

PROFESSOR LIONEL SHERIDAN IN CONVERSATION

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I. INTERVIEWER'S PREFACE

The following is an edited transcript of a filmed interview I did with Professor Lee Sheridan on 29 December 2014 at his home in Cardiff, Wales. I first met Sheridan back in 1985 when I was a law student at the Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore. At the time, I worked through the Law Club to launch a series of lunch-time lectures and talks and through the good offices of Professor Tommy Koh, was able to invite Sheridan to deliver one of these talks. Over the years, I have had many correspondences and interviews with Sheridan. As a result, parts of this particular interview sound like half-finished conversations from an earlier time. I decided to leave them be, rather than edit them out as it gives the reader a better 'feel' of the Sheridan charm and mystique. I do not cover the entirety of Sheridan's academic life or work as that has already been comprehensively documented in Andrew Phang, "Founding Father and Legal Scholar: The Life and Work of Professor LA Sheridan" [1999] *Sing JLS* 335. What follows is a recollection of the early days of Sheridan's life and of his journey to Singapore to establish its first law school.

To set the background, the following biographical sketch from my *Lamp of the Law*,¹ has been excerpted for reference.

Lionel Astor Sheridan was born Croydon, Surrey in England on 21 July 1927 to Stanley Frederick Sheridan and Anne Quednau. He studied at various primary schools around Croydon, spent a year in Sylvania, near Sydney, and ended up at Whitgift School in South Croydon. Whitgift was an independent school established by the Elizabethan Foundation for day boys only. In 1944, Sheridan left Whitgift and entered University College, London. Initially, Sheridan had wanted

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¹ Kevin YL Tan, *Lamp of the Law: 60 Years of Legal Education at NUS Law* (Singapore: NUS Law Faculty, 2017) at 22–23.

to spend a year studying for a scholarship examination for entry into Pembroke College in Cambridge to read French and English literature, but he later changed his mind and decided to take up law instead.

Sheridan did, however, end up in Cambridge – physically at least – because University College had moved to Cambridge after most of its buildings were destroyed by heavy German bombing between 1940 and 1941. There, Sheridan fell in love with law, and under the spell of Glanville Williams, who taught him constitutional law and contract. Another University College professor who was to greatly influence Sheridan was George William Keeton (1902–1989) who was then Dean of the Faculty of Law when Sheridan was studying there. Sheridan graduated in 1947 and proceeded to read for the Bar Finals which he completed in 1948. He was a few months shy of his 21st birthday and had to wait till then to be called to Bar. In the meantime, he had married Margaret Helen Béghin. Sheridan's decision to be an academic was in a way 'forced onto' him. . .

Sheridan joined the University of Nottingham as a part-time Assistant Lecturer while holding onto his part-time position in London. In the meantime, he started working on a PhD dissertation under the supervision of Keeton who had advised him to acquire a doctorate if he planned to continue being an academic since he obtained a Second Upper degree rather than a First.

Towards the end of 1949, Sheridan obtained a Lectureship at Faculty of Law at the Queen's University in Belfast. The move from London to Belfast made his continued PhD candidature at University College untenable since his research required him to do a lot of reading and research in the Public Records Office in London. Sheridan thus transferred his PhD candidature to Belfast where he wrote a dissertation on *Fraud in Equity* under Professor James L Montrose, Dean of the Law Faculty at Queen's.

By his own admission, Sheridan would not have known about the opening for the Chair at the University of Malaya's Law Department had he not been asked to write a reference for one of the applicants. No one was appointed after the first round of applications and he received a letter from the Inter-University Council – who wrote to the referees of the initial applicants – asking them if would consider applying for the Chair themselves. . .

Sheridan thus became the first Professor of Law of the University of Malaya in July 1956. He was initially a 'one-man Department' as part of the Faculty of Economics and Social Studies before the Law Department became a non-faculty department. In 1959, when the Law Department was given full faculty status, Sheridan was unanimously elected its first Dean and Head of Department. Sheridan resigned suddenly in October 1962 to take up a chair in Comparative Law at the Queen's University in Belfast, where he had previously been. In 1971, he founded the Law Faculty at University College, Cardiff where he remained till the end of his academic career and was made Emeritus Professor.

Legend

KT: Kevin Tan

LS: LA Sheridan

II. IN CONVERSATION

KT: Can we start with a bit of early personal history, of your days as a schoolboy. You were born in Croydon,² but where did you go to school?

LS: Well, I went to school eventually after various primary schools, at Whitgift School in Croydon which is an Elizabethan Foundation,³ and it is one of the few schools to take day boys⁴ only. Previous to this I had had bits of schooling in Wallington which is the next borough to Croydon which is where we actually lived – on the far perimeter of Croydon Airport.⁵ Then in Ferring, on the south coast of Sussex, and farthest away of all, in Sylvania, New South Wales.

KT: New South Wales?

LS: Yes! I had a year, from 1937 to 1938 because after many visits to Harley Street and elsewhere, my parents were advised that if they wanted my asthma cured, they should send me to Australia. And it so happened that business associates of my father's who were Australian were returning after many years of living in England, with their six children, of whom I had been in school with two. And they agreed to take me. And after a few weeks of living in a flat in central Sydney while they did their house hunting, they bought a house in the village of Sylvania, which is now more or less I understand, in central Sydney, but was then about 12 miles across open country from the edge of Sydney, southwards to the Georges River. And in the village of Sylvania, was the local primary school where I convinced the schoolmaster that I knew enough already.

KT: So you did a year there and you came back to England?

LS: Yes, I came back because. . . I don't know if Australia did me any good, but from the moment I got on the boat to Tilbury⁶ to go to Australia, I never had another attack of asthma.

² Croydon, in South London, had existed as a market town from the time of the Norman conquest and was historically part of the *hundred* (administrative region) of Wallington. In the Middle Ages it became a centre for charcoal production, leather tanning and brewing and in 1803, became one of the terminals for the world's first public railway that ran from Croydon to Wandsworth. In 1965, it was amalgamated into what is now Greater London.

³ The Whitgift School was founded in 1596 by John Whitgift (1530–1604), Archbishop of Canterbury, and officially opened in 1600. Whitgift had established a charitable foundation (now known as the Whitgift Foundation) in Croydon – then the site of a palace which was the summer retreat of the Archbishops of Canterbury – which supports homes for the elderly and the infirm and runs three independent schools, including Whitgift School; the other two being the Trinity School of John Whitgift and the Old Palace School for girls. Whitgift School moved to its present premises – the one-time home of Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord High Admiral of the Fleet – at Haling Park in 1931.

⁴ The reference to 'day boys' means that Whitgift was not a boarding school at the time and students would attend class for the day and then return to their own homes.

