

65 YEARS

of Good Value, Good Fun!



Pictured above: Fairways Resort has the distinction of being situated in a World Heritage Site and having spectacular views of the only 18-hole golf course in the Southern Drakensberg.

In 1958 Robert Henry Gooderson, then residing in England, applied for a job with Clover Dairies in South Africa and was accepted for the position. He sent a telegram to his wife, Ellen Beatrice who was still in England, stating, “this is the land of milk and honey, sell everything and come.”

And that is how the Gooderson Leisure story began!



Alan Gooderson
Chairman of Gooderson Leisure Corp Ltd

The Gooderson family translocated to Durban from the bleakness of post-war Britain in the 1950s, bringing with them a sturdy ethic of entrepreneurialism, hard work and family solidarity.

Gooderson Leisure Corporation was established in 1958, when Robert Henry Gooderson acquired the first of his hotels in Durban - The Lonsdale Hotel, one block from the beachfront.

Later that year, Alan Gooderson left England to join his family and begin his career working in The Lonsdale Hotel. Here he developed hospitality skills and expertise that served him for the rest of his career.

In 1979, Alan bought the business from his family and pursued a new strategy which included entering into the timeshare industry. In 1988, Gooderson Leisure built its first timeshare

development - Riverbend Chalets.

With over six decades in the business, Alan has seen it all - the highs the lows, the boom times and the bad. The effects of various economic downturns, political uncertainty, the acquisitions and the selloffs.

He has persevered through it all, adapting with changing conditions, diversifying the business from a purely beachfront operation to eco-tourism resorts in Zululand, golf resorts in the Drakensberg, a natural hot springs resort and top notch conference and event venues.



We believe that everyone has the right to a great holiday, so we've tried our hardest to make investing in holiday accommodation effortless, affordable and accessible.”

[Alan Gooderson]



The Story of a Timeshare Visionary and an Acclaimed Building Contractor

Dave Barnett (owner of DS Barnett Construction and Civil Engineering) tells the story of his 36-year relationship with Alan Gooderson and their roles in pioneering timesharing and leisure development in the Drakensberg valley.

The start of a long and fruitful relationship

My introduction to Drakensberg Gardens was in 1987 when Alan's father, Robert Gooderson, appointed us to build the twelve new Viewpoint Rooms. I was living about six kilometres down the road at Castleburn, so it worked out perfectly.

The Gooderson family had owned the Hotel from the 1960's. During that contract Alan took over the reins of the Group and it was with him that I dealt from then on. We were both young men then - I was forty-three years and he a few years my elder.

The Hotel in those days needed a lot of attention and we undertook major room upgrades and lots of new infrastructural work. Alan infected me with his vision for the future, and I was privileged to be able to join him for the ride.

The big year was 1989

I had applied to the Town and Regional Planning Commission on Alan's behalf for the build of his first timeshare venture at the Hotel. Alan had agreed to my unit design proposals, and we got going on the eighteen units of Riverbend with the double storey units as you enter the Hotel.

During that year we also built major new infrastructure such as the Glengarry Dam, the new sewer plant and a main road through the Hotel.

As the year drew to a close, one evening Alan and I were going over more of his ideas over drinks in the old Kraal Inn bar at the Hotel. I can remember it as if it was yesterday - like one of those moments you remember where you were when you heard that Kennedy had been shot!

He said "David - he always calls me that not Dave - do you think we could build an eighteen hole golf course?" I'd had enough to drink that I couldn't say anything but "yes" and that's how the golf course was born.

The next week we did a contour survey of the rough veld and old potato and mielie lands, which we then plotted into a drawing on a serviette with a Koki pen.

After walking the proposed layout, with big injections of Alan's golf skills, the planning was finalised. We spent the next year or two with our earthmoving machines, tractors and planters turning his dream into the reality of a fine and one of the most scenic golf courses in our country.

A natural progression to timeshare

As the golf course progressed, what better project could there be than a timeshare development and calling it Fairways.

Work began in 1993 and went on in phases for just over ten years until the sixty-two thatched units were completed.

The view over the golf course with the backdrop of the magnificent main Drakensberg mountains is both spectacular and unique. No wonder this particular development is Alan's favourite.

In 2005, we built Alan's family home overlooking Fairways. There was always something he had for us to build within the property. He has a great eye for restoring the older parts of the Hotel and adding new dimensions in the way of additional blocks of rooms and recreation areas.

The catastrophic fire of 2003

December 2003 saw a catastrophic fire that destroyed the main hotel building. I well remember phoning Alan late that night with the news that the building was gone.

