

ARMAND LC DE MESTRAL, CM (1941-2023)

*Daniel Boyer**

Professor Armand de Mestral's life encapsulates perfectly his ancestral Swiss humanist civic tradition of public service. His steadfast commitment to Canada and the world beyond, from government service to his long-standing academic excellence at McGill's Faculty of Law, will resonate for years to come, as will his innovative legal conceptualizations that have enriched the field of law. His widely known and respected academic work plays a key role in informing policymakers on constitutional law and complex legal aspects of international trade.

Beyond his modest and imperturbable exterior, he etched wry comments in the memory of countless students. He was also appreciated by all for his irrepressible bonhomie. A deep thinker whose dedication to law was unswerving and whose energy was phenomenal, Professor de Mestral became a defining element of the Faculty. His concern for and defence of students is remembered by many.

After graduating a decade earlier, Professor de Mestral returned permanently to McGill as a Professor in 1976. He quickly developed an interest in European Union (EU) law from a constitutional perspective (i.e. comparative federalism) and in international trade law. His interest in EU law, combined with being an early acolyte of digital technology, led him to prepare a pioneering database on regional trade agreements. This database contained thousands of agreements along with selected relevant official documents and bibliographical information. He was an early and enthusiastic supporter of McGill's transsystemic program, which in 1999 broke the mould of traditional legal teaching but not the seriousness of its purpose.

A brilliant legal mind, Professor de Mestral was far too familiar with all major Western legal traditions to support a professed superiority of anyone legal jurisdiction. He also never lamented the increasing interna-

* Wainwright Librarian Emeritus, Faculty of Law, McGill University.

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tional dissemination of the Common Law; should the “Man on the Clapham Omnibus” ever turn to INCO Terms, he is bound to appreciate Professor de Mestral’s masterful and astute analyses. But that stock character for common sense, unlike de Mestral’s many constitutional law students, might balk at the interest and relish with which the Professor dove in the complexities of the *Margarine Reference* or *P.E.I. Potato Marketing Board v Willis*.

Professor de Mestral’s civic commitment perhaps reached its apex in 1999, when he assisted the Canadian Red Cross Society by becoming its president in its darkest hour following the tainted blood scandal. The fact that the Society continues to help countless people to this day is a fitting testament to the efficacy of his effort.

Professor Armand de Mestral’s lifelong dedication to teaching and scholarship leaves an indelible mark. As an educator, he embodied intellectual rigour and clarity, bringing complex legal principles to life. His legacy tells two stories, artfully braided: Classroom teaching and legal principles. His contributions will continue to inspire future generations of legal scholars and practitioners in Canada and far afield.

Armand de Mestral’s passing is an irreplaceable loss for his Faculty, University, and the greater legal community beyond our walls.
