

Kwai Chun Chan relates her Chicago experience

On April 3, 2001, at 9 a.m. Kam, my husband; Keith, my son; and I met Dr. Wilson and Mrs. Wilson at the airport in Raleigh.

The flight left Raleigh at 10:00 and arrived in Chicago at 11:00.

We ate lunch at Midway Airport in Chicago and waited for my parents to arrive from New York.

When they arrived, the 7 of us traveled by limo (the cheapest mode of transport!) to the Hyatt Hotel mid-town.

Dr. Wilson and I went to the AACC (American Association of Community College) counter to register. An AACC faculty member gave me my name card that had "Centennial Scholar, ALL USA First Team Member, Kwai Chun Chan, and Wayne Community College, NC."

After we had registered, my family invited Dr. Wilson and Mrs. Wilson for dinner that night. We had a really traditional Chinese dinner that night including Pi King duck, lobster, and other traditional Chinese food.

We met each other from 50 states, and I met the other two first team ALL-USA members from North Carolina, April Layne from Durham Technical Community College and Karen Rippy from Cleveland Community College.

On Wednesday, April 4, at 10:00 a.m. all the Centennial Scholars met at the Grand Room inside the Hyatt Hotel.

At 12:30 the 50 Centennial Scholars were practicing how to hold the state flags and face the camera.

The Centennial Ceremony started at 4:30. At the opening, we kicked-off with a parade of state flags into the Grand Room, where almost 1000 guests were. Big screens at the back of the stage and 2 big 100 orange designs were on the stage.

When I held the North Carolina state flag and walked into the Grand Room with other scholars, I took a deep breath and made myself calm down and not to cry. From my heart, I appreciated the equal opportunity in USA as well the Community College System and Wayne Community College which gave me this chance to study.

I am thankful for the faculty and the instructors at WCC, especially Kathryn Spicer and Miriam Wessell; they not only helped me study, but also watched my steps, and gave direction.

After the parade the entire scholars stood beside the stage and received the standing ovation from the guests.

The ceremony was finished at 6:00, and we 50 scholars left the room with a candle, which symbolized a bright future.

At dinner that night, George Boggs, President of AACC, introduced each scholar.

One by one we went to the stage and got the check from the Coca-Cola representatives and the pin of Centennial Scholar.



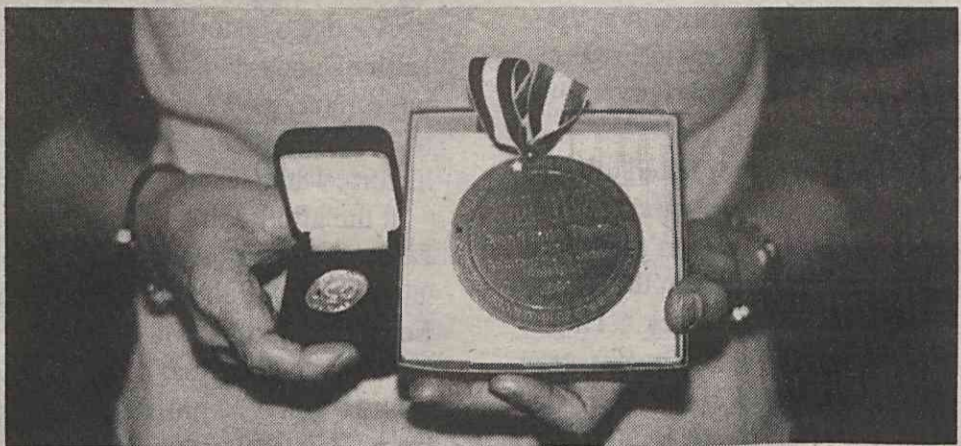
Kwai Chan, fourth from left, stands with Dr. Ed Wilson, Jr., WCC President and her family: (l to r) Wilson, Sang Chan, father; Chu Kwok, mother; Kwai; Kam Nin Lee, husband; and Ming Him, Kwai and Kam's son.

I was excited and frightened when it was my time to go onto the stage. Dr. Wilson said to me kindly, "Kwai, breathe deeply and relax."

Bob Dubill, the executive editor of USA TODAY, called my name, and Dr. Wilson and I went up to the stage. I received the medal and the trophy from George Boggs and the check from the representative of USA TODAY

On the way home on the flight, my husband asked me what I was thinking now.

When I was watching the infinite sky, the beautiful clouds with various shapes wandering upon the mainland of the USA, I said emotionally, "Kam, thank you for bringing me here."



Kwai holds the medal and medallion she received.



Kwai and Dr. Wilson stand amongst an array of state flags at the Hyatt Hotel.



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