

Documents Evidencing Marriage Bona Fides Narrative

NOTE: Throughout this narrative, Shih-Yi CHIEN will be referred to by her chosen American name of Phoebe and her daughter, En-Chi Stacy CHIEN, will be referred to by her given middle name of Stacy.

Phoebe CHIEN and I were introduced to each other on 13 June 2008. At the time, both of us were members of e-Harmony, an on-line dating service. Both of us had found it difficult to meet people through our normal lives – me because of the constraints of my professional life and her because of the constraints of being a single mother of an infant – and had decided to give on-line dating a try. After progressing through e-Harmony's Guided Communications process, we began conversing directly via e-mail on 25 June 2008. Over the course of the next several weeks, we determined that we had a great deal in common and, in particular, were looking for the same things long term as far as a family life was concerned.

At this time Phoebe was visiting her older sister who lives in Shakopee, Minnesota. After numerous e-mail exchanges we were interested in pursuing a relationship and though we preferred the slow pace that a long distance courtship normally implies, the fact that her authorized stay in the U.S. would end in mid-September forced us to accelerate that pace. We discussed getting married before her stay expired, but were not comfortable with that. Instead, we decided to spend some time together prior to their returning to Taiwan and then, if we were both still interested, continuing a long-distance courtship at a more reasonable pace.

The intensity with which Phoebe and I communicate is indicated by the fact that, in the eight months we have known each other, we have exchanged over six hundred e-mails. The first 150 of those occurred in the eight weeks from when we were introduced until Phoebe and Stacy arrived in Colorado Springs for a visit. During their five day stay we discussed many issues, both short-term and long-term. While we were aware that we had barely begun to learn about each other, we were very impressed with how well all three of us got along and were optimistic about our potential to forge a healthy family. This was particularly emphasized by the experience we had dealing with Stacy's first significant bout of separation anxiety.

We again briefly discussed the possibility of getting married immediately, but were still uncomfortable with taking that step that soon. We decided that the best course would be for them to return to Taiwan for a few months see if our ensuing correspondence led us to conclude that we did wish to get married. If so, the plan was for them to return to the U.S. as visitors and for us to live together for a few months before getting married and beginning the immigration process.

After Phoebe and Stacy returned to her sister's home in Minnesota our e-mail exchanges continued at a high rate as did our exploration of every issue we could both think of that might be relevant to our future together. Topics ranged from whether we wanted more children (we both have a desire to have one, possibly two, more children) to whether we want our children to attend public school or be home schooled (we are split on this one but confident that we will achieve a consensus well before that decision must be made). We discussed family finances, cultural and religious considerations, respective roles and responsibilities within the family, interests and hobbies, health issues, philosophy on raising and disciplining children, and what role we feel parents should play in shaping the paths that their children pursue in life. By the time that they left for Taiwan we were both willing to commit to a good faith effort to forge a lasting family, although we were still very aware that the brevity of our relationship would invariably lead to significant challenges.

As we began researching the immigration process we discovered that our original plan to have Phoebe and Stacy return to the United States on their existing tourist visas was not a legal option because their intent would not be to remain temporarily; if things worked as we hoped the intent would be for us to marry and for them to then remain permanently. While we understand that people commonly follow this path, we chose to adhere to this nation's immigration laws. We therefore explored other legal options including obtaining K-1/K-2 visas for Phoebe and Stacy, however the time frame and cost for this route was estimated to exceed that associated with my traveling to Taiwan, us being married there, and then petitioning directly for immigrant visas for both Phoebe and Stacy. Similarly, we decided not to apply for K-3/K-4 visas subsequent to our overseas marriage because of the cost associated with doing the Adjustments of Status combined with the likelihood that it might not get them into the country any earlier. Furthermore, travelling to Taiwan would permit me the opportunity to meet Phoebe's family still living there.

At this point our marriage plans were for me to travel to Taiwan between semesters at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (where I am a Ph.D. student in Electrical Engineering). If possible, we intended to marry before the end of 2008 in order to file our taxes jointly as a married couple. However, after booking the airfare it was discovered that there was a three working day processing delay between the times that a couple registers to be married in Taiwan and when the ceremony can take place. This, unfortunately, would place the marriage a few days into 2009. The possibility of changing the travel dates was explored but it was quickly determined that this would be prohibitively expensive. Therefore it was accepted that we would have to forego the tax benefits of being married in 2008.

In early December 2008, while researching the requirements for recording, with the State of Colorado, a marriage that occurs in a foreign country it was discovered that Colorado permits marriage-by-proxy. Not only would this permit the marriage to occur in 2008, but the process was considerably simpler than the process of being married in Taiwan. Therefore, after several

days' discussion, we decided to marry officially in the State of Colorado by proxy and then repeat our vows in Taiwan, primarily for the benefit of Phoebe's family there.

The arrangements for the proxy marriage went smoothly: I obtained and prepared the necessary documents and e-mailed them to Phoebe, who then signed them, had them notarized, and returned them to me via Fed-Ex. The ceremony took place in the chambers of El Paso County Fourth Judicial District Court Judge James Patterson on the evening of 12 December 2008 with USAF Capt Carolyn R. Bartley serving as Phoebe's proxy and witnessed by USAF Lt Col Leemon C. Baird III.

I arrived in Taipei, Taiwan on the evening of 29 December 2008 and the first task we attempted was to register for a notarial marriage with the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following the procedures outlined on websites of the U.S. Department of State, the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the American Institute in Taiwan, we had our marriage certificate and a modified statement of celibacy (which stated not that I was single and free to marry, but rather that I was married to Phoebe and free to reaffirm those vows) at the American Institute in Taiwan. However, when we presented these to the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the clerk was insistent that the documents first had to be authenticated by the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Kansas City. Since there was insufficient time to mail those documents to the TECO office and receive them back following the expected turn-around time, we were unable to proceed further with having a ceremony performed in Taiwan. As stated previously, the purpose of this ceremony was primarily for the benefit of Phoebe's family and since our plan was (and still is) to have a more formal ceremony once Phoebe and Stacy are both in the United States, we did not feel this matter worth pursuing any further.

Phoebe and I spent most of the time during our honeymoon traveling around Taiwan, usually staying in a different hotel each night. We also had an extensive set of wedding photographs taken by Cadier Paris. I departed Taiwan for the United States on 17 January 2009. Since my return Phoebe and I continue to be in e-mail contact nearly every day as we make plans for establishing our household here in the U.S.. In fact, surprisingly few of our communications have focused on the immigration process.

It should be noted that Phoebe and I have explored establishing co-mingled financial accounts; however, because Phoebe does not yet qualify for a Social Security Number and because of the foreign transaction fees involved, it has been both more convenient and more cost effective to use PayPal as a means of electronically transferring funds from my account to Phoebe's account. Therefore, this has been the primary means by which I have provided financial support for my wife and child while we are separated. I have, however, made Phoebe the beneficiary of my two TD Ameritrade retirement accounts.