

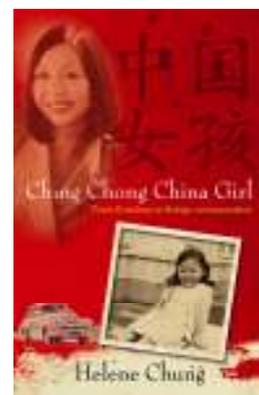
**PUBLICATION DATE: April 11, 2008**

## **CHING CHONG CHINA GIRL**

### **From fruitshop to foreign correspondent**

**By Helene Chung**

**rrp: \$32.95 paperback; ISBN 978 0 7333 2291 4, 368pp**



*In the tradition of Amy Tan, a hilarious and bittersweet memoir of growing up different in a very eccentric but traditional Chinese-Tasmanian family.*

Warning: Not to be read by convent girls not wearing their gloves.

'Ching Chong Chinaman' girls taunted Helene Chung in her Catholic school playground. An Australian-born Chinese growing up in 1950s Hobart, Helene not only dealt with being different from her blonde-haired, blue-eyed classmates but suffered the shame of having divorced parents. And she kept a shocking secret – her mother, Miss Henry, was a nude model, who also lived in sin with a foreign devil and drove a red MG.

Surviving the embarrassment of childhood, Helene discovered the thrill of the theatre, fell into journalism and travelled the world. She became the first non-white reporter on Australian TV and the first female posted abroad by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. *Ching Chong China Girl* is filled with honesty, humour, love and loss, and gives insight into life that traverses cultures East and West.

### **About The Author**

Helene Chung is a former ABC Beijing correspondent, the first non-white reporter on Australian TV, and the first female posted abroad by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Her great-grandfather left China for the Tasmania tin fields in the 1880s and became an opium addict. Born in Hobart and raised by her divorced mother, an artist's model who lived in sin with a foreign devil, Helene was strapped by nuns at her convent school, and led astray by the University of Tasmania's Old Nick.

**For further information, please contact Louise Cornege  
on (02) 8333 3982 or [cornege.louise@abc.net.au](mailto:cornege.louise@abc.net.au)**

**HELENE CHUNG IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW**

Available at ABC Shops, ABC Centres, selected bookstores,  
on-line at [abcshop.com.au](http://abcshop.com.au) or phone order to 1300 360 111.

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A history honours graduate and MA, she has reported for radio and television in Australia, for radio from Britain, China, Egypt and Hong Kong, and freelanced for BBC, CBS, NZBC and Hong Kong radio. She is an honorary research fellow at Monash Asia Institute, Melbourne, and the author of *Shouting from China*, *Gentle John: My Love My Loss* and *Lazy Man in China*.

**Major themes of *Ching Chong China Girl*:**

The transition from White to Multicultural Australia: from Australian Chinese to Chinese Australian.

The search for identity of an Australian-born Chinese in White Australia and the white and Asian world.

The mystery of the meaning of 'Chinese'.

Media ethics and practice: from Hobart to Beijing, from London to Cairo, including off-camera antics in the once-chauvinist ABC.

Parental affairs: untangling the lives and loves of Tasmania's first Chinese divorcees.

Catholic agonising: over sins of the flesh and the sins of the parents' flesh.

Sin and sex: society's change in attitude to race, religion, sex and gender reflected in the book's racist, religious, sexual and sexist humour.

**Distinctive features of *Ching Chong China Girl*:**

Catholic childhood memoirs agonise over sins of the flesh; this especially agonises over sins of the parents' flesh.

A Western Chinese memoir with dragons, chopsticks, exotic aromas, mah-jong and racist taunts intertwined with a bohemian artist's model of a mother, and two foreign devil stepfathers: a radio announcer with a rich golden voice claiming to be the illegitimate son of an English aristocrat, and the Egyptologist son of the British paymaster at Mafeking, both mentors to the ABC's first female foreign correspondent.

An Australian baby-boomer memoir set not in a happy nuclear family with a red-brick house and Holden car but against the backdrop of a feud between Hobart's two leading Chinese clans, the Henrys and the Chungs: like the Montagues and the Capulets, they're not on speaking terms.

Most Australian journalists' memoirs are boys' stories. This is a girl's story, by a Chinese girl who breaks the television barrier against a non-white reporter, and the ABC's barrier against a girl as a foreign correspondent.

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