

When the Young, Bright Prodigy evolves into the
Great Seasoned Master.....

Enter. Dr. Michael Byun

Highly regarded Professors at the prestigious Northwestern University did not know what to make of this young boy genius from South Korea over twenty-five years ago who questioned their already established methods of what is commonly referred to as a 'facelift'. He insisted, instead, on referring to a facelift as more appropriately 'facial reconstructive surgery' or even more understandably and simply as 'MUSCLE REPAIR for the aging face'. While you might think this nuance in language is subtle, it actually clarifies 2 very salient points in the mind of the potential cosmetic patient: one, it shatters the stigma of 'getting work done' for the sake of vanity; after all, your muscle has been damaged to the point of sagging or even dangling off the bone under the skin. You must realize, in the eyes of Byun, this is simply a corrective medical procedure to the aging process. And two, it differentiates the actual medical procedure itself as being totally and distinctly different from that of other Plastic Surgeons' methods as a breakthrough establishing the 'Byun Method' as the vanguard for attaining a more organic, natural, beautiful result.

You will still look like you. And that's the difference.

Written & Illustrated by
Gretchen Gordon Minyard

GENERAL
SUPER BILL
RHINOPLASTY

SILICONE/GEL

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Dr. Michael Byun is a serious doctor with seriously comprehensive experience unlike many of his peers setting him heads and shoulders above all the rest. I'm not just talking about those Plastic Surgeons in the United States, he is quite well known in his peer group as being one of the best Plastic Surgeons in all the world. Unlike most at his level however, while he certainly has enjoyed traveling the world giving National Presentations, writing Medical Research Abstracts, conducting Scientific Research and developing Revolutionary Products... a vast swath of his resume, his true love and passion, still resides in Chicago performing very hands on, in depth work rearchitecting peoples' bones, nerves, muscle and skin. *How lucky is Chicago to have arguably the world's most foremost Plastic Surgeons right here in our own backyard!* When he was a young man, his ideas were bold and new; advanced even. No one had ever thought to question the esteemed Northwestern professors' old school rudimentary methods and techniques before Byun came to study at Northwestern University Medical School, one of America's top universities in the Midwest. At times, it felt like he was educating them with his already cultivated medical vocabulary and precise surgical knowledge, but all would agree that his theoretical ideas were fascinating.

Before meeting Byun, I read his lengthy resume packed with outstanding schools, academic appointments, high level positions, endless honours, fellowships, etc. but one of the things that most caught my eye occurred more so at the beginning of his fledgling career; when he earned some truly immeasurable experience in COMPASSION. Not only did he do a substantial amount of work as a Trauma Plastic Surgeon which gave him a comprehensive anatomical understanding of every dimension of the face and body, but this meaningful Critical Care unequivocally helped him to realize how much his work truly effects people in a very real way, obviously a very necessary preliminary lesson to being a Great Master. Shortly after that stint was the other 1-2 punch that truly launched his career. I learned that he ingeniously developed some entirely new, creative techniques while working as a Pediatric Plastic Surgeon that initially addressed the unique issues a child goes through as their face changes and develops with age. However, this was also the pivotal point at which he changed his entire thinking about how to consider the muscle tissue as it develops with aging adult patients as well. Hence, the 'facelift'-- only this time using the 'Byun Method'. And the rest is history. In fact, he uses these exact same revolutionary techniques today in his facial reconstructive work by using a pediatric size endoscope (so seamless, undetectable scarring) to wrap regrouped muscle fibre tissue in the cheekbone area back together like a hammock only suturing it higher into the bone periosteum for a more beautiful, youthful look. In other words, some of these crucial distinctions differentiate the Byun Method completely from the old techniques and he established them in his early years where he gained consequential, real world experience. Furthermore, to have worked particularly in those two areas dealing with such a unique, specific patient population base obviously garnered him a wealth of knowledge, skill, consideration, sympathy, tenderness and humanity.

Many people have wondered how it is that Dr. Byun has had such tremendous results for the entire length of his career. Is it because he is that gifted with his hands? Is it because he understands the anatomy better than anyone else? Is it because he was always the number one student in his class at all the top schools and universities? Or is it because he is also a highly skilled, exquisite, award winning artist? While all of these points have certainly contributed to Byun creating the Byun Method, the answer is the Byun Method itself.



