
Preface I

The Spirit of Fighting Cancer Remains Eternally Among Mankind

Shu Chien

Felicia and Ken first met at a service counter of the college entrance examination center at Taipei First Girls' High School on July 28, 1957. The simple act of borrowing a water jug was the circumstance that brought about their happy meeting, and their union in marriage to become lifelong partners, accompanying each other through the ups and downs of life for forty-two years. For more than a year, Ken has mustered together a great deal of energy and determination to write *Felicia*, describing her colorful life, their beautiful and blissful union, home and career, in prose overflowing with emotion and affection. This book "casts light on Felicia's unique and amazing life," serving as an inspiration and a source of profound meaning for those of us who survive her.

Though I knew Felicia for twenty years, it was only after reading the first few chapters of this book that I understood the origin of Felicia's serious, tenacious, perfectionist, courageous, determined and warm-hearted personality. Because of her natural talent, upbringing and diligence, Felicia

excelled in all things since she was a child. Her diligence enabled her to make it to the “Hall of Fame” throughout her six years at Taipei First Girls’ High School. As valedictorian, she was granted admission to National Taiwan University (NTU) without having to take the examination; this sowed the seeds for the lifelong love between Felicia and Ken. Ken was valedictorian of the NTNU Affiliated High School and was also guaranteed admission into National Taiwan University. Because the two of them were exempted from the examination, they had the opportunity to provide support services for other students on the examination day, which brought about their chance meeting. Given that Ken had already heard of Felicia’s stellar achievements and seen her picture on the “Hall of Fame,” it certainly seemed as if their meeting was destined by fate. After they met, they discovered that they had participated in the Taipei City Model Students’ Ceremony in the same year and were pictured in the same photograph when they were in junior high school. That was purely a coincidence, but it could also be said that it was the natural outcome of their superior academic performance.

Ken’s flowing prose and emotional sincerity fully expressed the love between him and Felicia. What they achieved together in family life and career is the fruit of their own efforts. After Felicia discovered that she had breast cancer, they both fought the battle together for thirteen years. Their “lifelong interdependence and mutual support” is profoundly moving. After opening the book, I could not put it down. I read it in one breath, felt a multitude of different emotions, and received invaluable inspiration.

Kuang-Cheng and I first met Felicia and Ken at the NTU Medical School reunion at North Sea Fishing Village Restaurant in Queens, New York. They were then faculty members in SUNY Stony Brook’s pharmacology department. We just happened to be at the same table and had the opportunity to chat. From the outset, Felicia’s spirit, optimism, proactive attitude, warmth and goodwill towards friends, as well as her serious and conscientious attitude towards her work impressed us.

Our chat was quite enjoyable, so we got together again several times. Every time we visited their Long Island home, Felicia always received us with immense kindness and warmth. She was an excellent cook, steadfast and methodical, from that we could imagine how well-organized she was in the laboratory. Her house was dignified and immaculate. Her children,

David, Faith, and Albert were all extremely cute; seeing them filled us with warmth of their household. Felicia and Ken took us for a walk around the neighborhood; we saw the duck pond which was one of Albert's favorite places, and we even walked as far as the Atlantic coast. Today, those happy times still seem as if they had just occurred yesterday.

Since 1984, Ken and I served together on the advisory committee for the Institute of Biomedical Sciences committee at Academia Sinica, so we met on many occasions to do preparatory work for the establishment of the institute. In 1986, Professor Nan-Geng Yu conducted the "Symposium of Recent Advances in Biomedical Sciences" at the Institute of Biomedical Sciences. Felicia was asked to give a lecture; that was the first time I heard her speak. Her research was insightful, in-depth, and at the leading edge of biomedical sciences; her lecture was clear and organized, starting with an introductory opener and then going into the specifics, and elicited the interest of both laymen and medical professionals. Everyone who heard her came away feeling as if they had learned a great deal.

The year 1987 was the thirtieth anniversary of our wedding; our two daughters held a celebration for us in New Jersey. At that time, Felicia had already discovered that she suffered from breast cancer and the chemotherapy that she subsequently underwent had weakened her, but she insisted on attending. Ken and Felicia drove for two hours from Long Island to New Jersey. Since Ken was worried that she would be too tired, they first drove to a motel in New Jersey and spent the night, then attended our dinner the following night. When we saw Felicia, we were certainly excited and touched by the effort she made to attend our celebration. My wife and I danced a tango at the dinner, and Felicia, playful as ever, took a rose and placed it in my mouth. Thinking of it now still brings a smile to our faces. Ken and Felicia gave us a photo frame, photo album, and jewelry box engraved with our names. Even to this day, we still use them, and Felicia is still in our mind.

In 1988, Ken succeeded me as the director of the Institute of Biomedical Sciences, and I returned to the United States, relocating from New York to San Diego, California. Those years when I returned to Taipei, I often visited the Institute of Biomedical Sciences, and had the opportunity to call on Ken and Felicia. During that period, Felicia's medical condition would sometimes hover between good and bad, but she still

spent a majority of her time in the laboratory, tirelessly continuing her research. Whether I saw her in the laboratory or at her office, she was always light-hearted and smiling, reflecting the strength, bravery, and enthusiasm with which she committed in her work.

