



Son of 'Bewitched' star visits statue of his mother

By Chris Cassidy

Staff writer

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SALEM — Bill Asher was only 6 when his famous mom rode into town to film eight episodes of "Bewitched" in the summer of 1970.

"I remember them coming back and loving Salem," Asher said of his parents, Elizabeth Montgomery and director William Asher. "They thought it was a great town and got a kick out of filming the show."

Nearly four decades after Montgomery and ABC television crews filmed scenes at landmarks like The House of the Seven Gables and the Hawthorne Hotel, Montgomery's son made his own visit to the Witch City this week.

Now a 43-year-old designer of electric guitars, Bill Asher brought his wife, Jessica, and 21/2-year-old daughter, Makaela, to the bronze statue of television witch Samantha Stephens at Lappin Park over the weekend.

It was the first visit to the statue for both son and granddaughter.

"I've always been proud of my parents and their work, so seeing it made me very proud and happy that her image was important enough to grant a statue," Asher said.

Makaela, who never met her TV star grandmother, immediately recognized the famous face and wrapped her arms around the statue.

"She was very connected to it, like she knew that's who it was," Asher said.

Asher and his family spent two nights vacationing in Salem over the weekend and decided to stay an extra day before heading to Cape Cod and Boston.

They stayed at the Hawthorne Hotel, the same place Montgomery and her husband stayed during their 1970 Salem visit. Today, the hotel's main lobby features photos of Montgomery, a page of the script, and a thank-you card from Montgomery and her husband.

"He was a very down-to-earth, wonderful guy," said Kristie Poehler, the hotel's director of sales and marketing, of Bill Asher. "If you just looked at him, you wouldn't know his family was in the business."

Asher and his family also visited the Salem Witch Museum, took a trolley tour, explored the Peabody Essex Museum and saw the Friendship. At Finz, Asher tried haddock for the first time.

"We all grew up hearing about the witch trials," Asher said. "I learned some history about Salem."

Growing up as the son of a TV star, Asher said he tended not to tell friends who his parents were. Eventually, many found out anyway.

"More than one friend asked if she can really do magic by twinkling her nose," Asher said.

Asher still lives in Los Angeles and designs and builds custom electric guitars. Some of his clients include Jackson Browne, Ben Harper, Bonnie Raitt and the Black Crowes.

Halloween was one of his mother's favorite times of the year, he said, though she never had a chance to visit the Witch City on Halloween night.

"We really had a great time," Asher said. "I hope to come back and visit. We could have stayed a few more days."

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Photos



Bill Asher, son of Elizabeth Montgomery, checks out the statue of his mother for the first time with his daughter, Makaela, 2. He said he enjoyed Salem so much that he stayed an extra day. Staff photo