⁵ Croydon Airport was Britain's main air terminal in the inter-war years. The original Croydon Aerodome grew out of two earlier aerodomes – Beddington (1915) and Waddon (1918) – and was, from 1918, the main gateway into and out of London from the rest of the world. It was Britain's most important international airport till after World War II when it was supplanted by Northolt Aerodome and Heathrow and Gatwick Airports.

⁶ The Port of Tilbury has been, since the 1920s, the principal port for the city of London. It lies on the north shore of the River Thames, some 40 km downstream from Tower Bridge.

KT: Amazing. So where did you finish off school before heading off to University?

LS: 1944.

KT: But where?

LS: Where? At Whitgift.

KT: So that would have been the equivalent of the School Certificate. . . the Higher School Certificate?

LS: I took both the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate. The Higher School Certificate was not necessary in order to enter university, but I had to wait until I was old enough.⁷

KT: Well you were obviously a very prodigious student.

LS: I was prodigiously successful.

KT: So you gained admission to London. Did you have to do a matriculation examination for the University of London?

LS: No. The School Certificate with a sufficient number of credits, exempted you from the matriculation examination. So all I had to do was to produce my School Certificate.

KT: And this was in 1944.

LS: Yes.

KT: So, the University continued to function during the War?

LS: Yes after a fashion. The Law Faculty which I entered, at University College London, was actually in Cambridge. The whole of University College was evacuated at the beginning of the war, initially the whole Law Faculty moved to Aberystwyth. Then as I understand at some time about two years later they decided to come back to London and just before they did, University College was virtually destroyed by a parachuted landmine or a bomb, I'm not quite sure which. So, they didn't come back, but they moved from Aberystwyth to Cambridge.

KT: And so you went to University of College, London (UCL) in Cambridge?

LS: The UCL Law Faculty was, along with the Law Faculties of King's College and the LSE amalgamated with the Cambridge Law Faculty for some purposes. We went to some of their lectures and some of the London lecturers had the Cambridge students go to theirs. But we had separate tutorials.

KT: Where did you live at the time?

⁷ When Sheridan completed his School Certificate – the equivalent to the modern 'O' level examination – he was only 15 years old, too young to enter university.

LS: We London students had to live in digs. There were no places in college except that Peterhouse College made the Common Room available but there were no residential places. The University College and the officers of the other college departments arranged digs. When you got there, you could either go into the digs arranged for you or if you like something you saw for yourself that was better, you could move.

KT: You obviously took very well to the study of law.

LS: Yes. I enjoyed various aspects of the study of law, of which particularly I suppose I should mention, punting on the river, the freedom to go into the public house without parents complaining and I must say that although we all exploited the advantages of Cambridge as fully as we could, I did seem to learn a certain amount of law.

KT: Which area of law interested you the most when you were a student?

LS: Well, in my first year, I was most interested in Constitutional law of all the subjects we did in the first year. And I think that is something to do with the teacher, who. . . was Glanville Williams,⁸ who was in Cambridge, a lecturer, though he subsequently moved to London. And in the second year, I particularly enjoyed Contract and it so happened that that was taught by Glanville Williams. But I must say, I did acquire an interest at that time in both Trusts and Land Law, and I think it was because of a quirk.

The normal London LLB system at that time was that you studied after your Intermediate. . . your seven subjects for two years and were examined in all of them. You studied four of them for one year. Then you stopped studying. Then you study another three for one year. And you were examined on all seven at the end. So, you had ample time to forget what you learned in the second year. I took advantage of a temporary system they had in the wartime emergency, which was that you could take a second-year examination in these subjects, just in case you didn't survive to the third year, or you got called up and came back later. . . or something like that. But if you did survive the course, you had to take them again. As a result of that, I attended Land Law for example, for two years. And consequently, I understood it for the first time about halfway through the second year.

⁸ Glanville Llewelyn Williams (1911–1997) was one of Britain's most distinguished legal scholars and teachers. He graduated from University College of Wales before proceeding to the University of Cambridge where he wrote his PhD. Among his examiners was the Vinerian Professor of Law at Oxford, Sir William Holdsworth who famously asked if Williams had submitted the thesis for an LLD instead of a PhD, so outstanding was his work. Williams was Professor of Public Law and Quain Professor of Jurisprudence at University College London from 1945 to 1955. He then moved to Cambridge where he became Professor of English Law from 1966, and then Rouse Ball Professor of English Law from 1968 till his retirement in 1978. Williams is best known for his ground-breaking *Criminal Law: The General Part* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1961) and his magisterial *Textbook of Criminal Law* (London: Stevens & Son, 1983). His book *Learning the Law*, first published in 1945 is probably the most read introduction to law in the English language. Sheridan got the order of Williams' career wrong as he had moved from University College London to Cambridge, rather than vice-versa.

KT: Who taught Land Law?

LS: Harold Potter.⁹ He was a Professor of King's College. He died quite young actually. But his published work was on the English legal system, rather than on land law.¹⁰

KT: And you decided quite early on that you wanted to be a legal academic?

LS: It was a decision which was in a way forced on me in that while I was an undergraduate, my father died and the family income stopped. And I had just enough money to see myself through graduation. I could not possibly have paid for myself to go into chambers at that juncture or to live without an income. And my first remedy for that was to take a job on the editorial staff at Butterworths. I worked on the preparation of the text of the statutes for the second edition of the *Halsbury's Statutes of England*. But while doing that, I also succeeded in getting an engagement with one or two teaching organisations, for example, the London County Council as it then was and was put on classes, evening classes, for people wanting to take the London intermediate LLB externally or the part one of the Bar or Law Society examinations, and I gradually became interested more in teaching than editing as a means of supporting myself. And then I decided to apply for a post at the university. I may say though that my experience at Butterworths did stand me in very good stead when it came to reading or compiling text when it came to amended statutes.

KT: And that was your first real teaching job? Would it be the one at Nottingham University?

LS: That was my first university job. In fact, it was the first job that Nottingham gave out because it became a university the day I joined it.¹¹ It had been until then, a university college, preparing students for the London External LLB, or other London external degrees. And consequently, I had first year students who

⁹ Professor Harold Potter was Head of the Law Department at King's College, London from 1930 to his untimely death in 1950.

