

The Chinese Mr Hooker

Looking up from my writing, I smiled at the black and white photograph in front of me. It was like Grandpa was encouraging me to tell his story. Thousands of Australians know of the real-estate agency LJ Hooker. But not so many Australians know about the



Grandpa kept his Chinese heritage a secret

man behind it. And neither did I, until I started researching.

It started six years ago, when my brother Janusz suggested I write a book about Grandpa. As I loved writing, and Grandpa was certainly a great subject, I began right away.

I was living in Barcelona, Spain, so each year I returned to Sydney for a few months to do research.

If only I'd started 20 years ago, when many of his coworkers would still have been alive! But I did manage to meet some of his associates. One was Bruce Adams, whose uncle had started up the first office with my grandfather in 1928. And another was Jack Abeshouse, who had been with the company for 44 years.

Grandpa died in 1976, when I was just a few years old. I recall a sweet, gentle man. Others speak of him as a kind and generous fellow and a respected

businessman. He left school at 13 and by the age of 16 had bought two properties, with money saved from his office job.

Just over 30 years later he was Australia's largest landowner and the biggest cattle owner in the world. He created Australia's first shopping malls, introduced franchising and had large housing developments in every state.

But Grandpa had a secret. Born Lesley Joseph Tingyou, he had Chinese heritage. He changed his name to Hooker, I think, because his mother married a man called



I've also just finished writing a children's book



Howe Hook Yin, later Harry Hookin, and Hooker is an anglicised version of that. But no-one knew about his Chinese background until after his death.

I like to think I have inherited some of Grandpa's creativity. I work in publishing and have just finished a children's book, *Misha,*

the Travelling Puppy.

Grandpa's motto was persistence and I hope *LJ Hooker The Man* will inspire people to challenge themselves. ■

Natalia Hooker, Barcelona
LJ Hooker The Man is \$54.95 from bookstores.