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Félix César Descalzo Gómez
(Barcelona, 1960 - Zaragoza, 2017)

On 5 August 2017, Félix Descalzo, our dear friend and the cook of the R/V *García del Cid*, passed away unexpectedly, shortly after an early retirement to take care of his family. His death shocked not only his beloved ones but also the many of us who shared with him parts of our lives at sea.

Félix started the degrees in Biology and Nautical Studies—which he never finished—while working in the Spanish Post Office from the age of 18. In 1991, he embarked as assistant cook on the R/V *García del Cid* and completed a correspondence course of initiation in Oceanography. In 2007 he was appointed ship's cook, thus somehow fulfilling a dream, because from a very early age he had thought that something deep in himself would come to the surface when he was at sea, doing freediving, sailing, or living in an oceanographic vessel.

He was a good friend and an honest man with firm convictions and a sensitivity for beauty and justice. He had a critical vision of society that he would express

sharply but respectfully. He was more than a creative cook who took care of our food during the endless days of work. He was always very interested in the research work that was done on board, on the deck, under the microscope or on the CTD screen. Passionate about nature, he spent hours of his free time chatting with scientists or looking through the binoculars on the bow. He wrote a diary in the form of a blog, where he communicated about life and science on board. In his own words, “We are seamen, not educators, but we love what we do, and that is the first foundation for transmitting knowledge: love and passion.”

In the very short time he had after retirement, Félix participated as a volunteer in bird watching campaigns of the Spanish Ornithology Society and in the removal of invasive clams on the Ebro Delta. We often think unjustly of seamen as lonely and isolated people, but Félix was a person committed to the world.

In one of his last entries in the diary, he wrote: “From the very moment a scientific project is set up

on the *García del Cid*, I feel myself—humbly but intensely—part of the project. But at the end of the day I'm just a cook (...). When I'm not in the galley I go to the outer deck, to stare at a sea to which I feel united in a complex way. It is not much more than the pleasure of looking over the sea to the horizon or following the journey of a wave as if it could be recognized from one shore to another; the ear hearing its whisper in the calm or the thunderous roar of the storm; the smell perceiving the spray of the sea in the air, depositing salt

to the touch; the salty taste on my face while my feet almost lose contact with the deck as the ship rushes into the next wave... I try hard to retain these sensations to treasure them for times of scarcity.”

Thank you, Félix, for sharing your personal view of the sea and, above all, for your recipes for life.

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