

February 15, 1988

Mr. Dennis Black  
Umpqua Feather Merchants  
Box 700  
Glide, Oregon 97443

Dear Dennis,

Tom Pero has asked me to do a story on trends in flies 1959-1989. The idea is to run this in Trout as part of an issue on TU's thirtieth anniversary. The subject sounds like a good one to me: I was tying flies in the 1950's and have seen changes worth noting. One of them is that fly-fishing has become a real business, and your firm is a case in point.

Anyhow, I'm sending you a sort of questionnaire on which I'd welcome any comments you have time to make. As far as I know, you weren't in the business in 1959, but you must know more than most about the market now.

Could you also send me a copy of your fly catalog?

I'll be sending this kind of request to a few other firms, too. My article will be shaped, to some extent, by the replies, but my intention at this point is to focus on the flies themselves rather than on the business angle.

Thanks.

Yours,

Enclosed: questionnaire





# UMPQUA

## FEATHER MERCHANTS, INC.

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March 7, 1988

Datus C. Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59714

Re: Article on trends of trout flies.

Dear Datus Proper,

On behalf of Dennis I will attempt to respond to your questions. Keep in mind there is virtually no hard info on most of this, so I will be pretty much shooting from the hip. I'd also appreciate keeping our production and dealer numbers confidential.

### A. Market as a whole

1. Currently we produce and sell approximately 180-200,000 dozen per year. Our first factory in India only produced about 8-12,000 dozen a year in 1970-71. 10,000 dozen at 6.00 was about \$60,000 in wholesale sales as opposed to 190,000 dozen at 9.00 which equals 1,710,000.

2. There are approximately 4,000 retail outlets for flies now. In 70-71 we had about 100 accounts as opposed to 1400 now.

3. Majority of our flies come from Sri Lanka, Thailand, and India, employing close to 400 workers and I only know of a dozen or so professional commercial tiers in the USA.

### B. What kinds of flies

1. Trends are towards designer flies (and people are willing to pay the additional cost). Bass flies being the most difficult to produce and demand far exceeding supply with salt water patterns coming in a close second.

2. There are minimal sales on traditional wet flies with little fluctuation. Here again, designer wet flies do quite well.

3. Sales continue to be strong in both traditional and designer dries, nymphs and wets. Standard dries and hairwing are in strong supply but demands still out due our production.

4. Imitative flies are probably to be considered designer flies. More specific designs for specific Insects or fish. As mentioned above, their hot selling patterns overall, but keep in mind UFM started this trend and to date have 23 infamous personalities we pay healthy royalties too! Much more can be said on this if you'd like to call me.

5. Salmon flies, we have had limited experience with. Success has been poor, and we've not had much demand here.

6. Steelhead flies, have always been semi successful. The market for UFM has been steadily increasing, though not nearly as much as Bass or Saltwater. The designer patterns here have done very well and because of this success we will soon be producing more.



#### Personal Impressions

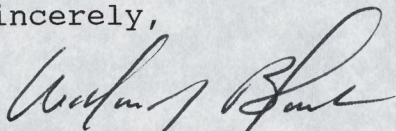
Someone told me flyfishing is the fastest growing segment of the fishing industry as well as the quickest growing leisure sport in 1987. Facts seem to indicate they are right, and there are many reasons behind this. The Flyfishing sport has remained relatively small and overlooked. With all the new books, videos, even TV ads our industry is receiving amazing press. The old opinion, that Flyfishing was for the smart, rich and famous or otherwise elite has been changing rapidly. It's no longer reserved for the arrogant aristocrat.

Fishing pressure has increased enough along with environmental concerns to change many state game regulations. People are beginning to realize that Blue Ribbon (fly fishing only) Trout Streams are beneficial not only to the environment but to the enhancement of person's overall fishing experience.

The consequences are what most of us in the industry are feeling (pressure). This in turn is reflected in fly sales and trends. One last point that we've noticed is many people mostly flyfishermen have seen a rapidly expanding market in our industry and have jumped in with both feet, attempting to fill any one of many niches. Whether it's a fly shop, fly box, or new improved patterns. Trends tend to show now that, more and more folks are going bankrupt. I'd venture to guess these people are more fly fishermen than businessmen. It takes a lot of each quality to survive today and unfortunately the later of the two seems to have the advantages.

Glad I could be of help Datus. Give me a call if need be.

Sincerely,



William J. Black  
Vice President

WJB/ga