

People:

Wu Family Parents:

- KC (kay-see) Wu – Governor of Taiwan from 1949 to 1953
- Edith Wu – Wife of KC Wu

Wu Family Children:

- Eileen Wu
- Edith Wu
- Hsui-kwang “Hugo” Wu
- Hsiu-huang (show-hwong) “Sherman” Wu



*Front row, left to right: Edith Wu (mother), Eileen Wu, and Edith Wu.
Back row, left to right: KC Wu, Maryland McCormick, Robert McCormick, Yi Yuan Yu, and Hugo Wu.*

The McCormicks:

- Robert McCormick was the editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune* Newspaper from 1911-1955. He became friends with KC Wu through Wu’s position as governor of Taiwan, and a shared passion for anti-communism.
- Maryland McCormick – Robert’s second wife. They married in 1944, and were together until the Colonel’s death in 1955.

Political Leaders in China:

- Chiang Kai-shek – Leader of the Nationalist government on Taiwan
- Mao Zedong – Leader of the communist revolution in China



Map of the island of Taiwan, in relation to mainland China.

Terms to know:

- Assimilate – To fully become part of a different country, society, or culture.

- Communism – An economic and political system in which the government owns all the businesses, and citizens have limited personal freedoms.
- Cotillion – A large formal party for dancing. This party is often held as a symbolic way of introducing young women to dating culture.
- Emigrate – To leave a country or region to live somewhere else.
- Fraternity – An organization made up of male college students who share common goals and friendship.
- Immigrant – A person who comes to another country to live.
- Nationalist Party – Political party that was ruled Taiwan.

It is hard to tell exactly what 16-year-old Hsiu-huang “Sherman” Wu was feeling on July 21, 1954, when he stepped out of a plane onto the tarmac at Chicago’s Midway Airport. After a year of house arrest in Taiwan, (his family negotiated his release from their home in Evanston, Illinois) Sherman may have been feeling excited and relieved to be reunited with his family. He may also have been feeling nervous about starting a new life in a foreign country.



Left to right: KC, Edith (mother), Sherman, Edith, and Hugo Wu.

Sherman’s father, KC Wu, was the governor of Taiwan during the turbulent civil war years in China after World War II. As the Communist government of Mao Zedong swept through mainland China in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nationalist or democratic forces, retreated to Taiwan. KC Wu, a close confidant of Kai-shek, began a friendship with Robert McCormick based on their similar views on communism and of the United States sending aid to Taiwan. Over several years and many letters, their friendship grew, as well as the friendship between the Colonel’s wife Maryland and KC’s wife Edith. As the political situation in Taiwan became strained, KC asked Robert for help in getting Edith and Eileen into an American school. Robert’s position as editor in chief at the *Chicago Tribune* meant his role in the Chicago community was a strong one, and after reaching out to the president of Northwestern University, Robert was able to speed-up the application process. Maryland offered to let the girls stay at the McCormick’s home at Cantigny. Sherman and his older brother Hugo remained in Taiwan with their parents.

Unlike many people who emigrate from politically unstable countries, Edith and Eileen had family connections in the United States, in addition to the McCormicks, who looked out for their wellbeing. They wanted to assimilate into their adopted culture.



Left to right: Edith, Eileen, and Edith (daughter).

They joined social clubs, learned to drive, and even had their “coming out” cotillion at school. Holidays like Christmas and New Year’s were spent with the McCormicks. Eileen married a classmate, and the McCormicks hosted their wedding at Cantigny in 1952. Eileen adopted another aspect of American culture, getting married in a white dress, although she had it tailored to include Chinese styling. The sisters were joined by their brother Hugo in 1952, when he came to the United States to attend school in New Jersey.

By 1953, KC Wu had begun to accuse the Taiwanese government of abandoning democracy and felt the government should establish greater individual rights to the people living there. The tensions between KC and Chiang Kai-shek increased, and eventually KC and wife Edith immigrated to the United States. However, due to his father’s outspoken criticism of the government, son Sherman was forbidden to leave by the Nationalist party, and put under house arrest except to go to school. Thanks in part to Robert McCormick’s constant political coverage of the situation in the *Chicago Tribune*, Sherman was finally issued a passport and was allowed to reunite with his family in Illinois.

Like his sisters before him, Sherman wanted to assimilate into American culture. He adopted the name Sherman, after the street his family lived on in Evanston. After finishing high school in 1956, he attended Northwestern, following his sisters, where he made national headlines. After being accepted into Psi Upsilon fraternity, several of his new fraternity brothers felt that having a Chinese member would “degrade the house.” Sherman was asked to resign. The majority of the student body came to Sherman’s defense, and with respected national magazines like *Life* and *Time* picking up the story, Psi Upsilon offered an apology to Sherman. The experience brought national recognition to the issue of

discrimination against Asians in America, and was even memorialized in the Pete Seeger song, “The Ballad of Sherman Wu.”

The Wu Family Story – Afterword

Where did their lives take them?

Robert and Maryland McCormick: The Colonel, as he was known, died April 1, 1955 at Cantigny. He is buried on the estate, next to his first wife, Amy. His wife, Maryland, lived for another 31 years. The Colonel's legacy lives on in the form of the McCormick Foundation, which established Cantigny as a public park and created a charity that funds community programs that educate and inform citizens.

KC and Edith Wu: KC and Edith never returned to China or Taiwan. KC spent the rest of his life as a lecturer and teacher at a college in Savannah, Georgia. He died June 7, 1984. Edith was an accomplished artist, painting birds and flowers in the classical Chinese style. Galleries in China and the United States displayed her work, and one of her paintings even hangs in Maryland McCormick's former bedroom at Cantigny. Edith died in October 22, 2002, in Florida.

Eileen Wu: While at Northwestern University, Eileen married Yi Yuan Yu. She went on to get degrees in modern art and library science, and had two daughters. She died May 9, 2014, in New Jersey.

Edith Wu: Edith, like her sister Eileen, met her future husband at Northwestern University. Tingye Li, who went on to be a pioneer in American laser technology, and Edith had two daughters. Edith lives in Colorado.

Hugo Wu: Hugo married in 1968. He currently lives in Florida.

Sherman Wu: Sherman received several science degrees from Northwestern University. In his professional life, he developed the guidance systems used in spacecraft, including the Apollo moon missions, and in missiles and airplanes. He also designed robots for use in factories. He married in 1993, and travelled the world with his wife. He died May 10, 2010.