

## Editorial

# Dedication to Carmina Virgili

It is for me an honour that the editors of this journal have asked me to describe, in a short space, the main facets of Carmina Virgili. This task is, however, an enormous risk because of the number of virtues Carmina has and, moreover, because I could forget some detail that she would consider essential. I have, therefore, decided to focus on my subjective and personal impression of her professional work based on my relationship with her, which today mounts to over 40 years.

Carmina's work activity, I think, can be summarized as three main lines: teaching, research and politics. Here, I shall outline the first two and will only touch upon certain points of the third; and only those linked to the first two lines.

Carmina was born in her beloved Catalonia on a day in the XX century. This is where she undertook her studies. Already in these early years there were signs emerging of her promise for the future: she was awarded Extraordinary Prize in her Final Baccalaureate Examination (unlike today's version, this consisted of seven years of work plus a final exam of all the subjects covered), Extraordinary Prize in her BSc in Natural Sciences at the Universidad de Barcelona, Extraordinary Prize in her PhD read at the same university, and meanwhile, so as not to waste time, she completed the degree course in Teaching in Tarragona.

With such qualifications it is hardly surprising that Dr. Solé (as she always refers to) picked her out for his research group (or did she perhaps choose him?). It is with Dr. Solé's group that she expanded the teaching of Geology to the whole of Spain, creating the (then) sections of

Oviedo and Granada, and greatly encouraging fieldwork for teaching purposes and a dynamic view of Geology. Other members of this team I should mention were Noel Llopis and José María Fontboté, with Carmina and Oriol Riba as younger collaborators.

During this time, she held several positions at the Universidad de Barcelona: Assistant Lecturer, Associate Intern and finally Associate Lecturer of Physical Geology. Carmina fulfilled these posts alongside her research work as: fellow of the "Lucas Mallada" Institute (Barcelona section), Research Assistant at this centre and finally as Scientific Collaborator of the recently created "Jaime Almera" Institute.

Her teaching and research tasks during the twelve years spent at the Universidad de Barcelona were devoted to Physical Geography and Stratigraphy (newly emerging at this time), especially focussing on the Triassic deposits of the Catalan Range on which she conducted both her first degree dissertation and doctoral thesis.

At the same time, with her investigation group she took the opportunity to prepare the trips performed in Catalonia within the framework of the International INQUA Congress; these were her first steps in the research administration area that were to provide such good results in the future. It was through her subsequent contacts with geologists of other countries and fields of expertise, that she widened her research horizon and was later to transmit this type of collaboration to her students.

In 1963, Carmina's life took a turn when she was awarded the Chair of Stratigraphy at the Universidad de Oviedo.

This move from Barcelona to Asturias meant a huge change in her teaching and research activities along with her social life, both because of the group of friends left behind in Catalonia and the increased responsibility that came with the new post.

Carmina had the extreme fortune of being accompanied by her mother Doña Carmen, whom we all remember with great affection and admiration.

It was in Oviedo that I first met Carmina during a visit with Professor Lecompte to the Devonian of Asturias.

The idea of teamwork, always defended and practised by Carmina, led to the creation of a group of people working on the Asturian Mesozoic, so different to what she had seen in Catalonia, and the start of several doctoral theses both on the Jurassic and Cretaceous, which owing to the shortness of her stay in Oviedo, she completed in Madrid.

Her work in research management within the Spanish Research Council's (CSIC) Applied Geology Institute in Oviedo, was first undertaken as Head of the Stratigraphy section and subsequently as Director of the Institute.

Her transfer through competition to the Universidad Complutense of Madrid in 1968 represented a second change in her teaching duties (number of students, study plans, etc.) and research activities: now she found herself in the surroundings of the Iberian Range, with its magnificent outcrops and a simpler tectonics than in Asturias.

After this transfer as a consequence of the death of Prof. Llopis, she was faced with a Department of Stratigraphy filled with lecturers and large numbers of students, who were writing their first degree dissertations or starting their doctoral theses.

Although part of the teaching staff was transferred to Oviedo, Carmina quickly became organised following the usual strategy: essentially, practical teaching, research conducted in teams and links with firms and other research groups.