¹⁰ As Sheridan rightly remembered, Potter was a prolific scholar who wrote mainly on legal history and the English legal system but his oeuvre was vast and his publications included: *The Foundations of Modern Prize Law* (London: Grotius Society, 1925); *The Elementary Principles of the Law of Bankruptcy and Deeds of Arrangement* (London: Butterworth, 1932) [with Terence Adams & Augustus W Dickson]; *An Introduction to Equity and Its Courts* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1931); *Theory and Practice in Legal Education* (London: Solicitors Law Stationery Society, 1934); *A Historical Introduction to English Law* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1943); and *The Quest of Justice* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1951). Contrary to Sheridan's recollection, Potter published extensively on land law as well: *Modern Modes of Conveyancing* (London: Solicitors Law Stationery Society, 1926); *The Modern Law of Real Property and Chattels Real; Founded on the Fifth Edition of Goodeve's Law of Property* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1929); *The Modern Classification of Future Estates in Land in English Law* (Iowa, 1933); *The Principles and Practice of Conveyancing under the Land Registration Act, 1925, with Forms And Precedents* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1934); *Contracts for the Sale of Registered Land* (London: Solicitors Law Stationery Society, 1935); *Principles of Planning Under the Law of Property Act* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1950) [with Donald Macintyre].

¹¹ Nottingham University started as the University College Nottingham in 1881. In 1948, the College was awarded a Royal Charter to become the University of Nottingham with the authority to award degrees in its own name. Prior to this, University College Nottingham students received their degrees from the University College London.

were doing the Nottingham curriculum, and second- and third-year students doing the London curriculum.

KT: And what did you teach at Nottingham?

LS: I taught Constitutional Law, Land Law and Trusts.

KT: And the PhD. Back in those days, you didn't need a PhD to be a law professor?

LS: No, but I didn't think you do now; at least, not in this country. But I was advised by Professor Keeton¹² who was the Dean of the Law Faculty at University College London when I graduated, that since I got an Upper Second, and not a First, I would be well-advised if I wanted to continue with an academic career, to take a PhD.

KT: And who became your thesis supervisor?

LS: Well I started on the PhD for London, and Professor Keeton was my supervisor and I was embarked upon a thesis on the early days of the law of charitable trusts, starting in the 15th century, for which purpose it was necessary to do a lot of reading in the Public Records Office.¹³ There were a lot of unreported cases. Chancery Reports were not very regular in the 15th century. When I then moved to a post in Northern Ireland it ceased to be practical to do a thesis on a subject that required me to be in London. So, I transferred my candidature to Belfast and I was supervised by Professor Montrose to do a thesis on fraud.

KT: So that would have meant jettisoning largely what you had done. . .

LS: Yes, for that purpose, yes. . . it remained an interest to me to dabble in the history of charitable trusts before the Statute of 1601.¹⁴ I had never made anything of it except as background information.

KT: Coming to the University of Malaya in Singapore. I remember you said that you never actually applied for the job.

¹² George Williams Keeton (1902–1989). Keeton was born in Sheffield and educated at Cambridge where he obtained a first in law in 1923. His first teaching post was as Reader in Law and Politics at the University of Hong Kong from 1924 to 1927 after which he returned to a Senior Lectureship at the University of Manchester. In 1931, he was appointed Reader in Law at University College London and remained there till his retirement in 1969, successively becoming Professor of Law (1937), Dean of the Faculty (1939) and Vice-Provost (1966). He later went on to help establish the Law Faculty at the University of Brunel from which he finally retired in 1977. Keeton was a prolific scholar, publishing in diverse areas such as trusts, international law, politics and legal history. He was obviously impressed with Sheridan's scholarship and invited him in 1970 to co-author his leading book, *Introduction to Equity* and later *The Modern Law of Charities and Trusts in the Commonwealth and Ireland*. On Keeton's remarkable career, see Sheridan's tribute, "George Williams Keeton 1902–1989" (1993) 80 *Proceedings of the British Academy* 333; and Keith M Devlin, "Obituary: Professor George Keeton MA, LL.D, FBA" (1989) 18:1 *Anglo-American Law Review* 1.

¹³ The Public Record Office (PRO) was the official guardian of the United Kingdom's national archive between 1838 and 2003 when it was merged with the Historical Manuscripts Commission to form The National Archives. Following the merger, the PRO moved from its premises in Chancery Lane to its new home in Kew. The PRO was, interestingly, placed under the charge of the Master of the Rolls.

¹⁴ The Charitable Uses Act of 1601 (known as the Statute of Elizabeth), 43 Eliz I, c 4.

LS: That is right. Yes. I probably wouldn't have known there was such a job but for the fact that one of the candidates asked me to be his referee. But they didn't appoint anybody. And I understood when I subsequently received a letter from the Inter-University Council that they were writing to all the people or most of the people who had been referees for candidates, to ask if either they were interested themselves or knew of someone who hadn't applied and might be interested. In that sense, I didn't apply for the job.

At that time, there were some . . . one or two chairs vacant and some friends and I discussed which of us might apply for which jobs. I don't suggest that we apportioned the world between us, but I came to the conclusion that at my age I wouldn't stand a very good chance of getting a chair. But more importantly, I thought, how exciting it would be to start a new Law Faculty. There have been no new law faculties in the Commonwealth in living memory. And there probably will never be a chance again. How wrong I was! But it was exciting.

KT: Who were your contemporaries who were sort of looking for jobs at the same time?

LS: Well, one in particular I can recall was Roy Marshall who was then a lecturer in London. He was considering applying for a chair of law that was vacant in Sheffield, which he got actually. And I'm sorry to let you down on this . . . but I can't recall who the others were. But there were a number of us who considered that we were on the verge of being qualified for chairs of law, and in fact, no two of us applied for the same chair.

KT: So, when was the first inkling you got that you got a job?

LS: Oh. This . . . must have been early in 1956. I think probably at the turn of the new year.

KT: Who told you?

LS: I can't remember who the letter was from . . . it seems to me very likely, looking back on at subsequent practice, that it was from Sir Sydney Caine, who was then Vice-Chancellor.¹⁵ Unfortunately I haven't now got the letter.

KT: What was your reaction?

LS: My reaction was partly surprise, delighted that I had been successful, because I was quite young to be appointed to a chair of law. My second reaction was that I was quite pleased that I turned down one or two other jobs that had been offered to me in this country so I was free to go, which I wouldn't have felt if I had just taken a new job somewhere else. And the third was . . . it's going to be exciting!

¹⁵ Sir Sydney Caine (1902–1991) was an economist and educator. From 1937 to 1940, he was Financial Secretary of Hong Kong, and from 1952 to 1957, he served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya in Singapore. Thereafter, he was appointed Director of the London School of Economics, a post he held till 1967.

KT: Right. By which time you had already married Margaret?

LS: Oh yes, we got married in 1948.

KT: After you got called to the Bar?

LS: No, before I got called to the Bar. After I passed the Bar Final, but I couldn't be called because I was underaged to be called to the Bar. After I passed the Bar Final, we got married. . . and only after a matter of weeks later I was called to the Bar. I was married – as you can gather from this – just before I was 21.

