# **Miss Barbara West:**

# **A Lifelong Friend and Mentor**

Peter J. Hack Copyright © 2018 It is the 1930s. There is one city in China where women wear high heels and the latest Western hairstyles, and men dress in Western business suits. A city that celebrates all things modish and Western. Artists and architects, designers and decorators, dare to be modern. A city with nightclubs, where you might glimpse the actress Hu Die, the Butterfly. A city where art and culture burn bright. A city of glamour, but also a city of squalor and vice. A city with Western department stores established by Chinese-Australian merchants. This is Shanghai.

For some, the Great Depression barely touches Shanghai. This is a place of riotous abundance. The rich and the famous continue to party in the Paris of the Orient. The buildings continue to rise. And the department stores continue to flourish on Nanking Road.

And there is one store built in the latest art deco style that has the only escalators in China, has a rooftop garden, has air-conditioning on every floor and the largest porcelain department in Shanghai - the Sun Company department store. And one person who made this achievement possible is the Company Secretary, William Liu.

#### **Determined Reformers**

William Liu was born in Sydney in 1893, to a Chinese father and an English mother. At the age of seven in 1900, William was sent to China for a traditional Chinese education, returning to Australia in 1908. After eight years he needed to work on his English.

At the age of seven, I and my younger brother Charlie went to Hong Kong, then inland China, to our father's village, about a hundred miles<sup>1</sup> south west of Hong Kong and Canton. That was 1900 when we left Sydney. In 1908 I returned to Australia, to relearn my A.B.C. and English speech. I began in 1909 at St Laurence Christ Church School<sup>2</sup>, Pitt Street, Sydney, under tutor Miss Barbara West and made good progress...<sup>3</sup>

The role of the teacher or tutor is particularly significant in China:

By tradition, a teacher was a most revered figure, a mentor for life, who imparted wisdom as well as knowledge, and who must be respected like a parent. (The murder of a teacher was classified as parricide, which, like treason, was punishable by death of a thousand cuts.)<sup>4</sup>

An absolute loyalty was owed first to the family, then to non-blood relatives through marriage and third to the student-teacher bond.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The school of Christ Church St Laurence still stands at 505 Pitt Street, Sydney. Today it is used as a training college.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> About 160 kilometres.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> William Liu (1978), *William Liu Interviewed by Hazel de Berg* [sound recording], Oral Transcript 1/1093-1095, Canberra: National Library of Australia, p. 14,899.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Jung Chang, (2014), *Empress Dowager Cixi*, London: Vintage Books, p. 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Sterling Seagrave (1985), *The Soong Dynasty*, New York: Harper, p.186.

From 1909, a special friendship developed between Barbara Stephenson (Miss Barbara West at that time) and William Liu, enduring and lifelong. At a time when the White Australia Policy was widely accepted and notions of white superiority were seldom challenged, there were some European-Australian families that developed close relationships based on mutual respect and cultural exchange with Chinese-Australian families.

The relationship between Barbara and William was significant on many levels. Barbara became something of a mother figure, William's ill mother being committed to a mental institution shortly before he was sent to China in 1900. Barbara was only eight years younger than William's mother, Florence. Barbara married Albert Stephenson, an accountant, in 1912, but the couple had no children. On an emotional level, William would have filled that gap.

A lot was at stake when Barbara made the fateful decision to help a Chinese boy:

There came a time when I returned to Australia and enrolled at St Laurence's school in Sydney in 1909. The Headmaster did not know what to do with me because I could not speak English. Two teachers flatly refused to have me in their classes. It was a lady named Barbara West, the daughter of the proprietor of the *Parramatta* [sic] *Times*<sup>6</sup>, who took me into her class. I remember on my first day the girl behind stuck pins into me but I did not know enough English words to protest.<sup>7</sup>

This was a time when the Chinese symbolised all things undesirable, but Barbara had no time for this ideology:

Fear of 'the Yellow Peril' has a long and enduring history in colonial and federation Australia, and the nineteenth century Sydney citizen was no exception. ... The Chinaman became the symbol of and the scape-goat for all that was undesirable. In Sydney society, racial discrimination was virtually complete.<sup>8</sup>

In later years, most of his family would join William on his trips to visit Barbara. There are photographs taken of these family gatherings and there were always presents for Barbara and her sister Amy. Often William brought candied fruit or preserved ginger. Those jars of preserved ginger were from Wing Sang & Co where William was a manager.

