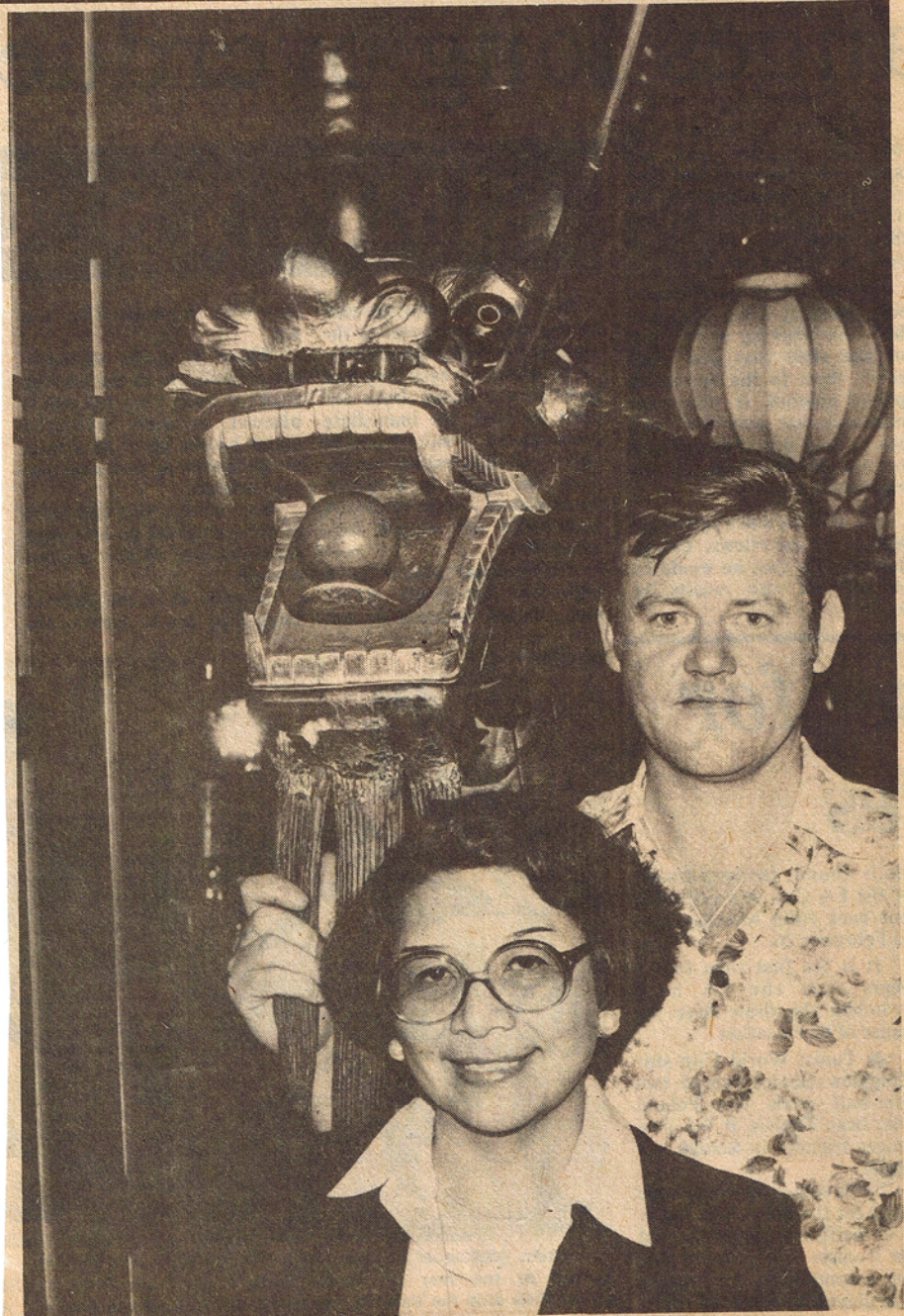


FEB 17, 1979



Mabel Wong and John Ball with their ornate dragon.

Australian taxman is no St George

THE WORLD'S longest dragon is en route from Fat Shan to Australia where it will dance through the streets of Melbourne as part of the city's annual Moomba Festival.

The \$100,000, 300-foot-long dragon is believed to be the first traditional dragon made in Canton since 1949.

Intricately-designed, brilliantly coloured and with more than 50,000 hand-cut mirrors glittering along its sides, the dragon is the brain-child of the Tai Lung Committee, a group of Australians and Australian Chinese.

PEOPLE

A few years ago, he took a Hongkong-made dragon to his home city of Bendigo, a city which once had a large community of Chinese during the Victorian gold rush of the last century.

"We began trying to get the new dragon made in China about 18 months ago," Mr Ball recalled as he took a break from trying to organise the purchase of costumes, banners, weapons and other processional regalia.


"David Wang wrote to China asking for permission

makers' art to Fat Shan for the workers there to base their efforts on.

The result, he says, is spectacular . . . nothing less than the most beautiful, most exquisite dragon in the world.

Before the Tai Lung dragon could be taken to Melbourne, however, an unexpected stumbling block developed in the person of the Australian Federal Government taxman who wanted \$15,000 sales tax before he would let the dragon into the country.

This bureaucratic move prompted a fiery, and somewhat hilarious, press cam-



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The committee is headed by Mrs Mabel Wang, the widow of a former Melbourne City Councillor, and Mr John Ball, a former Hongkong newspaperman who is now editor of the bilingual newspaper *The Asian*.

In Hongkong this week to make final arrangements to take the dragon back to Australia, Mrs Wang and Mr Ball told of their long attempt to get a Chinese-made dragon to Australia to represent the Chinese community in the big festival parade.

For Mr Ball, this is his second dragon-importing endeavour.

PEOPLE

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"We began trying to get the new dragon made in China about 18 months ago," Mr Ball recalled as he took a break from trying to organise the purchase of costumes, banners, weapons and other processional regalia.

"David Wang wrote to China asking for permission to have a dragon made there, but he died shortly before we got a positive answer.

"Mrs Wang then took over.

"Peking gave permission for what the Chinese authorities described as 'an old dragon factory' to be re-opened in Fat Shan to build the dragon.

"But the last of the old men with full knowledge of how the dragons were made had long since died."

Mr Ball, who during his nine years in Hongkong had become somewhat of an expert on dragon building, had to send samples of the dragon

makers' art to Fat Shan for the workers there to base their efforts on.

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This bureaucratic move prompted a fiery, and somewhat hilarious, press campaign in Melbourne, with one cartoonist portraying two worried politicians complaining: "If you let in one dragon, they'll *all* want to come."

The taxman finally decided he had made such a laughing stock of himself over his decision — especially when the Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, donated \$250 to the pro-dragon cause — that he changed his mind and announced the department would pay the sales tax.

"That will give him a lesson on the power of the dragon," John Ball said contentedly.