Pictured below: The Drakensberg Gardens aerial view



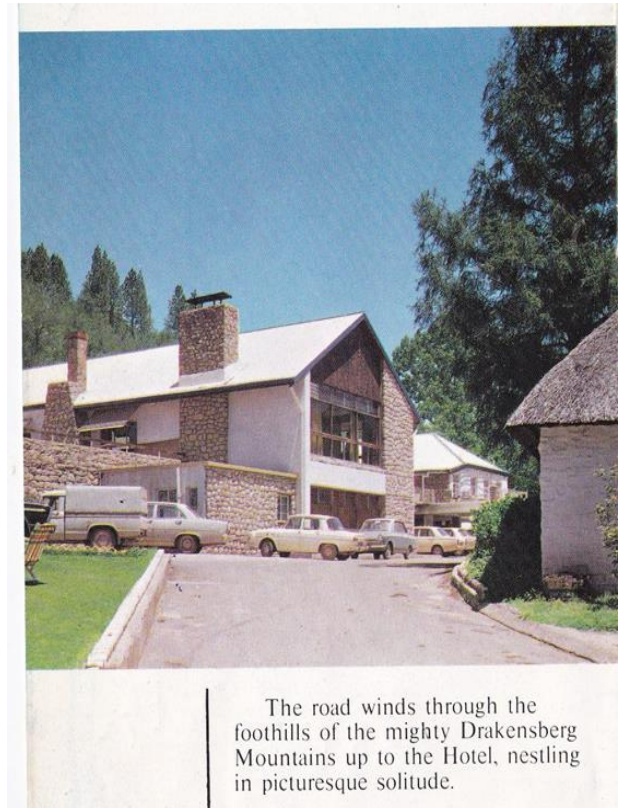
Once he knew nobody had been hurt, he told me not to worry and I believe he was already envisioning how much better he'd make the hotel look when we rebuilt it. Our rebuilding took most of 2004, during which there many meetings and discussions culminating in the fine new facility that greets his guests today.

A deep friendship

It has been one of the greatest good fortunes of my life to have had this 36-year relationship with Alan. Not only have I enjoyed the 'ride' on the construction side, but during this time both my wife, Sue, and I got to know Alan's dear late wife, Judith. She was a rock to Alan and stood alongside of him in his challenging business. Personally, I had many dealings with Judith about the finishings of the new buildings and refurbishments. She shared the same business principles that I valued with Alan, and my wife and I are saddened by her death.

A simple formula

Alan has not only been the best client any contractor could ever wish, but also a valued friend. Over this period we have worked on a basis of absolute trust in one another. Alan has had the vision for Drakensberg Gardens and its final destination value – for both hotel guests and timeshare owners alike - and he has given me the privilege to build and bring this into being. It's quite a simple formula - he knows what he wants, he asks what it's going to cost and look like, we agree, I build, and he pays me on the nail - what I call "old school" values.



Pictured above:
The Drakensberg Gardens Hotel entrance.
[Photo credit: Drakensberg Gardens Resort Facebook]

Pictured below:
The Drakensberg Gardens Hotel entrance today.



In Conversation With Alan Gooderson About The Industry Today

What prompted you to get involved in timeshare?

I'd been in the hotel business for many years when I first heard about the timeshare concept from Jan Kruger of the Kondotel Group, which was marketing and developing several timeshare properties in the '70's and '80's. My first thought on timeshare was 'what an interesting project to have a week of holiday at a reasonable price'.

Jan had vast experience in leisure resort and hotel development and through our partnership with Durban Spa I learnt the ropes of the timeshare industry. In 1988, Gooderson Leisure built its first timeshare development – Riverbend Chalets - which sold out almost as soon as they became available and are still just as sought after today.

In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing our industry today?

The escalation in levies over the past four years, which has had an impact on sales to the middle-class prospective buyer.

What advice would you give someone starting out in the timeshare industry?

The Covid pandemic and lockdown had a detrimental impact on the industry and recovery is slow under the current economic climate. Entering the market right now is going to be extremely challenging.

Over the years there have been many successful timeshare developments under the Gooderson Leisure banner, does one in particular stand out?

Definitely Fairways. The design, views, location and the idea of a mixed-use resort contributing to the hotel earning with the add-on facilities and activities available at the resort has been a winning combination.

What does it mean for you to belong to the VOASA community?

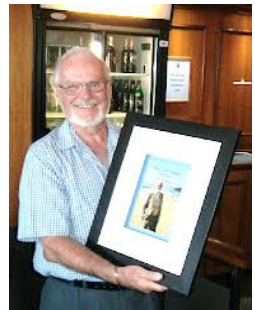
In the early years, the timeshare industry did not witness a level playing field, with short-sighted operators who were out to make quick gains, and a quicker exit. VOASA, together with the timeshare industry at large, introduced a Code of Conduct to instil ethical behaviour which improved the perception, reputation and credibility timeshare - and continues to be a hallmark of quality for VOASA members.

Any business philosophies or personal mottos you'd like to share?

Yes, I have three... "You can't change history", "Cash is King" and "Keep positive and learn".

"You can't change history" is also the title of Alan's biography, which is written by Graham Linscott and published in 2016. The book describes the development of the Gooderson Group – often in the teeth of economic adversity. This is also a very human book and tells of the closeness and loyalty of the Gooderson family, personal tragedy, the lighter moments of hotel-keeping, Alan's involvement in poker, horseracing, golf and karate. He once swapped hotels with a man he was playing poker with, and he once bought a hotel in the Free State to keep the bar open after an inter-provincial karate tournament.

Pictured below: Alan and his late wife, Judith, with Graham Linscott at the launch of his Biography.



[Source: Berea Mail]

Pictured below: Fairways Golf Course

