

Full Text of A Eulogy by the Hon Chief Justice Andrew Kwok-nang Li
at a Memorial Service for the late Sir Noel Power
on January 15, 2010 (Friday)
(English only)

Noel Power was a native of Queensland. He graduated from the University of Queensland. Before attending university, he had toyed with the idea of pursuing a career on the stage and had spent two years in London where he attended classes at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. After practising in Queensland for some 10 years, Noel came to Hong Kong to join the Judiciary. That was in 1965. In the 1960's, "Go north" was perhaps not the fashion of the day. But it turned out to be a wise and far-sighted move.

For 34 years from 1965 to 1999, Noel rendered dedicated and distinguished service to the people of Hong Kong as a Judge. During this period, the wheels of fortune had turned many times for our community, with the transformation of Hong Kong from a small manufacturing economy to an international financial centre and from a British colony to a Special Administrative Region of China under "one country, two systems". Over this time, the Judiciary has grown substantially in size. When Noel joined 1965, there was not even a permanent Court of Appeal, let alone a Court of Final Appeal. Over the years, the community has increasingly higher expectations of their institutions of government, and the challenges which the Judiciary faces have grown in scale and complexity.

Noel grew with the Judiciary and Hong Kong. He rose through its ranks, serving as Magistrate, Senior Magistrate, President of the Lands Tribunal, Judge of the High Court and Justice and Vice-President of the Court of Appeal. In the

crucial year preceding re-unification with China in 1997, he was Acting Chief Justice. After his retirement, he served as a Non-Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal and he also served as President of the Court of Appeal in Brunei. Noel had seen Chief Justices come and go. I am the 6th Chief Justice who had the privilege of serving with Noel. I shall forever be grateful to him for the wise counsel and the unstinting support he had given me.

Noel was one of the most outstanding judges to have served Hong Kong in recent decades. He had a fine intellect and was an outstanding lawyer. He displayed robust common sense and he had deep compassion, with a realistic appreciation of human nature and its fragilities. Above all, Noel had a strong sense of fairness and justice.

His judgments have provided authoritative guidance in many areas of the law and will remain a testament to his great contribution on the Bench. He made a particularly signal contribution to our jurisprudence in the area of criminal law and procedure. As Vice-President of the Court of Appeal, he presided over its criminal division for six years. He conducted the business of that court fairly and efficiently. The judgments he gave illuminated the law. He scrutinised the lower court's judgment with great care in order to decide whether the appellant had had a fair trial, whether it was by judge with a jury or by judge alone. He also gave many leading judgments on sentencing, laying down principles and guidelines.

With his strong physique, Noel cut an impressive figure in court. He graced the Bench with great dignity and authority. He had an excellent judicial temperament. He kept firm control of his court. He did not tolerate incompetence and no one can pull wool over his eyes. But at the same time, he was invariably

courteous. He always appreciated the courtesy which those in authority owed to those who are subjected to it. He gave everyone who appeared in his court, whether counsel or unrepresented litigant, a proper opportunity of presenting his case. Whatever be the result, everyone left his court fully satisfied that they had their fair day in court. Such fine judicial conduct contributes greatly to enhancing public confidence in the Judiciary and the administration of justice.

Through his dedicated service on the Bench, he won the admiration of everyone and was held in the highest respect by all. He added lustre to the high judicial office he occupied. The honours of the knighthood and the Gold Bauhinia Star bestowed on him were well deserved.

As everyone knows, Noel was blessed with a loving and wonderful family. The saying that behind every great man is a great wife is absolutely true in the case of Noel and Irma. Irma provided Noel with unstinting love and support and they are blessed with children of which they are extremely proud.

Noel and Irma are wonderful friends: charming, kind, considerate and generous. They extended to all their friends wonderful hospitality both in their home in Hong Kong and after his retirement, at their home at Surfers Waters. The culinary skills of both of them are legendary and Noel as President of the International Wine and Food Society, Asia Pacific Zone and the Founder of the Wines of the Pacific Rim Fair had an encyclopedic and unrivalled knowledge of wines. Their friends were always treated to delicious food, fine wines and wonderful company. Noel and Irma were perfect host and hostess.

Noel participated fully in the banquet of life. He lived and enjoyed it to the fullest. He touched and enriched all our lives. In the words of the Bible, he had fought the good fight, he had finished the course and he had kept the faith. Whilst mourning his death, we can truly say that we are celebrating and honouring his wonderful, meaningful and distinguished life.

On behalf of the Judiciary, I wish to convey our deepest condolences and sympathies to Irma and their children.