

## Epilogue

As a lover of history and an outsider to Spanish culture, history, and politics, I have thoroughly enjoyed collecting information on the Spanish Civil War. The war depleted the resources of Spain, which led the country to another period of neutrality in the second World War. That war ended with Spain isolated by its Fascist dictatorship from the rest of Europe and the world. In 1953, Spain was able to join the United Nations and resume diplomatic relations with other European and American states. Religious freedom for Jews, Protestants, and other non-Catholics was established in the law in 1967. Franco slowly loosened his autocratic rule by declaring Don Juan Carlos his heir in 1969. Much has changed in the 64 years since the Spanish Civil War. Spanish contributions to art, science, and medicine have been recognized; the country is politically stable, especially in comparison to the political turmoil in the Balkans, the Middle East, and in Africa.

As I listened to Dr. Ponseti, I found that I could identify with some of the nuanced complexities of being involved in an unpopular war. My own military experience in a different unpopular conflict spanned two years of the Vietnam War, from 1967 to 1969. Like some other young people, I was able to rationalize being inducted into military service because as a medical officer we would be able to save lives. My military experience took place entirely within the continental United States so I never faced an adversary who was trying to kill me. Other young people of my generation left the country for Canada, joined the National Guard, or obtained medical discharges to avoid military confrontation. We did not face the bullets, shrapnel, or accidents that maimed people in Vietnam, in Spain, and in so many other sites around the world and across time. And I never faced having to emigrate from my native country for what I believed, or having to start an entirely new life in a completely different place. Dr. Ponseti's openness and understanding of the reasons for and exigencies of social change both in Europe, his native Catalonia, Spain, and other regions of the world is profound. He has a sensitive appreciation for struggling nations such as Iraq. He understands, from his own firsthand experience, the destructive nature of war. As a physician devoting his life to the betterment of humanity, he has found it difficult to witness the destructive nature of war, not only in terms of individual casualties, but in the dismemberment of the social fabric of a culture as well.

Perhaps one of the most interesting threads in Dr. Ponseti's story is how easily he found a new and hospitable community in which he could set down roots, adapting to life first in Mexico and then in the United States. Separated from home, country, family, and friends, he has valued

deeply whatever he finds, wherever he is. This ability to adapt is a precious gift that he shares with others. He has created a community in Iowa City, and it has flourished around this gentle, gregarious man. Dr. Ponseti has also maintained ties with his native Majorca and Barcelona, returning with his wife each winter to that sunny climate.

It has been an inspiring opportunity to interview Dr. Ponseti and to listen as he reviewed and reflected upon the varied chapters in his life. As a biologic physician scientist he is proud of the advancement of basic biochemical mechanisms manifest in his connective tissue research. He is flattered by the recognition of people outside his field who admire his basic research effort. He appreciates the great strides medicine has made in understanding molecular mechanisms of connective tissue disease.

But he clearly believes that most people will remember him for his contributions to the children with clubfoot deformity. He loves these little ones who respond to his gentle manipulations and expertise in orthopedic casting. And he constantly encourages his many colleagues, doctors, nurses, brace and shoe construction personnel to innovate and improve the conditions for healing of these children. Above all, he loves people—his students, colleagues, fellow workers, and all the wonderful parents and patients with whom he comes in contact.

Ignacio Ponseti is a true renaissance man, someone with a deep and wide-ranging appreciation of music, art, literature, science, the biological wonder of life, as well as the abstractions such as freedom of thought and inquiry. He has contributed immensely to the improvement of the society in which he lives and those who have benefited are grateful for that. Unwittingly, Spain contributed one of its most gentle, faithful sons to the United States. We have attempted—in only a very small way—to repay him by sharing his inspiring story.