



KNOWLEDGE Is Still The Key To Fishing Success

Many Fishing Facts readers gathered in Manaki, Ontario to attend Buck Perry's summer fishing classes. The Daddy of Structure Fishing put his students to the test, and most passed with flying colors.



COMMENT

Numerous readers have expressed curiosity over the outcome of Education Editor Buck Perry's fishing schools held in Ontario, Canada during the past summer season. Although a good number of Fishing Facts readers attended these highly informative training sessions, others were unable to attend due to busy summer schedules, traveling distances, conflicting commitments, etc.

In the following interview (Part 2 of 2 parts), Managing Editor, Carl Malz, asks Education Editor, Buck Perry, to highlight some of the important subjects that were covered at the schools, and also to describe how student fishermen fared while undertaking various on-the-water fishing assignments.

(Part two of two parts)

by Carl Malz, Managing Editor & Buck Perry, Education Editor

QUESTION: Let's look at some of the students' assignments and discuss why a particular one was used or included. How did it help the student, and how did it apply to the material taught in your classroom sessions?

BUCK: We do not have the time or space to cover all of the structure types we used, but we may take one or two examples out of each area, so as to show what was involved. The mapping and interpretation of bottom features in a body of water is where fishermen

can ALWAYS become better. It is in this study we really begin to learn and begin to make all phases of fishing fall into place. We have had several students say it took a couple seasons of study and work in mapping their fishing waters before things fell into place, and they began to catch fish consistently.

Before we look at some particular feature, let us look at Figure 1 again and note the different areas (see Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and the different sections (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep

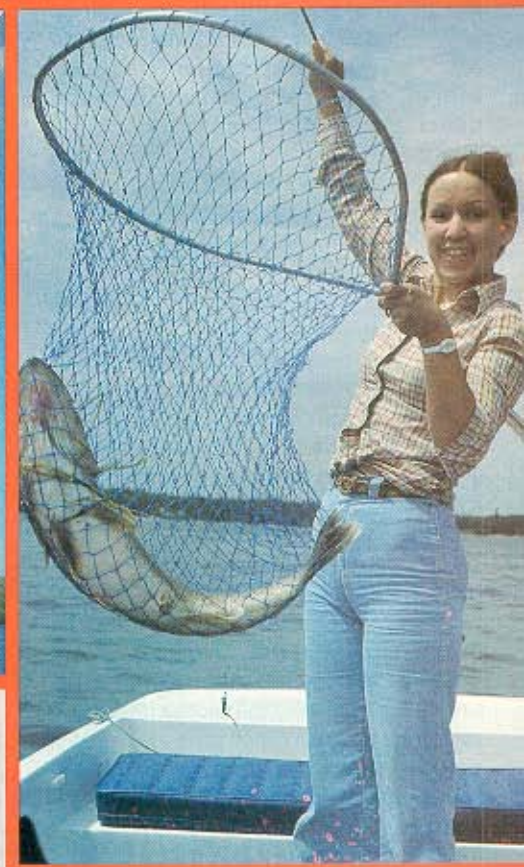
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(Top photo) Wisconsin anglers Mark Gilles, Frank Pouzar, and John Walker display some of the fish caught by them and other members of their class.

(Photo at right) Alice Ferencek shows her biggest walleye caught 35 ft. down.

Alice learned that proper training in trolling can save the day on many occasions.



water, etc.) A, B, C, D, etc. Then let me explain the student assignments for each of several areas. By doing this I think you will better understand how the student must relate the things he is taught in the classroom to the situations he actually faces on the water. As stressed many times, the most important thing that a student must get is to do his fishing in areas where he has the best chance to catch a fish. This means he must think at all times in terms of structure (break, breaklines, deep water, etc.) if he desires to consistently be at the right place at the right time, fishing in the right manner.

Before we talk about a particular feature (section) and the assignments on it, let me discuss Area 1, to show you more clearly what I mean by the "AREA" and the different sections. We did this for our students so that they could get a clearer picture on how to go about mapping the water they might fish back home. We covered procedures for making maps in the classroom, but here again, there's nothing like going directly to the water and showing them how it is done. Figure 5, is a blow-up of Area 1. Put yourself in a boat and imagine what it takes and what is involved here.

