

I didn't want to be a burden, said husband in suicide pact

David Brown Chief News Correspondent

A husband accused of murdering his wife in a bungled suicide pact a year after they celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary told police that they had not wanted to be a burden on their family.

Brendan Constant, 87, survived after he "messed up" but insisted that his wife, Jean, 86, was also determined to die, an inquest was told.

He carried out meticulous research into suicide as the couple had pledged to die together if life became "unbear-



Brendan Constant did not wish to live without his wife, Jean

able". Mrs Constant had suffered a stroke weeks earlier and had been prescribed anti-depressants after talking about wanting to die.

The inquest at Huntingdon Town Hall was told that in August last year care staff at an assisted living complex in St Neots, Cambridgeshire, where the couple lived, found a handwritten note taped to their door that read "Do not enter, call the police."

Mrs Constant was found in her wheelchair. She died from asphyxia-

tion. Mr Constant was slumped in an armchair a few feet away. He was charged with murder, and had admitted manslaughter, but died in April after a fall before he could face trial.

He had told police that the couple had decided his wife should die first as she was unlikely to be able to do things herself because of the stroke.

"I loved my wife very much," he told police. "She made it clear that she no longer wished to go on and I assisted her to die. When I was sure she had passed, I planned to take my own life, but the equipment failed. I just wanted to die. I didn't want to live without Jean.

"We just wanted to die with dignity. She was a talented, creative and intelligent woman, my equal in every way."

Before their retirement, Mr Constant was a company director and his wife ran a secondhand pottery shop. Simon Constant, their son, told the inquest that his parents were devoted to one another and did not discuss their health problems. "They were fiercely private people and all decisions were well thought out and made jointly," he said.

Mrs Constant was admitted to hospital in July last year after suffering the stroke. She repeatedly told nursing and physiotherapy staff she "wanted to go" and didn't want to "be any trouble to anyone". She returned to the assisted living complex three days before she died. The inquest was adjourned to wait for the results of toxicology tests.

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