KT: Now, coming to Malaya, what plans did you make? You got the news, you got the job, so how did you prepare yourself for this new adventure?

LS: Well, I did of course have advice from the Inter-University Council about such mundane things as suitable clothing for life in Singapore. In 1956 of course air-conditioning was much less widespread than it is now and we didn't have it in the teaching areas of the Law Department. We did eventually, but not for two or three years. I don't think we made much preparation mentally, I think we just thought we get there and see how it's like, and we probably fit in quite easily. One thing that I remember discovering was that I had not long ago bought a new car. The first time that new cars were affordable to a lecturer in law had come on the market since before the war. And I discovered that if I sold it, and bought another new car, I would even after paying for its carriage to Singapore, be in pocket because they would refund the purchase tax when I left the country. That may not seem very important, but for someone who had been on a lecturer's salary, petty matters of finance were quite important.

KT: And so, you bought a ticket, they sent you a ticket.

LS: They sent us tickets – we had a young daughter by then – for passage on the *Willem Rhys* from Southampton to Singapore. This was going of course, to Indonesia. And on the boat, we had a lot of advice from people who were returning from leave; most of which were of no practical use whatsoever.

KT: And, can you tell us a bit about your arrival in Singapore? I . . . recall your story when you were greeted by –

LS: Professor Dobby?¹⁶ Yes, he came to my cabin. Well, when we docked, we knew we were going to stay in a hotel for a few days, a hotel in Orchard

¹⁶ Ernest George Henry (EGH) Dobby (1909–1981) joined the Geography Department of Raffles College in 1939 as a lecturer. In 1945, he obtained his PhD from the University of London and in 1946 returned from War service as Head of Department to restart Raffles College. He was appointed Professor of Geography in 1947 and went on to head the Department till 1960. Dobby was instrumental in establishing the Department of Geography as an intellectual powerhouse, and also founded the *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*. He also served, at various times as the Dean of the Arts Faculty of the University of Malaya in Singapore and as its Acting Vice-Chancellor. He left Singapore in 1962 and held Visiting Professorships at the University of Ghana and the University of Cape Town before retiring to the Isle of Man in 1969. Dobby is best known for his two books: *Southeast Asia* (1958) and *Monsoon Asia* (1961) which have undergone numerous editions and were translated into many languages. See 'Obituary: Ernest George Henry Dobby' (1981) 2:1 *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography* i.

Road which name I cannot recall now, and which almost certainly not been there for many years. And I was making the most of the last remnants of air-conditioning in our cabin before facing my new climate. I had been quite shocked actually when at the first emergence onto the deck, to see what the climate Singapore was like. While I was sitting in my cabin, Professor Dobby knocked the door and greeted me with: 'Welcome to the first Professor of Law in the Faculty of Arts.' This was something I immediately planned to subvert.

KT: Did he take you to your hotel or. . .

LS: No, I think Mr Brown who was then the Registrar was the person who came next to take us to the hotel.

KT: And when did you first turn up for work?

LS: I think I was taken either the next day or the same day to see Sir Sydney Caine in his office and given a rough idea of the facilities available to me, which were: a room and the loan of someone who worked in the Registrar's Office as a secretary.

KT: That would be the late Mr Young Cheng Wah.¹⁷

LS: It would.

KT: What do you remember of that first meeting with Sydney Caine?

LS: I don't remember the meeting in detail, it was a little formal welcome coupled with a few details and he told me about the other facilities, like the amount of money that had been set aside in the library budget for the purchase of law books and he was obviously a supreme optimist in that respect. I decided very shortly afterwards that I would have to make contact with Mr Lim Yew Hock¹⁸ and the Tunku¹⁹ to get some more.

KT: Support?

LS: More money.

KT: Right, right. So, where was your first office?

¹⁷ The late Young Cheng Wah was an Administrative Assistant in the University of Malaya. In 1956, he was seconded to the Law Department to provide Sheridan with administrative support to establish the Law Department. For the first decade of the Law Faculty's existence, Young ran its administration single-handedly. Later, when more administrative staff joined the Faculty, Young presided over its efficient running until the early 1990s when he took a back seat and handed the reins of administration to Lim Swee Tee. For twenty-five years, Young also served as the Secretary for the Board of Legal Education. He died, aged 60 on 12 February 1995. See Andrew Phang Boon Leong, "Mr Young Cheng Wah – A Personal Appreciation" (1995) 16 *Singapore Law Review* 23.

¹⁸ Lim Yew Hock (1914–1984) was Chief Minister of Singapore from 1956 to 1959.

¹⁹ Tunku Abdul Rahman (1903–1990) was Malaya's first Prime Minister. For his role in leading Malaya to independence, he is acknowledged as the Father of Modern Malaya or Bapa Malaysia. He served as Chief Minister from 1955 to 1957; and then as Prime Minister from 1957 till he resigned in 1970. He is often respectfully referred to simply as 'The Tunku' ('The Prince').

LS: Well it was in the first floor in the building. I don't remember what it was called now.

KT: Oei Tiong Ham Hall.

LS: Hmm?

KT: Would it be Oei Tiong Ham Hall? The main administration building.

LS: Well, it was in that area. I don't remember being given any name. But the library was at one end; the administration on one side, and then some sort of an 'L' shape which was where there were retiring rooms for members of the staff of all faculties at Bukit Timah.

KT: You were among the Arts Faculty?

LS: I think that, yes I was amidst the Arts Faculty people. But whether it was because we were segregated I don't remember. I got to know the people from Science and Social Work as well as members of the Faculty of Arts. And there was a . . . not so much a contest, but a feeling that the Faculty of Economics and Social Studies I think it was called, and the Faculty of Arts had equal claims on the Law Department. So Professor Silcock,²⁰ Professor Dobby, Professor Parkinson²¹ and. . . dear me, I can't remember the name of the Professor of Political Science,²² they all felt that they were as closely related to the Law Department as the others.

KT: Do you remember your first day in office? What were you thinking about?

LS: No. I don't remember any detail about that. But I do remember largely in those early days, the hospitality of people who got to know us, who were very kind. Of course, I was the only member of the Law Department, so the people I got to know were from other departments. There was one other law lecturer, but he wasn't in the Law Department.

KT: Who was that?

²⁰ Thomas Henry Silcock (1910–1983) arrived in 1938 to assume the first Chair in Economics at Raffles College. He later became Head of the Economics Department at the University of Malaya. In 1960, he left Singapore to teach at the Australian National University from which he retired in 1973. While at the University of Malaya, Silcock also served, at various times, as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and as Acting Vice-Chancellor. See "Obituary: Professor Thomas Henry Silcock" *The Canberra Times*, 27 Jun 1983, at 7.

