

In Memoriam: Tribute to Alexis Goh

*David Flint A.M.**

It is with great sadness that we must record the passing of Associate Professor Alexis Goh.

After a period as assistant editor, in 1995 Alexis became the editor-in-chief of this journal, now known as the Australian International Law Journal. In that position, the journal became widely respected in international law circles, both in Australia and overseas.

Alexis Lian-Yin Goh was born in Malaysia in the town of Seremban to Francis and Marie Chong, who in 2005 would make that tragic journey to her sick bed in Sydney and for her Requiem Mass.

Sister to Kevin, Gregory, Adeline and Lauraine, she was educated at the King George V School in Seremban, and soon displayed that lively intellect, remarkable memory and a sense of humour, which was with her to the end. Both at home and in her college, she acquired that sense of duty, devotion and loyalty which never deserted her.

Alexis excelled in her studies and enrolled in the Bachelor of Laws programme at the University of Singapore. It was there that she studied under the late Professor Geoffrey Bartholomew, who was to be the Foundation Dean when she later joined the Faculty of Law of what would become the University of Technology, Sydney (U.T.S.).

On graduating in 1973 she married Walter Goh, who was her childhood sweetheart in Seremban, but who was later educated in Australia a

* Professor David Flint A.M. is the Vice-President of the International Law Association (Australian Branch) and Consulting Editor to the present journal.

boarding school and then at the University of New South Wales. They decided to make their new life in Australia together.

After working as a research assistant at the Law School the University of New South Wales, Alexis was appointed to the UTS Faculty of Law and completed a Masters of Laws at the University of Sydney in 1978. Under the guidance of the late Professor David H. N. Johnson, she prepared and defended her thesis, "A Selected Study of Recent Development in the Law of Responsibility in International Law".

At the same time, Alexis engaged in a vigorous teaching programme ranging across such practical matters as drafting and statutory interpretation, various common law subjects, and her great love, international law.

Her home life was as rich and rewarding as her academic endeavours. Alexis and Walter were the proud parents of three children – Benjamin born in 1978, on whom was to fall the great obligation of delivering the Eulogy at his mother's funeral, Jocelyn, born in 1979 and Dominic, born in 1980. They could not have had more loving parents, and they could not have been children that are more dutiful.

While at U.T.S., as well as undertaking her teaching duties, Alexis was at various times Acting Dean, Director of Undergraduate Programs, Director of Postgraduate Programs and Director of the International and Commercial Law Centre. She was instrumental in inviting a number of prominent international lawyers to be visiting professors in the Law School, including the current President of the International Law Association, the Lord Slynn of Hadley.

In 1997, Alexis moved to the Faculty of Law of the University of Western Sydney at Macarthur. There, her energy, loyalty and sense of humour were again to endear her to her academic colleagues and her students. At various times she held the positions of Associate Dean, Acting Dean and Director of Undergraduate Programs. In addition to international law, she also taught in a variety of common law subjects and supervised both honours and postgraduate research students.

In addition to her many duties in a new law school, she accepted the prestigious but onerous appointment as the Coordinator of the Commonwealth Legal Education Association Lecture Series, where she was responsible for nine regional chapters. The lectures presented in the

first and very successful series were delivered by internationally renowned jurists, academics and judges. She was also a member of the Legal Practitioners Admissions Board, the statutory body responsible for making rules for, and approving, the admission of legal practitioners in New South Wales. There, Alexis was able to demonstrate her common sense and fairness in the difficult area of the admission of foreign practitioners.

She brought great prestige to her new law school, ensuring that three occasions important law school function were held at the Government House in Sydney, New South Wales. She also arrange for the Secretariat of the Australian Council for Europe, supported by the European Union, to be based at the University of Western Sydney.

Alexis was to experience the burden of a great sadness in the last few years. This was during the long terminal illness of her beloved husband, who died in 2003. Tragically, she was then diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2004. In her last few months, knowing the inevitable, she worked from her sick bed to ensure a greater understanding and increased research into this terrible illness. She insisted in her last days that her family and friends leave her to attend a function in the city held under the auspices of the M.N.D. Association. She was touched by two personal letters that were read to her in her last few hours. These were about her wishes to enhance government and community support to understand and fight M.N.D. They came from the Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard and the prominent radio presenter, Mr. Alan Jones A.O., who subsequently recorded the passing of and the funeral of the “lovely Alexis” on his prime time Sydney radio programme.

Surrounded and supported by her family, her children Ben, Dominic and Joyce and her loving sisters Lauraine and Adeline, who cared for her in her last months, her parents and other members of her family, Alexis left this world peacefully on the 14th of June, 2005.

Her dying wish had been that her funeral be held at the Mary Mackillop Memorial Chapel at North Sydney, where the body of the Blessed Mary lies and where Alexis worshipped. His Lordship, Bishop Julian Porteous D.D. V.G., presided at her Requiem Mass.

In everything she did – whether as a mother, daughter, sister, wife, teacher or scholar – Alexis’s byword was duty, leavened by humour, common sense and a great attention to detail.

To this Journal, she lent her many talents, even in times of great stress and sadness. She enriched the journal, the branch, the Association and the lives of all those who worked with her. She is and will be greatly missed.

May she rest in peace. 