



J.E. Cai SFSU

William “Willie Woo-Woo” Wong

Chinese American

Basketball Player

William “Willie Woo Woo” Wong (1926-2005) grew up in a crowded apartment in San Francisco’s Chinatown. His parents worked many jobs to support their seven children. Willie often escaped to shoot baskets at Chinese Playground. He didn’t have a basketball, so he practiced with a tennis ball. Willie grew to five feet five inches which was short for a basketball player. However, he was so good at ball handling, passing, and shooting that he was invited to play for the University of San Francisco from 1949-1950. Willie was the first Chinese American player to appear at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Wherever he went, people would shout “Woo Woo” whenever Willie made a basket. His success did not last long when the college changed coaches. Because the new coach did not want Willie on his team, Willie had to play on segregated teams with other Asian Americans. Chinese Playground was renamed “Willie ‘Woo Woo’ Wong” Playground in his honor in 2006.