



2017
John T. Lesley
Award of Excellence

John T. Lesley Award



- **First presented to John T. Lesley in 1981**
- **As a special tribute to Mr. Lesley – the award was named in his honor**
- **It is presented in recognition of an individual for outstanding leadership and service on behalf of the Florida fresh citrus industry**



2017 Recipient “The Person”

This Year's Recipient



- Born Dec 10, 1950 in Anniston Alabama
- Started out with no real interest in citrus. In fact, he' still not sure.
- One sister - Nancy Gordon
- Spent high school years hoeing trees, loading trucks, etc. – for his father and grandfather
 - 1966/67 – Vero Beach High School
 - 1968/69 – Darlington School
- Graduated from Hampden-Sydney College: Majored in history, with a minor in economics
- After college, went to work for a large paper company
- In 1978, after his father had bypass surgery, he was asked to return to the business, starting with harvesting and grower relations
- Married 38 years, 2 daughters, 1 son, two grands and at least one outstanding cousin
- Hobbies include quail hunting and fly fishing
- Represents the third generation in the family business



Fun Fact
In College, he worked
As a salvage diver for Mel Fisher

Any guesses?



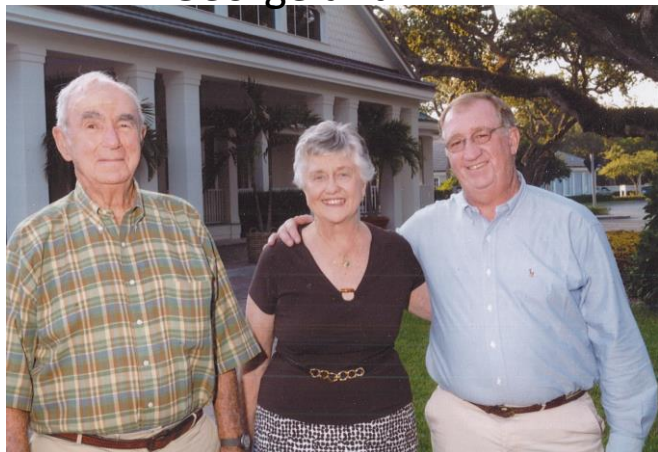
The FAMILY





George and his lovely wife Toni

George with his parents,
George and Ann



The whole Clan





Chip, Mer, Chance, Wes



Jonathan, Katherine,
Shaw



Ginna, Bret, Toby, Henry

Three Generations

George F Hamner Jr
George F Hamner III
George F Hamner Sr
Robert W Graves





**Sometimes you wear a
white hat**



Sometimes you don't



Hunting Adventures



Just watch out for Dick Cheney



Little Lord Fauntleroy



Pssst ... Duke, hop in the driver's seat!



That will teach them to steal my buggy

Unparalleled fishing skills



**Flats, Deep or Fresh
George is ready to fish**

George being George



Chief

Feel a draft?



