



# Tom Stern

Physician Author Adventurer

Interesting how our forefathers pave our paths. For Tom Stern, having a grandfather as well as a great-grandfather who had each hunted gold in their day meant following in their vein – *literally*.

Of course, he didn't start out to become a modern-day chaser of ancient gold. Instead, born in the Midwest and raised in California, he followed another genetic predisposition and pursued a career in medicine as had his father before him. Briefly flirting with the idea of law school, he was admitted to [his alma mater] Stanford University's School of Law but quickly revisited his decision and subsequently began his medical education at the University of Southern California's School of Medicine. He transferred to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

The mental discipline required to excel in the field of medicine has been complemented by similar discipline acquired from athletic pursuits. A fall in a lake while still a boy caused Tom to learn to swim – and fast. His mother was understandably shaken and insisted immediately that he take swimming lessons. Only a handful of weeks later, he boldly entered a City swim meet and relished the competition, even if he did come in dead last. But that outcome wasn't to be repeated. The next meet, he won his first medal. And he went on to be All-American in swimming, setting both National as well as Age Group World records. While spending hours a day training in Stanford's pool he nevertheless achieved a 4.0 grade point average one year and lettered on the Varsity Swim Team.

Over the years, Dr. Stern has also served as a teacher at a number of medical schools including UC San Diego, UC

Berkeley, UC San Francisco, Stanford, and USC concurrent with his ongoing medical practice. In 1974, he established his own practice, The Berkeley Family Practice Medical Group, and is still leading the practice today. Mayor Willie Brown honored Dr. Stern for having seen over 125,000 patients during his medical career and proclaimed June 8, 2000 *Thomas Stern and Berkeley Family Practice Medical Group Day* in the City and County of San Francisco.

Already blessed with a rich personal life, it got even better in 1982, when a good friend suggested he meet a neighbor woman he knew named Yolanda. It was love at first sight. The dynamic young doctoral scholar who had recently moved to the States from the Philippines became Tom's wife and steadfast partner. Together, they have 4 children and have lived in Berkeley for over 30 years now.

Associating himself with the Interplast organization has brought deep personal fulfillment to Stern while permitting children in need of reconstructive surgery (for facial deformities) in the Philippines to benefit from his healing skills. Originally Yolanda's idea, Tom joined forces with Interplast and established their first outreach project in Yolanda's island homeland. To date, nearly 700 children have been assisted in La Union Province. He volunteered for 7 years and has served as organizer of this ongoing project which dispatches teams on annual two week projects.

Dr. Stern's efforts in the Philippines, while so personally rewarding, have also garnered him unexpected public praise. He was named Humanitarian of the Year in 1996 by the Philippine-American Chambers of Commerce, "Adopted Son" by an act of Congress of La Union

Province, and, most recently, Honorary Goodwill Ambassador for the State of California in 2000.

As a result of initially being introduced to the Filipino social matrix through Yolanda, Tom has developed a deep fascination with the culture, history, and geopolitical complexity of the islands. While there before an Interplast mission, he was relaxing one evening with a Colonel of Intelligence from the Philippine government. The Colonel was commenting to Tom about his country being one of the richest countries on earth. Tom sipped his scotch and rejoined that, indeed, there was such a wealth of culture and beauty – an amazing place to be sure. The Colonel clarified his meaning then – which was instead literal – telling Tom a story that most Asians already know, the legend of the lost Yamashita Treasure and of the gold bullion it is said to contain. To say Tom was fascinated is the proverbial understatement.

The romantic tale the Colonel had spun danced in Tom's waking as well as sleeping thoughts for months thereafter. He began undertaking historical research on the treasure. After organizing a large team able to face the challenges, Tom joined the chase. The story of his adventures in search of the lost legend, while subtly fictionalized, is a modern day saga like few others.

Stern's first novel, *Gold Fever* was published in 2000 by AEI Titan as was it's follow-up title, *Vatican Gold* (2002).

Most recently, Stern has lent his "new voice" to those of bestselling authors **Deepak Chopra, Dean Ornish, Andrew Weil** and others in the provocative new release, *The Heart of Healing* (Elite Books, Fall, 2004) which explores alternative paths to one of mankind's final adventures - healing of spirit, mind, and body...a noble "hunt" worth pursuing indeed.

