

# MY HISTORY OF BASS LURE MAKING

by Albert Ford

My dad was a guide in the Branson area for 30 years and a guide for Jim Owens for over 20 years."

"When I was nine years old Dad told me if I learned to hit a tire at least five out of nine times, he would take me on a float trip. He gave me one of his rods and reels to practice with and a sinker. I didn't like just a sinker, so I got some chicken feathers and a hook. I put the feathers and hook in the split sinker and mashed them together to make a bait. We had some chickens on the farm at that time that were about three-quarter grown. We lived at Ridgedale, Mo. about 10 miles south of Branson and 3/4 miles from the Arkansas line."

"I was casting at the tire and one of the roosters ran up and grabbed the lure and I set the hook. It was sure a good fight: The rooster went every way but towards me, squawking all the time. My mother called to me and told me to turn that chicken loose, and I told her I would when I got it in. That was a great fight that I will never forget. I got to where I could hit that tire eight out of nine times. My folks always kept their promise and Dad did take me on the first of many float trips. I would get tired and my Dad would tell me, "You can't catch fish with your bait in the boat."

"My parents were the greatest in the world and I am grateful to God that He chose me to be their son. We worked hard and were punished when we did wrong. Many times I felt the sting of a switch, but we were very, very happy."

"I lived in Kansas City, Missouri for 19 years and would come down on weekends to fish with my Dad. We were floating Long Creek in Arkansas one day, and using plastic plugs and catching a few bass. I thought we were doing pretty well, but apparently Dad didn't think so. He told me to pull over to the gravel bar, so I did."

"He came back to my end of the canoe and started looking through my tackle boxes. I asked him what he was looking for and he said, He would let me know."

"I had REBEL lures in my boxes (three plastic ones and one wooden one). He took the wooden one and I put on a plastic one. From then on, I didn't have a chance. He caught five to my one, and all of them bigger than mine. I remembered this when I started making lures. (They had to be wood!!!)"

"I was taught by my dad to fly fish and we got very good at it, too."

"When I moved to Buffalo, Missouri, I would fly fish the river, but no matter how careful I was, I would hang up behind me on tree limbs, because in clear water streams



Albert Ford carving lures at Silver Dollar City

you need a long cast to keep from spooking the bass. I could roll the line, but I didn't get enough distance that way. I looked in Springfield and Kansas City for a bug, but everything, I found was round and the bug had to be big enough to cast. I made one out of pine, painted it yellow, and I painted the back brown with brown legs. I tore a plastic lure apart and used the screw eyes and hooks on my lure. I bought a black and yellow skirt and put it on the back hook, backwards so it would fluff out I didn't name it, the lure named itself. I took it fishing the next weekend about the middle of June of 1966. I caught 18 bass that day and kept a limit of bass from four pounds to six pounds. I started making more for my neighbors and me."

## IMPORTANT FOR FISHING

"Any bass lure that will float on the surface, in all cases (clear water), cast as far as you can accurately...dark water, not necessary. It is very important that one be ready to set the hook when it hits the water. The worst thing you can do to a bait that sets on top of the water is to move it any way, until the circle of waves the lure makes when it hits the water. Let the circle get at least five feet across or more. (More is better). Wiggle it three times in the shortest distance you can and let it set again until the circle is makes gets at least five feet across. Then start working it erratically as though it was crippled or dying. This should do the trick."

## 38 years of carving - from 1966 until 2004.

#1. In 1966, I started making the "Blooper", strictly for top water. Brown, Green, Grey, blue, Red & White.



#2. A few years later,, I started making the "Varment". You can pop it or run it under the water. It will go from two to four feet deep.. When I started making it, I used deer hair for the tail and put it in the body of the lure. Now, I use horse hair and put it on the back hook for more freedom of movement. Brown, Green, Grey, Blue, Red, White.

#3. The "Lazy Minnow" lays on its side like a dying minnow. White, Grey, Green, & Blue.

#4. The "Doo-Dad" is a great little lure that is excellent for streams, ponds, and lakes. It will go down about two feet and has a feathered tail. *Green, Brown, Grey, Red, White, Blue.*

#5. The "Dying Shad" with glitter, can be used on lakes, ponds, and streams all day. *Green, White, Grey, Blue.*

#6. The "Swishy Tail" minnow sets upright at just the right angle. It has a spinner and feathered tail on the back hook. It is an all around great bass lure. *White, Grey, Blue, Green.*

#7. "TH-KOB" made from a corn cob. I drilled out the center and epoxed a dowel rod in the hole, to make it sturdier to attach the eye hooks. Good for day time lakes, ponds, and streams. *Brown*

#8. "Helpless Minnow" has a feathered tail that is like a feeding minnow (moves slow, stands on end, and moves around, tail down, nose up). *Silver, Grey, Blue, Green*

#9. The "Frog". You should not pop this but should drag it about two feet each time. This was the first year I got my lures in a bait shop. In 1982, I got them in three other shops. *Green, Tan*



#10. "Baby Branson", is red and white with a feathered tail. It is good in Branson lakes, ponds, and streams all day. *Red & white*

"Keep in mind that all of these lures are to be worked as though they are in trouble."