Born to be wild

Maybe P.I.Q. wasn't such a good idea





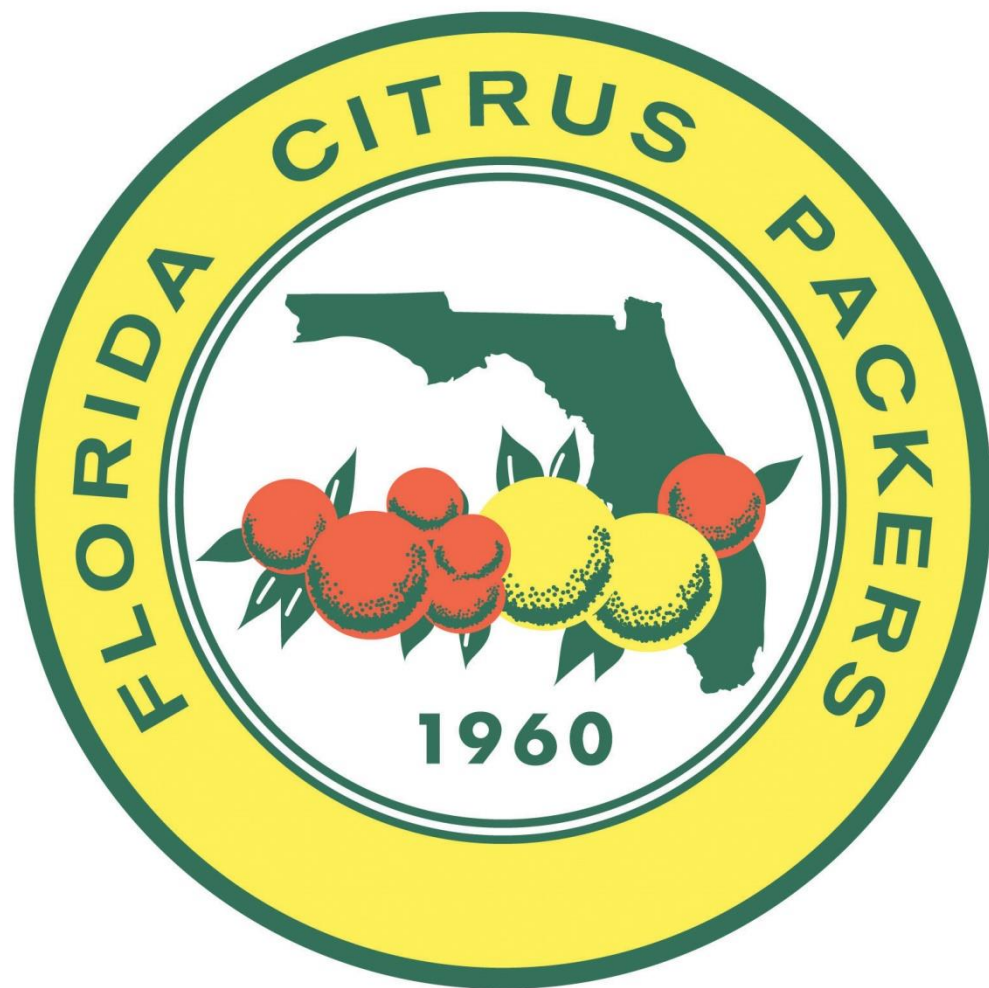
Professionally

A leader of just about everything

Best known for



- Expert working knowledge of rulemaking, regulations and developing sensible solutions. Works with:
 - DEP
 - FDOC Rules, and Florida Citrus Commission
 - Chapter 601
 - Export protocol
- Part of the team that got USDA Partners in Quality (PIQ) started. Won the National Partnership for Reinventing Govt's 2000 Hammer Award.
- Reinventing and reorganizing. If it can be made better, George will be in the conversation. He is currently leading the charge for consolidating industry organizations in the face of tight supply.



**Past President
of Florida
Citrus Packers
Current
member of
Board and
Exec Comm**



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Citrus League
And
Member of Board
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**CITRUS
ADMINISTRATIVE
COMMITTEE**

**Chairman
Citrus
Administrative
Committee**

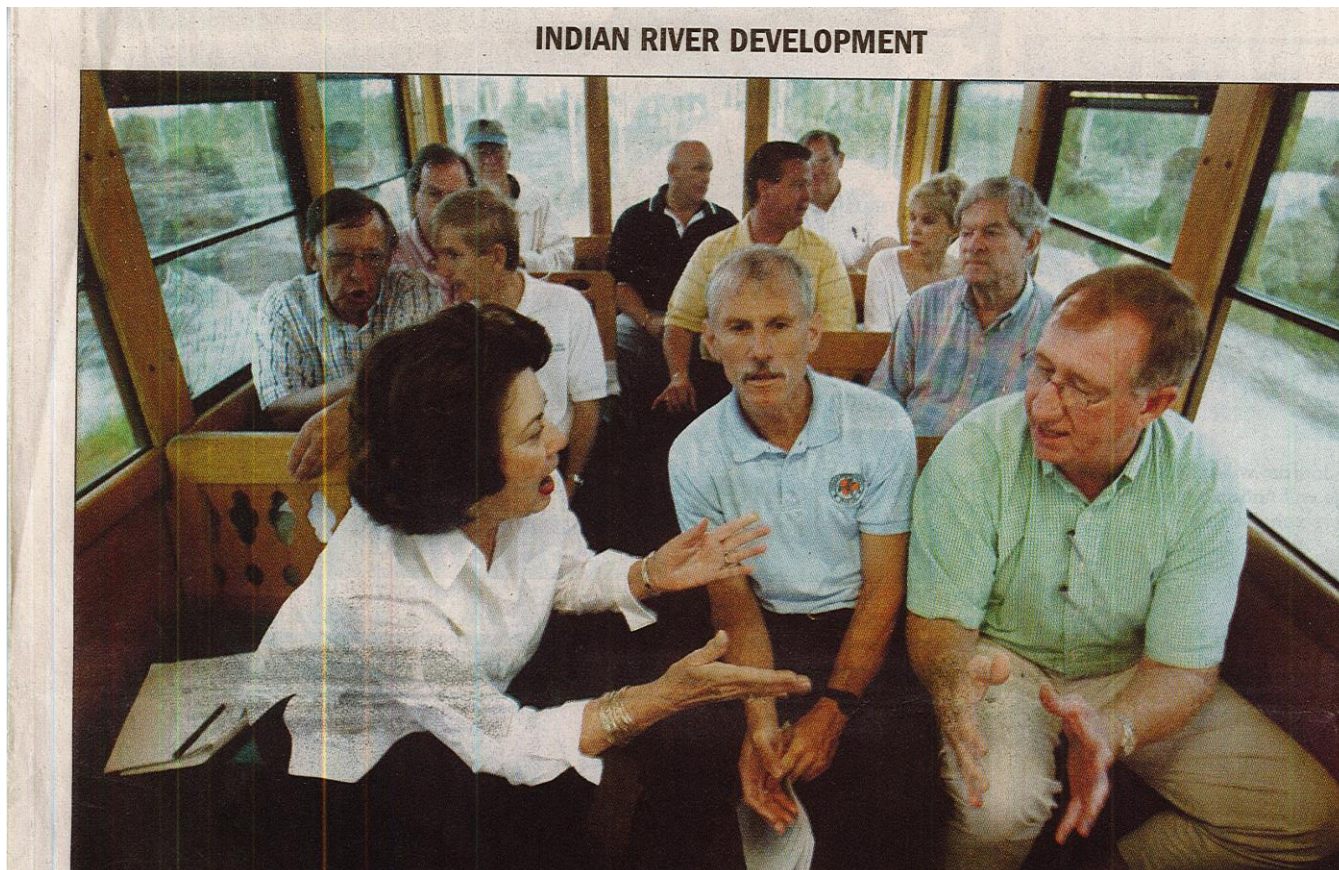
**Also served on Florida Citrus Canker
Technical Advisory Task Force**