Her teaching practice did wonders with her students, attaining what for me are her two main achievements in this area: promoting and generalizing field studies and setting up a faculty library. Both feats she pursued during her stage as Faculty Head, but had been preceded by her routine work with students, which had demonstrated a need for these goals at the faculty level.

Field studies at the faculty level were the result of two endeavours: the first was the purchasing of a bus, to which end she gave up the official car used by faculty heads in those times, proposing that its chauffeur (our beloved Benito) switched to driving the bus; and the second was to obtain from the university rectorate, an annual budget for these practices, which over time became a fixed faculty budget.

Another of Carmina's accomplishments was the common library, which involved bringing together funds from the different departments, finding the appropriate building and providing it with the corresponding funds. At this point we should mention the excellent work from the very beginning of Hortensia, and later on the help of Mariví, in cataloguing, ordering and establishing the rules for the library.

Her research efforts involved the creation and promoting of research teams. These included scientists of different specialities within the field of stratigraphy, related to each other through the age of the materials on which they worked. This work including what today is denoted basin analysis, and was then an important innovation.

The most numerous teams were those focusing on the Triassic, Cretaceous and the Palaeozoic-Precambrian. Although she personally headed the first of these groups, she was always aware of what was going on in the others and willing to help or resolve any problems arising during the course of these investigations.

I consider this stage of Carmina's life in Madrid as the most intense in terms of research, as one of growth within the scientific community and the most prolific in results, always achieved along with her group, as she constantly specifies.

Some of the outcomes of this work are the stratigraphy of the Triassic deposits of the Iberian Range, their correlations and facies changes, comparisons with data from the Catalan Range, and the discovery, study and tectonic-sedimentary relationships of the Permian in the Iberian Range at its connection with the Central System.

Although it is often said that the goal of the life of an investigator is not to exhaust a topic but rather to take a step forward in its understanding, we would have to admit that the size of the step taken by Carmina and her team in improving our current knowledge of the Permian and Triassic sedimentary basins in the centre and east of the Iberian Peninsula, is considerable.

Among these results, drastically summarized for this description, I would highlight that she has written over one hundred scientific articles for Spanish and international journals and is the author of several books.

Carmina has received numerous prizes and awards such as the "Great Cross of the Civil Order of Alfonso X" and "Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honour" of France. Among the scientific posts held not mentioned so far we find: Vice-president of the Geological Society of France, President of the International Subcommission of the Stratigraphy of the Triassic of the IUGS, Member of the Management Council of the UNESCO's International Geological Correlation Programme, Board President of

Madrid's Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, etc.

All these awards and posts were obtained by Carmina exclusively through her hard work, scientific knowledge, management skills and endless effort.

Her return to Barcelona after her stay at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, enabled her to readdress topics of research that she had worked on at the start of her scientific career and, above all, to analyse the history of science, with special emphasis on Geology, by publishing a series of articles and books on persons whose work has marked the development of geological knowledge. This project did in no way interrupt her ongoing work on the problems of studying the Permian, which gave rise to an excellent dissertation as her entrance speech to the Academy of Sciences of Barcelona, an act in which her personal contribution to research in general and to geology in particular was recognized.

And alongside her research work and teaching and management activities, we encounter yet another facet of Carmina's professional work: her political activity.

For me, without a doubt, the fact that she accepted the post of Secretary of State for Universities and Research, falls within the framework of her attitude towards life and especially was consistent with her commitment to the

management and development of university teaching and scientific research.

As a product of these actions, I would have to mention the creation of the Laws of Universities and Science, which despite its critics has represented a milestone in the activity of both fields.

Finally, I cannot end this piece without again remembering a person who constantly appears in the life of Carmina: her mother, Doña Carmen Rodón, who accompanied her from her field work for her doctoral thesis to her arrival at the Ministry.

All who have had the fortune of knowing Doña Carmen, have an indelible picture of her. Her intelligence, her composure, her wise advice, her moderate outlook on life and a long list of personal values have come together in the minds of all of us who knew both the mother and daughter, to form a tangle of inseparable memories.

I would like to conclude this informal note by recalling a typical phrase Carmina uses before she approaches someone: "oye guapito/a...." (very loosely translatable as "hey handsome..."). This introduction is always followed by a long pause that could even be awkward but that has not prevented so many of us to continue to love and admire her.

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