



James Chuan-Hsiang Wu

October 6, 1926 - October 31, 2019

James Chuan-Hsiang Wu (吳傳祥) was born on October 6, 1926 in the city of Tai An (泰安) in Shandong Province, China. He grew up with an older sister, three younger brothers and three younger sisters. Soon after turning 5, his family moved north to the city of Ji Nan (濟南). His father worked as a business manager in a vocational school and also taught business management there. In Ji Nan, James lived in a house just outside the southeast corner of the old city wall. Half of the house protruded over the old city wall moat. The house even included a swimming pool that incidentally still exists today although now much larger in size. The old city wall was wide enough for cars to drive on and was later modified with ramps so that cars can actually drive up. In his youth, he and his brothers would try to heave rocks onto the top of the old city wall. At that age, the wall appeared exceptionally high to them, and it was challenging to land rocks up there. His high school was located inside the city wall to the north of his house. He enjoyed playing in nearby Da Ming Lake (大明) where during the winters, he skated on the lake, and during the summers, he rowed boats in it. He lived in Ji Nan until his high school graduation. As the eldest male child, he was well pampered compared with his younger siblings — as Chinese tradition dictated. He felt that all his relatives treated him a bit nicer than others. Throughout his life, James never really like to eat meat much and preferred vegetarian dishes — especially tofu.

After high school, he moved to Tianjin and later Beijing. One of his friends suggested that Shanghai Customs College (上海海關稅務專門學院) would be a good opportunity. They both applied and were accepted there. James majored in Maritime Studies and was graduated in December 1948. He then started working aboard ships belonging to China's customs maritime services. During the Chinese Civil War, James and others boarded a customs maritime ship and followed Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan.

In 1956, he started working in the merchant marines as chief officer and traveled around the world. In 1962, he easily passed the national captain's exam and was ranked number 1 in the nation.

In April 1962, one of James' Customs College schoolmates introduced him to his future wife, Eva (王大菁). His schoolmate's wife knew Eva. After dating just a few months, James knew that Eva was the one, and on September 8, 1962, they got married. Shortly after

their honeymoon in late October of that year, he had to ship off to sea, and by the time he came back home, their first son, Sandy, was already five months old. Their second son, Louis, was born in 1965, and their youngest son, Ben, was born in 1969.

After years as a captain, he studied for and passed the national harbor pilot exam — again, he was ranked number 1 in the nation. Harbor pilots are considered the highest-level position in maritime. He began his career as a harbor pilot at the Port of Keelung, Taiwan in 1971.

In 1974, his wife and children immigrated to the United States so that their children could receive better educations and opportunities. James stayed in Taiwan to provide financial support but visited his family as often as possible. This arrangement proved hard on everyone, but they were willing to do so, thus providing a brighter future for their children. He retired as a harbor pilot in 1991, and the Port of Keelung recognized him as their best harbor pilot. After retiring, he moved to the United States and joined his family full time. James enjoyed his retirement by spending time with his extended family, teaching and practicing Tai Chi at the Lake Merritt Senior Center several days a week and traveling extensively around the world. James was exceptionally well-traveled. As a young adult, he visited or lived in England, Sweden, Japan, Germany, United States, Indonesia, Vietnam, Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Cambodia, South America, Taiwan and China. As an older adult, he traveled widely throughout North America, Central America, South America, Australia, Europe, Russia, Middle East and Asia. He spoke multiple languages including Mandarin, English, Japanese and even Indonesian.

James was well respected by people he worked with and beloved by his family and friends. As a thoughtful, gentle person, James was always concerned for the wellbeing of others. He was generous with others but spent little on himself. Being frugal was important to him when it came to day to day living. He sometimes played the lottery and said he would give his winnings to his grandkids if he won.

Sadly, James unexpectedly passed away in his sleep on October 31, 2019 at the age of 93 (or a couple of days shy of 93 according to the Chinese lunar calendar). He simply died of old age. James is survived by his wife of 57 years, Eva; sons Sandy, Louis, and Ben (wife Anna); and grandchildren Jessica, Michael, Ali, Jonathan and Stevenson Wu. He will be buried in historic Mountain View Cemetery next to Piedmont, California where he lived for decades. He will be missed.

Comments



“ Ben Wu lit a candle in memory of James Chuan-Hsiang Wu



Ben Wu - June 21, 2020 at 05:52 PM