During the interview of Albert Ford by Marilyn France, (Editor) on December 2, 2011, he was reminded of a fishing expedition with Bob Franson, a free-lance outdoor writer for the News-Leader in Springfield. When they were out on a boat, fishing, a cotton mouth snake appeared straight up out of the water looking at each one back and forth. Ford told Franson to hand him an oar. He said, "I was NOT going to let that snake get in the boat with us - no way"!!! He took its head off. I am sure that Franson was relieved that Ford had THE answer to that dilemma.

Ford told the Editor that he likes Bull Shoals Lake much better for fishing because there are not as many on it.

Albert Ford went to Kansas City to attend school to learn woodworking.

He came back to live in Branson, and drove to Springfield where he was employed as a cabinet maker. He also made unique furniture, one of which, was a sewing cabinet that had a chair, built-in, that pulled out. His ingenuity (paring the phrase, "necessity is the mother of invention") reigned in his work, fishing & everyday life.

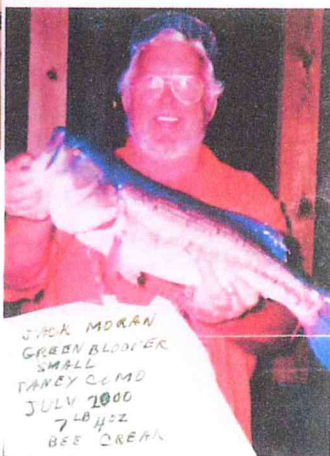
Since woodworking was his vocation, (when he learned from experience that wood was THE thing that worked catching fish) it certainly is not surprising that it was a natural for him



"TH KOB" - Corn cob lures packaged and ready to sell.



Demonstrating each step of the carving process - from start to finish.



Another example that Albert's lures do work. This was caught on the North Bee Creek arm of Lake Taneycomo.



A moving advertisement Shallow Water Baits, on his pickup.

to make wood lures - and according to his customers (letters), THEY WORK JUST AS HE SAYS THEY DO!!

"I test all of my lures in water to make sure that they set just right before packaging them."



LARGE MOUTH BASS  
CATCH MAY 25 BULL <sup>4B</sup>  
SHOALS 20 1/2" 440Z



Bul Shoals 5-21-01  
18" 440Z 20/20Z on DIXIE SHAL  
715 440Z

It is unbelievable how many lures he has stock piled. He still sells them. He stopped carving seven years, when he was no longer able to carve. The time spent carving each lure, painting, install spinners, treble hooks, and eyes is just astronomical. He had the patience to do that.



Packaged Bloopers ready to sell.

The Editor asked him, "what kind of tool did you use to carve your lures?" He said, "just a knife, but I invented a tool later to make it easier." He showed us his invention- (electric tool with a flat metal piece attached with an open groove, and the carving tool inside that projects through the opening 1/16th of an inch). He said that it was easy to control the carving with this tool. The Editor asked him, "if he patented it?" He said, "I sold the patent, but they changed the size of the groove-they made it larger." He does not think it is as good as his original.

PIC OF HIS TOOL.

He sold his lures to Wal-Mart, to resell, and occasionally set up a booth to show his lures.

In the past, Ford took his customers on guided fishing trips, to show them the correct techniques using his lures, that resulted in a good day of fishing. He shares his techniques, does not keep it a secret. He will tell you every step of the process, if you would like to learn "how to". In his instructions on how to carve a lure, he states, "be sure to use some fire engine red somewhere on the lure". The reason for the red, is that fish have red gills, that will attract fish to the bait.

He also said, "when fishing in creeks, always walk down below where you want to fish, wade upstream. You do not want to wade downstream, the noise will be in front of you, it scares the fish".



" Spotted Bass caught in 2001, on a "Lazy Minnow".

"It took a lot of desire, hard work and a lot of time", Ford said, "I have trouble getting people to use the lures", they say, "they are too pretty"! "I made them to USE!"

Mr. Ford lives in Branson, and you can contact him at 417-334-2865.