Always ready to engage politically





**George is never short on opinion
Wouldn't you hate to be the
poor guy in the middle?**



Recognizing the efforts of colleagues



Indian River Exchange Packers Team



Ready to make a deal ?

Smile
Damnit!



By whatever
means
necessary

Indubitably

George Hamner Jr.: one of citrus's most colorful characters

By Tacy Callies

"I had no real desire to be in citrus at all," confesses George Hamner Jr., president of Indian River Exchange Packers (IREP) in Vero Beach.

In high school, he worked for his father and grandfather in the groves, hoeing trees, and in the packinghouse, loading trucks. After college, he accepted an offer from a large paper company, where he had the opportunity to succeed on his own with several transfers and promotions during the five years he was there.

"In 1978, my father had bypass surgery and he asked me to come home to help with the business. I did so reluctantly," says Hamner. "I took over harvesting and grower relations, spending a lot of time in the field and then the packinghouse. At the time we were affiliated with Seald Sweet Growers cooperative."

EARLY INFLUENCERS

Hamner gradually took over jobs for his father. "He stepped aside graciously, and I gained a huge amount of experience from him on how to handle fruit and how to manage the export market. My dad was well connected and respected in Japan," Hamner says.

Two lessons he learned from his father are "your word is your bond" and "cash is king — always know how much is available and when."

Another influencer was Jim McCranie, who worked for Seald Sweet 41 years. "He introduced me to marketing, and we traveled a lot together," says Hamner. "He taught me about handling crisis situations. He had the ability to walk through a problem without panicking, because he had a lot of experience in both the domestic and export markets. I know he always figured I never listened to him, but he had a great influence on the outcome of things today."

By the end of the 1980s, IREP was packing 2 million cartons a year and had built a new packinghouse under Hamner's leadership. "Then the reality of the 1990s set in," says Hamner. "The biggest challenge of my career was an economic one: survival after coming out of a high growth era."



Surviving the 1990s by cutting costs, vertically integrating and finally consolidating with a strong sales partner, Bernard Egan Co. (DNE Sales), is what Hamner considers his greatest career accomplishment. IREP supplies fruit to DNE, which handles all European and domestic sales for IREP. "Although DNE is a larger company than we are, they have made a great partner," says Hamner, who still directly handles most of the Oriental sales for IREP.

AN EYE ON SUPPLY

"Supply is the issue in a packinghouse. You have to be able to satisfy both the customer and the grower," says Hamner. "In the early 1980s, we started planting groves of our own to help strengthen our fruit supply. We began to vertically integrate and realized that the industry had to consolidate." Ninety percent of IREP's fruit comes from groves it owns (approximately 1,900 acres) or leases (approximately 1,500 acres).

"Fresh fruit growers and packers are married at the hip, even though sometimes we don't think we are," Hamner says. "We are both committed to supplying the same market and we can't do it without each other. It's a symbiotic relationship. When there is oversupply, we all have a problem."

Hamner says maintaining a continuity of supply is an important goal for his company. "The question is when to reinvest in groves again," he says. "Long-term, this [citrus] is still a good place to be."

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What?

Oversupply puts squeeze on grapefruit

By Dan Tracy *Advertising Committee*
OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

When talking about the increasingly poor financial plight of Florida's grapefruit growers, citrus economist Dan Gunter likes to use a quote often attributed to Mae West, a popular sex symbol of the 1930s.

"Too much of a good thing can be wonderful," Gunter says, his tongue planted firmly in his cheek.

Gunter is referring to a burgeoning oversupply of grapefruit that has plunged grower returns so low that some are losing money when they sell to packers and processors.

The problem arises because growers have planted too many trees during the past 12 years, increasing the total 21 percent, from 8.9 million in 1970 to 10.8 million this year.

Many of those trees were put in during the late 1970s — when prices were strong — and have swelled production, while demand has remained relatively stable.

As a result, processed prices are down at least \$1.35 from a 1979 peak of \$2.85 a box and fresh fruit prices are down at least \$2.25 a box from the 1980 peak of \$5.25.



The Challenges have changed over the years, but the will to resolve them remains strong

George F. Hamner Jr.
2017 Recipient
John T Lesley Award

