

## From Cape Canaveral to the Streets of San Francisco

By SHARON FAIOLA PETERSEN

Photo: NASA

*This Bastyr grad brings a passion to natural medicine that even *The Terminator* can't ignore*

As a kid growing up in Cocoa, Florida, Carl Hangee-Bauer, ND, LAc, regularly climbed trees to watch rockets take off from nearby Cape Canaveral. And when he wasn't up a tree, he was searching for strange creatures at the seashore or dreaming about being an astronomer or an FBI agent. One needn't be a psychoanalyst to conclude that curiosity is a driving force in Dr. Hangee-Bauer's life.

Combine that love of discovery with a tenacious spirit and fascination with nature, and it's not surprising that Hangee-Bauer ended up as the first naturopathic physician in San Francisco and a pioneer in the effort to secure licensure for qualified California NDs. Now, as a member of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine Advisory Council, Hangee-Bauer can look back on the path that brought him here with equal parts amazement and gratitude.

"As far back as I can remember, I was drawn to science and exploring the natural world," says Hangee-Bauer. "I was always turning over rocks!" Because he also was strongly drawn to water, he ended up studying marine biology in college and graduating in '75 with a BS in biology from Florida State University.

A future in marine biology, however, was abandoned when Hangee-Bauer found himself in the Medical Service at Ft. Lewis, Washington, giving four years of his life to the U.S. Army. "I'd gone through college on an ROTC scholarship," he says, "so I owed them." He doesn't regret his time in the service, however. "It contributed to my life in two very important ways. I learned confidence and how to take a leadership role. And I was exposed to the pros and cons of mainstream medicine."

It also deposited him in the Pacific Northwest, where a culture devoted to all things natural flourished. "As a runner, I was into the fitness side of things," he says. "So I ended up very active in a Tacoma natural

whole-foods co-op. Some of the other co-op folks would talk about their naturopathic doctors. Up to that point, I'd never heard of such a thing."

In 1979, Hangee-Bauer had his own close encounter with naturopathic medicine. Newly out of the army and attending a festival at Seattle Center, he happened across a booth set up by the administrators of Bastyr College. "They had this table with the school's textbooks lined up on it. I immediately recognized *Gray's Anatomy* and other legitimate medical texts. I started thumbing through the books, and it just hit me—*this* was what I should pursue. It brought together all my interests. It seemed like such common-sense medicine."

After a brief detour to California with his new bride Michele to study medicine at the short-lived Pacific College of Naturopathic Medicine, he moved back to Seattle to finish his studies at Bastyr. "It was very heartening coming to Bastyr," he says. "The instructors and students all shared a common vision, and I felt I was a part of something much bigger."



Carl Hangee-Bauer exploring the ethnobotanical gardens in Oaxaca, Mexico.

He earned his naturopathic degree in 1984. But because he wanted to return to California to set up a practice—and because California wouldn't license naturopathic physicians but *would* license acupuncturists—Hangee-Bauer felt compelled to add “licensed acupuncturist” to his resume. “Acupuncture follows a philosophy that works in concert with the natural world, so I knew it would dovetail nicely with my naturopathic practice.”

In 1989, after graduating from the San Francisco College of Acupuncture, Hangee-Bauer opened his naturopathic/acupuncture office and became the first practicing naturopathic physician in San Francisco. “I rented a space south of the Market district, got myself a credit card and started charging things!” He named his practice SOMA Acupuncture and Natural Health Clinic ([www.somaacupuncture.com](http://www.somaacupuncture.com)) based on a number of elements including the name of the first drug described in ancient Indian literature, the meaning of the word somatic and the acronym formed by “south of Market acupuncture.”

Hangee-Bauer discovered his chosen combination of modalities worked extremely well, especially in a community already familiar with acupuncture. “Patients would come for acupuncture seeking quick relief. I'd use that opportunity to introduce them to natural medicine, educating them about supplements and lifestyle changes. I'm still amazed by some of the simplest procedures that bring about the greatest results,” he says, “like salt-water nasal irrigation for sinus problems or sunshine and diet for depression.”

Frustrated that neither he nor any other naturopathic physician in California could be licensed by the state, he, along with fellow NDs David Field and Brian Karvelas (another Bastyr alumnus), hatched a plan to unite naturopathic physicians in a common goal. “Sitting around the kitchen table, we came up with the concept for what is now the California Naturopathic Doctors Association. We

were amazed when 20 out of 30 or so NDs in the state actually showed up at our first meeting. The very first item we discussed was how to secure licensure.”

After years of pounding the legislative pavement, their efforts finally paid off. In 2003, California's naturopathic physicians who had graduated from accredited schools like Bastyr were granted licensure. This past October, Governor Schwarzenegger tapped Hangee-Bauer to sit on the Bureau of Naturopathic Medicine Advisory Council, which develops and enforces standards for regulating naturopathic medicine in the state. “I'm honored to be a part of the council,” he says, “and no, I haven't yet met ‘the man.’”

Hangee-Bauer has high hopes for the future of natural medicine in California and throughout the country. “The U.S. could have the best health care system in the world, but instead it's a mess,” he says. “However, I do see us moving into an era of integrative medicine, which is going to help tremendously.” He contributes to that shift himself by lecturing to fourth-year medical students at University of California/San Francisco (UCSF) about natural therapies and speaking about the benefits of collaborative medicine at a number of high-profile venues, including UCSF's Integrative Medicine Forum. “It's encouraging to see providers of different stripes and different educations coming together to learn about each other,” he says. “California's mainstream practitioners now can look at naturopathic doctors with confidence. Licensing helped give us that credibility.”

When he isn't busy running his practice or running up and down the halls of California's capitol building, Hangee-Bauer unwinds by gardening, cultivating orchids and traveling with Michele (now SOMA's office manager). His curiosity still very much intact, he continues to be drawn to space (“I love science fiction”) and to the seashore. “Wherever I go,” he says, “I still turn over rocks.”

## ALUMNI NEWS

### ALUMNA RECEIVES LOAN REPAYMENT FOR WORK WITH UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

**Kelly Wright, ND,** ('98) has been awarded full loan forgiveness for her naturopathic medical school student loan through the Health Professional Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program (HPLRSP) of the state of Washington. This is the first time a naturopathic physician's solo practice has qualified for the loan repayment. According to Pamela Snider, ND, Bastyr University adjunct professor and committee member on the HPLRSP advisory committee, these

loan repayments are given to select providers who serve underserved urban and rural communities. Naturopathic practices are not eligible to receive Medicaid. Consequently, it's challenging for a naturopathic physician to own a practice that serves the required percentage of economically-challenged patients (most of whom are on Medicaid) needed to qualify for the HPLRSP.

Dr. Wright explains that her practice, Vashon Natural Medicine, qualifies “because we're a primary care medical facility that provides care on a sliding scale. We also provide community wellness services,

such as the Washington State Childhood Vaccination Program.”

While it's the Office of Community and Rural Health—working closely with the state's higher education coordinating board—that determines the recipients of loan repayments, the funding comes from the Washington State Department of Health. In accepting loan forgiveness, Wright agrees to a three-year contract with the department to continue providing health care to underserved populations. For more information, visit [www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/ocrh](http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/ocrh).