

unting Alabama rail, outdoor family fun

Great Southern Outdoors

"It's All In The Name!"

Mark S. "Gritter" Griffin

Great Southern Outdoors is one of Alabama's newest hunting lodges. The lodge opened for the first time in October of 2000. Since the opening of the lodge was scheduled to coincide with the opening of deer season I figured that a few lucky hunters would get to enjoy this beautifully managed property before word got out. I was right! But more than a few hunters showed up. At the end of this first season the lodge has exceeded their three-year prediction.

Deer hunting is not everything at this lodge. Owners Wayne Green and Rex Pritchett, III had predicted that they would have a full service "outdoor experience" facility within three years. They have reached that level in one year. These entrepreneurs are living their dream.

More than a decade ago these close friends began talking about a dream. At first, the dream existed only as a fantasy in their conversation. Over the years, though, they worked it out in their minds. Now it has been perfected in reality. These partners didn't want to build "just another hunting lodge". Their dream was to create a lodge on their own property where people could come to enjoy the "total outdoor experience".



The lakehouse at Great Southern Outdoors.

They do have some of the finest deer, turkey, and wild boar habitat in Alabama but they want to offer more. Their dream is for people to come to their lodge for fishing, hunting, wing shooting, vacationing or to simply commune with nature. Their lodge serves as an alternative solution as a location for reunions, wedding parties, and family get-togethers.

Nestled in the gently rolling hills of Bullock county is the 3200 acres containing Rughall Plantation and Black Creek Plantation now collectively known as Great Southern Outdoors. The allure of this land is easy to see and nearly intoxicating to experience. Some of the land is carpeted with rolling green pastures, a perfect foil for the background-blue of the southern sky. The breeze is scented with the perfumes of nature. The musty earth-smell of mixed hardwood bottoms, wild flowers, and wetland swamps mixes wonderfully with the thick stands of tartly scented pines. Two beautiful, mature lakes are sculpted out of this southern landscape and filled with huge bass, bluegill, crappie, and catfish waiting for the lucky anglers who will fish here.

There are two lodges and a lake house on the property at present. These facilities can accommodate up to 18 guests for an overnight stay and about 250 for a dinner. Wayne and Rex planned that the lodges would be used for only about nine



Rex and Wayne at the entrance of the main lodge.

hunters per week during the first year. Their main interest is always in "doing it right first". Expansion could **always** come later. It seems that they have done a lot of things "right" as they have quickly found themselves on the fast track to success. Their lodge stayed completely booked throughout this past season and about half of next year's slots are already filled.

Wayne and Rex also have a keen interest in introducing the outdoors to women and youngsters. Several events are planned for the upcoming year with some of the schools and civic groups in the area. They are also great supporters of the Wheel-in' Sportsmen, a group of outdoors men and women with disabilities. Great Southern Outdoors held a weekend hunt for this group in December. The event was a resounding success. Every hunter left the plantation with many memorable and touching stories from their time spent at this fine lodge.

The main lodge consists of a large kitchen and two dining/meeting areas. The larger of these two rooms is over 2000 square feet. It is here that the guests will enjoy relaxed traditional southern cuisine at the beginning and at the end of a long day of hunting or fishing. This is also the location of the not-yet-famous "Liar's Den". Wayne and Rex agreed that they needed a "place for their clients to exercise their tongue-in-cheek skills" which is a "very important part of the outdoor experience".

The smaller of the two lodges is the more nostalgic of the two. Rex's grandfather built this home in about 1890. It has been completely refurbished maintaining as much of the original

character as possible. This lodge is used to house most of the guests that visit the plantation. The lake house rests in an idyllic setting beside the smaller of the two lakes and serves as quarters for those whose passion is fishing 'for the big one'.

Wayne and Rex are excellent hosts. Their passion for their dream and their lodge is clearly evident in their eyes, their speech and their demeanor. After meeting these two and touring their beautiful plantation areas, it is obvious to me that Great Southern Outdoors is poised to join the ranks of the great lodges in Alabama. I can honestly say that these two friends are not only living their dream, they are creating and fulfilling the dreams of the many hunters, fishermen, and families that will enjoy their stay in the Great Southern Outdoors.

Contact Wayne or Rex at:

334-738-5066 or www.greatsouthernoutdoors.com.



Moss-draped hardwood lane at Great Southern.