

SPECIAL TRIBUTE and REMINISCENCE

by

His Excellency Yosiwo P George  
FSM Ambassador to the United States

at

MEMORIAL SERVICE and PUBLIC VIEWING

ANDON L AMARAICH  
(24 Aug 1932 – 26 Jan 2010)

A Premier Founding Father of the  
Federated States of Micronesia

Affordable Casket and Moanalua Mortuary Chapel  
01 Feb 2010; 4:00pm  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Family and Friends of the late Chief Justice Andon Amaraich  
Fellow Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia Residing in the United States

The departure of the late Andon Amaraich is a great loss to all of us as a people and as a Nation. It is therefore fitting and proper that we come together this afternoon to pay our last respects to a man to whom a young and grateful Nation owes so much; equally significant, we come together to draw our strength from reflecting upon the many examples of his fine deeds during his long and distinguished public service career to his people and his country.

While mourning his departure from us on the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month at the age of 77, let us also be comforted in the confident knowledge that the reservoir of his achievements shall endure. Indeed, his stellar accomplishments continue to spark and shine through as a source of inspiration to all of us during these dark hours of our national loss.

The late Chief Justice Andon Amaraich was a humble and quiet man who would not claim credit for himself even when such credit was rightly due him. This unassuming gentleman who was born on the Island of Ta in the Mortlocks, Chuuk

State, on the 24 August 1932 hardly needs any introduction and epitaph from any one of us. He was already a legend and monument before death. And the legacy that he leaves behind is a national treasure for us to cherish and hold but, perhaps more important, from which to seek guidance.

It is not an easy task to define Andon Amaraich in one word. His career spans more than five decades, covering various professions or fields of work. He commenced his career during the early days of the Trust Territory Government, initially as a classroom teacher. He also served, among others, as a public defender, a municipal government advisor and community leader, a legislator, an administrator, member and advisor to a handful of boards and enterprises.

In subsequent years of the Trust Territory era, Amaraich continued to serve with distinction as a senator in the Congress of Micronesia, Micronesian advisor to US delegations to UN conferences and Micronesian representatives to regional and international conferences. He was always a principled negotiator and a first-class diplomat. In his lifetime, he served his people at all levels of government – from local to national government.

At the national government, furthermore, Amaraich holds the unsurpassed record of serving in all three branches of government. As earlier noted, he was a senator in the old Congress of Micronesia or the forerunner of the FSM Congress. When the FSM Government came into existence, he served as the first Secretary of External Affairs; and, to the moment of death, he was the first Micronesian to serve as the Chief Justice of the FSM Supreme Court.

The record shows not only the scope of Andon's skills and talents, but also his readiness to put the full strength of his body and soul in whichever capacity he was called upon to lead and serve his people. For those who knew him well, there was never a task that was too low or too small for him.

As Chief Justice of the Kosrae State Supreme Court, I had the privilege of coming into contact again with him as Chief Justice of the FSM Supreme Court after we had served together in the first term of the late President Nakayama's presidency. In the capacity as Chief Justice, just as he was as Secretary of External Affairs, Amaraich continued to operate with great tenacity and unflinching persistence on the twin principles of integrity and fairness. It was clear to those around him that his aim was always to apply and uphold those principles just as well in the judicial process in a Micronesian fashion to the extent possible.

Amaraich went to the FSM Supreme Court after he had turned 60. But old age was not deterrence to his renowned reputation or inclination to think outside of the box in seeking solutions to problems. Long before he went to the federal bench, he had almost on a daily basis encountered and handled complex problems and controversial issues. His temperament, vast experience, and legal background all made him an exceptional judge.

On the bench, he saw as his ultimate role to ensure that justice is served and that the principle of fairness is not compromised. He also believed strongly that not all problems should be tried by the court system. A significant element of his judicial philosophy is that the best justice is one that is worked out between the parties themselves in a just and mutually concurring manner before seeking remedy through the litigation process.

Andon Amaraich was born a natural leader, yet a conspiracy of events cast him in a rare breed of Micronesian leaders. He upheld the principle of civic duty to the absolute highest standard. His sense of civic duty was a public trust – to serve the interest of the public; he was never known as a seeker of self-interest and private gain. He was a man with phenomenal courage of conviction, his reticence and quiet demeanor notwithstanding.

While excelling in everything that he did, whether as a classroom teacher or as a public defender, the singular task to which he brought the full force of his skills and energy – and in which he took maximum pride -- was when he shepherded the efforts to create a new and independent Micronesian Nation of many islands which we call today as the Federated States of Micronesia. This was a historic undertaking in the history of Micronesia, and Amaraich was a prime mover in the process that gave birth to the country that he served with distinction and loved so well.

At a time in the history of our islands when there remained significant doubt or hesitation, Senator Amaraich was an avante guard and true believer in a future independent Micronesian Nation. In the Congress of Micronesia, he took advantage of his chairmanship of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations as well as his membership on the Joint Committee on Future Political Status to advance the aspirations for self-determination and self-government. No amount of obstacle or resistance ever crushed his enlightened conviction that Micronesians must be the “proud guardian of our islands, now and forever.”

It was no accident of history that, when the FSM was finally born, President Nakayama entrusted his friend and confidante to head the Department of External Affairs in completing the process of taking its seat in the world community of independent states. In addition to serving as the first Secretary of External Affairs, a position that he assumed for more than a decade, he was also the Chairman of the Commission on Political Status and Transition. In that dual capacity, he is credited for helping to bring to conclusion the long and difficult negotiations for the original Compact of Free Association.

For this accomplishment alone, Amaraich had earned the recognition as a premier Founding Father of the Federated States of Micronesia, toiling side by side with his like-minded and equally committed Micronesian colleagues in advancing the Micronesian cause. He was a true Micronesian elder statesman *non pareil*.

In addition to advocating that the Micronesians themselves should be in charge of charting their own political destiny, Andon Amaraich was equally persistent in maintaining that they must also control their own natural resources. In those days that the future political status of the Trust Territory was being negotiated, the world community under the sponsorship of the United Nations was also negotiating a comprehensive international law of the sea -- a subject matter that was just as close and dear to Andon's heart.

Amaraich prevailed in his principled argument that Micronesia, given its unique interests, should be enabled to represent its own positions at the UN negotiations. Years later he observed that the US concurrence to the concomitant proposals that the Micronesians must have at least observer status at the UN law of the sea negotiations and to assume full control of their marine resources changed the direction and pace of the political status negotiations.

Seeing the fisheries resources of the FSM's marine space as a vital aid to nation-building, Amaraich continued to have abiding interest in the subject matter long after the conclusion of the political status negotiations. It was only natural that he was appointed to serve as chairman of the Micronesian Maritime Authority for many years.

Family, friends, and fellow citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia -- my family and the staff of our Embassy in Washington and our Consulates in Hawaii and Guam join me in expressing our profound sense of loss upon Chief Justice Amaraich's passing. It is only fitting and proper that we come together to pay our last respects to one of our nation-builders, indeed a premier Founding Father of the FSM. Confident that his legacy will be written on every page of Micronesian history, let us now bid him farewell and pray that his soul rests in eternal peace in the hands of his Creator.