Now let us look at some sections in the different areas and talk about them. As you recall, I said the boats assigned to a particular area had an instructor with them. Not only was he to help and direct the students on their assignments, he was also to see if each area was fished in the proper manner. You can see by this, much more was accomplished than merely answering the questions on any particular feature. We felt this "fishing" (presentation of lures) would greatly assist the student in relating the classroom material to the different situations faced on the water.

Figure 6 is Section "B" in Area 3. The student was to find out, or answer, the following:

1. Find the hump.
2. How deep is this hump at shallowest spot?

There were several things involved for the student. First, he had to locate the section from the general map (Figure 1). He then had to use the shoreline sightings (line up objects on shore) as a guide to where the hump lay. His classroom work stressed very strongly the need to locate himself by such sightings. It was pointed out that he could never truly learn his lake without them.

He was taught that the depth sounder was a great aid if used properly, but only if used as an aid. In order for him to find the shallowest spot on the hump, it meant he had to make quite a few passes, with a lot of twists and turns before he would be able to find it. By the time he had found the shallowest

spot (and thrown a floating marker) he had a very clear picture of the total shape of the hump. He should have noted the shape, fingers, breaks, breaklines, and depths. Since he had to "fish" (present lures) the structure, both casting and trolling, he would be

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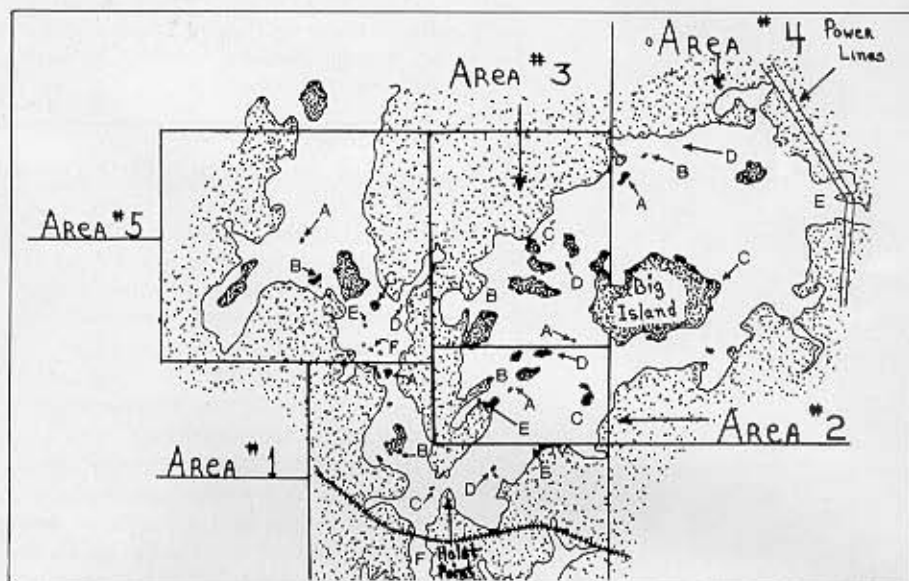


FIGURE 1 — Each student was supplied with a map of the general area to be fished. The students also received detailed maps showing existing structures that were to be worked in each area.

