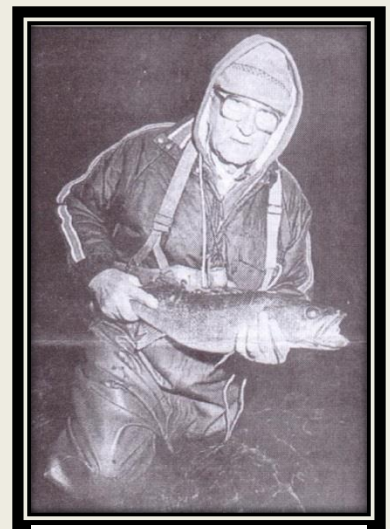


## Lynn E. Pulver

(As published in the fall issue of the 2010 NFLCC Gazette article "The Pulver Riser Lure" by Ken Bernoteit, Joliet, Illinois)

In the early 1970s, I worked alongside a gentleman who introduced me to the Pulver Riser fishing lure. He was a distributor for the lures, calling his business Spengler Enterprise, located in Cudahy, Wisconsin. Knowing that I fished for trout and salmon on Lake Michigan and that his Pulver Riser lures were not proven to catch those types of fish, he gave me some of the lures to field test. They were an assortment of 1/8, 1/4 and 1/2 ounce sizes in various colors. The lures all had a shape that were patterned after a leech, worm, caterpillar, or wounded minnow.

The originator and the designer of the Pulver Riser lure is Lynn Pulver, formerly of Swea City, Iowa. He started making his lures over 60 years ago. They are now becoming collectibles. Lynn was born August 23, 1914. He had a very humble early life. His mother died when he was eight months old. He was then raised by his grandparents until his grandmother died when he was four. Thereafter, he was raised by his father and three brothers in the small town of Delhi, Iowa. They lived off the land, supported by large gardens, butchering their livestock, hunting and trapping rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, and other animals, and fishing. (Lynn had learned to hunt and fish as soon as he could walk.) Any spending money he had was earned by



Lynn Pulver who was featured in the Oct./Nov issue of the Walleye/Insider, holds a walleye that he caught

mowing lawns and any other odd jobs he could find. He even caught bullheads at a lake on the edge of town and sold them for 15 cents a pound. After graduating from high school in 1932, he married his classmate Alice. Two years later, he was hired by the Milwaukee Railroad to work on a track section gang where he made 25 cents an hour, a salary he and Alice were glad to have during those Depression years. In 1942, he transferred to Swea City, Iowa, where he worked the next 30 years for the Rock Island Railroad as a depot agent. There, he and Alice raised four daughters, and in 1974, after 40 years of service in the railroads, he retired at the age of sixty. Lynn was an avid fisherman and family man. He was recognized for his nighttime walleye fishing. He became so successful that he started getting write-ups in the local newspapers. Alice also became an avid fisherman, fishing alongside Lynn. Lynn tells the story about how Alice got started. One night she decided to go fishing with him and three other fishermen. She chose to fish off a dock while the men went on ahead and wader fished. When they returned later, she had out-fished all four of those more experienced fishermen.



A nice collection of Pulver Riser lures (some trial colors)

It was at Swea City where Lynn's idea of a new lure design would form. The idea came to him when he read a story in an outdoor magazine about a fisherman trying to catch a bass feeding underneath a tree. Every day, that fisherman would try to get the bass to rise to his lure, but with no success.

One day, once again watching the bass under the tree, suddenly the fish leapt out of the water and caught a falling caterpillar.

Lynn set out to design a lure that would look like a caterpillar. His first designs were carved out of wood. After weeks of working on his first model, it was finished and ready for testing. This was done by pulling it through the water in his bathtub. Finally, after many hours of work, he got one lure that had the action he was looking for. He then took it, along with a friend, and field-tested it on a nighttime fishing trip. After he caught fish with it, his friend was so impressed that he talked Lynn into carving more of them. Later, he encouraged him to market the lure.

In 1953, the Pulver Rise was patented and assigned number 2,623,973. Then, in order to get his new business started, Lynn had to borrow \$5,000 from a bank and get two co-signers as surety. He decided that the lure would be made out of molded plastic. A molding company in Chicago, Land-O-Tackle, was referred to him as a source for manufacturing molds and furnishing the plastic parts from those molds, as the company was known for making lure bodies for other manufacturers.

