



# ENVIROFOCUS

SPECIAL EDITION  
BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
DEPARTMENT



TRIBUTE TO THE LATE  
DR. HUGH SEALY  
1962-2022

## Dr. Hugh J. Sealy- Passionate, Driven Probing, and Open

**D**r. Hugh Sealy started his tenure at the Environmental Engineering Division (now Environmental Protection Department) in 1993 as the Senior Environmental Engineer. Though his tenure was short, only eleven (11) months, I am told he immediately distinguished himself in two ways: his ability to consume large volumes of data and quickly provide interpretation and opinions; and his interpersonal skills that forged tangible relationships with those he came into contact with.

As head of the Department, he left a legacy of having been the only Head to initiate a court case against a polluter and introduce statistical analysis into the work of the Department. My first personal experience with Dr. Sealy came through sitting on several technical committees for both the construction of the South Coast Sewerage Treatment Project and the Solid Waste Management Infrastructure Programme. I found Hugh to be **Passionate, Driven, Probing and Open.**

Hugh was a mentor to all engineers and scientists and always took the time to say thank you. Hugh's words of encouragement resonated with me and always remind me of why I stayed in the public service. To provide rational unbiased opinions without taking artistic licence to facts and figures but being true to the profession. One after-

noon, after a meeting discussing the implementation of the Marine Pollution Control Act, Hugh said, "You are doing a good job, Anthony. I realised that Jeffrey is depending on you a lot, and you are practically running the Department." I certainly didn't think so at the time, I was just interested in learning and growing professional. This was reinforced on his return to Barbados in late 2018 when we had several discussions on water reuse and pollution impacts on the marine environment in preparing the Groundwater Protection and Land-use Policy.

I clearly remembered when we had a heated discussion on the release of information for a particular project. I was opposed to the release of the information given the circumstances of how the information was acquired whilst Hugh wanted the information to address a pressing challenge. That same day after the meeting had concluded, Hugh called me and said Anthony, on reflection, your opinion is correct and more appropriate in this situation, I was wrong. He even went as far as to make a similar statement in a forum of the same individuals when we met again. Despite his **Passion**, Hugh remained very humble and respectful, particularly in his interactions with people.

*(Continued on page 7)*

### Inside this issue

Dr. Hugh J. Sealy- Passionate ,Driven , Probing, and Open.....	2
Leadership Beyond the Times.....	2
A Dear Friend and Colleague.....	3
"...For the Benefit of Barbados".....	6

## Leadership Beyond the Times

**D**r. Hugh Sealy assumed duty at the then Environmental Engineering Division in 1993 as Senior Environmental Engineer and had an immediate impact even before he sat at his desk. Word of him assuming leadership of the EED resonated across the entire department and speculation was rife that his leadership would be transformational.

As the date for his arrival drew near there was some fear and a bit of trepidation among staff. "News" was spreading that radical changes were coming and this did not fit well with some staff.

*"However, the fear and trepidation were unfounded as Dr. Sealy soon put everyone at ease with a unique style of leadership that hitherto was unknown in most sections of the Public Service."*

However, the fear and trepidation were unfounded as Dr. Sealy soon put everyone at ease with a unique style of leadership that hitherto was unknown in most sections of the Public Service. During his relatively short stay, he gave and received the respect of the staff and his legacy will always remain with us.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## A Dear Friend and Colleague

**A** dear friend and work colleague, I first met Hugh at the Environmental Engineering Division, now the Environmental Protection Department of the Ministry of Environment and National Beautification.

Dr. Hugh Sealy in the early years of completing his doctorate came to the department with the energy and willingness to learn the role, functions and responsibilities of the department and the Ministry as a whole. Recognizing that experience was greater than

Another fond memory of Hugh, my “Deputy” as I referred to him in our playful banter, despite him being the Senior Environmental Engineer, occurred when a vacancy at the South Coast Sewage Project arose, after the former Project Manager departed that office. The Ministry could not decide at that time, whether Dr. Sealy or myself should be assigned to the project office or stay at the EED. Dr. Sealy was asked to discuss this matter with me and make a decision on which one of us should be assigned to the South Coast Sewage Project. During the discussion, I suggested to

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*“...he insisted that I call him “Hugh” and he would call me Jeff. However, at professional and high-level meetings, I would always refer to him as Dr. Sealy.”*

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the qualification, he insisted that I call him “Hugh” and he would call me Jeff. However, at professional and high-level meetings, I would always refer to him as Dr. Sealy.

Hugh was very reliable, respected and appreciated by all the staff.

One of my fondest memories of Dr. Sealy was when he asked by the Ministry, to prepare a paper on Solid Waste Management in Barbados in the early stages of his assignment to the Ministry. Dr. Sealy fresh out of university, and with no previous experience in the field, sought to learn from the experience of his superiors to prepare this paper, he consulted with me on the preparation of this paper which was presented at the Ministry’s Management Committee Meeting. Dr. Sealy presented the paper and received congratulatory accolades for the well written and presented document.

After receiving this praise, Dr. Sealy informed the committee that he did not in fact prepare the paper, he only presented it but the paper was prepared by Mr. Jeffrey Headley, that said a lot to me about the strength of his character. I was fortunate to have Dr. Sealy as a great friend during our professional and personal undertakings. Especially our Friday evening session after work.

