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2021 CLAYBIRD CONTRIBUTORS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Kevin Dougherty

MANAGING EDITOR
Jonathan Myers

STAFF WRITER
Robert Sawyer

DESIGN EDITOR
C2-Studios, Inc.

PHOTOS
Jonathan Myers
Israel Curran

HOURS OF OPERATION

Wednesday – Friday: 12:00pm to dusk
Saturdays – 9:00am to dusk
Sundays – 9:00am to 6:00pm

6700 McHard Road,
Houston, Texas 77053
www.greaterhoustonclub.com
(281) 437-6025



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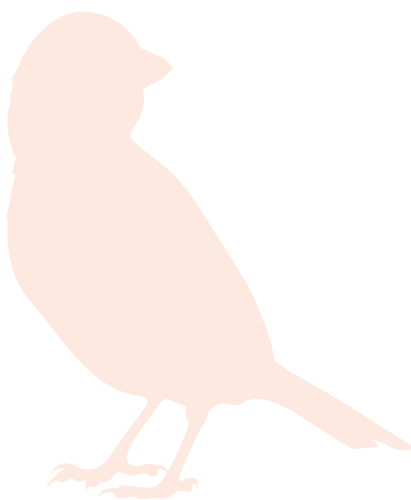


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Clubhouse Corner

BY JONATHAN MYERS

I imagine many of our members are somewhat relieved to put 2020 in their rear-view mirrors, so to speak. As the GHSC team looks back on 2020, we remain humbled by your support, grateful for your friendship, and excited about the journey ahead. It's one we'll make together.

One way that Greater Houston Sports Club (GHSC) is celebrating the New Year is with a new, innovative *Clay Bird* format. We're taking our popular *Clay Bird* online this year! *The Clay Bird* 2021 plan for this, already our fifth volume, is to publish them quarterly throughout the 2021 calendar year. Our goal with the format change is to bring you the most current club information with fresh, exciting content all year long.

We hope you enjoy the new *Clay Bird*! Here's to the New Year, and here's to you!





The Grant Ilseng photo that hangs on the wall of the Greater Houston Sports Club.

The Grant Ilseng Story

BY R.K. SAWYER

You probably see him each time you visit Greater Houston Sports Club, well at least his picture, prominently displayed in the main club room. It's Grant Ilseng, and what you may not know is why it's there. In part, it's that Grant Ilseng was one of the 100 founding Greater Houston Gun Club members, and one of its most celebrated shooting coaches. But there is a lot more to the "why." This story is designed to answer the rest of the "why," as well as to enlighten, entertain, and maybe help to preserve the legend of one of America's greatest clay target shooters and sport statesmen.

One thing that set Grant apart from his contemporaries during his shooting career was how much he was liked and respected, even by his competitors. Sports writers, although they tried to be unbiased, couldn't easily hide that they nearly always favored Grant Ilseng. One outdoor writer remembered how "somewhere during [a competitive] shoot, no matter what his own score, you'd see him sidle over to a young shooter, put a heavy hand on a shoulder, and give some words of confidence." Grant may have been a gentleman, but on the field, he was fierce. Phrases like "crack shot," and "steel-nerved veteran" were used to describe him, and "pulverized the competition" to portray the outcome of his matches.

He was born Andrew Grant Ilseng Jr. in 1907 in Fort Worth to a father who worked in the mining

business. As a young boy his interest in shotgunning was likely sparked by shooting birds and rabbits in Central Texas, but there is no record of him ever shooting competitively. After graduating from University of Texas in the early 1930s he moved in Goldfield, Nevada, to work in the family mining company. By 1934 he was back in Austin and married Alma Farris Geer of Waco. Less than a year later the newlyweds moved to California, living in Los Angeles and Fresno after his father named him vice president of the Mt. Gaines Mining Company, located along the foothills of Yosemite National Park.

The Winning Years. Only Grant could tell us of the first time he shouldered a shotgun, who inspired him, or how much he practiced. Evidently, he was a proficient shooter before he was married, as one of his earliest competitive triumphs was as a member of the Santa Monica-based Gilmore Red Lion shooting team, the same year he wed. The meet was at the Remington Gun Club in Lordship, Connecticut for the Great Eastern Skeet Championships, at the time the country's oldest, largest, and most prestigious shoot. Apparently not expecting much from the upstart west coasters, the east coast establishment was a little dismayed when the Californian's took top team honors.

The big four annual shoots in the country during that golden era of skeet and trap were the National Skeet Shooting Championships; the Great Eastern Skeet

Championships held in Connecticut; the Grand Pacific International Trapshooting Championship, and the Grand American Trapshoot, held in Ohio. These were Grant's main shooting venues in the competitive playing field after his appearance at the Great Eastern until World War II.

Grant started the national circuit in 1936, when the 29-year old director of the International Mining and Milling Company was named Class C trapshooting champion at the Grand American, held in Ohio. As this event was only open to state title holders, although there is no record of it, he must have held a California State Champion title by 1935. The Class C champ headed next for St. Louis for his first National Skeet Shooting Championship. With a hard breeze and spitting rain, Grant managed a respectable third in the sub-gauge contest, and a tie for third in the All-Gauge event.

