

Stanley F. Myers

by Dennis 'Doc' Hyder

Stan Myers was all smiles as he pulled in the scrappy 4-pound bass, and added it to the two-pounders already on his stringer. "Yessir" he said to himself, "This little lure is just what the doctor ordered!" He twirled the prop and watched the spiraling colors before casting it back into that secret honey hole on Finley Creek.

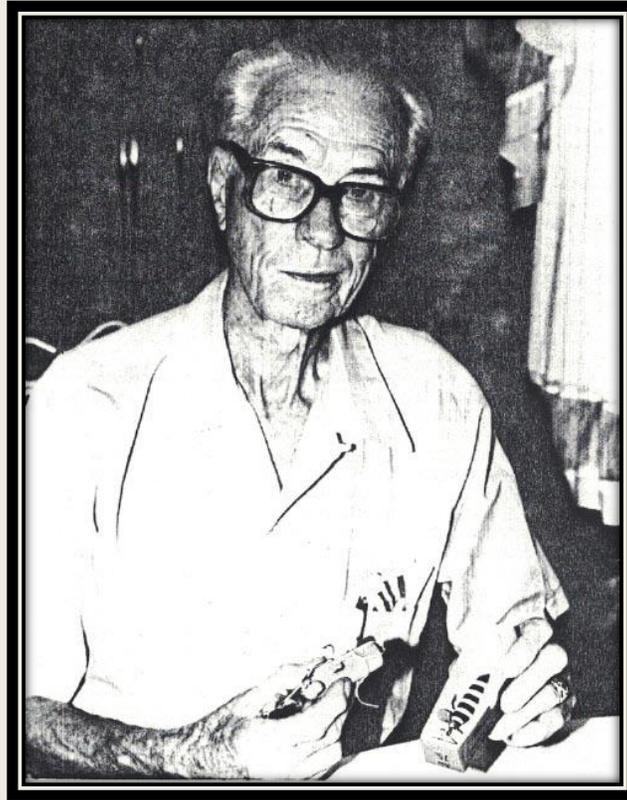
Born in Laclede County, Missouri, on September 1, 1896, Stanley F. Myers had always been an avid fisherman, spending many enjoyable hours on the Gasconade River near his home. Like most Ozarkians of that time, he was primarily a bait fisherman. By 1919, Stan had moved to Springfield and was working as Chief Switchman for Southwestern Bell Telephone Company.

Although he still floated the Gasconade, he also found time to fish the local James and Finley Rivers. In the 1920's, Stan responded to an ad in an outdoor magazine and purchased two lures - a green scale Heddon Vampire and a South Bend Bass-Oreno. Shortly thereafter, Stand Myers was "hooked" on plug fishing.

In the late 1920's while on a fishing trip, Stan broke his favorite Kiest reel and was advised that a local machinist by the name of Adolph Kunz might fix it. Kunz operated a shop at 331 N. Cambell, near Myer's home.

When the two met, the talk soon turned to fishing as it happened that Kunz also was an avid fisherman. They soon began fishing together and as Stan's head was already full of ideas on how to make a better lure, and with the

machinist skills of Adolph Kunz, the result was inevitable – they decided to venture into the lure manufacturing business.



Stan Myers (1988) - age 93 - with Reel lure

Their new company would be known as Springfield Novelty Manufacturing Company with headquarters at Stan's home, 631 Broadway. On October 29, 1932, they filed for a patent on their new lure and production began immediately in a garage behind Stan's house. Stan wished to call their lure the "Cyclone" due to its spiraling action but gave in to Kunz' idea of the "Reel" Lure.

The work force consisted of Myers and his two sons and Kunz and his son. The men worked their regular jobs days and manufactured lures into the late night and early morning hours. Although it was only a part-time business, they worked hard, producing 8,000 lures during the first 4 months.

All of the materials used in production was purchased locally from the select red cedar for bodies to the brass bushings and German silver wire and sheeting used for shafts and props. The fine quality imported hooks

were the only exception. All the machinery and equipment used was designed and made by Myers and Kunz themselves.

The wood minnow bodies were turned out on a lath, soaked in filler, and several baked-on coats of enamel applied before a final varnish. The earliest lure bodies were smaller in diameter which later production bodies were made fatter. A unique feature of the "Reel" lure was the front mounted lead sinker which not only served as a hook hanger but also simulated an object being carried in the minnow's mouth, thus further inducing fish strikes. The men attempted to design a wobbling lure by adding various lips to their bait; however the action of the rear prop always counteracted the lip action so the idea was abandoned. Late model lure were fitted with a spring at the rear to prevent hook tangle. This was later eliminated to cut costs.

The finished bait was packed in its individual cardboard box. The earliest boxes were white with red borders and a picture of the lure on top. However, the Heddon Company claimed this was an infringement of their own box design patent so when the supply was used up, a change was made to the familiar red box.

