

Mary Gray (1924-2018)

Mary knew China, and she loved it. More importantly, perhaps, she insisted on trying to share both this knowledge and that affection with others. Love of China and its peoples, its long and its modern histories, its culture. Above all, love of its language, not just because it is a knowledge of someone else's language that must underpin any attempt to understand (in empathetic manner) that person and their culture, but because language is, by its very purpose, the means by which the peoples of this diverse and often troubled world can speak with each other. Communication, between peoples and across cultures, was a keynote in the Mary that I (and many of us here today) was privileged to know and to work with. And it was so much in keeping with her nature, that, such were the circumstances of New Zealand's small Sinologically-inclined community, she knew that mobilisation was required, and mobilisation in turn required organisations, either joined or created (if no fit-for-purpose one already existed). To these organisations, Mary then lent her considerable intelligence and energy and, as all who had occasion to work with her can testify, in such contexts Mary was a veritable force of nature. The "vast, overflowing *qi*" (*haoran zhi qi* 浩然之氣) spoken of by Mencius, the second sage of Confucianism, comes to mind in this connection (*Mencius*, 2A.2). Mary's innate resources of *mana* and wisdom were powerfully persuasive. Those of us who worked with the same purposes in mind were forever grateful for her efforts. Few things are more certain about our future than that China is bound to play an increasing vital role, and Mary grasped, as few others did, that to the extent that New Zealand, if only slowly, and often reluctantly, will be better able to come to terms with its geography rather than just its history, where and who we are now, rather than where the bulk of our ancestors came from, more and more young New Zealanders will need to become fluent in spoken and written Mandarin.

I and others worked closely with Mary for many years in connection with the New Zealand Chinese Language Association (of which she was President between 1996-2005). More recently, I became an office holder in the Wellington Branch of an organisation that she (and Vincent) had been such a vital member of, the New Zealand China Friendship Society. In recognition of her contribution to this latter body (joined, 1979; National executive, 1992; National President, 1994-96; Past President, 1997-2003) Mary was awarded Life Membership of the Society in 2008. I represent both these organizations in paying these final respects to Mary. We were all privileged to know you, and to share with you some of the

passions that so animated your life. We will miss you. Here, by way of our good-bye, and a thank you for the manner in which you enhanced our lives, is a poem by the great Tang poet Li Bai 李白 (701-762), entitled “Farewelling a Friend” (“Song youren” 送友人) and given here in the translation of Rewi Alley (*Li Pai: 200 Selected Poems*, p. 216):

*Green hills arise
north of our city; white waters
stretch from its east, and we
here farewelling each other;
you like a lone boat sailing
so far away, we both as bits
of cloud moving over the sky;
the sun will always set in that
west to which you go, never
allowing me to forget you; we
wave hands in parting, and then
your horse turns its head back
to me and whinnies, voicing too
his grief.*

青山橫北郭白水繞東城
此地一為別孤蓬萬里征
浮雲游子意落日故人情
揮手自茲去蕭蕭斑馬鳴

Duncan Campbell

President

New Zealand China Friendship Society Wellington Branch

4 July, 2018