William often visited Barbara. He appreciated her advice. Barbara was a friend, an advisor and mentor. She encouraged him and made helpful suggestions when she

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The newspaper owned by Barbara's father was based in Parramatta but called the *Cumberland Times*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> William Liu (1979), 'Australia's Chinese Connection', *125th Anniversary of the Battle of the Eureka Stockade - Papers presented at the 5th Annual Lalor Address on Community Relations held at Victoria Theatre, Sovereign Hill, Ballarat on 3'd December 1979*, Canberra: Commissioner for Community Relations, p. 20; also mentioned in Eric Rolls (1996), *Citizens: Continuing the epic story of China's centuries-old relationship with Australia*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, p. 264. <sup>8</sup> Max Kelly (1978), *A Certain Sydney 1900: a photographic introduction to a hidden Sydney, 1900*, Sydney: Doak Press.

could. They discussed all the great events of William's life and the campaigns against the White Australia Policy.

Barbara sometimes discussed her father with William. His name was John Ferguson, and he had been a newspaper proprietor and a friend and associate of the Premier of New South Wales, Sir Henry Parkes. Barbara was an immediate source of information for William on Australian history, Federation politics and the operation of Australian culture and the White Australia Policy.

John Ferguson was an early inspiration for William. William Liu and John Ferguson were both determined reformers who understood the power of the press and used it to great effect. Newspapers can articulate dissatisfaction, dissent and the need for change and reform. They can propose alternative ideas about political, economic and cultural life.<sup>9</sup>

Both men understood this medium and its power, always, eventually bringing about change. Barbara's friendship with William was not a mere coincidence; it is a historical necessity upon which great things rest.

# **John Ferguson and Barbara West**

John Ferguson was born on 20 August 1831 in Scotland. By the age of 19 he was a book seller. He had not been to school but he learnt to read and write and by 19 he was selling books and subscriptions door to door. Unlike the rest of his family, he managed to escape the cotton mills and he was doing well.

John reaped the benefits of the "industrialisation" of book publishing. Steel engravings were introduced in the 1820s. The earlier soft copper plates would wear out quickly and only 200-500 impressions could be made from the plate; but 25,000 impressions could be made from a steel plate. This transformed publishing, reducing costs and leading to the mass production in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of illustrated annuals and travel books. Limited print runs of expensive illustrated books could be replaced by much cheaper serial publications. In addition new sales and marketing techniques were developed.

One publisher, Fisher, Son & Co, set up depots with other publishers and bookshops in major cities across the country. These depots relied on teams of book canvassers selling door to door, leaving prospectuses and taking orders. Many publications were sold in parts which could be bought every few weeks until the whole volume was purchased. This was an extremely profitable business with these publications becoming increasingly popular with the growing middle class. <sup>10</sup>

On 13 June 1854, John Ferguson married Jemima Walker. At age 23, John and his new wife sailed Intermediate Class on the maiden voyage of the clipper *Champion of* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Pankaj Mishra (2012), *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia*, London: Allen Lane, p. 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> James M'Kenzie Hall (2013), 'The Peculiarities of Our Business: Fisher, Son & Co', *Quadrat*, 25 Autumn 2013, London.

the Seas to Sydney. Passage for two cost £46.11 This was a great achievement for a young book canvasser.

Like many others. John set sail for Australia to make his fortune: not by trying his luck on the goldfields, but by setting up in Sydney the only business he knew something about - selling books and publishing. Within two decades, John would also be a well know newspaper proprietor.

