

On 9 July, Alfonso López Arroyo, who in 2008 had been presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by this Foundation for his scientific work, died at the age of almost 91 years.

It is difficult for me to look back at the human and scientific achievements of such a dear friend, who supervised my first tentative steps in seismological studies, without feeling an immense sense of loss that began so sadly several years before his passing this summer. I will repeat here the words that I dedicated to him in person on the awarding of the recognition as they represent what was then – and still is – my vision of this extraordinary person.

“I hope that these words that I’m going to pronounce as President, designed to highlight the figure of the object of this award, will also be those of a long-standing friend and, above all, a pupil who you guided for so many years.

“Alfonso, allow me first of all to recall the days when you were a researcher who I would meet at the congresses of the European Seismological Commission, of which at the beginning of the 1970s you were the Vice-President along with our friend Vit Karnik. There, often in the countries that were then behind the Iron Curtain, as it was called in those days, you would comment how you had to struggle with the paltry means at your disposal to ensure some kind of balance in the difficult distribution of the meagre funds available for research and for travel. I realised then that behind that apparent fragility there was a tenacious researcher who was, above all, a good friend to all of us.

“Your professional career continues – for you don’t seem to have stopped working since you ‘retired’ over 15 years ago – to be one of great vitality and wide-reaching in terms of the different fields of seismology in which you have worked. You began back in the 1950s at Saint Louis University working on fault activity with the pioneer in American seismological studies, Fr. Macelwane. Subsequently, you studied Rheology with Markus Bath at Uppsala University in the mid-1960s and seismicity and seismotectonics in the 1970s, before ending your work as an administrator by gravitating towards the world of seismic engineering. You were one of the pioneers of this field, which has so many technological applications and implications for modern-day society. And, with you as the President of the Spanish Association of Seismic Engineering, the X World Congress on Seismic Engineering was held in Madrid in 1992, which was a great success for Spain and an important factor in the upsurge of this field of engineering in our country.

“All of your multi-faceted work was carried out from within the National Geographical Institute. Indeed, the year 2006 marks the sixtieth anniversary of your admission into the body of geographical engineers, where you worked first as the Director of the Malaga Observatory and then, once in Madrid, in the management of the Seismologic and Geophysical Service as General Sub-director of Geodesy and Geophysics.

“I apologise if during this rapid review of your research career I have unwittingly omitted any of the multiple posts that you have held — details can all be found in the minutes of the congresses you attended and in the most important seismological journals. My aim here is, nevertheless, to approach Alfonso López Arroyo as a person, that is, from the point of view of the friendship we share.

“I could not finish without mentioning Pili, your loving wife and friend, who encouraged you and all of us so often, and who helped by writing up reports, field work and

pronouncing words of inspiration when research was almost a dirty word in many Spanish institutions and a far less worthwhile activity than it is today.

“So, I finish with words of gratitude for all your time and efforts, and for your contributions to geophysics in general.

Many thanks, Alfonso!”

We would like to express our gratitude to his three children Pilar, Alfonso, Arturo and to his brother Manuel for the time he devoted to all of us who enjoyed his friendship and wisdom. We feel today very sad of his loss.

Julio Mezcua Rodríguez

President of Fundación J. García Siñeriz