

On 4-22-17 by Dr. Edmund Tanner

What is your name, title, and where do you live?

Hi, I'm Dr. Edmund Tanner, I live in Cambridge, in the United Kingdom.

What do you do now?

I'm a University Professor. I teach general plant ecology, climate, and plant physiology. I aim to explain how a bit of the world works – including what we do not understand.

What was your first job?

Delivering newspapers.

What was your first science job?

Post doctoral (after receiving my Ph.D.) research into the reasons why there are so many plant species, especially in the tropics. And trying to figure out why hasn't the "best" species won the competition for existence, especially where they have had longest to do so – in the tropics.

What is your greatest accomplishment?

Successfully guiding 25 Ph.D. students to graduation. Their success is my success.

What was your biggest mistake?

OK, one of my embarrassing mistakes, was as a grad student. I and another grad student were in the mountains of Jamaica with an old manual transmission VW bug that had problems starting. One day it wouldn't start, so we tried to bump start it by rolling it down a gentle hill. It still didn't start. At this point we were most of the way down the hill, so I proposed that we push it back up the hill for a second shot. I got out to see if I could hold the car while my colleague held the brake. I held it, so he got out and we started to push uphill. Holding a stopped car is one thing, pushing a car uphill is quite another. After a few seconds, we realized that gravity was winning and we both had to jump out of the way to avoid being run over. The car rolled away, went off the road, and into a tree! We watched in embarrassment as it was winched out. Later, luckily, it was repaired.

What is your goal / dream for your field of science?

That a very substantial part of the natural world will survive forever.

What is your advice for kids?

Follow your interests, read a lot, find people to help and inspire you.