

# Francisco Albert-Vidal, from Pinoso

*“He always did this thing, when he was introduced, they’d say, “Mr. Albert Vidal, President, from Spain,” and he’d say “From Pinoso, Alicante!” He had a great deal of love for his town”<sup>1</sup>*



Magdalena and “Quico” (Francisco’s nickname)’s son, Francisco Albert Vidal was born in Pinoso, the 14<sup>th</sup> July 1917.

He was the older of 3 siblings. Two boys: José Luis and Julio (who passes away when 21 years old), and a girl: Josefa.

After the primary School, when he was 9 years old, his father, who worked as blacksmith making windows bars, tables, chairs... sent him to a seminary in a next town, Orihuela.

He didn’t like that school nor the religious studies, despite along his life he was deeply believer and devout, and came back home.

In Pinoso, he carried on the baccalaureate and became the president of “Catholic Action”<sup>2</sup> in the town.

He started to study Law at the Alicante University, but the beginning of the Civil War interrupted his studies.

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<sup>1</sup> José Rubio, Oral History, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Catholic Action was the name of many groups of lay Catholics who were attempting to encourage a Catholic influence on society

# The war years

*“...she insisted and insisted as much that the guards finally used to let her go in, and they used to tell her: “you are who should be in prison instead your husband!”*”

During the Civil War, Francisco and his father were incarcerated in the Alicante Prison, the same where José Antonio Primo de Rivera<sup>3</sup> was. The only reason to be arrested was to be the President of “Catholic Action”. Those were a chaotic time for everyone in Spain.

His family still remembers how his mother, Magdalena, a woman with fun, strong and persistent personality, visited them often despite the difficulties at time. She used to wake up early in the morning, went to the road and wait until some cart stopped and could bring her to Alicante, around 60 km far away.

She used to bring some food, a just made knitted pullover... As the visits to the prisoners weren’t usual and weren’t allowed, she insisted and insisted as much that the guards finally used to let her go in, and they used to tell her: “you are who should be in prison instead your husband!”

During those years in prison, Francisco was sent to work on the Almaden mine for some time, coming back to the Alicante Prison.

They were war years and his family drive apart, he and his father in prison and José Luis, his brother, fighting at the front.

Some weeks before the war end up, Francisco run away from prison with a support of a friend and came back to Pinoso by walking (about 60 km). He stayed hidden in a house until the war was officially ended up.

After that, Francisco passed a civil service exam and started to work at the City Hall of Elda, close to Pinoso. He married Maria, his girlfriend since years ago, and their first daughter, María Francisca, was born in Elda (4th October 1943).

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<sup>3</sup> José Antonio Primo de Rivera was the founder, in 1933, of “Falange Española”, fascist inspiration organization which later, merged with a similar one, became in the single political party during the FrancoismHistory, 2019

# At the “Virgen de La Paloma” VET School



In 1946, Diómedes Palencia, friend from Pinoso and Principal at the “Virgen de La Paloma” VET School in Madrid, proposed him to move to Madrid and work with him as Secretary of the School. He accepted and moved with the family to Madrid. At the School he took care of the Human Resources and facilities management.

In 1947 the “Frente de Juventudes” started to organize the VET competitions at the “Virgen de la Paloma” VET School.

Among other responsibilities, Francisco Albert-Vidal was involved on its organization since those first competitions and he was getting more and more involved until become the Secretary of the Organizer Committee for the International VET Competitions, as we can see on the documents since 1953.

*“When the time came for his wife to give birth for the second time, the doctors recommended she did so at their home at the training college. And ever since, María Ángeles, as she was christened, has always been called “Paloma”, in recognition of her birthplace”<sup>4</sup>*



In those years, his family grew up: his daughter María de los Ángeles was born in 1950 (23rd March), and María Remedios in 1956 (12th February).

The Albert-Vidal family lived in one of the school’s buildings, the same that part of the staff: the principal, two of the janitors<sup>5</sup>, the doorman, the head teacher, and the Physical Education teacher. They used to cross the common use stairs to go home so they were always involved at the school environment and youthful atmosphere.

