

FEATURE

Prof- Tien-Wei Wu (1918-2005)

Historian/Pioneer

As an accomplished historian, he
championed justice and righteousness.

By Hua-ling Hu



In the afternoon of March 20, 2005, Prof. Tien-Wei Wu suffered a massive heart attack and passed away that evening. [1] He left behind his ailing, beloved wife of 50 some years, Caroline Wu. [2] He also left behind a mission to which he had devoted his life. It was a mission of preserving historical truth and fighting for justice and reparations for war crime victims.

Prof. Wu was born in Mukden (Shenyang), Liaoning, China on October 15, 1918. [3] He received his bachelor of arts degree from Nanjing University and doctorate in history from University of Maryland. For twenty some years he taught in the History Department of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Illinois, and his book, *The Sian Incident*, was highly acclaimed by his peers.

In the 1980's, the Japanese government repeatedly revised text books to whitewash its horrific war crimes committed by Japanese military in China. Prof. Wu saw the growing danger of the revival of militarism in Japan and decided to devote his life to preserving the truth about the history of Japanese aggression against China and demanding an apology and reparation from the Japanese government.

In 1990, Prof Wu single-handedly founded the *Journal on the Studies of Japanese Aggression Against China*, hereafter referred to

as JSJAAC. The primary goal of the publication was to arouse people's interest and attention to this important page of human history and to engage research on the subject. [5] However, it was difficult to publish a scholarly quarterly, such as JSJAAC, without ample support of funding and manpower. I know this because I have participated in the editorial work since the birth of the journal. Prof Wu was the chief editor. In addition to the heavy burden of editing responsibilities, he had to raise funds for the journal. He and his, adult children donated generously to JSJAAC's coffers.

To edit the journal. Prof Wu, his wife Caroline, and I worked long hours. During the month of the quarterly's scheduled publication. Prof Wu and Caroline always worked till midnight. Since I was not cut out to bum the midnight oil, I got up instead at 3:00 or 4:00 a. m. to finish my assignments. Although my husband complained that I disturbed peace in our home, I was very grateful to the Wu's because I learned a lot about Sino-Japanese history.

Besides, I received a fringe benefit from them — the freshest Chinese vegetables grown by Prof Wu in their back yard. Growing vegetables was Prof Wu's fondest hobby. Besides publishing the JSJAAC, Prof Wu often joined efforts with the Chinese grass-roots organizations in big cities to preserve the truth of the Sino-

Japanese War. For instance, during the goodwill visit of Japanese Emperor Akihito to the United States in June 1994, Prof Wu sought cooperation of the Chinese organizations in New York to organize activities to protest to the Emperor. First, they inserted a whole-page ad entitled A Country That Does Not Recognize Its Wrongs Cannot Do Right in the New York Times (June 17, 1994) to denounce the war crimes committed by the invading Japanese troops in China. The ad further pointed out that before Japan shouldered responsibilities for its war crimes, the United Nations should not accept it as a permanent member of the Security Council. Meanwhile, they challenged Chinese Americans to hold protests and demonstration rallies in cities along the route of Akihito's visit.

Prof Wu actively participated in the rally in front of the White House, which was organized mainly by the Chinese Americans. In the simmering summer heat with a carload of literature on Japanese aggression against China, he drove for two days from his home in Carbondale, Illinois to the capital city. As soon as he arrived, he distributed the literature to the protesters, made inspirational speeches, and conducted interviews with the media. He also led the protesters in shouting anti-Japanese slogans and sang Chinese patriotic songs. Many people were moved to tears. Pei Yun-ling, chairperson of the United Chinese American Committee of Protest and Reparation, credited Prof Wu as the most important leader of the protest rally in Washington. [6]

In January 1995, the Smithsonian Institute held an exhibit entitled "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb on the End of World War II in Asia." It portrayed Japan as the victim because of A-bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ignoring Japan's gruesome war crimes committed in China, and the Chinese contribution in ending the war. The exhibit so angered Prof Wu that he immediately protested to the Smithsonian. [7] He was convinced more than ever about the urgency of showing the world Japan's gruesome war crimes and atrocities. Later, through his tireless

efforts. Prof Wu was able to win the support of Chinese American organizations and gained the approval of the Beijing Museum of 'Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan' to hold an exhibit regarding the rarely publicized war crimes committed by the Japanese Biological Warfare Unit 731. The exhibit of 100 pictures was held in New York, St. Louis, San Francisco and Los Angeles from September to December of 1995. [8]

