

# Get someone else to take you

Harry, at Cooma

Goodnight Barlow

3 December 2004

Dear Members,

A novice fly-fisherman who I don't really know all that well recently asked me to take him fishing. He's a 'human resources professional', but Ivermectin can cure that these days and he seems like quite a decent bloke. But I have got a bit sick of that sort of thing and made the excuse that someone else had told me that I was dreadful company on a fishing trip, and I had decided to fish on my own from now on.

I felt a bit guilty about it, but bugger it, I'm getting on in years and don't want to spoil the few fishing days I've got left, lending someone my best flies on my favourite pools, getting mud on the passenger side car mats as well, listening to them complain that they can't get proper coffee in country cafes and then watching them drink Earl Grey tea. As if that's tea.

It started me thinking about whether or not that was a reasonable attitude to take. I didn't have to think too long before deciding I was right, as usual, but I kept thinking along those lines anyway, so that I had plenty of excuses for myself.

I decided it all boils down to fishing trips that you'd rather have not gone on, and not because of the poor fishing, but because some stupid bugger did something to spoil the whole thing. If they do that, they're best avoided in future. And by the time you've been fishing as long as I have, nearly everyone's done it to you.

The worst are people who are simply careless. You just can't afford to be careless when you're in the bush, miles from anywhere. It's dangerous enough with all the snakes, guns, alcohol and unexpected second cousins lying about the place, but someone

who spoils a perfectly good fishing trip by setting fire to anything valuable or any clothing attached to oneself, getting the one and only vehicle bogged, sinking any type of watercraft, filling a diesel vehicle with unleaded, announcing on Sunday morning that they promised their wife 400 km away they wouldn't be home late that day, half cutting a finger off proving they've got the sharpest knife, or burning the chops for dinner, can only be considered as reckless, feckless and thoughtless and shouldn't be invited again.

I once took some blokes from Sydney fishing way up in the high country, and one of them, who we'll call Mike, but whose real name is Jeff and he lives in Maroubra, just in case you bump into him, smoked some of that funny tobacco and then blissfully and gently drove the ute into a creek. He didn't seem to think it would be too much of a problem, until I pointed out that a) the three of us couldn't lift it out, b) we were 35 kilometres from the nearest farm, c) it would be dark in an hour, d) it would be below freezing by about 10.00 pm, and f) we had better start walking. I also told him something about e), but it escapes me now.

We hadn't walked far at all when to my relief and amazement a Toyota 4WD appeared on the track, driven by two Jindabyne blokes, loaded with camping gear and with a stack of fire wood in the back. They were going down to the river to camp for the weekend and agreed to come down and tow the ute out.

Mike got into the front seat of the Toyota with the driver and his mate, and the other Sydney bloke and myself sat on the firewood in the back. We started off down the track but after a minute or so the driver said quietly to his mate, 'Tony, did you fart?' 'No, wasn't me, mate', came the deadpan answer. The driver didn't take his eyes off the road, just drawled 'Pretty tough when you help blokes out and they fart in ya truck'.

I had thought about clobbering Mike much earlier, back at the creek, and only the fact that I was having trouble balancing on the firewood stopped me from doing it now. But my hearty stream of invective directed at Mike seemed to perk up the blokes from Jindabyne quite a bit and they drove on and eventually we got the ute out. They looked pretty chirpy but I don't think they said more than a couple of words to us. I guess they might have discussed us a bit later. Needless to say I didn't take Mike fishing again.

Another lot that won't trick me again if I can help it is would-be anglers who simply aren't cut out for it. It beats me why people who haven't got an ounce of patience want to go fishing. Of course it's pretty hard to foresee this, especially when they're all excited and keen because they've heard how wonderful this trout fishing stuff is and how beautiful the mountains are, they've seen that Robert Redford film, yak, yak, yak. After the first hour they usually start asking where the nearest coffee shop is. If we aren't catching any fish, they start asking if we should hire a professional guide.

To be fair, they mightn't know they aren't interested in fishing until they've been. But I wish they would make that mistake with someone else before I run into them.

I once took someone fishing on the Kybean and we crawled through the thistles to the edge of the pool where I could see a big fish was cruising. I had seen this fish many times before, a big rainbow. They were common enough in those days, some of them were five, six pounds or more. I know people like to fish for brownies these days, but the big rainbows in those eastern Monaro streams really were something out of the box. They were great big greeny-silver things and acted like they owned the pool, prowling around, looking down their short noses at everything. Not like the old brownies, slithering around the bottom of the pool like a lump of mud on heat. It was a top spot, you could watch this big fish swim past just a couple of feet under your nose. Anyway, we were lying there in the dirt, I was all excited about this great speckled rainbow, pointing out there-he-is and here-he-comes-again and all that nonsense, when I heard a monotonous,

buzzing noise. At first I thought it was an insect or animal in the thistles, but then I looked to my right and saw that it was my companion, face down in the dirt, asleep, snoring. The funny buzzing noise was caused by her nose being squashed against the ground. Yes, that's right: 'her' pale, refined, nose. Not a good look for a well connected Eastern Suburbs sort and considering the thrill of the moment, very disappointing in the sporting sense. Despite that, we knocked around together for a few years after that but nothing ever really came of it, and I think that it can all be traced back to that day.

I have also gone on fishing trips with a bloke whose belief that country people are a bit thick has got us into trouble more than once.

Once we were paying for petrol at a service station in a very small Monaro town and he handed over his credit card; this was back in the days when they had 'Ansett Golden Wing Club' versions of them. As one of the petrol station blokes swiped the card in the machine, he said 'Golden Wing Club, eh? You must know Barry Kruger'. My friend looked at him blankly and asked 'No, why would I know him?' 'Well, he lives around here and he's a member of that club' came the reply. My mate looked at me, and I could see that he was stuck for an answer, but trying to keep a straight face.

As soon as we got into the car he exploded into laughter and said 'Did you hear that? He really thought I'd know that chap.' I looked around, and as I suspected, the service station blokes were nearly pissing themselves...they probably pulled that stunt on every Golden Wing Club member that came into the shop. My mate looked around as well, saw that they took him for a dickhead, stormed back into the shop and wanted to fight both of them. Only the arrival of a Highway Patrol car in the service station driveway stopped things getting nasty and after a few apologies and pleas to the cop, who fortunately was the son of a cousin of mine, I managed to drag Rocky Gattellari away without him, or more importantly us, getting punched or charged with anything.

I still go fishing with him. At least there's never

a dull moment. Maybe I'll give his number to the next novice who wants to go fishing with me. It would be character building for both of them.

Kind Regards,  
Harry

[End]

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