John Ferguson had 14 children. He had five children with his first wife Jemima. He had another nine children with his second wife. Catherine West, while still married to Jemima. Those nine children used their mother's surname. The sixth of the nine children was Barbara Ellen West born on 23 September 1877.

Barbara was known as the smartest of Catherine West's nine children. On 17 July 1890, the Sydney newspapers published the names of all the girls who had passed the examination for admission to the Public High School for Girls in Sydney. 12 Barbara started the following week at Crown Street Public School where she won a number of prizes. This was at a time when many girls only completed a few years at primary school. Barbara was later employed as a teacher at the school of Christ Church St. Laurence from 1902 to 1912.

# **Sydney**

John opened a bookshop in Sydney and by the early 1870s, he was living in Parramatta where he remained for the rest of his life. He was a bookseller and stationer at Church Street, Parramatta. 13

By the end of 1866, the *Public Schools Act*, introduced by Colonial Secretary, Henry Parkes passed Parliament. For the first time, state schools run by governmenttrained teachers were established wherever there was a minimum enrolment of 25 students. Church schools would continue to receive financial assistance from the Government "on condition those schools used the same curriculum and same text books as government schools, employed government-trained teachers, and restricted religious instruction to an hour a day."14

The Public Schools Act was very good for John's business. In 1870 he a won a three-year contract - a monopoly - to supply all the text books and stationery for the government schools of New South Wales. 15

Both Barbara West and William Liu benefited from the establishment of public schools in New South Wales. As a student, Barbara owned a number of histories

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Kevin Wilson (2008), We Came to the Land Down Under, Boondall: Kevin Wilson, pp. 66 and 108. A receipt for £23, "being half of the passage money", is in John Ferguson's leather bound "scrapbook" in the Mitchell Library, Sydney ref. A699.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Australian Star, Thursday 17 July 1809, p. 6; The Daily Telegraph, p. 2; The Sydney Morning Herald, p. 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Wilson (2008), p. 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Stephen Dando-Collins (2013), Sir Henry Parkes – The Australian Colossus, Sydney: Random

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser, Thursday 17 November 1870, p. 2.

illustrated with engravings which she won as prizes in the 1890s. The books may well have come from her father's bookshop. The titles of these prizes are not surprising for a school in a colony of the British Empire. In 1895, Barbara won a copy of *A Pictorial History of the British Empire*. The previous year, in an essay competition, she won the magnificent two volume *Australian Men of Mark* published to commemorate the centenary of the colony in 1888. As a clever and intelligent student, Barbara no doubt noticed that these two tomes included not a single biography of an Australian "woman of mark".

# **Ferguson and Parkes**

According to an advertisement in *The Cumberland Times* on 7 August 1875, Ferguson's is the cheapest store in Sydney for school books and every type of school material; stationery; wrapping paper; English and American newspapers and magazines; and much, much more. John Ferguson had a successful business. And he was advertising in a newspaper he purchased in 1869.<sup>16</sup>

The paper's political creed was the support of free trade, Federation and public education. The paper also backed the Parkes Government. The year 1888 was an important one for Sir Henry Parkes. The colony of New South Wales was founded in 1788 and the centenary of 1888 was a catalyst for the Federation debate. Was this the centenary of the colony or might it be the centenary of the new nation of Australia formed by the federation of all the British colonies? On Saturday 2 July 1887, John Ferguson wrote an editorial in *The Cumberland Times* supporting Federation with great enthusiasm.

But 1888 was also the year in which the Parkes government introduced new legislation restricting Chinese immigration. Anti-Chinese sentiment reached a peak in 1888 when the ships *Afghan*, *Menmuir* and *Guthrie* arrived with large numbers of Chinese in excess of the "tonnage allowance". Earlier legislation placed a limit of one Chinese immigrant for every 100 tons of shipping tonnage and each arriving Chinese had to pay a tax of £10. The public became hostile in 1888 and Sir Henry Parkes rushed through the *Chinese Restriction and Regulation Act*. The tonnage allowance was increased to one Chinese for every 300 tons of a ship's tonnage and the arrival tax was increased to £100. As a result, in 1891 only 39 Chinese arrived in New South Wales compared with the 6,284 in 1887-1888. Other States introduced similar legislation.

