

## In Memoriam

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Armando Laffón Roca

I will transcribe to you the words I spoke in a very emotive homage that was carried out by the Rheumatology department of the Hospital Universitario de la Princesa of Madrid and the Spanish Society of Rheumatology (SER) on June 2 in the Salón de Actos of the aforementioned hospital.

“Dear friends, dear Armando. Yes, dear Armando, because to those of us who have a transcendent sense of life, Armando is still with us, in the highest.

I would like to explain to you how this act came to be. Speaking, on the day of the burial, with my dear friend and president elect of SER, Dr Txaro García de Vicuña, we convened that it was necessary to give back, even if only minimally, all of the work and sleepless nights that Armando had suffered for his Rheumatology department and for SER, because both entities owed a permanent debt to him and a memorial service in which his closest friends in rheumatology had to be organized. That is how we planned this emotive and moving service.

I will limit myself to pointing out the aspects of the professional life of Dr Laffón that were more intimately related to the SER, mainly the period in which he was its president. I will tell you, with the permission of our collective memory’s gatekeeper, the current manager Doña Ester Loaces, an anecdote that from my point of view shows the generosity and character of Armando. When he took the reins of the Society, its situation was very different from the current one. There came a time when the SER did not have enough funds in its treasury to pay the salaries of 3 measly workers that we had hired at that moment—let me remind you that currently almost 20 persons work for the SER—Armando started touring the conference and lecture circles like a possessed man, using his speakers fees to pay the employees. Fortunately, this situation did not last long and slowly the economic situation was once again buoyant. Armando transformed the Society. He spearheaded the profound change that the SER has experimented in the past few years. One of the elements that have allowed for the enviable economic solvency that we currently enjoy is the integral organization of the national congress on the part of the SER, an initiative that was initially explored by the previous administration, with a spectacular result; we managed to multiply by a factor of 10 the benefits. The congress started being an annual event instead of biannual. Monographic symposia

were organized successfully. A Research Unit was formed, something that is the pride of the society, with a scientific production that makes it a leader in the research of rheumatology in Spain. In the past few years he was dedicated to his new creation, the official journal of the SER and the Mexican College of Rheumatology, *Reumatología Clínica*—which by his impulse was created—joining the national journals of both organizations and which I hope will soon give fruit in the form of the anxiously awaited indexing. Alas, as I said at the beginning, it can be said that Armando has been a great president. And the SER will always be indebted to him.

On a more personal note I can only say this: that I did not have the good fortune of knowing him much. He ‘left me’ with the responsibility of being a speaker in charge of matters concerning osteoporosis. You all know that one of the good things about SER is that the board of directors is renovated in halves; in this manner continuity is guaranteed and, in some form, makes for softer changes and exploration of new inroads. As I said, so he ‘left me,’ and at the beginning he treated me with a little suspicion. Slowly, when he realized that I was also there, like him, to work we developed a good relationship. Later, the evolution of the society made us have differences, some profound but in spite of this we never, never ceased to have a mutual respect.

I will tell you another brief anecdote referring to Armando. In the last few months of his life he was, as always, leading projects and there was one in which we had strongly opposing views. In a conciliatory mood I decided to talk to him. They had told me that he enjoyed a good meal so I invited him to a famous restaurant in Madrid, managed by a Catalanian star chef. He told me: ‘You know, Josep, being president of the SER will give you many headaches and tribulations, as well as many joyful moments, but the best thing you will do is eat like a priest.’ How right he was! That is what I am starting to look like...

On a final note, the SER has lost a great president, Spanish rheumatology a great rheumatologist, his family a great son, father and husband, and all of us a great friend.

I am sure that he will take care of all of us and for the SER. So that it can continue on the road shown by him and others, so that it may continue being what it is today: a vigorous scientific society, a leader in academics, a leader in research with a notable scientific influence and a necessary economic solvency.

Armando, there where you are, know that your memory will always stay alive between us. Thank you.”