

Bruce Curry's Surprise 50th Birthday Party
Jozini Dam – December 2008
Story by Laurence Davies

Many, many months back I had a call from Lorraine Curry telling me that Bruce was soon to celebrate the big **Five-O** birthday. Lorraine was arranging a surprise outing for Bruce, on the first weekend in December, a weekend on a house boat (Shayamanzi) at Jozini. To me this meant some Tiger fishing. Arrangements were that we drive up on the Friday and returning on the Sunday.



Bruce Curry (left) is the NEW member of the BALLIE BRIGADE

The question was, would I like to join the party? This was definitely a silly question...! Of course I would love to join the party, who wouldn't, because after all, Tiger fishing at Jozini has been on my stripping basket list for some time.

Haydn, Graeme, and I were the DFT members who were going to be part of a party of 36 family and friends of Bruce and Lorraine, that would be sharing the two house boats, Shayamanzi I and Shayamanzi II.



For me it was my first time at Jozini, and the Shayamanzi boats were great. As the **"bachelors"** (for the weekend at least), Hayden, Graeme and I shared a "tented" area on the top deck of the boat. Hayden and Graeme had come straight from Vidal, having fished there from the Monday.

These two house boats had 5 tenders between them, and generally four of them were used for the anglers and one for game viewing.

We fished in the mornings before breakfast, and in the evenings before dinner. Midday on Saturday was spent tying new flies or poppers. All in all not a lot of time was spent fishing, we welcomed the break and just enjoyed the company and cruising around on the house boats. After all, it was Bruce's birthday bash and not a fishing outing.



On the Friday evening I went out on a boat with Mike, Kieron and Brett to fish the river section at the head of the dam. Mike took his fly rod with but stuck to the spinner, and Kieron fished sardine fillet whilst Brett occasionally used a spinner. The wind was very strong and we had to anchor, which made it difficult to fish with a fly whilst others were fishing with bait or spinners. We did not have much success on the first outing.

On Saturday morning, Mike, Piet and I set off in one of the tenders, Piet and I using fly, and Mike sticking to his spinners. The morning was overcast with little wind and we fished close to the bank and weed beds. It was lot easier fishing because we were able to drift, which meant that we could all cast straight ahead. Mike out-fished the fly-fishers with his spinners, which worked best when he attached sardine fillet to the hook.

We had lots of takes and misses until Piet, who had been advised accordingly, said that, instead of striking immediately, give a little line before setting the hook. This worked a treat, except when giving too much line. I was using a short length of 20lb Mason bite tippet and sometimes they would take the whole lot. Another thing that he was advised on, was to slow the retrieve down a bit, which also worked.



Popper muncher

The dark flies (orange, reds and black combinations) did not work out too well for us. Piet did very well with a light, clear and olive Flashy Profile fly, with big eyes, whereas most of my fly-caught fish were caught on a white and chartreuse Maxi's Dogs Breakfast.

Although Mike out fished us with his spinners, I must have had the most fun of all with poppers on the Saturday morning. The tigers climbed all over them, I would get take after take when retrieving until they would eventually hook up. This was heart pounding stuff. They chomped my poppers to pieces until I virtually ran out of them.

After breakfast on Saturday the boats upped anchor and cruise to the gorge section of the dam where we were to spend the night. The gorge did not work out as well for us except on the

last morning when we drifted into a forest of dead trees.

The water was much deeper of course (and clearer). In fact the fishing all round on the Saturday evening and Sunday was very slow. I suspect that there was a weather change or something atmospheric, which slowed them down.

On Sunday morning, I think that our boat was the only one out of 4 boats that caught fish. Some had takes but no hook-ups. One thing that I must say, is that Graeme and Hayden had been fishing hard all week, and I think that the sun might have been a touch too much for them as they made claims against my good name, which I can only put down to hallucinations.

Graeme claims to have photographic proof, but should he offer this so-called proof, you can see that it could be almost be anybody, and I suspect that he and Hayden rigged up something. It is incredible how you can manipulate photographs on the computer nowadays. The length's that people will go to is amazing!!!

All in all I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience, and would recommend it to anyone. Lorraine did a great job of organising the outing, with almost military precision. To me, Piet summed it all up when he said that, his wife always wanted to go on a cruise and he always wanted to go Tiger fishing, and the weekend enabled them to both satisfy their dreams.

NOW FOR GRAEME NEARY'S VERSION Trip to Cape Vidal and Jozini December 08

For quite a long while Haydn and I had talked about spending at least a week at Vidal (outside of weekend) as this has become a very special place for a few of us. One evening over dinner with our wives, the suggestion came up and very happily our good ladies gave us their blessing. We often spoke after that about it but these thoughts never seemed to reach paper.