The Parkes legislation of 1888 provided a model for one of the first pieces of legislation passed after Federation by the new government of the Commonwealth of Australia, the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901), "An Act to place certain restrictions on Immigration and to provide for the removal from the Commonwealth of prohibited Immigrants". This 1901 legislation was commonly known as the "White Australia Policy". An immigration official had the power to require an immigrant to take a fiftyword diction test in any European language. The test was used to exclude non-European immigrants as any immigrant who failed the dictation test could be arrested and deported as an illegal immigrant. Chinese and other non-European

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Wilson (2008), p. 79.

residents (and citizens) needed to apply for a Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test to ensure reentry to Australia after travel overseas.

Legislation restricting Chinese immigration was generally supported at the time, including by *The Cumberland Times*. All John's children grew up reading *The Cumberland Times* and helping out with their father's newspaper. Barbara West grew up absorbing the debates over Federation and restrictive legislation targeting the Chinese. She was 11 years old in 1888 and 24 in 1901. The views Barbara formed at this time laid the foundation for a lifelong friendship with one of the great campaigners against the White Australia Policy, William Liu. Barbara could have taught at any number of schools in Sydney. It just might be that Barbara's decision in 1902 to accept a job teaching at the school of Christ Church St Laurence, close to Sydney's Chinatown with many Chinese pupils, was a decision made in defiance of her father.

Miss Barbara West was a teacher at the Christ Church School for ten years. She resigned in 1912 shortly before her marriage and on Friday afternoon 27 September there was a presentation at the school to farewell Miss West. The Reverend Clive Stratham presented Miss West with a cheque from the school board and there were presents from teachers and pupils. The Chinese students presented Miss West with a silver teapot and butter dish. There is no greater testament to the esteem in which Barbara West was held by the Chinese community of Sydney's Haymarket. A week later, on Saturday afternoon 5 October 1912, Miss Barbara West married Albert Stephenson at St John's Church, Parramatta. Research

## Journalising is not all roses

John Ferguson upset many corrupt politicians and there were several legal actions taken against him for libel. One case Barbara remembered started in 1893. John was found guilty of defamatory libel involving two politicians, William Patrick (Paddy) Crick and William Nicholas Willis. John accused both men of being dishonourable and disreputable drunks and was fined £80 for the two matters and had to find sureties totally £400 to be of good behaviour for three years.

By 1905, Crick suffered from cirrhosis of the liver. One of his hard-drinking friends and a horse racing companion was William Willis. They were both often seen at the racecourse. Crick was Minister for Lands from April 1901 to June 1904. A Royal Commission found that, "Crick had overruled adverse official reports while approving improvement leases in thirty-five applications; of these Willis was agent in twenty-one..." 19

Willis was a land agent as well as a politician. Crick resigned his seat in Parliament on 6 December 1906 before he was formally expelled from Parliament on 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> The Sun, Monday 30 September 1912, p. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The Sun, Thursday 10 October 1912, p. 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Bede Nairn and Martha Rutledge, 'Crick, William Patrick (Paddy) (1862–1908)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/crick-william-patrick-paddy-5821/text9883, published in hardcopy 1981, accessed online 27 December 2013.

December. In hindsight, John's comment on these two public figures seems quite reasonable.

