On CAZAZAs, Bus Drivers, and Other Miscellaneous Neighbors (that may be out there...)

By Steve Cox

Last September, a quiet Saturday morning appeared, muggy and sticky (as they usually are). It was 6:30 am, and I was headed to my step-mother's house for our daily cup of coffee. Then it was on to my business to catch up on some paperwork. Being privileged to have my residence located a mere .6 mile from the office, if the truck runs out of gas, its no big deal, just walk home! My wife, Claudia, is up by 4:30 every morning. She always starts a fresh pot early, so my mug was armed and ready as I pulled out of the driveway.

I had barely traveled four blocks when I spotted a garage sale sign! With the usual sensation of adrenaline flow and increased blood pressure one gets when embarking on a treasure hunt, my curiosity piqued, and I turned in to find a place to park. The sale was at a house situated between two streets, and the sign was posted on the street facing the rear of the property. A chain link fence surrounded the place, and enclosed a large carport with attached workshop and several storage sheds.

The chain link double gate was open, so I pushed on through the maze of junk piled high on tables at a 330 degree angle. I walked past garden tools, small appliances, 8 tracks, cassettes, and vinyl. Knitted pot holders, glassware, and unique kitchen utensils (as seen on TV!) abounded, as I scanned the semi-orderly mounds of rubble, searching, searching, searching...

Finally, I spied a mint ZEBCO 33 in the original box, with no zip code on the address. I opened the box, and inside, the shiny chrome reel was nestled with the Brunswick Corporation paperwork in a neat foldout arrangement. The pamphlet...
Simple in their design, but very effective; the "Bus Drivers" are classic folk Florida lures. Pier baits don't get much cooler than these!

featured ZEBCO, Mercury, and other members of the new Brunswick conglomerate, complete with a zip coded address. Ah ha, I mused; a rare transition piece, from 1964 or 65! The reel had a colored adhesive dot price tag stuck to the top of the box, with obvious disregard for the potential damage it could cause to the cardboard upon removal. It was marked $10.

About that time, I noticed a stocky, friendly looking man who appeared to be in his early to mid 60s, dressed in white shorts, white t-shirt, well worn jogging shoes and white athletic socks. He was, apparently, the purveyor of this trinket empire, and he said, "It's a beauty; never been in the water. It oughta be worth at least $10." I said, "Maybe", and introduced myself.

The gentleman said his name was Mr. Roddy Hilton, and he asked if I knew anything about fishing tackle. I told him, "More than some, less than others," and I inquired if he had any other tackle besides the reel. Mr. Hilton said, "Yes, boxes and boxes of the stuff!" I pulled out a crisp $10 bill and gave it to him, saying, "I'll take the reel if I can see the other tackle." Mr. Hilton asked me what I was going to do with the reel, and I told him I was going to sell it for $25 at the next tackle show I attended. He replied, "Lots of guys come up and ask me if I have any tackle for sale, but you're the first one who's given me an honest answer about their intentions. Come on and I'll show you the other stuff."

Mr. Hilton and I started pulling old metal, wooden, and plastic tackle boxes off shelves in the adjacent storage sheds, at least 25 or 30 of them! I was brimming with anticipation at what might be found. With this many boxes, surely something good would be revealed...

Well, the first box was full of hooks. The second overflowed with lead weights. The third contained swivels and snaps and so on... line spools, bobbers, spare reel parts, rod guides and tips; every kind of neatly separated tackle imaginable, except for lures! I couldn't contain my disappointment, as Mr. Hilton kept dragging more and more from further back on the shelves. Fortunately, his daughter was manning the yard sale, so he and I could continue our futile search.

After 45 minutes, I found a plastic Barracuda hand line grip in a color I didn't have, so, Halieulja, finally... something! Mr. Hilton gave me the item for $5, and said "That's all there is, except for the 'good stuff' in the house." Of course, I wanted to see the 'good stuff', but Mr. Hilton had to get back to help his daughter with the sale. He did say the sale would be over at noon, and if I could come back after 1 p.m., he'd try to find the rest of the tackle in the house. I agreed, and continued to my office where I resolved my original plan for the morning.

