

# 10/22/2002: Student Excitement At the Wang Center's Grand Opening Was Intense! The Wang Center Needs To Be Exciting Again!



by Sherry Ha, Class of 2003

October 2002 was my senior year. I had spent the previous three anticipating the completion of the Wang Center. I was so excited when the first section for the tower was lowered onto the roof. The Stony Brook skyline was to forever change. A day later came the last two sections. The frame was complete; a symbol of the culture that would be the foundation of this new building. It didn't have its holographic panels then. It was just an immense silver frame, soon encased in scaffolding.

As ASA VP, I was on the Asian American Center Bridge Student Advisory Board, AAC SAB, the forerunner to the current ASC. We knew that the tower was, to use the architect's words, "a modern sculptural representation of a pagoda." Architecturally, a pagoda in some form unites Asia. Whether on a small Indonesian island or in a remote village in China, you'll find one, just as there is at least one church steeple in every American town.

But the rest of the campus was clueless. To rectify that, a color flyer was made of a photo of the tower at sunrise, symbolizing a new beginning. It explained the meaning of pagodas in Asian culture. In one incredibly amazing night, students from AAC SAB hung one on every bulletin board in every academic building, but more importantly, on the door of every restroom cubicle. Soon everyone knew.

Every Sunday, JoAnne Young, AAC Bridge's administrator, would take photos and talk to the architect, P.H. Tuan, as they documented the construction. She would often bring a student with her. I was the lucky one selected for the "special" tower tour. Wearing a hard hat for the first time in my life, I climbed the construction ladder to the tower's base. But that's as far as I wanted to go. The tower was intimidating and I had no desire to join her as she climbed the scaffolding to the top.

October 22nd was set for the grand opening day. A "soft" opening really. I graduated before students got access the following fall when Jasmine opened, but at the time we didn't know that was going to happen. Bin Tang, GSO

President, and Kimmie Chin, CASB President, were the students on President Kenny's opening advisory board. They convinced her to showcase not just Asian culture but the many talented students on campus. It was a double bonus for ASA because we had Asian Night less than a month later and were able to preview to the public our talent for the show.

Students from all the clubs were also the official greeters, dressed in traditional cultural attire. But the students who got to be the brides and grooms in traditional outfits had a special experience. The girl who wore the most traditional Chinese wedding gown had to be taught how to put the headdress on. None of us had ever even seen one before. The students wearing the Vietnamese wedding clothes were originally wearing their hats upside down.

It was all a little crazy. We only had the AAC bridge to practice in. Although 80 feet long, it was only 8 ft. wide and stuffed with furniture and props. Can you understand why the Wang Center was so highly anticipated by student leaders?!

It is unfortunate I no longer have the program. These photos give a flavor and many more are in the AA E-Zine gallery. One hundred forty students performed. Even parents helped out. CASB Treasurer Stanley Liang's father, a gifted calligraphist, inked guests names in characters.

*Charles B. Wang and Kimmie Chin, CASB President, 10/22/2002  
Photo by Kevin Quan, AA E-Zine Editor*



JCA did more than just perform para para and a tea ceremony. Each week they would be in the AAC Bridge, folding cranes. When finished, they had 1022 to match the date. They even figured out how to make a 6 foot origami crane! But more impressive was getting it up to the roof to spray paint it gold and then walk it to the Wang Center.

The AAC Bridge had Wang's words posted for all to see. As the president of the Queens College Chinese club when he was there, Wang said his building would be for us. "I want it to be a boy meets girl place." It would be "for all types of activities and services that will welcome all students to visit, participate, and enjoy." It was for "meeting and hanging out with friends", "parties and dances", "club fairs", and "food festivals."

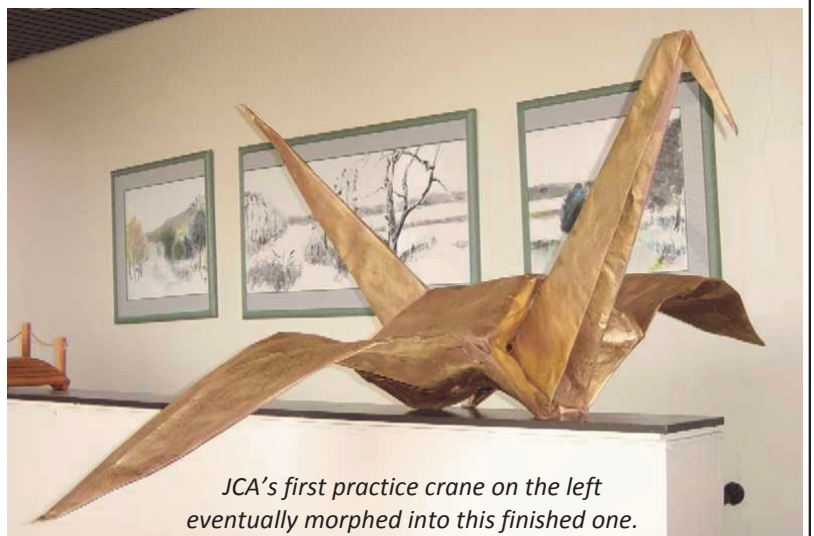
Charles Wang chose his personal architect for the design. It became the best looking place on campus. ASA managed to have the Nations of Asia Semi-formal there once, but the restrictions made most student events impossible (i.e. another Staller). So instead of Asian Night there is Parent's Day! The absurdity is that when students graduate, as alumni we (and someday you), have our own room for alumni events. The hopes and dreams of using the facility to build student memories seem more far fetched everyday.

I wish students reading this could feel the importance of the Wang Center and the enthusiasm we had on opening day. It was powerful. The Center was meant to represent us and our future. I hope someday the dreams



and plans Wang and the students had for the Wang Center become a reality; that it will not just be a building where you go to eat; not a center where there are more outside performers than student ones. The Wang Center should be where students go to have fun, where they get to showcase their talents like we did, where they not only have that opportunity for 'boy meets girl' events but where they could someday even be like Bin Tang and get married there - it's why the chapel was built!

If you are a student it was meant for you - reclaim it! Years ago [www.aezine.org](http://www.aezine.org) website was hacked and Wang Center original pages and thousands of photos were lost. Zine staff have been going through the archives (aka floppy and Zip disks) and found the original index page. As they find more, they will add the photos and links. It currently has the video of Wang's speech. You can check it out at [www.aezine.org/Wang](http://www.aezine.org/Wang) though later it will be moved to [www.aezine.org/wang](http://www.aezine.org/wang).



*JCA's first practice crane on the left eventually morphed into this finished one.*