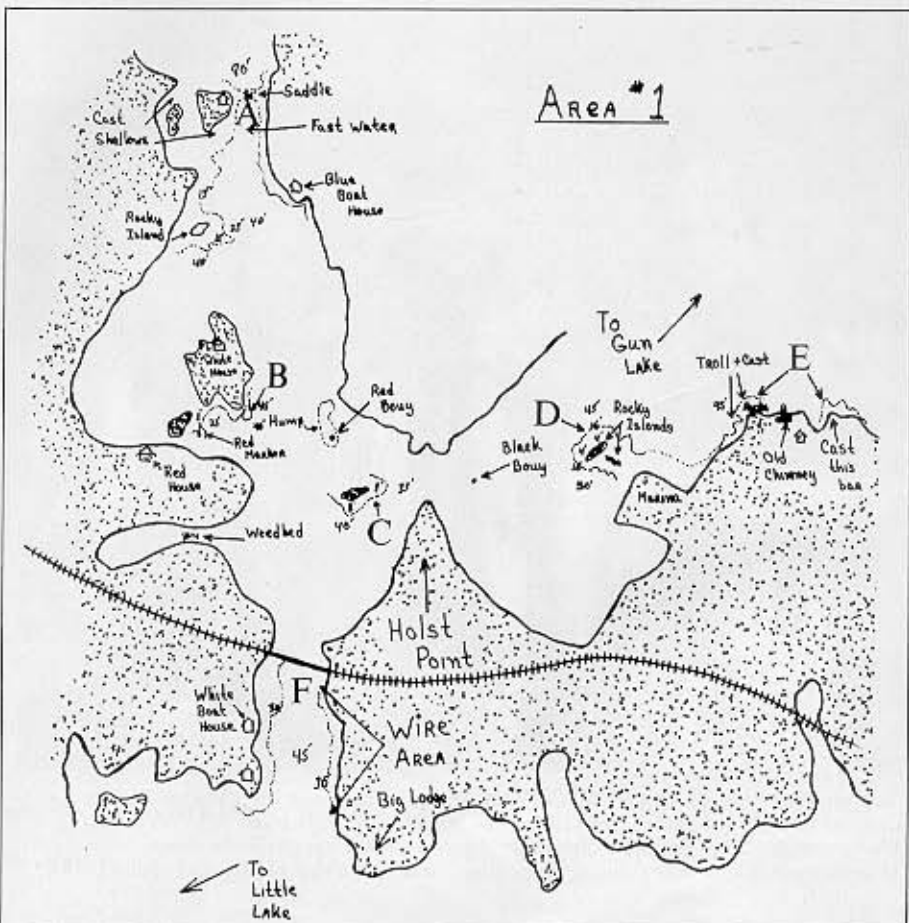


FIGURE 5 — There's a lot of water to be fished here. Rock-strewn islands and shorelines, underwater bars and points, sunken islands, a railroad bridge, shallow bays and deep, river current, etc. Where would you begin fishing such places, and how would you proceed?

able to get some idea of the bottom conditions — mucky, clean, mud, sand, rock, etc. If he had "gotten" other phases of his classroom study, or the assignments on other features, he should have had no problem anchoring his boat for the cast toward deep water (to establish contact points, etc.).

Another assignment not listed, but very much in the mind of the instructor, was whether the student would see the weed bed a short distance from the

shoreline. Did he realize there was another hump, and that it came shallower than the one in the assignment? Would he question the possibility that the hump he had worked might possibly be a "dead-end" (and possibly not used by the fish), and that the other hump may be getting most of the fish in the area? Some students did get the message in the classroom and went to check it out before leaving. However, some did not. (Note: The hump for the assignment was mostly a "dead-end." The structure with the weeds showing

did go "all the way" — lead all the way toward the shallows — and it did get most all the migrating fish.)

Figure 7 is a more detailed drawing of Section "D" in Area 3. The assignment was:

1. How would you get a jump type lure (jig, etc.) into the "pocket" or inside turn (position "Z")?
2. Throw a marker on the 25 ft. hump.
3. What would be the most effective way to fish this hump with artificial lures?

There are several things involved here; (a) location, (b) shapes, (c) distances (perspectives, etc.), (d) depths, (e) presentation of lures (best position, type gear, use of markers, etc.).

This particular section produced a lot of fish. It gave the instructor a chance to stress the importance of good deep water features. It gave a chance to bring out that for a shoreline or bar, etc. to be productive, there must exist good features in the adjacent (deeper) water. If the students were going to pick out a shoreline to cast surface lures for shallow working smallmouths, for instance, they would have to pick those with bars, humps, breaks, and breaklines all through and into the deepest water. Furthermore, when the fish are deep (along the shoreline) and not moving shallow, the fisherman should have visible features deeper that may hold active fish. ("Structure" — all the way.)

It was important to stress getting a

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Education Editor Buck Perry is shown mapping bottom contours in areas where students were later asked to fish. Buck selected structures that were likely to teach students the most about typical situations they might encounter back home.

