

## 牽手獎之大模範夫妻具體事跡文稿

### **Model Couple Award** achievement article

Sponsored by Global Federation of Chinese Business Women

### **Music & Medicine, Harmony & Healing - A Legacy of Life & Love** **Elizabeth Chen Christenson, MD, LAc and Edward B. Christenson, MD**

Elizabeth was born into a musical and medical family in Jia-Yi, Taiwan, all relatives were inspired and skilled by harmony and healing: Father Chen Lian Chang, a well-known ophthalmologist & violinist and was one of the distinguished citizens in Ming-Shiong city; Mother Chen Shie Bi-Aru, a piano enthusiast and inspiration to her children in all arts; first elder sister Rita -a concert pianist; second elder sister Grace – a dermato-pathologist and soprano, third elder sister Lorrain, nutrition & ballet, elder brother Richard-anesthesiologist & violinist and younger sister Anita - a dual doctorate in pharmacy & Chinese medicine and a soprano. As a child, Elizabeth was inspired by her father’s clinical documentary film of restoring vision to blind patients and she wished that one day she, too, would become a doctor and restore health to those in need.

After her graduation from the prestigious First Girl’s High School, Bei-Yi-Nu, she thought her door to becoming a medical doctor was closed when her application to medical school in Taiwan was rejected. She, instead, went on to receive her bachelor of science degree in Biology from Fu-Jen Catholic University. It was destiny that brought her to the US for a Master’s degree in Microbiology at Wagner College on Staten Island, New York, where she was to meet her future husband, Edward Burton Christenson, a pre-med student majoring in biology and chemistry. It was at a Tri-Beta Biology Honor Society party where she was invited to perform on classical guitar that this member of Honor Society, attracted by her beautiful melody, approached her and asked her to dance with him. That would be the beginning of a lifelong inseparable relationship.

Elizabeth’s love of music was about to take a new pathway when she was a graduate student research assistant at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. Her boss, Dr. Connie Oliver was impressed with her classical guitar concert and suggested she might enjoy the harp. Unknown to Elizabeth, Edward found out, rented a harp, took a NY taxi with the harp sticking out of the cab window, and carried it up six flights of stairs to Elizabeth’s Manhattan apartment, as a gift. Elizabeth fell in love with Edward and the harp and began harp studies while working on her master’s degree in Microbiology.

Upon recommendation of Elizabeth’s graduate school advisor, both she and Edward joined a group of American students to study medicine in Italy and they graduated with their MD degrees from the University of Siena, School of Medicine and Surgery. As fortune would have it, Siena is also host to a world class musical conservatory where Elizabeth continued to foster her new love of harp. She performed classical guitar with the local orchestra – L’Orchestra a Plettro Senese during her medical school years, adding more exciting lifestyle in studying abroad and reducing stress in foreign medical school, challenged by different language (Elizabeth’s third). Edward has been her kindest critic and greatest fan while Elizabeth was always his spiritual support.

1979 was a year of destiny for Elizabeth and Edward. While on one of the medical school breaks, they celebrated their marriage in Greenwich, Connecticut at the home of Edward's parents, John and Margaret Christenson. His parents helped them get through the final year of medical school with a generous gift of \$10,000. After graduation, the newly married doctors returned to the US and passed the Federal Licensure Examination to practice medicine in the US. They were gifted a beautiful baby son, Chancey, who was born during their residency training in New York. Edward specialized in Anesthesiology and Elizabeth in Pathology (the specialty that did not require hospital stay during on call nights so she could stay with her infant). It was not easy for both partners being residents with a young child. It takes a village to raise a child and Elizabeth's mother also came to baby sit. Every weekend they took their son to stay with Edward's parents. It was a happy time created by three generations.

While Chancey was in grade-school, Elizabeth had an opportunity to pursue a Family Medicine residency training in Ohio. The decision to undertake the long route of a second residency was difficult, but she found that Pathology didn't offer her the patient interaction and sense of accomplishment she needed; Edward nurtured her decision with his love and support. It wasn't easy being a full-time resident, wife and mother, but through sheer strength of will she was able to manage the house while taking care of Chancey, working full time, and still managing to study late at night. Along the way, she had the full mental and emotional support of her husband Edward who had become the Chief of Anesthesiology at a regional hospital.

