



# Machine-Gun Al Asks Questions in Rapid Fire

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

BY ROBERT G. KLITZ, CGCS  
Golf Hollywood

**S**o 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.*

ship of the Etonic Seminars at the FTGA Conference and Show; official notification of a new local chapter, the Calusa Chapter; and continued funding of the shared lobbyist with the FTGA.

The FGCSA will continue to support the GCSAA Platinum Club and the Musser Foundation with annual donations and its five-year commitment to the GCSAA Foundation.

Richard Coyler and Chris Leahy from Golf Agronomics were on hand to present a \$3,000 donation to the FGCSA Research Account. This donation from GASH's profits-rebate program brings the company's participation to a total of \$36,000 over the

past several years. The board expressed gratitude to Dale Mitchell and Richard Coyler on behalf of all those who benefit from GASH's continued generosity and support.

The FGCSA also approved a motion to explore the proposal by Jared Grigg to establish a Florida GCSA website. The only obligation to the FGCSA will be to provide current information to the webmaster maintaining the site. Darren Davis, Gary Grigg and Joel Jackson will serve on the Website Committee to get it started and provide all chapters with a list of features to be included on the site.

Immediately following the summer board meeting,

the annual meeting was convened for the election of new officers. The FGCSA Officers were pleased with the 100 percent representation by all Chapters. The new executive council for 1999-2000: Darren Davis, GCS, president; Cary Lewis, CGCS, vice president; Geoff Coggan, CGCS, secretary/treasurer; and Mike Perham, past president.

New directors coming on the board: Brett Harris, Central Florida; Ed Neumann, North Florida; John Van Vranken, Sun-coast; and Eric Joy, West Coast.

Continuing members of the board: Doug Abbuhl, Coastal Plains; Gary Grigg, CGCS, Everglades; David Court, CGCS, Palm Beach;

Roy Wilshire, CGCS, Ridge; Buddy Keene, Seven Rivers; Jim Goins, South Florida; and Craig Weyandt, Treasure Coast.

CENTRAL FLORIDA GCSA

## Kamphaus Crowfoot Draws Record Field; Delaney Honored


A record 172 players teed it up on the North, South, and East nines at the Grand Cypress Club in Orlando for the 23rd Larry Kamphaus Crowfoot Open. A Stableford points scoring system was used and most players finished their rounds in less than five hours.

Tom Alex and his staff plus the Golf Operations staff had everything ready

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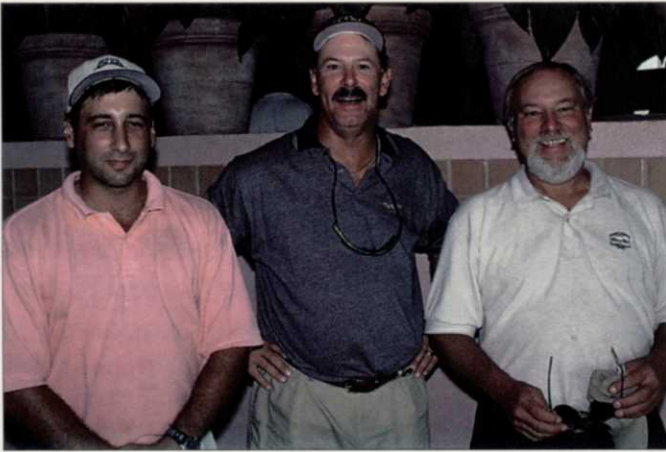
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The West Coast Chapter walked off with the Low Net Team Championship at the 1999 Crowfoot Open. Team members are: (l-r) Tony Joanow, Avila G&CC; Mike Blanchard, Westin Innisbrook Resort and Buddy Carmouche, CGCS, Palma Ceia G&CC. Photo by Joel Jackson.

to go for the 8 o'clock shotgun start on the first Monday morning of August.

Central Florida's Hal Richburg, Heathrow CC shot a sizzling 73 on a sweltering hot day to win



Hal Richburg, superintendent of the Heathrow CC, captured the Crowfoot Open Low Gross trophy and a spot on the FGCSA team at the GCSAA Championship. Photo by Joel Jackson.

low gross honors and a spot on the FGCSA team at the GCSAA tournament to be held in Mobile, Ala. this year. Kevin Rotti, Errol Estates CC, was second with a 74, followed by Paul Bondeson, Jr., Mariner Sands CC, in third with a 75.

In the net points division, the winner was Mike Blanchard, Innisbrook Resort with plus 10. Second was Tony Joanow, Avila G&CC. Ray Cuzzone, Bartow GC picked up third place. The strong showing by Mike and Tony led the West Coast Chapter in capturing the Crowfoot Open Team Trophy. Buddy Carmouche, Palma Ceia CC and Dave Datema, Disney's Magnolia GC rounded out the West Coast team.

