

Buck talks fishing

by Buck Perry, Education Editor

Take The Lake As A Whole And Separate It Into Two Types of Water

"Papaw, you know what?"

"No, what?"

"I believe those other boats left because Eric kept yelling at them every time he caught a fish."

"They probably pulled out because he caught a fish, but I doubt if they left because he yelled at them. I'd probably do the same thing, if I were guiding a couple fishless fishermen, and some squirts gave a yell every time they caught a fish."

"Papaw, you know what?"

"What?"

"Eric and I must be better fishermen than those other people."

"Why you little squirt — you don't know your rear end from third base. All you've been doing is sitting there holding the rod. Why do you think we're doing nothing but trolling? Your casting stinks, and Eric makes a mess of things every time he picks up the rod. How about all those big fish wrapping the rods around the boat and taking lures like they were going out of style? O.K., smart guys, we'll go work the areas where the other boats were; this should show us just how great you are."

"Papaw?"

"Yeh?"

"Don't you think the fish have stopped biting?"

"Papaw?"

"Huh?"

"I don't believe there are any fish around here."

"Papaw?"

"Yes?"

"Why don't we go back and fish where we caught the fish?"

"Now you want to be a fish hog, eh?"

"Papaw, you know what?"

"No, what?"

"I don't think I can hold the rod much longer; my arms are about to fall off."

The above conversation took place when three of my grandchildren (Jeffrey, age 9; Donna, age 7; and Eric, age 5) were fishing for northern pike and walleyes for the first time. They were familiar with other species, but this particular trip would provide new and unique experiences and would enable me to "teach" them a thing or two. Later at the cabin, I explained why the other fishermen failed, and why they (my grandchildren) had caught some

fish. (They were willing to be quiet, because they were worn to a fraz — "fishing where they ain't.")

A drawing was made showing the conditions that existed in the general area they had fished. They were impressed with the fact that in order to be successful, regardless of the type presentation, a fisherman must use features found in a body of water (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water) as his guide to where the fish might be. Then, he must use "tools"

(fishing gear) to control the depth and speed of the lures (or bait) on or around these features.

"We caught fish because we were using structure as our guide (a long underwater "hump" or "bar"), and were trolling rather fast, using line lengths and lure sizes to reach the spot where the fish were. (See spot marked "X," Figure 1.) The other fishermen did not necessarily fail due to lack of skill, how they handled the boat, or the type lure or bait used. Their speed was probably close enough, but their failure was primarily due to the fact that their bait was out of position (depth control). They were not using bottom features as their guide. They were probably there due to the fact the area was known as a "hot-spot." We have no way of knowing how many times their depth and speed control was good or bad in the past. However, today — it wasn't good enough.

"The sad part is, they might have thought we were using some new-found lure. Or, they were not rigged to troll as we were; or, the fish were not biting live bait today. Sadder still, was the fact they pulled up and left. What they should have done was come over and find out WHY a couple small-fry were catching fish and they weren't."

(It was not explained why a "guide" or a "pro" wasn't likely to do this, but would do just what they observed — "get the heck out of there.")