One evening in April, I got a call from Lorraine that say that our other fishing buddy was going to become a member of the **“Ballie Brigade”** on the second of December. She would dearly love to put together a weekend with some family and friends at Jozini on board the Shayamanzi boats as Bruce had often mentioned catching tiger fish before he grew much older than a ballie. This was to be absolute cloak and dagger stuff. I did not have to contemplate too long a “Ye” (Olde English” to this question.

VIDAL



Within a few minutes, a call from Haydn. Have you heard the news? Immediately we were in depth discussion. If we are to be at Jozini at 1.00 pm on Friday 05 December then Monday 01 to Thurs 04 December sounded like old plans coming together.

It was going to be tough to keep all this secret stuff from Curry for eight months as there were more than thirty of us involved, but we swore our lives and everything else away anyway. We eventually mentioned to Bruce that we would not be at the December meeting as we will be at Vidal for the week. We were called a few nasty names, unrepeatable here, but if the truth be told I think he was just a tad envious.

We arrived at Vidal at about 11 on that Monday and had a very good fishing session. Although tides were not quite in our favour in that low was between 12

and 1.30 over the time, we had some very good water and weather conditions. Fishing was not excellent but rewarding to say the least. We got lots of the usual like; Wave garrrick, Bastard mullet and Cape moonies with a few Shad thrown in. Haydn got quite a big Smelt and I managed two Big eye kingies of 25/30 cm.

JOZINI

We put in a first light session on Friday, packed up and made our way a little further north to Jozini. To say we were exited was understatement as this was to be our first ever opportunity to have a go at some tigers.

We were all to meet at the Shayamoya lodge at one and then get bussed down to the dam to the Shayamanzi 1 and 2 boats. As people started arriving there was this wonderful air of anticipation.

Bruce was to be flown up because of time constraints but they had to drive at the last minute due to bad weather and a dodgy landing at Mkuze. He had obviously smelled a rat by this stage but apparently everyone was still tight lipped. While we were sitting on the deck at the lodge with cold beers in hand, my phone rang which broke the solitude. Whose name appeared on the screen oh no Bruce Curry; a shortened version of the conversation goes as follows.

Are you guys still at Vidal? Yes! The weather can't be too good. No its fine. Well we are driving north and its raining hard between Richards Bay and Mtuba. It rained here early this morning but its fine now. You guys are still there quite late. Yes, we've just got back to the car now and making our way home shortly.

Yes, I am ashamed of the lies, but Lorraine has fortunately been a good teacher in things devious and after all it was for good reason. So the “NEW BALLIE” wouldn't smell a rat.

I did not dare to ask where they were driving in case I started laughing. We exchanged a few more pleasantries and bid each other farewell. You should have heard the names I was called when he arrived at the lodge to see us all with silly grins, I think the first time I've seen Curry speechless.

Once we were all safely landed on the boats via the tenders it did not take too long for a few desperate fisher folk to coerce some guides to take us out fishing. Unfortunately no success but back to mother ships and a roast dinner fit for a king.

Saturday dawned dull and overcast but none of this was going to see us putting feet up and reading magazines. We were here to catch toothy critters and don't be getting in our way as we were armed with dangerous things like fire Tiger Clousers, Poppers and Flippers.

I was very chuffed to land five tigers and lost one which the guide estimated to about 3kgs, Haydn also got three fish. He was first on our tender to get one which produced a comparably toothy grin to the fish. These fish seem to take great delight in chasing down the popper or flipper, whacking it out the water but not hooking up. This seemed as though the Tigers were teasing the anglers to distraction, this of course caused much laughter and shouting on the tenders.

The Older "BALLIES"



Haydn



Graeme

Saturday afternoon proved disappointing but never the less very relaxing and pleasant. By this time the boats had moved off to a new mooring place for the night down the very deep gorge that leads to the dam wall. We were told that this area is an average of 80/85 meters deep towards the wall.

Very early on Sunday morning saw our ever so pleasant guides fired up the tenders, taking us out once more. Again fishing was disappointing but looking at the terrain and conditions one couldn't help having that constant feeling of anticipation. Some strange things happened on one of the tenders close to us that got me thinking that I shouldn't have had that last drink the night before.

After watching the goings on for a while I realized the goings on were for real and only at this stage reached for my camera to record the second half. Asking a few innocent questions later has led to Laurence Davies accusing Haydn and me of suffering heatstroke or worse things and that we are fabricating stories to bring shame to his family.

Fortunately for Laurence there is photographic proof to back this up and I have already had an anonymous financial offer to purchase the said photos. (Probably one of his mates)!!

Hopefully this issue won't go on too long and the air will be cleared soon. After a hearty breakfast we were once again returned to dry ground with I'm sure many good memories.

