



P. Vedavyasa Rao

- Designation at retirement : Principal Scientist
- Period of service : 1958-1995

My day of reckoning

CMFRI is a great Institute. It has a remarkable USP. It is also a paradox. Its research contributions and achievements, its excellent and brilliant scientists and technical staff, sincere and honest administrative, supporting and auxiliary staff are occasionally praised, applauded, appreciated and honoured, often blamed, criticized, disliked and sometimes rejected!. But its aesthetic value always remained shining; persons of wider outlook recognized its role and contributions not only to the development of the marine fisheries of the country, but also to the corollary fisheries sectors.

CMFRI is employee, pensioner-friendly. It only could remember lesser mortals like me at this time of gorgeous celebrations of its Diamond Jubilee, but it draws flak when it calls for service period and designation at retirement!

I recall, 17th September, 1958 - the day I joined the CMFRI at the then

Headquarters at Mandapam Camp. On joining, my accommodation was allotted in one of the halls of the then called 'trainees block'. Keeping my sole asset of a steel trunk and a hold-all bedding in a corner of the hall, I hurried to the laboratory, as I was told to be punctual in attendance and not to be late. At that time, I did not bother to look into the facilities available in the hall or its surroundings. I went back to my abode after dinner at about 9 P.M. only then, I realized that it was located in the far end of the long corridor, where it was dark and no light! Soon, to my utter disappointment and misery, I further realized that I might have to spend the entire night in dark, as there was no light in the hall, and that it was possible to get any source of light only in the next morning. Being new, almost a stranger to the place, I did not know to whom to contact and where to go for help. Initially, surging rage, giving way gradually to stark helplessness over took me, and as the night advanced, I reclined to my fate of spending the entire night sleepless in the dark. With the help of match-box stick light, I located the corner of the hall where I kept my trunk and hold-all. Spreading the hold-all, I tried to sleep over, but the eerie sound of the blowing breeze, often getting stronger and making the unbolted windows and doors slap, imaginary visualization of snakes falling from the roof or getting into the hall from outside, and wandering ghosts and ghouls (as the main campus building was originally a hospital) and the loneliness made me not only to keep awake, but also to succumb to

fear and nervous breakdown. This horrible experience, first time in my life, made me to decide to leave the place without informing anybody early next morning, and to resign the job on reaching Alleppey and never to return to this part of the country! Thus making up my mind, I got ready to leave the place, packed up my luggage and was waiting for the boy to carry my luggage to Mandapam side. It was about 7 o' clock in the morning. Lo! At that time, I saw a short gentleman emerging from the other end of the corridor, looking out and searching for something. I was ironically wondering who could that be, and soon, unbelievable, great surprise! I found that the approaching gentleman was none other than Dr. R. Sridharan Pillai who was my senior working as a Research Scholar at the University College, Thiruvananthapuram. My joys knew no bounds, I hugged him, shook hand firmly, eyes expressing how he was there! Slowly, I narrated my previous night's experience and disclosed my decision of leaving the place and the job. Saying that, that he had now come, we both would stay there for a day more and review the proposal to go back or not next day, and in the event of leaving the place for good, he would also join me. But, alas! that day never came, as I destined to continue at CMFRI!