The next step he needed to take was to make prototype halves of the lure and submit them to Land-O-Tackle. With the help of a machinist, the first prototypes for the mold design were made out of brass. After the Land-O-Tackle company completed the molds, the injected molded plastic lure bodies were shipped to Lynn in Swea City. The bodies were made in two pieces so that, after gluing, the two pieces would snap together.

The following steps were then required in the lure assembly:

1. Sanding the lure's seam
2. Drilling for hook and line tie hangers
3. Buffing prior to painting
4. Painting white undercoat
5. Painting final color coat

6. Applying clear lacquer outer coating
7. Attaching hook eyes and hooks
8. Packaging lures in boxes with inserts
9. Stamping number and color on each plastic topped cardboard box.



1El Leecho 700 series. Color: Silver (Std. color)



2400 Series blue scale finish Pulver Riser, special color. Purchased by special request only. Lynn thinks he made only about 200 in this color.

At first, the entire assembly process and finishing was done by Lynn and Alice in their home and garage. In time, they rented a building across the street where all the lures were painted, and later, they purchased a larger house where all the assembly and painting was done. At times, they hired part-time help as well.

The Pulver Riser lures were made in two sizes, the 200 model series, 118 ounce, 2-inches long, and the 400 model series, 3/8 ounce, 3-inches long. The start-up plan was to make 12 colors of each size and have 400 lures of each size and color finished by the first of the year. When Lynn realized this would require an inventory of 9,600 lures, he reduced the number of colors for each model series.

The original colors on the 200 model series were as follows:

|                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Yellow with Red Spot | Red head crystal       |
| Black Scale          | Orange with Red Spot   |
| Brown Scale          | Orange with Black Spot |
| Perch                | Yellow with Black Spot |
| Frog                 | Red head               |
| Gold Scale           | Silver Scale           |

The original colors on the 400 model series were as follows:

|                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Frog            | Perch         |
| Black rib       | Silver scale  |
| Black scale     | White crystal |
| Redhead crystal | Gold scale    |

Eventually, the colors used on both the 200 and the 400 model series follows:

|                               |             |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Gold scale (400 series only)  | Perch       |
| Brown scale (200 series only) | Black scale |
| Yellow Spot                   | Red head    |
| Orange Spot                   |             |

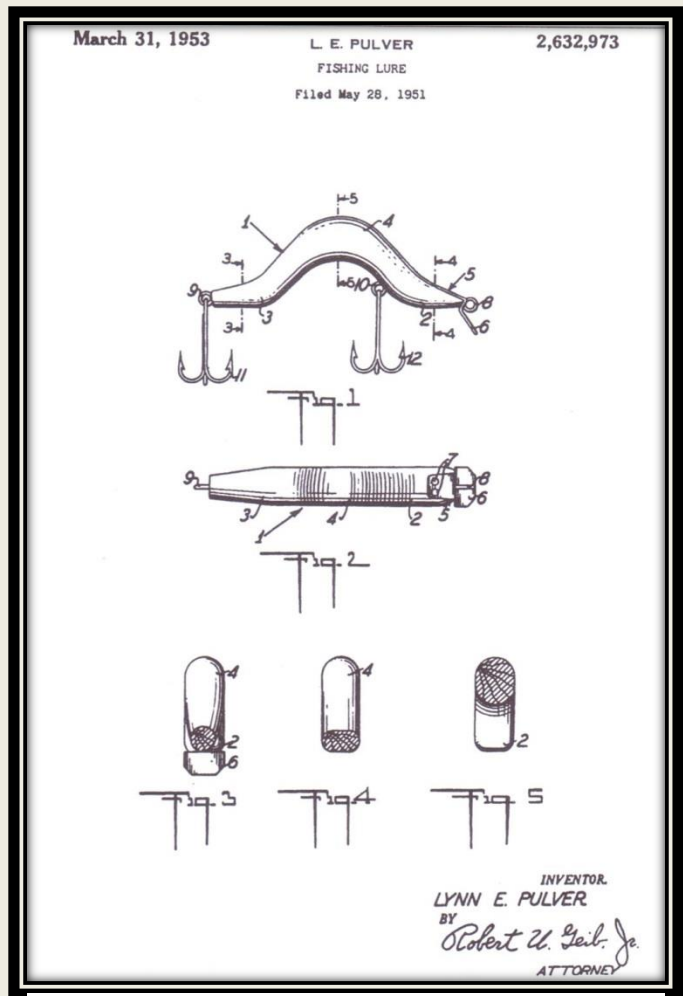
The colors listed are by no means complete, however. The company was always experimenting with new colors and giving them to fishermen for field testing. Some of the trial colors were produced in large quantities, while others were only made once or twice. Unfortunately, records were either destroyed or not kept, so collectors should beware of touch-ups or imitations.

