

STATEMENT

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A Tribute to a True Son of the Soil - The Late Hugo Vanterpool by Premier Wheatley

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As Premier and Minister of Finance, Minister responsible for Agriculture, Ecclesiastical Affairs, Culture, Tourism and Trade, and as a former Minister for Education, I pause today to pay tribute to one of our illustrious sons, Mr. Hugo Vanterpool, who departed this life on Friday, 24th April, 2026.

Today, we celebrate the life of a true son of the soil—a man whose hands were equally accustomed to the firm handshake of a banker, the rustic toil of a farmer, the careful turning of historical pages, the guiding gesture of an educator, while carrying the heart of a preacher and the spirit of an entrepreneur.

The Banker with a Heart

Mr. Vanterpool dedicated 22 years of his life as a banker at the Development Bank of The Virgin Islands (now National Bank of The Virgin Islands). He initially served as Credit Officer and rose to the position of bank manager, a post he held for 19 years. As a Bank Manager, Mr. Vanterpool was more than a financier; he was a custodian of community dreams. He understood that behind every loan application was a family's hope or a farmer's ambition. He managed assets with unwavering integrity and served with a compassion that earned him immense respect, bridging the gap between sound fiscal management and community development. He was well loved by his staff. They recall him as being compassionate, friendly, and kind to them. He was always approachable and had a good sense of humour. He was rich in the Territory's history and liked sharing stories with them. They reported that when the Bank had scarcity of funds, even though he was stretched, he remained calm and composed. He was a bank manager who saw beyond spreadsheets, understanding that true investment is in people, not just assets.

The Farmer who Tended the Land

He was a livestock and crop farmer whose work was recognised through the awards he won through the years. He was more prominent in raising cows and sheep and was an avid breeder of the Virgin Islands white sheep. His Virgin Islands white rams won prizes at several agricultural exhibitions. Mr. Vanterpool was the kind of man whose hands told the story of a lifetime of work, whose values were stitched into the soil he tended, and whose quiet strength carried not just his

family, but the community around him. He taught us to love the land that sustains us.

Tourism Ambassador and Entrepreneur

Mr. Vanterpool was a tourism ambassador and entrepreneur. Through his family's villas and condos, he has served countless visitors and residents. From the picturesque Lloyd Hill Villas, many tourists gained an appreciation for the beauty and tranquility of The Virgin Islands and the hospitality of The Virgin Islands' people. His villa was linked intricately to the Territory's tourism product, being one of the few villa-type properties at the time it was established in the 1980s. As an **entrepreneur**, Mr. Vanterpool did not just chase profit; he created opportunities and lasting memories for all who came in contact with his business.

The Exemplary Preacher

Mr. Vanterpool was a local preacher in the Methodist Church. He did not just speak the Word; he lived it—bringing hope to the hopeless, clothed in humility and unconditional love. He often paid keen attention to the children and youth, ensuring that he shared stories and words of wisdom, breaking down the gospel to their level.

The Historian who Preserved Our Identity

As a dedicated historian, he recognised that a people without knowledge of their past are like a tree without roots. He was a custodian of our heritage, anchoring us to our roots and ensuring that our story was never lost to time. In *Dusk to Dawn*, he captured the indomitable spirit of The Virgin Islanders as he chronicled the tragedies and triumphs of a family. In *Angus Chinnery: I am Happiest when at Home*, he captured another aspect of the Territory's history between the 1950s and 1980s, when we depended mainly on farming and fishing for survival. He was a living library, always giving advice and sharing invaluable wisdom.

The Educator who Empowered

As an educator, Mr. Vanterpool believed that knowledge was the key to a better life, and he lived that truth fully. He did not just teach from textbooks; he taught

from experience, having started his educational career from the tender age of 15. He was among a rare group of local educators who had the distinct privilege of teaching at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. His lessons were marked by patience, wisdom, and a genuine desire to uplift the next generation, making him a beloved mentor to many. He was a beacon of light, enlightening minds with a passion that made learning an adventure.

A Legacy in the Soil

Mr. Vanterpool was a rare breed, a man of many hats who wore each with humility and dedication. He was a true son of the soil who cultivated both the land and lives of those around him. He has left an indelible mark on every corner of social and economic life. He has now finished his chores on this earth, planting faith and harvesting hope, and has made his way to a higher resting place. His legacy is planted deep and will keep growing for generations to come.

Condolences to Family

On behalf of the Government of The Virgin Islands, I extend my sincere condolences to his widow, Mrs. Erlin Vanterpool nee George, who hails from the Seventh District, his children, who are all making significant contributions to this Territory and two of whom I have had the privilege of working closely—Jeremy (Deputy Financial Secretary); Harlan (medical doctor/former Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee/); and Vareen (Registrar of Supreme Court); Dr. Karis Vanterpool-Thomas (medical doctor/Penn Medical Centre); and Derek (Regulator 2, Financial Services Commission). Condolences also to his siblings, Mrs. Yvonne Dawson, Joseph Vanterpool, and former Speaker of the House of Assembly, Mr. Reuben Vanterpool, and extended family, especially his nephew, Honourable Dr. Karl Dawson.

May God comfort and strengthen you during this time of loss.

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