Evidently, every Plastic Surgeon currently learns and follows a strict, almost militaristic disciplinary method called the Halstedian Approach where the students have intense and repetitive opportunities to treat surgical patients under the supervision of a skilled surgical teacher. This approach comes from the well-known Dr. William Stewart Halsted, M.D., born in 1852, called the "Father of Modern Surgery", who was one of the founding pioneers in surgery at John Hopkins Hospital emphasizing strict aseptic techniques while being an early champion of newly discovered anesthetics and introduced several new operations including the radical mastectomy for breast cancer. His historic operating room, a small space in Ward G at John Hopkins Hospital is well known for being the setting where many miracles took place. As a result, the Halstedian Approach is still very much in use to this day. Dr. Byun obviously trained, schooled and mastered this extremely intense program using the Halstedian Approach. Like every other educational institution he had attended, once again, he achieved the number one status at Northwestern University Medical School. Because of this great honour, Byun was specifically hand-chosen to be the first Fellowship by the 'holy trinity' of Northwestern Plastic Surgery. This trinity included the late, great Dr. B. Herold 'Hal' Griffith, Dr. Peter McKinney and Dr. Victor L. Lewis. Dr. Michael Byun's brilliant questions and erudite discussions on surgical anatomy, method and technique earned him the position as the very first Resident (Take note that Dr. Halsted created the role, 'resident', implying that they would practically live at the hospital working very long, intensive hours.) to ever be chosen for a fellowship at Northwestern Plastic Surgery in order to spearhead their new, highly acclaimed, integrated, seven year program. The fact is, even though he has won countless awards, honours, and accolades over the years, interestingly enough, this by far is the most meaningful as he has nothing but utter genuine respect for all those who took part in his meaningful educational experience here in Chicago. His humility is endearing as his gratefulness shines through in all his many anecdotes of lessons learned by them, but it also shines through in even his gifted teachers' profound life lessons as a young boy in South Korea.



Dr. Byun fondly recalls the very first accolade he ever remembers getting as a child. His teacher was trying to demonstrate how physics and design, or science and art, work hand in hand with each other. Each student was given the same exact materials for the assignments of making a paper airplane that could sustain flight: a certain number of popsicle sticks, a few sheets of paper, and glue. The winner would be decided on whose plane would fly the furthest and longest. They had the whole afternoon to work on it. At the end of the day, the teacher would test each flight pattern. At this point, Byun meekly chuckles as he remembers his teacher repeatedly throwing a few other kids' planes in the air only to have them dive straight down to the ground again and again like a lead balloon. However, each time the teacher would fly his plane, it would soar through the sky almost endlessly! All the kids cheered as they fully understood the skills required to perform such a task. He was the clear winner and there was absolutely no dispute among the other children. Interestingly enough, some of these small children are industry giants today with some quite familiar family names like Samsung, Hyundai, and the Koo family (LG) so as it turns out, each of them was able to strongly benefit from this profound lesson uniting art and science.

Dr. Byun and his work have been written about countless times over the years, but when I asked when was the first time an article had been written about him, again he laughed. He and his family had just migrated from South Korea to Southern California as he entered his junior high years. He recalls a huge art contest throughout the entire state for kids his age that was being sponsored by Citibank. Apparently, every kid in California was extremely excited about this contest as it potentially set the ground work for any path possible in the creative arts in a highly creative community. As you could probably guess, the young Byun won First Place. But the reporter who interviewed him just after having received the award couldn't get over his response and it ended up being the small newspaper's major headline in big, bold letters on the frontpage edition of the Sunday Newspaper that week. The reporter wrote that he had just congratulated him on winning this highly competitive art contest and had asked the young Byun what direction he wished to focus his creative talents. So incredibly, the headline read, **"I WANT TO BE A SURGEON!"** with an exclamation mark as the reporter couldn't get over the audacity after having just won this highly touted art contest. Obviously, the reporter hadn't been introduced to the masterful equation that unites art with science.

