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Tropical Island Practice
by Barb Milke

As a special addition to the Alumni News of this issue we are featuring a unique practice established by four Iowa State University graduates. All four veterinarians have clinics in Wisconsin—Dr. Joseph Donovan ISU '56, Madison; Dr. Jerry Hicks ISU '63, Edgerton; Dr. Dale Kelley ISU '51, Sauk City; and Dr. M. E. Rydberg ISU '62, Lake Geneva. Together they operate a mixed practice on the tropical island of Grand Cayman, a British Crown Colony located in the Caribbean directly south of Cuba.

The idea for a clinic began when Dr. Hicks, vacationing on the island with his family, was asked by the islanders for veterinary help. On subsequent visits he was often put to work and kept busy providing veterinary services for the small farmers and pet owners on the island. Dr. Donovan, led to the island by his interests in scuba diving and underwater photography, also had many requests for veterinary care. Later, Dr. Rydberg found the same situation occurred while he vacationed on the island. These three veterinarians and Dr. Kelley, who was also interested in the situation, got together to discuss a solution to the problem. The four traveled to Grand Cayman in January, 1972 and spent three days there. During that period they rented a clinic, obtained work permits from the government, found an island resident manager, set up a schedule, and began work.

At first, the working situation was quite crude—sprays were done in bathrooms and barns, the instruments were boiled and the surgery was non-sterile. Dr. Don-

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avan recalls how they had to improvise, "My first bone pinning was done using a piece of welding rod from a backwoods repair shop." By March, 1972 a sterile surgery had been set up complete with cap, mask and gown technique, modern equipment and a good drug inventory. Now they were able to do difficult surgery including bone plating.

Grand Cayman, known as the "Island Time Forgot," is a coral island 26 miles long and about 3 miles wide. The tropical climate makes it ideal for scuba diving, and since it was once the hideaway of Blackbeard the Pirate, many wrecks of ships can be found in the surrounding waters. The native people descend from a mixture of races, mostly English-speaking, and have one of the highest literacy rates in the world—even higher than the United States. Most of the farmers own only a small number of cows, hogs and burros. With a population of 11,000, the island has some fledgling agricultural industry. One large 100 cow dairy herd, Caribbean Farms, and the world's only sea farm, Mariculture Ltd., where ½ million green sea turtles are raised for human consumption, are located on the island. Over 2,000 British ex-patriots live on the island, and many own pets and want good veterinary care. The people were desperate for veterinary help. At first they got some assistance from a farm boy from Minnesota who runs a fishing boat and a retired man who formerly worked in a zoo. According to Dr. Donovan "It's almost like missionary work. They're intelligent, likeable people who were trying hard and had no veterinary assistance whatsoever."

When the practice began it was about

80% small animal and 20% farm animal work. Presently it has expanded to include:

- 40% Herd health programs at Caribbean Farms and Mariculture Ltd. including meat inspection.
- 10% Dairy food products testing
- 10% Miscellaneous large animal work
- 40% Small animal work.

The Cayman Veterinary Clinic is open half-days on the second week of every month. Each veterinarian spends two weeks on the island, three times during the year. One week is spent at the clinic every day until noon. The second week is spent vacationing and remaining on call for emergency work. Plans for the future include adding more veterinarians in order to expand to year-round veterinary service on a half-day basis.

Grand Cayman is a rapidly booming resort area. Because the island is Rabies-free, tourists are not allowed to bring their pets onto the island. Since the arrival of the veterinarians, the Cayman Island Humane Society was established and works closely with the clinic there. The island has its problem areas too. There is a high incidence of anaplasmosis in cattle, and 100% heartworm infestation in dogs which are rapidly being treated to help control the situation.

All four veterinarians and their families enjoy some of the world's best scuba diving off of the beautiful coral island and look at the island as kind of a peaceful retreat from the cares of the outside world. But most important, Dr. Donovan, Dr. Hicks, Dr. Kelley and Dr. Rydberg provide the much needed veterinary services to the people of Grand Cayman.

Class of 1968

As a change of pace, we would like to feature one of the more recent graduating classes from the ISU College of Veterinary Medicine: the class of 1968. We would like to thank the members of the class of 1968 who replied to our letter making this article possible. Any sugges-

tions or help with finding current addresses would be appreciated.

Dr. David O. Christenson has been employed by the Sioux Veterinary Clinic in Orange City, Iowa, since his graduation. At present, Dr. A. Neuman (ISU '48), Dr. Larry Royer (ILL. '62) and Dr. Larry Ver-