²¹ Cyril Northcote Parkinson (1909–1993) was the inaugural Raffles Professor of History at the University of Malaya, having been appointed to the post in 1950. Parkinson had been educated at Cambridge and at King's College, London, where his thesis, *Trade and War in the Eastern Seas 1803–1810* won the Julian Corbett Prize in Naval History in 1935. It was during his stint at the University of Malaya that he wrote his famous 'Parkinson's Law' – that "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." In 1960, he resigned his post at the University to become an independent writer.

²² This would have been Professor Rupert Stephen (RS) Milne (1909–2014), founding Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Malaya. Milne headed the Department from 1961 to 1965 when he left for the University of British Columbia where he became the first Head of its Political Science Department.

LS: Ahmad Ibrahim.²³

KT: Where was he?

LS: Social Work.

KT: What was he doing in Social Work?

LS: Teaching law... the legal system.²⁴

KT: Let's talk about how you went about recruiting faculty, planning syllabi and getting students to apply to Law Faculty.

LS: Well, so far as the recruitment of staff was concerned, the first thing I had to do was to get someone to authorise a post and a salary. And I managed to persuade the University Council that to cope with first year law students, I would need one more full-time lecturer and at least one part-time lecturer. And then we of course would have to think about the second year. I had a whole year for this planning because even though I arrived at the end of July 1956, we weren't taking in any students until October 1957, when that year's academic year began.

The appointments had to be made by the usual university appointments procedure of joint Senate and Council Committee, writing a recommendation to the Council. The result of that was for the first year, I had as a colleague, BL Chua²⁵ as a full-time lecturer and Tan Boon Teik as a part time lecturer. Tan

²³ Ahmad bin Mohamed Ibrahim (1916–1999) was a brilliant Queen's Scholar from Raffles Institution who had graduated with a first class in the Law Tripos at Cambridge University in 1938. He joined the Legal Service and later rose to become State Advocate-General (and later Attorney-General) of Singapore (1959–1965). In 1969, he left Singapore for Malaysia and became Professor of Law at the University of Malaya (in Kuala Lumpur) and later founding Dean of the Khulliyah of Laws at the International Islamic University.

²⁴ In 1937, a three-year diploma course for Malaya Administrative Service (MAS) officers was taught at Raffles College, and among the subject officers had to read was law. The first person to be appointed as Lecturer in Law at Raffles College in 1939 was Raja Musa bin Raja Haji Bot (1897–1943). When classes resumed at Raffles College in 1947, Ahmad Ibrahim was appointed temporary Lecturer in Law. From Sheridan's account, it appears that the MAS Diploma course was run by the Department of Social Work.

²⁵ Chua Boon Lan (1920–1999) was the first Lecturer whom Sheridan hired. He started work at the Law Faculty on 1 July 1957. In 1961, he became Sub-Dean of the Faculty and in 1962 was elected Dean in place of Sheridan. Chua was born in Ipoh in 1920 and studied at the Anglo-Chinese School in Ipoh. In 1938, he left for Cambridge where he studied law at Trinity College, obtaining his BA degree in 1941, his LLB in 1942, and his MA in 1945. From 1943 to 1945, Chua studied at the London School of Economics where he specialised in juvenile delinquency and youth welfare. In 1945, he was a Captain with the British Military Administration. In 1946, when the Juvenile Court was re-opened and moved to its new premises in the Department of Social Welfare behind the Victoria Memorial Hall, Chua was appointed its first Juvenile Court Magistrate. In November 1947, Chua resigned his post to study medicine in the United Kingdom. It is uncertain what happened to Chua hereafter and whether he did indeed embark on the study of medicine. However, by 1950, he was back in Singapore and in private legal practice. At the time of his election as Dean, Chua was a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty. Chua resigned as Dean in 1963 to pursue his doctorate under Sheridan at Queen's University, Belfast. Little is known of his activities thereafter.

Boon Teik²⁶ incidentally and Ben Jeyaratnam²⁷ came to see me not long after I arrived in Singapore – together; they were bosom pals. And they both expressed their interest in doing whatever they could for the new law school. And they did indeed, both did part-time teaching at one time or another, though Boon Teik did more.

KT: What did he teach?

LS: He taught the Introduction to the Legal System.

KT: And Ben?

LS: I don't think he was teaching in that first year of the Law Department. But in any case, our need for part-time teachers suddenly expanded because we had this large part-time course as well. You asked me about recruiting students. Recruiting full-time students was not so much a matter as keeping them out, because we were given a quota of 30 or 32, something like that. And the number of applicants far exceeded that even though they didn't know they would get a recognised law degree later on. And some of the people who applied had already secured places in other faculties and wanted to change when they found out that there was a law degree.

Another thing which stimulated interest was the Radio Law series broadcast by Radio Malaya with studio audiences in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and . . . where else . . . Ipoh? Or it may have been Malacca? I'm not sure where else. They had four sets of studio audiences. And some of the people who enrolled for that course subsequently applied to be admitted as full-time law students. But then on top of that, it became apparent to me, very soon, that there was a huge pent-up demand for the study of law from people who were no longer of an age where they could be full-time law students but who have not been able to afford to go abroad when they were of normal university age. So, when we instituted the part-time course, we could of course arrange for lectures to be at a time when they could attend, but the matter of tutorials required a sudden employment of large numbers of part-time staff. And there were quite a lot of them and I can't remember all of them or what these individuals taught.

KT: I remember the story which Amarjeet Singh²⁸ told me, of how he first met you because I asked him how he, a boy in Taiping, came to Singapore?

²⁶ Tan Boon Teik (1929–2012) was educated at University College London and joined the Singapore Legal Service in 1955 as a police magistrate. At the time he met Sheridan, he was Deputy Registrar of the High Court. In the 1963, he became Solicitor-General and in 1967, Attorney-General of Singapore.

²⁷ Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam (1926–2008) was educated at University College London and joined the Singapore Legal Service in 1952, rising through the ranks to become Senior District Judge. In 1963, he resigned from the Legal Service to enter private practice. Jeyaretnam is best-known for being the long-time Secretary-General of the Workers' Party and for being the opposition leader who broke the People's Action Party's hegemony of Parliament when he won the Anson constituency by-election in 1981.

²⁸ Amarjeet Singh was born in Taiping, Perak. He was among the first group of students to graduate from the Faculty of Law of the University of Malaya. After a long and distinguished career in private practice, he was appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court in 1992 and served in this capacity till his retirement from the Bench in 2000.

LS: Ah yes.

KT: And he said that Lee Sheridan was recruiting students. And he was flying around and he came. . .

