

LORI L. CH

My Life in Upper St. Clair

You may be wondering what correlation exists between that lovely white building on the cover of this magazine, and me. That building, and the efforts necessary to develop it, are the culmination of my education and life as a physician and surgeon, all which started in 1964 when my family moved to Upper St. Clair.



Lori Cherup, Upper St. Clair H.S.
Class of 1972;
Head Pantherette

My name is Lori Cherup and I am a product of USC. I went to Eisenhower Elementary, to Ft. Couch when it was 6-7-8th, and to the Upper St. Clair High School when it was aqua blue. I always loved school. I would get there as early as possible in the morning to talk to my friends (Sally Colussy being one of them), and I felt such pride and compulsion about my schoolwork – I would rather die than get anything less than an “A”.

Miss Holman, Mr. Beck, and Mr. Argiro were some of my favorite teachers. Because I had dated a boy who eventually went to Princeton University, I thought (in my Elle Woods-kind of way) that I should apply there also. Luckily I was accepted, and that was the springboard that changed my life. Upper St. Clair prepared me with the tools to compete academically at Princeton. The values I learned here served as the reference point from which I judged the unbelievable variety of experiences I would have

both there, and in medical school. Experience them I did. Although I went to college vaguely interested in medicine and cherished my father, E. David Cherup, M.D. as a role model, my activities there such as varsity gymnastics, cheerleading, The Triangle Club musicals, philosophy courses on Nietzsche, a thesis on Yeats, and a fair amount of socializing with some very attractive Princeton men left me as a 1976 graduate in N.Y.C. (everyone went there after graduation!) not really sure of my purpose in life. One night I got an otitis media (i.e. earache) and ended up in Roosevelt E.R. When my acute, terrible pain was relieved by a young resident on call that night, I decided right then that there is nothing more worth doing in this life than being a doctor and helping people in that very basic way. When I called my parents to tell them that I was dedicated to doing whatever it took to get into medical school, they totally supported me, and that support and decision largely determined the rest of my life.

If high school teaches you, figuratively, to read Dr. Seuss, and college teaches you to draw the illustrations for it, then medical school teaches you to translate the Dead Sea Scrolls and teach it to Harvard Divinity students. I never learned to think so precisely or scientifically until my thought impacted the life of another human being. While at my medical school, Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, I saw some of the first cases of AIDS in NYC in 1980, I did lumbar punctures on acetaminophen-overdosed suicide victims at 3 a.m., I was on call in Roosevelt E.R. the night John Lennon was shot in 1981, and I delivered babies for 14 year olds in Harlem Hospital where everyone in the room yawned, except me. In the midst of that cultural and intellectual shock, I met and married Alexander Kandabarow. If you were swimming across the ocean and thought you weren't going to make it, and you bumped into a rock, Alex would be that “rock.” If you need back surgery, Alex is your guy: steady, steady and steady. We navigated through N.Y.C. and New Jersey and landed for our orthopedic and surgery residencies at the UPMC flagship right here in Oakland.

The next 5 years flew by. I survived by sheer will. General surgery residencies in 1982-7 did not like women residents. I imagine it was similar to the environment at West Point when the first women cadets arrived. I never saw daylight. I was a slave to my senior residents. But I did some amazing things, like crack a chest in the E.R., wire up a chest on the cardiac service, hold some retractors on complicated pediatric surgery, and made rounds at midnight on the Transplant service with Dr. Starzl. Every notable doctor in Pittsburgh circulated through Presby in those 5 years. When you brought your child to Children's to have his laceration sutured, you saw me, the resident, first. Near the end, I knew that I most fit in personality with the more creative, more charismatic plastic surgeons that I had met there, and Dr. Starzl's generous reference letter catapulted me and Alex to Chicago to finish our training in spine and plastic surgery.

