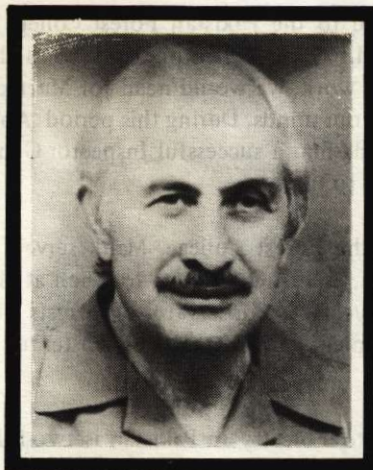


OBITUARY



ABDUL MALIK KHATTAK

Abdul Malik Khattak is no more: As he was returning home, after attending the Passing Out ceremony of the Institute, fate snatched him from us:

“To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return”

What do we leave behind, when we are no more? A few memories with those who care for us.

As I think back, memories of Abdul Malik come surging: memories are of his sky — blue eyes, handsome face, and simple attire, when he was a student of Islamia College Peshawar.

The most intense memories are those when we were batch mates in the Indian Forest College, Dhera Dun, and later in the Pakistan Forest College Upper Topa. We shared the same tent during our Kashmir tour — the toughest experience of our lives: Each morning we would march to our work for felling large deodar trees, sans shirts and carrying a big axe on our shoulders. Each evening we would trudge back to camp bone tired, so much so that one night when the tent fell on us in a rain storm we had no energy left to erect it, and slept on in pouring rain with only the soaking tent fly between us and the weather outside.

The Kashmir tour was conducted by Mr. Suri, a strict instructor. Discipline those days was very strict and we took what Suri gave us, with whatever grace we could muster. But not Abdul Malik: Regardless of consequences, he would pay him in the same coin. This moral courage was his hall-mark throughout life: He would stand up for whatever he considered right, come what may.

With partition, we moved to the Pakistan Forest College Upper Topa, organised under Khan Bahadur Zia ul Haq I.F.S. as Director, and to a happy and care-free part of our lives. Every evening, after work, we would head for Murree and back, often marching in step, singing whatever came to our minds. During this period Abdul Malik noticeably gained in sophistication, which later, made him a successful Inspector General of Forests, and His Excellency, the Pakistan Ambassador to Iran.

After passing out from the Forest College, Malik served briefly in the N.W.F.P. Forest Department, then left for Iran, as F.A.O. Expert, to teach at their Forest College at Gorgan, returning to Pakistan after 13 years, as Conservator of Forests Abbottabad, and then as Inspector General of Forests, Government of Pakistan, for two terms, separated by a tenure as Ambassador to Iran.

His lasting contribution to Forestry in Pakistan is two-fold. Of a long list of illustrious predecessors, he was the first to raise the status of the Inspector General of Forests to the level of an Additional Secretary to Government of Pakistan. He also played a significant role in piloting most of the development schemes of the Pakistan Forest Institute and of the Provinces.

He was an outstanding conversationist and a man of exceptional integrity. During his tenure as Conservator of Forests Abbottabad he stood like a rock in the way of powerful forces who ultimately succeeded in moving him out of their way little realizing that by doing so they would facilitate his elevation to the position of Inspector General of Forests, where he would play a significant role in stopping the practice of selling standing forest trees to contractors — a practice which had become so corrupt that it was causing large losses to the nation.

Yes, Abdul Malik is no more. But what he did lives on, and we all take pride in his achievements and hold him up as a model.

May God help us all to serve the Cause of Forestry as he did.

(G.M. KHATTAK)

26 January 1988