

Retiring judge gets standing ovation

Waylon Johnston



Retiring Mr Justice Joseph Camilleri. Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

In his final sitting before retiring, Mr Justice Joseph Camilleri yesterday paid tribute to colleagues, staff and lawyers who he said always treated him with the utmost respect.

Mr Justice Camilleri was overcome with emotion twice during his speech bringing to a close 32 years of service.

This prompted the packed court room to give him a standing ovation in a gesture of support.

The judge recalled that his stint in Gozo at the start of his career as an adjudicator had been an excellent learning experience due to the vast range of cases he had to deal with.

“I feel a certain heartache that I will have to leave the Bench behind me, having dedicated the latter part of my life to the administration of justice,” he said.

At this point he held his hands over his eyes, as the audience broke into a resounding applause.

He spoke of “work that I always loved despite the pressure, the volume of work and other difficulties” adding that “with the help of God and others around me I was able to carry on”.

Again unable to continue so emotional he had become, Mr Justice Camilleri handed over his notes to Chief Justice Vincent De Gaetano who continued reading on his behalf, allowing him to take some deep breaths before resuming his speech.

Mr Justice Camilleri will be officially leaving office on October 20.

Asked what he would be doing once he retired, Mr Justice Camilleri said his wife, Marie Therese, would tell him with a half-smile that there was a growing list of things for him to do at home.

The president of the Malta Chamber of Advocates, Andrew Borg Cardona thanked the judge for the hard work he had carried out, especially during his time in the Family Court.

Dr Borg Cardona said Mr Justice Camilleri had gone beyond the call of duty when dealing with marital problems and had actually brought many couples back together again. There were a lot of couples still together today because of his interventions, he said.

Mr Justice Camilleri graduated from the Royal University of Malta with a Bachelor of Arts in English, Italian and economics in 1965. In 1968, he obtained the Diploma of Notary Public and the following year he graduated Doctor of Laws from the same University with a thesis on The Usages Of Trade In Commercial Sales.

He was called to the Bar in 1970 and set up his own private practice, mainly as a civil and commercial litigation lawyer.

He was appointed magistrate for Gozo in 1977 and magistrate for Malta in 1978.

In 1983, he was appointed judge of the Superior Courts and he sat in the Commercial Court from 1983 until its suppression in 1995.

During this period, he was also assigned duties in the First Hall of the Civil Court and in the Criminal Court. From 1996 to 2002, he sat in the Second Hall of the Civil Court.

He now sits on the Court of Appeal and in the Constitutional Court.