A big thank you to Lorraine for all her "devious" back ground work that culminated in a wonderful weekend for all involved. This is what friends and family should be all about and this trip leaps into my top 10. I would like to take Wendy here sometime as it is just so relaxing and the accommodation and meals were top class. I must say that the crew of these two boats are also out of the top draw.

THE SEQUEL

To
Bruce Curry's Surprise 50th Birthday Party at Jozini Dam

Questionable Achievements

Laurence Davies

In last month's Bobbin, I accused Hayden and Graeme of hallucinations brought on by sunstroke, when they cast nasturtiums on my good name. What actually happened on the Sunday morning at Jozini Dam, which had Hayden and Graeme laughing and threatening "*questionable achievement*" nominations?

Well let me set the record straight.

I was fishing on the boat with Pete and Mike, and fishing had been a bit slow. We were drifting into a cove full of dead trees when Pete hooked a Tigerfish. A few seconds later, I also hooked one. Pete carefully fought his but I cranked mine in and it was duly netted and released. I wanted to get a close-up of the tiger's jaws to show off the wicked teeth, used for chomping baitfish, poppers and flies.

I duly cast the Maxi's Dogs Breakfast out again and placed the rod on the gunwale, to let the fly sink whilst I readied for a picture of Pete's fish. Pete's tiger was netted and was held up by the guide, whilst I took a close up of its teeth. I had just pressed the button when I heard my rod scrape against the gunwale and looked up in time to see it splash into the water and in a flash was beyond my reach. A tiger had taken the fly on the drop (who says that you have to strip fast for tigers?).

My first reaction was to dive into the water after the rod, but simultaneously flashing through my mind was the thought of possible things electronic which might be in my pocket or on my person (cell phone, watch, camera etc). Then I thought that Mike would be able to hook the rod with his spinner, but he was just standing there, like me just mesmerised by the disappearing rod.

I ended up just gormlessly pointing at my rod which was moving further away. This is when our guide jumped in, grabbed the rod and started swimming towards the bank, which was closer than the boat. His slops came off his feet but fortunately they floated.

Now for the million dollar question..!

How do we get the boat working so that we could pick up the guide who was now busy fighting the tiger on the bank? None of us in the boat knew anything about the motor, or how it worked..!

Shouting out to the guide on the bank, I confirmed that the key started the motor (***I had been looking for a button***). I put the boat into gear and edged towards the bank to pick up the guide who had landed and released the fish not forgetting to collect the guides slops on the way.

This is when Hayden and Graeme who were fishing fairly close by were alerted to our plight, and their immediate reaction was to get out the camera and not to come alongside to see if they could assist.

Oh no..! They just enjoyed the moment, my embarrassment and wanted to record it. It's a wonder that they never asked for an action replay.

A few minutes later they also fell about with glee when I hooked a solitary dead tree on my back-cast. I was all for breaking off the fly but the guide insisted otherwise and backed the boat up to the tree, climbed off, and was shinning up the tree to remove the fly. Again the cameras were brought out to record the moment.

So, I had two embarrassing moments within minutes of one another, much to everyone's delight, and suitably recorded by Graeme, who fortunately was far enough away for me to claim that the picture could have been of any one of us, and claiming that they were suffering from sunstroke, or were hallucinating. ***As you know, attack is the best form of defence.***

However, in the end, my conscience got the better of me and hence the above confession. All the same it was great fun and a good laugh afterwards.

THE BANTER CONTINUES

By Graeme Neary

I have heard via the grapevine that Laurence Davies conscience has been pricking him lately and that he has written a letter to the editor confessing as to what happened on the boat that sunny Sunday morning at Jozini.

Now ,I have heard it said that there is an old saying that goes `Fishermen are born honest but they get over it ` .I gather that the story told is actually as close to the truth as what we saw from our boat.

Fortunately the guide realized that these three "Mlungus" are galvanized to their spots and it was now up to him to save the day. 6 o'clock, cold water or not he very gallantly took the plunge and rescued the rod with fish in tow, so I'm sure Laurence is gentleman enough not to claim this fish as his own. I think we can let him off getting the fly stuck in the tree because this happens to us all from time to time, just ironic that it happens with about 80 square kilometers of water around us.

Laurence was been asked to do a presentation on the Jozini trip to the F.F.A. on Thursday 15th January and got some pictures from me to add to his collection. He has also paid up for the offending pictures and says he will hide them far from prying eyes.

As Laurence is a member of both D.F.T. and F.F.A. we did threaten to disclose the goings on to the Chairmen as there are annual awards of Fowl Hook and Golden Boot respectively, but since he has come clean in the media, we can leave it up to the two Chairs as to what course they take.

Again I must say a good time was had by all and good to see that life shouldn't be taken too seriously.

