



Felmlee Lures— A LOCAL ADVANTAGE

by Alex Zidock Jr. photos by the author

“Under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, Sports Illustrated magazine appeared on the newsstand for the first time and Elvis Presley’s first single, “That’s All Right” was on the airwaves. Stirring up the waters near Lewistown, that year an avid angler, John Felmlee, began making fishing lures in his garage. With faith and writing a new story for an old company, the new owner of Felmlee Lures sees a bright future.

“John Felmlee had a passion for fishing, and he was an innovative and successful guy,” said Michael Flanagan, C.E.O. and President of Felmlee Lures. “Felmlee made the machinery himself. We are still making lures originated and designed by him, and 65 years later, the machines are still running, and the lures are still catching fish.”

Flanagan is not new to fishing but has only owned the company for about a year. “I sold an investment company I started when I was 28-years-old and was looking to get involved in something I was passionate about. Now, I have the greatest job in America. We get to make lures, and I get to hang out with

other anglers. I travel a lot, and I fish wherever I travel. That helps me know what products work where.”

Spinners for Pennsylvania trout and bass were the first lures Felmlee made. Then, Felmlee bought a soft lure company in Chicago. “He wanted to make the most popular and least labor-intensive lures that worked, so he focused on soft lures. That is what we are producing today,” said Flanagan.

Felmlee Lures continues to make the Redfin Minnow still popular for trout and bass. “Anglers around Lewistown used



Michael Flanagan, C.E.O. and President of Felmlee Lures



One of John Felmlee's original designs, hand-painted Redfin Minnows, look just like live Redfin Shiners.

to take a net and catch 'redfin minnows' (Blacknose Dace and Longnose Dace) to catch trout," said Flanagan. "Our Redfin Minnows are identical to the ones you catch. We mold them, individually paint each one, and before it goes into the packaging, it gets dipped in John Felmlee's 'secret sauce.'"

Every Felmlee lure gets dipped into the 'secret sauce.' A concoction John Felmlee developed to protect the soft plastic lures, so the lures last even after catching a lot of fish.

Production in foreign countries accounts for roughly 85 percent of all the fishing lure products sold in the United States. It would be less expensive to manufacture overseas, but Michael Flanagan is adamant that it will not happen. "I love the history of companies," said Flanagan. "For me, it was intriguing to look at a family business, how they started it and their values. I thought it would be such a great thing to keep those values right here where they started, and it has worked well. With a great foundation, we re-branded, re-packaged and our 5-year plan is not only to become one of the top lure manufacturers but to expand even further outside the United States. Made in the U.S.A. has also helped us with a lot of the major retailers across the country," said Flanagan.

Besides the United States and Canada, Felmlee Lures are now helping anglers catch fish in Greece and Australia.

"Our eels are one of our biggest sellers," said Flanagan. "In Texas, they call it 'Cobia Candy.' Here in the Northeast, it is referred to as 'Striper Candy.' It is the original eel made by melting our special plastic poured into the Felmlee-made molding machines. Then, depending on where it is going, they are hand-painted to match eels of that region. Of course, these lures are also dipped into our 'secret sauce' before packaging and shipping," said Flanagan.

Flanagan notes that there are newer technologies out there and that some manufacturers are stamping images on their lures. Instead, Flanagan has a staff of artists that apply paints to emulate authentic fish patterns.

Felmlee Lures offers retailers 130 different products. Among those listed as big sellers in Pennsylvania is the hellgrammite for trout and bass. Freshwater starter kits for trout and bass that contain different size lures and a S3™ Species Specific Scent fish attractant are packed together for newer anglers. There are Stone Catty Spinners, colorful frogs, crayfish and soft-bodied trout.

For saltwater anglers, there are eels by the bucket and eels with squid heads that come in 8, 11 and 16-inches. You can get



Michael Flanagan offers eels in a variety of sizes by the bucket or individually packaged with jigheads treated with S3™ Species Specific Scent.

sinking bass eels, sinking bass currtails and even an Eel or Curl Tail 8 Count Hooked Umbrella Rig. Combinations with shad and sardines are also popular among the soft plastic assortment.

"Throughout the United States, but specifically in Pennsylvania, people should realize by buying our products, they are employing local people. We have 15 local people working for us who are creating art. These people create lures that worked for 65 years. We are helping the community. It is nice to buy local and support local manufacturing in Pennsylvania," said Flanagan.

Relating a fishing experience more than 22 years ago with his three children, Flanagan recounted, "crossing that flat expanse of water as dawn's first rays creased the sky, those three young children were next to me. The dramatic setting, the presence of my next generation and the heading to fish made me feel a connection to God that remains powerful to this day." □



Felmlee Lures are made and assembled in Lewistown by local workers.

Felmlee Lures

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