LS: And he came to Taiping. I do remember him now you mention it. It may have looked like a recruiting drive. But really, it was more that I wanted the secondary schools to know what was happening, so they could take it into account. I knew already that there would be more suitable applicants than we could take. That didn't mean that additional ones couldn't be taken, they would just have to be more suitable than others. So, I wasn't worried about the shortfall in the volume of applications. But I was concerned that the secondary schools throughout Malaya and Singapore should have some rough idea about what was involved in undergraduate legal education. And so I visited many of the schools and I went to Taiping and I still remember Amarjeet there now that you mention it, and I also remember that when I was going to go on from Taiping to Penang by air – it was a scheduled air service from Taiping – I couldn't get a taxi. But I got a trishaw with a very, very elderly rider who had great difficulty getting me and my suitcase to the airport in time, but we made it.

KT: Tell me a bit about your visits to all the states, because one of the biggest issues for the new law faculty was to get its law degrees recognised by the various bars. What was the reaction of the bars like, and how did you overcome the initial objections?

LS: Well, my first move so far as the Federation was concerned, was to call on Sir Roland Braddell²⁹ who had been a party to the Report,³⁰ and his partner, Ramani,³¹ who was then Chairman of the Malayan Bar Council. They both advised me that the Bar Council would not move unless they had the opinions of the other state bar committees, and I would be well-advised to consult practicing lawyers and their committees throughout the states. I didn't go to the East

²⁹ Sir Roland St John Braddell (1880–1966) was the scion of one of the most distinguished legal families in Singapore. His grandfather, Thomas Braddell, was the first Attorney-General of the Straits Settlements, while his father, Thomas de Multon Lee Braddell was Chief Justice of the Federated Malay States. Roland Braddell was also an accomplished historian and was, by the time of Sheridan's arrival, the doyen of the local Bar.

³⁰ Some time in 1954, the University of Malaya invited Sir Roland St John Braddell (1880–1966) and Professor Roy George Douglas (RGD) Allen (1906–1983) to “submit a scheme of courses and organisation for consideration by the Senate and Council.” The Braddell-Allen study was first made known to the public in early February 1955 when Vice-Chancellor Sydney Caine announced the appointment of Braddell and Allen to undertake a “preliminary investigation with a view to setting up a law faculty” at the University of Malaya. The Braddell-Allen Report – which took merely a month to prepare – was published in March 1955. The Report recommended that separate faculties of Social Studies and Law be established but that the teaching of these subjects be developed concurrently. With respect to the course in Law, it was proposed that legal courses first be developed “for students of social studies and then for Degrees in Law.” Braddell and Allen recommended that the University establish a Faculty of Law that would grant degrees in Law.

³¹ Radhakrishna Ramani (1901–1970) was a prominent Malaysian lawyer and diplomat. He was the second President of the Malayan Bar Council (later renamed the Malaysian Bar Council). Ramani was a formidable advocate and knew Braddell when he first practised at Braddell Brothers in the 1930s. Later, the two lawyers formed their own firm, Braddell and Ramani in Kuala Lumpur.

Coast, but I did visit all the West Coast states except Perlis where I don't think they had a bar committee separate from that of Kedah. I found the reactions were very mixed. Some people were very enthusiastic about the idea, some people held the view that you couldn't provide the quality of service locally that you can provide in the United Kingdom. I dare say some of the concern about quality may have disguised other objections, but I'm not saying they did. There were some who believed that even if it could be done in a way that matched the quality that matched the United Kingdom, people would be better lawyers if they made the journey to the United Kingdom. When it came to the point, I was never in the position to guess how the majority opinion would turn out. But as you know now, and as I learnt a couple of years later, the result was favourable. I never had any doubt that it would be favourable in Singapore.

KT: Were there fierce objections from any senior practitioner here?

LS: I don't remember anybody being fierce. There were reasoned objections, some of which I had to admit were reasonable as we were an untried facility. I could only say to them that I was determined that things shouldn't turn out as they feared. There were cases where I thought there was prejudice, but for the most part, I was well-received and made quite a lot of friends.

KT: Let's talk about your first day of the opening of the Law Department.

LS: You mean to students? Well, I would be a bit inventive if I could pretend to remember in detail what happened on the first day. Except of course, a place full of students is quite different from a place expecting students to come at some date in the future. I was very glad myself to be able to get down to some teaching. But some of the time I spent that first day I could remember very clearly was of dealing with people who wanted to switch to the Law Department from other departments, notwithstanding that we had already filled our quota. And some of them were very good. And I spent some of that first day seeing them. And working out how to persuade the Council to let us take a few above our quota.

KT: Right. What were the first subjects you were teaching?

LS: I taught Constitutional Law to the first year students.

KT: Developing the syllabus. One of your primary jobs was to get the syllabus up and running. Can you tell us how that was done?

LS: Yes. There was a syllabus annexed to the Allen-Braddell Report but I thought it didn't make adequate allowance for the fact that there were no professional law schools, although it was very unlikely that professional law schools would be introduced in either Singapore or the Federation of Malaya so I wanted to try to devise a system in which when someone graduated, I knew they wouldn't all want to practice, but that a person could qualify to practice by practical training and not by further examination of an academic nature. That's why I wanted to include subjects like civil procedure which would never have figured in an academic syllabus in England, and criminal procedure, and I therefore wanted

to expand the undergraduate course to 4 years so that we can say, 'Now if someone goes into an office, a practitioner or the government – legal service – and is supervised properly for 6 months, you will have someone you can let loose on the public.'

KT: And this was easily approved?

LS: It was surprisingly easily accepted. There were some murmurs in the University Council about requiring people to spend four years of their lives in university, but with a little bit of explanation and a little bit of analogising with the medical profession, I found it was accepted fairly readily.

KT: What about other facilities, most important of which is of course the library. Can you tell us how that came about? The story about the Asia Foundation. . .

LS: When I first went to see Mr Lim Yew Hock I explained to him that the University had set aside \$40,000. There were some law books and law reports for example which Ahmad Ibrahim had been using in his course, but in my estimate, if we were to have a library adequate for all four years for the degree once we were functioning, we would need \$300,000 – in 1956 prices – and that I would suggest to him that whatever sum that the two governments could generously provide, half might come from the Federation and half from Singapore. And Lim Yew Hock was very receptive. He was very keen on the idea of local qualification for lawyers and he said, 'Don't approach the Tunku, leave him to me.' And I came away from that meeting, thinking that he gave me a very good reception but I thought naturally that governments don't give you what you ask for but they might give you a sizeable chunk. But he did. I had a letter actually from the Federation Government a few weeks later telling me that they'd agreed with Singapore that they should give \$150,000 for the law library. This was based on the idea that we would need comprehensive sets of local law reports; in some cases in multiple copies if the number of students increased. Anything published locally about the law as well, as of course, the comprehensive set of English law reports and some Indian law reports to back up the study of criminal law and the Criminal Procedure Code. It was much later that I got more ambitious about extending the library to other parts of the Commonwealth and to the United States but that was when the Ford Foundation provided the money. The Asia Foundation approached me to supply a Professor of constitutional law, and that's how I got Harry Groves. But they may or may not have given some money for books to support his work but the funds for the expansion of the Law Library came from the Ford Foundation money I accidentally swindled the Burmese out of.

