

## **Reflections on Paul Ruwoldt**

**Reader: Wilma Gormley, Paul's friend and co-worker at TRG, Inc.**

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Paul was a man who often took the road less traveled. The American Poet, Robert Frost wrote a poem about that.

TWO ROADS DIVERGED IN A YELLOW WOOD AND I SORRY THAT I  
COULD NOT TRAVEL BOTH STOOD AND LOOKED DOWN ONE AS FAR  
AS I COULD SEE AND THEN TOOK THE OTHER THAT WAS LESS  
WORN.

Paul and I often talked about taking that other road – leaving one's home farm and making a life in another place. You don't do this without it leaving an empty spot in your heart. And he certainly never forgot that he was Australian. He wore it proudly. Paul was very dedicated to his work and very talented in carrying it out. He worked with great energy to carry out his responsibilities. And, was never slow to jump on an airplane and go to work directly with the folks he was trying to help.

- He worked on making health workers more productive in Zanzibar. (He didn't get a lot of sympathy from us on that assignment.)
- He worked on how to retain health workers in Tanzania – how to keep them from migrating to countries with better working conditions.
- He helped Namibia create and implement a new Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan
- He had such compassion for people in developing countries – able to work with them as equals, respectfully, able to give advice without sounding superior.

AND he frolicked on the wide, windy beaches of Namibia with his colleagues.

There are good stories about his travels. He liked to rent a car and drive all over Namibia by himself. Paul was never afraid to be alone; in fact, he savored it. He once rented a motorcycle in Tanzania and took out over "less traveled" roads. Of course, he got lost.

It's a wonder he didn't get robbed, but instead he persuaded a local to jump on the cycle behind him to get him back to town.

Paul and TRG were made for each other. We are a small community of 40 employees, working on short-term assignments all over the world. Our values are extraordinary service to clients, keep the company profitable, maintain an environment alive with joy and laughter, and treat all people with care and compassion. Paul was the very essence of those values. No wonder we grew to love him so. A story we remember is...

He had been with TRG 10 days, and we had a wonderful, intricate orientation path scheduled for him. However, we discovered we needed him to go to Namibia on an assignment immediately. We asked him, and Paul said, 'but I don't know much about TRG, know less about the project I would be working on, and almost nothing about Namibia. My colleague, Jim, said something like, 'well guess that makes you the perfect one to go'. True to Paul's spirit, he said 'well, mate if you think I can do it, I am game'. And off he went. He started a project in Namibia that is now funded around \$50 million dollars.

Paul was a wonderful friend. He was funny, supportive, and caring. Fun to talk with and drink beer with – a really good listener. He had a kind of quiet strength, a stillness about him that was so strong and firm. We had fine times with Natalie and Paul. Examples: Wintergreen and the hike; eating dinner in the summer on our screen porch; and Jim and Paul's staff meetings at the Pub near our house.

We like you will miss Paul. In fact, Paul, couldn't you arrange some better weather for us today.

Back to our poem...

When I saw two roads diverge, I took the one less traveled, keeping the familiar, trodden one for another day. Yet knowing how way leads on to way, and I doubted that I should ever come back.

I took the road less traveled, mostly by choice and this last time not. But I took the road less traveled and that has made all the difference.

I want to close with a poetic e-mail from one of Paul's colleagues on the project. In his first line he quotes Paul – "It is what it is" – Paul often used this to describe his disease. It was a balance between realism and attacking it fiercely. He always said, "IT IS WHAT IT IS AND NEXT I AM GOING TO..."

Dear Paul,

It is what it is; you are gone

You were a special person.

Your memory will live on.

Strength to your family and to Natalie.

Dinner's on me, mate, the next time we meet.

- Danny (DeVies) [ddevries@intrahealth.org](mailto:ddevries@intrahealth.org)

Thank you.