



DR. WELLSWORTH MORRISON CHRISTIAN

(April 30, 1953 – June 9, 1990)

The First Dominican born Chief Veterinary Officer

Dr. Wellsworth Morrison Christian was the first Dominican to become a veterinary surgeon and the first Dominican to rise to the position of Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) of the Commonwealth of Dominica (1980-1990). His leadership of the animal health workers at the Ministry of Agriculture during the 1980-1982 swine flu epidemic which threatened to wipe out the local pork industry was critical. Through well thought out measures to quarantine sickly hogs and destroy those which were irredeemably infected the spread of the disease was arrested. By 1983, the swine fever epidemic on Dominica had abated. The swine fever epidemic was unprecedented in the history of Dominica's animal health system and required a keen degree of managerial coordination. In that regard, the effectiveness of the Ministry of Agriculture's team which comprised Chief Agriculture Officer Errol Harris and animal health technicians such as Collin McIntyre, T. Hill, Franky James and John Toussaint must be commended. Both McIntyre and Toussaint went on to become veterinary doctors in later years.

Wellsworth Morrison Christian was born in St. Joseph, Dominica on April 30, 1953 at the home of his grandfather Aaron John Baptiste and his grandmother Virginia John Baptiste nee Austrie. His mother was Alberta John Baptiste, an assistant phone operator and Wendell McKenzie

Christian, a World War II British Army veteran, then serving as the Soil Conservation Officer for the Layou Valley. He was the first boy of his parents. He had three sisters, Christalin, Esther and Hildreth; and three brothers Lawson, Samuel and Gabriel.

Wellsworth attended the Roseau Boys School and got a scholarship to attend high school when he came second in the island during the 1964 Common Entrance Exam. He attended the St. Mary's Academy (SMA) from 1964 to 1971, graduating with Cambridge University GCA "A" Levels in Botany, Zoology and Chemistry. During his time at the SMA Wellsworth joined the Sea Scout Detachment and took part in the first ever circumnavigation of the island by a Sea Scout troop. He also joined the SMA Cadet Corps and so distinguished himself alongside fellow cadets of the day such Franklyn Cuffy (later a Roman Catholic priest and Chaplain of the revived Dominica Cadet Corps) and Eddy Charles (later a US Army Brigadier General). Ever civic minded Wellsworth joined the St. Alphonsus Youth Group in 1969 and took up a leading role during the period 1969-1974. In that period the youth group assisted the workers at the Workshop for the Blind, and the elderly at the Roseau Infirmary. He also assisted in pioneering the hugely popular ***Kiddies' Talent Show*** at the Goodwill Parish which took place on Sunday every month during the period 1970-1973.

In 1972 Wellsworth became a teacher at the Dominica Grammar School where he taught Spanish and General Science. In 1975 Wellsworth was awarded a scholarship by the Indian Government under Indira Gandhi to study for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at Kerala Agriculture University, Kerala, India. Upon graduation, he returned to Dominica and soon thereafter replaced Dr. Mithian (an Indian national) who was serving as the island's Chief Veterinary Officer. In 1987, Dr. Christian was awarded a scholarship to study for a Master's of Science degree in tropical veterinary medicine at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. Wellsworth, despite laboring under increasingly poor pulmonary health, completed his Master's thesis on the subject: ***Methods for the Control and Eradication of the Amblyomma Tick in Tropical Cattle***. In 1983, 1984, and 1985, at meetings in Washington, DC, USA, Brasilia, Brazil and Port of Spain, Trinidad, Dr. Christian tendered scientific papers on the following subjects: ***Ruminant Haemiparasite and Zoonotic disease and control; Hog Fever Control and Eradication; Amblyomma Variegatum Eradication Project Bellevue Chopin***. In an interesting piece of research, Dr. Christian theorized that the ***Amblyomma Tick*** came to Dominica, from West Africa, via one of the French islands. That discovery should awaken our state authorities to heighten the scrutiny at all our ports, to ensure the appropriate examination of vessels and travelers. He also secured opportunities to train the staff of the Animal health Division, while acquiring animal health supplies and equipment from the Inter American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture IICA for use on Dominica.

In 1983 Dr. Christian married Alicia Abraham, a graduate teacher in French Language, who was then studying in France. In 1985 they had one daughter, Trudy Christian. Trudy Christian went on to be first in her class in every year at the Convent High School and was valedictorian of her graduating class. She later graduated with a BS in Biology from Midwestern University, Texas.

In January 1990, Dr. Christian's pulmonary health worsened and he enrolled in an experimental program for the treatment of lung disease at the National Institutes of Health in Maryland. He was scheduled for a heart lung transplant shortly thereafter but passed away in Prince Georges County, Maryland on June 9, 1990 before he could be operated upon. To the very last he did his duty to the animal health service of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Commonwealth of Dominica and earned the respect of his peers and the community he served. After a funeral service in Washington, DC, his mortal remains were returned for a service of Christian burial at the Roseau Roman Catholic Cathedral a stone's throw away from his alma mater, the St. Mary's Academy.