

Good afternoon Honorable senators:

My name is Dr. Sidney Comissiong. I wish to thank you for the opportunity to address this body in regard to my colleague and friend, Dr. Alfred Heath.

I first met Dr. Heath when I was a ninth grade student in the 1960's. He came to my school to address the student body about health issues and to talk about careers in the health field. He has always assisted Virgin Islanders in their efforts to become health care providers by allowing students to shadow him in his office and hospital, as well as writing letters of recommendation to schools to which they are seeking admission. I know several doctors here in St. Thomas who have benefited from his assistance in getting accepted to medical school.

Dr. Heath has a very impressive resume. He has held many positions of leadership here in our healthcare system including staff surgeon, chief of surgery, medical director, and Commissioner of Health. He has always been respected by his colleagues in those roles.

His contributions to our community are not limited to just hospital services. He has also built The Medical Arts Complex facility, which houses many health related practices and labs. He also built The Seaview Facility, which for years serviced hundreds of Virgin Islanders with long term care. This is a facility which I hope this body will help to reopen soon as it is desperately needed.

I've had the great privilege to work closely with Dr. Heath over the last 30 years. During this time I have learned a lot about him outside of his professional life as a surgeon. Many of you may know that he also has a long history of military service. First he was an Army surgeon; then as a National Guard surgeon attaining the rank of General at his retirement from military service.

In addition to these achievements he also has a long history of great community presence by being a member of many organizations such as the Caribbean Choral, Knights of Columbus, board member of the University of the Virgin Islands, the Rotary Club, and other organizations too numerous to count.

If these accomplishments seem daunting in their scope, add to these things that he is also a boat captain and a licensed pilot, which are some of his recreational hobbies. He also is quite a talented violinist.

How does one find the time to accomplish all of these things? Well, having a long and healthy life is certainly a help, but I think I know his secret. If you ever walk around with Dr. Heath you'll understand. I would find myself skipping to keep up with his pace when he walked together. Also for a while I thought he was afraid of elevators. He usually used the stairs in the hospital up and down.

Dr. Heath has spent a long lifetime serving our government and the people of the Virgin Islands in many capacities, and should be recognized for his many years of service!

I'd like to leave you with one of his favorite expressions:-- "Prior, proper planning prevents poor performance".

He would also jokingly say that he loved doing surgery so much that on Sundays he would nick himself while shaving just so he could see some blood.

I again thank you for the opportunity you have given me to address this body.