KT: Well can you tell us a bit about that?

LS: I was up in Kuala Lumpur, staying at the Merlin Hotel, as a fraternal delegate to the inauguration of the University of Malaya as a separate university, and I think that was in early 1963, may possibly have been in late 1962. But the ceremonies involved us delegates presenting scrolls of congratulations, and lots of people making speeches. On one particular morning, the speech

was to be made by a Deputy Minister of Education in the Federal Government, and he was going to speak in Malay. And as I don't speak Malay to any greater extent than buying myself a ticket on the ferry, I decided not to go and I went into the bar of the Merlin Hotel, sat next to forlorn-looking figure, got into conversation with him and he told me that he had been the Ford Foundation manager in Burma. . . who had just been expelled along with everybody connected with the Ford Foundation. And cut the long story short, I gave him a good idea as to what to do with the surplus money.

KT: How were the monies applied? I mean who went out to buy these books?

LS: The money came after I left Singapore.

KT: What about the \$300,000?

LS: Oh, the \$300,000. Well, the staff of the Law Department, which was mainly me with the assistance of Bashir Mallal and one or two practitioner friends in Singapore and Federation who advised. We bought the books via the Malayan Law Journal office, who gave us a substantial discount.

KT: So, even all these Indian law reports were bought through Bashir Mallal?

LS: That's my recollection, yes. Bashir Mallal was a very loyal supporter of the Law Department and I owe him a great deal.

KT: Who else would you say were great supporters? Punch?³²

LS: Punch was, yes, he was. And so were some of the politicians, both David Marshall and Lee Kuan Yew were very helpful. Punch yes, he gave a great deal of time. Lee Kuan Yew was very encouraging and he took part in the Radio Law series, as you may remember. David Marshall taught and gave his services for free. Probably the people who didn't like us didn't appear. But I felt we were very well-supported by the generality of the profession.

KT: What about the judges?

LS: Oh yes. The judges were very helpful. Some of them were not there for very long – the Colonial Legal Service judges. But, Tan Ah Tah for example was very well-disposed towards the Law Faculty as I think were all the local members of the Singapore bench. The Federation, well, they weren't on the spot but I did get to know some of the judges. Some of the Colonial Legal Service judges like Justice

³² Punch Coomaraswamy (1925–1999) was at various times, legal practitioner, Speaker of Parliament (1966–1970), Ambassador (1970–1983); and High Court Judge (1983–1994). Coomaraswamy, who was educated in Nottingham University, joined the firm of Braddell Brothers where he had a successful practice. A staunch supporter of local legal education and of the local legal profession, he devoted much of his time and energies to the work of the Advocates and Solicitors Society of Singapore (now Law Society) and taught the Law of Evidence at the fledgling Law Faculty from 1959 to 1970.

Buhagiar³³ from Malta and Justice HT Ong³⁴ who was one of our first external examiners.

And Eusoffe Abdoolcader³⁵ who became a judge later, whom I met when I tried to persuade him to be a law teacher. He was a graduate from University College, London. When I was leaving this country, I went to say goodbye to Professor Keeton in London. And he said 'Do try to recruit Eusoffe Abdoolcader, he'd be a wonderful teacher.' So when I was in Penang, actually on my mission to speak to the state bar committee, I had gone to see his father rather than him, but he was there. And I discussed with him the possibility and he said 'No, no.' He was absolutely determined on a career at the bar.

KT: He eventually became one of our external examiners, you know?

LS: Oh good!

KT: He was our external examiner for banking and insurance.

LS: We used to see him every time we went to Kuala Lumpur, and after we left the country, he used to write... sending me a copy of any judgment he was particularly pleased with, and then later on when we were living in St Nicholas³⁶ – this would be in the 1970s – he was becoming rather unhappy. He used to ring me up for long chats. I didn't realise how unhappy he was until I read about his suicide.

KT: Well I think it became much worse after his wife died.

LS: That's right, but he was already becoming unhappy because of his colleagues.

KT: I think he was, well, some of the people I know said that he was a bit manic-depressive.

LS: Well he might have been, he might have been. I learned a lot of English from him.

³³ William Buhagiar (1909–1982) was the second son of Francesco Buhagiar, second Prime Minister of Malta. He was educated at the Faculty of Law of the University of Malta and went on to read Jurisprudence at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He practiced private law in Malta and was for a time Professor of Constitutional Law and Public and Private International Law at the Royal University of Malta. In 1946 he was appointed Solicitor-General of the Federation of Malaya and was later elevated as Judge of the High Court in Malaya. He left Malaya in 1957 to become President of the High Court in Ethiopia.

³⁴ Ong Hock Thye (1908–1977), better known as 'HT Ong' was the first Chinese Chief Justice of Malaysia (1968–1973). Born in Penang and educated at the University of London, Ong practiced in Perak from 1931 till his elevation to the High Court in 1958.

³⁵ Eusoffe Abdoolcader (1924–1996) was born in Penang and read law at University College London. His father, Sir Husein Hasanally Abdoolcader (1890–1974) was also a well-known lawyer, community leader and politician. Eusoffe was a brilliant scholar and lawyer and he practiced for 24 years before being elevated as Judge of the High Court in 1974. In 1982, he was appointed Judge of the Federal Court where he remained till his suspension during the judicial crisis of 1988.

³⁶ This was a small Welsh town in Glamorgan where Sheridan lived when he was at Cardiff University.

KT: The last point I want to cover concerns the creation of local legal literature. Your thoughts on that, how you went about doing it and the creation of the *Malayan Law Review*.³⁷

LS: Well, so far as the creation of the *Malaya Law Review* was concerned, I floated the idea at a faculty meeting that we should plan in about two years' time in which we would publish works by our own staff and by anyone else in the area who would write about local or nearby legal matters. But we would also welcome contributions from abroad. And this was well-received to the point where somebody said 'Why two years' time, why not tomorrow?'

We had to do a bit of organising. I'm exaggerating. He said, 'Why not now?' It was Dai Davies. And I suppose in a way he was right. It was a departmental meeting and not a faculty meeting. We had resolved to do it in one year instead of two. And at that stage to start it we had to solicit contributions from abroad because there wouldn't be anything enough locally to fill a full issue.

