisher,  
*The Augusta Chronicle*

# Marriott Timeline & Celebrity Sightings

Over the past 20 years, the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center has hosted presidents, celebrities, sports figures and special guests from near and far.

**October 1982:** Augusta Tomorrow commissions a study supporting the addition of a hotel and convention center complex on the riverfront as a boon to the local economy.

**Mid-1980s:** Banker's First takes on the project. Discussions continue as various sites are proposed. Initially, the hotel, office building and convention center were planned for Sixth and Reynolds streets, with residential housing at the 10th and Reynolds site. The sites were later flip-flopped.

**1988:** The city of Augusta becomes involved, securing a \$7.5 million federal Urban Development Action Grant to support the project. However, at that time, bank funding for hotel projects was difficult to obtain.

**1989:** With the project seemingly stalled, and federal UDAG grant funding about to be pulled to support a project in another city, Mayor Charles DeVaney invites local business leaders, including Billy Morris, to step in. A partnership between the city of Augusta and Augusta Riverfront LLC, a private conglomerate of local business leaders, is created to move the project forward.

**1990:** Construction of the hotel and convention center, plus an office building and parking deck, begins at the 10th and Reynolds site.

**February 6, 1992:** The Radisson Riverfront Hotel opens. Mayor Charles DeVaney, Billy Morris, Monty Osteen, Paul Simon and other project leaders help cut the ribbon.

**1994:** The Riverfront Grille restaurant becomes Augustino's. The pasta bar is an instant hit.

**1999:** The city of Augusta approves a plan to build a new riverfront hotel – which will become the Country Suites – and 20,000 square foot of additional convention space.

**October 2001:** The 136-room Country Suites opens.

**January 2006:** The Radisson Riverfront Hotel and Country Suites becomes the Augusta Marriott Hotel & Suites.

**December 2009:** After nearly a year of discussion, the Augusta Commission approves a plan to build a new trade, exhibit and event center, expanding the Marriott's existing convention space to more than 100,000 square feet. The plan also includes a new parking facility.

**June 16, 2010:** Ground is broken on the Augusta Convention Center.

**September 21, 2011:** The new parking facility is dedicated.

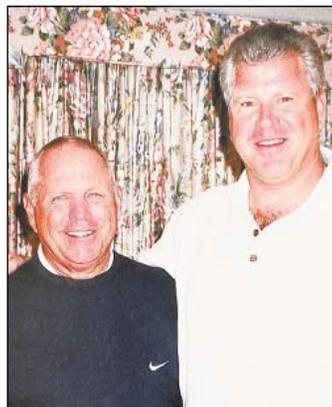
**Late 2012:** The Augusta Convention Center is scheduled to open its doors.

Sources: Augusta Chronicle archives, Monty Osteen, Paul Simon, Darryl Leech



AUGUSTA MARRIOTT

During the annual Masters Tournament, the Marriott has welcomed visits by golfers Tiger Woods, above, and Adam Scott, below, and golf instructor Butch Harmon, left.



AUGUSTA MARRIOTT



AUGUSTA MARRIOTT

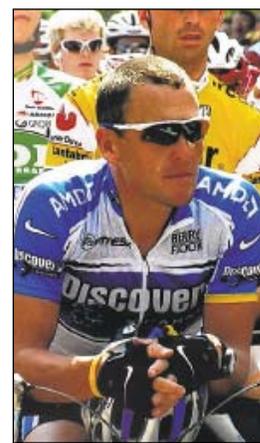


AUGUSTA MARRIOTT

Actor Danny Glover has been a guest at the hotel.



AUGUSTA MARRIOTT



AUGUSTA MARRIOTT

In 2005, Lance Armstrong announced his retirement to the world from the ballroom of the Augusta Marriott during the Tour de Georgia.

During the annual ESI Ironman, 5,000 people come through the Marriott's doors as guests, visitors and expo attendees.



AUGUSTA MARRIOTT

Other sports figures who have participated at events at the Marriott include football greats Ray Guy and Dan Marino, top photo, and Jim Plunkett, above.

During the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, boxers from around the United States came to Augusta to compete in the boxoffs, and stayed at the Marriott. Staff reported seeing the boxers train in the circular drive every morning.

Over the years, the Nike Peach Jam has brought the nation's top basketball coaches to the Marriott.



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Dharma and Greg stars Thomas Gibson, left, and Joel Murray walk the red carpet and greet fans during Academy Award celebrations at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel in 2001.

# Employees saw hotel opening 20 years ago

It was Marisa Barnes' dream job. Having worked in reservations and the hotel industry for a number of years, Barnes watched in anticipation as the steel beams, then the walls of the Radisson Riverfront Hotel and the attached convention center went up in the early 1990s. "I had the opportunity to do convention service work with the Telfair Inn during Masters Week, and that gave me the interest into going into convention services," said Barnes.