In the Commercial Divisions, Jim Staub took first place low gross ahead of Dick Bessire who nudged out Troy Parker in a match of cards. Todd Perkins was first in the net division after matching cards with John

Gamble. Fred Marshall finished third.

A special thank-you to the record number of sponsors that helped make this year's event such a great success. Kudos also to Tom Alex's administrative assistant, Lisa Richards, and her parents Jan and Robert Lloyd for their help in staging the event and preparing the sponsor board. A big hand for course superintendent, Tom Diggins his assistants Jeff Clark and Andy Smith and staff for having the course in its usual immaculate condition. Special thanks to golf professional Ryan Kidwell for helping to score the results of the tournament.

The 1999 Crowfoot Committee was: Chairman Tom Alex; Vilma Kamphaus; Dwight Kummer; Joel Jackson; Stuart Leventhal; Joe Ondo; Lisa Richards; Jan Lloyd; and Bob Lloyd.

### Crowfoot Banquet

Crowfoot luck held out as the scheduled poolside banquet on Sunday got a tentative start while severe thunderstorms lurked around the Grand Cypress property. Only a couple of miles away as the crow flies, the Lake Buena Vista area was getting pummeled by 1.75 inches of rain. After a few feeble sprinkles, the party got under way.

The highlight of the banquet was the presentation of the Larry Kamphaus Award. The award was instituted to honor the memory of longtime Crowfoot chairman and Disney superintendent Larry



Don Delaney of Golf Ventures, Inc. was named the 1999 Larry Kamphaus Award winner at the Sunday night Crowfoot banquet. Delaney received an engraved crystal bowl and a David Pursell commemorative drawing of Larry. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Kamphaus, who passed away in 1997. Larry and his wife Vilma co-chaired the Crowfoot committee for 13 years, and Larry was with the Walt Disney Company for 27 years.

Each year now the selection committee looks for a Central Florida member who depicts loyalty and tenure with his employer, service to his profession, and dedication to family and community.

This year's winner was caught by surprise when he was announced. Don Delaney, former superintendent and president of the FGCSA, was practically speechless when his name was called. Delaney is now with Golf Ventures, Inc. Delaney's name was inscribed on two crystal bowls, one that goes with him and



Ridge Chapter members from left, Ray Cuzzone, Alan Puckett, Jeff Brown, Tom Barnett and Mark Hopkins pose with guest of honor Aaron Bledsoe and his new bike at their July meeting.

provided the labor to install it so Aaron's new bike can be kept secured.

On July 22, 1999 Aaron Bledsoe was the guest of honor at the Ridge Chapter's July meeting at Puckett's course where he and his mom thanked the Ridge Chapter for helping them coordinate the efforts and funds that came in to help Aaron. Later Puckett took Aaron on a golf cart tour of his course to show him some alligators.

Puckett said, "Aaron asked me if I had a bike. I told him I did. He asked me if I would come over and ride with him some time. What a neat kid! He has great spirit and he doesn't let his condition stop him from living life to the fullest.

"I was at Aaron's house when they delivered the new bike. When he was trying it out in the carport there was one spot where he got hung up trying to turn. When I got him clear and he looked up at me and said, 'Thank you, Mr. Puckett!' I got teary eyed.

the other that resides at the Kamphaus home.

RIDGE GCSA

### 8 Chapters Join to Replace Stricken Boy's Stolen Bike

Alan Puckett, GCS at the Lake Region Y&CC in Winter Haven, spearheaded an effort to right a wrong in his community. Alan read a story in the local newspaper about a young boy afflicted with spina bifida who had his new bicycle stolen from his front yard.

Alan called the paper, the Lakeland Ledger, to see if something was being done to replace the bike for 8-year-old Aaron Bledsoe. Alan put out a call for donations from FGCSA

chapters and the Central Florida, Everglades, North Florida, Palm Beach, Seven Rivers, Treasure Coast and West Coast chapters each responded with \$100. Through his inquiries and interest and a follow-up story in the Ledger, the Sunshine Fund became involved and not only replaced the bike, but did so with a specially built three-wheeler customized for spina bifida patients.

With the donations in hand, Puckett asked Debbie Bledsoe if Aaron had any other special needs that could be met with the funds. Mrs. Bledsoe mentioned that Aaron could use a special wheelchair to help him get around on shopping trips and outings. The Ridge

Chapter then partnered with the Bledsoe's insurance company to provide the wheelchair, using the donations to help defray the cost. In addition, Puckett purchased a utility shed and



Host superintendent Steve Pearson, CGCS, left and Palm Beach Chapter President Chip Fowkes, right present UF turf coordinator, Dr. John Cisar, with a check for ultradwarf BMP research at the 1999 Future of Golf tournament at the Falls CC. Photo by Joel Jackson.



People said I was big hearted. My answer was no! I got angry and just did something about it."

