

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: Hing Hua Chun, MD

Hing Hua Chun, MD, 1932-2002

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Hing Hua Chun was born in Honolulu on March 27, 1932, to parents who were second-generation Chinese Americans. In 1952 he earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Hawaii, where he was in the pre-med club. It was here where he first acquired the nickname, "Hunky," by which he would become nationally known later in life. He earned an MD from Northwestern University Medical School in 1956 and completed his internship in Philadelphia, where that same year he married Alberta Nobu. They had three sons who all went into medical fields.

Chun spent his entire medical career in his native Honolulu, where he worked as a heart specialist and internist. Early on he was a partner in the Chock Pang Clinic, a longtime Honolulu institution that was co-founded by Hong Quon Pang, a 1928 Northwestern University Medical School graduate. In 1967, while on staff at St. Francis Medical Center, Chun suggested the development of a special coronary care unit after seeing relatively young people dying of heart attacks. His interest in the prevention of heart disease led him to quit smoking, lose weight, and begin exercising more, which led to a lifelong passion for long-distance running. In 1968 Chun became the Chief of Medicine at St. Francis and held the position for 13 years. He was also a member of the faculty at the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine.



The Chun family (Hing Hua is second from left, wife Connie is third from right) trains for the Boston Marathon while wearing "The Hunky Bunch" t-shirts, from Sports Illustrated

He continued to make house calls and to make rounds at nursing homes around the island of Oahu until months before his death on June 12, 2022. His wife Connie made a name for herself separately in Hawaii: in 1980 she became the first Filipina and first nurse elected to the Hawaii House of Representatives. She died in 2020 and a park in Honolulu was named in her honor. In 2022 their son Jerold, a neuroscientist, became one of only two people to have run all 50 Honolulu Marathons, continuing his father's and his family's legacy.



Chun's medical school class of 1956 portrait, Galter Library Special Collections

In 1970 Chun married his second wife Connie, a native of the Philippines who had worked as the director of nursing at San Francisco's Golden Gate Hospital and as assistant director of nursing at St. Francis in Honolulu. They created a blended family with his three sons and her three daughters from previous marriages, exactly mirroring the makeup of the family in the television show "The Brady Bunch" that was airing at the time. The family began to make national news in 1973 as they trained to run marathons together. Using Chun's nickname from his youth, they were known as the "Hunky Bunch," in reference to the popular sitcom. In 1974 they were featured in *Sports Illustrated* as they trained for the Boston Marathon. At their peak, the family collectively ran 25,000 miles and wore out 24 pairs of shoes in one year. Many of the children set records for their age groups. Chun himself ran the Honolulu Marathon 25 years in a row, beginning in 1973, its first year.

Later in his career, Chun shifted his practice to specialize in geriatrics.

Selected References

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