So far as books are concerned, what could I do? People write them, or they don't write them. I hoped that it would come about through the natural gathering of experience and knowledge by academic lawyers at the university or by practitioners with such interests. And I must say that I think that the volume of local literature that has appeared since I left the country is very impressive indeed, not only in quantity but in quality.

KT: But you did in a way lead by example.

LS: Well, you had to produce something for students to look at, you couldn't just send them to read law reports or talk at them, and we wanted to produce materials that they could see. Mavis Puthucheary³⁸ – as she now is – was appointed to gather materials on constitutional law. She'd done a Diploma in Public Administration and I couldn't get a lawyer for that very purpose. We did this so we could get something in front of students and say 'These are materials on local law.' I wrote a very poor and hasty book on the Federation of Malaya Constitution. Harry Groves, when he came to Singapore, told me what a rotten book it was, and so I said 'Why not you join me as co-author and make it better?' And he did join me as co-author, but I don't think he made it *much* better, but he made it better. But I think he then understood what the difficulties were of making a really good book about an institution so young.

KT: That's *Sheridan and Groves*?

LS: Yes.

³⁷ The *Malaya Law Review* was established in 1959 as the *University of Malaya Law Review*. In 1962, when the University of Malaya split and its branch in Singapore was renamed the University of Singapore, the journal was renamed *Malaya Law Review*. It was once again renamed in 1991 as the *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*. In 1996, following the death of his wife, he committed suicide.

³⁸ Mavis Scharenguivel had been hired by Sheridan to collate materials pertaining to Singapore's constitutional and legal history. She later married James Puthucheary, the well-known Malaysian lawyer and politician.

KT: What about that volume you put together for that series?

LS: Oh, the Commonwealth series.³⁹ That I'm really proud of. I think we did a good job on that, all of us. But the only excuse for a book of that kind is that it would stimulate deeper study of the individual areas. It's a beginning.

KT: But it was a fabulous volume I must say.

LS: That's one of the two things, publications, that I'm most proud of.

KT: The other being?

LS: The other being the comparative study of trusts in the Commonwealth, which I did with George Keeton.⁴⁰ They were both of them I think, materials which haven't been put together, were available together for the first time with comparisons.

KT: Did you have any part to play in the first hiring of local graduates into the university?

LS: Well you mean graduates with the University of Singapore? Well yes. I was responsible for the appointment of Tommy Koh. Well, I told you that the appointments are done by a committee and Senate and Council, but I was responsible for initiating it and for getting the money that enabled the first of such person to go study abroad not out of his own pocket.

KT: How did you do that? How did you recruit Tommy?

LS: So far as recruiting Tommy, he had to apply. I had certainly wanted him to apply and told him so. I expected there to be a competition but there wasn't – we couldn't have done better.

KT: And the subsequent hires like Kheng Lian⁴¹ and Su Mien?⁴²

LS: Su Mien was appointed after I left.⁴³ When I first got back to this country, she had come to London as a PhD student, and I met her in London from time to time

³⁹ LA Sheridan (ed), *Malaya and Singapore, the Borneo Territories: The Development of Its Laws and Constitution* (London: Stevens, 1961). This was part of a series of books entitled *The British Commonwealth: The Development of Its Laws and Constitution* that had been conceived and was edited by Sheridan's mentor, George Williams Keeton.

⁴⁰ George W Keeton & LA Sheridan, *The Comparative Law of Trusts in the Commonwealth and the Irish Republic* (Chichester: B Rose, 1976).

⁴¹ Lim Kheng Lian (better known as Koh Kheng Lian) (b 1937) was among the first batch of graduates of the Faculty of Law at the University of Malaya. After graduation, she took up a teaching position at the Singapore Polytechnic, teaching law, and later joined the University of Singapore as an Assistant Lecturer in 1963.

⁴² Huang Su Mien (better known by her married name, Thio Su Mien) (b 1937) was among the first batch of students of the Faculty of Law, University of Malaya. As one of the top students in her class, she was recruited as a member of the Faculty in 1962. In 1968, she became the first local law graduate and woman to become Dean of the Law Faculty, a position she held till 1971 when she resigned and left the University for private practice.

⁴³ Sheridan's recollection of this is inaccurate. Thio Su Mien had joined the Law Faculty as Assistant Lecturer in 1961 and had, at Sheridan's insistence, done an LLM thesis with Professor Harry E Groves. Sheridan had planned for her to study for her doctorate in the United States but she went to London

when I was there on University business but no she was appointed to her post in the university after I left. I was not there for very long after the first graduates who then of course if they had any sense would spend some time on getting their professional qualification even if they intended to be academic lawyers. Times have changed and the vast majority of academic lawyers nowadays I think either don't have a professional qualification or have one they never used. But it was my belief in those early days that you should have a second string to you bow, if you wanted to be an academic lawyer but you changed your mind, you could do something else and not soldier unhappily.

KT: Finally, your educational philosophy. One of the pieces which you wrote which I found to be extremely enlightening in my early years in academia was a piece you wrote called 'University Law'.⁴⁴

LS: Was that my inaugural lecture?

KT: Yes. It was about the difference between vocational training and academic training. Can you share the thinking behind that, and how you arrived at the conclusion that you did.

LS: No. I don't know how I arrived at my conclusions; very often when I'm mowing the lawn and not thinking about it at all. But some way or other, I acquired a belief that I still hold, that if there is a variance between theory and practice, one of them must be wrong. But that doesn't mean that they are the same thing. I do believe that an academic training should be concentrated on the development of the mental faculties. For example, well-trained undergraduates in law might become a Chief Justice of Singapore, or the Archbishop of Armagh of which is another example of one of our students, or an actor, or the author of wonderful comic operas. Nevertheless, to be a good lawyer you need this substantial academic appreciation of the law. What I said about being archbishop or an actor could equally well apply to a graduate of Economics, Latin or Malay or anything else. But the fact is that the better your academic training in law, the better lawyer you're likely to be doesn't mean you don't need the nuts and bolts training on how to do it. But that is not something that I believe universities can give. There might be people in university who can, but it's not part of the equipment of every academic lawyer nor is it the duty of the university. And therefore, in my ideal situation, the practical part of a lawyer's training is given by practical lawyers who have a gift for communicating and supervising the acquisition of this sort of skill. But on the other hand, I think an academic lawyer who has no intention of practicing may very well be better informed if he has been through this practical training and knows what it's about.

instead as her husband had been posted there for work. She eventually completed her dissertation with Professor Stanley Alexander de Smith (1922–1974) at the London School of Economics.

⁴⁴ 'University Law', inaugural lecture given on 19 October 1956 in the Arts Lecture Theatre by Professor LA Sheridan, LLB, PhD, of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister-at-Law, on his becoming the first Professor of Law at the University of Malaya (Singapore: University of Malaya, 1956).