Upon returning at 1 p.m. sharp, Mr. Hilton was ready for me, and had located two more boxes of tackle, one metal and one plastic. As I inspected them, my heart sank. Each was covered in dust and grime. The first held four Paw Paw "Shiners" (two Shiner Scale, one Perch, and one Green Perch) in their original slide top boxes, an Isle Royal "Pikie" type in Perch in its correct yellow and black box, and three assorted Creek Club "Pikies" and one "Injured Minnow", all glass eyed, all silver flash, and all in very rough shape. Several Arbogast "Baby Jitterbugs", one Pflueger "Palo-Mine", one Pflueger "Poprite" with a chunk of wood broken off the lip, one South Bend "Babe-Oreno" in red/white, one plastic Heddon "Chugger Junior Spook" in Black Shore, and two Porter "Sea Hawks" (one in a nice sky blue and cream color pattern) rounded out the lot. The Paw Paw boxes were crumbling, while the Isle Royal was in the best condition of the bunch.

Depressed, I turned to the final box, a rusted metal hulk that creaked badly when the corroded latches and hinges were forced to actuate. As the metal halves bound and squallled, more junk appeared. Lead weights, an old "May Was" with the paint
These Porter “Sea Hawks” display the colorful chevrons painted on both sides of the lure bodies, similar to those on the “Bus Drivers” they were found with.

I told Mr. Hilton I wasn’t sure what these lures were, but I thought they might be important. Saying, “I am willing to roll the dice”, I offered him $100 for both boxes. In any event, my recommendation was that he treat the lures with “a little more respect” if he ever intended to preserve them. He said the Creek Chubs and Paw Paws were his grandfather’s, and he really didn’t want to sell them. Countering with an offer I thought he couldn’t refuse, I said I would take both boxes, clean and restore everything, check out the identities of the “CAAZAZA” and pier baits, and get back to him. With the intention of further substantiating that I was a reputable collector, I threw in a couple of back issues of FATC News I had retrieved from my office earlier that morning. Having been convinced of my good intentions, Mr. Hilton agreed to let me take them temporarily.

With a new spring in my step, I put the boxes in my truck and immediately drove back to my office. Thank goodness for Mssrs. Bruce, Stuart, and Riddle! As I flipped through several volumes of Florida Lure Makers and Their Lures, I called fellow collectors Ed, Roth, Larry, Gary, Doug, Bill, Lewis, and Robert. I described my find to them and picked their brains for clues. Their guidance soon directed me to the chapters on “Uncle Charlie” Edwards and Red “The Bus Driver” Hutson. Sure enough, “Uncle Charlie” made the “CAAZAZA”, and it was rare indeed, especially in the blue and cream color combination! The pier baits were, in fact, “Bus Drivers”, though none had been reported with the white chevrons hand painted on them.

Janie Hilton and son, Roddy, taken outside the family home in the early 1970s. Janie and Spoffard both passed a few months apart, in 1975.


Roddy’s father Spoffard Roger Hilton.

Taken in 1924, showing a young Spoffard Hilton at age 20.
With this newfound knowledge, a few more days went by and I got busy cleaning, replacing hardware, and restoring the remaining lures for Mr. Hilton. There's a difference between patina and dirt, and his grandfather's lures were doomed to the scrap pile if left "as is". The methods used to restore them will be the subject of another article for FATC News. Suffice it to say that, while it was impossible to make them perfect, the lures came back very strong, especially the Paw Paws and the Isle Royal. Going a step further, years of rust and/or grime were removed from both tackle boxes, and the end result was one salvaged presentation piece in excellent condition, which now serves as the storage container for Mr. Hilton's grandfather, Roger Hilton's lures.