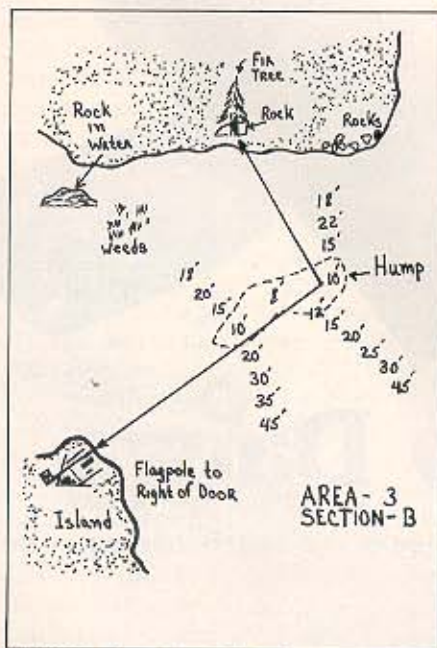


FIGURE 6 — Searching for underwater humps taught the student the importance of using shoreline sightings (lining up objects on shore) to pinpoint the exact location of each hump.

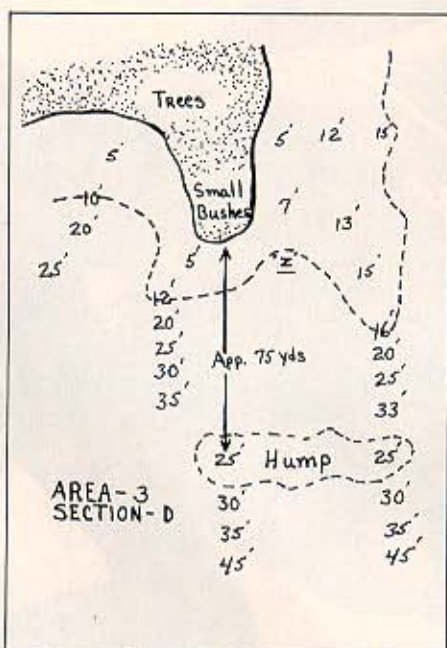


FIGURE 7 — This section gave the instructors an opportunity to stress the importance of fishing good, deep water features.

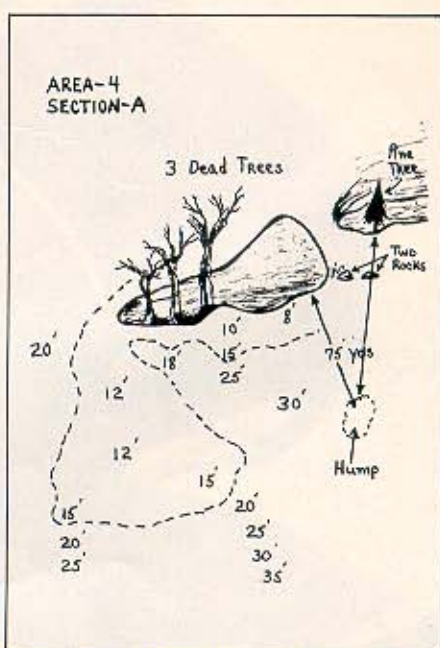


FIGURE 8 — "It was interesting watching the students trying to figure out where to place the boat for the best casting position, taking into account the shape, fingers, sharper breaks and deep water."

BUCK PERRY'S SCHOOL, cont.

lure into a "pocket" between two bars, such as this. The migrating fish many times will make contact with the bar, and move along the deeper breaklines (or base of tall weedline) and became concentrated at the head of this bend (or pocket). The student had been given a "rule of thumb"; "do not expect the fish to move beyond the bend, they will not move around the bend and on out onto the other finger or bar."

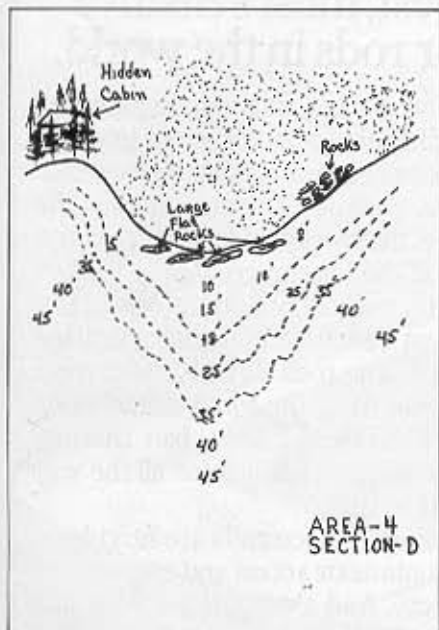


FIGURE 9 — Hours were spent on this structure. It clearly showed how weather and water conditions affected the movements of the fish.