Growing up in Taiwan, Elizabeth never thought much about Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) as she was drawn to western medical technology. She believed TCM was part of the past. When she went to an acupuncture conference during her Family Medicine residency, she realized that acupuncture and TCM may be able to help a great number of her patients. Her medical career then made a dramatic turn – integrating the best of east and west. She learned to use the TCM Five Element theory of all universal phenomena, including the human organs, emotions, spirit, as well as sound, music and harmony. It was this revelation that brought Elizabeth to the addition of therapeutic music and the integration of body-mind-spirit healing therapies to her medical practice at her newly established CHI (Comprehensive Health Innovations) Medical Center.

In 2004, Elizabeth and Edward followed their spiritual call and moved to Hawaii. Edward nurtured Elizabeth's TCM schooling to obtain an acupuncture license in Hawaii while practicing integrative family medicine at CHI Medical Center in Kailua. She, in turn, supported him through the difficult transition of moving to Hawaii. After a few tumultuous years, the couple weathered the difficulty of relocation with love and compassion. After retiring from anesthesiology, through Elizabeth's TCM work, Edward went on to become involved as faculty with the World Medicine Institute of Oriental Medicine. He also served as a senior medical examiner for both the Veteran's Administration and Social Security.

Together, they co-founded a Hawaiian-based non-profit organization called GAMA (Global Advancements of Medical Arts) and serve as adjunct faculty, along with Elizabeth's sister, Dr. Anita Chen Marshall, at the John A Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii. They

are proud to be on the original Integrative Global Medicine Committee, developing a post-doctoral degree and fellowship program, the first of its kind in an accredited medical school in the US, in collaboration with Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. This program will feature traditional global healing modalities to integrate with mainstream western medicine.

Elizabeth's dream of helping restore people's vision like her father has come true by opening their spiritual eyes to the integrity of their health. Edward has been profoundly significant in this transformation by translating, weaving and bridging the elements of culture, language and medicine between the eastern and western worlds.

They have been blessed to see their son following in their footsteps. Dr. Chancey Christenson is pursuing fellowships in both Transfusion Medicine and in the emerging field of Clinical Informatics, a field which seeks "to improve healthcare delivery through better technology". Proudly, the family has expanded to include Chancey's lovely wife, who just completed her Master's degree in Construction Management, and works as a project manager for a multi-billion dollar international construction firm.

The last few years in Hawaii have greatly strengthened Edward and Elizabeth's love. They go to medical meeting together. Ed has been a valuable photographer for all social activities. They meditate together with friends and bring her harp to play for full moon festivals at the beach. They enjoy a healthy diet and frequent beach walk to preserve a long and happy life together. Elizabeth's harp music by the beach sends the music out on the ocean wave, and Edward, as always, encourages her and stands by her side. He is still as entranced by the beautiful music as the day he first saw her play guitar.

Recently, Elizabeth and Edward have enjoyed being world travelers with several trips to China and Taiwan. Elizabeth also joined her elder brother Dr. Richard Chen, elder sister Dr. Grace Kao and younger sister Dr. Anita Chen Marshall, as part of the Medical Musical Group and was invited to perform at a Congressional concert in Washington, DC. They have just returned from a three week medical musical performance tour of South Africa. Edward has been a catalyst of Elizabeth's combining music and medicine for better benefit to patients.

Elizabeth and Edward have been instruments for each other's evolution as individuals, as team mates and as life partners, molding their lives together through friendship, marriage, parenthood, medicine and music over three decades of bringing life to harmony and harmony to life. They have found in each other the true journey of true love and have embraced a shared vision for their life and a Legacy of Life & Love for generations to come.

Model Award October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Taipei - (see criteria in next page)

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PS: The criteria for Model Couple Award set up by the Global Federation of Chinese Business Women are:

1. Be a member of Global Federation of Chinese Business Women at least 3 years (I have been

the member for 11 years) .

2. Husband and wife are married at least 15 years ( We are in 37 years).

3. Husband and wife have been helping and supporting each other, establish career / business together and have distinguished achievements.

4. Husband and wife are filial to parents and friendly to neighbors, enthusiastic in public affairs, have contributed model social activities.

5. Children have done good deeds and respect social orders (rules and laws for example, meaning, well manner / behave appropriateness), promote social consciousness and has distinguished achievement, like doing work to benefit people / society – positive influence to the world.

6. Husband and wife teach loyalty, teach filiality, are known to have a happy and blessed family.

7. Husband and wife have contributed social benefit events with compassion.