

## **JUDGE MAURICE CARUANA CURRAN**

B.A., LL.D., D.Litt. (Hon. Causa), U.O.M.

MAURICE CARUANA CURRAN was born in Valletta on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1918 of a Maltese father and Irish mother. He was educated at the Old Lyceum and at the Royal University of Malta where he graduated B.A. (1939) and LL.D. (1943). At the age of 23, during World War Two, he served as Assistant District Commissioner with general duties in the Lieutenant Governor's Office assisting with humanitarian causes and the organisation of Malta's air raid shelters. In 1943, he was offered a Rhodes Scholarship at the University of Oxford which he reluctantly had to turn down to assist his family and his beloved Valletta to recover from the ravages of wartime.

In 1945/46 he was a leading member of the Malta National Assembly that made the proposals for the return of self-government in the 1947 Constitution. An active athlete, he was President of the Malta Football Association and of the Malta Amateur Athletic Association. He was a much-loved actor and played leading roles for the Malta Amateur Dramatic Company and British Council Players. In 1959, while Deputy Attorney General, he was granted a foreign leader Fellowship in the United States to study matters of legal and civic interest.

During his long and versatile career, Maurice Caruana Curran has been one of Malta's most distinguished lawyers specialising in criminal law. He was appointed one of Her Majesty's judges in 1963 at the age of 45, and from 1974 of the Republic of Malta serving as Senior Judge and on many occasions as Acting Chief Justice. He was a lecturer in law at the Royal University of Malta from 1950 to 1963. He also delivered a number of landmark judgments in criminal, civil and administrative law and is considered an icon by the Maltese legal community.

While serving on the Bench, he was most noted for his independent mind and his forthright defence of human rights. The former President of Malta, Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, described him as 'the Islands' bastion of liberty'. He retired from the Bench in 1983. In 1987 Judge Caruana Curran was appointed President of the Medical Council of Malta. He was also Chancellor of the University of Malta from 1988 to 1995.

Maurice Caruana Curran is considered by all on the islands of Malta to be the pioneer of the national conservation movement. In July 1965, he founded *Din l-Art Helwa*, Malta's National Trust, as a voluntary organisation to assist the State to uphold Article 9 of the Maltese Constitution in its work, '**to safeguard the historic, natural and artistic patrimony of the nation**'. Maurice Caruana Curran was soon to become an outspoken and fearless leader in the field of environmental and heritage conservation.

Maurice Caruana Curran was awarded the prestigious title of Officer of the Order of Merit of Malta in 1993 in recognition of his services to the country. In

1995 the University of Malta conferred on him the Degree of Doctor of Literature (*Honoris Causa*) with the title of *Chancellor Emeritus* in recognition of his contribution to the field of learning and to the preservation and promotion of Maltese culture.

Other highlights of Maurice Caruana Curran's career in the field of conservation have been the Gold Medal Award presented to him by Malta's Society of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce for his contribution to Malta's heritage; the prestigious Silver Medal from Europa Nostra awarded to *Din l-Art Helwa* for its outstanding restoration of the 19<sup>th</sup> century British Cemetery and Historic Garden at the Msida Bastion, a ten year project entirely carried out by *Din l-Art Helwa* volunteers; and a Silver Plaque award by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority for his defence of heritage. He was awarded personally Europa Nostra's Silver Medal for a lifetime contribution to Cultural Heritage in 2005.

He married Kate Gatt in 1947 (died 1976) and they had a son, Paul and two daughters, Simone and Louise (died 1968). He married Cettina Psaila in 1982