

# "THE HISTORY OF STRUCTURE"

By Chase F. Klinesteker, 2003

"Knowledge is the key  
to fishing success."

*Buck Perry*



In a recent 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 defined 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 and equipment) that allowed complete control of both depth and speed at the same time. The lures 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. 25<sup>th</sup> 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 bass, muskies, walleyes, 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](http://buckperry.com).