There was no stopping the California Gilmore Red Lion shooting team at the Nationals that year – or most to come for that matter – as they took the All-Gauge event team title. Members of the Red Lion Team fluctuated over time, but at its mid-1930s core was Grant, Harry Fleischman, Bobby Stack, and Alex Kerr. It was an impressive line-up, notable not just for their gunning prowess. Fleischman was of margarine fame, with Texas roots as a founding member of Rockport's Port Bay Club; Bobby Stack was later to be known as Hollywood icon Robert Stack, and Alex Kerr owned the Santa Monica Gun Club and a sports shop in posh Beverly Hills.

The next year, 1937, sportswriters across the county moved Grant from the bottom of their columns to their headers. Grant progressed to the A Class, and achieved some stunning wins. He tied for second place at the Grand Pacific International Championship Trapshoot in California, won the title of California State skeet shooting champion for a second time, and was crowned the Pacific Coast Champion of Champions in trap. More national recognition followed when Jimmy Robinson, trapshooting and

skeet editor of Sports Afield and the nation's leading advocate for clay target shooting, nominated him to the 1937 All-American Trapshooting Team. Jimmy and Grant developed a friendship that lasted both of their adult lives, and it was Jimmy who dubbed him "Big Grant," a name that followed him throughout his career.

By 1938 Grant was headed back to Ohio for the Grand American and to Oregon for the Pacific International trapshooting contest. In the former his score of 374x375 took second, missing first by one target, and he took a first place in the latter. The 1938 National Skeet Shooting Championship was held in Tulsa, and he was a force to be reckoned with. He tied for second in the All-Gauge after shooting a perfect 200x200 over two days, but lost the title spot by dropping a single target in the final round. Undeterred, he went on to take the winner laurels in the Two-Man event with Alex Kerr, their score of 498x500 setting a new national doubles record. But there was more to come; the Gilmore Red Lions won the National Team Championships, "continuing their spectacular assault on the records" by smashing 1,238 out of 1,250 targets for a new skeet team record. After the Nationals, Grant won the California State Skeet Championship, again, shooting a 100x100 in the finals. With only four years of competitive shooting under his belt, he was named captain of the 1938 All-American Skeet Team.

The records are incomplete, but in 1938 he either managed or became part-owner of Alex Kerr's Santa Monica Gun Club, a position he held until 1941. Among its members were "motion picture stars" Fred MacMurray, Clark Gable, and Gary Cooper. It was here that he earned his appellation as the "shooting coach of the stars," his students including John Wayne, Howard Hughes, John Barrymore, Carole Lombard, Ginger Rogers, Claudette Colbert, Don Ameche, Andy Devine, and Robert Taylor in addition to MacMurray, Gable, and Cooper. Grant initiated an inviolate rule at the Santa Monica club

– the lowest scoring skeet shooter each week was required to carry a red railroad lantern with him all day, every day, for seven days. MacMurray and Gable were sometimes recipients of the dubious award, and were known to haul the lantern with them to their movie sets.

***“Jimmy Robinson,
trapshooting and skeet
editor of Sports A Field and
the nation’s leading
advocate for clay target
shooting, nominated him to
the 1937 All-American
Trapshooting Team.”***

Grant was at the top of his game in 1939, but came close to losing it all. In January he and his father, both officers in the International Mining and Milling Company, were convicted of mail fraud. His father received a five-year federal prison term and Grant was sentenced to one-year. The convictions were overturned on appeal, and the case was later even heard by the Supreme Court. Grant would compete again, and 1939, despite a harrowing start, would be his year. He and Alex Kerr took the Pacific Coast Doubles Event in trap, held in Oregon, and they went on to win the Nationals in doubles skeet. Of four possible winner titles in California state championship trap, he took three; in singles, doubles, and All-Around. Grant's national "long run" record of 506 targets without a miss continued to go unchallenged.

It was east against west again in 1939 when the Gilmore Red Lion Team was invited back to

the Remington Gun Club for the Great Eastern Skeet Championships. Pundits of the day heavily favored the Hilltop Team of Boston, which the year before had broken the Gilmore Red Lion's world title score of 496x500 by two targets. But the Californians delivered an upset, winning the contest by three targets. Before the 1939 National Skeet Championships, held at the Pacific Rod and Gun Club in San Francisco, the Red Lions went through a roster change. The new team had impressive star power, made up of Hollywood's Fred MacMurray and Gary Cooper, with core shooters Grant Ileseng and Alex Kerr, but they managed only a fourth.

By 1940 Grant had won top California spots in both trap and skeet, had national wins, and set national records. He was nominated to the All-American Skeet Team three times, its captain twice, and the All-American Trap Team once. At the time, he was the only person to place on both the All-American Skeet and Trapshooting teams. Grant Ileseng also became a celebrity, signing on as Montgomery Ward spokesman for their line of hunting and shooting sporting goods.

