

During the National Assembly's hearing on the corruptions of Chun Doo-Hwan's military regime in 1988, a novice lawmaker stood in the spotlight. The hero was Roh Moo-Hyun from Pusan. He pressed hard against the testifiers who had been involved in the corruptions and kept only saying "I cannot remember" or "I don't know". He pointed out their inconsistencies in their testimonies. By his resolute will to search for truth and logical inquiry, he rose to a well known statesman and were kept in minds of Korean people.

Roh, a successful lawyer, graduated only from a vocational high school, unlike most of other Korean lawyer who graduated from prestigious universities or got degree from foreign schools. Aside his activity during the hearing, his life was dramatic enough to attract attentions of other people.

His political opponents used to say that his emergence as star in politics during the hearing was just a happening resulted from his narrative skill. But his real value rooted in his life before politician career.

Roh was born as the youngest son of a family at Jinyoung, a small town in Kyung-Sang Province. Following the path of bright but poor students at that time, he also went to a vocational school and got a job after graduation. But he was disappointed at his salary under the minimal wage and decided to challenge to bar exam which has been powerful source of elites in Korea. In 1975, he passed bar exam despite his poor education background.

After getting career as judge, he opened his own attorney office.



His career as lawyer was successful. In particular, as he showed his talent on tax problem, he held a prominent position on legal circle of Pusan area. He could have accumulated his wealth and enjoyed comfortable life. However, he could not close his eyes on the reality of Korea under the brutal military regime.

At that time he faced the reality that bright students protesting against the military regime were arrested without warrant and tortured. Instead of comfortable life as lawyer, he chose social justice and a life of constant suffering, joining in democracy movement. In the middle of the movement, he was suffering from the military regime's oppression, even disqualified of lawyer. As taking charge of chairman for Association of Democratic Citizens in Pusan, he played a major role for democratic movement in Pusan. He was one of the leaders to ignite the Great Democratic Movement in June 1987.

After the Movement, he decided to run for the National Assembly, as looking for legitimate power of democratic movement. He joined in Unified Democratic Party led by Mr. Kim Young-Sam who was the leader of the opposition party based in Southeast part of Korea and became President later. Roh ran against a military elite of ruling party and won the election.

The National Assembly is the ground for him to show his talent. He left his footmarks on parliamentary activity, as playing major role not only in the hearings on the former military regime's crimes but also in the labor committee of the National Assembly.

But what was waiting for him was the bad regional conflict between the east and west part of Korea. The regional conflict occupied the political space instead of military regime dictatorship. In 1990, Kim Young-Sam, president of Unified Democratic Party, and Kim Jong-Phil, president of New Democratic Republic Party based on Chung-Cheong Province, announced to merge their parties with the ruling Democratic