

LIFE LESSONS LEARNED, AND FROM WHENCE THEY CAME. **Ferris, Howard¹**.

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The path of a professional career is shaped by many factors. They include personal interests and expertise, resource availability and associated obligations, and acceptance of positions and assignments by following either the path of least resistance or the only obvious choice.

Interactions with four groups of people have been of paramount importance in my career development. One group, of course, was comprised of professors, teachers and mentors who conveyed the basic understanding and principles of the discipline and related areas of science; another very important group was the long-term research technicians at various institutions who knew how to make things work and how to get things done; a third group was the graduate students and postdoctoral fellows whose evolving ideas shaped my thinking and often dragged me into new directions; and, finally, participation as the nematology component of large-scale, multi-investigator projects, introduced me to the knowledge, skills and ideas of colleagues from other disciplines and helped mold my own. Sometimes a chance remark in a conversation, or an idea retained from a seminar, has stimulated thinking about the hidden truths concealed within an existing or potential dataset and the questions that are waiting to be asked. The Nematology that I was first introduced to was centered on damage to plants; it still is, but has become much more.

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