Grant travelled the country for the next two years as Montgomery Ward's "jovial goodwill salesman," as one writer described him. Before each whistle stop local papers posted advertisements with his endorsements of Ward's sporting products along with his shooting clinic schedules. The clinics were advertised as "no admission" - unless you read the fine print. Admission was free only as long as you had proof of purchase for one 75-cent box of redhead shotgun shells. A big draw at the Montgomery Ward events was Grant's exhibition shooting, and it was impressive. At one show, he shot 49 out of 50 targets "from every angle, dusting doubles from the hip, turning the gun upside down," finally missing a single bird that was "a combination upside down from the hip shot."

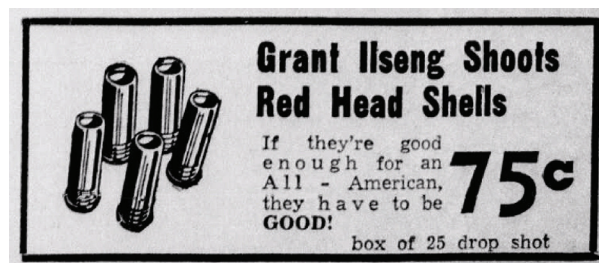
Grant abandoned the mining business by 1941, moving to Chicago to consult for Montgomery

Ward's sporting goods line and catalog business. Somewhat cynically, newspapers noted that, for the next several years, whenever Grant placed in tournament, he was shooting Ward's "mail order house ammo" instead of a name brand. His record that year was probably good for Ward's catalog ammunition business - he was the Interstate Challenge Flyer Cup Race trapshooting champ, and then went on to break three tournament skeet records at the Nationals held in Indianapolis, winning the HOA title and tied for second in the 20-gauge division.

Skeet competitions took a hiatus during World War II, with the last Nationals held during the war in 1942. The event was in Syracuse, and the outcome somewhat confusing. According to multiple sources he was named the 12-gauge champ, dropping only one bird. The official NSSA records, however, show it as LeRoy Childs, with a perfect 250. Grant competed in only one war time trap shoot, the Grand American, and took the Pro class crown with a 197x200. Most of his time was spent during the war traveling around the country to US Army Air Corps bases, where he instructed pilots on leading moving targets.

Competitive skeet returned in 1946 under the auspices of National Skeet Shooting Association, headquartered in Dallas. Grant was a stiff competitor in NSSA's first National Championship shoot, held in Indianapolis, but didn't title. In 1947 Grant moved to Waco. With the exception of annual showings at the National Skeet Championships, he began to wind down his national shooting, spending most of his competitive time, instead, on the Texas circuit. In his first entry into the Texas State Skeet Championships he won the HOA and the 20-gauge and All-Bore trophies, setting two state records along the way. He took a second in the Alamo shoot at San Antonio Gun Club that year. At the National Skeet Shooting Championships he took first place honors in the doubles event and was HOA runner-up, three targets behind his old friend Alex Kerr.

Montgomery Wards ads like this one ran for several years in the early 1940s, and next to such items as ladies zippered fall skirts for \$2.29, and Hawthorne bikes, complete with a safety light and horn, for only \$27.88.



Proof of purchase of a 75-cent box of mail order Red Head shotgun shells was the only price of admission to a Grant Ileng shooting clinic before World War II.

Ever the nomad, Grant moved to Houston in 1948. He stayed for the next 40 years. He was named, again, to the All-American Skeet Team, and dominated Texas shoots. In Galveston's very first Oleander Open Skeet Championship he took HOA with 394x400, and also won second in 20-gauge and Small-Gauge division. At the Texas State Trapshooting Tournament Championships in Dallas he nabbed the All-Around award with 383x400. Then in the Texas State Skeet Championship, held in Houston, he won another HOA with 688x700, and also the Small-Bore title with a 99x100. He entered the Nationals, held in Las Vegas, and it was his finest year. Neck in neck with Alex Kerr, Grant secured the HOA and shot perfect scores to win the Small-Bore title.

Grant and seven other Texans were nominated to the 15-slot on Jimmy Robinson All-American Team in 1949, and Grant was again named its captain. It must have been a heck of a show when all eight showed up for the Galveston Oleander that year. No one was watching the clock, but if they had, the Texans probably set a new record for longest tie-breakers. Grant, for example, was part of a 6-man tie for second in the 20-gauge division, with all six shooters scoring a 99x100. Next it was back to

Houston to compete for the state trapshooting title. He tied for first with 99x100, then ran 50 out of 50 from the 16-yard mark to win the top spot, as well as the All-Around and Texas Doubles titles. The 1949 Texas State Skeet Championship was held in Harlingen, where he repeated his Small-Bore win with 98x100 and took the HOA crown with 590x600.

The 1949 National Championship Skeet Shoot, held that year in Dallas, was one the shooting community was to remember. Not only did the score of 544x550 set a new world record, the record-breaking score was a tie between Ileng and Dallas' Herman Khler. The spectator stands were packed as Khler triumphed over Grant in the shoot-offs. He may have been RU in the HOA, but Grant's 100x100 Small-Gauge win made him the first person ever to win the title two years in a row.

