



LIFETIME'S SERVICE: Retiring senior magistrate Christo Schutte says farewell to friends and colleagues at the magistrate's court Picture: BRIAN WITBOOI

● **Stalwart magistrate retires after 50 years' service**

Christo Schutte lays down gavel

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Fifty years working for the department of justice has left senior magistrate Christo Schutte with memories few could even imagine.

And as the stalwart of the Port Elizabeth Magistrate's Court headed off to retire, his colleagues showed their appreciation on Wednesday, forming a guard of honour outside the North End court building while singing *Asiphelelanga kushoda uSchutte* (We are incomplete without Schutte).

Clad in their regalia, magistrates, prosecutors, interpreters, clerks and cleaners joined hands as Schutte, 68, walked through the guard of honour, waving goodbye to friends and colleagues.

"It's very nice that people are still supporting me. I have been part of this building for quite some time now," he said.

Schutte joined the department in 1968 as a clerk of the court, but worked his way up.

His glittering career started in the small Eastern Cape town of Maclear.

His work took him to Adelaide and then in 1971 to Joubertina.

He then worked all over the

country, including in Pretoria and the then Transkei.

In 1976, he qualified as a prosecutor and worked in Port Elizabeth for a short period and later was promoted to the bench as a magistrate.

Schutte said he had presided over a number of cases – but the one that stood out most involved the son-in-law of the long-serving president of the Transkei, Kaiser Matanzima.

"[The son-in-law] breached the law. He came to Mthatha [for his court case] and the case was politically orientated.

"As I was busy with the matter, I received a message from a brigadier, saying '[Matanzima] has sent me to you to say that you must convict and sentence [the son-in-law] to a lengthy jail term'.

"I responded by saying: 'Brigadier, go back and tell the president that, with all due respect, he must refrain from sending this type of message.

"I respect him. I will listen to the evidence and convict or acquit him depending on the evidence'."

Later, the brigadier reported back to Schutte that Matanzima would accept any verdict imposed by the court.

Schutte has spent a combined 31 years in the old and

the new law court buildings in North End

"I am leaving part of me behind. This new building in particular is part of myself.

"I was involved from the start and with the planning of this building.

"I was appointed by the chief magistrate to be on the panel that involved architects, engineers and [employees from] public works."

Schutte said things had changed a lot in the judiciary and the department of justice.

"When I started, they were very strict.

"Your work had to be up to standard and correct.

"Official hours were utilised and they did not tolerate mistakes. I don't mean to criticise, but discipline must come back," he said.

He was one of six senior magistrates and was responsible for looking after six sub-clusters in the Port Elizabeth area, including those in New Brighton and Gelvandale.

Schutte said he was looking forward to spending time at home, doing things like gardening, painting and "touring my country".

"Wherever I have never been before, I will take my caravan and go."