

# Wing Luke, learning from his example

by Jay Glick

**Wing Luke was the first person of Chinese descent to win political office on the entire West Coast of the United States, but he wasn't perfect. Luke's baby sister, Betty Luke Kan, told of a time when Wing Luke got involved in fist fights at Roosevelt high school.**

Luke and his younger brothers and sisters were often teased and called names because they were one of the few minority families in Seattle's University District. In order to protect his family's honor, Luke would fight. But he soon realized that fighting made him and his family nothing but enemies.

He searched for a better solution, one that would be long-lasting. After doing some thinking, he decided to try and make friends with his tormentors, instead of making enemies. His plan worked. Not only did he make friends, but the friends he made followed Luke's example and quit making fun of others.

In this way, Luke forced people to get to know him. By always showing them respect, he also always gained their respect, and oftentimes their true friendship.

This may sound like a simple solution to a complex problem; in fact, it is. But it is very practical and works to prevent problems that could have disastrous effects.

It was this type of visionary thinking that would lead to Wing Luke's successful and ground-breaking political career. Instead of holding grudges against people, even those who had mistreated him, he embraced all people and all cultures.

Luke was a strong proponent of cultural pluralism before this phrase was even a concept. Again, he used his value and tool, respect, to break down cultural barriers. Instead of shunning other cultures and their values, he participated in them.

Making friends and accepting other people helped Luke in all walks of life. He had a definite natural talent at a young age for communication. In first grade, Luke had to learn English. He accomplished this task in only a year.

Being an English-as-a-second-language student never slowed him down. It only enhanced his life, as anyone who speaks two languages knows, because he was able to communicate with twice as many people.

In "Marshall Junior High and Roosevelt High School students now came to appreciate Luke's serious efforts as a scholar and colleague." (The Weekly, Jan. 28 — Feb. 3, 1987) He also drew cartoons and created comic books which would entertain his friends.

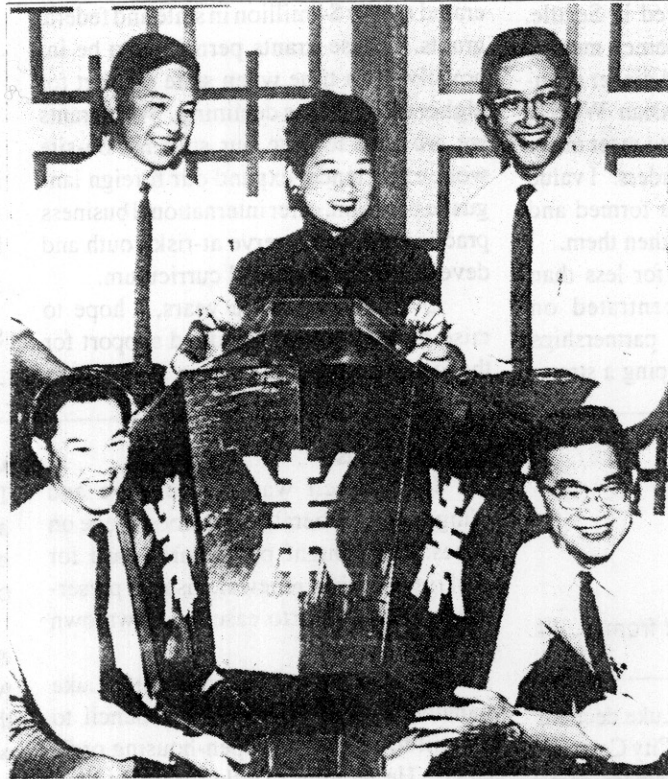
"At Marshall he was elected Boys' Club president; his Roosevelt classmates elected him student body president and he served as president of the Seattle Inter-High Student Council." (The Weekly) He was already becoming a leader among leaders.

After serving as a sergeant in WWII and receiving a bronze medal and six combat stars, he resumed his education. He continued to be a leader in college.

He was elected president of his sophomore class at the UW.

He got a BA (1950) from American University in Washington, D.C., and a Master's in political science and law degree (1954) at the University of Washington.

Luke then entered into private law practice in 1955. After two years he was appointed State Assistant Attorney General. The political pull in this position was



Wing Luke with some friends (bottom right corner). From top left, Ark Chin, Ruby Chow, Ben Woo, Wing Luke and Warren Chan.

"His ethnic heritage remained a proud possession, while he enthusiastically saluted the traditions and customs of others... He sang Irish ballads with an ersatz brogue on St. Patrick's Day. He crooned Norway's national anthem in Norwegian (for the king of Norway).

"In school he studied Spanish, and was known to throw around a few Swedish phrases. His friends applauded the occasion (at a fund-raiser) when he pranced across the Seattle Opera House stage in a Scottish kilt — playing bagpipes." (The Weekly, Jan. 28 — Feb. 3, 1987)

See "Wing Luke" P. 45