

# GEORGE – A PIONEER IN POLICY MAKING

George Edwin Frost is in many respects a pioneer in the veterinary profession. Earlier this year he was elected to a second term as President of the South African Veterinary Council; he was the first doctor to tackle a master's degree while running a full-time practice; and at the moment he is busy with an experiment, which if it works, could be a pointer for vets to run co-operating parallel practices. ELNA ROSSOUW spoke to him at his practice on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

George Frost is not a legal man, but his interests in the so-called veterinary politics or the functioning of the profession, are very near to his heart. And that is why he is really looking forward to his second term of office as President of the South African Veterinary Council.

As he slowly and meticulously explains the details of the Council's functions and its powers, the message is clear -- here is a man who really cares about his profession.

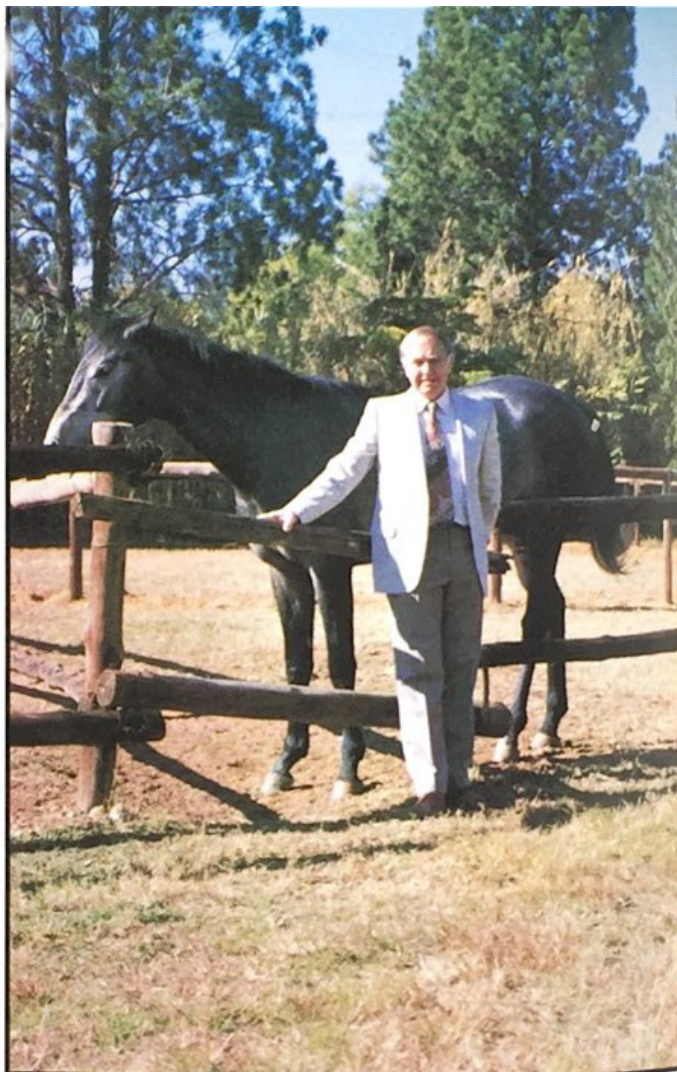
Born on a Karoo farm near Kimberley, he grew up amidst animals. "I loved it, but was more interested in medicine as such. After my schooling at Kimberley Boys High, I did my first year of a basic Bachelor of Science at the University of Natal, and applied for admission to Medical School, and just in case I was turned down, also to Onderstepoort.

"I was accepted by both and had to make a decision. Veterinary Science won and I never looked back. It's a rewarding and fulfilling career, especially if one can be involved in policy making decisions."

Dr. Frost has been involved in the affairs of the veterinary association for many years. He was a nationally elected member of the SAVA Federal Council from 1973 - 1988, when due to his election onto the Veterinary Council, he did not make himself available for re-election.

He became President of the Veterinary Council for the first time three years ago. In 1981 he was first elected to the Council and assisted with the formulation of the new Veterinary Act that was published in 1982.

A personal highlight for him, during his previous term of office, was a visit by a team from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons at the joint request of the Council and the University



ABOVE : Dr George Frost, a man who really cares for his profession.

BELOW : George and his wife Liz with two of their dogs at home on their smallholding at Fourways, Johannesburg.

PICTURES  
BY  
ELNA  
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of Pretoria. "The visit was so successful and the group so impressed with the facilities at Onderstepoort, our very high training methods and academic standards that South African-qualified vets can still register and practice in the United Kingdom without difficulty."

One of the problem areas that Dr. Frost and his Council members investigated and successfully resolved, is a better understanding and co-operation between the veterinary profession and the animal welfare organisations. "This has been a long and bitter battle, but I do feel we now have a good working relationship with the National Council of SPCA's."