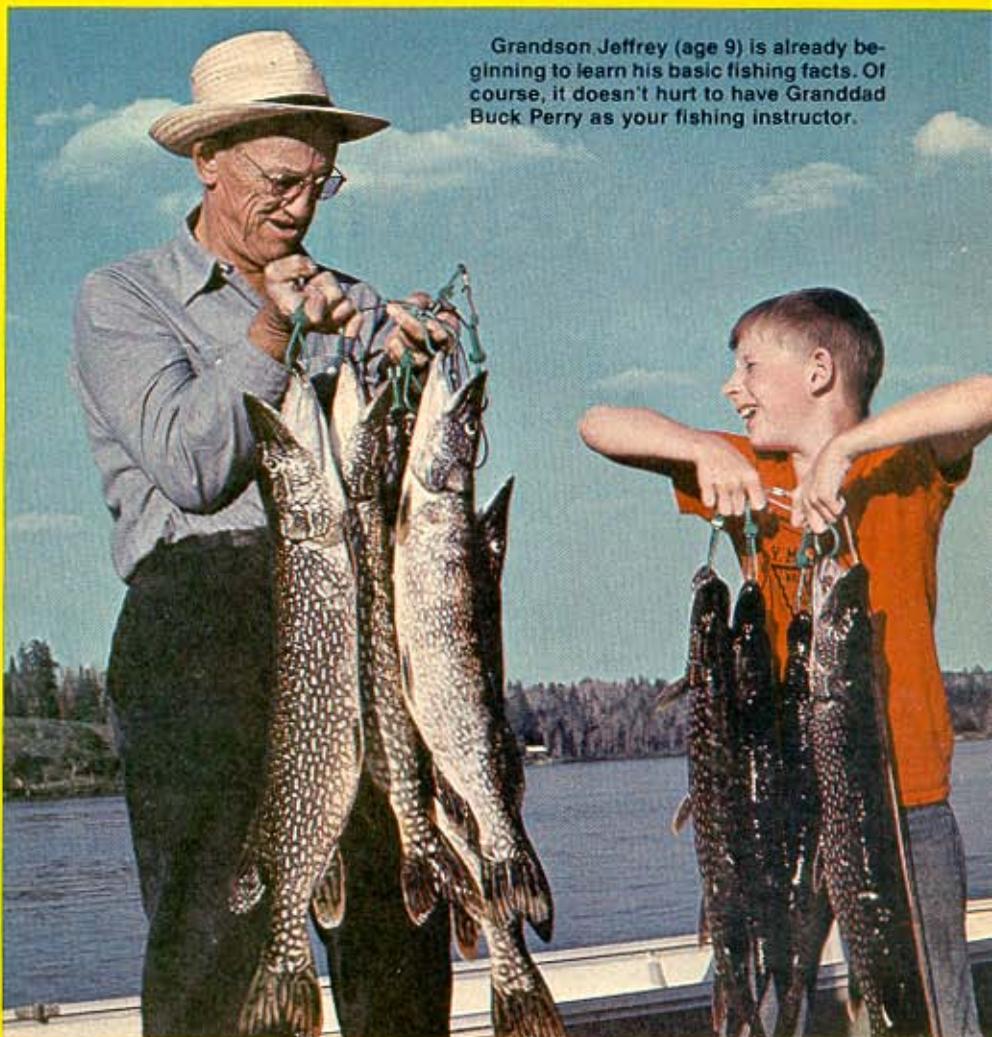
In the past we have discussed how you and I should use the features (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water) in a lake (reservoir, pond, stream, etc.) as our guide to where the fish will be. These features are to be used at all times, regardless of the weather, water conditions, seasons, lake types, moods of the fish, etc. We also talked about how we must answer all successes and failures in terms of depth and speed control. We set forth a BASIC presentation of lures. This included both casting and trolling. The basic presentation of lures (depth and speed control) would not change regardless of the weather and water conditions, seasons, lake types, species of fish, etc. The whole purpose of which was to show that success is not overly difficult, and that we do not need a new set of rules every time we go fishing. And, that we cannot rely entirely upon a particular "method," "system," etc. The things we have talked about were also said so you and I

would know exactly what to look for, and just what to DO on each trip.

We might ask ourselves — "What DO most fishermen have in mind when they go fishing?" "How DO they plan to go about catching a fish on each trip?" "How does it feel to go on a body of water and NOT KNOW what steps to take to arrive at the fish?"

For many of us it has been so long since there was any doubt as to what must be done to consistently catch fish, it can't be imagined what the feeling would be. Undoubtedly, it must be little short of frightening. Probably most fishermen face the unknown by planning to utilize some new electronic gimmick, "hot" lure, or some new "breakthrough." Some might depend upon some new action, size, color, rattle, odor, or sound that's supposed to drive the fish crazy. It could be they plan to use that new line or rod claimed to change a bad fisherman into a good fisherman. It might be some have checked all "charts" and found the "signs" are favorable for them on that particular day. Probably most plan on flying from "hot-spot" to "hot-spot," each hoping he is going to do something a little bit different from the rest.

We have no way of knowing just what the plans are for the day, but it



Grandson Jeffrey (age 9) is already beginning to learn his basic fishing facts. Of course, it doesn't hurt to have Granddad Buck Perry as your fishing instructor.

Who can blame 5 yr. old Eric for yelling when he got hold of a fish like this? Even most grown-ups would get excited at the sight of this lunker.



would probably be safe to say that most fishermen give some thought to what they will do, but with very few knowing exactly what they SHOULD do. Probably many of us would not fish much if we did not know how weather and water conditions affected the movements of fish. Or, that a fish spent most of his time in deep water and that he used bottom features as guides in his movements and migrations; and, that we must control our depth and speed on or around these features to overcome his "moods."

