

My Take: Stars Are Falling On Alabama Again

Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
Tuesday, 20 April 2010 09:36



Much of my drive time into work one recent morning was spent in the draft of a big, yellow 18-wheeler belonging to TKX Logistics, a division of ThyssenKrupp Industrial Services.

The truck and its cordial driver reminded me of some good news I had picked up earlier in the week, about another ThyssenKrupp business—*and, more importantly, where it's putting the finishing touches on a new \$3.7 billion steel mill.*
But, first a little background...

As someone who spent almost 20 years living and working in Alabama (moving from Auburn, to Birmingham, to Tuscaloosa, then back to Birmingham, before relocating to Illinois several years ago), I start each day by checking out "all things Alabama" at www.al.com. It's where I pick up a wealth of critical information, most of it pertaining to the interests and pursuits of my adopted (and beloved) Auburn University/War Eagle family, as well as to those of the other persuasion—my good friends and associates who yell "Roll Tide." I also count on this Website to keep me informed about what's going on across Alabama from the standpoint of industry and commerce. Evidently, it's quite a lot.

Countless people who know and love Alabama—*having been born and/or raised there or, like me, transplanted in as an adult due to family- or work-related circumstances*—will tell you what we always knew: It would only be a matter of time before this jewel of a place for business investment was "discovered." And why not? According to the [Economic Development Partnership of Alabama](#) (EDPA), the state offers, among other things, a skilled workforce (backed up by a highly successful state-sponsored, state-of-the-art industrial training network); an awesome sun-belt climate; five Interstate highways (soon to be six); seven commercial airports; five Class I railroads; and one of the finest deepwater, full-service ports in the U.S. (not to mention one of the largest navigable inland-waterway systems in the nation). EDPA could go on and on and on, promoting Alabama as the great place for business that it is. And this is not just my opinion, either.

In the March 13-19 edition of The Economist, an article entitled ["Alabama's Economy After Cotton,"](#) described how the state's small cities are poised for economic recovery (perhaps more than others). A case in

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point is that new ThyssenKrupp mill in Mobile, which represents "the largest German investment in America ever." By the time it reaches full capacity (in 2012), the operation is expected to employ 2700 workers and turn out 5.1 million tons of carbon and stainless steel annually. The article noted something else of interest: a recent Moody's Economy.com ranking of 378 U.S. metropolitan areas by job growth. In it, the Mobile region ranked only 12th. Three other Alabama regions ranked higher. The engineering hotbeds of Huntsville and Auburn/Opelika ranked 1st and 2nd, respectively, and the Columbus/Phoenix City area (straddling the Georgia border), ranked 7th.

Achieving these enviable stats hasn't been easy. As Wayne Flynt's 1987 book, *Mine, Mill & Microchip: A Chronicle of Alabama Enterprise* pointed out, the journey from frontier and homestead to railroads and rocketry was not without some major turbulence. These days, the ride seems to be much smoother. While everything may not be right in Alabama, the state is clearly doing plenty of the right things. The stars falling on it today may have been a long time coming, but they're ever so well deserved.



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