Shuping Wang

October 20, 1959 ~ September 21, 2019

Public Health Whistleblower

Shuping "Sunshine" Wang (October 20, 1959 , September 21, 2019)

Dr. Shuping Wang passed away on Saturday, September 21 while hiking in Salt Lake City with friends and her husband Gary. In recent years she worked as a research associate at the Radiology and Imaging Sciences Lab at the University of Utah. During her tenure at the University of Utah, she also worked as a medical researcher in the Immunology and Pathology, Dermatology, Nephrology, Neurobiology and Anatomy Labs. She is best known in public health communities worldwide as a whistleblower in the Henan AIDS Blood Contamination Disaster whose refusal to back down in the face of government bullying saved the lives of at least tens of thousands of rural villagers.

In the 1980s Shuping was a doctor and researcher of hepatitis in China's Henan Province. In 1991 she was assigned to work at a for-profit blood plasma collection station run by the Epidemic Prevention Center in the city of Zhoukou. While working at this station she realized that due to severe cross-contamination in the plasma collection process, government-run plasma collection stations were likely to become vectors in a hepatitis C and AIDS epidemic. When she reported her findings to officials at the Henan Ministry of Health in 1992 she was fired from her position.

Early experiences with suffering during the Cultural Revolution made Shuping unyielding in her refusal be silenced by People's Republic of China (PRC) bullies. As a child during the Cultural Revolution, she witnessed her parents forced to kneel onstage with dunce caps on their heads and be denounced by thousands of villagers because her father had been a soldier for the Kuomintang Army. Red Guards called Shuping ‚Äòspy daughter' and tried to make her denounce her parents. She refused. At the age of eight she was kicked out of school. Shuping had an insatiable hunger to learn, and peeked in through the school's windows to see what her teacher was writing on the chalkboard, until her classmates shut the windows on her. Finally, in 1972, at the age of 13, she moved away from her family's village, changed her surname from Zou to Wang and was formally adopted by an uncle who was a Communist Party cadre. Only then could she go back to school.

In 1994, Shuping took a job in the Zhoukou Health Bureau. She also received permission to set up a Clinical Testing Center in one room of the Tuberculosis Institute. From inside this clinic she monitored her city's blood supply. In 1995 she collected blood samples from 408 donors at local plasma stations and used personal savings to test each sample with three separate HIV kits. She found the HIV-positive rate to be 13%. Shuping reported her findings to the head of the Health Bureau, who challenged her results, suggesting her data was incorrect. She took 55 HIV-positive samples by train to the Institute of Virology in Beijing, where her results were confirmed. Upon

return to her home province, she was interrogated by Provincial Security officers and berated by health officials who were furious at her for damaging the reputation of Henan province. Presumably acting on government orders, a retired health official was sent to damage her clinic and beat her with a wooden baton. Shortly afterwards the clinic's electricity and water supply was cut off and Shuping was forced to shut it down. Her marriage suffered as a result of her whistleblowing, as did her domestic job prospects. Her then husband, who also worked at the Ministry of Health, was ostracized by his colleagues. Eventually they divorced.

In 2001 Shuping moved to the United States to begin a research position at the Medical College of Wisconsin, where she took the English name "Sunshine". Several years later she married Gary Christensen, and the couple moved to Salt Lake City, where Shuping began work at the University of Utah and Gary took a position as Chief Financial Officer at Salt Lake City\s Living Planet Aquarium. Shuping's friends and family knew her as a talented painter and exuberant practical joker who loved wearing rainbow socks and teaching her dog Bagel and cats Coco and Billy new tricks. All three of her children followed Shuping into the medical field. Her eldest daughter, Samantha Geng, is a Clinical Pharmacist at Tucson Medical Center. Her youngest daughter, Bingbing (Julie) Zou, is a Second Lieutenant Active Army Nurse at Walter Reed Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. Her son, David Zou, is a Quality Engineer at Dynatronics, a medical device company in Salt Lake City.

Shuping is also survived by her brother Tian Cheng Zou. Shuping was preceded in death by her parents Bang Yan Zou and Yun Ling Huang, and two brothers, Tian Jue Zou and Tian Yi Zou, all from China.

Even as she worked long hours to support her family and build a new life in the United States, Shuping continued to speak publicly about how Henan government-run plasma stations caused a rural AIDS epidemic. Every time she did family, friends and former colleagues back in Henan were visited by Chinese State Security. Still she would not be silenced. In late August 2019, after Chinese State Security officers made threatening visits to relatives and former colleagues in Henan, trying to pressure Shuping to cancel the production of a play inspired by her life that would have its world premiere at London's Hampstead Theatre on September 12, 2019. Shuping was uncowed. Instead she called out her PRC bullies in a public statement that made international headlines and attended the premiere. At the curtain call the actress playing the role inspired by Shuping's whistleblowing work invited Shuping to stand onstage and take a bow. She received a standing ovation.

Funeral arrangements are scheduled for Saturday September 28, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. with a viewing prior from 12:00-2:00 at Larkin Sunset Lawn, 2350 E. 1300 S., Salt Lake City, UT 84108. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Best Friends Animal Society of Utah, in honor of Shuping's deep love for animals and their well-being. Online condolences welcomed at www.larkinmortuary.com.