The use of statistics to rank shooters seemed to gain popularity in 1949, and Grant was at the top of the new-fangled numerical system. Jimmy Robinson, whose carefully computed compilation was calculated to four decimal places, ranked Grant with 0.9880, making him the number one shooter in Texas and, according to Jimmy, the world's greatest all-around target shooter. NSSA numbers for 1949 scored him a 0.985 out of possible 1.0 in registered all-gauge targets; it was a record that appears not to have been beaten until late 1959.

By 1950 it was no longer the Jimmy Robinson Sports Afield All-American Team, but the National Skeet Shooters Association All-American. And like 1949, he was nominated again and named captain. At the Nationals that year he won the .410 division, and tied for first with W.B. Strickler in the Champion of Champions competition. It was a marathon shoot-off showdown between the two clay titans, both breaking 375 targets straight before the game was called for darkness. The next day the warriors hit another 500 straight before Strickler finally blinked. Theirs was the longest shoot-off in the National's

history, and Grant's string of 500 straight set another record.

Grant somehow had the stamina to establish another new world record with 1240x1250 in the 1950 National shoot in the five-man team. Throughout the competition, the Galveston Daily News reported on the action and, instead of sports column headlines dominated by baseball and football, promulgated in bold upper-case letters that marched across the page "Grant Ileng Leads in All-Gauge Shooting With 200 Straight!" Nineteen-fifty would be the last year Grant took a division title at the Nationals, but it was the beginning of his three-year reign as NSSA Champion of Champions, a competition at the Nationals reserved for only state title winners.

One sports writer following Grant's career in 1951 wrote that he seemed to be in a rut - all he does is win. He had a point. At the Oleander Grant earned the HOA, and RU in the 20-gauge and team events. He won the HOA at the Pan-American by a single target, and retained the National Champion of Champions title after another grueling tie-breaker. Tied for first with a perfect 300x300, he broke 400 more consecutive targets in the shoot-off until his weary opponent finally dropped a target.

Grant was named to a fourth straight nomination on the NSSA All-American Team in 1952. At the Nationals that year he took his third straight Champion of Champions title, and established a new five-man team long-run record of 438 straight. In 1953 Grant was nominated, for the last time, to the All-American Team. That year the NSSA National Championships were held in Reno, Nevada, and newspapers anxiously anticipated the attendance of "Mr. Skeet." He didn't make it. Big Grant Ileng was done with the big circuit. But not with Texas.

Grant between 1954 and 1959 took one last Pan-American trap shoot title and an RU, but focused



The Five-Man Team from the 1958 San Antonio Texas State Skeet Shoot. Top row left to right: Joe Frost II, Edmund Buckley, and Grant Ilseng. Bottom row left to right: Titus Harris Jr. and Joe Frost III.

mainly on crushing clays and competitors in the Lone Star State. Ilseng became the first person to shoot a 100x100 in the 1953 Oleander Small-Gauge event, and by 1959 had won ten straight HOA titles. He took numerous titles in Texas state shoots, as well as various open venues. But the national shooting community took note of Grant's absence. One writer lamented that only one Texan was named to the 1957 All-American Team, and recalled how, throughout the 1940s, the "Texas boys took skeet seriously in those days." He missed that era, its shooters, and most of all Grant Ilseng.

By 1960, Grant's 1949 high percentage skeet record finally fell, and when it did, it was carried in papers

across the US. That year he finally lost his Oleander crown, dropping a target in the HOA tie-breaker, although he won the All-Bore and Two-Man event with Titus Harris Jr. He dominated the Pan-American in Dallas, taking home seven crowns that included HOA and the Two-Man trophy. The next year Grant bagged the HOA at the Texas State Skeet Championship, won the .410 division, and fired a perfect 100 to win the 28-gauge event. The defending champion also won the Texas State HOA again in 1962. But by 1963 the competitive reign of Grant Ilseng was over. At the 1970 National Skeet Tournament in Savannah eight years later he was honored with the NSSA's All-time Achievement Award, and was inducted into the NSSA Hall of Fame that year in its first ballet.

Tail Feathers. Perhaps a lesser known part of Grant's career was in the live pigeon shooting arena. Originating in Europe as a gentlemen's sport, it made its way to South Texas via Spain then Mexico. As one might surmise Grant dominated the sport, becoming, according to Bob Brister, one of the two best pigeon shots he ever knew. And like in skeet and trap, he was named an All-American pigeon shooter - nine times to be exact.

There was big money in pigeon shooting Texas contests - a participant could lose \$3,000 on a single shot, or win over \$10,000 in a single day. The sport was considered the toughest test of a shooter, partly because of the money at stake but mostly because of the difficulty of the shot. A score of 60%, for example, qualified as Master. It is also considered the most intense of all shooting competitions. Brister once asked Grant how he handled the mounting pressure towards the end of shoot, and his reply was classic Grant: "If you get that far, you can darn sure hit one more." Renowned artist John Cowan immortalized Grant's pigeon shooting days in his watercolor "Ilseng Shoots." His brush captures the sport, and the time, perfectly. In the foreground is world famous columbaire (thrower) Pepe Manuata, behind him Grant, and in the background American and Mexican flags flutter in the breeze above the grandstands of the Club Tiro al Pichon ring in Nuevo Laredo.