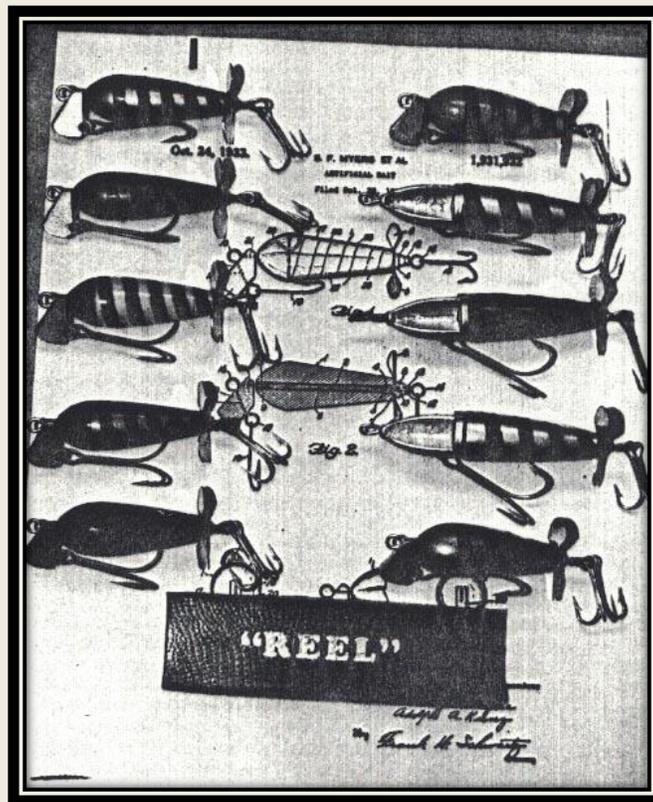
Ad sheets show there were 28 color combinations, all striped. However, one of the earliest colors (not catalogued), was a "red-head", with the red and white striped body. Although a favorite color of area fishermen, this color was later dropped.

The Reel lure became a popular item among area fishermen. As one aptly put it, "The only thing wrong with 'em is that you can't buy 'em just anywhere!" Sales were handled by salesmen of established businesses who carried the Reel lures as a sideline. Most lures were sold in northwestern Missouri, down through Oklahoma and into Texas. One of the best business areas was around Warsaw, Missouri. Due to the high cost of advertising, most was done by "word of mouth". Keeping costs down was imperative as the 75-cent lure wholesaled at only 37-1/2 cents each.

At Springfield Novelty, as with most companies, there was some experimentation going on. One such experiment was a "musky" lure to be

used on the Muskies and Northern Pike in the northern states. This was simply an 'enlarged' Reel lure. While the regular Reel lure had a 2" body, the 'Musky' was about 2-3/4". Less than a dozen of these big lures were made making them extremely rare today.

Probably their least know lure was their '1/2 Charmer'. This 3" long plug has been credited in lure books as either Charmer Minnow Company bait or as an 'unknown'. Definitely influenced by the other earlier Springfield bait, the Springfield Novelty "1/2 Charmer" was an attempt to produce a small bait more suited for the Ozarks fishing. The design incorporated a rear rotating body with a specially designed "hollowed out" lead head to reduce weight. Still it must have cast like a magnum bullet! Unfortunately Myers and Kunz were informed that this bait too closely resembled the original Charmer Minnow design so it was never patented or produced in quantity.



Springfield Novelty's Reel Lure & 1/2 Charmer

I am aware of only 3 color patterns, although others may exist. All have silver painted heads and the bodies are striped in red/silver, black/silver, or black/orange. These lures were packed in the same red "reel" lure boxes

as the other baits. The few lures made were sent out with the regular salesmen and sold with the others. It's doubtful that many of the "1/2 Charmers" exist today as only between 3 and 4 dozen of these were produced.

In late 1935, Kunz became ill and the men decided to quit the lure making business. A few years afterward, Adolph Kunz passed away. Today Stan Myers still lives in Springfield, Missouri at the same location where his lures were made. He still enjoys floating the Gasconade and fishing from the deck of his riverside cabin. Rightfully so, Stan is very proud of the lure he designed and observes that with the "Reel" lure, there's still "A Thrill In Every Cast!"

Editor's Notes:

1. This article appeared in the N.F.L.C.C. Gazette in 1988 under the title *Springfield Novelty Mfg. Co., The 'Reel' Story* and is re-published here with consent of the author.
2. At the time of its writing, Dennis "Doc" Hyder was a 42 year-old freelance artist, living in the Missouri Ozarks. He is a part time writer, lure collector and a person friend of Stanley F. Myers. He nominated Stan Myers for honorary membership
3. Patent number [1,931,932](#) was issued to Myers and Kunz on October 24, 1933 for the Reel lure.

Honorary Member - 1989