

# Knowledge Is The Key To Fishing Success

by BUCK PERRY

## Part I

More years ago than I like to remember, I coined a word which expressed my thinking about the *ingredients* necessary to become a good fisherman. To become good and to achieve satisfaction from the sport, *a degree of success is a must*; and to obtain any great amount of success, *the first requisite is knowledge*. This is true in any phase of life, but is particularly true in fishing, as this sport carries the greatest number of prophets and gimmick makers whose purpose is anything but altruistic. So the need for a word that would embrace the total concept of fishing, I felt, was needed. The word I coined was SPOON-PLUGGING.

Over the years, many interpretations have been applied to this word, and in some cases have become synonymous with things that are in no way connected to the original thought.

Some refer to the word SPOON-PLUGGING as a 'method' of fishing, such as fast trolling, or running helter-skelter over the lake. Others have associated the word with a certain type lure, which has been described as "a stepped on shoe-horn"; and, many other things, none of which relates to "*knowledge*", which is the main ingredient.

In the first place, there isn't a "method" of knowledge. The application of Spoonplugging knowledge, or the use of tools to implement this knowledge, might be referred to as a "method", but the "*knowledge*" necessary to become a great fisherman is certainly not a "method". If, however, the total concept of Spoonplugging knowledge is learned and used in a precise and orderly manner as prescribed to become a great fisherman, then Spoonplugging could properly be referred to as a method.

In coming issues of FISHING FACTS, we will be talking about *fishing knowledge*, and what an important factor it is for fishing success



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and growth; so it is imperative that the full meaning of the word SPOONPLUGGING be fully understood, for at times the word will be used for a specific purpose, and at other times may slip in without any awareness on my part.

SPOONPLUGGING is an all-inclusive word. It is *the total concept for successful fishing*.

(1). It is an understanding of *how* fish live, his habits, his instincts, his reaction to stimuli, *how* weather and water conditions affect him, *where* he is likely to be found under various conditions, and *what it takes* to put him on the stringer at that particular time.

(2). It is an *orderly and precise manner* in which to fish.

(3). It is *confidence* in one's fishing; the removal of fear in fishing strange waters and for strange species.

(4). It is the full understanding that there is no magic short cut to success; and that *successful fishing is predicated on knowledge and the implementation of this knowledge*.

(5). It is the willingness to put forth *effort*.

(6). It requires no special talent or ability to learn, only a strong *desire* to catch fish.

(7). *The guy who understands* fish behavior and how to go about utilizing his knowledge to put fish on the stringer, we call a SPOON-PLUGGER.

(8). A SPOONPLUGGER has an unselfish attitude toward his fellow fisherman, directs his efforts toward conservation, and is concerned with his outdoor manners.

(9). Equipment that was designed for better control, and allows the transfer of fishing knowledge to others as easily as possible, is called SPOON-PLUGGING EQUIPMENT.

(10). Lures which were designed to allow SPOONPLUGGING knowledge to be utilized to full advantage are called SPOONPLUGS. These lures, through proper application, will be the means by which a fisherman can discipline himself, and constantly direct his attention to *the important controls* in fishing (depth and speed), rather than on aids (size, color and action).

Each of the above can be a factor in fishing growth, and a little further look may give a better understanding of what SPOONPLUGGING is all about.

Item No. 1 covers so much ground that it is impossible to cover it in its entirety in an article, or a group of articles. Yet this is one of the most important phases of SPOONPLUGGING.

To get started and have a clear understanding of basic knowledge, and to comprehend the meaning of the nomenclature used, it would be helpful to study a copy of SPOONPLUGGING FOR FRESH-WATER BASS AND OTHER GAME FISH, and a SPOONPLUGGING LESSON. These booklets contain the BASIC facts; basic movement of fish, basic structures, basic weather and water conditions, basic presentation of lures, and so on. Without this basic knowledge there is no firm ground on which to build further fishing knowledge and growth. If a fisherman does not understand the BASICS,

