

Doctor Chen Fu-min

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Chen Fu-min was born in Medan, the third largest city in Indonesia and the capital of the province of North Sumatra. His father ran a bicycle shop and could scarcely make a living while supporting his 15 children. When Fu-min was 17, his mother fell seriously ill, but they couldn't afford to seek medical treatment. A monk who knew something about Chinese medicine went to their home to give her acupuncture treatment, but he thought her beyond help.

Chen was desperate and didn't really know what to do to help his mother. He ended up at the front gate of a Christian hospital asking to see a doctor, any doctor. A nurse told him to go away, but Chen just stood there fighting back his tears. He vowed then and there that he would come back someday with the title of M.D.

A doctor from Germany who worked at that hospital was touched by Chen and went to treat his mother. The German physician cured her and went on to care for her for many years afterwards. Chen said, "I didn't know how much money my family owed the German doctor, but he just told me not to worry about my mother's medical bills. He encouraged me to study medicine and help others. His mother lived till her 80s."

Anti-Chinese sentiments were running high in Indonesia when Chen was in high school. In his senior year, his Chinese-language high school was taken over by the Indonesian government. Chen applied for and received a scholarship from the medical school of the National Defense Medical Center in Taiwan. He got out of the unrest in Indonesia, where his family still lived.



To avoid any political repercussions that might adversely affect his family, Chen severed ties with them in an Indonesian court. While in Taiwan, he wanted to write to his family, but he couldn't, a fact that still saddens him to this day.

After Chen finished medical school, he worked for the Veterans General Hospital in Taipei where he met his future wife, Tian Xue-yan (田雪彦). They got married and later moved to the United States, where he established himself in gastrointestinal surgery. He also endowed scholarships to help aspiring young men and women. He often asks himself where he might have been today if he had not received the financial help of many people along the way. He knows the transforming power of constructive assistance early on in a poor person's life.

Dr. Chen tried for quite some time to find the German physician who had saved his mother's life. "I have wanted to thank him in person one more time, but I haven't been able to locate him," Chen said. "The only way I know of to pay him back is to emulate him and help others."

By Chen Mei-yi

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