Grant's favorite outdoor past-time was duck hunting, and he was evidently as accomplished in the blind as on the clay field or in the pigeon ring. His fowling excursions can be traced back to the Sacramento Valley in the 1930s, and up to Canada at the famous Delta Marsh on Lake Manitoba with Jimmy Robinson and Clark Gable. There are still a few stories remaining about his Texas days afield. The late Byrd Minter Jr. remembered Grant as a regular guest at his father's club in Aransas Pass during the 1940s. Byrd says his father may have been the only guide on the coast with a supply of rationed shotgun shells during World War II because Grant, with an unlimited supply as a professional shooter, donated

them. A favorite memory was the time Grant snuck a 10-gauge into his duck blind, pre-empting his brother-in-law in an adjacent blind by shooting ducks headed for his decoys - at nearly 100-yards distant. Grant taught the young Byrd how to shoot, and the double barrel L.C. Smith .410 that he and his brother used was a gift from him.

Shotgunning icon Bob Brister recalled a duck hunt in which Grant got lost in the high sea cane that bordered notoriously challenging Barrow's Ranch prairie ponds and bayous. The wayward Grant, he said, "left a trail of discarded ducks, geese, cartridges, coats, and sweaters, crawling when he became too exhausted to walk." Club proprietor Joe Lagow later retrieved most of the cast-off possessions, telling a worn-out Grant with a wink that "he'd found it in a pregnant alligator's trail."

Other Houston Pursuits. Grant brought what he learned from his Montgomery Ward job when he moved to Houston, during the 1950 opening Grant Ilseng's Sporting Goods Incorporated - later just Sporting Goods Incorporated - in a big, square red-brick building at York and McKinney east of downtown. The store was a gathering place for Texas best known outdoors men and women, and some, including Felix Stagno and Rudy Grigar, worked there. Houston Chronicle outdoor writer Shannon Tompkins visited many times, wide-eyed from the displays of hunting and fishing gear that were too far out of reach of the young boy's allowance. He called the store, that finally shuttered its doors in 1968, "sacred ground."

A little-known part of Grant's time in Houston was that, in 1956, he was a founder of the Harris County Sheriff's Dept Marine Auxiliary, also called the 'Marine Division.' He served with no pay as its captain for nearly 20 years. It started with a few volunteers, but the Ilseng charisma helped it to quickly grow to more than a hundred. In his role Grant mainly investigating drownings, supervised divers, and was even known to forecast the weather, such as the



1973 winter storm in which he was the calm voice of warning to southeast Texas coastal residents on the storm's potential flooding. Asked about the job years later, Grant simply said "I got more interested in saving people than winning championships."

The GHGC Years. Grant's last few years as a competitor, and all of his retirement years, were spent at the Greater Houston Gun Club (GHGC), and he was one of its original 100 stockholders when the club opened its doors in 1958. Not surprisingly, he was also a founding member of the GHGC "Flyers Syndicate" that, for a time, brought live pigeon shooting to the club. The Flyers donated the funds to build a bird loft, pigeon ring, and traps complete with modern "electrical controls."

Grant's reputation and his outgoing and inclusive personality helped put the young GHGC, now the Greater Houston Sports Club (GHSC), on the map. Club skeet contests were sponsored in his name as late as the 1980s, and GHGC held a Grant Ilseng skeet shoot every May for many years. One of the club's skeet fields, in fact, is named in his honor. Perhaps more influential was his years as a shooting instructor. Grant attracted disciples from across Texas who wanted to learn from the icon of clay target shooting. The former "shooting coach to the stars" simply loved teaching the art of the shotgun, especially to young people, and it showed. Bob Brister said he was one of the best shotgunning instructors he had ever seen, and in fact it was Grant who taught Bob how to break clay targets. As an aside, it was Grant who later wrote the foreword to Bob Brister's seminal 1979 *Shotgunning, the Art and the Science*.

A Man and his Gun. One of the hardest things to answer is what makes a shotgunner great. In Grant's case, he almost never discussed it. He finally offered some insights in a 1985 interview with John Werner for the Waco Tribune-Herald, and it was enlightening. Grant said when he started competing, he shot his childhood hunting gun, later sawing off the barrel to open the pattern. He borrowed guns, and

even repaired broken ones in the middle of matches. "I was a poor boy, he said, and to afford the sport "I had to win." He developed his enormous stamina and strength, he said, by raising and swinging his gun "a hundred times a night."

Modern shooters still analyze his form, noting



THE GRANT ILENG OPEN
May 17 - 19, 1985

*"I was a poor boy," he said,
"and to afford the sport
I had to win."*

that the self-taught swing-through shooter would today be called a "power shooter." He was never prone to shooting fancy guns, in fact, he shot the same 1940 Winchester Model 12 for 40 years at GHGC. But whether borrowed, broken, or just old, there was one feature to every gun he fired – a carefully honed feather-light trigger pull. Never knowing when the gun would go off, almost no one else could shoot his hair-trigger shotguns.