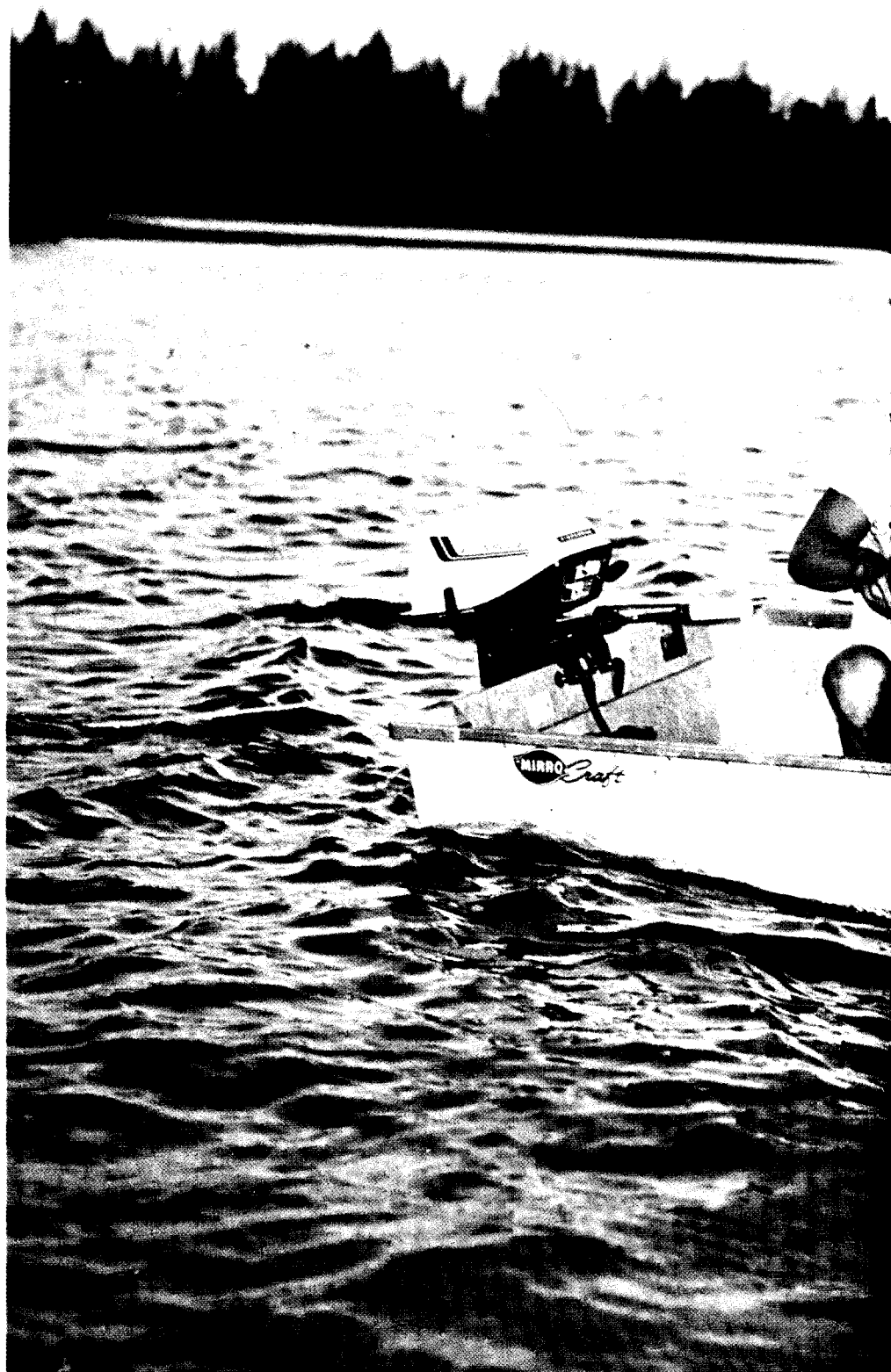
there is little likelihood that he would every fully understand the expansion of these subjects; and, the expansion of this basic knowledge is the key to an expanded fishing growth. This is what brings fishing catches to an unbelievable level; and without it a plateau will be reached, and in fact, skills and fishing success will take a nose-dive. Human factors enter the picture and the outcome is unquestionable.

(Editor's note. Booklets *SPOON-PLUGGING FOR FRESHWATER BASS* are available at \$2.00 per copy from Northwood Publishing Company. The Spoonplugging lesson, is included with the spoonplug 5-PAK. The expansion of basic knowledge which Buck mentions is taught in his Fishing Classes, and the Correspondence Course which he is preparing, and his articles in *FISHING FACTS*.)

