

born into rheumatology. When he returned he developed a small immunology laboratory that lives on to this day and which has generated a lot of our research and doctoral thesis, definitely contributions in different intensities and tenors. He first found his immunologic counterpart in Manolo Ortiz de Landázuri and Paco Sánchez Madrid, and afterwards they formed a group of persons in our department that, after attending to the patients during the morning, would continue the laboratory work the rest of the afternoon. Sixteen-hour days; but that was the way many papers came to be, many graduate thesis and a good number of doctoral thesis. All of this was possible thanks to the vital and scientific impulse of Armando.

His capacity for drawing was famous and used it in all of his activities, sessions, conferences or classes to better explain himself, both in simple as in complex matters, making him a great communicator of science. He impregnated this Department of Rheumatology of the Hospital de la Princesa, where he was everything: resident, attending, acting chief of section, official chief of section, head of the department. I remember clearly both his graduate thesis and his doctoral thesis. His graduate thesis aimed to explain the inflammatory infiltrate that was observed in the portal space of patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). In it he questioned, was there any relationship with rheumatoid inflammation? It was pathology. In his doctoral thesis he continued on the subject of inflammatory infiltrate, also in RA by synovial, and into the picture came Integrins. It was immunology. Those were 2 moments of his career and his scientific though that I enjoyed because during the first one I had still not entered politics and the second one occurred when I had returned. Once Armando was installed in the Hospital de la Princesa, colleagues from all of Spain were discovering what we, who had known him for some years, already knew. They did so through his publications in books, journals or his contributions, and conferences at national and international Congresses. He was elected president of the Spanish Society of Rheumatology (SER) in 1999, and was currently an honorary president. He also presided the National Commission of the Specialty. For 19 years he had been Associate Professor of Rheumatology at the School of Medicine of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

I will not detail his resume; today I only want to browse through some lines of that life, which goes way beyond his professional history, having been also seduced by those infrequent characteristics, so exceptional and that sometimes made him so passionate.

Armando Laffón was for me a person I could refer to in our department, in our fights and our battles, in my leaves of absence, and my returns from politics. When I spoke of rheumatology and of Laffón, I felt him and expressed him as something mine, as he was, both virtuous and with

an intelligent human profile as well as extraordinarily emotive.

Today I can say that these considerations on his person and their meaning to me were transmitted to him 10 months ago on the day of my birthday. Dear Armando, wherever you might be, please know that your colleagues at the Department of Rheumatology of the Princesa, of the complete hospital, of many rheumatology departments in Spain, Mexico, Cuba, many persons, a lot of them your patients, who from different places have called me to express first their pain and then their solidarity, we all loved you and, as your memory lives on, we still love you. Good-bye.

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Manuel Figueroa Pedrosa (1940-2007)

On February 9, Manuel Figueroa Pedrosa passed away in Chihuahua, Mexico at the age of 67. Friends and colleagues that witnessed his sudden departure will never forget those moments and the days that followed. We also won't forget the help and affection we received from our Mexican friends and colleagues, the Executive Committee of the Mexican College of Rheumatology as well as all of the support and total disposition of the President and Directors Board of the SER.

On this note we pretend to briefly profile the life of a man of good will, a good physician and an unforgettable friend.

Dr Manuel Figueroa Pedrosa (1940-2007).

Manuel was born in 1940 in Escairon, Lugo, into a middle class family. His father, a liberal teacher, who came up frequently in our conversations, left a profound impression on him.