Ken has been in charge of the Institute of Biomedical Sciences and the National Health Research Institutes, the two most important institutions for Taiwanese medical and public health research, for over ten years. They have achieved impressive results, and their success is due in no small part to Felicia's dedication on all fronts. Ken also made the utmost effort in taking care of Felicia's health. Of course, Felicia's success in living with cancer for thirteen years is a credit to her own determination and iron will, but Ken's love and encouragement were also extremely important. "The strength of Felicia's love and her endearing passion for her family enabled her to stand up and overcome her hardship."

In 1995, Felicia's medical condition worsened, requiring her to travel to the United States National Institutes of Health for treatment. At that time, she underwent extremely drastic chemotherapy and had over two hundred bone marrow extractions. Any normal people would not be able to endure what she went through, but Felicia finished the complete sequence of medical treatments by relying on her iron will and love of life.

During that particular treatment, the circumstances became quite dangerous, and Ken remained by Felicia's side throughout. At that time, the National Health Research Institutes' advisory committee and its research grant review committee's yearly meetings were about to convene in Taipei. Although Ken felt that he ought to return to Taipei to preside over the meetings, in the end, he decided to remain in the United States and stay with Felicia until she was completely out of danger.

Felicia loved life and her fellow people, and she was willing to share the experience of her fight against cancer with everyone. She gave many lectures on cancer, speaking from her dual perspective as a cancer researcher and patient; there would be a full house every time she spoke. Felicia's speeches enabled her listeners to understand more about cancer, inspired faith and determination in cancer patients, and created impact on the society for the better.

On July 9, 1999, Kuang-Cheng and I visited Felicia at National Taiwan University Hospital. She was then waiting for a liver transplant; although she passed away just ten days later, she was still full of life. She told us about her latest medical condition and treatment direction, and she became even happier when the topic turned to Ken and the children, demonstrating that she was not yet ready to go. She spoke with great enthusiasm, but we were worried that she might become exhausted, so we said goodbye and left half an hour later. It did not occur to us that not long thereafter, we would receive the sad news of Felicia leaving us. Throughout the forty-two years that Ken and Felicia knew each other, they were together committed to their research, they were of the same heart, and they “were inseparable in everyday life.” Undoubtedly, the time they shared together surpasses that of a “diamond” sixtieth anniversary marriage.

Felicia was an exceptional woman who possessed strength beneath the softness, and was overflowing with energy. In action, she was resolute and courageous. Not only was she a natural leader, she was sharp and focused, and also adept at handling interpersonal relations. From beginning to end, she valued her life; she never backed away. Felicia had a great marriage and three capable children who are high achievers and have limitless potential. After receiving a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of California at Berkeley, David went on to do postgraduate research at the University of Cambridge. He has already made significant contributions to the field of chemistry. Faith worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after graduating from Cornell University; my brother Fu Chien told me that within a few months, she had become indispensable as an English writer in the Ministry. Today she has obtained a J.D. degree in law. Albert is pursuing dual degrees in medicine (M.D. and Ph.D.). He, too, has many great achievements. The fact that Ken and Felicia’s children are so accomplished can only be attributed to the parents themselves who were top students too. Without a doubt, Felicia was a virtuous wife and a good mother. Besides caring for her husband and raising the children, she also had great achievements in her career; she served the society incessantly and worked for the common good of people everywhere, thus serving as a role model for modern women.

Ken has succeeded in expressing Felicia's unique and extraordinary life in this biography with earnest warmth and devotion. He said, "I felt closer to her, because her spirit lay within my heart." As her friends, we too, after reading this biography, felt closer to Felicia, and felt that her spirit had a great influence on our hearts.

Today, although Felicia has left us, her personality, her deeds, her achievements, and her influences are still stenciled in our hearts, to be preserved eternally among mankind.

The author of this essay is a member of Academia Sinica.

Preface II

Brave, Dedicated and Committed Women are the Most Beautiful

Jacqueline Peng-Wang

After knowing someone for forty-two years, thirty-seven of which as husband and wife, no matter who leaves first, the burden on the one left behind is virtually impossible to bear. Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers found in Taiwanese women, second only to cervical cancer. There are about five thousand newly diagnosed cases annually. Around a third of these succumb to their illnesses, making breast cancer number four on the cancer mortality list.

Felicia's mother died of breast cancer at the age of seventy, making her a high risk for the illness. Felicia first underwent surgery for breast cancer fifteen years ago. At the time, many of her axillary lymph nodes were positive. This hinted at the malignant nature of her particular cancer and that she was at a high risk for relapse. Thus, she received intense chemotherapy subjecting her to comparatively severe side effects. The intensity of the treatment paid off and the cancer was kept in check for eight years. During intensive chemotherapy and in the subsequent eight disease-free years,

Felicia carried the onus of running her family. She successfully integrated the supervision of her lively children, making sure they grew up healthy, happy and well. She ensured that the household matters were run smoothly, enabling her husband Ken to focus on his vocation of directing and spearheading Taiwan's medical and health research, with the eventual establishment of the National Health Research Institutes.

