

## **The Chronicles Of Southwest Florida Sportsman's Association**

By Roy John Fuller

The Southwest Florida Sportsman's Association of 2018 is an aggregate of many determined club Presidents, range committees and hard working club volunteers. Motivated by a desire to exercise their second amendment rights and acquire an adequate range location. From the club's humble beginnings in the early 1980's as the Cape Coral Sportsman's Association to the present day thirty five acre shooting complex located on Oil Well Rd in Punta Gorda, the club has undergone numerous iterations. In the early years the club competed at the Cape Coral police range, located behind the Cape Coral Reverse Osmosis Plant until it closed. Later the club and the ISPC River Rats shared a range owned by Carl Hanson located on Zemel road. In 1994 the club name is changed to the Southwest Florida Sportsman's Association and the club purchases the property off Oil Well Rd.

The club uses several meeting locations from the Police Auxiliary on 47<sup>th</sup> Terrace to Powell's Restaurant in Cape Coral and presently the Nauti Parrot located in North Fort Myers.

The club's Articles Of Incorporation states: *“the purpose of the club is to encourage organized rifle and pistol shooting among the citizens of the United States, residents of the community, with a view toward better knowledge on the part of such citizens of the safe handling and proper care and use of such firearms, and to encourage other sporting activities including fishing and archery and to enhance the development of those characteristics of honesty, good fellowship, self-discipline, team play, and self reliance which are the essentials of good sportsmanship and the foundation of true patriotism.”*

The club amenities continues to expand under the club's executive leadership with plans for a 300 yard and a cowboy range. The club access road has always been a problem in the summer due to heavy rain and hurricanes force winds. Future plans call for a new private access highway.

## **Club Presidents And Their Achievements:**

**1980's.** - The club begins as the Cape Coral sportsman Association. Much of the early history of the club is lost as many of the pioneers of the club have passed away. One name mentioned during the earlier years in 1988 was Jim Brockmeyer, a former Sergeant At Arms and possible President for the club.

**1992.** Mark Lewis is elected President. Mark is credited with marketing and expanding the clubs membership.

**1993 - 1999.** John Pancari is elected President. The Southwest Florida Sportsman's Association is founded. Until February of 1994 the club shares the Carl Hanson range on Zemel Rd. With John's leadership ten acres is purchased off of Oil Well Rd. in Punta Gorda. John manages to secure a seven year bank loan in February of 1995 for thirty thousand dollars to purchase the ten acres. He supervises the construction of two twenty five yard ranges on the property. The club's four hundred strong membership is divided over the bank loan and drops to approximately eighty five. Many of the former members do not share the club's vision of owning an exclusive range and move to the Hanson range.

A couple years into the loan John suggests the members invest in the range and establishes investment blocks of five hundred dollars. Each member can purchase up to two thousand dollars and is promised a payback in five years with accumulated interest. Under John's responsible financial leadership the club manages to pay the investors back in only three years. Now the club owns the range outright. The twenty one members that invest in the range are now honored on a plaque at the range. During this time the range is very primitive with no permanent shooting positions. John's legacy is acquiring the original range property, paying for the property and paving the way for the club to have it's own range.

**2000 -2002.** Allan Whitman is elected President. Allan's first order of business is to get portable toilets installed and a perimeter fence around the ten acre range. He supervises the construction of a one hundred meter range to replace bay two and a twenty five meter pistol range on bay three. The sixty five yard range on bay one receives improved drainage and higher berms. Allan develops a Master Plan with a range committee and institutes many of the initial range improvements during his term as President.

**2003.** Bob Reid is drafted as President for a one year term. Unfortunately no historical information is available for 2003.

**2004.** John Pancari is elected for his eight year as President. John has the entire range covered with four inches of gravel and the access road covered with two inches of gravel. He also inventories the club assets and stores them in a rental storage facility.

**2005 - 2008.** Lee Hampe is elected President. Lee's legacy is purchasing the three abutting land parcels on the western boundary doubling the club's property to twenty acres. The parcels provide a buffer zone between the firing line and the western neighbors.

**2009 - 2017.** John Trotta is elected President for eight years. In July of 2013, John requests a special exception from Charlotte County to allow an additional fifteen acres to the private recreation facility zoned as pistol, rifle, shot-gun and archery ranges. John discusses the roof baffles and how bullets cannot go over the berm. He also discusses the retrieval of the lead bullets and the process involved.

**2018** - David Gardiner is elected President.

\* **Footnotes:** Many thanks to John Pancari for agreeing to be interviewed and providing much of the club history from 1993 to 2000. Also thanks to Allan Whitman's prior club history from which much of this information was collated.

\*\* **About the author** - Roy is a retired electrical engineer, author of short stories, and a watercolor artists. His work can be viewed at [www.RoyJohnFuller.com](http://www.RoyJohnFuller.com) & [www.RoyFuller.com](http://www.RoyFuller.com). Follow Roy on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Linked In](#), [Pinterest](#), [Tumblr](#), [Google](#) & [Yahoo](#) with hash tag (#) RoyJohnFuller.