After obtaining his title in the School of Medicine of Santiago de Compostela in 1963, in 1964 he left for Venezuela where he worked as a rural physician in several towns on the Llano and the Venezuelan Andes until 1969. This part of his life always had a very special meaning for Manuel. He remembered especially his two and a half year stay at Canaguá, a population in the Andean jungle where, as he often commented, he had the most profound experiences as a physician, because in severe cases, he felt the responsibility and the anguish that the life of the patient depended almost exclusively on his performance. Doubtless, this experience of such profound and humane physician/patient relationship in very precarious conditions that are not known to Spanish medics left a mark in him that decisively contributed to make Manuel the good doctor, in the noblest sense of the word, which we all knew. From 1969 to 1971 he specialized in internal medicine at the Hospital Ruiz y Páez, of Ciudad Bolívar. In 1971 he left for Paris and for almost four year specialized at the Centre de Rhumatologie Viggo Petersen of the Hôpital Lariboisière, under the tutelage of Prof Stanislas de Seze. His training was extensive, having not only the privilege of working in the clinic with such renowned figures such as Prof de Seze, Lequesne, and Kahn, among others, but he carried out rotations in some of the specialty's complementary areas such as the immunology laboratory, the bone metabolism laboratory the bone tissue and cellular research unit, the pathology department and the arthroscopy unit. After the presentation of his thesis, he obtained the degree of Assistant Foreign Physician in the Hospitals of Paris, Faculté de Médecine Lariboisière-Saint Louis. Due to that, at least in the case of the Spanish rheumatologists of his generation, his postgraduate 10-year training, in the most rich and varied human and professional environments, was among the most complete.

In 1974 back in Ciudad Bolívar, he once again worked, this time as a rheumatologist, in the Hospital Ruiz y Páez until 1977. That year he returned to Spain and started his activities at San Sebastián, where he carried out the remainder of his professional activities, initially as head of the Section of Rheumatology of what was then Residencia Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu and afterwards as chief of the Department of Rheumatology of the current Hospital Donostia. In San Sebastián, in spite of always having comparatively modest human means, with his work and dedication he soon became a point of reference in Spanish rheumatology, forming and consolidating a prestigious department due to its clinical excellence, without forgetting, in spite of his limited resources, research activity. Apart from his strictly professional work, Manuel was a person preoccupied with the institutions and convinced

of the necessity of participating in them to give social development an impulse. Because of this he presented himself as a candidate and was elected president of SER. Though his presidency is recent and therefore known to many, we will allow ourselves a recap of some aspects of his administration. He consolidated the economic foundations of SER, whose benefits had been established by the two presidents that preceded him, Pedro Barceló Jr and Eliseo Pascual. This economic consolidation made possible the planning to acquire the first installations of SER on Recoletos street. Having a proper site, with a dedicated and stable human team has no doubt meant a change in quality and has contributed in a decisive manner to the ulterior development and the splendid current state of the SER. Also during his administration, juridical basis for the Spanish Foundation of Rheumatology, that has turned out to be a fundamental instrument for the planning and development of very important initiatives for Spanish rheumatology, known by all, was established.

If we had to choose one virtue of Manuel, his friends and in general everyone who had the good fortune of dealing with him would probably coincide that it was his cordiality and his dialogue-based character. We will always remember his amenable conversations, his paused speech and his conciliatory tone. His friends know that it was this capacity for dialogue and his aversion to confrontation in sterile arguments that most influenced in a decisive manner in what could be thought of as a minor matter, the reform to the statutes of the SER, proposed and accepted under his mandate, but we believe it has had a great relevance on the development of SER during these past few years. This reform changed the mechanics by which a president was elected, until then carried out during the general assembly of SER. The coincidences at the assembly of aspects that were purely social with the election of president left up to the votes of the participants has led in more than one occasion to confrontation and uncomfortable divisions, difficult to understand to most of the members. When the election was reformed into an independent act, with open election lasting all morning, not only did this facilitate and increase the participation of the members, making the president more representative, but also avoided in more than one occasion, sterile confrontation. If all of his other contributions as president of SER had turned out to be insufficient, this by itself would have justified his mandate.

To conclude this professional profile, we will mention that Manuel also was in charge of pre-graduate training of rheumatology as an associate professor of the School of Medicine of the Universidad del País Vasco, was a speaker for the National Commission for the specialty and from 1999 to 2003 was the first editor of *Seminarios de la Fundación Española de Reumatología*, a publication conceived and founded by another unforgettable and

exceptional president of SER, Armando Laffón, whose loss is even more recent than Manuel's, being also felt deeply by us.

Death surprised Manuel at a relatively young age, when he was living a time of plenitude and illusion, thanks to the serenity and happiness he had found in the companion of his last years, Michelle, and the support of his four daughters. We are sure that all of them, from within the pain of their loss, will feel the comfort of the example of

a life dedicated to work and to his peers, as well as the lovely memories that without a doubt they share of a good father and a good partner.

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