You might ask, when did you ever give any thought to a family? My handsome, oldest son Alex was born during a year of research at UPMC on cardiac and muscle transplantation. My loveable Grant was born in Chicago, in the middle of my burn unit rotation: 2 nights before he was born I put a Swan-Ganz catheter in a child whose brother had thrown him and a bottle of alcohol on the floor and lit a match under him. That child died in 2 hours in the burn unit that night – I will never forget it. Somehow, in the midst of all this reconstructive surgery, I

learned from my teachers the seeds of aesthetic surgery and its principles. My heart and intellect took flight: I really understood and liked aesthetic surgery. When I was finished my plastic surgery residency, I decided my best shot at starting a practice was coming back to USC where people knew the Cherup name.

With a \$60,000 loan from PNC in September 1989, I opened a 900 square foot office at 1500 Oxford Drive, assisted by a gal-Friday that I had interviewed in my mother's livingroom. I was accepted on staff at St. Clair, AGH, Canonsburg, and Ohio Valley, and later at

raising my 3 children. In 1992 I spent every morning from 6 to 8 a.m. studying for the test of all tests, and thankfully passed the 2 day ordeal known as the certifying exam for the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

I believe my practice has grown for a few reasons. First, I really enjoy connecting emotionally with my patients. I know most of them very well. Their general health is a concern to me; like my father, I want to be their family doctor for plastic surgical problems. Many patients have returned to my care many times – I love that! Second, I try very hard to give each patient the best surgical

It's time for a short discourse on the merits of aesthetic surgery. If you bought a very expensive house, whether it was perfect and brand-new, or older and needing some repairs, you would work on it, maintain it, upgrade it, not purposely put junky furniture in it, or damage it. Our bodies and faces are just like houses. Aesthetic surgery improves on what is normal, but not optimal. It maintains



Dr. Cherup:

I wanted to thank you for all the great care you have provided to me during this difficult time. I feel very lucky to have you as a doctor. You and your staff provide such quality care — with a warm concern for your patients. It's nice to see such a well organized office. Once again, thank you for all your help.

UPMC and Mon Valley hospitals. My father and my dear uncle Glenn Rankin referred many patients from their family practice to me with plastic surgical problems: carpal tunnels, skin cancers, keloid scars. I also remember some of the harder problems: a 10 year old girl absent a right breast; huge buttock sores in nursing home patients; amputated fingers. Because of the excellent training I had received in our residents' aesthetic surgery clinic at the University of Chicago, I felt quite comfortable performing my first aesthetic surgeries on my own: breast augmentations, breast reductions, and facelifts. I was quite busy running to E.R.'s, operating at the hospitals, managing my growing office and staff, and

outcome that is possible given their pre-existing anatomy and health. There are limits! I ask patients to do difficult things and to endure discomfort for the sake of achieving a fantastic result. Conversely, when patients expect excellent results and sabotage our efforts with smoking, too much alcohol, and inattention to post-op instructions, I get very frustrated and don't exactly want to participate in such an exercise. Third, over half of the process of rendering good surgical care must be credited to the flawless and diligent efforts of an excellent office staff, and I definitely have 6 individuals who care about our patients' welfare as much as I do. Most of my staff, led by office manager Mrs. Beth Hyland, have been with me for over 4 years – we do not have a revolving door where the patient sees a different receptionist every month. It is not unusual for my plastic surgery-educated staff to talk to patients 5 to 10 times on the phone during the week prior to a surgical procedure. They keep me on track and organized; so many patients, when thanking me, thank me for the great communication and advice they also got from my office professionals.



Left to Right:

Susanne Vidale, our biller, Beth Hyland, Dr. Lori, Monica Hall, Kathy O'Connor

youth and vitality to those who want to still be physically their best at each age of life. It is not a necessity, but it is so much more than icing on the cake - it truly makes people feel invigorated and more self-confident. It needs to be carried out by a thoughtful, knowledgeable and creative surgeon, just as you would not hand your house repairs over to an amateur; I strongly recommend that if you are considering plastic surgery, you only seek out a plastic surgeon certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. Yes, I've had some plastic surgery – WHY NOT? Inside I still feel like I'm 19 years old. Now, back to the story on the cover of this magazine.