Dr. Michael Byun is the oldest son of four children to his immigrant parents. His elegant, affluent Japanese Mother, Teresa, is from a very long line of exceedingly brilliant scholars while his South Korean Father, on the other hand, is no stranger to labor intensive, hard work. The Byun family were well known as being one of the main contributing families that achieved the "Miracle of Han River" in Korea. His father ended up being the CEO of Hwa-il Construction Company that not only built Korea's current highway system, but previous to that, Byun's Grandfather actually built the very famous, first hydroelectric power dam in SoYang and

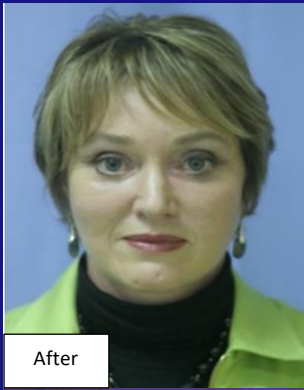
Choonchun, South Korea. So the Byun Family have a very long established history of not only finding new pathways but also finding new, creative and scientific, unique revolutionary solutions.

Although Byun was born where his mother is from in Tokyo, he was always raised in his father's native South Korea only visiting his mother's family on holidays and vacation.

Like many children his age, Michael and his friends were obsessed with everything that was American. Michael begged and pleaded with his parents to allow him to go to Boarding School in the United States for his junior high years mimicking the American TV show, "Facts of Life" where famous actors like George Clooney and Helen Hunt made their very first cameo appearances playing young students. Rather than allowing her only son to go off to school by himself, Byun's 'Tiger-Mother' insisted that the entire family would migrate to the states together. After all, Michael was her pride and joy and as with many traditional families, 'anything for the boy' still rings true. And so he and his parents and his three little sisters uprooted themselves and their lives in order to move to Newport Beach, California for their eldest and only son's lofty American Dream. However, as he grew older, Byun's strong, inherent family values seemed to gravitate much more towards the Midwest. As luck would have it, our town became his 'Sweet Home, Chicago' and so incredibly(!) he prefers living and practicing medicine here over anywhere else in the world!

Byun is not flashy. He could be, but indeed he very much fits in with 'my kind of town, Chicago...' Whereas in his previous residence of California, he says, "caters to designer faces and designer bodies." This goes against his very grain. He quips, "If you want a Khloe Kardashian transformation, I am not your guy." He states, "With the human body, you cannot be a designer. And I say that truly as an Artist. You actually have to suppress your creativity. The tissue is already perfect, you see. You should especially not be a designer to the human face. It's repair. It's restoration." While I thought I had a pretty good grasp of the Byun Method, I finally had a "eureka moment" when Byun's staff was recounting how he had to turn down not just one, but two different celebrities the previous week. My ears perked up. The two different seasoned actresses had already had a couple of facelifts from other surgeons out West. They had heard wonderful things from previous patients and were perfectly willing to come to Chicago to have the procedure done -a must for Byun. His staff said that although he really wanted to work on them, he could not. When I asked Byun about it, he started to explain by using more metaphoric layman terms so that I could understand more easily, "If you think of your skin as Christmas wrapping paper, these 2 women would not have had enough 'Christmas wrapping paper' after I would repair the muscle. Have you ever wrapped a gift and then find out during the process that you don't have enough paper to cover the box? You see, once I repair the muscle and it occupies its original real estate on your face, your skin will naturally fall seamlessly over the tissue. It's a perfect fit





After

down to even the most smallest measurement! It's beautiful, actually, just like Christmas wrapping paper! If these women had had 2 previous facelifts... Well, I can't just graft new skin out of thin air! Their previous surgeon threw away their beautiful skin thinking it was worthless. Your skin is most valuable to you and only you. Don't take it for granted." My thoughts exactly, eureka! I finally got it.

When I interviewed Byun and thought of his past and how arduous it must have been to have gotten to this point, I imagined him questioning his old professors with, "But couldn't you achieve a much more natural result if you simply put the dangling or sagging muscle right back where it belongs? The way I see it is... this muscle is like a puzzle piece. It just needs to go back into its original, natural pocket." And I can picture his professors thinking, "That makes too much sense, kid. Shut up." Ha! He would go on to say something like, "The skin, on the other hand, not to confuse the two, is more like say.... Christmas wrapping paper!" He would adroitly exclaim. "Only after the muscle has been repaired back to its original glory should our skin, or our 'Christmas wrapping paper' be finally unified with the repaired muscle. When this happens, you see, there is no extra skin! No need to cut! Because, you see, the skin will now fit perfectly along the beautifully repaired muscle contours that already have a natural convexity that goes back towards the center of the face." I'm sure he was quietly frustrated as to why they would stretch back both the muscle and the skin past the intrinsic hairline and cut the extra tissue - - Cut! Cut! Cut! I imagine Byun thinking loudly, "Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!" I imagine him thinking this was lazy and crude and primitive surgery, but I can't prove it.

