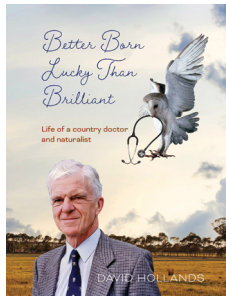


Book review

Better Born Lucky Than Brilliant: Life of a country doctor and naturalist

Author: David Hollands

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David Hollands OAM, retired doctor, naturalist, writer and wildlife photographer, pens his autobiography, at the age of 90 years, *Better Born Lucky Than Brilliant*. The book

offers an enjoyable account of Dr Hollands' interesting life and career as a pioneer in rural generalist medicine. He dedicates each chapter to a different topic, covering a diverse range – from family and medicine to sailing and birdwatching.

David opens his heart in this endearing narrative, outlining the difficulties of balancing professional responsibilities with family life and hobbies. His dedication to medicine and to his local community shines through in his accounts: such as the time he drove all night to begin operating the next morning, after being stranded by rain with a birdwatching group in Birdsville. The author's acquisition of medical skills as a true generalist is inspirational. He shares his journey from being a general practice assistant in the UK and then serving as a British army doctor to immigrating to Australia and running a district hospital

and general practice in rural Victoria. He also pays tribute to his late wife, Margaret, highlighting her remarkable contributions to the local hospital pathology department as she also completed additional training in anaesthetics and obstetrics, all while raising young children.

While medicine played a significant role in David's early clinical years, in his later life he found time to pursue various hobbies, including breeding Angus cattle, birdwatching and, of course, writing books. Dr Hollands has published eight natural history texts on birds, and his autobiography provides insight into the challenges of birdwatching and wildlife photography. His global travels and encounters with people from diverse cultures offers a unique perspective into ornithology and different societies.

David's description of childhood memories, with reference to significant world events, including the sinking of the *Bismarck* during World War II, are powerfully candid. These glimpses paint a vivid picture of a bygone era and motivate us to consider his generation's evolution during a troubled time. Throughout the book, the honest and nostalgic reminiscences draw attention to significant changes in the world, including medical advances. However, his tales also challenge us regarding issues which remain familiar to this decade, such as the hierarchical nature of hospital politics, inadequate staffing and excessive work hours in the medical system.

David effortlessly narrates his story, capturing the evolution of the world over the last century, encompassing historical,

technological and medical changes. This memoir is not just a personal keepsake, but a valuable treasure for doctors, historians, ornithologists and anyone with a curious mind – therefore, all general practitioners.

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