

Dr Andrew Chew Guan Khuan (1929 – 2012)

Dr Andrew Chew was a Fellow of the Academy of Singapore since 1965. On 19 August 2004 he was conferred Honorary Fellowship at a ceremony during the Singapore-Malaysia Congress of Medicine where President SR Nathan, President of the Republic of Singapore and Patron of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore attended. Then, he was still serving as Chairman of the Public Service Commission and as the Pro-Chancellor of the National University of Singapore. His unexpected demise is a loss to all in the medical fraternity and to Singaporeans at large.

Dr Chew was born on 11 October 1929 in Kuching, Sarawak in Borneo. He came to Singapore and studied at St Andrew's School, passing with a Grade I in the 1948 Cambridge School Certificate Examination (slightly late because of World War II). He excelled in sports in the well-known tradition of the school and was a tough and adept rugby player. Dr Chew embarked on a career in Medicine. He graduated MBBS from the University of Malaya in Singapore in 1955 and joined the Singapore Civil Service as a Medical Officer in the Ministry of Health at the tender age of 27 years. A disciple of Professor Sir Gordon Arthur Ransome, he trained in Medical Unit I at the Singapore General Hospital. In 1959, he was awarded a scholarship to London for a course leading to the MRCP, which he passed within 6 months of arrival. He returned to Singapore in 1960 to be the Senior Registrar at the Thomson Road General Hospital, under the late Professor Seah Cheng Siang who was then the physician in charge as well as its Medical Superintendent. Dr Lee Hoe Guan and Dr Wong Kum Hoong were fellow Senior Registrars. At the age of 35 years, Dr Chew was promoted to Medical Superintendent, Thomson Road General Hospital and a superscale officer in the civil service in 1964. Three months later, he moved to Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) as its Medical Superintendent and it was he who re-organised TTSH into 4 medical units from the previous 3. Three years later, he was made Medical Superintendent of Kandang Kerbau Hospital and in 1968 at the age of 39 years, he was promoted to Senior Consultant grade. In 1970, he was Medical Superintendent of Singapore General Hospital and a year later, he was promoted and returned to the Ministry of Health as Deputy Director of Medical Services (Hospitals). A most supportive

medical administrator, he promoted joint collaborative projects between the Tuberculosis Research Committee and the British Medical Research Council, leading to the establishment of the present day short course therapeutic regimens for tuberculosis.

Doing sterling work in the Ministry, he was duly recognised and awarded the Public Service Administration Gold Medal in 1975 and 2 years later, was appointed to be concurrently the Acting Permanent Secretary of Health as well as the Director of Medical Services. He was then 48 years old. His meteoric rise through the superscale grades of the civil service was phenomenal and by the age of 52 years, he was Permanent Secretary Grade A. At 55 years old in 1984, he left the Ministry of Health to take up the posts concurrently of Second Permanent Secretary (Public Service), Ministry of Finance; Permanent Secretary (Special Duties), Prime Minister's Office (under Mr Lee Kuan Yew); and Deputy Head of the Civil Service—3 important and high profile portfolios. Some 7 months later, he was appointed Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary (Public Services), Prime Minister's Office. He retired from service on 11 October 1994 and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. He was a Fellow of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of London and Edinburgh.

Dr Chew was the archetypal true, dedicated loyal civil servant who would have signed off letters "Yours Obediently". He gave his whole life to the civil service such that when he retired at the age of 65 years, the government still required his excellent professional services. He was Chairman, Central Provident Fund from 1994 to 1998, then Chairman of the Public Service Commission until July 2008. He served as Chairman Board of Governors, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (from 1976), Member, Presidential Council for Minority Rights (from 1994), Member Legal Service Commission (from 1998) as well as Chairman of the Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellowship and Scholarship Fund, and the Dr Goh Keng Swee Scholarship Fund (from 1998). In 2002, the government conferred on him the Distinguished Service Order.

In the last 2 years, Dr Chew underwent 3 major operations. First, he had bladder surgery. Then he had his hip joint replaced—a long standing injury from his schoolboy



Dr Andrew Chew Guan Khuan, Chairman, Public Service Commission of Singapore, receiving from the Master, Prof Low Cheng Hock, the Honorary Fellowship scroll at the Opening Ceremony of the 38th Singapore-Malaysia Congress of Medicine on 19 August 2004.

rugby days. He recovered and returned to golf. In 2012 he underwent cardiac valve surgery at the National University Hospital (NUH) but suffered a stormy postoperative period. Sadly he did not recover and passed away in hospital on 29 February.

Despite his busy schedule of service, he had led a full life enriched with friends. Dr Chew was a man of devout faith, always “doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly”. He was a family man, a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather. He is survived by his wife Jennifer, daughter

Juniper (a PhD), son Paul who is head of Ophthalmology NUS, their spouses and 4 grandchildren.

Dr Chew was always decisive, not one to procrastinate. Any problem he was challenged with, he dealt with it with clarity of vision and a brilliant mind. To those who say doctors are too narrowly trained, Dr Chew proved otherwise. He was the administrator par excellence and we are grateful for his life of service to the nation. His sterling service to Medicine, to the Civil Service and to Singapore will long be remembered.

Yam Cheng Chee (Past Master, 1998-2000)

Chin Hin Chew (Past Master, 1973-1975)