



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 Stanford University's School of Law but quickly revisited his decision and began his medical education at the University of Southern California's School of Medicine. He later transferred to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada and completed his studies at Stanford.

The mental discipline required to excel in the field of medicine has been complemented by similar discipline he acquired from his athletic pursuits. A fall in a lake while still a boy caused young Tom to learn to swim – and fast. His mother was understandably shaken and immediately insisted he take swimming lessons. Only a handful of weeks later, he boldly entered a City swim meet where he relished the competition, even if he did come in dead last. But that outcome wasn't to be repeated. At 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 and also lettered on the Varsity Swim Team.

Already blessed with a satisfying life, it grew richer still 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 Stern's wife and steadfast partner. Together, they have four children and have lived in Berkeley for over 30 years now.

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 which he established in 1974, The Berkeley Family Practice Medical Group, where he's still active 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.

Associating himself with the Interplast organization has brought deep personal fulfillment to the doctor who uses his healing skills to provide reconstructive surgery (for facial deformities) to needy children in the Philippines. Originally Yolanda's idea, he 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 seven years and has served as organizer of this ongoing philanthropic 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

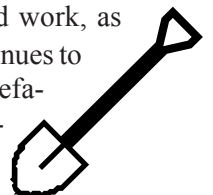
Son" by an act of Congress of La Union Province, and, most recently, Honorary Goodwill Ambassador for the State of California in 2000.

As a result of initially being introduced to the Filipino social matrix through Yolanda, Stern has developed a deep fascination with the culture, history, and geopolitical complexity of the islands. While there awaiting an Interplast mission, he was relaxing one evening with a Colonel of Intelligence from the Philippine government. The officer was commenting to Stern about his country being one of the richest countries on earth. He 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 Stern a story that most Asians already know, the legend of the lost Yamashita Treasure and of the vast gold bullion it is said to contain. To say Stern was fascinated is the proverbial understatement.

The romantic tale the Colonel had spun danced in his 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, Stern 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.

This first novel of his, *Gold Fever* has just been published (December 2000) by AEI Titan and is already being considered for a film treatment.

And so Tom Stern, M.D. has just begun to mine this next phase of his life – that of an author. His next book, *Vatican Gold*, is being published in the Fall of 2001. This second work, as its name implies, continues to pay tribute to his forefathers – and the modern day spirit of the hunt which is their legacy.



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