From the 50’s, he was been strongly linked to the international VET competitions. Until the 80’s, he headed the Secretariat of the International Committee together with his team: Capdepón, Maruja López y Martínez.

On the 60’s, for some while, her daughter Paloma helped them at the Secretariat and once she left, Ana de la Cerda replaced her.

<sup>4</sup> <https://worldskills.org/media/news/daughters-worldskills-founder-albert-vidal-arrive-kazan-closing-ceremony/>

<sup>5</sup> One of them was the Rocío Durcal’s grandfather, a well-known Spanish singer who also lived at the “Virgen de La Paloma”



## Quite a character!<sup>6</sup>

Everyone who has told us about him pointed out his punctuality, what was clashing with the reputation of the Spanish team. Francisco Albert-Vidal was always the first to arrive to an appointment or meeting, even just arrived after hours trip, or after being working the whole night.

Also, they mark out his skill as speaker, his perseverance and his power of conviction (this, maybe, heritage from his mother). They remember how he was able to go through a conversation for hours, how he looked after the competition and his ideals in favour the young VET students... adding to this his unconditional love for the VET competitions, his involvement allowed to overcome very critical moments.

His daughters, M<sup>a</sup> Francisca, M<sup>a</sup> Remedios y Paloma (M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles) remember him always busy, working with his secretaries even at home during the weekends, and that was the normal, nothing special. And always passionate by VET and the competitions, he liked it, his job, and he really believed on the importance of the young people and their training and education. All that was part of him his whole life<sup>7</sup>.

They never felt their father far away, despite his job and life, he was always there for them. His daughters remember him like an understanding and loving father, happy to integrate his family in what was his job and his passion at the same time and make them to feel part of that.

<sup>6</sup> Manuel Valentín-Gamazo", Oral history, (Madrid, 2019). (WSI\_1008). "Albert was quite a character; he was a great public relation and earned the confidence of every participating country. Every one of them trusted him. He had a few run-ins with some short-tempered dignitaries, but if they squabbled, afterwards they would go off for a drink and everything would be smoothed over quickly".

<sup>7</sup> M<sup>a</sup> Francisca Albert Vidal, during the Interview to M<sup>a</sup> Francisca, M<sup>a</sup> Remedios and Paloma (M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles) Albert Vidal, by Nuria Portland, 27th December 2019

# Team work

*“She never minded about the later meetings... the protocols requirements... in this way she also was part of my father’s job, and responsible for the success too, they really were a team”<sup>8</sup>*



Francisco Albert-Vidal’s wife is also fondly remembered because of her unconditional support to her husband and specially to the young competitors who she took care like to her kids. In José Rubio’s word, “she used to take care of us as if she were our mam during the competitio<sup>9</sup>”

Both, Paco and María, liked to meet people, every kind of people, without distinctions. Maria started to travel with Francisco of course to support him but specially because Francisco was a very bad eater, and she wanted to be sure that he was eating well during his trips. But at the end of the day, in the same way she was taking care of Francisco, she was taking care of everyone in the team.

“I remember my mother like a self-improvement story, naturally smart because she didn’t go the school more than the first live years. From a small village, she knew how to adapt herself to a new live, meet new people totally different to her, travel abroad, deal with protocols due to her husband position, and she was always able to behave accordingly... This kind of intelligence I mean... She was the perfect partner to my father<sup>10</sup>”

<sup>8</sup> Paloma (M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles) Albert Vidal, during the Interview to M<sup>a</sup> Francisca, M<sup>a</sup> Remedios and Paloma (M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles) Albert Vidal, by Nuria Portland, 27th December 2019

<sup>9</sup> “Pepe Rubio”, Oral history, (Madrid, 2019). (WSL\_1085)

<sup>10</sup> M<sup>a</sup> Francisca Albert Vidal, during the Interview to M<sup>a</sup> Francisca, M<sup>a</sup> Remedios and Paloma (M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles) Albert Vidal, by Nuria Portland, 27th December 2019



# When Spain lost interest in VET competitions



Between 1976 and 1979, during the years of political transition, the Spanish Government showed no interest in organizing VET competitions... or even in participating in them. It continued to provide funding for the International Secretariat and the Spanish National Committee, which were incorporated into the Ministry of Culture, but it showed no further interest in these activities.

