Dispelling myths—
from ex-CJ
to lawyer mum

Stellar cast offers insights into
legal careers in new book

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SOME myths about the legal profession here are debunked in what looks to be one of the best law books to come out of Singapore.

For example, former chief justice Yong Pung How was not the harsh and unforgiving judge who, at the drop of a hat, dictated the jail terms of those who appealed against their sentences.

And justice, lawyers fresh out of school, do not “decide” cases for judges through their bench memos, which summarise the issues and arguments in each case.

Former HLC Law Steve Ling, now a deputy senior state counsel and author of one of 27 chapters of the book, The Practice Of Law, shows why the former chief justice’s reputed crustiness and the “power” of HLCs are mere myths.

HONEST TAKE

“We hope the insights shared... will serve to provide an honest account of the struggles and gratifications one can experience as a lawyer.”

Senior Counsel Alvin Yeong of Wong Partnership

Taken from the book

NO RIGHT OR WRONG CAREER CHOICES

“And so I ended up joining the IMF in September 1997. Fast-forward 13-plus years and I am now back in Singapore in a job that barely resembles what I have done before.”

“Aspiring lawyers out there should feel free to explore. Short of thievery or high-sea piracy, there are really no right or wrong career choices.”

“In any case, what you learn in law school will be largely obsolete within 10 years of your graduation, so you might as well start dreaming now of possible alternatives to a legal career.”

“Above all, never let your law degree define what you do in life.”

Lawyer Ho Seng Choo, now Group Chief, Corporate Services of Mayfair Investments, who worked at the International Monetary Fund before

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD’ IN THE U.S.

“Work was no piece of cake either. There were only a few four six public holidays observed by my company and I had only two weeks of vacation instead of the 24 days that I enjoyed as a senior associate in Singapore.”

“The Americans work much harder and had less down time than what I had pre-conceived.”

“But the work ethic that I most admired was that there was a clear demarcation between work and play.”

“My colleagues spend the weekends and major holidays with their family and it was a major transgression to impede on their family time. They worked hard and played just as hard.”

Lawyer Benjamin Teo, who works in a Wall Street firm, on life in New York