

Dedication to Francesc Pagès (1962–2007)

During the last week of April 2007 our friend Francesc Pagès called us from Plymouth (UK) to explain the preparations for the Hydrozoan Society Workshop that he was organizing for the following July. We can still remember his words so full of allusion, enthusiasm and serenity. It would be another occasion to meet up with all his friends and colleagues whom he appreciated and admired so much. His enthusiasm quite simply infected all of us but it was the last time that we had the chance to listen to him. Only a few days later, on 4 May, he left us suddenly and forever. An unexpected illness ended the life of one of the most honest and enthusiastic professional careers we have ever known. It also left us without a friend, companion and colleague. He was a person who always had such appreciated virtues as sincerity, kindness and strength. In his absence, we have been left with a huge emptiness but we know we have to strive to make sure that his excellent professional endeavours are not forgotten.

Francesc was not the usual sort of student. From the beginning of his university career he was an enthusiast of the natural world and, surprisingly, of the planktonic cnidaria group of organisms. We have still not been able to understand the reasons for such an early vocation but this vocation was nevertheless transformed into an obsession. In fact, before finishing his university studies, he had already taken part in the first study cruises for collecting zooplankton in the Mediterranean and along the coasts of north-west Africa. From the beginning, he was very meticulous in his observation and identification of the species he collected. He almost never gave up studying the whole content of any samples, even when he must have counted hundreds of individuals of any one single species.

Although the Mediterranean was his preferred study area, he soon began his long pilgrimage to all the oceans of the world, and his doctoral thesis was carried out in the waters off Namibia and South Africa. Later he moved to the Alfred Wegener Institute in Germany, where he concentrated his studies on the Antarctic waters. In these waters, he poured a large part of his efforts into defending his opinion that the gelatinous zooplankton had hardly been considered in studies of marine ecology. This idea stayed with him for his entire professional career. Francesc always had a global

integrated vision for the role of the zooplankton in marine ecosystems and this led him to study a wide spectrum of topics, including their taxonomy, evolution, feeding, biological cycles and predation, as well as their relationship with environmental factors. He was a meticulous naturalist as well as a magnificent observer, and almost no detail escaped his attention during the cruises he took part in and the subsequent characterization of the samples.

His scientific trajectory covered all the gelatinous zooplankton organisms and many geographical areas. However, it is worth emphasizing his stay in Japan and his frequent trips to the USA on expeditions with submersibles. He worked with different specialists and finished by being not only their colleague but also a friend. We will always remember his comments full of admiration and affection for people such as J. Bouillón, C. Carré, P. Pugh, H. Verheye, S. Schiel, W. Arntz, F. Kurbjeweit, H. González, S. Kubota, M. White, P. Rodhouse, W. Hamner, W. Graham, M. Youngbluth, P. Flood and D. Lindsay, among many others. Francesc was a deep admirer of his companions and he was always available to talk with everyone, in a manner that effused kindness and respect.

We have lost not only one of the finest specialists in the knowledge, understanding and identification of the planktonic cnidaria, but also a great friend and an irreplaceable colleague. Francesc was one of the best cruise companions we have had. He was committed to and an admirer of the Hydrozoan Society and the work of all his colleagues. He read voraciously and widely, and always explained details to us that he had found interesting in any publication. He was passionate about ancient literature. Although he was an outstanding expert in his own particular field of work, he never stopped being interested in any topic related to the sea. In spite of his youth, he had a profound knowledge of the oceans which he used for explaining its mysteries to us on any occasion, making being in his company an unforgettable experience. Now, we can only follow the trail he blazed and continue learning from his life, his studies and his example.

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