It is estimated that 5,000 of the first original colors were sold, with the 400 series outselling the 200 series by three-to-one. Overall, it is estimated more than 30,000 Pulver Risers were sold. In 1960, a new Pulver lure was added named the EI Leecho, in a 700 model series and a 900 model series. These series were similar to the Pulver Riser 200 and 400 model series, but were referred to as "tail up" versions because the ends of the lures were extended

upright. It was designed to have more eye appeal than the Pulver Riser, and Lynn hoped would attract fishermen to purchase it.

Lynn ordered 4,000 lure bodies of the El Leecho, but only about 2,000 were made up and sold. Four standing colors were used on the 700 and 900 model series: Black scale, Sunfish, Silver, and Blue.

As with the Pulver Riser, other experimental colors were made and tested on the El Leecho. Although Lynn and Alice fished with the El Leecho and had good results, it did not sell well on the market.



A patent drawing for the Pulver Riser

Like many lure makers, Lynn

Pulver had many problems with running the business. A major challenge was marketing the Pulver Riser. Large discounts had to be given to dealers with not much room for profit. At first, each lure cost 33 cents to make and it was sold to distributors for 45 cents. Retail prices were \$1.15 for the 200 model series and \$1.25 for the 400 model series.

Some of the lures were sold through jobbers and wholesalers, in particular the largest one, Paul Bunyan in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The profit margin with the wholesalers was so small, 5 cents or so per lure, that Lynn dropped them after two years. Thereafter, he was more successful selling the lures through mail order dealers at a 40 % discount, which gave him a 30 cent profit per lure.

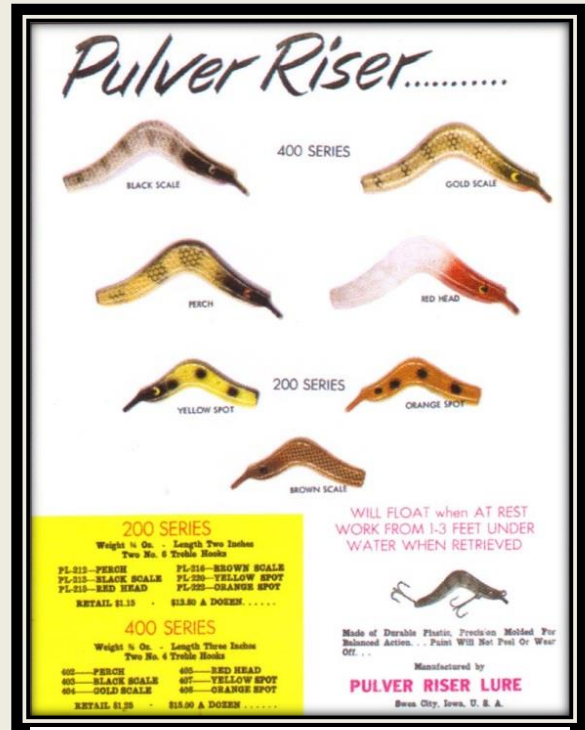
In the company's later years, other problems cropped up. Many other companies began offering fishing lures, and the increased competition hurt the sales of the Pulver products.

Lynn received some offers to purchase the line, but he turned them down initially, not wanting to sell to any-one who might not make a go of it. Then, in 1976, he decided to sell the business to a retired football player from the Green Bay Packers. Lynn believed the buyer could run the company successfully, but, unfortunately, he filed for bankruptcy before he even sold one lure. All this time, Lynn was still receiving mail requests for his lures.

Nevertheless, Lynn Pulver was happy because his lure business had prospered for over 10 years, whereas the average life of a new lure on the market was usually for only a few years. While in the business he gained a million dollars' worth of experience, made many friends doing it and he is left with many fond memories.

Now, fully retired from both the railroad and the lure business, Lynn and Alice had more time to travel and fish.

My special thanks goes to NFLCC member Art Reece for his help and pictures and Lynn Pulver who provided me with his time and information, enabling me to write this article. Lynn will be 96 years old this year. His dedicated work, along with that of his wife, Alice, was a labor of love in order to achieve success as an entrepreneur. We collectors greatly appreciate Lynn's efforts and accomplishments as we hold his work-now prized collectibles-in our hands.



This was a jobber and dealer advertising and ordering sheet

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