We stressed the jump type lure (jig, etc.) in this case, as it did give good depth and speed control. Many fish (smallmouth, walleye, and northern pike) come from these type pockets, breaks and breaklines.

Some of the larger fish caught by students came from the hump or its breaklines. The practice and use of markers and wire line on the troll at this section were important.

Figure 8 is a sketch of Section A in Area 4. The assignment was:

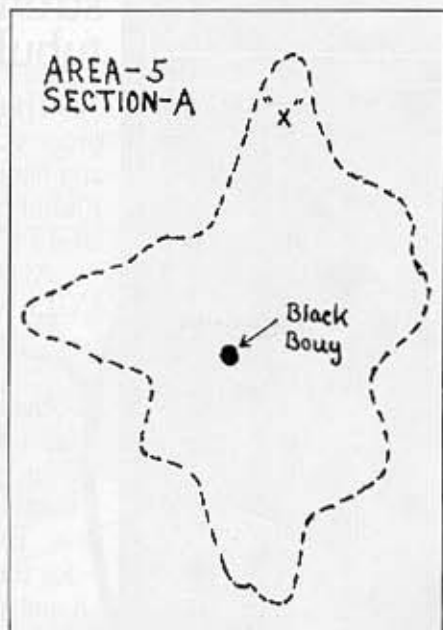


FIGURE 10 — Students were asked to determine the shape of this deep water hump, then locate all fingers (projections) and mark the best "contact point" (where the fish first contact the structure).

was 7 to 8 feet rather than 12. It had a different shape, being much narrower, but ran out quite a distance as shown. The deeper breakline varied in depth with the deeper and "sharper break" being on the end farthest from shore. It was "dirty" on top, and to cast or troll it required either markers or good shoreline sightings (the reasons for the dead trees in drawing).

Many students claimed we were being unfair with such a fouled up drawing. SOME of them may have un-

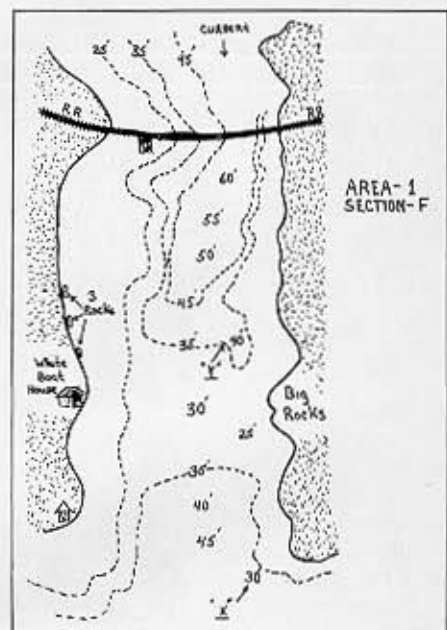


FIGURE 11 — The heavy current in this section made proper lure presentation difficult. Yet it was the "ace in the hole" for catching fish under extremely bad weather conditions.



Randy Justice, of Kent, Ohio says, "Look at some of the fish our boys in the Ohio Spoonplugging Club caught. Our training with wire line and the deep water interpretations just about cinched it."

1. How deep is the small hump?
2. What is wrong with the drawing of the big bar?

Lots of things were involved in this particular section. If you look at the drawing carefully (Figure 8) you can see just finding the hump covers a lot of subject matter — perspective, shoreline sightings and in many cases the students had to throw all the markers he had before locating it.

The student couldn't anchor the boat on the hump for casting, as it just wouldn't be big enough. It was interesting watching the students trying to figure out just where to place the boat for the best casting position, taking into account the shape, fingers, sharper breaks, and deep water.

The big bar was a "stinker" as far as most students were concerned. The drawing was wrong in several ways. First, it was not a bar tied into the island with the dead trees. It was a hump, with a fairly wide deep slot between the hump and the island. The depth on top

derstood what we meant when we said, "What do you mean, unfair? This is no different than any or all water you are going to fish in the future."

