

LEONIE FORBES

Total commitment

SHE grew up in the heart of the city. She has been described as the best acting talent Jamaica has produced. Leonie Forbes might not agree with that description of herself, but Jamaican theatre's popular leading lady will tell you that whatever she has achieved has been the result of much sacrifice, hard work, time, energy and discipline.

"You have to be totally committed to whatever it is you're doing... There have been times when I was not able to sit in the grandstand with my children to enjoy a function because I was on the field covering it... I even missed one of my daughters' graduation once (thank Goodness she doesn't hold it against me.)"

OPPORTUNITIES: Leonie Forbes admits that at various times in her life opportunities presented themselves and she took advantage of these under the guidance of a number of individuals who realised that she had natural talents that could be honed and improved upon to serve the artistic world. Among those who inspired her were the late Rita Ccore, UWI's Radio Education Unit Director, Alma Mock Yen, the late Dick Pixley and Easton Lee.

She has just about done it all -- marriage and children, the stage, a rewarding career in radio and television, a stint for the big screen, the Bronze Musgrave Medal (1973), Officer of the Order of Distinction (O.D. - 1980) and a host of other accomplishments. Yet, Leonie says she still doesn't take it all too seriously:

"You see, you could fade overnight," says the woman who refuses to lay claim to having attained superstar status.

"The more praises you get, the harder you have to work. I never stop working to improve my last effort. The more people tell you you're doing well, the more you're challenged (to do better) it's a constant striving."

Like everybody else, Leonie Forbes has problems to deal with, but she understood from early that "Once you make up your mind... whether it's radio, television, the stage... your life is not yours. You have to fight for a little privacy and a little understanding. But if you're



going to succeed, you have to put them (the public) first, and they deserve the very best (of you).

"So, much of the time I would spend worrying about mundane things, is spent instead in the creative process of thinking about a new way to do the next show/programme or even more creative ways to present the same things.

"It's hard work for the most part, but it's fun and rewarding. I enjoy it."

Leonie currently co-hosts a morning television programme and is the leading lady in Patrick Brown's play "December" now running at the Barn Theatre.

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