In the very beginning of our talks, it was pointed out we must approach the subject from many different angles before many fishermen will fully understand what is said.

Over the years it has become apparent many fishermen do not completely understand what is meant when it is said that STRUCTURE must be our guide as to where the fish might be! Most misunderstandings are largely due to the fact that NUMEROUS fishermen do not know what the term "structure" truly

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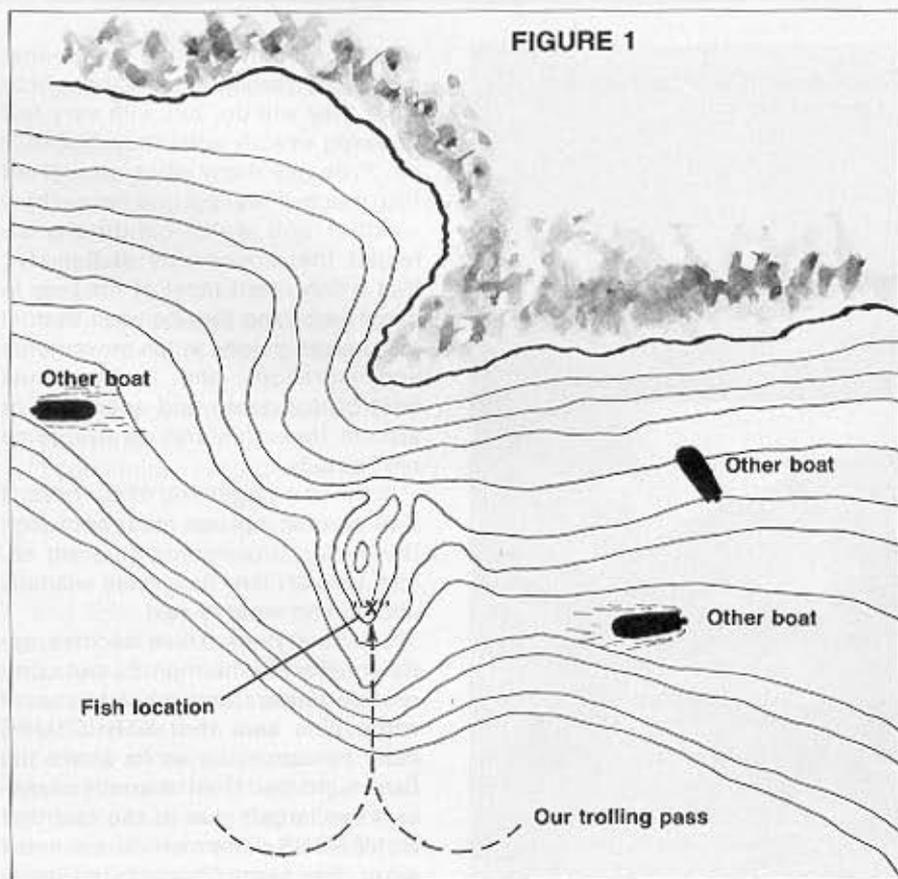
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FIGURE 1



means. In recent years we have seen and heard many references to the word "structure" being made. Most of the time those talking (or writing) are not referring to STRUCTURE but, in actuality, are talking about "breaks" and "breaklines." In many cases they are referring to visible objects (a stump, stick-up, log, weed patch, rock, etc.) that can be cast toward. They couldn't be farther from the truth when they say, "I am a 'structure' fisherman."

Our Glossary of terms states: "STRUCTURE — the bottom of the lake with unusual features that distinguishes it from the surrounding bottom area." We must note the word BOTTOM. It is not used just one time in this sentence, it is used TWICE. At no time did it say structure was a weed patch, bush, rock, stump, etc. The bottom of the lake (reservoir, stream, pond, etc.) was what it said, and what it meant.

