

Volume IV is finally on its way! Your Grandmother, my Aunt Ruth, would have been so proud of you, Peter, for getting it back on track.

With the exception of graduate school, law school, and the practice of law in NYC for five years, I have lived in China almost all my adult life. I have lived in Taiwan, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, and now Hong Kong. My husband, Dr. Yong Xie, is a molecular immunologist originally from Shanghai and together with our daughter Renni and son Sawyer we have called Hong Kong home for over 30 years.

As you can imagine, I have a lot of stories to tell! But with the tight timeframe for publication, I decided to submit copies of two talks I have given recently related to my research about my Grandma, Miriam Boyd Parlin, her mother, Corabel Tarr Boyd, and Yenching University—a Christian university established in 1917 in China, the campus of which is now the site of Peking University. This research began in 1998 when Xie Yong was a visiting professor in the Biology Department at Peking University, I was a visiting scholar in the History Department, and Renni and Sawyer attended the Peking University elementary school. I spent several months in the University Archives discovering references to Miriam's year teaching at Yenching University and Corabel's role in the Yenching College for Women.

Our delightful time in Beijing was cut short by the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, but 20 years later (!) I was invited by the President of Peking University to continue my research in the Archives. What I discovered was fascinating! These two talks are a direct result of that research. They describe a part of our family history that has influenced the course of my life, so I have decided to contribute them to Volume IV.

The first talk was a graduate seminar I gave in 219 in the History Department of Peking University. Professor Niu was one of the key professors I had worked with back in 1998 and when I was invited back to Peking University in 2019, Professor Niu arranged for me to be a Visiting Professor in his department. He asked me to introduce his students to the use of archival material in original research. I focused on the discoveries I made regarding the impact of women on the establishment of Yenching University in the early 1900s. As the Yenching University campus is now the site of Peking University, the history of the campus was of interest to these students.

My second talk was part of an international conference celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hong Kong YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) in 2020. A friend of mine on the Board knew our family had a connection with the YWCA and asked me to speak on the topic "Women's Multiple Roles"—in my case, spanning five generations of women in one family. I introduced my great grandmother Corabel, since she was actively involved in the YWCA before she was married and, after she married, was instrumental in raising funds for the Beijing campus of the Yenching College for Women—the first college for women in China. Corabel and her husband, William, personally funded the construction of the Women's Gymnasium and gave scholarships for women to study physical education. I spoke of her legacy, which led her daughter, my Grandma Miriam, to head off to China as a missionary to teach chemistry to women (and men) at Yenching University in 1923—the

year before she was married to Charles Parlin, Sr. Miriam also taught physical education to women—introducing basketball, baseball, tennis and other sports. Corabel’s legacy continued when my mother, Camilla Parlin Smith, went to Korea as a missionary to teach Women’s Studies at Ewa University in 1980. And her legacy was passed down to me, where I have been living and working in China over 30 years—teaching, fundraising, supporting physical education, and pastoring a church. The fifth generation of international women so far is our daughter, Renni, who is a trilingual, multicultural artist living in London.

For those of you who don’t know me very well, and for future generations who may wonder what an American girl who grew up in Delhi, New York has been doing in China all these years—here’s a bit of explanation.

Although I grew up in the USA during a time when there was no official relationship between America and China, my Grandmother Miriam’s experience as a missionary in China meant I was surrounded by stories of China and physical artifacts—paintings, tapestries, figurines, carpets, porcelain—that captured my imagination at a very early age.

When, after Miriam’s passing, my Grandpa (Charles Parlin, Sr.) married Kaye King, the China connection became deeply personal. Kaye became my mentor and guide as I studied Chinese in college, and she helped me navigate the complexity of Chinese culture and social norms. I lived with her in New York City for a summer after Grandpa died, and she visited my Shanghai in-laws several times.

In 1980 I went to Taiwan to teach English, and after earning my Master’s Degree in Teaching in the US, I went with a team from UCLA to China to teach English to brilliant young scientists about to embark on their PhD programs at elite US universities. That’s where I met Xie Yong, although it wasn’t until after I moved back to the USA following a year teaching in Shanghai that we got together.

After both of us earned our respective doctorates (the same year Renni was born!), we moved to New York City where I practiced law at Davis Polk & Wardwell and Xie Yong was a post-doctoral fellow at Rockefeller University researching cancer. Sawyer was born in NYC and a year later, when my law firm opened a branch in Hong Kong, off we all went! Xie Yong became a professor at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology (HKUST) teaching genetics and immunology and I practiced New York law in Davis Polk’s Hong Kong office.

There is a 12-hour time difference between Hong Kong and New York, so practicing New York law in Hong Kong meant sleep was not part of the package. Our very first night in Hong Kong I was faxing an IPO at 2am from my husband’s office! With two toddlers, that lifestyle didn’t last too long. But I’ve had so many other interesting and fulfilling roles in Hong Kong since then, I’ve never looked back!

I worked at a large international telecommunications firm as a consultant to the Managing Director—hired to “ask stupid questions” about how the firm was developing and marketing their technology all over the world. I became the first Director of Development for the International Christian School, responsible for raising over US\$40 million in 5 years to build a state of the art Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade American curriculum private independent school. I

was the Managing Director China for the first online donation platform for nonprofit organizations in China, where I discovered so many people dedicated to serving humanity! When Xie Yong retired from HKUST and started his own cancer therapy research and development company, I helped manage the finance and administration for him. I attended Seminary in 2017. As the Director of Advancement for Outward Bound Hong Kong during the social upheaval in Hong Kong and the ensuing global COVID pandemic, I helped raise enough funds to keep them afloat during the 18 months Outward Bound was without income.

And just when many of my colleagues were retiring, I instead began a new vocation in October 2022 a pastor at the Methodist International Church in the heart of the city!

I feel somehow that the history of our family's connection with China has been the thread connecting all my different "roles" here in China—Christianity, education, science, women's issues, fundraising, historical research, even physical education/experience for young people! It is my prayer that no matter what the politicians come up with, the over 100 years of friendship between the American and Chinese people will not be forgotten and will continue to grow for generations to come.