After John Ferguson died on 4 May 1911, an anonymous article appeared in *The Cumberland Times*:

Like all fearless and honest journalists that conduct a newspaper, he had many harassing experiences, threatened and actual actions for libel. These he met manfully and fearlessly.<sup>20</sup>

The article also refers to the reform of the Asylums, what we would today call psychiatric or mental hospitals. Some of these "asylums" were also for the aged and terminally ill. John Ferguson used a section of *The Cumberland Times* for the publication of letters attacking the woeful management of the Asylums and in early 1906 a new Inspector of Charities was appointed. Mr. G. E. Brodie set about the reform of the Asylums addressing the issues of overcrowding and structurally defective buildings. <sup>21</sup> "It is only one of hundreds of cases where the Cumberland Times, under the rule of [John Ferguson] gave its powerful aid to have wrongs righted." <sup>22</sup>

# A migrant family

William Liu's father, William Ah Lum (later Lumb Liu or Liu Hee Lum), was born in 1859 in Taishan province of Guangdong. In Australia, he worked in a Chinese gang, organised by the Sam Yick Company of Hong Kong, felling trees and clearing land for the sheep graziers and wheat growers of the Riverina in south-western New South Wales. It was not uncommon in the 1880s and 1890s to see large squads of Chinese moving from one clearing contract to the next.

William's father drifted to Sydney with cash. He liked it in Sydney and stayed. Here he met William's mother, Florence Thomas, who was born in 1869 in Lancashire and arrived in Australia aged four with her parents. Florence was assistant organist at the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Surry Hills. This was where William's parents first met.

William's parents married in 1892. Florence was disowned by her parents and some of the Chinese cousins tried to stop the marriage. William Joseph Lumb Liu was born on 29 January 1893. A brother, Charles Frederick Francis Lumb Liu, was born on 11 May 1895 and a sister, Pauline, in 1897.

Sydney was not kind to mixed marriages. In 1901, *The Bulletin* wrote:

Australia objects to [the Chinese] because they introduce a lower civilisation. It objects because they intermarry with white women, and thereby lower the white type, and because they have already created the beginnings of a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Wilson (2008), pp. 97-99; The Cumberland Times, 1 June 1911, p. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald, Friday 4 May 1906, p. 6; The Daily Telegraph, Thursday 21 June 1906, p. 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> The Cumberland Times, 1 June 1911, p. 6.

mongrel race, that has many vices of both its parents and few virtues of either.<sup>23</sup>

The birth of Pauline did not go well and Florence Liu became ill, eventually being committed to the Parramatta Mental Asylum. She had been without family support with three young children and was probably suffering post-natal depression which would have been little understood at the time. Following a breakdown, she was taken away by the police.

Florence Liu lived for many more years and would be visited by her children and grandchildren. In one of those remarkable coincidences of history, Florence Liu may have benefited from the reforms of the asylum system brought about to some extent by John Ferguson and *The Cumberland Times* and perhaps William was inspired when Barbara told him about those reforms.

#### The Chinese Consulate

William worked as an English-speaking secretary at the Chinese Consulate in Melbourne from 1912 to 1914. The Consulate was established in Melbourne because this was the home of the Commonwealth Government until it moved to Canberra in 1927 and it was established after much lobbying by the Chinese community for the Chinese Government to provide support around a range of issues largely connected to the White Australia Policy. This was William's education in the operation of the White Australia Policy and the beginning of a lifelong campaign to get Australia's immigration laws changed, which was finally achieved in its entirety in 1973.

William's job involved writing applications for exemption from the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901). The Minister responsible for administering the Act had the power to exempt a person for a specified period. The Chinese wife of a Chinese-Australian might be exempted for six months and allowed to stay in Australia; but at the end of the six months there was no guarantee a new exemption would be signed.

Many cases were about wives and children. Some Chinese-Australian men became frequent travellers as they returned to China to spend time with family. The Act could make life hell for many Chinese families. There was no certainty.

# The Publicity Campaign

Barbara Stephenson's advice and encouragement to William when he talked about the unfairness and injustice of the White Australia Policy was always constant:

"You must put it in writing. You have to inform the public. It does not matter how long it takes. Write letters to the newspapers; write to politicians; educate the public about China."

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Kelly (1978).