She was the first reservationist hired at the new hotel, which allowed her to get her foot in the door. The rest, as they say, is history.

Now convention service manager, Barnes oversees events and conferences taking place at the center, ensuring every detail is just right. And it truly is her dream job.

"I'm doing what I've always wanted to do. My job is a new job every day," said Barnes. "I couldn't imagine going anywhere else. I'm here to stay."

That excitement is what many employees say have kept them at the

Augusta Marriott over the past 20 years. With hotel turnover averaging around 50 percent, according to the American Hotel & Lodging Association, the Marriott continues to boast a high number of longtime employees, with anniversaries of five and more years. Three original employees remain: Barnes; Darryl Leech, vice president and general manager; and Maggie McDaniel, who works in housekeeping at the hotel.

McDaniel left the stress of a medical career as a nursing assistant behind when she joined the hotel staff. She's always worked behind the scenes – first cleaning hotel rooms, then as a telephone operator, and now in the laundry.

She remembers walking inside the hotel and going from room to room to ensure everything was set up how it needed to be. "I was here before guests started coming into the hotel," she said.

Both McDaniel and Barnes remember their first feelings walking

into the building. "It was like stepping into a grand hotel," said Barnes. "It was beautiful," said McDaniel. "It was known as the Radisson, the best hotel in the CSRA."

Twenty years is a long time. Barnes met her husband at the hotel and was married in the convention center; McDaniel has made friends and found a supportive environment here. "I enjoy the people here. If I didn't, I wouldn't still be here," she said. "They're just fun to be around. I've been very happy so far."

Leech, who made 14 moves in his career before making a home at the Marriott and Augusta, agrees. "From a social aspect, it's about the memories we've been able to create for people here," he said.

It's a feeling that's also seconded by Barnes. "This is our second home. We have lost employees due to death and illness, some have retired and some have moved away, but this is our home and everyone around us is our second family."



CHRIS THELEN

Three original employees remain from the day the hotel opened in 1992: Marisa Barnes, right; Darryl Leech, left, vice president and general manager; and Maggie McDaniel, front, who works in housekeeping at the hotel.

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# TEE Center Goes Away: Hello, Augusta Convention Center

No one likes being called by the wrong name.

For the past four years, the new convention center attached to the Augusta Marriott has been referred to as the Trade, Exhibit and Event Center, or TEE Center. But its official name – and the one that will be used going forward – is the Augusta Convention Center. The entire hotel and convention center complex is the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center.



SPECIAL

Referring to the space as simply an exhibit and event center could limit its potential, and some groups outside the area have already responded with confusion over what the TEE name represents, said Darryl Leech. “The TEE part has been useful to date,” said Leech, vice president and general manager, Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center. “It was easy to use that to explain in our local market. But Augusta is more than golf. And when you go out to seek others, you have to have a name that capitalizes on the fact that it’s a convention center.”

“Augusta Convention Center really reflects the overall facilities, where TEE Center is limited to just the exhibit hall,” said Greg DeSandy, director of sales and marketing at the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center. “What I think we’re going to find as we sell into the future is that people will use more than just the exhibit hall itself...they will also use hotel rooms and some of the meeting space in the existing facilities to create a larger program, larger than what we can accommodate now.”

In addition, in order to market the center with other Marriott facilities, the words “convention center” had to be in the name, according to Marriott’s corporate offices, said Leech. Marriott owns the eighth largest retail website in the world. “It just makes sense that we would follow their brand standards, rather than market something completely separate,” said Leech.

With the Augusta Conven-

tion Center set to open in late 2012, the challenge has been to secure conventions with no formal opening date set. Groups typically plan conventions as early as a year in advance; the hotel marketing team is focused on filling the center for the 2013 season. The Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau, which represents meeting spaces across the area, is also marketing the convention center.

Four groups, with anticipated attendees ranging from 300 to 3,400, have been secured to date: the Prince Grand Hall Lodge F&AM, the Georgia Association of Housing and Development, the ESI Ironman 70.3, and Mary Kay.

The ESI Ironman 70.3 and Mary Kay will together pull an estimated 5,400 attendees into the convention center and the Augusta area, and are exactly the type of groups that the Marriott and the CVB want to bring to the city. The new facility expands convention center space to more than 100,000 square feet. That, coupled with Augusta’s convenient location, value, and downtown area, plus the services and facilities of the hotel complex, are what will appeal to both new and previous customers. “We will certainly be able to attract larger groups, groups that have outgrown us, groups that really haven’t considered Augusta before because there hasn’t been a facility like this here in town,” said DeSandy.

“The decision on where one of our clients hosts a meeting is

based on their needs,” said Barry White, CVB president and CEO. “It’s really a whole new market that we’re going to be able to go after.”

