



Dr Colin Broun with page one of his appointment book when he first joined the Glen Forrest surgery

The good doctor

Broun

Elements of this editorial focus on life journeys — the launch of promising fledgling careers for two Helena College graduates; the bowing out of a well-loved Hills doctor who has been part of the lives of many locals for well over three decades.

During his final weeks at the Glen Forrest Medical Centre, Dr Colin Broun's office saw a steady stream of the GP's patients expressing gratitude for his skills, and for the trust this caring doctor built over the years.

"They've had me in tears on occasions," laughs the retiring GP who tells the *Review* that medicine was his calling for as long as he can remember. Growing up in Coorow on a family farm that had been cleared by his dad "with a box of matches and an axe", he was one of four sons — and the only one to venture beyond farming, determined to be a doctor.

How come?

"Many reasons," he muses, "like hearing mum dispense commonsense advice to neighbours on our party line; meeting the first professor of medicine at UWA's new medical school; acquiring the medical books of a missionary my father supported in Africa; and getting to know the Three Springs GP who mended my broken bones, and removed my appendix and tonsils. And, of course, coming from a good, community-minded Christian family."

When his dad realised Colin was serious about medicine, he sent him to Wesley College and enrolled him in an Art of

Speech course — "to make sure I no longer spoke like a yokel!"

After qualifying, he set off adventuring with his family in Africa's game parks, and then gained a first-class training in obstetrics at a Durban hospital that received the region's most complex cases. His supervisor

was an African obstetrician who, Colin was astounded to discover, was paid less than him. This was Apartheid South Africa.

Back home, he settled for a country practice in Geraldton, building a successful obstetric clinic and leaving only when his children were of school age.

Glen Forrest became home in 1979 when he joined a solo practitioner, working from an old weatherboard house. Later he teamed up with fellow UWA graduate Frank Kotai — "a very skilled doctor and anaesthetist, which meant we were able to do quite complex surgery until the government put a stop to that."

The Glen Forrest Medical Centre was born, with the pair working well together, and being joined by a third doctor, Liz Wysocki (now married to Colin) and Carol McGrath.

"A lot of practices break up because of intolerance and temperament, but we've been incredibly lucky," says Colin. "As more and more doctors joined,

we formed a very good community of practitioners offering a very high standard of medicine. And the most recent arrivals are Dr Mark Daykin, who graduated from Birmingham University and arrived in WA five years ago, and Dr Alina Harris, a UWA graduate and Fellow of the Australian College of General Practitioners. I'm more than happy to hand 'my' patients over to them and the established GFMC doctors."

The Centre's staff — and patients from across the Hills — filled Glen Forrest Hall recently to toast the man who, overnight, would move from being doctor to being friend. He thanked the staff for laughing at his jokes and putting up with his "obsessions and oddities"; his many patients who had made appointments just to say goodbye, and whose appreciative presentations of scones, apple pies and produce sometimes accompanied an appointment.

What now? Despite a biking accident in Vancouver that saw him take a tumble that took its toll (fortunately he was riding with an orthopaedic surgeon and a nurse!), he still aspires to become "the best 70-year-old down hill mountain biker". And in fact he will shortly be back on his bike, riding the Munda Biddi Cycle Track to Albany with Darlington resident Terry Giles. Then, later this year, he and Liz will be on their bikes in Burma, visiting villages that have benefited from Gates Foundation support, along with a school being built by a Catholic priest from Perth on the Thai/Burma border.

So, he's hardly putting his feet up, and one suspects that there will be good deeds embedded in the physical and spiritual paths the good doctor will pursue during this next phase of his life.

One thing is certain: Dr Colin Broun will be missed.



Above: Colin Broun, Liz Wysocki and Frank Kotai