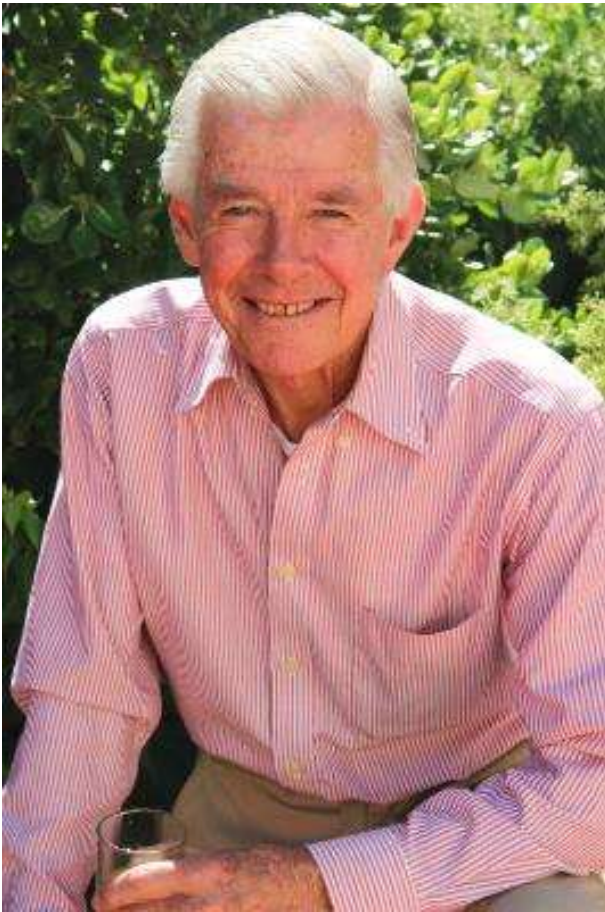


## Wise words from Jolyon Nuttall

Culled from the April 1967 *Field and Tide*



Jolyon Nuttall

In the same way that some fathers book their sons into their old school half an hour after the little beggars are born, so others deposit their male offspring on the banks of a trout stream as soon as they are out of nappies. This is a fatal step, guaranteed to drive Junior to drink or judo or sea-fishing or something. The desire to acquire the art of trout fishing must come naturally, with no more than a dose or two of moral persuasion from Father

Try to force the issue, and your youngster will regard you with the same scorn as a self-respecting trout would an artificial grasshopper. My father attempted to launch my career as a trout fisherman when I was ten or thereabouts. It was during the World War II years, and there was no petrol for trips to Underberg. Instead, we went by train to the Dargle in the Natal Midlands.

Unfortunately, a long and severe drought, plus other unknown factors, had taken their toll on the Umgeni River and, if there were any trout left, they were highly educated. When I first splashed fly on water, no trout had been taken for two seasons and none, as it turned out, was to be taken for three more.

Half-way through the second blank day, I was ready to use my father's third-best rod, with which I had been entrusted, for firewood.

I believe this early exposure to an art that requires great patience, plus a philosophy that makes the actual catching of trout an afterthought, might have lost me permanently to its charms, had I not been whisked off -at the moment before crack-up- to a dam full of blackbass that duly offered up two or three of its inhabitants and at least kept my interest alive.

It was eight years before I again cast a fly for trout, and this time I was caught, hook, line and no sinker.

My twin brother, however, after that disastrous exposure at the age of ten, has never returned to the trout-fishing fold. If he has any interest at all in fishing, it is limited to tobies.

This illustrates a further important point to proud fathers who see in their sons the ghost of Izaak Walton. Because I had the third-best rod, my brother, who foolishly had shown far fewer glimmers of interest than I, was given the fourth-best rod.

This rod had reached the age and stage where it should have been more correctly used as a prop for runner-beans. Furthermore, in the days of war-time strictures, the fourth-best rod did not rise to fresh-water fishing line. It was, in fact, equipped with that ghastly yellow cord that sea-fishermen used before the advent of nylon, and was soggy and clumsy enough when applied to trout water to drive the most accomplished expert up a tchi-tchi bush. Which, incidentally, is where my brother spent most of his brief career as a trout fisherman?

The further important which I referred three paragraphs back, therefore, is try to ensure when you start your son off on trout fishing that he is equipped, not with a matchless featherweight hardy rod or a tapered line, but with reasonably efficient equipment. Let him feel, that, other things (apart from experience and skill) being equal, he has a fair chance of bagging a fish.

Take time off to watch him without his noticing you, for at that age he is likely to be embarrassed, and then pass on a few tips when the moment is propitious.

Applaud his successes, and make light of your own when he comes back with an empty creel.

Seek his comments on the fly he saw on the water during the evening rise and instill in him a feeling for the art.

When he accepts without undue glumness three blank days in a row, then you will know that he has become another true trout fisherman and be glad in your heart that you will have a companion on the river banks in your old age.

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