On 28 April 1927, the Australian Government placed an embargo on the importation of Chinese peanuts. <sup>24</sup> This was a blow for the Chinese-Australian merchants and companies like Wing Sang & Co where William was now a manager. This was the catalyst for a major public relations campaign to convince the Australian public and politicians that the White Australia Policy was bad for Australia, and that Australia could benefit from further trade with China. As William said, "We need to do some publicity to let Australian friends know the Chinese side of the story." <sup>25</sup> Barbara would have approved.

A number of strategies were used in the campaign. Several books were published and distributed. Volunteers delivered boxfuls to State and Federal Parliaments for distribution to politicians. Copies were sent to newspaper editors, libraries and universities. An English-language Chinese newspaper was established, *The Sino-Australasian Times*, and an annual lecture on China, which continues to this day at the Australian National University, was founded - The George E. Morrison Lectures in Ethnology.

One of the books was *White China*, written by John Sleeman in collaboration with William and published in 1933.

White China pleaded for increased and reciprocal trade between China and Australia. The book painted a picture of a proud civilisation 'bled white' by the marauding West, and frustrated in its gigantic efforts to revolutionise by the predations of a rapacious Japan.<sup>26</sup>

A theme running through the book was the exploitation of China by other powers - Britain through the opium wars, Japan in Manchuria and a series of unequal treaties. After the first opium war, the British dictated the terms of the treaty of Nanking which opened up the opium trade further, ceded territory to Britain including Hong Kong and granted extraterritorial rights to foreigners, exempting them from the jurisdiction of local law. Soon similar unequal treaties were negotiated by the United States and France. In 1876, Japan followed the Western example and negotiated an unequal treaty over Korea.

Sleeman also exposed some of the more perverse and unjust outcomes of the White Australia Policy. The story of Lucy Wong Sau illustrated that the High Court could find by judicial gymnastics that an Australian citizen returning to Australia was an immigrant and not a citizen.<sup>27</sup> Lucy Wong Sau was born in 1883 in Gulgong, New South Wales. Her father, Wong Hing, was a British subject and a naturalised Australian. At the age of six, Lucy was taken with the rest of her family to China, where her father died ten years later and her mother six years after that.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> William Liu's papers, Mitchell Library; Sophie Loy-Wilson (2009), 'Peanuts and Publicists: Letting Australian Friends Know the Chinese Side of the Story in Interwar Sydney', *History Australia*, Volume 6, Number 1, Melbourne, Monash University Press.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Liu (1978), p. 14928.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Fitzgerald (2008), p. 170.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Sleeman (1933), pp. 250-253; Irving (2008), pp. 146-147; *Donohoe v Wong* Sau (1925) 36 CLR 404.

In 1917, a market gardener from Ryde named Wong Sau visited China and married Lucy. Wong Sau returned to Australia but Lucy remained another seven years before sailing to Australia, arriving in August 1924. Lucy failed the dictation test and a magistrate sentenced her to six months imprisonment for failing to leave Australia. The High Court found that Lucy's father had abandoned Australia by returning to China and dying there, and unanimously agreed that Lucy was an immigrant and saw no reason why this Australian-born citizen should be permitted to join her husband in the country of her birth.

This was not about good law, but about political policy. "I know of no more contentious incident, no more inexcusable pandering to political propaganda, in the legal history of any nation in the world," Sleeman wrote. To sum up, "No group of jurists in the world would accept, other than as judicial trickery, the mental contortions that were exhibited in the Lucy Wong Sau case". 29

The Sino-Australasian Times, the first Chinese newspaper printed in English, was first published on 8 September 1930. It promoted trade between Australia and China. "The policy of the paper is to create international understanding and trade development between the East and Australasia." 30

The Chinese in Australia made very good use of Chinese-language newspapers. Identity can be shaped by newspapers:

Chinese-Australian communities derived coherence, continuity and a sense of 'community spirit' ... from their participation in shared historical narratives of belonging and becoming, elaborated through the Chinese-language press.<sup>31</sup>

For the Chinese to publish an English-language newspaper was a logical next step – to inform and educate the public. But whose idea was it? Did Barbara Stephenson suggest it? Was it William's idea and Barbara encouraged it. Were William and Barbara talking about the press one day and agreed that an English language newspaper would be the way for more Australians to read about the Chinese? In any case, Barbara became one of those readers.