Although Prof Wu launched various activities to preserve the truth about Japanese aggression against China, he still found time to write papers on the subject. Among his many published papers were, A Preliminary Review of Studies of Japanese Biological Warfare in the United States. [9], The Failure of the Tokyo Trial — As Seen from the Success of the Nuremberg Trial. [10] and Let the Whole World Know the Nanking Massacre. [11]

In 1996, Prof Wu went to Yale Divinity School Library to select and edit the letters and diaries of the American missionaries written during the [Nanking (Nanjing) Massacre], also known as the [Rape of Nanking]. He even raised the needed funds for publishing the primary sources from his schoolmate, (Kwoh Chuan-ho). In the following year, American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre. 1937-1938 (Yale Divinity School Library Occasional Publication No. 9, 1997) was published. [12] Also, Prof Wu co-authored The Nanjing Massacre — Facts and Records! with Sun Zhe-wei. [13]

Prof Wu's most cherished dream was to establish a permanent Chinese Holocaust Museum in San Francisco to let this page of bloody human history pass from generation to generation and to prevent the Nanking Massacre from repeating in the future. Despite friends' reservations about the enormity of the museum project. Prof Wu went ahead with it in full stride. In February 2000, he established a temporary museum in a rented building in Oakland [14], and

often worked long hours as its janitor and attendant.

In late January of 2005, my husband and I visited San Jose, California. Prof Wu and Caroline came to see us at the hotel. I knew that Caroline suffered from Alzheimer's. Prof Wu personally bathed, fed, and dressed her. Although Caroline had lost her memory, she tearfully hugged me, and out of the blue, she said to us, "I burden Tien-Wei." Prof Wu tenderly responded, "How can you say you burden me? You're my wife." He then told us that he was looking forward to taking Caroline to see the best Chinese herb doctor in Beijing in the coming April, hoping that miracles might happen. And he added, "She and I have shared so many trying times together, 50 some years...."

Prof Wu also told us that he had another agenda during his April trip to Beijing. He intended to continue fundraising for a permanent Chinese Holocaust Museum from various communities there. And he said, "Even hard for it until my last breath."

Prof. Wu loved the Chinese people deeply. As an accomplished historian, he championed justice and righteousness. He was a pioneer of Chinese American grassroots movements for preserving the truth about Sino-Japanese history in the United States. During his lifetime, he boldly engineered so many projects to protect the integrity of the history of Japanese aggression against China, repeatedly demanding Japan's apology and reparation to the Chinese people. He inspired so many people; he penned so many papers on the subject. He fought unswervingly for the cause till his last breath.

Yet, he asked his children not to hold a funeral or memorial service for him after his death.

When he passed away on March 20, he quietly left this world.

References;

1. Data provided by Dr. (Briand Wu), Prof. Wu's son.
2. Mrs. Wu suffered from Alzheimer's. According to Briand Wu, his parents had been married for 59 years.
3. Data provided by Briand Wu.
4. Tien-wei Wu, The Sian Incident: A Pivot Point in Modern China (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1976).
5. *The Journal of Studies of Japanese Aggression Against China JSJAAC*, vol. 1, 1990/2, p.43.
6. JSJAAC, Special Edition of the Protests to the Japanese Emperor, 1994/8, p.31
7. Tien-wei Wu's letter of January 20, 1995 to Secretary I. Michael Heyman of the Smithsonian Institute, see JSJAAC, vol 21-22, 1995/8, p. 164.
8. For details of the exhibit, please see Chao Pao, Sept. 5 & 23, 1995; *International Daily*, Oct. 5, 1995, JSJAAC, vol. 23-24, 1995/12, pp.169-171
9. JSJAAC, vol. 21-22, pp. 47-54 (Chinese text}, 176-167 (English text)
- 10 Chao Pao, November 12, 1995.
11. (Biographical Literature) vol.71, no.6, 1996 (Chinese text); JSJAAC, vol. 27, pp. 215-231 (English text)
12. The book's preface by Tien-Wei Wu, pp. iii-iv; JSJAAC, vol. 25, 1996/11, p.108.
- 13 *The Nanking Massacre-Facts and Records* (Beijing, Chinese Literature and History Publishing, 1977).
14. See *The Chinese Holocaust*, quarterly newsletter, no. 1, Feb. 2000.

Hua-ling Hu taught at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she received her doctorate in history. She also taught at (National Chiao Tung University) in Taiwan and several other universities. She served as an editor at the Journal of Studies of Japanese Aggression Against China, JSJAAC (1990-96). She authored some eighty historical papers and short stories.