It Ends. Grant Ilseng's reputation has stood the test of time. Even today, he is considered one of the best natural shotgun marksmen in the country, "whether skeet, trap, pigeons, duck, or pheasant." Grant had his first heart attack in 1969. Then another in the 1970s. His last one was in 1987, and he was buried in Waco. His legacy still lives large at GHSC, where a number of members recall how their fire for clay target shooting was lit by Grant Ilseng. Hearing that would probably have meant more to Big Grant than his cabinet of trophies, and it is remarkable accolades for a man who has been gone for nearly a quarter century. But then Grant was pretty remarkable.



2020 Sporting Clays Wrap-up

BY R.K. SAWYER

This year GHSC focused on hosting one major sporting clays venue – the Greater Houston Sports Club South Central Regional Championships & Diamond Classic, Featuring FITASC Grand Slam. The title was a mouthful, but so was the event!

Greater Houston Sports Club South Central Regional Championships & Diamond Classic, Featuring FITASC Grand Slam. Five days in September. Eleven shooting events. Six-hundred and twenty registered shooters. An event of that scale could only have been the South Central Regional Championships and Diamond Classic, with a FITASC Grand Slam added for good measure. Held from September 2 to 6 at Greater Houston Sports Club (GHSC), it was the biggest event, with the largest attendance, ever hosted by the club.

Nineteen sponsors – from nationally known sporting companies to our local companies and friends – joined GHSC to make this a special affair. With a total of \$153,000 in prize money, the payout was the highest in the Regional's history. In addition to serious target shooting, diversions – with serious prizes – were added with the Mega Prize Game and the Big Bird drawings. Both were one-part shooting ability – you had to hit a few targets to earn your tickets – and one-part the good fortune of having your number drawn. The Mega Prize

Game lived up to its name, with nearly \$30,000 of rewards, including a Krieghoff K-80 Vintage Scroll with upgraded wood, two Beretta 686's, a Browning Citori 725, and 50 cases of Winchester and 50 Fiocchi ammunition. The Big Bird prizes included three more Berettas and more cases of shells.

The first of the tournament's procession of trophies, payouts, and options were awarded after the Mabry/Balaski Preliminary Friday shoot-offs. Bobby Fowler shot a 97 for the HOA honors, the RU tiebreaker earned by Theo Ribbs (96) over Cory Kruse. The Ladies Prelim Champion position was earned by Reanna Frauens (92) in a tiebreaker with Karen Shedd. It was a narrow margin for the four top shooters and foreshadowed the tight competition to come between Karen Shedd, Desirae Edmunds, and Madison Sharpe.

The 100-target Aguila 5-Stand followed the purse to class format and ran for all five days of the shoot. Champion Brad Kidd shot a 98, only one target over RU's Bobby Fowler and Jasper Copelan. Bobby won the tiebreaker, with Jasper taking 3rd honors. In the Ladies 5-Stand, Champion Meagan Harrington was a comfortable two targets in front of her nearest competitors, Haylyn Hanks and Madison Sharpe.

The Krieghoff and FITASC Grand Slam was scheduled from Wednesday to Saturday. With 200





targets from 8 parcours, 226 entrants had their eye on nine payouts, trophies, options, and winner rings. HOA went to Gebben Miles with 182, followed by RU Derrick Mein (180), and Bill McGuire (179). The Ladies FITASC Champion came down to a tiebreaker between Karen Shedd and Desirae Edmunds, both with a 164. Karen didn't blink, earning the top spot with Desirae in 2nd, and Christina Loudenslager in 3rd (161).

The 100-target Legacy Cup Super Sporting Event ran Wednesday to Saturday. It was the second biggest event of the shoot, with 332 contenders competing for a purse and trophies based on class. From a total of 159 Master Class guns, Dylan Anderson took top honors and 50% of the \$7950 Master Class purse. Bill McGuire and Jasper Copelan took 2nd and 3rd, respectively. Shooters experienced something a little different in this event, with the targets thrown from the beds of a flock of Legacy Ford pick-ups.

Krieghoff sponsored a fun 50-target Sporting Clays competition for 12-, 20-, 28-gauge, and .410 that ran for five days. The 12-gauge event brought out the best in the best, ending in a three-way tie with perfect 50s. The tiebreaker Champion honors went to Bobby Fowler, RU Joseph M. Dianda, and William Walton 3rd. Chad Johnston (50), Dalton Kirchhoeffer (49), and Doss Bourgeois (48) took the top three spots in the 20-gauge. It was Chad Johnston (50) again as HOA in the 28-gauge Sporting, followed by RU J.J. Keeth (47). Four shooters tied with a 46 in the .410 bore Sporting, the tiebreaker HOA won by R.J. Mehnert, with Scott R. Kramer (RU), and Major J Pirtle (3rd), and Gregory Nassar taking the M1 prize.

The 50-target 20-gauge FITASC was another tight race, with Champion William Walton's 48 only a target ahead of RU Jerry Rackley and 3rd place Doss Bourgeois, decided by a tiebreaker.

“COO Kevin Dougherty says the club’s strategy was to prepare for extreme heat and extreme rain – and they got both!”

Billy Jensen dominated the 50-target 28-gauge FITASC with a perfect 50, his closest competitor RU Paul McCormick (48) with Christina Loudenslager (47) taking 3rd.