The first annual Morrison Lecture was delivered in Canberra in May 1933 by Consul-General Chen, who spoke about the life and work of Dr Morrison. The purpose of the lecture series was to raise awareness in Australia of Chinese culture, literature, art and science. William Liu in Sydney and William Ah Ket in Melbourne raised over £400 from the Chinese community to establish the lectureship.

George Ernest Morrison (1862-1920) was born in Geelong and in 1897 became the first permanent correspondent for *The Times* of London in Peking. He became a China expert known as Chinese Morrison or Morrison of Peking and reported on all the major events for the next two decades. He reported on the Hundred Days'

<sup>30</sup> Loy-Wilson (2009), pp. 5-6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Sleeman (1933), p.253.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Mei-Fen Kuo (2013), *Making Chinese Australia: Urban Elites, Newspapers and the Formation of Chinese-Australian Identity, 1892-1912*, Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, p. 5.

Reform Movement led by the Guangxu Emperor; the Boxer Rebellion of 1900; and the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 that resulted in the defeat of the Russian fleet shocking the Western colonial world and beginning the awakening of Asia. When in Australia in 1917, Morrison spoke publicly in favour of trade with China.

On 23 April 2010, The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister of Australia, delivered the seventieth Morrison lecture during which he announced the establishment of the \$53 million Australian Centre on China in the World. William Liu would never have imagined that one year an Australian Prime Minister proficient in Mandarin would deliver the Morrison Lecture.

#### A Man of Letters

By the end of 1956, William was ill and had an operation for a pyloric ulcer early the following year. Barbara wrote to William on 14 January 1957:

Dear Will

I hope that you are feeling much better now and that you are improving daily.

Just imagine what you will be like when you get home again – like a giant refreshed.

There'll be no holding you.

Anyway Will I do hope you have a very speedy recovery.

With kindest regards and every good wish.

Your old friend Barbara Stephenson<sup>32</sup>

The prophetic comment that once William gets home he will be "like a giant refreshed" would prove to be true. William's best lobbying and letter writing days were still ahead of him. Throughout his life, William interceded on behalf of others, putting the case to Immigration Ministers or to the Department. He also lobbied and campaigned for changes to immigration legislation. From the days of the gold rushes, the Chinese resisted restrictive legislation with pamphlets, petitions and protests; with lobbying and litigation. One newspaper estimated that William sent an average of 500 letters every year to Ministers, politicians and government officials. Barbara would have been proud of her former student.

From 1958, William travelled to Canberra each year when the Australian Citizenship Convention was held in Albert Hall. He was barred from attending, but he could lobby outside Albert Hall in favour of non-European background representation at these conventions. There were four issues William tirelessly pursued:

1) Non-European Australians should be represented on government advisory bodies such as the annual Australian Citizenship Conventions;

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> William Liu's papers, Mitchell Library, CY4263.

- 2) Non-European passport holders should not be treated differently from passport holders of European descent;
- 3) Non-European migrants should not have to wait longer than European migrants before being eligible to apply for citizenship;
- 4) Australian citizens should be permitted to sponsor a relative or friend to migrate from Hong Kong in the same way that relatives and friends are sponsored from the United Kingdom and Europe.

The possibility of change permeated the air of 1960s Australia and in March 1966 some changes were made in immigration policy. William's small matter No. 3 disappeared completely. Non-European residents could apply to become citizens after five years instead of 15 years, the same as European background residents. A major discriminatory feature of the White Australia Policy was gone. After years of lobbying, this was a great achievement for William and other reformers.

