IN MEMORIAM

Jean Puget, 1946–2013

Professor Jean Puget, born on 26 January 1946, died on Saturday August 3, 2013 at 67 years of age. He was head of the Orthopaedics and Traumatology Department of the Rangueil Teaching Hospital in Toulouse, France; head of the Regional Musculo-Skeletal Research and Clinical-Management Network; President of the French College of Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgeons; president of the Société Française de Chirurgie Orthopédique et Traumatologique (SOFCOT); and, at the end of his life, a member of the EFORT board. His funeral was held on 7 August 2013 at the Saint-Étienne cathedral in Toulouse and was attended by his family and very large number of friends and admirers.

Jean, we have been working together since 1975, 38 years ago. We have shared painful losses (the premature deaths of our mentor Guy Uthéza and of your uncle Paul Bessou) and uplifting successes (the international HIP meeting). We had our disagreements, which we always resolved, thus developing ties that were stronger than friendship, indestructible ties for now and forever, ties forged of respect and fondness.

You were endowed with a bright and creative mind, a passionate and dynamic approach to life, aesthetic sensibilities, humour, and a non-conformist outlook.

You were intelligent enough to choose your mentor wisely: Guy Uthéza guided you towards the intellectual aspect of our specialty and passed his culture on to you, while giving you the freedom to act and to grow. You rapidly became a skilled and accurate surgeon with a strong awareness of ergonomics and a focus on finding solutions for unresolved problems. In the 1970s, you developed innovative techniques for traumatology, pelvic surgery, and limb re-implantation. In the 1980s, you were among the pioneers of revision surgery for hip prosthesis loosening and of reconstructive surgery after pelvic tumour resection. The techniques we use today are merely the practical application of principles that you had already argued for.

You liked to teach. You were well aware that what matters is not what we teach but what the students take home from our classes. Your classes were contemporary, rich in images, original, and of a nature to arouse curiosity. You were always available to your students and you put them at ease, showing a greater youthfulness of mind than did many of them. Your office was open until late to any who was willing to push the door open.

You were a faculty member who believed in the school concept. You contributed directly to train 34 students who became surgeons. Similar to Georges Rieuneau, you were a fellow at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester at the beginning of your training, although international training was not a requirement at the time. You found it great fun every year to make a different speech when awarding the Rieuneau prize. You were extremely sensitive to the professional achievements of the students of the department. During meetings, even after retiring, you steadfastly supported the speakers from the department by paying close attention to their communications.

You carried out major roles in the hospital and university, as head of a hospital department, head of a research and clinical-management network, president of the French College of Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgeons and SOFCOT, and member of the EFORT ethics committee board. Rather than focussing on accumulating credit, you believed that by acquiring intimate familiarity with the workings of large
institutions you could simplify them and infuse them with common sense, humanity, and ethics. You probably would have needed a bit more time. In the hospital, your talent for organisation became clear as you went from the Hôtel-Dieu to Purpan then from Purpan to Rangueil, and you would have liked to participate in the adventure consisting in creating the new Riquet Hospital. You could have been an architect combining beauty and functionality. You frequently scrutinised the blueprints for the Riquet Hospital; we are indebted to you for the operating room arrangement in a single row on the same floor, which optimises resource centralisation. However, you gave pride of place not to the buildings, but to the human component: throughout your career, you were close to your staff and there is a good reason our anaesthesiologists were also our friends. You were well liked by our administrative executives and directors. You contributed to harmonise the relationships among the various teams of orthopaedic and trauma surgery for adults and children, to ensure that their joint meetings would be both productive and pleasant.

You hadn’t really retired! While working as a consultant, you sought to improve relationships among physicians by setting up a modern and secure e-mail system, which rapidly became indispensable to us. You would have been a mediator at the hospital during the years to come... With Jean-Louis Tricoire, you were preparing to write a book on the history of orthopaedic surgery over the ages.

I have received many e-mails from our colleagues throughout the world highlighting your valuable contributions, not only to orthopaedic surgery, but also to each of them personally.

Jean: you seemed to be content and serene lately, ready to assume the role of a sage, and that made me happy. You were filled with love and pride for your family, Nanou, Anne, and Bertrand; worried and happy for Pierre; and you were waiting for your grand-children to grow up a little before teaching them not to be too sensible. Jean, I already miss you and I will always miss you, like the older brother I never had. All the staff of the departments, the surgeons and anaesthesiologists, and your former students share the grief that envelops your family and friends.

Adieu Jean.

P. Chiron
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