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Linda Chu
Living Her Best Life

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SPECIAL FEATURE



LINDA CHU LIVING HER BEST LIFE

By Richard Forzley | Photos by Fariba Mirzaee, Far Photography

Born and raised in Vancouver, Linda Chu spent her teenage years in Edgemont Village on the North Shore, where her father Harold ran an iconic eatery. "When my Dad operated The Woodbine Inn, you could walk into the restaurant any day and see our regulars at their usual tables. Every out-of-town guest had to visit "Harold's," where every child received a free Shirley Temple or Rob Roy and left with a bag of fortune cookies."

But the extra love wasn't reserved for the out-of-town visitors. "Our regular clientele always received a birthday cake for their celebration dinner. And then there was my dad's homemade Irish Cream Liqueur ... I have so many great memories."

If you weren't lucky enough to have your own memories of The Woodbine Inn, Linda paints a beautiful, compelling picture. "Just imagine Robbie Burns Night, every January 25th, a Chinese-Western style restaurant turning out Haggis to a sold-out crowd. The room would be full of Highland dancers and singers with my dad in his element, dressed in a kilt and relishing his nickname, Hamish McChu of the McChu clan."



Photos courtesy of Linda Chu

"These are precious memories that honour my dad. I remember a loyal customer from the Woodbine who made a bagpipe player in her pottery class and Sharpie'd in the bushy moustache that my dad sported in the 1980s. The black-rimmed glasses that he

usually wore were cut out of construction paper and that's when he was dubbed Hamish McChu."

This memory stands as a tangible reminder of the lasting impact Linda's father had on the Woodbine Inn and the lives of those who frequented his restaurant. "To this day, when I work with elderly clients on the North Shore, I always ask if they remember The Woodbine, and they almost always have stories of Harold and the legacy he left behind."

Linda's path into the hospitality industry was an outgrowth of her teenage years when she worked at the restaurant. "My Dad's extensive hospitality career took him from working at Trader Vic's at the Westin Bayshore to owning his own restaurant, becoming a fixture in Edgemont Village from 1977 to 1987 when he passed away. Following in his footsteps, I attended BCIT and received a diploma in Hotel & Restaurant Management."

From there, Linda landed her first hotel job as a server at the former Mandarin Oriental Hotel Vancouver and then moved into front desk operations. After that, it was on to employment at Delta Place, Hotel Vancouver, Pacific Palisades, YWCA Hotel/Residence and the Hyatt Regency, finally coming full circle back to the Metropolitan which was once called the Mandarin Oriental.

After almost 20 years in hospitality, Linda's life took a turn. After the events of September 11th, 2001, and its significant impact on the demand for travel, Linda decided it was time to reinvent herself. The change manifested itself in a new career in Professional Organizing & Move Management and eventually her own company, Out of Chaos.

"My team and I work with busy homeowners in the city who need assistance in clearing out the large volume of possessions that many people have in their homes and creating organizing systems for them that help maintain order — thus the name Out of Chaos. We provide door-to-door services for people who are moving, whether downsizing to a smaller home or senior residence, or upgrading to a larger home as their family grows. We handle all the logistics, including packing, hiring movers/removal services/cleaners, unpacking and home setup."

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Enter Linda's sidekick and co-star, Lil' Chu. "The character Lil' Chu was a collaborative effort with one of my puppet-making team members," Linda says. "When I saw Dusty of Color Sound Labs' puppet creation for a country music video, I was hooked and knew I needed my own puppet. That was the impetus for creating Lil' Chu, my sassy sidekick. With tongue-in-cheek, Lil' Chu and I could poke fun at the serious and often overwhelming side of home organization and move management. We had fun creating my alter ego, even trying to match the colour of my lipstick and eye shadow. Working with Lil' Chu, we are able to create easy-to-digest videos on our services with tips that help homeowners get through the process."

With her professional knowledge and experience, Linda is proud

to be able to give back to the community. "Through my work in move management and home organization, particularly senior downsizing, I offer information sessions on how to downsize and where to donate unwanted possessions at various neighbourhood community centres and senior residences."

During her occasional downtime, Linda and her husband David, try to get away and stay out of reach by travelling to Hawaii. "It gives us the ability to wind down, recharge and reconnect," she says. "Maui feels like our second home. From the moment we land, we are in familiar territory that feels easy and comfortable. Seeing old friends, visiting favourite restaurants and spending time on the beautiful beaches, the trip is low key with just the right amount of excitement. And the daily sunny, tennis court time doesn't hurt."

"My husband Dave is a tennis professional who has played for more than 55 years. It's so much a part of his life that a tennis theme even snuck into our wedding plans."

Despite often hearing couples argue on the tennis court, Linda refused to let that impact their holiday time. "They say that if you can't beat them, join them and that's exactly what I did. Learning to play tennis has been such fun, although *play* may not be the right word to use with a husband who's a human ball machine and never misses the center of my racket. You definitely get spoiled."

The couple met during a chance encounter when David was walking his dog Herbie. "We collided on a neighbourhood path and here we are all these years later. Herbie was a Lakeland Terrier and he lived to be 17 years old. Our fur baby, sometimes a little terror, ruled the roost and was very protective of us and his territory. He had an uncanny ability to open the zipper on Dave's tennis bag, pull out all his gear and climb inside the bag as if to say — You're not leaving without me."

For Linda and David, one of their best memories is their wedding day. "To avoid becoming a bridezilla, I told everyone that if anyone said I *had* to do something, and it stressed me out, I would immediately cross it off our list of things to do. So, chair covers — no, receiving line — boring. Instead, we visited each table. First dance — how about everyone dance instead and that's what we all did. That gave us the freedom to enjoy our friends and family as well as the amazing food and drink."

"My old neighbourhood, Edgemont Village, still holds a special place in my heart for welcoming my father and the Woodbine Inn into their lives. To this day, when I speak to old friends from the area, they recount wonderful stories of happy times spent with family and friends at Harold's. I am so grateful to have been part of these special times."

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