

Jack Mason Tribute

— Nobel Peace Prize Forum Gala, Minneapolis, February 13, 2003

As we celebrate the accomplishments of the United Nations tonight, it is only fitting that we give tribute to the international spirit of someone with close ties to Concordia College and Concordia Language Villages, the Honorable John M. Mason.

*You have a dream, if you don't have a dream,
How you gonna have a dream come true?*

These lines from the song "Happy Talk" from "South Pacific" were quoted in remembrance of Jack Mason at his funeral in June 2002. They provide a glimpse of a life well lived in pursuit of notable goals. Jack was a visionary who allowed his imagination to grab hold of the future. And as he did so, it was always with a spring in his step and a twinkle in his eye. His special talent was bringing meaning to the undefined, and possibility to the untried. He simply inspired others to do their best, to take a risk and embrace the moment.

There are few who can claim to be a global citizen in every sense of the phrase. Jack was one of those individuals. He was an AFS high-school exchange student to Germany. His mastery of German was then followed by the study of Italian, French, Spanish, Korean and Arabic. With his keen linguistic ability, Jack seized any opportunity to meet people from diverse cultural backgrounds. He relished in new personal connections that crossed borders and united differences. A very dear friend was Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whom he first met as a college student at Macalester ... and with whom he remained in close contact throughout his life.

Jack, and his wife, Vivian, raised their three children with similar global aspirations, from attending sessions at the Concordia Language Villages to traveling abroad to hosting exchange students. Most importantly, they both brought their international experience to fostering strong relationships in their home community. Jack was proud of Vivian's role as a Minneapolis park commissioner and embraced wholeheartedly her work with the new citizens of Minneapolis who are integrating into the fabric of this society from all corners of the globe. One of his favorite tasks as a federal magistrate judge was performing naturalization ceremonies.

As we strive for peace in uncertain times, the foundation of international understanding and cooperation is built by those who espouse a worldview of respect, tolerance and justice. We thank and remember Jack Mason for being a peacemaker who had hope in his heart for the world and all its people.

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