That new market may include nontraditional conventions and events. Brinsley Thigpen, CEO of the Greater Augusta Sports Council, envisions growing the ESI Ironman expo, and bringing new sporting events to the exhibit hall space. “I think you have to think nontraditionally,” she said. “It could be a cheerleading competition, or you could take mats in and have judo, or you could take floors in and make it volleyball. We could put several volleyball courts in that space, whereas nowhere else in Augusta has that space at this time.”

In terms of local business, an initial study commissioned by the CVB suggests that the Augusta Convention Center will generate an annual economic impact of \$25 million, plus millions in state and local tax income. “It will have a significant impact on the area, and not just the downtown area,” said Sue Parr, president and CEO of the Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce. “People [attending conventions] will move beyond the downtown area and frequent other hotels and restaurants and shopping and retail throughout the region. We can compete toe to toe with other similarly sized cities now, which I feel just helps move our economy forward. We obviously reap a lot of benefit from the tourism dollars these kinds of things generate.”



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# A letter from Darryl Leech

When I came to Augusta in the early '90s to open the then-Radisson Riverfront Hotel, my wife and I were parents to a young daughter. As most parents will understand, my daughter often struggled with taking a nap. So, in the afternoons, I would sometimes bring her down to the hotel and let her toddle up and down the long corridors of the convention center. Then, and only then, would she be ready to sleep.

I tell this story as a reminder of what the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center has always been about – and will continue to be about: family. Many of us have been employees of this hotel for five, 10 years or more, with a few, like me, here at the very beginning. It takes something pretty special to engender such loyalty. Our entire team – past and present – works so hard to deliver a quality product, a truly full-service experience. And it shows. It's as simple as a smile and a hello in the hallway, and as complex as the many services and staff needed to support national events like the ESI Ironman 70.3, which hosts thousands in Augusta annually.



I met with several of our staff recently to discuss our 20th anniversary. One of the topics that came up was why they thought we have such loyalty and longevity. They all agreed the key is that everyone gets it: They understand what we are here to do, what their piece of the puzzle is, and they try to deliver that piece as best they can. It's about the human touch – the type of personalized service that starts with a warm greeting and ends with, "Is there anything else I can help you with?" As the vice president and general manager of this fine facility, this was incredibly heartwarming to hear. To our team: You have my deepest appreciation and thanks for your continued professionalism and passion for what we do.

I made 14 moves before coming to Augusta; and at that time, if someone had told me that I would be here 20 years, I never would have believed it. But I am as thankful as I can be that I am here; this has been and continues to be a wonderful place to live and work. I think that's because while Marriott is an international chain of hotels – in fact, one of the largest in the world – our Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center is a proud member of this community. Every day, we host events and celebrations, making memories in the lives of people in this community. We cannot thank you enough for your ongoing support and your friendship over the past 20 years.

For those who have never attended an event, visited our restaurant or had family or friends stay at the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center, don't worry. We plan to be here another 20 years...and counting. Consider this your personal invitation to experience our dining, our signature events and our fine accommodations. Until then, we'll keep the fires burning.

Darryl Leech,  
Vice President and General Manager,  
Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center



AUGUSTA MARRIOTT AT THE CONVENTION CENTER

## Did You Know

**It literally took an act of Congress to help build the riverfront hotel and convention center?**

The reason was that the levees along the riverfront had to be breached in order for the project to be successful. Augusta Tomorrow worked with Rep. Doug Barnard and Sens. Matt Mattingly and Strom Thurmond to get the 1890 law changed.

**The Marriott might have been built in a completely different location – in the middle of the Savannah River?**

Monty Osteen, an original developer of the project, met with a potential architect at the Pinnacle Club, and while admiring the views, the architect declared that he had

found the perfect location for the new hotel – smack dab in the middle of the Savannah.

**The architecture of the Marriott takes its inspiration from a historic Augusta landmark?**

The red-brick façade of the Marriott is inspired by the Cotton Exchange building.

**That during the initial talks, developers met with potential investors, literally from around the world?**

During a trip to Japan, developers met with several Japanese banks about their possible interest in financing the hotel project. Unfortunately, the only project they were interested in funding in Augusta was a golf course!



CHRIS THELEN

## Then & Now

At left, the original employees of the Radisson Riverfront Hotel gathered on the main staircase in 1992. Above, the current workers at the Augusta Marriott and Convention Center gather outside the hotel on the stair leading up to the Riverwalk.

**That the city is not the only public entity that has supported this project?**

The state of Georgia also invested \$25,000 in the project during its inception. The investment has paid off – through 2011 the hotel and convention center has returned more than \$16 million in sales taxes to the state.

**That the Marriott was always meant to be the Marriott?**

During initial planning, developers met with a company that operated Marriott hotels in Florida about coming on board for the riverfront hotel. Even though the partnership eventually went with the Radisson, Marriott was actually their first choice.

Source: Monty Osteen, Paul Simon