

## **Rev. Ai Chih Tsai: Memories by His Children**

By BiHua Tsai Caldwell, Bilin Tsai, Bisim Tsai Lee and Peter Tsai

On behalf of Rev. Ai Chih Tsai's children, grandchildren, and other family members, we want to express our deepest gratitude to the *Pacific Times* and the Taiwanese American Historical Society. We are profoundly moved and honored by your recognition of Rev Ai Chih Tsai and this opportunity to share his life's story and achievements with the readers of the *Pacific Times*.

We will first present a brief biography of Ai Chih Tsai and then describe four values that guided his life and that he and our Mother, Ryo Morikawa Tsai, passed down to their children and grandchildren.

### **Biography**

Ai Chih Tsai was born in November 1913 in Tainan Province, the 8<sup>th</sup> of 10 children of whom 9 survived into adulthood. After attending Presbyterian High School in Tainan for three years, he moved to Kyoto and graduated from Doshisha High School (1931), Preparatory College (1935), and Theological School (1938).

After arriving in the U.S. on a student visa in 1938, he earned an M.A. (1940) and B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity, 1941) at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He then served as the pastor of the Chicago Church of Christ (Japanese) in downtown Chicago where he was ordained in November 1942.

In early 1942, Ai Chih Tsai met Ryo Morikawa, a Japanese-American woman whose family was forced to leave their home in San Diego by order of the U.S. Government after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. The Morikawa family settled in Chicago and was invited to attend services at Father's church. Our parents married in December 1942 and their first child, BiHua, was born in 1944.

For the next two years, Father worked for the U.S. Navy and U.S. War Department assisting the U.S. government in the war and post-war efforts. In May 1946, he accepted a position with UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). He was assigned to the Shanghai Office and spent several months in Taiwan as a Reports Officer.

Following his UNRRA assignment, he returned to the US in 1947 and was called to the Seattle Japanese Congregational Church in 1948. In Seattle, the Tsai family added three more children, Bilin, Bisim, and Peter. Father served the Seattle church for thirty-one years. After his retirement, he and Mother enjoyed watching their children marry and start their own families,

playing with their grandchildren, traveling, spending time on Puget Sound, and enjoying their siblings, nieces, and nephews. Father died in August 1998.

## **Guiding Values: Faith, Family, Education, Service to Country and World**

Now we will to share four of Ai Chih Tsai's **strongest values**; he lived these values and even as young children, we saw him adhere to and conduct himself according to them.

**Christian Faith:** Our Grandfather (Ai Chih Tsai's Father) converted to Christianity at age 18. This resulted in his being rejected by his Tainan Province village neighbors and fleeing to Tainan City. There, he studied medicine with Dr. James Maxwell, the first Presbyterian missionary doctor in Formosa. Our grandparents were devout Christians serving their community with much needed medical care and food for the needy. They raised their children in the Christian faith.

Our Father's first pastoral calling was to a Japanese congregation in Chicago in early 1942. With assistance from his professors and mentors at the Divinity School, he successfully secured a welcoming location for his small congregation during the war years.

In 1948, he was called as the minister of the Seattle Japanese Congregational Church where he served faithfully for 31 years. In 1969, he helped establish the Seattle Formosan Christian Church.

**Love of and Devotion to Family:** Father's love for his immediate and extended family was incredibly strong. His deep devotion to us was evident in his interest in our lives, his concern that we were eating enough or warm enough or safe enough, and the way he modeled for and instilled in us how a family cares for and treats each other. He shared with us the things he enjoyed most outside of his ministry and community – his great cooking, clam digging, hunting for wild mushrooms (matsutake), playing bridge, spending time on Puget Sound – and we grew to love these activities and still do.

He was the first of his siblings to come to the U.S. Once he was settled with his family in Seattle, he sponsored many of his nieces and nephews making it possible for them to come to the U.S. to study. He also sponsored some of his own siblings and helped them settle in this country as well. One of our Tsai relatives said that Father was the "Moses of the Tsai Family".

**Education:** Education was highly valued by our grandparents and this love of learning was rooted in their Christian faith. They wanted their children, both sons and daughters, to become educated and use their education to serve God and the community.

Not only were Father and all of his siblings educated, but educational accomplishments continue among the next generations of the extended Tsai Family.

**Love of and Service to his Birth Country and his Adopted Country:**

Ai Chih Tsai sailed from Japan in 1938 to study in the U.S. when war in Asia seemed imminent. He always intended to return to Taiwan after completing his ministerial education. His dream was to help establish a college or university in Taiwan with a Christian mission in order to expand educational opportunities for Taiwanese young people and to spread the Christian faith.

During World War II, individuals fluent in Taiwanese, Japanese, and English and familiar with Taiwan and Japan were needed to translate various documents in support of the U.S. war effort. Father was one of a handful of people in the U.S. who could do this. His professors and mentors at the University of Chicago encouraged him to accept the government's translator job offer because of his unique skills and the hope that his knowledge could contribute to the successful conclusion of the war and help the occupation of Taiwan go smoothly with little loss of life and property in Taiwan.

In 1944, having been in the U.S. for only six years and after much soul searching, he accepted positions in the U.S. Naval Military Government and Administration (Lt. George H. Kerr was his supervisor) and the U.S. Naval Military Government Translation Unit (Lt. James T. Watkins, IV was his supervisor). Both of them and others attested to his loyalty to the U.S., his strong work ethic and integrity, and his many excellent contributions. In 1945, he was recruited by the War Department Military Intelligence Committee to work on highly classified projects in the Map Division outside of Washington D.C.

After the war ended, he was asked to join the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey team to analyze and report on the damage caused by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and also the firebombing of Tokyo and Shikoku.

In 1946, UNRRA asked him to accept an assignment as a Reports Officer to report on how UN relief supplies were being distributed in Taiwan and on the status of the Taiwanese people. Father was eager to go to Taiwan to see his family after eight years in the U.S. He was committed to helping the Taiwanese people recover after the war. And he still wanted to return to the country of his birth with his wife and young daughter. As a UNRRA officer, he worked closely with Allan Shackleton, a New Zealander, also working for UNRRA in Taiwan as an Industrial Rehabilitation Officer. Mr. Shackleton and others have written powerfully about the events in Taiwan in February and March 1947. Given his experience in Taiwan as an UNRRA officer, Father realized that he could not take his young family back to Taiwan in the near

future. He returned to the U.S. in 1947 and made a home for his family and himself in Seattle for the rest of his life.

Our Father, the Rev. Ai Chih Tsai was an extraordinary man with a generous and loving heart. In keeping his faith, family, education, and country at the core of his life, he touched so many lives and made many contributions to his local, national, and global communities.