

**TRANSCRIPT OF EULOGY  
BY LEE HSIEN YANG  
AT THE FUNERAL OF THE LATE MR LEE KUAN YEW  
SUNDAY, 29 MARCH 2015  
UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE AUDITORIUM**

Mr President

Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet

Distinguished guests here to honour my father

My fellow Singaporeans and friends of Singapore

1 Singapore has lost the father to our nation. For my family we have lost our beloved father and grandfather. We are bereft.

2 I was born in 1957, and for as long as I can remember, Papa was a public figure. As a child, I was only vaguely aware that my father was an “orang besar” or “VIP” in Malay. All little children must think their fathers are special; I do not remember when it dawned on me that he was not just my own special father and not just an ordinary “orang besar”, he was an extraordinary “orang besar”.

3 Papa was immersed in his work for much of my childhood. In September 1998, he gave Fern and me our copy of his book, “The Singapore Story”. In it, he penned a note with a tinge of regret:

*“To Yang + Fern,  
You grew up while I was running around as I describe in this book.”*

4 Perhaps in different circumstances, he would have been a very successful businessman or an entrepreneur; but he chose to dedicate his life and serve the people of Singapore and to build a better future for all. He wanted to ensure his three children had a “normal childhood”. He didn’t want us to grow up with a sense of privilege and entitlement.

5 As a teenager in secondary school, seeking to assert my independence, I would sometimes ride the public bus. Papa did not object, and my poor security officer had to follow me around the buses. When I was in junior college and keen on outdoor activities, my security officer had to shadow me as I trekked around Pulau Ubin, Pulau Tekong and canoed around Singapore. But Papa’s principles ensured that I had as normal a childhood as possible, although I think I put out the security detail often!

6 Family holidays were happy occasions. We were able to see more of Papa. We did not go anywhere far away, posh or exotic: the government rest houses in Fraser's Hill, Cameron Highlands, and later Changi Cottage, a small seaside bungalow that holds many precious memories for me.

7 Golf was Papa's principal recreation and passion, so golf featured prominently not only on vacations, but also after work in the evenings. The nine-hole course in the Istana grounds provided ample room for us children to find adventure whilst he golfed. Both Loong and I were sent for golf lessons. We learnt to hit a long drive from the tee box, but neither of us really took to the game and we stopped when we grew up.

8 But eventually, Papa too, prompted by Ling, gave up golf, and for exercise he took to jogging, swimming, stationary cycling as well as walking. He had read of the benefits of aerobic exercise, examined and accepted the evidence, and he had changed his old habits. Papa was like that: firm in his convictions, but open-minded enough to accept fresh evidence and to change, even to sacrifice something he loved and enjoyed, like golf. Like with much else that he had set his mind to do, Papa remained disciplined and exercised regularly even to the last.

9 In January 1973 when I was 15, Ling and I joined Papa and Mama on a trip to visit Loong who was at university in Cambridge. It was our first family holiday where we travelled so far away. On that trip, Papa and Mama took the family to Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace. We watched the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of Coriolanus and toured the usual Shakespearean sites at Stratford. I had assumed that it was just Mama indulging her love for Shakespeare and trying to educate us while we were on vacation. But years later when Papa wrote his memoirs, we realised the hidden meaning of this visit for my parents. They had married secretly in Stratford-upon-Avon in December 1947.

10 When Fern and I married in 1981, Papa was keen to have us live with them at Oxley Road. Mama, perhaps because of her own difficulties living with in-laws as a new bride, and my wife Fern too, had reservations, so upon marriage, Fern and I made a home of our own.

11 When my brother Loong's first wife Ming Yang died in late 1982, leaving Loong with two very young children, the family felt the weight of the tragedy. Fern and I wanted to help the family hold together and create some happy occasions to continue to share. Although, growing up, all our birthdays, including those of Papa and Mama, remained unmarked and uncelebrated, we began inviting the family to our home for Papa's and Mama's respective birthdays, for which I would cook a simple meal. At the time, the family included my father's father, Kung, Papa and Mama, Ling, Loong and his two children. Papa loved a good steak and he had a Peranakan sweet tooth for desserts.

12 Over time, the group grew larger. The grandchildren had views of their own and they could be outspoken. They were often ready to engage with Papa on issues of the day. I recall one birthday dinner where Shengwu debated with his Ye Ye till late, long after we had finished dinner, both sides wanting to ensure that the other understood his perspective and point of view!

13 Whilst there have been public celebrations to mark my father's key birthdays, these small private family celebrations were a source of much joy to him and Mama. It was anticipated for months before and savoured in the memory for months after, and was part of the ritual of each passing year.

14 The arrival of grandchildren was also a source of great joy for Papa and Mama. Mama was traditional enough that she was thrilled that I had one son after another but my sense is that Papa would have been equally delighted if Fern and I had had three daughters.

15 When the grandchildren were little, Papa would love to have them playing around him as he exercised after work in the evenings. At weekends he often took them out – to the zoo, the bird park, the science centre and other places where families would go.

16 Our youngest son, Shaowu, arrived long after all the other grandchildren, and long after they had given up hope of any more grandchildren. Papa was in his seventies, and less active in public life, so he and Mama took this as a wonderful opportunity to enjoy their last grandchild.

17 Many know how privileged Singaporeans are to have benefited from my father's contributions to building our nation. I know that growing up as his son, I have also been privileged to have witnessed what it means to be a good man, a good husband, a good father and grandfather.

18 To Singapore and Singaporeans, Papa was at various times PM, SM, MM. But whatever his office he was actually always LKY. Even after he stopped being MM, people found it awkward to refer to him by anything other than this alphabet soup. But to his grandchildren, he was always Ye Ye, and to Fern and me, he was and will always be Papa. We will miss him dearly.

19 This past week, my family and I have received a deluge of messages expressing appreciation for my father's life, sometimes providing poignant memories of interactions with Papa. And although in life, Papa kept the two threads of public and private life apart, and shielded Mama and the children from the glare of the media, in his passing, the two threads come together as we share in the grief of loss.

20 We have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of grief and affection. We have been touched beyond words by the many Singaporeans who have braved the elements to pay their last respects at all hours of the night and day. Young and old, on foot or aided by walking sticks, in push chairs or wheel chairs, you came to pay your last respects, to sign condolence books and to write messages. You have posted touching tributes and poems online and waited patiently to greet his cortege as it passed.

21 Please accept my family's inadequate but deep and heartfelt thanks. We know our loss is your loss too, and that the loss is deep and keenly felt. We are humbled that so many have come forward to demonstrate your affection for, respect of and gratitude to - my extraordinary father, a father we share - with Singapore.

22 Farewell Papa.

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