

Also receiving first-place honors in the Public Relations, Press Kit category are **Julie Watts, Craig Franklin, Patty Zubov, Linda Giannecchini, Keith Sanders** and **Darryl Compton**.

The Chapter earned a second-place award for Public Relations, Overall Excellence. Recipients are **Keith Sanders, Patty Zubov, Kevin Wing, Sultan Mirza** and **Darryl Compton**



## Gold & Silver Circle Profiles



## **GOLD & SILVER CIRCLE** PROFILES

by Kevin Wing



He was always dressed in black, from head to toe. Sometimes, he wore a black cowboy hat. He might have been short in stature, but he was a big man in the Bay Area television news industry. His presence was always known at any story or news conference he covered. He had a gruff, told-it-like-it-was personality that commanded attention. And he did, in more ways than one.

That was **Willie Kee**, a cameraman for KTVU Channel 2 for nearly a quarter of a century. He was known for his clothes, his Fu Manchu goatee, and his in-your-face demeanor. But, he was also known for being a caring, sensitive man who was an outstanding photographer. He was as much admired as he was feared, but in a good way. He commanded respect. Reporters and photographers from other stations got out of his way

when he arrived at news conferences. It was part of his shtick to say something mean to his competitors, but it was just shtick. He never meant any harm. He was a good guy. The guy had serious personality.

And, Kee would take things into his own hands, even if it meant breaking the law now and then. In the late 1980s, when I was an intern at KTVU, I went out one night on a story with Kee and reporter **Rita Williams**. We were in San Francisco. I can't remember the story, but what I do remember is Kee driving the three of us to an evening news conference in an old Cadillac of a news car that looked like something out of television's *The Streets of San Francisco*, the 1970s **Karl Malden/Michael Douglas** crime drama. We were going to be late. Kee decided to take a shortcut and drive the wrong way down a one-way street. When cars approached us traveling in the correct direction, Kee merely drove onto the sidewalk to keep us from getting hit head-on. It was quite an adventure for a 24-year-old intern sitting in the back seat. Not to worry. No pedestrians were anywhere in sight when we were driving momentarily on the sidewalk. As far as I can remember, at least. Oh, we made it to the news conference on time, too.

Kee, who died in October 2001 at the age of 64 after a brief hospitalization, was inducted into the Silver Circle of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 1995, a year after retiring from a career that earned him 12 Emmys for his work.

Kee, who had lived in Fremont, had worked at KTVU from 1970 until his retirement in 1994. The award-winning photojournalist covered the biggest stories of his era, including the 1974 kidnapping of newspaper heiress **Patricia Hearst**, the 1978 assassinations of San Francisco Mayor **George Moscone** and Supervisor **Harvey Milk**, the Oakland Hills firestorm in 1991, the UC Berkeley campus riots, the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980, nine national political conventions, and interviews with seven U.S. presidents.

Those 12 Emmys weren't just for Kee's camerawork. He was multi-talented: two were for producing and one for writing. The remaining nine were for his keen, sharp eye for photography. He was proudest of his Emmy for a feature about the traveling Vietnam Veterans wall exhibition, which he taped, wrote and narrated. Kee was, himself, a proud Marine.

Kee was a native of Oakland's Chinatown and a graduate of Oakland Technical High School, where he first discovered his love of photography, capturing campus life for the school newspaper and yearbook. After honing his skills as a Marine Corps photographer and writer, he returned to civilian life as a longtime still photographer for the Norton Pearl Photo Agency in San Mateo, which provided news photos for Peninsula newspapers. As a photographer in the 1960's for the old Circle Star Theatre in San Carlos, Kee befriended many of the legends of show business, including **Bing Crosby**, **Frank Sinatra**, **Nat King Cole**, **Sammy Davis Jr.**, **Carol Channing** and San Jose's **Smothers Brothers**. Kee later served as a technical consultant on a Smothers Brothers film and as an extra in the cast of several feature films shot in



the Bay Area.



### Willie Kee

*In the 1970s, with KTVU colleagues. From left: photographers **Craig Scheiner** and **Don McCuaig**, and reporter **Betty Ann Bruno**.*

honored him in 1984 with the Distinguished Alumnus Award for his work and commitment to students. He mentored dozens of aspiring photographers at Oakland High School's Visual Arts Academy Magnet Program.

And, throughout his career, Kee was an inspiration and role model to hundreds of fellow Asian American journalists.

Willie Kee was one of a kind.

Kee never forgot his Chinatown roots. As a pioneer Asian American in media, he advocated fair, sensitive, accurate news coverage of Asian Pacific Americans. At KTVU, he shot and produced an investigative series, which later was turned into a half-hour documentary, on the realities that Chinese Americans faced as low-wage laborers in garment sweatshops and restaurants. The documentary challenged society's inaccurate stereotypes of Chinatown as a gilded and secret society; it helped put human faces to the harsh realities Chinese Americans faced day to day.

In 1988, Kee and **Rosy Chu**, who retired as KTVU's community affairs director in 2013, urged the station to broadcast live coverage of the San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade. Kee co-hosted the first two years of the parade telecast with then-KTVU anchor **Elaine Corral**. The parade has been a fixture on KTVU ever since.

Kee was also a member of Bay Area Broadcast Legends. The Asian American Journalists Association recognized him with its Lifetime Achievement Award. The Oakland Public Schools

## Soundbites