

Like some of you here today, I attended his funeral this past summer. I believe that those of us who had the privilege of being there saw everything as he would have wanted it to be. We saw incredible strength and a celebration of life. We saw a community saddened, but proud and united. We saw a family imbued with love. Most important, perhaps, we understood that Senator Desmarais was right when he said that Jesus was a "smart cookie."

I have already had the opportunity to express personally my feelings to Colette and the beautiful members of her family. I do so again publicly, mindful of their loss but confident that this brave yet gentle spirit will be with them always.

Hon. Mabel M. DeWare: Honourable senators, it is with sadness that I rise in the Senate today to pay tribute to a dear friend: Dr. Desmarais, Senator Desmarais, Jean. I wish to extend my best wishes to Colette and the family who are here with us today.

After 14 months of working with Jean on the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, I came to respect Dr. Desmarais' dedication to the task. I also came to respect a friendship that developed as we walked back to the Victoria Building night after night, after our long hours of meetings. He showed compassion for our committee, and revealed to me his personal feelings on the direction our deliberations should take, reflecting, at the same time, his own personal experiences in his life as a doctor.

The last week, late on Thursday, as we went back he told me how tired he was. He said, "You know, when I go home this weekend, I am going to have to go see my doctor because I am sure I have the flu. I shouldn't be this tired."

After he was confined to the house, I called him one day to see if I could talk a little business. Colette said, "He'd love to speak to you." During our little talk, he told me how pleased he was that his maker had given him the time to thank all the people who had helped him on his way up through the years.

I should like to conclude with, and echo, what his six-year-old grandson said in a note of encouragement to his grandfather. He said, "Thank you for all the time we spent together." We all thank you, Jean, for having spent some time with us, even though it was far too short.

Thank you, Jean.

Hon. Sharon Carstairs: Honourable senators, when Chaucer wrote about the "gentle, perfect knight," I think he must have been referring to a character, to a man, like Jean Noël Desmarais, because that is what he was. He was a gentle, perfect knight.

I first met him during the hearings in Winnipeg of the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide when he was replacing Senator DeWare. We began to chat about his family. He recommended that I take an apartment in Ottawa, as

he had recently done after living for a year in a hotel, and then with his daughter. I accepted his good advice and did just that.

His contribution to the committee studying euthanasia and assisted suicide, as mentioned by Senator DeWare, was very positive. As a physician, he was able to provide us with the knowledge of medicine which the rest of us, with the exception of Dr. Keon, simply did not have.

He did not have very much to say because he tended to be a listener. When he did say something, it was after a great deal of thought and consideration.

He sat on this side of the chamber for the first few months that I was sitting here, and then he moved across the way. It was not because he changed parties, but because the seating arrangement changed in that fashion. I missed our daily greetings and the chatter that one tends to have with a colleague who sits nearby, so every now and then I would sneak around to the other side to say hello to him.

I will miss him here in the Senate. I think we could all strive to be a little better, to be "gentle, perfect knights" like Senator Desmarais.

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-P. Poulin: Honourable senators, it is with considerable emotion that I rise today, the first day of my mandate in the Senate, to mark the passing of Senator Jean Noël Desmarais. Senator Desmarais passed away on July 26 following a brief illness.

He was born in Sudbury in 1924 and studied medicine at the University of Ottawa, specializing in radiology in the United States and England. He practiced medicine until 1991. He was a pioneer committed to the health sector in Northern Ontario, specifically.

Those who had the good fortune to know him are well aware of his ever-increasing achievements over the years. His outstanding quality was his profound concern for others' well-being. He frequently reminded us in both words and deeds that well-being was dependent on good health. In real terms, this belief was expressed through a strong and daily commitment to promoting the availability of health care and the quality of hospital services in the Sudbury area.

I had the pleasure of working with him between 1978 and 1983 on the board of directors of the Laurentian Hospital in Sudbury.

Dr. Desmarais was known for the relevance of his remarks. He said little, but he spoke well and always at the appropriate moment. This fine quality earned him a reputation for wisdom and made him highly respected.

In addition to his exemplary contribution as a doctor and a director, he was known for his longstanding involvement in many community organizations.