

THE HISTORY OF STRUCTURE

By Chase F. Klinesteker

“Knowledge is the key
to fishing success.”

Buck Perry



In a recent (2003) article about structure in “Midwest Outdoors” the writer mentioned that he was **uncertain who first coined the term “structure” related to fishing**. This term is widely used and **its proper definition and use is important** to the accurate communication of fishing concepts. Hopefully I can add some light to the subject for the reader by relating **some of the history that I am aware of**.

Elwood “**Buck**” Perry was born in Hickory, North Carolina in 1915. As a young child he had a keen interest in fishing and had a very **inquisitive mind**. As he grew up he was attracted to the **study of science, math, chemistry, and physics**. He attended college and did graduate work at North Carolina State University, becoming a **physics and math teacher and a college physics professor**. His interest in fishing sparked a **16 year scientific study of fish, their environment, and behavior**. **Trained in scientific methods**, he ran many **experiments and observations**, both **from underwater and a glass-bottomed boat**. He discovered that **all species of fish relate to structure** and that the study of structure was the key to locating fish. He was **the first to define structure as “the bottom of the lake that is different from the surrounding area”** and that structure is made up of “breaks” and “breaklines”.

“**Breaks**” were defined as “**where structure is no longer uniform due to dips, a quick drop in depth, rocks, stumps, bushes, sunken objects, etc.**”. Breaks are not structure. **Fish** moving on structure will **pause at breaks**. “**Breaklines**” were **defined as “a line on the bottom where there is a definite increase or decrease in depth**, either sudden or gradual—such as the **edge of a channel, hole, or gully**; the ‘wall’ of a **weedline or brushline**; where 2 bodies of water meet which **differ in temperature, color, or movement(current)**”. **Fish** will **follow breaklines** in their movements and migrations.

Buck Perry did not just define structure but **developed a total concept for successful fishing** including knowledge of how fish react to weather and water changes and the importance of depth and speed as the primary controls of our lures to get fish to strike. **By 1944 the total concept was completed, including the design of tools (lures) that allowed complete control of both depth and speed at the same time**. These he called **Spoonplugs** and the total concept (knowledge) was called “Spoonplugging”.

In 1946 he opened Bucks' Baits to manufacture the equipment needed and to promote and **teach the concepts** he had discovered. For 11 years he traveled around the southern US talking about structure and trying to promote his concepts and lures, but **few would listen**. Then **in 1957 he did a promotion in Chicago** and made some **huge catches of big fish from "fished out" Lake Marie**. Considerable interest was generated in his concept of "structure fishing". "Fishing News" newsletter and later **"Fishing Facts" magazine used his discoveries as the basis for their approach to fishing**. Buck Perry remained **Education Editor for Fishing Facts Magazine for 22 years**, writing articles and teaching others about structure and the habits of fish. The classic book **"Lunkers Love Nightcrawlers"** had its **origins in Buck Perrys' discoveries**. **"In-Fisherman"** magazine began and grew up with Buck Perrys' structure fishing concepts also. They still have articles recognizing Mr Perry and his contributions to fishing (e.g. **25th Anniversary Special Issue, p.90**). The **In-Fisherman TV show aired February 2, 2002 stated**: "When you start talking about classic fishing theory, the **most fundamental of all theories in fishing is structure fishing** theory **as Buck Perry introduced it in the late 1950s'** and early 60s', and that idea, **the structure fishing idea**, was not only revolutionary for its time, it's **revolutionary today**. It is **fundamental to everything that every fisherman does**, whether you are fishing for largemouth bass, muskies, or other fish".

Because of his contributions to fishing, **Buck Perry is enshrined in the National Freshwater Fishing Hall Of Fame with their highest honor**. Now, in 2003 and 87 years "young", he still is very active, owning and operating Bucks' Baits, editor for the "National Spoonplugger" newsletter, and putting together a "History of Spoonplugging" display. He is widely **recognized as the "father of modern day structure fishing"**. For more information on Spoonplugging clubs, newsletter, or equipment, check out **Bucks' Baits website at buckperry.com**.