



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KEVIN TAN

**PIONEERS:** Among them were Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh ((third row, third from left), Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong (second row, second from right) and Emeritus Professor Koh Kheng Lian (second row, sixth from the left).

## 50 years of legal education in S'pore – captured in a book

BY SUMATHI V. SELVARETNAM

SINGAPORE'S pioneer class of law students started with 42 people. Four years later, just 22 graduated.

That was in 1957, when the Faculty of Law was part of University of Malaya at Bukit Timah campus.

It was a trip down memory lane for pioneer student Emeritus Professor Koh Kheng Lian, who spoke at the launch of a book commemorating 50 years of legal education in Singapore.

Among her classmates who made it through: Singa-

pore's Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh, Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong and retired judge Amarjeet Singh.

Only the ambassador was at yesterday's event, which was held at the refitted law faculty at the National University of Singapore's Bukit Timah campus.

He was the one who asked "difficult questions", she recalled.

The 69-year-old, who is the director at the Asia-Pacific Centre for Environmental Law, spoke of the "lucky present generation" who have access to materials on the Internet.

Lawyer-politicians spiced up their classes. In 1958, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew spoke to them – as head of the then opposition People's Action Party.

Former chief minister David Marshall, who taught them criminal procedure, would invite students to his Changi home to share stories about his criminal cases, she recalled.

The faculty's 50-year history has been captured in *Scales Of Gold: 50 Years Of Legal Education At The NUS Faculty of Law*, written by Dr Kevin Tan, a former faculty member and president of the Singapore

Heritage Society. The book was launched yesterday by President S R Nathan.

Going into the future, law dean Professor Tan Cheng Han said the faculty was in talks with a number of American law schools to offer the Juris Doctor programme to its students.

The Juris Doctor is a degree required to practise law in the US.

From next year, students who have completed their third year will be able to spend two years at an American university and graduate with both an NUS law degree and a Juris Doctor qualification.