



# Rock On, Uncle Freddy!

*The Uncle Freddy Band rocks at a Memorial Day barbecue in Casselberry.*

*By Joel Jackson*

All work and no play can make Jack a dull superintendent. One group of superintendents has found a unique way to unwind and relieve the stress of maintaining manicured Central Florida golf courses. They get together once a week and have a jam session playing classic rock music for their own enjoyment and decompression. Occasionally they perform publicly at the Kerryman's Pub in Altamonte Springs and at a couple of private parties. But the main goal is just jamming for the fun of it.

The Uncle Freddy Band, as they are known, is the result of a road-tripping bull session between Lake Nona superintendent Brett Harris and John Kopack, then superintendent of the Legacy Club at Alaquá. They were on a holy pilgrimage to golf's Mecca, Augusta National, in 2002 when they discovered they had a common love for music.

Both had been involved in bands years ago. Harris no longer owned a drum set and hadn't played in nearly 12 years. But the musical conversations continued back in Orlando over beers after Central Florida Chapter monthly meetings. Soon Jack Kress, the superintendent at The Alaquá Club, and his mechanic, Steve Kulka, became regulars in the bull sessions until they finally agreed to meet and just goof around.

They drew from Blues, R&B and classic rock performers like Elvis, Joe Walsh, Stevie

Ray Vaughan among others to create a play list. By mid-2003 they had 25 songs they could play reasonably well. Well enough that, after a year of weekly Friday jam/practice sessions they made their public debut at the Central Florida Superintendent/Vendor Tournament in February 2004 at Deltona Hills. Originally they called themselves "Supt-Up" (Souped Up), but later changed the name to The Uncle Freddy Band.

Subsequent appearance offers didn't come rolling in, but John Kopack's favorite watering hole, the Kerryman's Pub agreed to let them perform under the beer tent in the parking lot on St. Patrick's Day. They have done a couple of gigs at Kerryman's. It was Brett on drums, Jack Kress and Steve Kulka on lead and rhythm guitars, John on vocals and a mean tambourine and Wayne from the Kerryman's on bass guitar.

Wayne moved on a short time later and Mike Hamilton, head mechanic from the Ventura Golf Club, filled in on bass for awhile and is still the group's sound man. It turned out that Mike Dean, John's assistant superintendent at the Legacy Club also played bass and, according to Brett, may be the most talented musician of the bunch.

The musical influences within the group are Jack (Blues), Steve (Classic Rock) and Mike (Master of improvising). Brett says, "Wherever we perform we need a little room for the sonic blast. The mashers definitely outnumber the finesse boys." While the group has concentrated on covering tunes from known bands,

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Steve has been writing some original songs for the band.

The group used to practice in John's office in the golf course maintenance building, and then they moved into a vacant rental home until it was, duh, rented. Now the fun-loving, stress-relieving turf gurus meet weekly in an un-air-conditioned warehouse in Altamonte Springs. They drag out some fans and a barbecue grill and have steaks or ribs while jamming on a Friday night. Coincidentally it turns out this warehouse complex is also the practice home to several area pro bands. Who knew?

The group has no aspirations for a professional music career. They like to perform in public to get the crowd feedback and maybe help defray some expenses, but they are content to mostly play for themselves for the fun and relaxation on Friday nights. Rock on!