

Paul Ryan - An Itinerant Forester

The talk would look at some of my life as a forester, which not only involved a great deal of travel to different countries but was also a journey that taught me much from a forestry as well as a social and cultural perspective. Being a forester meant getting out into the rural areas and the forests as well as interacting with local communities particularly those with a vested interest in the forests.

My experience starts in PNG, where I grew up; then includes tales from Costa Rica, where the snakes and rain made life interesting in the forest; Burma, where I worked for a year in 1977 on developing their forest management; Afghanistan, where I was faced with raising fuelwood woodlots in arid conditions; the Philippines and an introduction to social forestry; several African countries that weren't always friendly, but included Tanzania where I introduced a form of community management of forests; Bhutan where the concept of Shangrila didn't meet our expectations when it came to traveling across country; then on to India for more community forest management; Bangladesh, where they were planting mangroves to extent the country into the Bay of Bengal and help mitigate the effects of cyclone storm surges; and Nepal with their community management of forests. In the process I joined the World Bank as a Forestry Specialist, after working for it as a consultant for some years, and that in itself is an interesting experience.

The talk would be about personal and sometimes unusual experiences as well as cover some interesting socio/cultural and forestry topics with which I was involved.