Number 2 is certainly an important factor. If a fisherman is burdened with questions as to how he is going to fish a particular body of water, most of his time would be spent in a hit-or-miss fashion. One of the pleasures in fishing comes from *KNOWING* exactly what will be done the minute the lake is reached, and that what is done is correct. The mind is not cluttered with, "I hope the fish are bitin' today", or, "wonder what they're hittin' today?" Or, "I wonder where is the best place to fish?"

Number 3 is, in a way, a continuation of number two; but if we analyze it further, we see other factors enter the picture. First, it is in working strange or new waters that a fisherman truly begins to learn. HE must look at the terrain, check water color, follow the steps necessary to find and map structure, and arrive at the fish. Secondly, the challenge of working out strange waters opens horizons in fishing never seen before. New avenues of knowledge are experienced, which makes a fisherman become better and better at his chosen sport.

Number 4 is a most difficult item to *remove* from the fisherman's thinking. He has, deeply ingrained, the feeling and hope that *someday* he will find *that magic lure!* He has a great desire and belief that he can go down to a store and *buy* immediate success in a fancy wrapped package. He is eternally blasted with the claims of gimmick-makers and the stories of sensational catches with some off-color lure, or one with





some exotic action; or he reads about some fantastic lake miles away from civilization. Any one, or all, of these he believes to be the reason for the great catch he saw or heard about. This type of thinking *must be removed* from a fisherman's mind, if he is to gain success and satisfaction from HIS fishing, on HIS particular lake.

Number 5 will point out that, as a whole, people are not prone to discipline themselves *on their own*. They all too often exert minimum effort rather than maximum. If a problem is encountered, and they are at a loss as to how it can be solved, they will quit. The WHY and HOW to cure the problem may not be known or is not firmly implanted. WHY and HOW is not served up in some bright package, but is obtained *through effort* on the part of the fisherman; either through *knowledge taught*, or *knowledge gained* through years of experience. If there is a profound desire on the part of fishermen, be they old or young, skilled or unskilled, dumb or bright, *they can be schooled* to move ahead. This cannot be done with gimmicks, but with true facts and effort.

Number 6 may not be appreciated by some of the "experts". Over the years, it has amazed me to hear some of the so-called experts expound to beginning fishermen just what skills are needed and how difficult successful fishing is because of those smart, wily fish they will have to out-smart! Some would have you believe that fancy knot tying, tournament casting, and sophisticated equipment, which takes little less than a college professor's knowledge to operate, is *necessary* to become a successful fisherman. When actually, all it takes is a strong *desire* to catch fish, coupled with *knowledge* and the expending of some *effort*.

Number 7 is fully understood by a fisherman calling himself a Spoon-plugger. He knows that his success is predicated on his having *knowledge*. He is aware that with all of his fishing knowledge, *he will always be learning* and will *never* reach the point where he can't get better! He knows that to be called a Spoon-plugger entails many things, each of which will make him a better fisherman.

Number 8 is a continuation of number seven, with the addition of

Taken at a recent Buck Perry seminar in Milwaukee, reading from left to right: Art Mercier of WBBM — CBS Radio, Chicago; George Pazik of Fishing Facts; Buck Perry; Mauri Marasco of M-M Sporting Goods, Milwaukee; Don Johnson of the Milwaukee Sentinel; and Earl Gillespie of TV 6, WITI, Milwaukee.



another factor. A factor, which I feel is of great importance.

Fishermen, as a whole, are considered to be a very selfish group when it comes to sharing their knowledge or their fishing hole. They will break their backs to "beat" ole Charlie. The ego of some is something to behold. To some, a competitive spirit is innate, and this is good — unless it is carried to the extreme. When the motivating force in fishing is to beat the other fellow, or make a big name, then pretty soon you find that fisherman sneaking off to places where he won't be recognized, only showing his face when he has a good catch; or he seeks more fertile waters, such as newly constructed reservoirs. He substitutes winning and acclaim for learning, invents excuses for failures, and pretty soon his fishing success takes a nose-dive, and his fishing becomes a chore rather than a pleasure.

In any sport — football, baseball, golf — you find a highly competitive spirit, but at the same time, you find the "pros" in these sports *sharing their knowledge*, and in many instances giving their personal help. Why should the sport of fishing not carry this attitude, rather than that of selfishness?

The removal of selfishness is the greatest aid in becoming a good fisherman. *You really learn when you begin to teach.* Then a far greater personal satisfaction is achieved than continually being concerned with beating the other fellow.

