

THE LIFE OF A VETERINARIAN

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The life of a veterinarian starts like any person- at birth- they go through all the growing phases- teething, crying, laughing, growing up, making mistakes and choosing a career.

Why choose a career in Veterinary Medicine? Love of animals, growing up on a farm, looking after pets, work experience, love of science and medicine, the influence of veterinarians are some of the many reasons.

Studying veterinary medicine is a challenge - to leave home and all behind, going to another country, maybe having to learn another language, financial challenges, emotional challenges, handling the trailer load of information you have to learn and putting it into practice. But you work hard and make it through 5 years.

But they do go by and finally, all those years of hard work come to an end- exams are over, graduation day is near. It's busy - family and loved ones gather to celebrate our achievements - the "Thrill of Victory".

Then we come home, get registered to practice and enter the "real world". Will we work with government, in private practice, with industry, at the race track, or even be an entrepreneur and start our own business? We work steadfastly, caring for the health of our animal populations, protecting the health of our people, our country, our World, in an often unspoken and unrecognized partnership with our physician colleagues. One World, One Health, One Medicine is the slogan of today.

Sometimes our goals change and we move away from the practice of veterinary medicine but still apply the skills we have to related areas. We may become entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture, Chief Executive Officers, Board Chairpersons, consultants, lecturers or cattle appraisers among the many hats we could wear.

We become spouse, father/mother, uncle/aunt, breadwinner, associate, caregiver and friend. We are all these and more, facing life's challenges as they come.

Time catches up with us and it's time to pass the baton to another generation of veterinarians, to family members who we have taught all that we know. We have to slow down. We are no longer young and spirited. What will we leave behind? A legacy – humility, dedication, fearlessness, fairness, wisdom, knowledge, passion, diligence, focus, a never say die attitude, gentleness, a soft spoken word, a joke or two, words of encouragement, grief, joy, laughter. All these left on the footprints of our time.

Let us cherish the memories of the veterinarians that have graced this land of Jamaica, leaving indelible footprints that we strive to follow. We remember those who have passed on in recent years - Drs. Franz "Gerry" Alexander, Cedric "Peter" Bent, Glennister Boothe, Gladstone Brown, Lynden Bryan, Bryan Davidson, Vincent Lopez, Winston Schloss, George Trewick and most recently, Dr. Richard Jones.

As we look to the future, they and all the others who have gone before will never be forgotten. May they rest in peace and God's light perpetually shine on them.