Phoning Mr. Hilton, I told him the tackle was ready for delivery. I said, "By the way, I am now prepared to give you $200 for the "CAZAZA" and the pier baits alone, and would also like to do a story on your lures for an upcoming issue of our magazine." He tried to sound noncommittal, but I could tell he was excited. Driving over to his house, I gave him the box of Paw Paws, Creek Chubs, the Isle Royal, and other miscellaneous baits. He was astounded! He'd never seen his grandfather's lures look this good in his lifetime... I told him about the "CAZAZA" and the story on the "Bus Drivers". Showing him the Florida lure books, he seemed to be very impressed and enthused.

As it turns out, Mr. Hilton's parents, Spofford Roger Hilton and Janie Hough Hilton, were originally from Bethune, SC, near Camden, SC. They fished around Pawleys Island, and spent many hours trying their luck on the Pawleys Island pier. They owned a vacation home there, which was subsequently sold. The home was destroyed some years later by Hurricane Hazel. In his youth, Roddy had a job making hammocks at the famous hammock company, Pawleys Island Hammocks. He operated a special jig which positioned and drilled the holes in the wooden spines through which the rope netting was inserted.

Roddy still remembers his father sorting through a large barrel of cane poles at the local bait and tackle store on Pawleys. Spofford would set aside two or three select cane poles at a time, each meeting his specifications. He would affix line guides (eyes) on the cane by wrapping them with thread, then gluing a tip on the pole. He would finish the pole by sliding a rubber handle onto the butt for a grip. Most of his fishing was done with these homemade poles, rather than commercial fishing rods, and Roddy recalls them being of very high quality.

Spofford and Janie spent many years fishing from piers in the Jacksonville Beach area and up and down the Northeast coast of Florida. Roddy believes the "CAZAZA" and the "Bus Drivers" were purchased by them and fished sometime along the way. As for the white chevrons, he did not know if his father painted them, or if they had been acquiered with the chevrons already in place. Retiring as a ship builder from Jacksonville Ship Yard, Bellinger and Mayport Divisions, Roddy and his wife, Irmgard, moved to Panama City approximately six years ago, bringing his family's tackle with them. To think it traveled through time and space, ending up four blocks from my house, truly is incredible! While you may have to turn over quite a few rocks to find a prize, it proves you don't always have to search far and wide to find "the good stuff".

The "CAZAZA" is documented as one of "Uncle Charlie"'s rarest baits. The blue/cream version is one of two known to exist in this color; a third in Bill Stuart's collection having been destroyed by the tragic fire at the Museum of Fishing. By way of a mutually beneficial trade, Bill was the logical recipient of this lure, with Lewis Townsend the proud owner of the other. The three "Bus Drivers" now reside in Scott Watkins' pier bait collection, and represent developing knowledge of their place in Florida tackle history. Rather than repeat documentation that is more comprehensive than this article allows. I urge you to read from Florida Lure Makers and Their Lures, Vol. I, pages 111, 112, & 119, and Vol. VI, pages 1872-73, & 1907-1916. The possible connection between Red Hudson and Dick Porter, is intriguing to say the least.

I hope more facts can be gleaned on the subject, and that Mr. Hilton's examples expand an already interesting story. This neighborhood journey started with the ZEBCO 33, and it is pleasing to report that it sold in room trading at Daytona for $20. Oh yes; by now you can tell, Mr. Hilton accepted my second offer, and this article finishes the deal.
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Florida Antique Tackle Collectors, Inc.  

A NON-PROFIT EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION  
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF OUR ANGLING HERITAGE

Florida Antique Tackle Collectors, Inc. (FATC) is a non-profit, educational corporation, incorporated in the State of Florida. The purpose of FATC is educational through the collection and distribution of historical and technical data regarding fishing equipment, its development, its inventors and manufacturers from the earliest times through the present day, and to assist other groups and individuals having a similar purpose. In order to enhance the knowledge of these subjects, the collection and preservation of examples of fishing tackle is to be encouraged for the benefit of present and future generations.