During the 1950s and 1960s, a small number of "distinguished and highly qualified Asians" had been able to migrate to Australia. This criterion was now replaced by "well qualified" non-Europeans, and the number of non-Europeans allowed to migrate would be "somewhat greater than previously". Applications for migration by non-Europeans would be accepted from well-qualified people on the basis of their suitability as settlers, their ability to integrate readily and their possession of qualifications positively useful to Australia.

Non-European migration began to increase. Non-European settler arrivals rose from 746 in 1966 to 2,696 in 1971, while part-European settler arrivals rose from 1,498 to 6,054 per annum.

#### The Giant Refreshed

At about 6.30 pm on 12 December 2012, Police stopped traffic on Commonwealth Avenue in Canberra. A flotilla of cars with police escort left the Canberra Hyatt taking China's most powerful woman, Liu Yandong, Communist Party State Counsellor, to Parliament House. To mark the occasion, the Falun Gong protesters moved around the corner from the Chinese embassy to the medium strip opposite the Hyatt Hotel.

That evening the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, hosted a dinner at Parliament House to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalising of diplomatic relations with China. Almost forty years earlier on 5 February 1973, William celebrated the event at a ten-course banquet for around 500 guests at the Mandarin Restaurant in Sydney. In 1971, shortly before he became Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam visited China, and the following year re-established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

"I was like a child, very happy," William says in an interview. "Mr Whitlam is a great man. He has helped remove the old fear of China. It means China and every person of Chinese blood can hold his head high again.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> 1973 Newspaper article by Peter Allen.

Or as Stephen FitzGerald puts it:

[Whitlam] challenged the policy, he took on the fear: the fear of China, the fear of Vietnam, the fear of Asia that underlay the White Australia policy...<sup>34</sup>

In a letter dated 28 June 1973, William congratulated the Prime Minister:

You have done a [wonderful] job in clearing-up the nonsensical bogeys – 'yellow peril and red menace'.<sup>35</sup>

The Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, sent William a letter dated 17 October 1973 in which he confirmed the end of the White Australia Policy in law and its discrimination based on race:

I can appreciate the concern you have felt previously concerning the question of the acquisition of Australian citizenship. Now, of course, the guiding principle of the Government is that there should not be any discrimination between groups of settlers, and irrespective of their birth, nationality or colour, they should be able to become Australian citizens under the same conditions. In accordance with this principle the Government proposes that the common period of residence required before a person may be granted citizenship will be 3 years, as by this time migrants are expected to be fully settled and desirous of identifying themselves with the rest of the community as Australian citizens.<sup>36</sup>

William Liu is now truly the "giant refreshed".

## **Postscript**

In 1936, William gave Barbara a Chinese teacup with the name *The Pavilion of Cypress made for One Mountain* on its translucent base. The inside of the cup is decorated with three cypress trees and three bats, the symbol for good fortune and happiness. This single teacup was made for a great Taoist teacher named One Mountain; One Mountain is Barbara Stephenson.

Barbara Stephenson passed away on 9 September 1967 aged 90. She just lived long enough to see the beginnings of real change to the White Australia Policy.

William was on the 1982 New Year's Honours List. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire for his "outstanding contribution to fostering friendship between the Australian and Chinese communities and trade between the two countries".<sup>37</sup>

When William passed away in 1983, the Premier of China, Zhao Ziyang, sent his personal condolences in a telegram, "Bill's contribution over a long period of time to the promotion of understanding between the peoples of China and Australia are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Stephen FitzGerald (2015), *Comrade Ambassador: Whitlam's Beijing Envoy*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, p. 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> William Liu's papers, Mitchell Library, CY4241.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> William Liu's papers, Mitchell Library, CY4241.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Mo and Mo (1991), p. 21.

highly commended. We are greatly shocked by this sad news and we extend our deepest condolences" <sup>38</sup>.

In a chapter called "The Men Who Bridged Cultures", Eric Rolls refers to William as "the most influential Australian Chinese of the twentieth century." 39

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Rolls (1996), p. 238.

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