

Hobart model mum's true story laid bare

MERYL NAIDOO

"I MUST begin with a warning: *Ching Chong China Girl* is not to be read by convent girls not wearing their gloves," said author Helene Chung, at the launch of her fourth book yesterday at the Hobart Bookshop.

Ching Chong China Girl is a memoir filled with honesty, humour, love and loss.

The convent-educated author thanked her mother, Dorothy Henry Greener, and father, Charles, "not for my birth but their divorce, which catapulted me at 16 months into the challenging childhood which, for better or worse, made me what I am".

Theirs is believed to have been the first divorce of a Chinese couple in Tasmanian in the early 1950s.

Her mother did nude modelling for aspiring local artists



BEFORE HER TIME: Helene Chung's mother, Dorothy.

such as Max Angus and drove an open-top red MG, which she eventually wrote off.

"Women whispered as Dorothy approached. With bosoms puffed they gaped at her under the brims of their hats, even those she thought of as friends disappeared into shops or scurried across the street. This was Hobart, not Hollywood," Chung read from her book.

Born in Hobart in 1945, Chung, a former foreign correspondent, now based in Melbourne, thanked the people in her life from across the globe who inhabit the pages of the book.

Appropriately, the launch of the book, was by Tasmanian watercolour master Angus.

"We blokes that were drawing were earnest about our work and we loved to draw Dorothy," he said.

She went on to pose for many of Australia's first great artists, said Angus, who drew Dorothy over a 40-year period.

But for young Helene and her sister, Lehene, at the time it brought them embarrassment and only alienated them even more at Hobart's St Mary's College.

Some students calling them "Ching-Chong".

Her admiration for her mother, who dared to be different, is obvious. Her mother said that, only since reading parts of the book, had she realised how upset her



CONVENT GIRL: Author Helene Chung reads from her book *Ching Chong China Girl* in front of a nude sketch of her mother by Tasmanian artist Max Angus. Pictures: KIM EISZELE

girls were about the nude modelling.

"They never said anything to me, I never knew," she said.

"But, even if they had, I wouldn't have done anything different — apart from my one horrible mistake, my first marriage."

St Mary's College Year 11 student Olivia Graney said she enjoyed the book.

"It's pretty cool to read a book where your own school plays such a large part," she said.



EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: Max Angus, who drew Helene Chung's mother, Dorothy, over a 40-year period and launched the book yesterday.

Women need better time in bedroom

MORE than half of Australian women have difficulty getting sexual satisfaction, according to sex researchers who are urging women to prioritise time in the bedroom.

The survey found rates of sexual desire were similar to those shown in international studies, but Australian women appeared to have more problems with arousal and orgasm, said Deakin University psychology professor Marita McCabe.

"All up, we found 55 per cent of women had a difficulty with sexual satisfaction," she said.

"It seems women go into the bedroom and expect it will happen quickly, automatically, with orgasm, even be multi-orgasmic, but without spending the time to do so."

Two-yearly pap smears 'waste time'

A CERVICAL cancer specialist has welcomed a drop in screening among young women, saying Australians had finally realised they are "wasting their time" getting pap smears every two years.

New statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show cervical cancer cases and death rates have dropped, but younger women are being tested less often.

Dr Gerry Wain, a gynaecological oncologist at Gynaecology Hospital in Sydney and former director of the NSW cervical screening program, said the results showed women and doctors were understanding cervical cancer prevention better than the policy makers.

AAP

Asbestos study big-picture aim

GILL VOWLES

TASMANIA'S Cement Australia site at Railton will be the focus of the largest asbestos survey and research program in Australia.

Two years ago the *Sunday Tasmanian* revealed asbestos exposure at the factory between 1947 and 1986, when it was owned by Goliath Cement, was a public health disaster for the town and Tasmania.

Melbourne lawyer Margaret Kent, who represented employees and product users, estimated new claims against the cement manufacturer would continue until 2015 or later and was likely to affect Tasmania in the same way the James Hardie case affected people interstate.

Yesterday Cement Australia, which bought the plant in 2003, and the Australian Workers Union announced a partnership project to accelerate asbestos removal at the site along with a wide-ranging study.

The study will also be the first in the world to include a professional occupational health and safety historian.

AWU national occupational health and safety director Yossi

Dig deep, urges tireless campaigner

FORMER Tasmanian senator Kay Denman has welcomed the planned asbestos study for Railton.

Ms Denman, who grew up in the cement-making town, spent her political career campaigning for those afflicted with asbestos-related diseases.

"This has been a long time coming," Ms Denman said yesterday. "I am delighted it is finally happening but just hope they dig deeply enough."

Berger said it would enable the program to explore "angles and corridors" not usually covered.

"The historian, Dr Berris Penrose, will be investigating every aspect of the site's asbestos production from 1947 to 1986," Dr Berger said.

"That will include where the asbestos came from, what kind it was, where it went and who handled it."

"We will attempt to find every worker, and former worker, along with community members



DENMAN

"I pushed for so long in the Senate without a result and my only regret about retiring in 2005 was that I would no longer be able to campaign on behalf of those afflicted with asbestos-related diseases."

Ms Denman's brother died from mesothelioma in 2006 and she said the full extent of the

who may have been affected."

Dr Berger said the ultimate goal was to discover the full extent of the asbestos problem created by the site.

"We already know of 16 cases of mesothelioma in former employees," he said.

"The program's main goal is to make life easier for those already ill and to find the people who may still contract the disease, and that includes people who lived in the town even if they didn't work at the site."

impact of the Railton site may never be known.

"Hopefully this study will help people in the future but there have been so many deaths in Railton in past decades that locals suspected were asbestos-related and it could never be proved," she said.

"At my brother's funeral former Goliath workers told me they had fibers in their lungs which hadn't developed into full-blown disease yet."

Dr Berger said compensation was not part of the program.

"Employees may still be eligible for compensation but that is not the point of this study."

Railton plant operations manager Steve Brass said money was not the issue.

"The issue is the well-being of our current and former employees," he said.

Mr Brass said the company knew when it bought the plant in 2003 it had inherited an asbestos problem.

Thieves rob Howard

THIEVES have broken into the Sydney home of former prime minister John Howard, stealing jewellery.

Police were called to the Wollstonecraft home, on Sydney's north shore, about 4pm yesterday after an automatic alarm was tripped.

No one was home at the time of the robbery, with Mr Howard overseas, Macquarie Radio reported. Police refused to confirm the home belonged to Mr Howard.



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