It is no surprise that, as I began to do more procedures in my office, I felt I was getting better results, and had more control over the intraoperative and post-operative care. Our hospital professionals work very hard to help the surgeons and cater to their whims, but occasionally I have to work with people who are unfamiliar with the procedure being done or just don't particularly like plastic surgery. Most lay people don't realize that surgeons do not get reimbursed for their supplies used when they treat patients in their offices. By building my own operating room near my office, I can control everything that happens to a surgical patient before, during and after a procedure, I can get paid for all that care rendered, and I can control my schedule for better efficiency.

RADIANCE



The goal at the end of the tunnel is to “surgically have it all”: outstanding, predictable care for patients undergoing plastic surgery with economy of time and resources for the surgeon.

In April of 2002 I began working with The Lettrich Group architects on plans for an office building and surgery center. The financial feasibility study was carried out by my good friend, business and personal accountant Kathy L. Hess, CPA of USC. With excellent advice from Robert MacWhinnie (also of USC) regarding my financial position and future, I felt confident that I could undertake this enormous project. My wonderful parents, in a moment of vision, loaned me some funds to purchase a lot in South Fayette on Washington Pike and Boyce Road. (I will dedicate the building to them in a little ceremony this month). I felt I had a good location for accessibility for my patients – patients from Wexford, Monroeville, West Virginia, Ohio, Erie and of course Pittsburgh can get easily to the Bridgeville exit of I-79. We had to obtain approval for the plans from the Department of Health, Labor and Industry, South Fayette Township, and eventually Medicare and JCAHO. I settled on a general contractor, McHolme Builders, Inc., who had built parts of Dr. Phillip Ripepi’s Southwestern Surgery Center and The Pointe in North Fayette. Mr. Gene McLane of PNC Bank at our St. Clair branch won our loan bid, and was



Surgical technician Darlene Bedillion with Dr. Cherup;
Above Left: Dr. Cherup and Darlene in surgery

instrumental in getting construction finally started in September of 2003. With some help from the weather, we hope to be finished and pass our Medicare and state inspections in late June.

When arriving into our 2-story reception room in our upper level office, patients will be greeted by our receptionist Monica Hall, sip on freshly brewed coffee or tea, and gaze at our commissioned artwork “Panopticon” hanging from the vaulted ceiling. Once in the consultation room they will be evaluated by me and given a thorough exam and information package regarding their problem of concern. A separate photography room will ensure I have good pre-op photos for study and documentation. My patient coordinators Kathy O’Connor and Beth Hyland handle all of the arrangements between insurance carriers and primary care physicians to make sure that all financial issues are dealt with, in the privacy of their coordinators’ office. A sunny conference room looking out on Boyce Road will allow for discussions with family members while we care for the patient. Our upstairs office will also be the home of Radiance Advanced Skin and Laser Center led by our beautiful and experienced aesthetician Susan Mowry, R.N.

When the patient arrives for surgery on a later date, she or he will enter underneath the large portico on the backside of the building off the Boyce Road driveway. On the lower level the Radiance Surgery Center will be complete with 2 general anesthesia-prepared and 1 local sedation-prepared operating rooms, and pre- and post-op recovery units staffed with our hand-picked professionals including my surgical technician Darlene Bedillion, C.S.T. I will perform all kinds of reconstructive plastic surgery, including skin cancer excision, scar revisions, breast reconstruction, and hand surgery there, as well as facelifts, liposuction, and of course breast augmentation. I am now recruiting and negotiating with other surgeons, including ophthalmologists, gynecologists, and general surgeons to also utilize our facility, and it is going well. My husband even tells me he can perform some smaller spine surgeries in our center. We have plans for an overnight care facility and are looking for a nearby location.

There are a few things that I enjoy more than thinking about plastic surgery: jogging around our wonderful high school on a sunny afternoon; watching my sons play football and cheering for our team; running on the treadmill next to my beautiful daughter Alivia or shopping with her; having a glass of wine and dinner with my husband. I love my home, I love our township, and I am very happy to be here in USC living out my dreams.



Left to Right:
#51 Kevin Reidy, Lori Cherup, Alex Kandabarow, Alivia, #17 Alex, #23 Grant

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