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Obituary

Professor Juan de Dios López-González (1924–2015)



Juan de Dios López-González passed away May 28th 2015 at his home in Granada, Spain, following a very short illness. He was 90 years old.

He got his BSc in Chemistry at the University of Granada in 1947 and a Ph.D. also in Chemistry in 1949 at the University of Madrid. He was a pioneer in travelling abroad for postdoctoral work and performed research at the National Bureau of Standards in Washington DC during 1950–1952, which was followed by short return visits in 1954 and 1959. He worked there under the supervision of Dr. Victor Deitz, who inspired him and had a strong influence on his scientific career. He also did research at the University of California in Berkeley during 1957–1959. After these stays in the USA he came back to Spain with twin sons (Carlos and Juan de Dios) and many ideas to start new lines of research.

After his return to Spain he was named Professor of Inorganic Chemistry in Granada in 1960, where he started a very prolific research career in different research areas related to the surface chemistry of materials, very much inspired by Dr. Deitz at the National Bureau of Standards. His research

mainly focused on adsorption and catalysis, and somewhat later he had a successful research career in coordination chemistry, an area of research well established in other Spanish universities. He worked at the University of Granada for 21 years, where he became Dean of the School of Sciences and later Rector (President) of the University for the period 1972–1976. In 1981 he moved to be Chair of Inorganic Chemistry at UNED in Madrid, where he stayed until retirement in 1989; however, he remained there for some years as Emeritus Professor. In 1999 he was named Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Granada to acknowledge the important role he played during his career from student to professor, to Dean and Rector of the University. He returned to Granada and relatively soon suffered the death of his wife Aurora in 2000. He has since lived there surrounded by his daughter, three sons, nine grandchildren and one great-grandson.

López-González had a very rich scientific career, having supervised over eighty Ph.D. students and published more than three hundreds papers, but more important was his creation of the “School of Granada” in inorganic chemistry. He was an excellent leader, able to take care of all his Ph.D. students and selecting those he considered best to lead the different research areas of his group. As a result more than forty of his disciples were, or are, professors at different Spanish universities, and many of them have been able to create large and important research groups, mainly devoted to carbon materials, which have acquired a high international reputation.

The Spanish Carbon Group and the Iberian Adsorption Group owe almost all of their early development to López-González, since he initiated at Granada in 1960 a very prolific career in carbon research and applications in adsorption. His students in turn organized carbon research in well known centers of excellence such as Alicante, Granada, Madrid, etc. and made the Spanish Carbon Group (GEC) an internationally acknowledged research association. The Spanish Carbon Group acknowledged his enormous contribution to the foundation and growth of carbon science in Spain by giving him the first GEC Award after the delivery of his Plenary Lecture on “Carbon as Catalyst and Catalyst Support” at Carbon’94 in Granada (incidentally I remember the joy of the meeting of López-González and Deitz when the latter came to

Granada for Carbon'94 after few years without seeing each other). The Iberian Adsorption Group has recently promoted the López-González Award for the best Iberian Ph.D. Thesis in the area of adsorption.

The legacy of Prof. López-González is immense. The fact that during his more than sixty years devoted to teaching and research he was able to place over forty pupils in academic positions in Spain, and that some of them have been extremely successful in developing carbon science in Spain, is simply the realisation of his vision in the late fifties of what the future of this field could be. His lifetime's effort was to reach this objective and his legacy will remain for generations.

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