



# Machine-Gun Al Asks Questions in Rapid Fire

## Dedicated S. Fla. Superintendent Receives FGCSA President's Award

BY ROBERT G. KLITZ, CGCS Golf Hollywood

So who is Al Ross? When asked directly he said, "Al Ross is a realist who says what's on his mind. Hopefully people will view this as honesty. He is loyal, sincere, and helpful." He gave a very accurate self description.

Here is a man who has dedicated the past 19 years of his life to the Sunrise Country Club and at least 14 years of service to the South Florida GCSA. I will not be discussing the mowing height of Al's greens; his weed-control program; or what color annuals he plants at the clubhouse. I will be providing some insight into the real person that we in South Florida affectionately call "Machine-Gun Al."

When you meet Al in person, he is friendly but somewhat distant. He will shake your hand, grunt a greeting acknowledging of your presence, and then look away if not immediately engaged in a conversation. But, if you possess information that interests him, be prepared for an interrogation of rapid-fire intensity.

Al will stare at your face, study your expressions, and pump every last bit of information out of you until every important aspect has been revealed, and you

have strongly stated your case.

Al's interrogations approach the intensity of a detective grilling a perpetrator. Your voice will tremble, beads of sweat will roll

and accurately, and be prepared to support your statements. Don't be surprised. This is actually how Al treats all of his friends!

Al's experience in turf

and then decided on golf course turf management. During summers Al worked at the school for faculty members, Drs. Bing and Hyde. After receiving his degree, Al decided to move to Florida and get a job on a golf course.

When informed that Al was moving to Florida, his mother was obviously concerned that he might move in with her in New Port Richey. So she visited Fred Tucker at Timber Oaks Golf Club and told him that Al was moving to Florida with a degree in turf and that he was looking for a job on a golf course. Tucker contacted Harvey Phillips at the Biltmore Belleview G.C., Dan Hall at Countryside C.C., and Chuck McCracken at Beacon Woods.

Al left Long Island on a Saturday, arrived in Florida on Sunday, closed on a house on Monday, started looking for work on Thursday, was hired at Beacon Woods on Friday and started work the following Monday. That is typical Al Ross intensity.

Al started at Beacon Woods as the assistant superintendent and worked there for five years. Beacon Woods was at the early construction stage, so he had the opportunity to work through grow-in. Al received his first superintendent's job at Inverness where he stayed for two and one half years.

Al then moved to Sunrise C.C. as superintendent and has remained there for the past 19 years.

down your temple, and the questions will be drilled relentlessly. Don't be alarmed. Al really is a warm, friendly person. But give him the information he wants, give it to him quickly

started at Farmingdale State University in Long Island, N.Y. He was searching for a major that would include his love for working outdoors. He tried horticulture and sod production,

## Machine Gun Al's Bullet Points for Young Bucks

### Work Ethic

- Take your time and enjoy your experiences
- Don't expect to go anywhere fast.
- Be loyal to your employer.
- If your job performance and results impress your boss, greater opportunities will develop for you.
- Focus on the benefits of long term employment.

### Association Involvement

- Fellowship and relationships.
- Education.
- It is your duty to make a commitment to your local chapter, and to help out in any way possible.
- If you are a veteran superintendent with years of experience, you have a responsibility to help out the assistants and inexperienced superintendents by sharing your knowledge and experiences.

### Most Significant Accomplishments

- Tree Program - Removing exotics such as Australian Pine and melaleuca and replacing them with native trees.
- Installing computer controlled irrigation system.
- Greens renovation and development of a master plan in 1994 with golf course architect Chuck Ankrom.
- Negotiations with developer of surrounding property which resulted in drainage enhancements, additional waterways and a long term financial commitment.
- Installation of two extra holes that permit 18 holes of golf to be played, when any other two greens are under renovation or aerification.





1999 FGCSA President's Award winner Al Ross, CGCS, Sunrise G.C. was recognized by the South Florida Chapter for his 13 years of service. Photo by Bob Klitz.

Al refers to himself as "The Certified Golf Course Superintendent at Sunrise Country Club," but over the years his responsibilities have grown to include serving in a general manager's capacity. While he oversees all aspects of the golf operation, his focus remains on the golf course itself.

Al's commitment to the South Florida GCSA began in 1986. He was offered the glamorous role of chapter shirt salesman for his first year of duty.

He dragged the big cardboard boxes to every meeting, set up his display table, sold one or two shirts, and then dragged everything back to the car.

He did all this without a single complaint. This was

his assignment, his duty, and he performed it to the best of his ability. Al moved forward through all the officer positions and served as president of the SFGCSA in 1991-92.

He continues to serve on the board, currently assisting with education, and will remain as long as his services are requested. Al feels a need to contribute to an organization that has provided such a positive influence on his career, and his performance as a superintendent.

He feels that the exposure to new ideas at the monthly meetings are an invaluable source of information. He has consistently returned to his club after chapter meetings with money-saving ideas

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that have had an impact on the club's bottom line. One such occasion was after a presentation by a private insurance carrier. Al was able to make insurance-plan adjustments that earned significant savings for his club.

Through all these years Al has shared many experiences with his friends and peers.

His most rewarding experiences on the job include receiving compliments from golfers and reading newspaper articles about someone who played Sunrise and enjoyed the experience.

Having spent nearly half of his life maintaining Sunrise, Al deeply appreciates the recognition for the extra effort that he and his staff put in on a daily basis.

Al has participated in many local and national superintendent events during the last 20 years. He enjoys renewing old friendships at the GCSAA conference and show, and late-night conversations after the day's formal education has ended.

Al's favorite local SFGCSA event is the annual benefit golf tournament for The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Al will only play golf if he is forced to. What Al lacks in golfing ability, he makes up for in entertainment value on the golf course. Al enjoys this event because it makes him feel good about contributing to a worthy cause and helping the children in our community.

Al resides in Coral Springs with his wife

Candace and his son Alfred. Al and Candace have been married 28 years and also have two daughters, Courtney and Melissa, and a 6-month old granddaughter Aaliyah. Al's interests include fishing, boating on his 18-foot Bayliner and traveling throughout the USA.

Al has enjoyed his long-term employment at Sunrise, and his career in the golf course industry. His goal is to stay in the business for another 20 years, and remain loyal to the club that has supported him. That is Al Ross, CGCS.

FGCSA BOARD/ANNUAL MEETING

**Board OKs Budget, Employee Plan, Considers Web Site**

**I**n conjunction with the Central Florida GCSA's Larry Kamphaus-Crowfoot Open, the FGCSA held its summer board meeting and annual meeting at the



*Chris Leahy, left and Richard Colyer, right from Golf Agronomics Supply and Handling present Past President Mike Perham, CGCS with a \$3,000 check for the FGCSA Research Account. Photo by Joel Jackson*

Grand Cypress Conference Center in Orlando July 31. Since the FGCSA's fiscal year ends on June 30 each year, the first order of business was to approve the 1999-2000 operating budget.

Included in the new budget was a new employee wage and benefits program that was approved to cover the association's two fulltime employees, Marie

Roberts, association manager and Joel Jackson, director of communications.

Also discussed were education expenses; internal control review by our CPA; government and public relations; the 2000 FGCSA Reception in New Orleans; Florida Green ad rate increase; \$25,000 donation to the FTGA Research Foundation; \$500 sponsor-



*FGCSA officers for 1999-2000 from left: Secretary/Treasurer Geoff Coggan, CGCS; Vice President Cary Lewis, CGCS; President Darren Davis; and Past President Mike Perham, CGCS. Photo by Joel Jackson.*