



Carl "Cotton" Cordell Jr.

Our 2nd honorary member for 2000 is Carl "Cotton" Cordell Jr. of Hot Springs, Arkansas. Carl was exposed to fishing as a young man helping his dad Carl Sr. when he purchased a boat landing on Lake Catherine in Hot Springs, Arkansas, which served to change Cotton's life.

His start in the lure making business began with the buying of World War II B-52 bomber survival kits to get the buck tail jig fishing lures they contained. He found that these jigs caught fish like nothing he had ever seen before. So in the late 1940's Cotton started making a similar type lure which became known as the "Banana Head Jig". The first ones consisted of a poured lead head, with a trotline hook, and hair from his English Setter dog, for deer hair was hard to come by at the time.

His next idea was buying large diaper pins and molding them into the lead heads of his Banana Head Jig. Cotton would then add a spinner by bending the pin sticker through the blade and thus the world's most popular bait was born "The Spinner Bait", and so was the Cotton Cordell Incorporated lure company.

A man named Bobby Murray, who worked for Cotton Cordell, was a bass tournament fisherman who was constantly getting beat by a hand carved lure called the "Big O". Cotton sent Bobby to Tennessee to find the man that originally carved the "Big O". Eventually the maker Fred Young was found and Cotton struck a deal sealed with a handshake to produce the plastic "Big O". This produced royalties of \$70,000 for Fred Young the first year of production.



Fred Young Big O lure by Cotton Cordell

Cordell Bait Company was the largest lure manufacturer in the world from 1968 to 1980 producing lures for many well-known manufacturers over the years such as Heddon, Pflueger, Abu Garcia, Creme & Burke, and the Creek Chub Company. They made the first power reel handles, and also hi-speed gears for the Ambassador 5000 reel. They also produced a fiberglass boat. They also produced a line of rods and handles and other related fishing items too numerous to list.

The company was sold to Ebsco in 1980 while it was producing 22,000 lures a day in Arkansas, El Salvador, and Taiwan. At that time they were selling lures to Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Sears, Cabella's and Bass Pro.

Cotton's life time of work was recognized in 1988 when he was inducted into the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame. In 1997, he was inducted into the Arkansas Outdoor Hall of Fame.

Mr. Cordell was nominated by NFLCC life member Ken Scott of Little Rock Arkansas and with these impressive credentials we are honored to induct Mr. Carl "Cotton" Cordell Jr into the NFLCC Honorary Membership program as our 44th member in 2000.

Honorary Member - 2000