Figure 9 is Section D in Area 4. The assignment for this huge bar was:

1. Establish the general shape of this bar by placing floating markers — consult instructor.
2. How would you fish the deep breakline with artificials?

Carl, I don't think I have to go into a detailed discussion as to what is involved here. It presented quite a lot of mapping and interpretation. It ran the gauntlet in the presentation of lures. Hours were spent on this feature. It clearly showed how weather and water conditions affected the movements of the fish. Some students would hit the fish while "contour" trolling the shallows. Some would find the fish "pattern" trolling, or casting some feature of it. Others would hit them working the deepest breaklines with large lures

continued

700 & 800 series Spoonlights on a long length of wire line. However, ALL students went through ALL phases. This section was a good together.

Figure 10 is a view of a larger under-water island or hump. It is located in Section A, Area 5. Areas 1 and 3 were set aside primarily for bad weather conditions. That is, high winds, waves, etc. However, in most cases, all students had a chance to look over and "fish" all sections in both areas. The advanced students (those with previous experience under their belt, etc.) were directed to work the sections in both areas 1 & 3.

This particular feature was a fairly long run from the dock. They located it by a black buoy (see Section A — Area 3, Figure 11). We did not put in any depths, etc. The students' versions of the map did not have the bar marked "X" as shown. I just added the "X" to more clearly describe what was involved in the "total" equipment. The total assignment was:

1. Find the shape of this hump — knowing all fingers.
 2. Where is the best "contact point" where the fish first contact the structure on this hump?
 3. How deep?
 4. Fish it, both casting and trolling.
- The shape of the hump was approx-

imately as shown. The best "contact point" was off the finger marked "X". There were several more breaklines below the one shown (approximately 15 feet). However, the contact point is narrow, sharper looking that had to be found out at 45 feet.

Chase a few fishermen found it. But most of the fish were caught by trolling large lures on wire line. Some students caught fish at the contact point with heavy "jump" lures on the cast, but only with the help of an instructor. This was a toughie, as there were a lot of features around the hump.

Figure 11 is a view of conditions in Area 1, Section F. Earlier I stated all the water from the Lake of the Woods region passed near the lodge. This is the area where this flow occurs. It is deep and has a heavy current.

Not only was this area referred to as our "wire line section," but it was our "see in the hole" for catching fish under extremely bad weather conditions, and when the fish were extra deep with little or no movement toward the shallows. If you look carefully at the drawing (Figure 11) you can see why this is so. We had the fish "locked in" as to speak, and we had the deeper breaks and breaklines, etc. well pinpointed.

The heavy current in this section made proper lure presentation more difficult. It practically eliminated presentation of lures on the cast. However, it was a perfect training ground for the use of wire line and larger lures on the troll, and for deep water interpretation. The students had plenty of good shoreline markers, or sightings, so good trolling runs could be made, and for reference points on later trips.

The assignments for this area were:

1. Establish the best trolling runs with wire in this area.
2. How effective do you think casting would be in the deeper sections?
3. If you had wire line, how would you establish how to hit the 30 foot depth at position "X" if you did not check it at a future date?

Some advanced students established some good trolling runs in this section, on their own (without help of instructor) going both upstream and downstream. They found, when going upstream with the current, the lure speed was too fast for the deep, inactive, non-shaking fish, and an effective pass had to be made upstream and/or across stream over the saddle (20 ft.).

There were two or three spots that could be called "contact" points (places where the fish first contact the structure



Corey Schellner, of Chisholm, Minnesota, has fish while fishing junior, Jack Brown, holds the landing net. A group of fishing on the lake's point viewing nearby (2716 hrs.) in the boat, 88-4130, 1981-1982.

structure). All the breaklines and the saddle, as shown, would be productive at times (for scattered fish). However, on extremely bad movement periods, it became very important that specific spots be hit. To point out the more important positions, I have marked two spots "X" and "Y". The third spot of great importance is a spot at the 45 ft. breakline directly under the bridge. Note this big bar on the left under the bridge. The bar broke fast at 45 feet into 60 feet. This bar would produce all over

shallow movements of fish). The instructor had no hesitation in telling them, "Wire line, big lures, in Section F, Area 1." He knew they were familiar with the area, and the best trolling passes.

