

# FOREWORD

I've been around for a while.

If you're one of the millions of fishin' nuts who have been reading the "how to" stuff for most of the past century, you might recognize my name. Or for that matter, if you're not big on reading, you might have watched me do casting exhibitions at outdoor shows from Tulsa to Tokyo and from Birmingham to Brazil and countless spots in between for decades.

I actually was, you see, one of the old guys you read about now and then who caught his first fish on a bent safety pin because his folks didn't have the bucks to buy any hooks during the Great Depression.


I mention the above for just one reason. Having been plumb goofy about fishing since I learned to walk, and having been involved in the other stuff related to it all my adult life, I am occasionally inclined to form certain conclusions. There was a time when I might have had a tendency or two to think I was pretty knowledgeable about fishing and stuff related to it. Got a question? I'd have the answer.

How close to the truth was that? About as close as telling folks the next time you go out after largemouth bass you're gonna get a dozen ten-pounders. The truth of the matter is, I still encounter stuff today that makes me think I don't know my bass from a hole in the ground!

I met a man recently who brought this home to me in a hurry. His name is Emmett J. Babler. Like me, he's now living in Sun Lakes, Arizona. Emmett, a soft-spoken lifetime angler, has forgotten more when dealing with fishing in this great land than most of us will ever know.

If you doubt that now, you won't after you get very far into this book. It tells the story of a major part of American angling, from those hardy souls who were on the Mayflower right on down to the wondrous tools and tactics anglers can work with today. This book, as far as I know, is the only one ever written that details the history of baitcasting in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

How this book came about is a story in itself. Emmett's wife, Carmela, lost her father during the battle for Iwo Jima in World War II. Emmett had come by an abandoned tackle box that was of World War II vintage. It still contained much of the original tackle. One day Carmela, undoubtedly thinking about her father, asked Emmett if her dad once had a similar tackle box. Emmett replied that he probably did, because the lures in the abandoned box were from the same period.



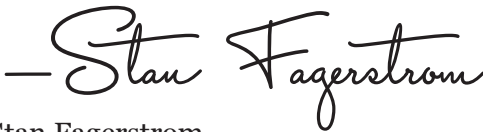
Babler finally managed to come up with the missing contents for the abandoned box. Once he had it all filled and in top shape, he presented it to his wife in memory of her father.

The next questions his wife asked him are the reason you are holding this book in your hands today. First, Emmett's wife wanted to know what he planned to do with all of his gear when he passed on. When he told her he was going to give it to their grandchildren, she asked, "Do the grandchildren understand the significance and historical value of your gifts?" And before Emmett could answer, she suggested, "Why don't you write a book?"

I know a bit about writing books, because I've written four of them myself. But mine were all deeply connected to personal experience. Certainly Emmett Babler is an experienced angler, but adding one more how-to book to the thousands already out there wasn't what he was after. What he wanted—and as far as I'm concerned, has achieved—is something that's never been done before.

You are about to get a look at the result of the three years of dedicated and intensive research Emmett J. Babler has devoted to creating this book. *A History of Baitcasting in America* provides both the history of the sport and the intriguing stories behind the facts. This well-written and definitive angling source is a cinch to "hook" its share of interested readers.

I've been one of them, and I'm honored and pleased to have the opportunity to share my thoughts about it on these pages.



Stan Fagerstrom

Member of the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame and  
the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame