

Brought up in the multiple worlds of the Rarotonga waterfront, Sir Tom Davis, Pa Tuterangi Ariki, KFE, has always had access to all cultures and classes. The first Cook Islander to qualify in New Zealand, he returned as a Doctor to the Islands (the title of his first book) in 1945. The first Cook Islander to attend Harvard University, he got there in a typically Tom David way - by sailing a small yacht half way round the world. He later served on the Harvard faculty for five years. He headed medical programmes in Alaska and the Himalayas, attained the civilian status in the US army of a three star general, and the highest personal distinction in the US public service and managed medical research and consulting aspects of one of the world's largest consulting firms, wrote two books and eighty scientific papers, qualified as a Space Surgeon and took a leading role in developing the US space programme. At the request of Cook Islanders he returned in 1971 and became Leader of the Opposition. He survived operations for cancer and became Prime Minister from 1978 to 1987. Awarded the Order of Merit of Germany in 1979, he was knighted by the Queen in 1980. As Prime Minister in a time of world economic decline he lifted the real per capita income of Cook Islanders more than 10 percent annually throughout his leadership, a remarkable achievement. It declined the year he was out of power, and again since his retirement. He emphasised distribution as well as growth, broadened participation of ordinary Cook Islanders in the economy, awarded guaranteed increases to the Public Service and increased pensions. Tom Davis has taken prizes in several sports. He gave up coaching rugby at 59, and at 71 helped to coach the Cook Islands team to the Oceania Boxing Championships. Now 75, he recently wrote two books, composed songs, designed and built an ocean-going canoe, held an exhibition of his recent art, caught up on reading in comparative religion, philosophy and Polynesian history, considered options for the Cook Islands next century, and took part in many community activities. Sir Tom expresses his views clearly, and admits what he failed to achieve or wished he had done differently. His power of description, as in handling a ship in a storm, is tremendous. Like the man, it's a terrific book.

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