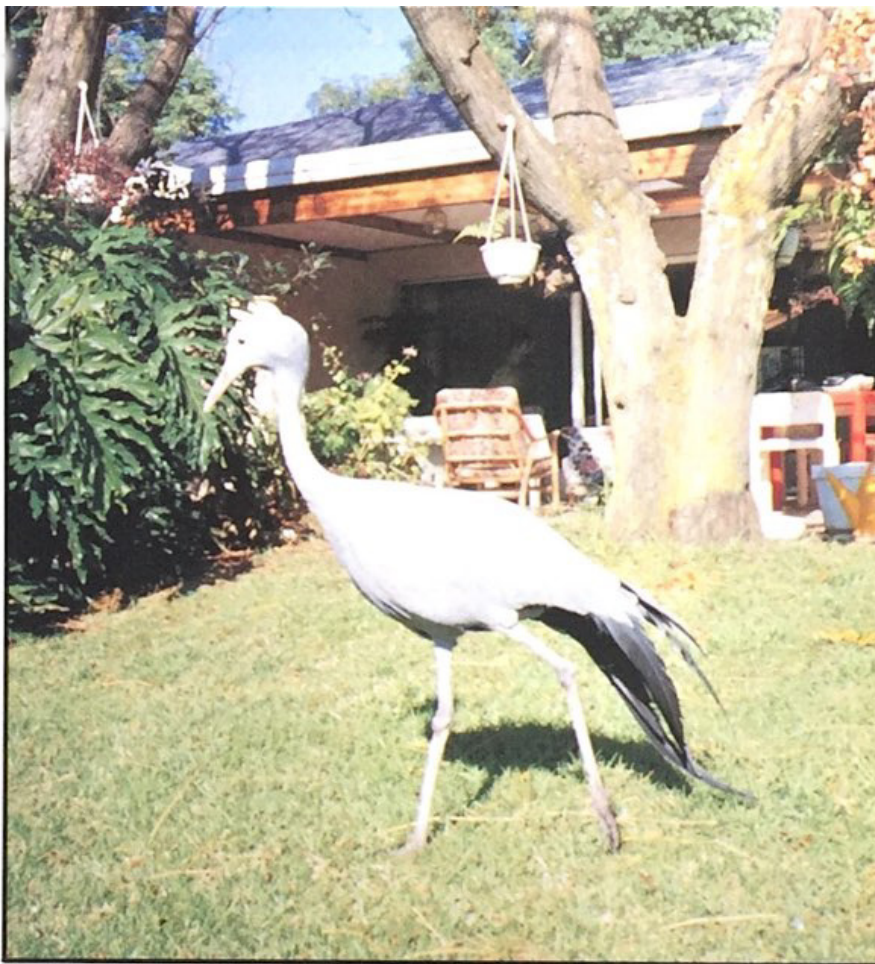
"Another aspect which we are working on and I feel particularly strongly about, is the use of animals for medical research and laboratory purposes. It is a tricky problem and there are definitely two sides to the story. A lot of research does require some animal involvement, and the ultimate would be, where animal experiments are involved, that veterinarians should have the deciding say. We have the knowledge and we are qualified to determine whether animals under such circumstances are suffering and whether the experiment is worthwhile."

Another major project of the Council over the next three years will be to look at possible changes in the veterinary rules and legislation as far as advertising is concerned.

"In Britain the Government actually forced the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to allow advertising. There is a worldwide trend, also in other professional fields, to allow advertising. The feeling is that a profession should not work in isolation and secrecy. The public should be fully informed to enable them to make a choice of services. So, we have to look at advertising and how vets can advertise without lowering the standards or dignity of the profession."

Dr. Frost's interest in the advancement of his profession and his pursuit of knowledge, drove him back to his text books in 1973 when he enrolled for a master's degree as a specialist surgeon at Onderstepoort.

"I was the first private practitioner to obtain a master's degree while running a full-time private practice. It was four years of very hard work, and looking back, I think my family suffered most. It was in the early days of television and our two daughters were still small. The only form of entertainment was the drive-in and with Daddy working full-time and studying full-time, there was no joy for them in this venture of mine. But as a



typical Leo, I constantly need a challenge and with my wife Liz' support, time actually flew."

After qualifying as a vet, Dr. Frost worked for a year in Pretoria before he joined the old Sandown Veterinary Hospital where his mentors, Drs. Boswell and Hempsted furthered his interest in horses. After a few years he started his own practice and hospital in Randburg, a mixed practice but with a definite emphasis on horses. He built it up to an eight-man practice, but dissolved it two years ago when one partner went overseas and another went sheep farming.

"That's when I decided to build consulting rooms adjoining the existing hospital for horses on my smallholding here in Fourways. And it's wonderful. I walk a few hundred metres to work every day, can be home for lunch and really enjoy the rural environment.

"Another thing that I've tried, and I think I am perhaps the first in the country to do so, is to run two practices out of one facility -- my small-animal practice and a separate equine practice. We share overheads, staff etcetera, and if the experiment works out well, it could be an example of how such mixed practices between vets could operate.

"I do miss the horses, but as

**Tertia the Frosts' elegant tame Blue Crane stalked majestically across the garden so we could snap this lovely portrait of her.**

one gets older it becomes more tiresome driving around and getting up at night to go out to farms. My associates sometimes ask me for an opinion and with the stables and enclosures literally at my back door it is a pleasure. There is always a horse around to nibble at a lump of sugar and remind me of early practice days.

A visit to his home is a must, Dr. Frost tells me. Walking there he talks about a little farm he's bought on the Crocodile River where he would like to establish a sheepstud, his dream of writing a book some day and about his favourite pet, Tertia, a blue crane.

I saw Tertia on a massive compost heap and could not believe my ears when he called her and she slowly followed us into the front garden. To get her into a picture with Dr. Frost, was much more difficult. I eventually settled for a nice close-up of the graceful lady, without her keeper!

As I left, the thought occurred to me just how fitting it was that a man of George Frost's stature in his profession should have South Africa's national bird as a pet.