FATC was founded in 1987. The founders felt that a statewide organization would provide additional opportunities for residents of Florida and others to learn more about the history of angling in Florida and elsewhere. FATC sponsors four exhibitions, open to the public, annually at different Florida locations. At the exhibitions members display their collections, interact with the public, and engage in other activities in keeping with the purpose of FATC. FATC publishes a newsletter quarterly, and an annual membership directory. FATC is not affiliated in any way with the National Fishing Lure Collector’s Club (NFLCC) or the Old Reel Collectors Association, Inc., (ORCA) but encourages FATC members to support those organizations.

FATC annual membership dues are: $35 domestic, $40 Canada, $45 Foreign or $700 (Domestic) Life Membership, $800 (Canada Life Membership, and $900 (Foreign) Life Membership (20x annual dues). Please direct membership inquiries or applications (with your dues) to the FATC Secretary listed below. For membership applications visit our web site at: www.fatc.net

The FATC News is the quarterly publication of the Florida Antique Tackle Collectors, Inc.

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FATC Member Show Registration Form
Clarion Inn and Conference Center

ALTAMONTE SPRINGS, FL  AUGUST 21 - 23, 2009

Hotel: 230 W. St. Rd. 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. Phone 1-800 226-4544 & ask for the Florida Antique Tackle Collectors Block. Rates are $84 (standard) until August 7th.

Website: http://www.clarionhotel.com/hotel-altamonte_springs-florida-FLB09

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Email: cheddon@mpinet.net

FRIDAY: Members Only 10AM – 7 PM
SATURDAY: Members 8AM –9 PM
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YOU MUST BE A MEMBER OF FATC TO BE ADMITTED ON FRIDAY, EXHIBIT OR TRADE.

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Saturday, August 22, 2009 - 9 AM to 5 PM

THE LOCATION:
The hotel is the Clarion Inn and Conference Center, 230 W. St. Rd. 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. Phone 1- 800-226-4544

THE SHOW:
Join Florida's most knowledgeable collectors of vintage fishing tackle for a fascinating show. Examine thousands of historic lures, reels, rods, and memorabilia, with some dating back to the 1800's. Florida's history is rich with stories of early lure makers from the Orlando area. Admission is only $3 for adults.

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Angling artifacts are one of today's most highly prized collectibles. Hundreds of items will be offered for sale priced from $2 and up.

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If grandpa's old tackle box – or even some of your own tackle from the '30's, '40's or '50's – is gathering dust in your attic or garage – you can consign it to have it auctioned off to top-paying collectors. The member only auction is attended by over 100 of the state's top collectors. Free appraisals will be given Saturday, August 22nd from 9 AM to 5 PM. $3 admission for adults, children free.

More Info?
Call Chuck Heddon at 407-862-7562
I started my day with my normal phone call from Ed Bauers. We shot the breeze about what sold on eBay last night, what we’re watching, etc., and proceeded with our regular tackle talk. Ed ended the conversation saying, “You’re going to get two Pfeffer Brown Leopard Frog Bananas today on your next tackle call!” I said “RIGHT” and ended the call.

While on my way to my neighbor’s house to seal some grout, my phone rang. I answered and an elderly lady replied. She said, “I have two army ammo boxes and a plastic tackle box full of old lures. I have put some of my favorite ones in the plastic box and might keep it for memories of my late husband.” She continued and said, “Some of the baits say Dillinger on them and are quite pretty”!!

Well that’s all it took, and off to my truck I ran! On my way, I stopped at the 7-11 and got $100 out of the ATM, thinking “it will just be the same ole’ junk”. I grabbed a Propel energy drink (as if I really needed one!), and finished the drive to her house.

I walked up and she was sitting on the step smoking a cigarette. I looked down and the two ammo boxes were just bulging over the top with nothing but Florida baits. Now my heart jumped out of my skin! I started looking closer, and there were two of just about every bait, in their boxes, and all were in mint condition. The ammo boxes had protected the lures for over fifty years. I got down to the 3rd tray, and there it was... A MINT PFEFFER BANANA IN BROWN LEOPARD FROG. I was shaking in my shoes as I examined the bait...

