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## 'Favourite child' wins dispute over will

Dr Caroline Chee Ka Lin becomes the sole heir to an estate worth millions by being mother's 'favourite child'. -ST

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**By Selina Lum**

THE youngest of six siblings has won a court fight with her sister over their late mother's two contrasting wills, making her practically the sole heir to an estate worth millions.

The High Court has upheld a 1989 will in which Madam Goh Hun Keong left almost all her assets to Dr Caroline Chee Ka Lin, 48, her favourite child.

Madam Goh's second daughter, Ms Muriel Chee Mu Lin, 54, a lawyer, lost her bid to declare a later will, made in 1996 and cutting Caroline out of her inheritance, as the true and valid will.

Ruling in favour of Caroline, Justice Lai Siu Chiu accepted the evidence of her medical experts that Madam Goh, who suffered from dementia and depression in her later years and was on a cocktail of drugs, was not capable of making a will by 1996.

Caroline called four doctors, who had all seen Madam Goh, to give medical evidence. Muriel depended on one expert, who had not seen Madam Goh in person.

Justice Lai described the suit as a 'most unfortunate case where the unequal affections of a mother for her six children' resulted in Muriel suing Caroline.

The judge described Madam Goh as 'the ultimate matriarch'.

By all accounts, she was strong-willed and had a forceful personality. When she was alive, she rode roughshod over her children without any regard for their feelings or sensitivities, noted the judge, in her judgment released last week.

'Without a doubt, Madam Goh was an unfair person... it mattered little to Madam Goh that her obvious preference for her youngest child may have caused envy or resentment in her other children, culminating in these proceedings.'

Madam Goh, who was born in 1921, quit her job as an English teacher to invest in real estate after marrying Dr Chee Siew Oon. She died in 2004 at the age of 83.

Her main asset was a Holland Road house, valued at \$13 million. A half share in the house was sold to Caroline and her husband for \$2.5 million in 1995.

She also had a shophouse and an apartment in Holland Village, 75 residential units in Batam, \$650,000 in the bank and a huge jewellery collection.

Her first will left almost the entire estate to Caroline, an ophthalmologist.

Seven years later, Madam Goh made another will, reversing the earlier one.

The second will gave Caroline an option to buy her mother's half-share of the house. Otherwise, the house was to be sold, with the proceeds and other assets shared equally among Caroline's five siblings.

In the suit, Caroline said the 1996 will was completely out of her mother's character; she said she had always been Madam Goh's favourite child. She contended that Muriel was instrumental in preparing this will, which was surrounded by 'suspicious circumstances'.

The dispute split their siblings into two camps. One brother sided with Muriel, insisting that their mother had intended to divide her estate equally.

Another brother and a sister supported Caroline, agreeing that she was the apple of Madam Goh's eye and the 1989 will reflected their mother's true wishes.

Justice Lai noted that the 1996 will was made surreptitiously - Muriel was the only sibling who knew it existed. It was not only wrong, she said, but totally reprehensible for Muriel to have manipulated a dementia-afflicted mother into changing her will.

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