

How I became a veterinarian

started working the day I turned 16. My first job, really, was when I was 12 years old delivering newspapers. That only lasted a short while. But when I reached “real” working age, I marched right down to McDonald’s and got a job serving burgers (do you want fries with that!). I also started competing in the Miss America Scholarship pageant to earn extra cash to pay for school.

As a college student, I majored in Animal Science to prepare me for veterinary school. I had to take tough courses, including physics, chemistry, organic chemistry, comparative anatomy and many more. Also, in order to be considered for some vet schools, I had to take the MCAT & VAT; two standardized tests required to get into medical schools. Half way through my junior year it was time to start applying to veterinary schools. I applied to three: Louisiana State University, Kansas State University, and University of Missouri-Columbia. I first received notification from Univ. of Missouri saying that I was accepted. But they only offered me a \$2000.00 scholarship. That wasn’t even enough to pay for books! Then I received an acceptance letter from Louisiana. And they were offering a full scholarship! Trouble was, I really wanted to go to the school in Missouri. So, at my mom’s

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advice, I told the Dean at Univ. of Missouri about the scholarship offer from Louisiana. I asked him if there was any way they could increase the amount they were offering me. And to my thrilled surprise they did!! It didn’t cover all my expenses but, boy, it helped a lot.

Veterinary school is four years, just like medical school. In fact, we learn everything a human physician learns. Except they just learn about one mammal, the human. Veterinarians must learn about SIX mammals (cats, dogs, horses, cows, pig, and chickens). School was tough. I got very little sleep, spent up to 20 hours in class and labs, and lived off fast food. There were many days that I wanted to give up and go home. But, by God’s grace, I made it through. I did take a year off to be Miss America. But when that was over, I came right back to finish what I’d started. That was the original goal in the first place! I graduated from the University Of Missouri College Of Veterinary medicine in 1991. Hallelujah!!

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Kind Hearts, Caring Hands 2009 Convocation Address



Dr. Debbye Turner Bell
DVM University of Missouri-Columbia 1991

Frick Auditorium, Mosier Hall
April 10, 2009 - 11:00 a.m.

Dr. Debbye Turner Bell

DVM University of Missouri-Columbia 1991

Biography

Since 2001, Dr. Debbye Turner Bell has been a staff correspondent on CBS' "The Early Show." She covers a variety of subjects as a feature reporter and as a doctor of veterinary medicine hosts regular pet segments titled "Pet Planet." These informative segments about pets and pet care air on both "The Early Show" and "The Saturday Early Show."



Dr. Turner Bell joined CBS after hosting "Show Me St. Louis," a daily, half-hour show featuring interesting people and places in St. Louis. She also hosted a PBS series about pets and veterinary medicine, "The Gentle Doctor."

Dr. Turner Bell's first passion is motivational speaking. Since being crowned Miss America in 1990, Dr. Turner Bell has spoken to more than a half million students at hundreds of schools, youth organizations and college campuses. She has addressed audiences in the corporate, academic, political arenas. Her topics include personal excellence, determination, goal setting and the importance of a solid education.

Dr. Turner Bell's beliefs reflect her own life-lessons — it took seven years and 11 tries in two states before she was crowned Miss America.

Dr. Turner Bell graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1991 with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. She earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture in 1986 from Arkansas State University. She resides in New York City area with her husband.

How I became a veterinarian

by Dr. Debbye Turner Bell

I have always loved animals. I have always cried when I saw one hurting. I have always wanted to know how to help them. In fact, my whole family loves animals. We had lots of cats, dogs, even birds, turtles, and frogs. We spent a lot of time at the animal clinic. I so admired our pet's veterinarian, Dr. Jack Jones that my mom suggested that I ask if I could hang around his clinic some time. At 13 years old, I spent the summer watching and marveling at

Dr. Jones's compassion, expertise, and commitment. By the end of the summer, I knew. I wanted to be a veterinarian!

By the time I reached high school, I was very focused. I took all the advanced science courses that I could. I joined many leadership and civic clubs. And I worked toward having a good enough academic record to be accepted into veterinary school.

But when I was 13 years old, I went to the library to find out just how one becomes a veterinarian. Doing the only thing I knew, I looked up the words veterinary medicine in the card catalog. I found on card after card the other the name "American Veterinary Medical Association." So I looked up the address for this official



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sounding group, and sent them a letter. I explained that I loved animals and wanted to be an animal doctor. To my surprise and delight, they sent me a big packet of information containing the details about where veterinary schools are, what classes I would have to take, the kinds of grades I'd need to make, how long Vet School is, AND how much it cost to go to veterinary school. Well, when I saw that dollar figure, I knew that I would have to find ways to help my family pay for this expensive education. You see, we were not rich. And while we were not particularly poor, we didn't have a lot of extra money. And vet school required a lot of extra money!

So I started working to make the best grades I could to increase the possibility of winning academic scholarships. I also

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