

WALKING IN MEMORY



Manhattan College senior Chuck Theisen met Elizabeth (Liz) Henze on a blind date in the mid 1950s while she was attending the College of Mount St. Vincent in New York. After a bit of convincing, Chuck finally won her over and after he finished college and received a commission in the Navy, they were married on December 26, 1957.

"For 57 years Liz was the epitome of the biblical wife: loving spouse, caring mother, and later strong business woman. For the last 18 years she dealt with scleroderma," says Chuck. "In her final three years, it was a struggle that she

bore with strength but it finally won out. Her love for life and her family never wavered." Liz had systemic scleroderma.

Chuck, who now resides in Florida, will travel to Maryland to join his family and friends for this year's **Stepping Out to Cure Scleroderma 5K Walk/Run on May 21, 2016**. Daughter, Elizabeth Theisen, whom the family calls Lisa, lives in Crofton, Maryland and is one of four children organizing Team Mama Liz. "My sister, Mary Beth, came across information about the Walk and passed it along. Mary Beth works and lives in Afghanistan and will not be at the event, but will be walking on a treadmill that day to be with the family in spirit. She told me, "I'll do it from Afghanistan, and you do it from there," Lisa recounts.

Lisa's other sister, Jeanne, and her two sons, Jason and Joseph, will come from New Jersey. Elizabeth's brother, Chuck and his wife Mo, are both nurses in Pennsylvania. They will not be able to attend due to work, but are sending their best wishes for a successful event. "This is our first time participating in the Walk, and we are very excited to help the Chapter raise funds and to honor our mother," Lisa says. [Register today to join Team Mama Liz and others at our 2016 Walk!](#)

A TRIBUTE TO ELIZABETH HENZE THEISEN



Liz, was born on October 2, 1937 to a loving family of seven in the Bronx, NY. She graduated from the Academy of Mount St. Vincent in Tuxedo Park, New York. After Liz and Chuck married in December 1957, they moved 3,000 miles to Monterey, CA. It was on this adventure, while honeymooning, Liz learned to drive a stick shift as they drove across the country. Later, Chuck and Liz moved to Guam. "She enjoyed their Quonset hut and the beautiful sunsets," says Lisa. "She was especially proud of learning how to tie down windows when a typhoon was coming through the area."

Liz always found time for volunteer work, while raising her four children. "Mom was always there to ensure we were getting the best education," says son, Chuck. "Mom was also always devoted to causes for children." Liz was active in her children's schools and running CCD religious education programs. She even built one from the ground up at one of the Navy bases. Liz was especially committed to her work at the Navy Relief Society where she was presented the Meritorious Service Award, the highest honor given to a volunteer. In addition to thousands of hours volunteering, Liz re-established a closed chapter at one base, recruited volunteers, and helped countless young sailors.

In 1979, Chuck retired from the Navy, and in 1982, he and Liz started a consulting company, HFA, Inc. Liz served as the President, putting to use the management skills she had developed from her years of volunteer work. "My mother and father loved each other dearly," says Lisa. "They always wanted to work together."



Chuck and Liz gradually grew the company from a staff of 6 part-time workers to a work force of over 250 employees. In 1995, Liz was named the Small Business Person of the year by the Small Business Administration. The company became the favorite supplier of Ordnance and Explosive Waste services, cleaning up left over unexploded ordnance at target ranges throughout the U.S. and Canada. In addition to clearing closed U.S. Army sites, HFA won contracts to clean up factory sites for Dupont, Hercules, and Morton Thiokol. In the final year before they sold the company, HFA was awarded a contract by the Israeli Defense Forces to clean up a factory site at which nitro-cellulose was manufactured.

"The employees adored my mother," says Lisa. "They would say, 'She took care of us like a good mama should.' We thought about it, and decided what better name for the Walk than "Team Mama Liz? She was a "mama" to so many!"

While running the company Liz found time to mother a special needs foster child who had severe learning disabilities. "After 3 years, Jennifer went from a 10 year-old with little cognitive development to a functioning young lady who could read and write at the 2nd grade level," says Chuck. "She went from an angry, withdrawn little girl to a self-confident teenager." In retirement in Southwest Florida, Liz's devotion to children continued when she became a Guardian ad Litem representing children removed from their homes for various family problems. She also volunteered as a tutor, teaching English to Hispanic workers at Shadow Wood.



"Mom loved being a grandmother," says daughter, Mary Beth. "When she suffered painful wounds as a result of scleroderma and Raynauds, she said Joseph took away her pain when he said, 'I love you.'"

She loved listening to Jason tell everything he learned in school or about books he read. Her grandson Joseph likes to quote his grandmother, "that's why they make chocolate and vanilla." Liz used the expression to explain "just because someone was different or wanted something different from you, it was OK to just accept and respect the difference."

Sergio Jimenez, rheumatologist at Thomas Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia, treated Liz for many years. "His use of penicillamine provided help and kept Liz going for 18 years," says Chuck. "She was his star patient through those years." The last few years of Liz's life saw the emergence of some lung and heart damage. She developed sores on her toes and then fingers, leading to the removal of one toe. Liz died due to complications from scleroderma.



Elizabeth (Liz) Henze Theisen was an amazing woman. She was a devoted wife and loving mother, a staunch volunteer, and a trailblazing business leader. Her story is one of strength and the unwavering love of her family.

The Scleroderma Foundation is very grateful to the Theisen family for sharing their memories of Liz with us and for inspiring all of us. We also thank them for their efforts to help the Chapter raise funds through our walk for scleroderma research and to provide support services and educational forums to our members and their families.

2016 STEPPING OUT FOR A CURE WALK

25 DAYS UNTIL THE WALK!

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6th Stepping Out to Cure Scleroderma

Greater Baltimore Walk/Run
May 21, 2016

Atholton High School Track
6520 Freetwon Road
Columbia, MD 21044

Hosted by the Scleroderma Foundation
Greater Washington, DC Chapter and
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