To make a long story short, let me tell you what they found they had to do in order to catch a fish. The fish did not come fast and furiously. However, these fishermen stuck it out all day long with a determination not found in most anglers. Ordinarily, with the larger lures, all the visible features (breaks, breaklines, etc.) could be reached on the troll

released from the reel spool.] There was little doubt about the fact that their lures were in the 50-60 ft. depths. The boat was quite a distance above the bridge before the lure came up over the 45 ft. breakline.

After the lure had crossed the bar, they would stop the boat, and retrieve those large lures in through that heavy current. When the retrieve was finished they would motor back to the area of the saddle, and go through the same procedure again.

They did not get a fish on every pass, nor could they determine exactly



The younger generation got into the act also. Jeffery Smith (at left), of Hickory, North Carolina, and Tres' Everett, of Detroit, Michigan, caught their fair share of fish, and then some.



Buck Perry couldn't say enough about these two anglers from the state of Illinois. Roger Stanley (at left) and his sidekick, Bob Conway, demonstrated that persistence can pay big dividends in fishing. Congratulations, fellows!

at times, but when things got bad (lots of the time) the fish would lie below this 45 foot breakline. In many instances the fish took the lure just before it came up on the 45 foot break. At times it appeared they were close to the 60 foot depth.

Earlier (Part 1 of this 2 part article), I mentioned the work and determination of one of our students, Roger Stanley, an Illinois state legislator. Roger and his fishing buddy, Bob Conway, (just as dedicated in becoming a good fisherman), came to an instructor on the so-called "fishing day" (Friday) and asked where he thought they had the best chance to catch a fish (we had a very bad weather situation for any type of

with 20 to 26 "layers" of wire line. They checked all parts of this section with trolling passes going upstream and downstream without catching a fish. They had learned their lesson well in the classroom, and they knew they had to get deeper.

Here is how they made a catch while most students were drawing blanks in shallower water.

Using large lures (700 & 800 series Spoonplugs) they would start a trolling pass in the area of the 30 ft. saddle (note Figure 11). While going upstream toward the bridge and the 45 ft. breakline, they would let out 35 to 36 "layers" of wire. [Editor's Note: One "layer" of wire is one complete layer of wire line

where a fish was when they did. However, it appeared most fish came as the lure left the 60 ft. level and started moving toward the 45 ft. breakline (directly under bridge). You can imagine just how difficult and tiring it would be to present lures in this manner. I'm sure you know it would take a dedicated and determined individual just to make a few passes, much less keep at it for a full day. We saw not only one of the finest catches for an individual boat for the season, but we saw an important "point" of our school driven home to a lot of fishermen who, otherwise, would have had some doubts as to why they weren't catching any fish.

I take my hat off to Roger and Bob.

Talk about persistence! One thing for sure, if I lived in that district of Illinois, there'd be no doubt in my mind who would get my vote! For you see they, too, believe that "knowledge is the key to fishing success."

QUESTION: Many of our readers are interested in catching large walleyes. Did you see any large walleye caught by novices other than the ones you were talking?

BLICK: There were quite a few visiting fishermen (not residents) going out with guides, and many others who appeared to have fished the area for years. Most of these individuals were making long distance runs to the lake, not for their walleye fishing. We saw a few fishermen in our area drifting or slow trolling live bait. Most were out of position as far as I could see. You can't catch fish where there are no fish, regardless of what you use.

QUESTION: What was the biggest fish caught by a student?

BLICK: Originally, on Friday (our fun fishing day) we had some small prizes for the biggest fish caught in 3 categories: smallmouth bass, walleye and northern pike. Later we had to add a fourth, the musky.

The largest smallmouth caught during the school sessions was 4 lbs. The largest walleye weighed 11½ lbs., the largest northern pike, 17½ lbs., and the largest musky 22½ lbs.

QUESTION: I want to ask you a two part question, as they seem to go together. What do you give your students after they finish a school? Also, you have mentioned "Spoonplugging Clubs" and "Spoonpluggers of America," are they one and the same?

BLICK: First, the students were given enough study material to last a lifetime. They also received diplomas, patches, decals and membership cards for our organization, Spoonpluggers of America, whose members will give them additional material and information to broaden their knowledge, fishing interests, and skills.