Though I was not directly responsible for Felicia as a medical oncologist, I was a member of her medical team. I inevitably saw her in the hospital room waiting patiently to hear the results of her latest treatment. When we told her good news, she excitedly thanked each of us in turn for giving her hope for the next treatment. When we gave her bad news, she always quickly asked what the next step would be. She always urged us to look for new treatment methods, and she was always willing to try newly released drugs. I think that was also the reason why, after surgery, when her breast cancer spread, she was able to rely on her own spirit and determination to keep going, cool and composed, for five painful, yet happy and satisfying years.

Seeing her get up after falling down caused us, the medical caregivers, to feel for her time after time. Originally, this book was to be written by Felicia. She wanted to tell every patient she met about her long thirteen years of experience fighting cancer. She wanted to prepare them to face their treatment without fear. Even she herself did not realize that her time was ticking away and that writing her own book was already an impossible task.

I met Ken and Felicia in 1995. Ken and I were elected to become members of Academia Sinica at the same time. After that, we worked together to help establish the Institute of Biomedical Sciences. Felicia's pretty eyes and beautiful voice prompted all who saw her to take a second glance. She was an extremely rare individual who excelled in everything.

Her talent was apparent from early childhood. She not only possessed great intellect, she also had perfect attendance throughout her six years of secondary school and graduated first from the high school. She earned admission to National Taiwan University without having to take the entrance examination.

Felicia also played the piano brilliantly and had held many solo concerts. In athletics, she was not to be beaten either. She once won first

place in the China Youth Corps' All-Taiwan High School Bicycle Race. She was praised as an all-rounded person and keen on five Chinese virtues: morals, intellect, physique, team spirit, and aesthetics. After entering society, she married and raised a family, but she continued her research with the same amount of zeal. Vitamin K3 was originally a drug that was used as a coagulant; however, it was discovered that its effectiveness in killing cancer cells far exceeded original expectations. Felicia dedicated time to conduct research investigating the drug's anti-cancer properties and how to increase its ability to kill cancer cells. Five years earlier, the Division of Cancer Research at the National Health Research Institutes conducted the Phase I clinical trial of this drug in Taiwan. Although the drug was not as effective as anticipated, it did give the Taiwanese medical community experience in clinical trials. Felicia pursued excellence in all her roles, that of a wife, mother, and teacher. To say Felicia was a person who always sought perfection is by no means an exaggeration.

I have often thought about what might be a suitable word to describe Felicia. In Taiwan, the term "Superwoman" is often used, but this refers only to her attitude towards her work. It does not describe her outstanding accomplishment in her family life. Were this book written by Felicia, it would have probably been focused primarily on her lifelong fight against cancer, serving only as an inspiration to cancer patients and their families. She certainly would not have written much about her own strengths. Felicia's success in simultaneously raising a happy family and building a successful career can serve as an example to women all over the country. A common saying these days that describes Felicia would be: "Brave, dedicated and committed women are the most beautiful."

The author of this essay is a member of Academia Sinica.

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Preface III

An Outstanding Researcher of All Time

Min Wu

With the increased scientific exchange between researchers across the Strait, I had the good fortune of becoming acquainted with Professor Felicia Chen. Although the occasions when we met were infrequent, she still made a great impression on me. Once, when I was serving as the director of the life science division at the National Natural Sciences Foundation, I invited her to Beijing to participate in a conference. She gave a brief introduction to Academia Sinica including its organizational structure, operational budget, and research projects. She made a great impression on everyone and narrowed the distance between researchers across the Strait.

While Professor Chen was presenting her report, she was energetic and her thought process was extremely quick; it was impossible to see and discern that she was afflicted with cancer. I later read in an Academia Sinica publication that due to the recurrence and spread of cancer, Professor Chen had not only undergone numerous chemotherapy treatments, but had also traveled to the United States to receive the latest treatment involving high dose chemotherapy and autologous bone marrow transplantation.

I have worked in oncology for a long time. Although what I do is basic research, I know well the kind of pain and loss that these treatments inflict on patients. Many patients are unwilling to endure even a single treatment, so I am in awe of the determination that Professor Chen demonstrated in enduring the incessantly numerous painful treatment sessions.

In the beginning of 1999, I saw Professor Chen participate in the Cross Straits Cell Biology Conference despite being ill. Though on the surface she appeared energetic as usual, she left the conference early. I then had a bad premonition, but still felt that she could conquer the illness. As a cancer researcher, I knew that despite the advances in medical treatments, there were still limitations. Professor Chen herself was an outstanding researcher, she must have had the same understanding, but most worthy of our respect was that her love of life paralleled her love of science. The ten over odd years that she fought against cancer were by no means easy.

Her enthusiasm for life and her esteemed image will not fade from my memory, and will be an encouragement for me to continue to work on the fight against cancer. In the future, I hope the day will come when cancer will no longer be able to plague a life as precious as this one; if there is such a time, then Professor Chen's efforts in the fight against cancer will not be in vain.

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