Hugh that he was a young bright star, the remuneration was higher than at the Division and I was willing to assist him when necessary with the technical and administrative functions of the project office. Since I was previously assigned to that project as Technical Officer.

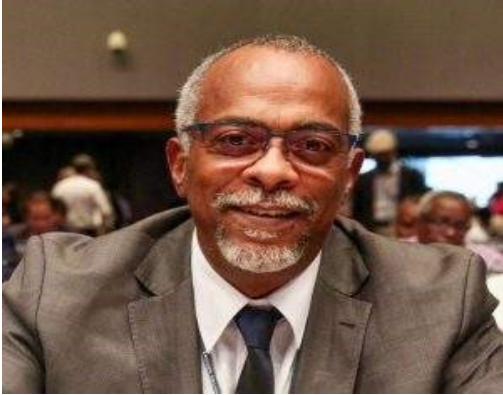
Dr. Sealy agreed and informed the Ministry about our discussions, the Ministry agreed and Dr. Sealy was assigned as Project Manager, South Coast Sewage Project – he did a fantastic job and performed admirably in that position.

I have lost a good friend, and Barbados to my mind has lost one of the best professionals in the environmental field at such a young age.

May he rest in peace.

*Jeffrey Headley – Director, EPD Retired.*





## Leadership Beyond the Times

*(Continuing from Page 3)*

One of his first initiatives on assuming duty was to conduct “one on one” discussions with staff to determine their **strengths, weaknesses** and **opportunities** available for further training. On reflection, this initiative was novel for the Public Service, but fast forward to the present and it is one of the tools currently employed in assessing officers in the Public Service. The acronym SWOT which stands for Strength Weaknesses Opportunities and threats is now a vital component of our PRDS. (Performance Review Development System) but Dr. Sealy can be credited with being one of the first proponents of this tool in the Public Service.

But Dr. Sealy went further, and at times accompanied officers on their routine field trips to better understand what their duties involved whilst engaging in provocative conversations as they journeyed from site to site.

He demonstrated a particular affinity for water and wastewater and would meticulously peruse the weekly reports generated from the ground water sampling.

Indeed, when there was an outbreak of cholera in one of the neighbouring South American countries, Dr. Sealy immediately sprang into action. He convened regular meetings with the Barbados Water Authority, with discussions at times being robust and animated. Central to those discussions was the need for enhanced and sustained chlorination at all wells and springs that fed the potable water network.

His thinking was that cholera being a waterborne disease, would have a reduced probability of reaching our shores if residual chlorine levels were in sync with PAHO/WHO standards for potable (drinking water) coupled with enhanced surveillance at all secondary wastewater treatment facilities inclusive of adequate disinfection of final effluent.

*Kenneth Barrow— Chief Buildings Development Officer  
(ag.). EPD - Retired*

## “...for the Benefit of Barbados”

**D**r. Hugh Sealy! Simply an amazing professional! An environmentalist whose attributes include such words as challenging, decisive, educational, embraceable, humble, affluent, and sociable.

External influences facilitated a tension-filled EED when Hugh was selected as the head of the department. Dr. Sealy quickly diffused the tension by applying techniques of humility, willingness to learn the new environment and total staff participation.

Memories of our colleague include, but are not limited to:

- ◇ Attending and fully participating in a BFS coordinated training course in Hazardous Waste even though we were more knowledgeable in the subject than the Canadian trainer. Hugh's words "...for the benefit of Barbados....."
- ◇ Hugh, Jeff and I forged a social work relationship that facilitated knowledge sharing, respect of opinions on aspects of our work and personal lives.

We will miss such a humble and sincere colleague and friend. Rest In Peace!

*Wendell Burnett— Chief Buildings Development Officer,  
EPD. Retired.*

## Passionate, Driven, Probing & Open Cont'd

### (continued from page 2)

For me, Hugh's greatest example was when he said "I do not know". This demonstrated not just his humility but that desire to continuously improve, to learn and grow. Hugh appeared to be **Driven** by the need to improve Barbados. He was not afraid of looking ignorant and dared to be aggressive but respectful.

*Albert Einstein once said, "If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes."*

Dr. Sealy also understood "the art of the powerful question" and knew that each time you engage in the journey of exploration of the same question, it yields a different perspective, a new possibility, and potentially a more efficient solution to a challenge. This is one of the traits I believe he intentionally tried to pass on to his students, that desire to **Probe** for answers and discover new opportunities and approaches to problems.

He was also very **Open** to new ideas, suggestions and possibilities as demonstrated by the proposal to address pollution on the west coast of Barbados from sewage through a proposal to treat groundwater rather than the sewage at the source. A driving question appeared to be "how can we do this better, not only right?

This is probably where Hugh collided with some of his colleagues on opinions. His inherent drive to improve, drove him to excellence and to be open to exploring alternative approaches. Hugh certainly was not a slave to traditional engineering solutions to solving complex environmental, social, and economic problems.

Hugh's passing has left a void, the probing voice is now silent, but his legacy perhaps is the challenge to discover the truth, the hidden meaning behind facts and figures and to look for nontraditional solutions. You can now rest my friend your task here on earth is done, you have done well.

*Anthony Headley— Director, EPD*

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