

The Junction of the Umzimkulu and Umzimouti

And the Hardy's Favourite

After that day I eventually acquired a trout rod and reel...my memory fades me here how I acquired one because most times I fished the Umzimkulu it was with a borrowed one from Uncle Dennis. The flies we fished were the traditional ones...Hardy's Favourite being my favourite one. Although an old pattern I think it represented the dragon fly larvae. When I look at the development of flies and fly-tying today it is intimidating. We have developed to a stage when flies are so realistic all they need is a smell to be as good as bait...

Well the Hardy's Favourites still sit in one of my old fly boxes...looking a bit moth-eaten and out of fashion but they still catch fish every now and then when I become sentimental. I have my favourite flies, one is the RAB's, Sawyers, Zaks and DDD's and have many variations of mayflies, caddis's, nymphs etc. Matching the hatch is where I stumble. This is where I must bow out gracefully and give it to those who put a lot more into it than I do. Sadly I do not spend as much time as I would like to but am truly grateful and satisfied to have had the privilege of many days on all sorts of rivers and dams and all sorts of fish.

One of the best was the junction...where the Mouti met the Kulu. I guess there are not many fly fishers that know this pool or better described as a stretch. In the days that we fished it, it produced the odd lunker...there were a lot of 3/4 pounders here but the odd 2 pounder and much bigger lurked here. Fish caught here when cleaned and stomach contents were examined showed masses of dragon fly larvae. I have always believed that big strong trout have 2 things in preference...well at least on the Kulu...dragonfly larvae and crabs. These are the big thick rump steaks to these powerful and macho and matriarch fish. Their flesh was always past pink...almost a red colouring like a sea-run Atlantic salmon.

Anybody that has caught a Kulu rainbow from 2 lbs up knows what I'm talking about. He/she is strong and as fit as an AB or Springbok player. I caught one; I'm ashamed to say, sinking a large Walkers Killer under a willow with split shot weighted. It took off like an 8-pounder in a dam right into the backing but caused its own demise because it shot into the rapids instead of diving into bank and roots where it would have been free before I gathered the next breath. It was a well conditioned female of 3.5 lbs...not my biggest river fish. I caught one close to 5 lbs in the river at Ceres just behind the New Belmont Hotel during a lunch break on a business trip. No comparison! It was like a wet sack...and I claim no accolade for it...it was so easy. Size means very little to me nowadays...one enjoys tricky fishing for very wild trout in the most faraway and pristine spots.

Back to the junction...that place I visited not too long ago...it looked different and I guess it's still not fished that often. Sadly with all my improved skills and better flies...blank. What has happened? Are there things that happen in rivers that we cannot explain? I have raised issues and questions about the upper Polela and the Umgeni in Dargle. No one really can put their finger on it...I think there is apathy or more correctly no sympathy from the ruling powers for the plight of trout especially in KZN.

Sadly the days of the junction and Hardy's are just memories...but so are a lot of good things. One must not become too keyed up about it. At least I was there. Something to be very grateful for. That is what is so nice about fishing...it holds myriads of memories that I enjoy sharing.