

## walker-dave-2017-06-24.mp4

**Dave Walker** [00:00:11] I think going back to, oh, school days as a little kid like this. We used to go out to a farm near a place called Dewetsdorp near Bloemfontein. And where they built a huge dam. And all of a sudden this fishing thing became hugely a huge challenge to catch a dam to catch a fish in its huge dam. Which would probably stem from as a youngster little bit older than this fellow.

**James Thull** [00:00:46] Well thank you.

**Dave Walker** [00:00:49] You lucky chap. And came down to the coast. Fiddling in the rock pools and what have you with a bent pin and a piece of cotton. And catching the same fish over and over again. Which you would think that that particular species of fish was being stupid. But none-the-less, yeah things grew from there. And then eventually I moved into a town called Ficksburg.

**James Thull** [00:01:21] And about what year would have been when you were fishing with the bent pin there?

**Dave Walker** [00:01:25] Oh that was probably the late 50s. '57 onwards. In those days used to go down to down the coast on an annual annual school holiday. One dad, two sisters and trundled down the coast and spent two weeks puttering around and come back again.

**Dave Walker** [00:01:56] Oh I can't quite recall. Maybe it was a pastor, or something that took my fancy as a kid. Because there were these rock pools with all sorts of little things in them, hermit crabs, ordinary crabs and then these fish little fish, rockfish. Fish in rock pools we used to call bullies. And it was far more interesting than going to see a museum or whatever.

**Dave Walker** [00:02:38] In South Africa in very broad terms I don't know that much about fishing elsewhere. But in our part of the world what they've established quite clearly is that fishing gets you to places that you'd never never normally have got to. Particularly fly fishing up in our area and in the years I lived in Ficksburg. Go up into the city and you get to places that you'd never normally have got to which are all stunning.

**Dave Walker** [00:03:10] In our part of the world, we get clueless otters. Who just appear out of nowhere. And you keep quiet and [unintelligible] on, and you can sit there and watch them frosicking around, hunting for crabs, doing what otters do. And the minute you move or they sense your presence then that's it, then you're spotted for the day. You'll never see them again.

**Dave Walker** [00:03:36] In our part of the world which is in the Eastern Cape highlands. Which is the southernmost portion of the province. [Unintelligible] would be due South of the city. We're on that on the city border. And the browns don't compete well with it with the rainbows. So unless you have a waterfall or you they have been stopped above a weir where the rainbows haven't been able to get to or are being stocked, the browns do fine. But they don't compete with the rainbows in the rivers.

**Dave Walker** [00:04:24] Well that's what they've what they've proved to do in our part of the world at least. Where there's all this talk of alien invasives and trout wiping out the indigenous species and so on. But funnily enough when I first moved to the Barkly East

district. The then J.L.B Smith Institute based in Grahamstown. Which is now the South African Institute for biodiversity. And researchers came up from there to establish the impact of trout on the headwaters of the Kraai river which is a tributary of the Orange. And in fact found all of the indigenous species which were supposed to have been there anyway were still there. And I think to a large extent it's a it's a it's a a situation where nobody can say the trout have caused incredible damage and decimated the local population because in those days nobody bothered to do any formal research and establish what was in the water before they were stocked. That sort of thing just didn't occur to people. We chose to recreate old and recreate the homeland as it were. Wherever we ever we came from we brought in our plants, trees. You could introduce fish you could introduce birds and all the things that is in the home country. And all that sort of nostalgic nonsense.

**Dave Walker** [00:06:17] In our part of the world, the Bokspruit. Which is where first when I first moved to that area I set up shop and set up a farm holiday fishing, gaming, shooting, hunting type, business. And the Bokspruit in itself is special. It's there's a huge variety of waters. Ranging from the lillipution little streams right on up on the plateau 2600, 2700 meters above sea level. Right down to the bottom end of the rock was probably about sixteen, seventeen hundred meters. So there's everything from bedrock and gravel beds and so on right down to the meandering stream flowing through the soil that's in the bottom of the valleys. And the interesting thing I've found is that the fish, and trout in particular, you catch a fish or a trout and knock it on the head. Up in the headwaters the flesh is completely white. Whereas lower down, where there are more crustaceans, and and snails and that type of thing. There their flesh becomes almost a bright orange.

