



# Revista Española de Cirugía Ortopédica y Traumatología

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## OBITUARY

### In memoriam Rafael Esteve de Miguel<sup>☆</sup>

Following a long period of illness, Prof. Rafael Esteve de Miguel, former President of the Spanish Society of Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology (1988–1990), passed away in Barcelona on March 20th. He was born in Huesca on March 23rd, 1924, but he lived in Barcelona since his childhood.

Analyzing as well as defining this figure of Orthopedics, as a person, is difficult and almost impossible; I will attempt to do it by describing his various characters.



#### Professional character

He graduated in Medicine and Surgery in 1948, with Extraordinary Honors.

In 1949 he moved to Oxford to work under the tutelage of Prof. Josep Trueta at Wingfield Morris Hospital, which was later renamed Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre.

Upon his return from Oxford, in 1953, he took charge of the Department of Pediatric Orthopedics at San Juan de

Dios Hospital in Barcelona. In 1959 he was appointed Head of Orthopedic Surgery at San Rafael Hospital in Barcelona. These two Services produced a considerable number of highly competent orthopedic surgeons.

In 1958 he read and defended his PhD thesis in Oxford, directed by Professor Trueta and entitled "A study of muscle paralysis, autonomic disorders and nutritional disturbances in poliomyelitis". Years later, this PhD was validated as a doctoral thesis by the Autònoma University of Barcelona.

In 1975 he was appointed Professor of Surgery at the Autònoma University of Barcelona, where he lectured in Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology.

In 1982 he joined the Royal Academy of Medicine of Catalonia as a full member and offered the address "Evolution and current concept of Orthopedics and Traumatology".

He was also President of the Catalan Society of Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology (1969–1971), Member and Chairman of the Girdlestone Society (Nuffield alumni), National Delegate at SICOT (International Society of Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology), President of the Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology Section of UEMS (European Union of Medical Specialists) and Member of the Executive Board of EFORT (European Federation of Orthopaedics and Traumatology).

In 1997 he presided with me the 3rd Congress of EFORT held in Barcelona.

Therefore, we can conclude that his professional character was highly regarded, valued and recognized.

#### His family character

He can be described as loving and is gentle with his wife Lucy, to whom he was fully devoted. The education and welfare of their children Carlos, Luis and Silvia were also a priority for him. Religious but also spiritual, his humanism was more transcendent than immanent.

#### His academic character

He reflected an achiever: a responsible, serious and reliable man. Although his presentations were not adorned by great

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speeches, which ought to be called brilliance, they were imbued with great pragmatism.

### **His daily work character**

He had been elegant and calm, with measured words and judgments. He did not like, or rather despised, gossip, especially when it was idle and gratuitous. He did not embrace new surgical techniques easily; he preferred them to pass what he called "the test of time".

The most surprising aspect of his professional character is that, being a man of few words and even less ostentatious displays of friendship with colleagues, he was so widely respected in Spain and especially abroad: Rafael Esteve

de Miguel was the main Spanish reference, especially in Europe.

Through these different characters I have tried to describe his Person, but it is a difficult task. In our lives we are the sum of our characters, which vary over time and according to the scenery, as described by Tournier.

I believe we could agree with Buffon that "a man himself is his style", or with Ortega that "a man has no nature, but rather history".

Rafael Esteve de Miguel has a great history in Orthopedics and Traumatology and his style in life was enviable.

Thank you, Rafael, for all that we have learned from you. We will miss you.

Antonio Navarro Quilis