

## **Kai-Yun Chiu**

### **Remarks Delivered at the 175th Anniversary Celebration Library Company of the Baltimore Bar**

Good Afternoon. My name is Mark Stichel and I was President of the Library Company of the Baltimore Bar from February 1992 to November 2006. I would like to thank the organizers of this event for giving me the opportunity to say a few words of remembrance about Kai-Yun Chiu, the Librarian of the Bar Library from 1976 to 2003.

For the first thirty-seven years of the Bar Library's existence, the Librarian's position was held by a law student or recently-minted lawyer for a few years. Since 1877, the Bar Library has had ten Librarians, with Miss Chiu having had the second-longest tenure. Only Andrew Hartman Mettee, who served from 1899 to 1933, had a longer tenure.

Miss Chiu was born in China in 1938. Her father had been a professor of political science and was an aide to Chiang Kai-shek, the military and civil head of the Republic of China. Miss Chiu's family traveled with the Nationalist Government of China during World War II and went to Taiwan with Chiang when the Communists took over the government of China in 1949.

Miss Chiu began college in Taiwan and finished her bachelor's degree at the College of the Holy Names in California. She then attended library school at the

University of California Berkeley, from which she was recruited by the Enoch Pratt Free Library. In 1962, Ms. Chiu traveled across the United States by Greyhound bus to Baltimore, which she never had seen before, to begin working at the Pratt. At that time she was one of the few persons of Asian descent who lived in Baltimore. Ms. Chiu then worked at Johns Hopkins before coming to the Bar Library in 1976.

I began practicing law in 1984. Back then, the Bar Library had many full time employees and I cannot recall when I first met Miss Chiu. But, what I do remember was that she was a forbidding presence and I tended to avoid asking her for assistance. Then, in 1988, I was asked to serve on a long range planning committee for the Bar Library and a year later became a member of the Board – the first new member in seven years and only the second new member in ten years. Through my work on the long range planning committee and early years on the Board, I came to know Miss Chiu better, but not well. That state of affairs probably would have remained unchanged, but for a sudden and unforeseen change in the leadership of the Board.

When I joined the Board, David Fishman was President. He was succeeded by John Schefflen and the expectation was that John would serve for many years. However, fifteen months after John became President of the Library Company, he received an offer he could not refuse – to be general counsel of MBNA, which was

located in Delaware – and resigned from the Board. At the age of thirty-three, I became President and, technically, Miss Chiu’s boss.

I learned a great deal from Miss Chiu. With hindsight, I probably was not qualified or prepared to lead the Bar Library in 1992. But, given the difficulties that the Bar Library and all law libraries faced in the 1990s and 2000s, I am not sure that even a well-qualified person would have been fully prepared. However, Miss Chiu and I worked together to keep the Bar Library alive. We survived personnel and budgetary crises.

The Bar Library is one of several membership law libraries that were founded in the 19th and early 20th Century. Miss Chiu was instrumental in organizing a roundtable of the librarians from those institutions. During the early years of my time as President, I visited many of our peer institutions throughout the country. Through those visits I came to realize that Miss Chiu was at the forefront of law librarianship and well respected among her peers.

It was Miss Chiu that prodded a reluctant Board to begin electronically cataloguing the Library’s acquisitions in the late 1980s and foresaw the challenges that the changing information landscape would have for our paper library. We were pioneers among membership and courthouse libraries in making electronic resources available to our members while retaining our pre-eminent collection.

As I began working closely with Miss Chiu, I learned that the behind the forbidding presence I had observed when I first began using the Bar Library, was a warm and caring person. As tough as Miss Chiu could be on the people who worked for her, she was their champion before the Board. When Miss Chiu retired, she lobbied long and hard for her trusted deputy, Joe Bennett, to be her successor. The lunches that Miss Chiu had I had at various Chinese restaurants became the stuff of legend. She became both a close friend and mentor to me.

When Miss Chiu joined the Bar Library in 1976, it was in dire financial straits. Through her careful management – and penny pinching – the Library was able to run budget surpluses and become solvent. However, my predecessors on the Board left a ticking bomb for me and my successors. In the late 1970s when interest rates were at historic highs, the Board set up a defined benefit retirement plan for the Library's employees. Since interest rates were high and at that time Miss Chiu, the library's oldest employee, was many years from retirement, the annual contributions required to fund the pension plan were minimal. However, as interest rates declined and Miss Chiu became closer to retirement, our plan was significantly underfunded notwithstanding the fact that we always contributed what our actuaries and the Department of Labor regulations demanded. When Miss Chiu retired, we were legally obligated to purchase annuities to fund her retirement benefits. If we had purchased the annuities at that time, we would have had to find significant amounts

of cash over and above what was in the plan to purchase the annuities. Miss Chiu offered to defer the purchase of the annuities until the bond market improved. She did not want to see the Bar Library put in a difficult financial position even though waiting to fund the annuities potentially was to her detriment. We paid Miss Chiu's retirement benefits from current funds and deferred purchasing the annuities for several years until the bond market improved. Miss Chiu's willingness to work with us on her retirement saved the Bar Library thousands of dollars. Miss Chiu's generosity towards the Bar Library did not end with her retirement. Miss Chiu died from pancreatic cancer in 2010. In her will, Miss Chiu left a bequest in the amount of \$10,000 to the Bar Library. She also left bequests to several other Baltimore institutions, including Asian artworks from her parents' collection that went to the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Walters Art Museum.

I see many familiar faces that were here when we were gathered in 1990 for the Bar Library's 150th Anniversary celebration. Miss Chiu's mother lived to the age of 101 and I had expected that Miss Chiu would be with us for many years after her retirement. Her death at the age of 72 was a great loss to those of us who had worked with her to keep this great library afloat. As we celebrate the Bar Library's 175th Anniversary today, the words of Sir Christopher Wren's epitaph at St. Paul's in London applies equally in this room to Miss Chiu: **"If you seek her memorial - look around you."**