In one sense of the word, Spoonplugging Clubs and Spoonpluggers of America are one and the same. By this I mean many members of Spoonplugging Clubs belong to Spoonpluggers of America. The clubs, some of them established in the 1950's are three located in specific areas, such as Ohio, Texas, Kentucky Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, etc. These are clubs with their own charter, membership meeting, field trips, training, educational programs, etc.

continued

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BOCK PERRY'S SCHOOL, CONT.

Spearpluggers of America has only recently come into existence. There was a need to "tie together" us to speak, the clubs as well as the many Spearpluggers scattered throughout the states and a few foreign countries.

As you know, we stress that fishing is a family sport and for those who fish for fun. Fellowship and helping each other is our aim. Spearpluggers have found and worked out a lot of good fishing spots in this country and there are probably few places a Spearpluggers can go where he can't find another Spearpluggers and get needed information or help in a hurry. For information, all they have to do is write Spearpluggers of America, P. O. Box 65, Hickory, North Carolina, 28601.

Q: I hope you have given a lot of your life as a fisherman, teaching and advising all corners what you have found, learned, etc. Why do you continue to do these things rather than just have an open end of expert or "guy"?

A: As you perhaps know, fishing has been good to me, but not necessarily from a material standpoint. I have had, and still have, a full and varied life of many interests. Some were good, some not so good. However, they have allowed me to sustain my great interest in fishing as a recreational sport.

You asked me particularly "why I continue." First off, I believe only through knowledge will we ever fully realize the great potential that fishing has as a family sport. Second, and far from being a minor thing, only through knowledge will we ever be able to compete with modern day fishing conditions. Traffic, pollution, over-exploitation, the disheartening attitude of many state agencies, etc., are making it more and more difficult for many to enjoy and get satisfaction from the sport. I can see the day when only the well educated in fishing know-how will be able to make up with a decent catch of fish. Many will give up and quit the sport. Through this alone, we could see a complete deterioration of fishing as a family sport. Even today it has become, to a certain degree, a thing of the "past." This is bad, this is wrong. I'll keep preaching that, "the key is knowledge." Take this any way you desire. But I think it involves all phases of fishing whatever or **WHICHEVER** may be involved.

While I've been talking, my mind has also been fishing on and off on something else. I don't know how to say it.

However, I do feel that in the last forty years we have accomplished one thing. I feel we have at least set up some guidelines in respect to fishing. When I started these many years ago, there was no source of information on such things as the schooling nature of fish in deep water, migration routes, fish movements, weather and water conditions and their effect on the fish, etc. There wasn't even a decent fishing glossary so we could talk fishing intelligently. Many of these things are taken as common knowledge today. I may not get any credit for contributing much to fishing knowledge, but I hope some will remember the guidelines. From these guidelines more fishing knowledge may be obtained. The trouble with this is that too many will take them for their own and in the process try to "change" the guidelines until they are no longer recognizable.

I have no way of knowing if the following applies to our schools and programs, but it must in some manner apply for it keeps popping up in my mind as time keeps flying by.

"How long does an ordinary man have to devote to thought? A normal lifetime of useful, skilled, well-directed action does not extend much beyond fifty years. One-third of this is wasted in sleep, one-third spent in eating and relaxation, leaving a mere twenty-five years to think, to figure things out. And then he dies and all his thoughts are lost. Embryonic thoughts that might, in just a few more years, have sprouted into well-rounded theory. Lost and left for someone else to discover if he could — and probably lost forever."

Carl, with this in mind, we could go a step further and say if we don't get our thoughts down in some type of everlasting unpolished or "unmastered down" version, either in the minds of fishermen, clubs, books, etc., we will have wasted our time, as well as the time of others, throughout the years. Is it any wonder we will continue to try in some measure to convince more people that "Knowledge Is The Key." You can have all the advantages of modern day side in the presentation of lures, you can have all the ideas, colors, and actions and continued emphasis that you can buy success in some fancy wrapped package, but in the end, those with success and those with satisfaction will be those who understand what makes a fish tick and what must be DONE to put the fish on the stringer; and this can't be had by some gadget or something in a box.