**PALM BEACH CHAPTER**

**Future of Golf Event Raises \$25,000**

Each year the Palm Beach Chapter holds its annual Future of Golf fund raiser for turf research, local charities and junior golf programs.

This year the event was held June 5 at the Falls CC in West Palm Beach. Host Steve Pearson, CGCS was bound and determined to make it a success and he triumphed.

The event netted \$25,000 and the Palm Beach Chapter pledged

\$15,000 over the next two years to fund Dr. John Cisar's best management practices research on several varieties of the new ultradwarf bermuda-grasses.

The research will be conducted on the FGCSA's Otto Schmeisser Research Green at the University of Florida Research and Education Center in Fort Lauderdale.

**COASTAL PLAINS CHAPTER**

**Tallahassee Tourney Raises \$6,500**

Florida's Panhandle may lack the large numbers of golf courses found farther south on the peninsula, but the spirit in this Tallahassee-based



1999 Coastal Plains Classic Committee heads up effort that earned \$6,500 for turf research. From left: Mike Bishop, Southern States, Inc.; Bill Kollar, FSU; Bill Humphrey, Lesco, Inc.; Geri Buchheit, Killlearn CC and Mike McNamara, Cross Creek GC. Photo by Joel Jackson.

chapter is just as big.

Celebrating their Fourth annual Coastal Plains Classic at the Golden Eagle CC this year, two-man teams pairing superintendents, golf pros and suppliers played a scramble.

The chapter raised \$6,500 for turf research at the University of Florida's Research and Education Center in Milton, near Pensacola, and at Georgia's Coastal Plains Research Station in Tifton, Ga.

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SOUTH FLORIDA GCSA

*Hutton received the Dick Pope Horticulture Man of the Year Award in 1968. Only 12 other people have received this distinguished award. Hutton is a charter member of the Florida Nursery Growers Association and the Florida Turfgrass Association from which he received the prestigious Wreath of Grass award in 1974.*

*Photo by Joe Dougherty*

## Meet John Hutton, Legendary Florida Horticulturalist

John Hutton has been somewhat of a mystery to his peers. A very humble and gentle Scotsman looking a score younger than his 80 years, John Hutton has made legendary contributions to the landscape of Florida, including golf courses.

Hutton was born in Oyster Bay, NY in August of 1919 in the same neighborhood as Teddy Roosevelt. A third-generation horticulturalist, he had his formal education at Cornell University Agricultural Extension in New York. His grandfather was put on loan from Kew Gardens, London and commissioned by Queen Victoria to landscape the Sultan of India's palace in Jahore, Malaysia, where his father was born in 1881. By special invitation, Hutton got to see his grandfather's work in 1981 with his grandfather's original field notes in hand.

Hutton came to Florida in 1946 after World War II to do the landscape architecture on some very exclusive Palm Beach and Miami Beach homes. His work was much admired, which led to some big contracts during the hotel development era in Miami Beach and Fort Lauderdale in the 1950s and 1960s. He had landscape contracts at

the Fountainbleu, Eden Roc, Seville, Pier 66, Doral and many other hotels and resorts.

Hutton's first golf course project was at the Diplomat Hotel and Country Club. Across the Intracoastal Waterway from the hotel was swamp land in 1956. A million and one half yards of fill was required for the Diplomat project, which was the second-largest landfilled area of its kind in Florida surpassed only by the Jacksonville Air Force Base.

Red Lawrence was the course architect, and Hutton still cares for the property to this day. In 1962, Hutton replanted nearly 1,100 oak trees for the Diplomat Presidential Course designed by Mark Mahannah, and only lost 50 trees. The rest are still standing today and can be seen on the east side of Interstate 95 near Ives Dairy Road.

Hutton received the Dick Pope Horticulture Man of the Year Award in 1968. Only 12 other people have received this distinguished award. Hutton was a charter member of the Florida Nursery Growers Association and the Florida Turfgrass Association from which he received the prestigious Wreath of Grass award in 1974. In 1962, Hutton helped Joe Konwinski host the NGCSA party and outing given

by Al Kaskel, developer of the Doral complex where he was helping golf course architects Joe Lee and Dick Wilson develop the courses.

Hutton is currently working with his old friend Joe Lee on the grow-in of the redesigned Diplomat with Nugent Golf Course Construction. During my visit to the course July 19, golf course superintendent Damian Loughran had assembled his new crew to begin the fine mowing on the project which began in October 1998 which included tear down, redesign, irrigation, etc. It's estimated that the course will be ready by December 1999, well ahead of completion of the hotel's renovation. A tour of the course with Loughran indicated that it will be challenging to all levels of golfers. The clubhouse construction is underway and will contain a spa. It's seems larger and just as majestic as the Taj Mahal!

We greatly appreciate John Hutton's accomplishments and contributions to the horticulture industry of Florida. Hutton will be formally honored at a future South Florida Chapter meeting.

*Joe Dougherty  
Hollybrook G&T*