**Dave Walker** [00:07:59] Probably the most distressing is the disregard by farmers for hired property. They don't earn it, they don't look after it. They use it ,in fact they overuse it. So you'll end up with overgrazing and the more recent tendency is for fellows who used to burn. In general the principle was that you'd burn veld as a management tool. On occasions you don't have sufficient stock on a particular farm and the veld becomes moribund. So then folk would burn the veld to suit. Depending on the circumstances and most folk have established a cycle of burning once every four or five years. And the more recent and very unfortunate changes that people some of the people that have started burning every year. And it's not not as a management tool as it's a means of creating grazing. And I find that quite distressing because in some of the streams in our part of the world where this is a predominant means of farming exercise. Whereas in others fellows stick to a fairly strict cycle. And you can see the difference in the riverbeds. On the one end you've got silted stream beds and riverbeds. Erosion is all over the shore. On others, erosion is limited to the cattle paths and that sort of thing. And there's beautiful gravel beds where the trout obviously spawn. But the yellow the small mouth yellow fish come up in summer and spawn in those same beds. So agricultural poor agricultural practices. I think the fundamental issue.

**Dave Walker** [00:10:19] In the early years we used to run our annual fly fishing festival in December. And I said the early years it goes back to the mid 90s onwards. And each year, we would find that spring rains and the winter precipitation in particular. But the spring rains would arrive later and later. To the extent that you've got 30 or 40 people coming to fish and you haven't had rain by the end of November and the fishing of that is the first week in December. Then one starts stressing a bit. Eventually it got to the point where I just said that's it we're not doing it in December anymore, we're moving it to March. Where the rainfall is just generally more reliable. But even then it's become more and more dicey.

**James Thull** [00:11:15] Yeah. Yeah.

**Dave Walker** [00:11:17] And we've gone through the the recent droughts which isn't over yet. But where we had streams drying up to the extent that there'd be a pool and there would be flow through the gravel bed. And then another pool and so so you could drive drive a vehicle up to the river beds.

**Dave Walker** [00:11:48] In more recent times I've said [unintelligible] because I live in the village of Rhodes but I also have a business there. I'd love to come back to Rhodes on holiday. Because it's a very special part of the world and it's got incredible scenery. And going up in the mountains and it's it's just very different to most other parts of South Africa. Comparison would be some parts of the city. But the problem in the cities is there are no, which is probably an advantage, there are no fences. But the overgrazing is rampant. There is in our part of the world there is a lot of fencing which is not natural not the natural thing but at least then it facilitates stock management which in allows as I said earlier some areas to have far better streams than others.

**Dave Walker** [00:12:56] I certainly think so. It's just purely from a commercial point of view. Certainly not if the philosophy of anything. But from a commercial point of view the more diverse the more that one can diversify from the middle age old fellow. And encourage women and younger people. And more particularly in this country there is more black people to take up the sport. Which is great to be happening probably in one of the earlier examples of fly fishing was Cyril Ramaphosa and various others. But he's also getting on in life. It's certainly important to to encourage the youth to to get involved.

**Dave Walker** [00:13:58] Persevere. Persevere because some people take to fly fishing very easily, others find it a bit more challenging. But perseverance is I think one of the key factors. You don't always manage to put the fly right in the water but more often than not it's hanging a bush or a tree or something. If you get the [unintelligible] pack up and go home well, then you're never going to get anywhere.

**Dave Walker** [00:14:35] Okay The Wild Trout Association was established in April in April 1991. And it was a combination of factors where I'd moved on to the Barkly East district. And I had a bee in my bonnet and I still have a been in my bonnet about Conservancies. Conservancy being just a private conservation area within a farming agricultural community. Which revolved around creating an awareness amongst farmers about the value of the wildlife in the region and not to have the they still have running dogs and only other aspects that go into it. And at the same time, when I arrived there a fellow by the name of Martin Davies had been coming up to our part of the world and fishing and so on and so on had established or was in the throes of establishing a hatchery. In partnership with one of the farmers there. And we got together and Martin talked about getting people to come to the area to come fishing and so on and so on and I had my bee in my bonnet about the conservancy thing and we debated. So it was this whole thing to the extent that we eventually we cobbled together the basic rules of the organization and cobbled together a constitution that's [unintelligible]. The fundamental thing about the association is that it's it's an organization that consists of riparian owners as opposed to a fly fishing club. So it's riparian owners who didn't have a problem with people coming onto their properties and fishing. Whereas fly fishing clubs very different kettle of fish. Where they want to get onto the farmers waters at minimal cost and fish. And that could be anywhere. So the Wild Trout Association ultimately what we do is we administer the day permits and the the waters on behalf of the riparian owners. And by and large, the riparian owners are obviously farmers who own access to water. Cause that's what it amounts to. You know,

you're not selling the water you're selling the access to the water via the good offices of the farming members. And so that's been going on since since 1991.

**Dave Walker** [00:17:34] My word. God. First of all getting to our part of the world is it takes time. It took us nine, ten hours to get to this event. But once you're there it's special. Is it's very different. Away from all these vehicles and sirens and aircraft knocking over and all that sort of stuff. Yeah, what else is there. My word. More reason you would have [unintelligible], you asked me about how good the fishing is, and I suppose the response is that it's been as good as the fisherman.