

Tributes

As everyone knows, he chose not to run in the last election. I am sure that it did his heart proud that he chose to go into retirement rather than going into retirement from this place without choosing it.

I have many memories of the Hon. Steve Paproski, all of them good. I say that unequivocally. His smile was what he was probably most known for. I appreciated that smile as I sat in my place during the last term. How good it was to see someone still with a twinkle in his eye being able to just smile so readily at all the things that go on in this place.

One memory that I have so strongly of Steve Paproski was when he sat in the chair and hollered for the yeas and nays. Then he said: "In my opinion the nays have it". That tone of voice and relaxation that he brought was so good that I will never forget those words ringing in my ear: "In my opinion the nays have it".

Last year Steve Paproski called me from my place to the chair. I thought: "He is going to recognize me". Of course it was a thrill in those days to be recognized by the Chair. He said: "Deborah, is such-and-such a place in your constituency". He named a little place. I said: "Yes, it is, Steve. It is so many miles from my house and has a small area of residences".

He said: "Guess what. I just bought a lot there and you are going to be my new MP. How am I ever going to explain this?" We had a good laugh together about that.

Most recently this fall I received a personal phone call out west from Steve just after the election and he congratulated me on my marriage and my re-election. It was wonderful just to have a few minutes with him. I had no idea it would be my last visit with Steve. Those memories are precious and I appreciate them.

My final memory of Steve was picking up the newspaper after church in Edmonton on Sunday, December 5. I picked it up and before I even grabbed it out of the machine I saw the headline stating that Steve Paproski had died of a heart attack.

It was almost as if my heart just gripped as well. Something had gone dreadfully wrong. Something was happening over which of course not I, his family nor anyone else had any control. He was dead. He is dead but his memory will continue to live on in this place.

• (1515)

On behalf of my caucus and all members here, I would like to pay my respects to his wife Betty and their family and say once again, as any tribute I have given in this House, thank you so much to the Paproski family for sharing Steve with us.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I speak today on behalf of colleagues who have had an opportunity to sit with Steve Paproski in the same House. I also speak on behalf of a political party that quite frankly was privileged to have had the

opportunity to have Steve Paproski as a candidate and as a member of Parliament representing us and also at one point in time a cabinet minister.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, as you will know, he reached the highest office of all. It is the one that in this place is recognized as a tribute to any of us. It is the privilege to sit in the chair you are sitting in today as one of the Deputy Speakers.

Steve Paproski, as a Canadian, had a great opportunity not only to sit here and make a contribution in the political field, but also, as was mentioned, as an athlete. There are few things that are not as well known about his career. One is that he studied at the University of Arizona on a scholarship.

I should also say something which I found out while listening to a eulogy delivered by His Excellency the Governor General. What he shared with us at the time is that during those days of his scholarship, given the fact that he had very little means, he supplemented his revenue by acting from time to time as an amateur wrestler. He was known because of his amateur status. He became known as the Masked Marvel. He would from time to time wrestle against a gentleman named Gene Kiniski. Of course Gene would win on one day and Steve, if you can believe the coincidence, would always win the next day and so on it would go. In some matches they in fact became a tag team. I should say that it sounds like quite an appropriate preparation for life in this place as I recognize my tag team member here today.

What was also remarkable about Steve Paproski was the love and understanding that he had for this place. I remember arriving here in 1984 and having the privilege of being one of the Deputy Speakers. Because we had other work to do and accomplish and because I was the youngest of the group I was often asked to sit on Fridays and often went to Steve to ask him whether he would or would not replace me. In his way he would sit in the chair and say: "What is it again, kid? What is it that you want?" to each and every one of us who had the privilege of knowing him. He would grumble but would always say yes. In that way I was more often than not one of the great beneficiaries of his great generosity.

I think we would all want to remember Steve for his *joie de vivre* and the fact that he always recognized that this country was a country of privilege. A small anecdote about Steve's life is that he would, as often as he could, bring people by the store that his father had opened in Edmonton. He had been born in Poland. I read the first speech he gave in the House of Commons and the references he made to his experience as a young Canadian born in another country where freedom was not what we experience here and what we take for granted. He had come to Canada, grew up here and took his place not only in this House but as a minister of the Crown. That says volumes about our country and about Steve Paproski.