The 200-target SC Regional Sporting Clays Main Event rotations were held Saturday and Sunday. Sponsored by Beretta, Beck & Masten GMC North, and West Side Drywall, 447 shooters vied for the largest payout schedule in Regional history. It was a tight race. At the end of the first day, Tim Jewell was at the top of the pile with a 93, a one target advantage over his closest contenders. By the Sunday shoot-offs, it was David Radulovich who took the \$10,000 HOA purse with a 184. His performance will be long remembered – he won it with a cracked stock repaired with resin and tape! The RU spot came down to a tiebreaker between Nicolas Berry and Cory Kruse, both just one target away from David’s 184. The shooters split the \$7,500 Runner Up and 3rd place purse, with Nicolas earning the RU spot and Cory 3rd. Ladies Champion Meagan Harrington shot a 173, with RU Madison Sharpe (172) decided by a tiebreaker with 3rd place Desirae Edmunds.

This year White Flyer was the sponsor for the coveted Diamond Classic trophies awarded for the High All-Around (HAA) scores in the Main, FITASC, Super Sporting, and 5-Stand. Between the heat and the Sunday rain, the winners earned their awards for not just shotgunning mastery, but endurance! The HOA was swept by Gebben Miles (547), followed by RU Bill McGuire (544), and Derrick Mein (543) in 3rd. Ladies HAA Meagan Harrington’s 509 score gave her a two-target margin over RU Desirae Edmunds, with Karen Shedd (504) placing 3rd. The Diamond sub-gauge HOA winners were Chad Johnston (143),

RU Gregory Nassar (139), and Johnnie Hoffman 3rd (131).

The GHSC staff had been talking about the South Central Regional Championships and Diamond Classic, with its FITASC Grand Slam, for over a year – and planning for it just as long. Chief

Chief Operating Officer Kevin Dougherty says the club’s strategy was to prepare for extreme heat and extreme rain – and they got both! For the extreme water outcome, they concentrated on infrastructure, including a goal to park every car on a hard surface. Drainage projects on the East and Central Courses were finished, including several new ponds. The Game Park by the big lake was cleaned, graded, and seeded, with rock walkways constructed to each station. For the punishing heat scenario, tents and umbrellas were erected at every station, with hospitality tents at regular intervals to dispense drinks and snacks. The staff rolled 5,000 towels to put on ice in strategic locations around the grounds.

In the days before the event, trucks busily delivered stacks of golf carts, tents, chairs, target throwers, pallets of targets and shells, and food and water. ATVs were packed with the necessities of the shoot, fanning out from the clubhouse in every direction to supply the field. To the untrained eye, it was chaos. To the staff, it was business as usual, just on a larger scale!

The metamorphosis from shooting club to the Regional was impressive. The East and Central courses had to be closed for several days before the shoot to provide an extra window for the target setters to plan, set, and test targets for the Prelim





and Regional Main Event. The South Course was converted into the all-gauge Sporting Event, the North Course into the Super Sporting event, and the 5-Stand extended most of the way down the east road. The line of club skeet fields morphed into practice row, along with sub-gauge FITASC, snooker, and the Mega-Prize Game. Eight FITASC courses lined the south side of the road and lakefront in the club's new Game Park.

The staff didn't have time to worry – much – as two hurricanes meandered towards Texas before the event. Fortunately, one lost its steam, and unfortunately, the other greatly impacted our friends in SE Texas and SW Louisiana. Although the numbers of new infections were dropping in Texas at that point, the staff adhered to exacting pandemic protocol. Masks, hand and surface sanitizers were situated at every place imaginable. Laura Lucas was posted at the club entrance, by her estimate taking the temperature of some 600 foreheads. Through the hard work of the field staff, and the organization and planning efforts by Ashley Reyes and Afton Stone, GHSC was ready as the first cars and trucks made their way down Champions Drive Wednesday morning for the tournament kick-off.

As Kevin looks back, he says his only worry during the event was the monsoon rains that soaked the last flight of shooters. With eyes scrutinizing the

'lightning ap' on his phone, he knew the seven Sunday shoot-offs were going to be delayed. Minutes mattered as over a hundred spectators lined the field, the shoot-offs finished after the rain and in the final minutes before darkness.

Kevin was also proud of how well the target presentations were received. Mike Boire was at the helm as target setter for nearly every event, except for the sub-gauges and Central Course Main, which were handled by Jason Menke and Henry Velazquez, respectively. Theirs was a massive job, as each target was set, shot, tweaked, then shot again. Then they repeated the sequence. In the end, the field bristled with over 300 machines that launched over a quarter million targets. Congratulations to Henry Velazquez, who was invited to set some of the targets for this year's Nationals.

The Regional is one for the record books now. Kevin and the club staff are preparing for the next event, the next opportunity to provide the things he says are the most important part of the job – targets and hospitality. "That," he says, "is why we're here." For a summary of all the Regional shooter scores, visit www.winscore.com. To keep up with the next shoots at Greater Houston Sports Club, see www.greaterhoustonclub.com or contact Kevin at Kevin@GreaterHoustonSportsClub.com.



