

Many new him by just “Doc.” Many have never seen another doctor in their lives. Many have called him their family practitioner longer than they care to admit. All called him friend.

News spread quickly through Charlestown Saturday evening, November 16, as family and friends dealt with the passing of Dr. William “Lou” Voskuhl. Many friends and patients spent the weekend and even into Monday morning telling stories and sharing memories of the beloved doctor. Most stories included his love of fishing, football or his gift of telling a joke. He could not tell a joke without laughing with you, well before the punch line. No matter how bad you felt, you always felt somewhat better after being seen by Dr. Voskuhl. His compassion for his patients was evident, his passion for the job was obvious to anyone who had the chance to be a patient.

One patient, Lajuana Cobb, fought back tears Monday morning as she remembered her doctor and friend.

“The great thing about him is you could see him at the store or on the street and he would say hello. He was not ever snobby like some doctors. Dr. Voskuhl was always personable, he was more like family. He was so passionate and caring. The last time we talked, he asked me how Jim was doing,” Cobb recalled. “I just can’t explain how much he will be missed. He was not someone you went to just for medicine and a shot. He was a friend. He understood pain and he understood his patients. It is going to be so hard. He will be greatly missed and can never be replaced.”

Cobb continued about the doctor she seen since 1972, “This is such a great loss to the community, to the hospital (Saint Catherine Regional Hospital) and to his patients. He was always there for you when you needed him. Always a phone call away. Dr. Voskuhl always took the time to answer your questions and answer them in a way you understood. He was a man of integrity, of great integrity. His commitment to his patients, the community and the hospital will never be replaced. I am just at a loss for words...”

Cobb was able to get one last hug from Dr. Voskuhl during her last office visit in September. A few days later he suffered a heart attack.

Dr. Voskuhl, 79, returned home from work on September 20. He was coming in the door at his home and fell. He was taken to Saint Catherine for treatment of the cut. Further testing showed he was suffering a heart attack. Then the doctor became the patient and he was transferred to fix the problem with his heart. Stints were placed and he returned home.

According to Anita Ashton, Dr. Voskuhl returned to work a few hours a week after his heart surgery. After some more testing a mass was located in his liver. He underwent a biopsy on November 6. Complications arose from the procedure and he never recovered. Dr. Voskuhl died on Saturday afternoon at his home with his family at his side.

Ashton, who worked with Voskuhl for almost 37 years was able to find a smile and laugh when she recalled some of her fondest memories of the popular doctor.

“My fondest memory was at the old office, and even the new office, we would sit down every Monday morning for like an hour and a half and talk about what happened during the football

games on Sunday. He would be like 'did you see that?' or 'what about this.' Patients would be waiting and we would be talking. They would be so mad and I would be mad to if I was waiting to see the doctor. We would always talk about the games on Monday. Then when we would be getting ready to get to work, he would be like, 'o yeah, did you see this.' He loved to talk football and fishing. He loved to tell his jokes and his fishing stories, they went on and on," Ashton said.

Working with Dr. Voskuhl on a daily basis Ashton knew how he cared for his patients. He was a hands on doctor and wanted to know his patients.

"When everything was going over to electronic medical records. He said 'no, I'll quit!' He wanted nothing to do with the electronic records. If he came back we had already decided we would let him do what he always did and we would just input the information into the system. He just could not see sitting with his back to his patient. He said 'you have to touch the patient to give an exam, how am I suppose to touch them with my back to them?'" , Ashton recalled.

She continued, "He was definitely a hands on doctor. The hands on doctoring is over. That is not the way doctors do it now."

Ashton remembered how he would call everyone, "kid." He knew the patients name and most likely had the patient since birth, he always came in, shut the door, and said hey, kid, just like you were his best friend in the entire world. His professionalism and compassion for his patients will be hard to match.

Not only did Ashton lose a friend, and employer, she also lost her teacher.

"He was not just my boss, he was my teacher. He taught me. He would sit me down and he would explain everything to you. I would ask a question and he would grab a book and explain it to me. You can ask the other girls in the office, you could always ask him a question and he would explain the answer to you. He was a great teacher, now I am just going to be dumb!," Ashton recalled with a laugh.

Another "kid" who spent the weekend remembering her beloved doctor is Mary Young. After learning of Dr. Voskuhl's passing on Saturday, Mary spent some time with her mother, Mary Shepherd, sharing stories and memories of Voskuhl.