Francisco Albert-Vidal<sup>11</sup>, then-chair of the International Organization, kept the activities alive and tried by all means to redirect the situation. But these were times where Spain had many things to deal with, and the government did not deem it relevant to respond to his request.

At the end of 1982, the International Secretariat and the Spanish Committee officially requested the Ministry of Culture, through Dirección General de la Juventud, which they were a part of, to position itself with respect to the competitions and to confirm whether it was interested in these activities or not. The answer was negative and the International Secretariat, housed in Spain for 33 uninterrupted years, was, "much to the chagrin of the Members<sup>12</sup>" moved to Switzerland.

As of 1983, National Competitions are not organized in Spain<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Vidal was Secretary of the Organizational Committee since its creation in 1953, and President since 1985 to 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Albert, "Antecedentes referidos a los concursos nacionales ...". (WSI\_0879)

<sup>13</sup> Juan Ángel Gato, "Historia de las competiciones".



*“We were worried, well... But “Don Albert”, who was twice my age and had twice my experience and knowledge, visited the Provincial Council, everywhere...He managed to double the money we needed to go to Birmingham, which for me was the point at which... Sometimes, when I’ve gone to competitions and I’ve felt a little down, I always think of him and say to myself “Think like Albert!” because you have to pull through. And it was wonderful to see how he solved it.”<sup>15</sup>*

Despite that, with no institutional support but with a strong will, passion and motivation, Tjerk Dusseldorp<sup>14</sup> remembers how Albert Vidal (and his wife) of course came to preside over the “88 Skill Olympics” in Sydney, and they brought one or two competitor with them to have Spain represented in the Competition.

Also, Francisco Albert-Vidal got that a small Spanish team (specifically from Valencia), participated at the international competitions at 1989 (Birmingham) and 1991 (Amsterdam).

<sup>14</sup> Tjerk Dusseldorp’s comments over a chat, December 2019.

<sup>15</sup> “José Rubio, Oral History” (Madrid, 2019) (WSI\_1085)



# Coming back to Pinoso

*“He enjoyed his life, he liked his job and instilled to the 3 of us that way to enjoy the moment. We look like him, the motivation he always transmitted...”<sup>18</sup>*

Shortly after his retirement, he fell sick. Their daughters remember that the competition was in his mind until almost his last moment of life. With the pain of the Spanish withdrawal but also with the satisfaction to see how the organization kept growing. Once week before he passed away, Daniel Sommer visited him with the regards from every member representative.

Francisco Albert-Vidal was buried the 25th October 1993 in Pinoso, his loved hometown. Among hundreds of people, Cees Beuk, President of the organization at that time, went to Pinoso to say the final goodbye to Paco.

“His nephews, Juan Manuel Albert Vidal, and I realized that, somehow, the town had to acknowledge his achievements; so, I remember we started in 2013, we prepared a file with all the clippings and documentation referring to Albert Vidal, to the person he was and how he was; and, finally, by unanimous decision of Pinoso City Hall , in March 2015, Mr. Francisco Albert Vidal was appointed “Hijo Predilecto<sup>16</sup>” de Pinoso.<sup>17</sup>”

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<sup>16</sup> The “Hijo Predilecto” title is an honorary title towns and cities give to people born in them who have gone on to accomplish great deeds for the town and which have attained indisputable consideration in the public sphere.

<sup>17</sup> “José Rubio, Oral History” (Madrid, 2019) (WSI\_1085)

<sup>18</sup> Paloma Albert Vidal, during the Interview to M<sup>a</sup> Francisca, M<sup>a</sup> Remedios and Paloma (M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles) Albert Vidal, by Nuria Portland, 27th December 2019