On The Vine

BY JONATHAN MYERS

If it's been a while since you've been inside the clubhouse, you're in for a surprise. The pages of our wine list have grown, as demonstrated by the variety of bottles lining the walls, shelves, and counters of our bar. Why the change? Because of you, our membership. Your suggestions gave us the critical insight needed to develop our wine portfolio. Today it continues to grow, and we're far from done. Please keep those wine selection recommendations coming!

When wine made its appearance at GHSC six years ago, our selections were initially based on a list of pleasing popular favorites. Today, our wine list has evolved into a burgeoning portfolio focused predominantly on New World and California wines with the inclusion of household names such as Caymus Winery and Orin Swift Cellars; rising stars such as Daou Vineyards and Austin Hope Winery; and luxury, cult classics from Schrader Cellars, Dalla Valle Vineyards, OVID, Lokoya, Ornellaia, and PlumpJack Winery.

So, what's coming in 2021? First, we'll build a collection of Old World offerings, including selections from the regions of Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Tuscany, continuing with New World wines from South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Second, we will augment our quarterly club wine tastings. Third, for both oenophiles and casual wine drinkers alike, an exclusive Greater Houston Sports Club wine club is taking shape with talk of wine lockers in the clubhouse bar.

At the forefront of everything we do at the club is our desire to provide an exceptional experience to our members, families, and guests. While this begins with our shooting venues, it doesn't stop there. We hope that you view the opportunity for sharing good wine with friends and family as one of your most important "go-to" after-shooting activities. We wish you all a safe and happy new year. Come by soon and share in the excitement with us!



Shooting Resources



SHOOTING INSTRUCTION			
C.H. Choo	(281) 250-2022	chchoo88@gmail.com	
Haley Dunn	(614) 660-6174	hdunn@hotmail.com	
Desirae Edmunds	(907) 227-3892	desi.edmunds@gmail.com	
Tom Fiori	(281) 384-1529	tfiori@sbcglobal.com	www.skeetshootinginhoustontx.com
Bobby Fowler	(713) 858-4200	elitegun@aol.com	www.eliteshooting.com
Ron Ingels	(951) 317-7207	ron@rpms shooting.com	www.rpmsshotgunlessons.com
Zach Kienbaum	(626) 831-8214	zkiebaumshooting@gmail.com	
Steve Liberta	(845) 453-3916	libertasteve@gmail.com	
R.J. Mehnert	(713) 614-1205	rjnlne@gmail.com	
Gonzalo Vargas	(713) 854-0961	gmrv628@icloud.com	
Adam Blair	(281) 733-4436	coach@shootwithadam.com	www.shootwithadam.com
Mike Maskell	(812) 322-6905	maskellshotgunacademy@gmail.com	
Cesar Aristeiguieta	(310) 804-7276	caristeiguieta@gmail.com	
Pablo Montealegre	(713) 303-1695	pabloperazzi@gmail.com	www.escopetashooting.com
LOCAL GUNSMITHING			
Vanden Berg Custom	(832) 781-8338	vandenbe@flash.net	www.vandenbergcustom.com
Briley Manufacturing	(800) 331-5718	sms@briley.com	www.briley.com
Feland's Gunsmithing	(281) 373-0335	felandsgunsmith@yahoo.com	www.felandgunsmith.com
Dustin Mounts Gunsmithing	(281) 431-0240	info@dustinmounts.com	www.dustinmounts.com
CUSTOM AUDIO PROTECTION			
The Audio Protection Company	(832) 647-3836	timholt@earthlink.net	
SoundGuard Custom Hearing Protection	(979) 219-0286	soundguardearplugs@gmail.com	www.facebook.com/SoundGuardEarPlugs/
GUNS, AMMO, ACCESSORIES, RELOADING, TRAPS, RENTALS			
Able Ammo	(936) 295-3275	sales@ableammo.com	www.ableammo.com
Briley Manufacturing	(800) 331-5718	sms@briley.com	www.briley.com
Game Girl Gourmet, LLC	(832) 851-5806	gamegirlgourmet@gmail.com	
Commerce Street Clothiers	(832) 422-3267	orders@homeandranchoutfitters.com	www.commercestreetclothiers.com
Big Guy's Shooting Supplies	(713) 416-6331	low8x2@yahoo.com	www.bigguysshootingsupplies.com
SHOTGUN FORUMS AND GUN TALK			
Shooters Page Texas		Shotgun World	www.shotgunworld.com www.shooterspagetx.com
SHOOTING ASSOCIATION LINKS			
National Shooting Sports Foundation	www.nssf.org	National Skeet Shooting Association	www.mynssa.com
National Sporting Clays Association	www.mynsca.com	Texas Skeet Shooting Association	www.mytssa.com
National Rifle Association	www.nra.org	Texas State Rifle Association	www.tsra.com
TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION LINKS			
WinScoreOnline	www.winscoreonline.com	MySkeet	www.myskeet.com
iClays	www.iclays.com		





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6700 McHard Road, Houston, Texas 77053
www.greaterhoustonclub.com
(281) 437-6025

