

# Recovery revives Hunter medical history

**GABRIEL WINGATE-PEARSE**

HEALTH



WHEN Dorothy "Bunny" Greening was in training as a nurse in the 1930s, a lot of her work involved patients with infections which, due to modern medicine, are no longer prevalent.

Abortions were illegal, and she remembers women in ward 21 of the Coast hospital in Sydney dying from infections brought on by "attempted miscarriages".

They developed septicaemia, or blood poisoning, and as Dr Greening tells the story, "they didn't have a hope", because there weren't any antibiotics to treat them.

"I will always remember those patients," Dr Greening said in an interview recorded in 1991.

"Being a 19-year-old country girl I didn't know much about miscarriages, and certainly not about criminal abortions."

She went on to become one of the first female gynaecologists in the Hunter Region, and from her experience as a nurse decided never to refuse to terminate a pregnancy under the proper conditions.

Other tales include having to shave children's heads to treat and prevent head lice, and of nurses being required to live on-site with a 10pm



RECORDINGS: Professor Alan Hewson with his CD of memories yesterday.

— Picture by Ryan Osland

curfew which could only be extended to midnight with a special late pass.

Her story is one of a dozen Newcastle doctors' memoirs recorded by Stephen De Lyall and collated by Professor Alan Hewson of the Hunter Postgraduate Medical Institute (HPMI) that are now

available publicly on CD.

"We almost lost them," Professor Hewson said yesterday.

"When we were getting ready for the closing of the Royal [Newcastle Hospital] in March last year we discovered these old tapes, they were just in a cupboard."

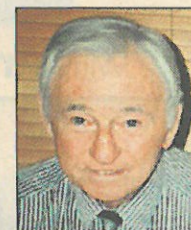
The doctors featured in the recorded memoirs include neurologist Adrian Dawson, general practitioners Bill Charlton and Bill Neild, pathologist Peter Hendry and surgeon Jack Smythe.

A lot of them lost parents at a young age and lived through World War II, experiencing a

lost world of medicine when specialists didn't require specialist training and doctors were likely to work 80 hours a week.

The memoirs run to 12 hours.

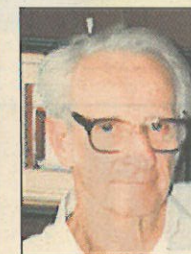
To obtain a copy telephone Shelley Feletti at HPMI on 4913 8163.



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