It has been said when fish move (migrate) on structure, they will pause or stop at breaks and breaklines on the structure. "Breaks" have been described as objects found on

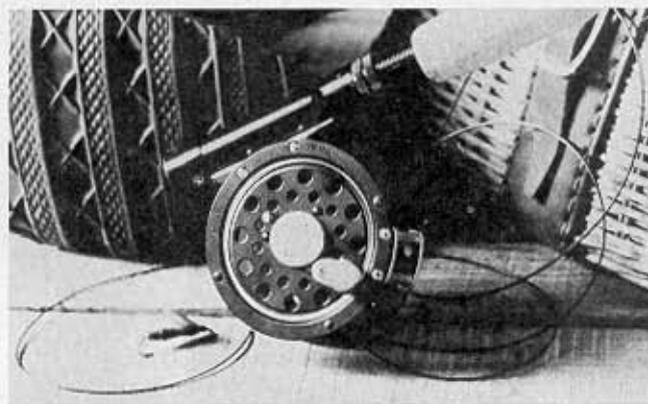
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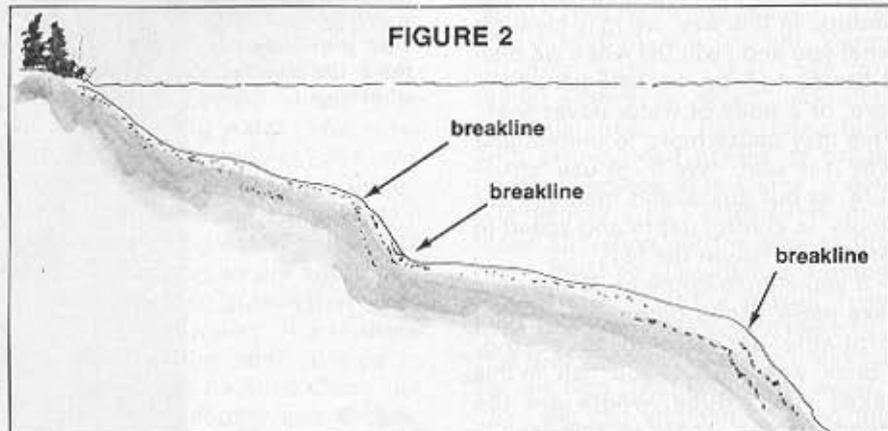
the bottom, such as rocks, stumps, bushes, weeds, washes, clear spots, etc. "Breaklines" are described as a place on the bottom where there is a more sudden increase or decrease in depth. Although a "breakline" is a break in the bottom, it is used as a separate feature, as it can be in the form of a weedline, edge of channel, or hole, a very obvious "line" around a structure, or (for that matter) completely around the body of water. Or, it could be an "unseen" type breakline such as color, temperature, light, current, etc. However, a "breakline" is normally thought of as a more sudden increase or decrease in depth (on the bottom), and as one of the more important "breaks" in fishing. (Note Figure 2.)

Quite often we might say (or write) — "We must use features in a body of water (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water) as our guide as to where the fish might be." Then we might state it, or write it — "We must use structure (breaks, breaklines) as our guide." Then we might say — "We must use structure as our guide." Whichever way it is stated or written, it is correct. We can drop the

words "deep water," for if we do not first accept the fact that deep water is the home of the fish (where they spend the greater part of their time) we might as well forget the rest of the stuff anyway. The key word in the whole thing is STRUCTURE. The use of "breaks" and "breaklines" is completely SECONDARY as to where you and I must look for the fish. Our first guide is "structure." The "breaks" and "breaklines" on, or connected to, structure is where we "pinpoint" the fish.

Many writers have shown maps,

and particular "structures" they have fished successfully. Many have gone to great pains to detail a particular feature, and how the fish use a particular spot. They have given in detail the type of lure, type of retrieve, "twitch," rigging, and even how the fish fought after being hooked. Anytime, "structure" is talked about, the writer is doing the reader a favor, but too often we may be guilty of too much detail on a PARTICULAR situation. We may be complicating the whole thing by discussing too much a particular structure, break, break-





Grandma Perry (Mrs. Buck) coaches Granddaughter Donna in the art of handling a striking game fish. After landing several battling northern, Donna (age 7) said she thought maybe she'd like to give this fishing a try again some time.

line, lure presentation, interpretation, etc. This may indicate we have forgotten the fisherman will be faced with a completely *different* weather and water condition, *different* seasons, *different* type lakes, *different* species, and definitely *different* moods of the fish. Let me quickly say though, writers are not the only ones who have overlooked this fishing fact. Things change in fishing, and we all should keep this in mind. What was great yesterday may not be worth a doodly-squat today or tomorrow.

