

Rod Stirling

I was born and raised in Port Alberni, a small town on Vancouver Island on Canada's Pacific coast. Port Alberni was, and is, a forestry town. It is in a mountainous area with large forests of western redcedar, Douglas-fir, and western hemlock. Much of my childhood was spent in these forests making trails and forts, climbing trees, picking chanterelle mushrooms, and hiking.



Like most of us, I never sought a career in wood protection. However, there was an early inclination. I recall being quite interested in the large transmission lines that ran into town. I eventually badgered my mother enough that she brought me into the local utility office to get more information on their infrastructure (unfortunately, they didn't have the NAWPC colouring books back in those days).



I left home after high school and moved to Victoria, a small city at the southern tip of Vancouver Island. There I attended the University of Victoria and completed an undergraduate degree in chemistry. During my degree I participated in a co-op program, which gave me experience working in industry. I had work terms with several forest product companies that sparked my interest and gave me a good practical education. When I completed my undergraduate degree I had two options: take a low paying job in an analytical chemistry lab, or take an even lower paying position as a graduate student. I chose the latter.

I was fortunate at the time that Professor Colette Breuil at the University of British Columbia was looking for a graduate student with a background in chemistry and wood science to work on a project with Paprican (now part of FPInnovations). I was accepted into the Forestry program and began my studies with UBC in 2000. My graduate work focused on developing methods to assess decay in wood chip piles. I initially looked at a wide range of technologies, but ended up focusing most of my efforts on the development of statistical models based on mid- and near-infrared spectroscopy. A lot of my time was spent preparing samples of decayed wood chips, so I learned a bit of mycology along the way.



When I was nearing the end of my PhD studies, I got married to my wife Rosalind and went on my honeymoon to Quebec City (great place). It was there that I received an email from Dr. Paul Morris, wondering if I would be interested in applying for a post-doc position at Forintek (now part of FPInnovations). In 2005, I defended my PhD and started work at Forintek shortly thereafter. My initial research focused on understanding how extractives in western redcedar heartwood contributed to natural durability. This work led to a brief paper on cedar extractives, a Ron Cockcroft Award, and my first trip to IRG in Tromsø, Norway in 2006.



I was initially terrified to attend an international conference, and it took me a while to warm up to it, but this was made much easier by the friendly IRG community. It was a great joy to meet the people who had written many of papers I had been reading for years.



I grew and began to thrive as a researcher under the mentorship of Paul Morris and shifted my research to focus more squarely on wood preservation. I've been fortunate to attend 11 of the last 13 IRG meetings thanks to support from FPInnovations management, and funding from the governments of Canada and British Columbia, and Koppers Performance Chemicals. IRG has led to several interesting collaborations with researchers around the world, and is a major source of my research inspiration. IRG meetings have had many memorable moments for me. Seeing the midnight sun in Norway, the



geysers of Yellowstone, the Great Wall of China, those fantastic custard tarts in Lisbon (which I've since sought out and found in Vancouver), the WWI trenches of Flanders, and South African safari to name a few.

Currently, I'm the Manager of FPInnovations' New Construction Materials group in Vancouver. We have a team of 12 scientists, technologists and industry advisors focused on wood protection, engineered wood products, and related fields. I live in East Vancouver with my wife Rosalind and our kids Thomas (10) and Charlotte (6). When it's not raining, we enjoy getting outside and taking advantage of the many beautiful sights in southwestern British Columbia. Our



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favourite spot is Sproat Lake on Vancouver Island, just outside of Port Alberni. The lake is great for swimming, and there is excellent nearby hiking and boating; a wonderful reprieve from city living.



I'm looking forward to helping host IRG50 in Quebec City in May 2019. Hope to see you there!