She just sat there with the plastic tackle box open, which I didn’t pay much attention to because I was too excited about what was in front of me in the ammo boxes! I took a quick glance, knowing she might keep that box. Reaching over the Pumpkinseeds and a few Yankee baits, I grabbed a Heddon River Runt box. Expecting to see a Runt, there, right in front of my eyes appeared another PFEFFER BANANA IN BROWN LEOPARD FROG!!! I just about died!!!! Ed’s prediction was eerily on the money...

I made her an offer, knowing I had only $98 cash and asked her in a shaking voice, “Will you take a check?” Of course, she said she preferred cash. So I asked her the location of the nearest bank. I was so nervous, though, I didn’t even hear her and drove off, trembling.

Fifteen minutes seemed like ten hours! The entire time, I just knew she was going to back out; someone was going to beat me to the find!! I finally found a bank... but what if they won’t give me the money? What if the bank is closed? What if.......? Cash in hand, I raced back before she had a chance to change her mind.

The traffic was horrendous, and I was stuck, waiting to make a u-turn across three lanes of oncoming steel and rubber. “To hell with it” I thought, and just punched it in front of everyone, racing back to the lady’s house. She was still sitting there, exactly where I left her, and I handed her the money. With me still shaking like a leaf, she helped load the boxes into the truck.

Once around the corner, I called Ed, screaming and trying to tell him about the find. I think I stopped three times on the way home, just to take another look at my best tackle call ever! My lesson learned: It’s still out there - dream it and the tackle will come!!
"PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION"

DAYTONA INTERNATIONAL STYLE

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IN ONE OF HIS EIGHT VIDEO TAPES CLYDE HARRIN SHOWED A LURE SOMETHING LIKE THIS ONE ON A BOARD OF EXPERIMENTAL LURES. CLYDE SAID, "I DID HAVE ANOTHER ONE WITH A BULBous HEAD, SMALLER, BUT IT'S NO LONGER IN MY COLLECTION." WHEN I ACQUIRED THIS LURE THE SELLER TOLD ME HE HAD BOUGHT IT FROM HARRIN.
The FATC News
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CALANDER OF EVENTS

FATC/CATC Spring Show
May 15 - 16, 2009
Holiday Inn, Savannah, GA
912-352-7100 (Hotel), 352-622-2868 (Mike Mais)
Show Hosts: Mike Mais, David Lindsay and
Co-Hosts: Karen and Arthur Edwards

FATC Summer Show
August 21 - 23, 2009
Clarion Inn and Conference Center
Altamonte Springs, FL 1-800-226-4544 (Hotel)
Show Host: Chuck Heddon
519 Sugar Ridge Ct., Longwood, FL 32779
407-862-7562  email: cheddon@mpinet.net

FATC Fall Show
October 30 - November 1, 2009
Embassy Suites
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 1-800-362-2779 (Hotel)
Show Co-Host: Ed Bauies
178 Poinciana Drive, Jupiter, FL 33458
561-630-6357 (Home) 561-358-1132 (Cell)
tara_ed@bellsouth.net
Show Co-Host: Ed Pritchard
561-748-7508 (Home) 561-818-1081 (Cell)
reeltackle@aol.com

A preview of the first-ever combined
FATC embroidered patch, just
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Another first for FATC, a shield
shape distinguishes this patch from
our traditional round version. This
"collector's edition" patch will be
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NFLCC Regional Meet Calendar
May 2009, Kansas City, MO... 816-350-0255
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August 22, 2009, Rochester, MN... 763-557-9313 or 262-632-4735
September 25 - 26, 2009, Decatur, AL... 256-355-6726 or 256-565-8191
October 10, 2009, Wisconsin Dells, WI... 715-877-3328
October, 2009, Allentown, PA
October, 2009, Ft. Wayne, IN... 260-824-4680 (one-day show)
November, 2009, Osage Beach, MO... 573-480-3939 or 573-793-3303