

A heck of a fighter !!!

I like Claude St-Jean very much. I know him for three years. Like Mr. and Mrs. St-Jean. Oh ! those two : I don't know of any courage more appealing and likeable as theirs !

I will come back to Claude. Him also, he is courageous. Certainly, for managing every day with the difficulties of life and moreover those resulting from ataxia. Hats off to him and to the other members of the association. It is true that he is a pioneer and a fighter such as I have rarely met in my lifetime !

A pioneer ? First of all because he has a vision. He has always known that there was only research which would help in a definitive manner the people afflicted with Friedreich's ataxia. Like for polio. Like for tuberculosis. Like one day : for AIDS and for cancer.

He also has leadership. He consults, he asks, but he makes decisions. His eyes always decide on something else besides. Even when he smiles, look at his eyes : his two blue eyes are not laughing. They are still deciding !

And he is a pioneer because he started from nothing at all and because he continues on. The Minister of Health, Mr. Marc-Yvan Côté, told me so when Claude obtained an appointment for us : "To continue to collect \$200,000. per year for research on Friedreich's ataxia sitting in his wheelchair in the back of the basement of the family bungalow : one has to do it ! Myself, he added, I cannot do otherwise but to receive this guy in my office whenever he wants. We don't have enough people like him !"

A fighter ? Ask the same minister, yes, Mr. Marc-Yvan Côté, the "bull" of Matane. At a conference in Quebec, he invited all kinds of people to hear him, and he declared to them that, as my grandfather Jean-Baptiste said : "We would have believed that it was just a piece of cake." At the end, everyone was silent, impressed, except one. A man seated in a wheelchair was waving his arms and yelling for someone to give him back the microphone : Claude. His eyes bulged with anger, he spoke to him "straight in the face" because he did not agree. The Minister listened to him and he receives him ever since.

I think that the "bull" met the "pitbull".

And he is a fighter who never quits. I heard him twenty years ago on television with his sister. He was already saying, just as now "I am going to fight until the end !" Professional boxers have careers much shorter than his. This is really the proof that a battle is not just a question of the body...

A real pioneer, a real fighter. A nymphomaniac asked the name of a guy who just said that the Inuit and the guys from Lac St-Jean were the best lovers in the world. (For saucy reasons which the dignity of this newspaper forbid me to reveal.) He replied: "Agaguk Tremblay". Claude would have been able to reply : «Moses»(1) Marciano(2).

Happy twentieth anniversary to the Association ! I salute you, my brother !

Jacques Voyer, M.D.

- (1). Moses : a well-known Biblical pioneer whom his flock followed to the Promised Land in spite of his ten commandments!
- (2). Marciano : Rocky Marciano, the boxer of the 50's who, never defeated, made all his adversaries give up boxing at every fight.

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