It is felt we should take a "high" look at a body of water (interpretation) and have a "bird's-eye view" of the presentation of lures. At times we should interpret the **WHOLE** body of water, rather than a particular spot, and, we should lay out the **WHOLE** presentation of lures on a body of water, rather than one on a particular feature. In this way, we may clear up what you and I will **DO** when we plan a fishing trip, be it a lake fished before, or a body of water never seen. This may cause more to understand why it is said, "We must use 'structure' as our guide, and then use our 'tools' to control depth and speed in order to arrive at the fish."

If you should come up to me on a lake never fished before, you would probably get around to saying: "Buck, where would you 'fish' in this lake?" Or, "Buck, where are the good 'fishing' spots in this lake?"

The reply may be something like this. "We can't see all the good *fishing* spots from here, but we can look at this contour map where some of the good areas have been circled."

Then you might say, "Yeh, but how about all those good-looking areas not marked on the map?"

My reply to this might be, "Joe, you should know a fish can be caught at



Chances are Eric and Jeffrey won't soon forget their fishing trip with "Papaw" (Grandpa Perry). In the years ahead they will come to realize that **ANYONE** can catch fish, providing they learn the true facts of fishing.





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anytime, most any place, by most anyone, using most any method. But, you and I both know this is not the name of the game. The good fishing spots have been marked, and it is in these areas where you concentrate your fishing. It is in these areas where you have the best chance to catch a fish. It is in these areas where you "shoot the works" in the presentation of lures. However, it would not be wise to pass up all the other places in the lake. You and I never know exactly the fishing situation; the weather and water conditions, the moods of the fish, etc.

"You will note in all areas marked as fishing water, the lake bottom has some unusual feature that is different from the surrounding area. These features stand out like sore thumbs. We refer to these as 'structure' (breaks, breaklines). You note the map does not show any well defined 'structure' in other parts of the lake; and, probably your depth sounder will not indicate any either. But, smaller features not shown on the map, and things you can't see on the depth meter, could look like a 'mountain' to a fish (and to your lures, pro-

vided you kept them in position).

"No, you do not pass up all the areas not marked as good 'fishing' spots. You have to find some answers to the fishing situation, and these areas must be 'checked out.' The fastest and easiest way to 'fish' these areas is by motor trolling. If you only plan to anchor the boat and put out live bait, then my suggestion would be to locate yourself at one of the 'fishing' areas marked on the map. The same thing would hold true if you plan to put all your faith in 'seeing' the fish on a depth recorder."

Experiences such as the above over the years, have caused us (Spoonpluggers) to refer to different portions of a body of water in different terms. One section will be referred to as "fishing water" and other sections as "trolling water." We have found the average fisherman understands that when we say a certain section is "trolling water," we are not necessarily saying we are not fishing the water. He also grasps that when we say "fishing water," it is in these areas he has the best chance to catch a fish, and he must check out completely the depths and speeds.

Our "on-the-water" instructors have found that designating certain areas of a lake as "trolling water" and other areas as "fishing water" plays an important part in understanding the subject of the presentation of lures.

When having "on-the-water" instructors explain how to interpret a WHOLE lake, a student will probably be cruising the water at a fast clip (no actual presentation of lures — as yet) and would be hearing comments such as: "ALL this section is 'trolling water.'" "See that shallow bar (structure) running out from the point? That is 'fishing water.'" "This whole section is a big flat. Purely 'trolling' water." "That cove is a feeder stream, or 'wash,' indicating the existence of 'bars' (structure) with pronounced breaks or breaklines someplace in this area; a definite 'fishing' area." "This entire long, steep shoreline, all the way to that point, must be classified as 'trolling' water for most of the season. However, that point looks like it has a narrow rocky bar with a sharp breakline on one side. That is 'fishing' water." "See all that shoreline behind this

