

Acknowledgments

BOOK AUTHORS seem to thank their spouses last. But this one thanks hers first. It would be impossible for a mother of two young children who has a full-time job to write a book, unless the working mother is married to the likes of Aaron Hoover. Aaron cheerfully engaged our son, Will, who was one year old when I completed the master's thesis that led to this work, and our daughter, Drew, who was one when I turned in the manuscript, for hundreds of hours so that I could complete *Mirage*. Many of those hours were snowy and gray: Aaron took an academic year off his own career track to care for our family in Ann Arbor, Michigan, while I conducted research and interviews during a journalism fellowship.

Aaron is also my first, last, and most trusted editor. As a science writer credentialed in both the classics and fisheries, his brain is full of fascinating facts. It was Aaron who told me Florida's springs were a source of inspiration for one of the most famous poems in the English language, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Most tales of water shortage in a land of plenty quote Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner": "Water, water, every where, Nor any drop to drink." Thanks to Aaron, I get to quote "Kubla Khan" instead. Also for making sure Will and Drew

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had fun and square meals while their mom was hunched over a laptop, I thank my aunt Mindy Blum, my father-in-law, Paul Hoover, and my mother-in-law, Jane Toby, as adept an editor as a “Nonna.”

Next I thank the two groups of professionals with the greatest value relative to appreciation in American culture: newspaper reporters and librarians. *Mirage* was much enriched by librarians and their treasures, from historic maps to hand-edited political speeches, at the University of Florida, Florida State University, the Florida State Archives, the University of Michigan, and the University of North Carolina. And, while I score some scoops in these pages, I also rely on daily newspaper reporting by fellow journalists. Floridians are particularly lucky to have Craig Pittman at the *St. Petersburg Times*, Robert King at the *Palm Beach Post*, and Bruce Ritchie at the *Tallahassee Democrat*, all longtime environmental reporters who serve as watchdogs for Florida’s land and water. Thanks to Ritchie, citizens know that our water-quality laws do not go far enough to protect springs. Thanks to King, we know when elected officials renege on promises to restore the Everglades. Thanks to Pittman and Matthew Waite’s powerful series, “Vanishing Wetlands,” regulators and judges in Florida finally began standing up to extraordinary political pressure to stop the rampant draining and filling of the state’s last wetlands. *Mirage* is meant to build upon the work of the journalists, historians, scientists, and others named in the bibliography and endnotes. I am grateful to each one of them.

Another three men who know and care for Florida are those who made up my thesis committee at the University of Florida, where I earned a master’s degree in environmental history in 2003. I thank historian David R. Colburn for convincing me that population growth is the single most important story in Florida, and for giving me so much of his time even while he was university provost. I am grateful to Mark T. Brown, an environmental engineer with a passion for Florida history, so aptly nicknamed the Swamp Doctor. And I thank Julian M. Pleasants, who oversees a treasure chest of modern Florida history at UF’s Samuel Proctor Oral History Program.

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Of course, the opinions and conclusions drawn in these pages are not those of my employer or my editors, my sources, my professors, or anyone else thanked here. They are all my own. And so are any mistakes.