I learned that 99.9% of all Plastic Surgeons still practice the old method of stretching the skin, the muscle, the whole enchilada back from the face only to cut, cut, cut, while Byun has been quietly surprising the world. Byun trains maybe 1 or 2 fellows in the Byun Method a year. For well over twenty-five years, though, the 'Byun Method' has now garnered a stunning array, an

exquisite gallery of beautiful portraits, living portraits(!) developed by this now Great Master of the MUSCLE REPAIRED Aging Face. Just like any Artist, there is certainly a way to distinguish Byun's work. The short answer: a smaller, more youthful face. As for distinguishing the other 99.9%, think of certain older celebrities who get a lot of flak for having had work done. Their faces are wider. Oftentimes, their mouths span the width of the bottom of their face. I wondered, "How does Byun achieve a smaller face?" He answered, "if you think of the aging face as if it were a waning candle where all of the wax gradually drips down over layers upon layers of hard wax because of gravity...it is similar to the aging face. You have what used to be this long beautiful, narrow candle that is now sadly draped in hard layered wax; the eyes are droopy, the cheeks, jowls appear, the neck gets crepey.. sometimes ropey., but when you understand the anatomy just underneath the skin, you can see that it is simply only dangling muscle tissue. For instance, when someone complains about their jowls, it is actually just because their buccinator muscle that allows you to suck or kiss has fallen out of its deep pocket. When someone complains about having 'turkey neck', that is the platysma muscle that runs the length from just below your cheekbone and the bottom of your lip all the way down to your chest. You have to understand muscles have and need to have origin and insertion points and sometimes over time they become loose from the bone or rather, the periosteum." The miracle of the Byun Method is that he restructures this droopy muscle tissue and restores it back to the 'centre of the narrow candle' that is your original face. Your mouth will be more narrow and youthful, your jawline, everything will have gone back towards the centre because it no longer carries the weight of those dangling, out of place, muscle tissues. In other words, to distinguish the Byun Method from his peers is to notice that his faces are much, much smaller than his competition. His faces are the same size of a much younger you as the facial muscles have been fully restored back to their true origin.



Before

While Byun has quietly been surprising the world...

For my final question with Byun, I asked him what was the best advice he could give to someone who was considering having a facelift. "Great question. One must consider the best 'window of time'. Once you start to notice this sagging muscle damage, the sooner the better. Don't wait until the damage is too drastic and everyone will notice that you've had work done. Come and see me when it initially starts so that we can repair it so that others will be none the wiser. Obviously, I can correct dramatic damage and those also make for the best 'Before and After' pictures, but you should really try to come see me just as it starts because the one commonality that most of my patients have is that they don't want anyone to ever know they've had any work done and my endeavour is to achieve those types of results.

As I was leaving, I went around his office and took pictures of his art, his degrees, different honours and awards, but also letters and poems from his patients. When you read them, you are awestruck at the genuine gratitude. Who writes a letter or poem to a doctor of all things? You can actually feel each person extolling their genuine appreciation while singing his praises for his exquisite work and how he had a hand in truly changing each of their lives in different and unique, very special ways. I couldn't help but think of the young, impressionable boy back in South Korea building that small airplane with a few sheets of paper, popsicle sticks and glue. And from that moment on, when all the kids cheered as his plane flew endlessly through the sky, little did the world know that the young Byun would be catapulted on a perfect trajectory through life uniting science with art and achieving flight by actually putting the wind underneath OTHER people's wings so that they too could "...soar through the sky almost endlessly!" Because as I read each of these letters and poems of praise and gratitude, it's just as apparent as it was back then that "All the kids cheered as they fully understood the skill required to perform such a task. He was the clear winner and there was absolutely no dispute among the other children..."

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