Number 9 relates to fishing equipment. I prefer to call equipment "tools", as they have a function beyond that of merely being capable of hooking and reeling in fish. Proper "tools" will play an important part in learning and will allow fishing to be done in a correct manner. It is im-

possible to learn proper trolling or casting methods, unless the right equipment is used. At the same time, it is impossible to teach and transfer knowledge without "tools" that allow this knowledge to be felt, experienced and understood. Proper tools, and their use, will discipline the fisherman, and this is a must for successful fishing. Fishermen are not prone to do this for themselves; they tend to let other factors enter the picture and dominate their thinking unless something is used to keep their sights upon the important things, rather than on the minor events that will enter the picture.

Number 10, lures, is a subject that could cover a book. The majority of fishermen give more credit for their fishing success to lures than to any other one thing.

Let it be clearly understood — there is *no such thing* as a magic lure; *there has never been one; and there will never be one.* Most *anything* with hooks will catch fish at one time or another! Some may do a little better than others. Lures should be put in their proper perspective, that is, how well they fit into certain *categories*. The various depths of water, the different types of water, different type structures, different presentations, and the varying seasons all call for lures, or "tools", that will allow the fisherman to accomplish what he is trying to do.

Spoonplugs are lures (tools) I designed many years ago, from necessity, as none were available that: (1) allowed control of depth and speed to any great degree; (2) that could be used for mapping, so as to determine bottom conditions and make-up; and (3) that would allow discipline in all steps of presentation; (4) that could be used as a tool for transferring knowledge to others. There are various series; weedless,

shallow-working, jig or jump-type and the basic lures. Basic Spoon-plugs (basic tools) are the free-running, bottom-bumping series. The other series could be considered only as aids, and used when certain conditions warrant their use. Proper use of these basic lures will tell what the bottom of the lake looks like, how it is made up, when and where to cast or troll, what type lure to use, and "why" you should do what you are doing.

Proper trolling of the basic series will not only teach mapping and *interpretation*, but will serve as a means for discipline in the fisherman's efforts to gain more knowledge and how best to apply it. Proper casting of them will allow many depth and speed controls not obtainable in any other way.

It is unfortunate that a successful curriculum must, to some extent, be associated with specific gear; but the necessity should readily be understood. If proper equipment can be found to do the job fully, *then I care not what the brand name might be.* My aim is to make *everything* in the tackle box more valuable. This will occur when it is understood what each item can do, or not do, in the total picture.

SPOONPLUGGING, as you can see, is a very broad term and covers a lot of territory. If any of the ten items listed could be eliminated, it would be a difficult chore to perform. You might become a fairly good fisherman if just one or two were mastered. But to become a *great fisherman*, all of them are needed.

So, in the future, when the term is used, be sure to immediately associate it to its simplest form — *knowledge* of what makes a fish tick, and what it takes to *consistently* put him on the stringer.





Increasingly more and more fishing areas today consist of man-made impoundments or flowages. Characteristically, they are all "hot" and "easy pickins" during their first 5 to 7 years of life. Seemingly, anyone can catch some fish by casting almost anywhere. In later years, however, these impoundments seem to go dead for most anglers and only a very few men can still fish them successfully. Are the fish gone? Of course not!! They have merely settled down into regular patterns of schooling and movement. They can be found by fishing structure, one of the great discoveries made by Buck Perry.

At the recent Buck Perry seminar in Milwaukee, attended by over 500 eager fishermen and fisherwomen, serious anglers held Buck for questions long after the seminar itself was over. The man with the "Jim" on his jacket is, of course, our own Senior Editor, Jim Wrolstad.

#### Editor's Note

"Blessed are those who share their knowledge with others for they shall be called teachers". E. L. (Buck) Perry, of Hickory, North Carolina, is the man we credit with being the father and teacher of structure fishing. It was Buck's discoveries about the habits and movement of game fish that made possible the entire modern era of angling. We also consider him to be America's greatest living fisherman, a man who has become a legend in his own time. Recently one of the giant national magazines wanted to do a feature article on Buck, but wanted to bill him as the inventor of the Spoonplug. Buck refused by saying he didn't want to be remembered as the inventor of a "piece of tin". The Spoonplug which he invented is only a tool of his trade like a hammer or a saw to a carpenter. It is Buck's discoveries and fantastic fishing knowledge that will make him immortal in the world of angling. We are privileged to announce that Buck will be a frequent contributor to Fishing Facts and present to you this first article in a series. Read it well. You are about to receive the basic fish knowledge that started the whole era of structure fishing.

