



Creative Inspirations: Meet the Tay Family

BY APRIL WALL, PHOTOS BY CRAIG AND AMANDA STARKEY, IMAGE DESIGN

Wei Jing Loo and Keng Yeow Tay met while attending New South Wales University in Australia, where a young and chivalrous Keng Yeow would pack up at his library cubical and offer to accompany Wei Jing Loo safely home when it was late. As time went on the couple and their friends would often walk together. On her 21st birthday the boys, led by Keng Yeow, picked her up and threw her into the ocean while walking home along the beach. Soaking wet, Wei Jing was smiling when she boarded the bus to go home. Ah, true love! Well, it must have been – as the two went on to get married not once, not twice, but three times!

At the conclusion of medical school, the young couple planned their own wedding, a special celebration with friends, before everyone went their separate ways. They even baked their own wedding cake. Knowing they had plans to move to the U.K. to begin residency, their parents were adamant that wedding ceremonies be held again to assure their respective friends and neighbours that the young couple had not eloped; so another wedding was held in Singapore with Keng Yeow's family and a third wedding in Malaysia at the insistence of Wei Jing's mother. The couple still travels each year to visit their families abroad.

She remembers the U.K. cities they lived in fondly, especially the history and the architecture that they grew accustomed to over 10 years. "I thought we would live there forever," says Wei Jing, remembering their time in Cambridge. Working at the same hospital during their residency years, where both Keng and Wei were 'Dr. Tay', made her soon decided to return to her own name to avoid confusion. Following their residency, an opportunity in Toronto for Keng Yeow prompted the family to immigrate to Canada.

22 years and 4 continents later, the Tays are living in Hunt Club and raising their own family, Elena Tay (14) and Edward Tay (12). In the middle of it all is Coco, the family's 2-year-old miniature golden doodle. She chews shoes and steals clothing (often hiding Wei's clothing under beds), loves going for walks, playing with the family and relaxing with anyone who finds time to watch television.

Keng Yeow is an associate professor and site chief for the department of radiology at Victoria Hospital. Wei Jing is an adjunct professor at Western University, a dermatologist and the medical director of her own business, DermEffects.

Despite pursuing her profession of dermatology, Wei Jing never lost her love of history and architecture. She purchased a historic London church in Hyde Park to house her business, and promptly began plans for extensive restorations. These projects were carefully executed to preserve the history (and 'story') of the church. In 2013 Wei Jing Loo was nominated for and received an Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Award through the Heritage London Foundation for her project that 'preserved the built heritage'.

This renaissance woman's love of art and creativity led her to painting, where her own original pieces are donated to raise money for charity. Providing the church as a venue for her Art for Charity event 2 years ago, Wei Jing invited guests to view and bid on 56 pieces of art up for auction. The evening raised \$10,000 for United Way and the Montessori Academy of London. Last month she helped raise funds for London's Transplant Program, by contributing original pieces to New Canvas of Life: The Art of Transplantation. In her newly completed studio above their home's garage, Wei Jing is already creating new watercolour paintings (poppies are a favourite), mixed-media art that sometimes uses found materials like shells or miscellaneous metals, and recent explorations in encaustic – or hot wax – painting, for her next Art for Charity event tentatively planned for 2019.

As Wei's creative interests began early on, she now encourages her own children to explore their creative sides, even while imparting the sage family motto, "A diamond is a lump of coal that stuck with it". During further renovations of her historic Hyde Park church – this time in the sanctuary – Wei, Elena and Edward discovered the 'ghost chairs'; marks



Wei Jing and her family are inviting the community to submit their own inspired verse, poem or phrase to add to the story of the 'ghost chairs'.

For more information, contact Wei Jing Loo at dermeffects@gmail.com.



left on the walls after old pews had been removed. It was decided that there was a story to preserve... and a story to tell. Elena and Edward wrote beautiful prose with phrases like, "...History is held on this wall, imprinted by 19th-century pews", "...The shadow of a historical past, the sanctuary for reminiscing..." and "We don't mind that it is old, we don't care if it's faded or worn out, we love the story behind it, the history within it and the patina on it." A selected verse will be mounted on the wainscoting with each 'ghost chair' to create an artful preservation and presentation of what once was there.

Writing isn't the only talent Elena and Edward share. The siblings play the piano and enjoy competitive sports; Elena with swimming and running, and Edward with tennis, hockey and soccer. Elena also volunteers at the Mission Thrift Store and SARI Therapeutic Riding and is

taking up the Duke of Edinburgh Challenge. Edward is witty and often the joker in the Tay household. He enjoys playing computer games and also loves to invent and build things - including converting a spray-on sunscreen container into a flame-thrower to light the fire pit when it's time to roast marshmallows.

Keng and Wei describe their children as "world troopers" as they have already been on 6 continents and would love to visit Antarctica one day. Until then, the Tay family are enjoying life in London, in their peaceful neighbourhood of Hunt Club Green.

Do you know a neighbour who has a story to share?
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