

State funeral held for Jules Léger

Canadians paid tribute to their twenty-first governor general, Jules Léger, in an ecumenical funeral service held in Ottawa, November 26.

For three days, politicians, diplomats and members of the public filed past the casket of the former governor general, who died as a result of a second stroke, November 22. The 67-year-old career diplomat lay in state in the East Block office on Parliament Hill that he had occupied more than 40 years ago as a member of Prime Minister Mackenzie King's staff.

Mr. Léger, who served as governor general from January 1974 to January 1979, was buried in a family plot in Valleyfield, Quebec.

The former journalist, senior public servant and diplomat was the fourth Canadian and the second French-speaking Canadian to occupy the post.

Governor general 1974-1979

Six months after his appointment to the position of governor general in 1974, Mr. Léger suffered his first stroke, which left him partially paralyzed on his left side and with a speech impediment. At the age of 61 he had to teach himself to speak again in both his native French and in English.

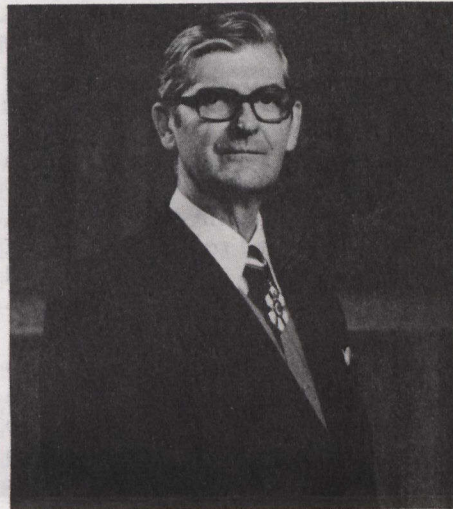
Through that time, Mr. Léger worked to regain control of his speech, taking 90 minutes of speech therapy every day. As he began to improve he undertook the difficult task of public speaking, often supplementing his brief words with a long written text. Sometimes his wife, Gabrielle was his voice, delivering the speeches her husband had written. By 1975, Mr. Léger had assumed his duties on a full-time basis.

During Mr. Léger's term, Queen Elizabeth consented to abandon the privilege of accrediting Canadian diplomats abroad and also the prerogative of awarding war decorations and signing treaties in the name of Canada.

The former governor general's love of art and classical music prompted him to institute an annual award for modern chamber music composers.

Under Mr. Léger, Rideau Hall was an open and informal place, which was part of the Légers' goal to make Canadians feel more at home with their institutions.

After graduating with a law degree from



M. Bedford

Jules Léger, Canada's twenty-first governor general served from 1974-1979.

the University of Montreal, Mr. Léger studied at the Sorbonne in Paris where he received a doctorate.

He started his career as editor of the Ottawa newspaper, *Le Droit*, for a year before he became a professor at the University of Ottawa in 1939.

Mr. Léger's diplomatic career began in 1940 when he joined the Department of External Affairs and became a member of Prime Minister Mackenzie King's staff; the Prime Minister had combined his post along with that of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. He was appointed as a third secretary in Santiago, Chile in 1943 and went on to similar duties in London in 1947. Mr. Léger returned to Ottawa in 1949 as executive assistant to Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and in 1951 was appointed assistant under-secretary of the Department of External Affairs.

The former governor general was named ambassador to Mexico in 1953, but a year later was brought back as an under-secretary of the Department of External Affairs. In 1958, Mr. Léger was appointed ambassador to the North Atlantic Council and the Organization for European Economic Co-operation in Paris. He became Canada's ambassador to Italy in 1962 and was appointed ambassador to France in 1964. On his return to Ottawa in 1968 he was appointed under-secretary of state with responsibilities for arts, cultural support, bilingualism, education and citizenship. Mr. Léger took over as ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg in 1973 and it was there that he received a telegram informing him that he had been appointed governor general, to succeed Roland Michener.

Mr. Léger's main preoccupation in the months before his death was the preparation and writing of his memoirs. He also planned to write a formal biography related to his period in Government House.

Messages of condolence

In a message of condolence, Queen Elizabeth offered her deepest regrets to Canadians, saying Mr. Léger was a "most distinguished man" who had won the "admiration of everyone" by fulfilling his duties as her representative despite the difficulties he encountered during his illness.

Governor-General Edward Schreyer praised his predecessor for his many talents, courage and dedication. "Canada has profited immeasurably from such a wise counsellor," he said.

Prime Minister Trudeau said that Canada had lost "one of its most remarkable sons and public servants". Mr. Trudeau said, "Jules Léger served all of Canada without ever forgetting his roots". The Prime Minister also paid tribute to the former governor general for giving Canadians its Official Languages Act and its cultural policies in the 1970s.

In the House of Commons, the leader of the Opposition Joe Clark said that what distinguished Mr. Léger was "the quiet pursuit of excellence". New Democratic Party leader Ed Broadbent said that the former governor general would "be missed for the simplicity and serenity he brought to a life which was committed to public service".



The flag-draped casket is carried by an RCMP guard of honour into Notre Dame Basilica, Ottawa.