"There is one thing I always loved about Dr. V. He seemed to have a nickname for everyone- make no mistake, he knew us all by name, too, but he just really seemed to like using nicknames. Mine was "Kid," said every time with excitement, like we were at a party or something. Even when I was sick as could be, he'd step in the exam room and say, 'Hey, Kid! Whatcha in here for?' which was immediately followed by one of the jokes he so loved to tell, and next thing I knew, I was smiling. He made everyone feel special, like they mattered. That was just Dr. V. Always quick with a smile and joke and a big hug when you needed it."

Dr. Voskuhl's patients also knew they had a doctor who would fight for them and their needs. He did what needed to be done, what he thought should be done, not just what was the easy

thing to do. That is just another reason why his patients truly loved him and considered him family.

“I saw him stand up for patients and their needs when it would have been easier to let things slide, just to stand back and leave the situation alone. He fought for what was right, gave a voice to those who sometimes had no voice of their own, and he stood up for what he believed to be the right and best thing for his patients. When my father was in the hospital for the last time and not doing well, Dr. V was made aware that we had just been told Dad was going to be transferred to another facility, certainly not by our request, nor by Dr. V. To say this upset my mother is a major understatement- she was so upset, in fact, that she threatened to call the news on them for trying to kick an elderly, dying veteran out of their hospital to save money. She told Dr. V and he was on the case, told her, ‘Don’t worry, Mary. It’s not gonna happen. I’ll take care of it.’ And he did. Dad was allowed to stay until we brought him home where he passed peacefully a day and a half later.”

Not only did Dr. Voskuhl make an impression on each patient, he also left a mark on the local hospital. He was one of the original founders of what was known then as North Clark Community Hospital, now Saint Catherine Regional Hospital.

Dr. Voskuhl began his family practice in 1965 after graduating from the University of Louisville School of Medicine in 1964. He spent many, many years with Dr. David Jones at their office on Water Street in Charlestown. They were later joined by Dr. George McGhee, who still practices out of the office on Water Street.

Dr. Voskuhl moved to his current office with Saint Catherine Regional Hospital in 2010. He continued to see his patients there until his heart attack at the end of September.

Cobb recalled asking Dr. Voskuhl when he planned on retiring.

She concluded, “About a year ago, I asked Dr. Voskuhl when was he going to retire? His reply: ‘Probably never, because I truly enjoy what I do!’ Yes, he did!”

The mood around Saint Catherine Regional Hospital was very somber Monday afternoon as administrators, doctors, nurses and staff just tried to get through the day.

“Dr. ‘Lou’ Voskuhl was more than just a physician in our community- he was our family. He touched many lives and had a large impact on patients and everyone he worked with during his 48 years of service,” stated Leslie Ingram, Executive Assistant at Saint Catherine Regional Hospital. “We understand our patients’ concerns at this time and we are making arrangements to provide continued service to all those who were under his care. Of course, it goes without saying, Dr. Voskuhl will be missed by all of us.”

Dr. Voskuhl was a member of the American Medical Association and board certified in Family Practice. He was also an Army Veteran and member of the VFW Post 1427 in Charlestown.

He was born, William Louis Voskuhl, February 18, 1934 in Covington, Kentucky to Joseph and

Clara Tiettmeyer Voskuhl.

Dr. Voskuhl is survived by his wife, the former Deborah Craig; a son, Kurt Voskuhl (Teresa) of Charlestown; daughters, Mary Lou Voskuhl of Charlestown, Sue Fox (Jon) of Dayton, Ohio and Christina Voskuhl of Charlestown; sisters, Dolores and Joan Voskuhl, both of Covington, Kentucky; Angie Voskuhl of Cincinnati, Ohio and Charlotte Lasita of Las Vegas, Nevada; grandchildren, Alicia, Kayla, William and Samuel Voskuhl of Charlestown and Ryan and Spencer Fox of Dayton, Ohio. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services for Dr. Voskuhl will be 11 a.m. tomorrow, Thursday, November 21, at Grayson Funeral Home in Charlestown. Interment will be in Charlestown Cemetery at a later date. Visitation will be today, Wednesday, November 20, from 12 noon to 8 p.m. and after 9 a.m. tomorrow, Thursday, November 21.

Expressions of sympathy may be made to the Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation at 1867 Frankfort Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky, 40206.

Many patients and friends recalled Dr. Voskuhl as their friend because his compassion for his patients and passion for his job could not have been done unless you were considered a friend, not just a patient, and many times you were considered family. Dr. Voskuhl spent 48 years caring for those in the community and the surrounding communities. Several patients shared stories of sports physicals he gave during the early 1970's at Charlestown High School, many shared stories of him answering the call in the middle of the night or even making house calls. Dr. Voskuhl has definitely left his mark on the community and his passing has left a void in many hearts. He may be gone, but he will never be forgotten.