

## JACK RHODES ROAST BENEFITS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

By: Robert Ingram, CCD

**M**ost of us have never seen Jack Rhodes speechless and may never again—but it happened about 9:15 p.m. on Tuesday, May 21, 2002, in the middle of Jack's rebuttal speech.

The exact person who persuaded a Hilton Hotel employee to begin sweeping the floor in front of the podium during Jack's talk is a closely guarded secret, but the ploy worked and probably shortened Jack's speech by at least two hours.

The 120 or so attendees were treated to verbal attacks which would make Mike Tyson shutter, but also witnessed a heartwarming tribute to one of Mississippi's finest economic developers (no, not you Mitch) and one of the profession's true gentlemen, Jack (of course) on both counts. Even Lucien Bourgeois, Jim Miller, and Charleigh Ford combined could not diminish Jack's character and accomplishments. And a wonderful video produced by the Electric Power Associations of Mississippi revealed that Jack could have been a stand-in for Gomer Pyle and other legends, as well as was the first "Rhodes Scholar."

The Electric Power Associations of Mississippi were the "Presenting Sponsor" and were joined by 21 others including MEDC. Net proceeds should be approximately \$15,000 with half of that going to an endowment fund to provide tuition assistance to Mississippi economic developers desiring to take courses or obtain degrees in USM's economic development education programs. The remainder will pay for a 2002-2003 scholarship, and research support in the USM E.D. Master's program, to be awarded in Jack's name. The President of MEDC will serve on the committee to choose recipients.

A scrapbook of letters written by friends and economic developers was presented to Jack at the Roast. Thanks to all of you who attended or sent donations, and to everyone who contributed letters. We hope to make the Roast an annual event, which will both honor a long time Mississippi economic developer and raise funds to help provide a formal economic development education to present and future Mississippi economic developers.

### VOLUNTEERS CONTINUED

- Rebecca Blackwell Drake, nominated by Mayor Isla Tullio - Raymond
- Jeff Dungan, nominated by Marion County Economic Development District
- Thomas Johnson, nominated by Madison County Economic Development Authority
- Oscar R. Jordan, nominated by Jackson County Economic Development Foundation
- Aldo Morelli, nominated by Harrison County Development Commission
- Danny C. Williams, nominated by Madison County Foundation
- Jimmy Williams, nominated by Southwest Regional Office - Mississippi Development Authority
- Jimmy Willis, nominated by Grenada Chamber of Commerce

## MISSISSIPPI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

ARE LIMITLESS...

By: Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr, CED

Executive Director, Mississippi Development Authority

**M**ississippi has been on a fast track for economic development. New companies have broken ground and existing companies are expanding. We at the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) are excited about the opportunities available to Mississippi. Success has taken many paths, from the continued progress of the Nissan plant in Madison County, to the reorganizing of the Alcoa plant in Hernando, to the creation of a virtually odorless paint at the

University of Southern Mississippi. And our possibilities are limitless.

Recruiting new business or helping existing companies expand depends on the strength of the community leadership. Economic development partnerships that focus on industries' needs will generate an environment conducive to job creation and business retention. Through strategies and long-term planning initiatives, we can prepare our communities and our citizens for growth and improved wealth.

Ensuring that communities across Mississippi have the programs and services necessary to attract and retain business is at the very heart of MDA's purpose. We know that our communities compete with neighboring states, nationwide and even globally for the creation of meaningful jobs. By promoting our strengths, our competitiveness, and our people, we raise awareness of Mississippi's favorable business climate, and the success so many companies have achieved.