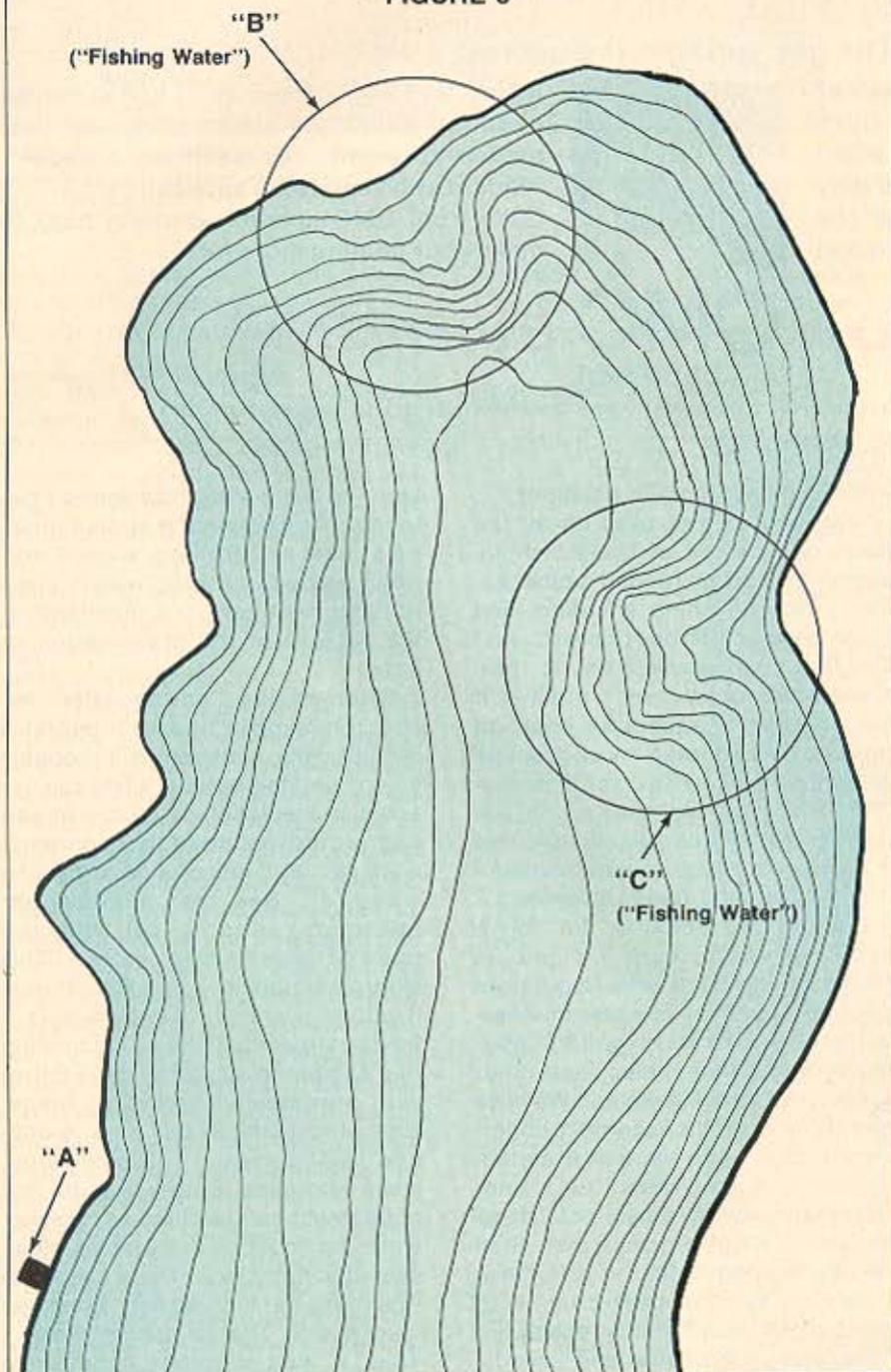
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FIGURE 3



row of bushes along the channel? All that shoreline, plus all the water behind this row of bushes is nothing but 'trolling' water."

Additional comments might be: "Most all these bushes and breaklines along the channel are considered trolling water. We don't have any 'fishing' water until we get up there where the feeder stream channel cuts across the flat. There exists definite 'bars' or 'humps' or STRUCTURE in some form where the two channels meet. That is definitely 'fishing' water." "This long ridge along the channel is mostly 'trolling' water with the exception of where a 'wash' or feeder stream cuts through it." "See that long point and how the weedline protrudes out farther from the shoreline? That indicates a 'bar' that must be gone over carefully; a 'fishing' spot." "All along here the weedline runs straight staying about the same distance from the shoreline; 'trolling' water." "That exposed weed bed out there indicates a hump or underwater island, and it must be 'fished.'" "See how the original channel makes a fast turn in this area of the reservoir? There exists a big 'bar' on the 'inside' of the bend that must be looked over carefully to see if its features will produce fish." "That long causeway (roadbed) that crosses the lake is mostly 'trolling' water until we prove it otherwise. The exception to this is where it crosses the channel."

Still more comments might be: "See that long, narrow island out there? You will probably find 'fishing' water at one end or the other." "That deep cove can be passed up at this time of year, but it would be classified as 'fishing' water next spring and during spawning." "Those two bars at the entrance to that bay must be checked out thoroughly." "That large feeder stream 'arm' has enough depth and must be looked upon as a *lake within itself*. Fishing it would depend upon water conditions, weather conditions, structure, depths and fish movements, etc., found in the main part of the reservoir. We could say, if trouble is being had on the larger lake, that 'smaller lake' would be easier to 'fish.' We'll look it over later to point out the 'fishing' spots, and the 'trolling' spots." "In the last hour we have covered 5 or 6 miles of this reservoir. You noted we only found 5 or 6 places that could be classified as 'fishing' water. All the rest is 'trolling'

water until we prove it otherwise." "We have gone completely around this lake and have seen no outstanding or recognizable 'structure.' This means the whole thing is 'trolling' water, and our lures have to find the 'fishing' spots."

Figure 3 is a contour map of the greater part of a "natural" lake we plan to fish. Neither of us has ever been on this lake before. We find there is only one launching ramp (or dock) on the whole lake. It is located at point "A" (Figure 3). We note right off the bat there is plenty of deep water over most of the lake to provide the fish protection from a changing environment. (If we had only one section of deep water, in one particular area, then the whole deal is simplified — the only "fishing" area is around the "hole.")

The first thing to do is take the lake as a WHOLE (contour map) and separate it into two types of water. We will divide it into "fishing" water and "trolling" water. In order to do

this we have to use the STRUCTURE shown on the map as our guide to where the fish will be ('fishing' water). Typical "structure," as we should know, are bars, humps (underwater islands), reefs, causeways, dams, roadbeds, dredgings, etc. The "bars" and "humps" come in all shapes, sizes and depths. Some are so small, or so large, they may be hard to recognize. Some are so pronounced they stand out like a sore thumb. These are the "major" and most common structures found in a body of water. Some will be good (fish use them), some will be bad (fish do not use them). Figure 3 shows how we have marked off the "fishing" water (structure — "B" & "C," Figure 3). As far as we are concerned the balance is "trolling" water (until we prove it otherwise). By doing this we have marked off the features in the lake as to *where the fish will be*. We have also set up the *things we are going to do*. *The basic presentation of lures has now been*

"Experiences over the years have caused us to refer to different portions of a body of water in different terms. One section will be referred to as 'fishing' water, and other sections as 'trolling' water."

laid out.

It might be well to say something at this point about the word "trolling." To some, the term, or the presentation of lures in this manner, turns them off. If you ask them why, they may give as reasons things of this nature: "Unsportsmanlike." — "Too easy." — "No challenge." — "Can't be used in a tournament," etc., etc. I could talk for an hour why none of these makes sense. But my Daddy would have summed this up by saying, "You never condemn people who don't know they don't know."

We note that where we launch the boat (Position "A" — Figure 3) is quite a distance from an area designated as "fishing" water ("B" or "C"). However, we must proceed *at once* to find some answers about the situation we face. We must find out the condition of the bottom, weed condition, water color, fish movements, depths, type of fish, things not shown on the map, etc.

It would be unwise to take off like some scalded dog for a "hot-spot" we have heard about. It would not be wise at this stage of the game to take off for any "fishing" water we might have marked on the map. It has often been said, there is no need to have a big fast rig in order to have consistent successful fishing. There is no need, in most cases, to take off for the other end of the lake. It would be far wiser to begin finding some answers — which would mean "starting right at the dock."

Next time we will continue our talk and thoughts about this natural lake (Figure 3) and how we plan to work it, using "structure" as our guide and our fishing gear (tools) to arrive at the fish. Later we will use a reservoir (man-made lake), and later still go into some of the questions our talks might have produced. 

It can take a mess o' fish to feed an entire fishing camp. When fishing got tough, Grandpa Buck went out for a few hours in order to provide enough food for the dinner table. On this particular outing it took a deeply trolled, high speed lure to find and catch these reluctant takers.

