

Andrés Martínez Jiménez-Balaguer

Champion, Fitting, International VET Competition 1958, Brussels

Notes from conversation over the phone, 5th May 2021

Andrés was born on 21st April 1941 in Cartagena. His father was a polisher at Bazán Company in Cartagena.

"At that time, furniture was made in the carpentry workshop and then polished in the polishing workshop, he was the head of the polishing workshop"

He grew up in the Santa Lucía neighbourhood, a typical fishermen's neighbourhood in this Murcian city, although soon, when he was 5 or 6 years old, the family moved to the Cuatro Santos neighbourhood, where he first went to school and then to an academy to prepare for the entrance exam to the Bazán Apprentices School¹.

He passed the exam without much trouble and was among the best qualified, so he was able to choose a speciality.

"In order of exam numbering, they gave you your mark and the first ones chose electricity and then machine fitting, lathe... mechanical specialities... and the last ones had to go to dirtier specialities, such as sheet metal, foundry..."

The training consisted of 2 years in fitting practices and another 2 years in mechanical workshop, but Andrés, as he started right away with the vocational training competitions and that required training, he spent 4 years in the fitting apprentices' workshop in the mornings and in the afternoons, he practiced in draughting and technical drawing.

"I was drawing up plans and then when the Daphne submarine office was set up, they took people for the submarine office, which later became the Spanish Oceanographic Research Vessel, and they took me on. That's where I made my professional career"

Andrés started by competing in the apprentices' school, then in the regional and national competitions, and finally he took part in the international competition held in Brussels in 1958, in the skill of fitting.

He recalls with emotion this experience, which for a 17-year-old who had not travelled before was a real adventure.

"Days before going to Madrid, I didn't sleep, I was 17 years old, I was sick with nerves, it was an exciting adventure. To go with two suitcases here and there, because you had to take your heavy tools as well as your clothes, that was a real challenge!"

I travelled by train from Cartagena to Madrid. There they had to arrange my papers, my visa, because I hadn't had time to do it before leaving. And after a few days in Madrid, we travelled by bus, an old one, which attracted attention, and we visited some cities in our way to Brussels: San Sebastián, Bordeaux, Orleans, Paris,

Germany and Belgium before arriving in Brussels. I remember that in one of them, in Germany, we arrived in the early hours of the morning, and as the hotel didn't have the rooms ready, we slept that night on improvised beds on the kitchen floor.

¹ The Bazán Cartagena Apprentices School was created in 1925. Until its closure in 1996, three thousand students passed through its classrooms, providing the necessary manpower for the construction of warships, submarines, merchant ships, engines, naval repairs, etc. A school linked to a company that continued the Arsenal built during the 18th century by the Bourbons, although it changed its name according to the times. Between 1909 and 1940 it was called "Sociedad Española de Construcción Naval" (Spanish Shipbuilding Company), a period in which it was privatised. The School was created during this period, in which the English shareholders of the Vickers, Armstrong and Brown houses played a major role. After the Civil War, it became a public company again, under the name of "Consejo Ordenador de Construcciones Navales Militares", what called for the construction of a second Technical School, which was transferred in 1947 to the recently created "Empresa Nacional Bazán de Construcciones Navales Militares".

In another city we couldn't all fit in the same hotel and we were divided into two, a few of us were left in the first one and the group coordinator went with the others to the other hotel, and soon they threw us out because the rooms weren't paid for, so we stayed there, sheltered by the entrance of a shop, all night raining.

I also remember that a couple of newlyweds came with us, the daughter of the group coordinator and her husband, who spent their honeymoon with us...

The truth is that they took us to many places. In Brussels, apart from the competition, they took us to a show in a theatre inside the Expo site. A flamenco dancer, Mariemma² I think, was performing. And in Ghent we were also invited to a Russian folklore song and dance show.

It was exhausting, there were excursions where I fell asleep in the aisle of the bus, the beatings were tremendous."


In 1958, the competition was organised for the first-time outside Spain. Andrés later knew that the winners of the 1959 competition in Modena (Italy) were given a Vespa, but in Brussels they were only given the trophy, which they still have, and a certificate.

"I think they also gave us some money. Well, and the company paid us a daily allowance which, if you saved it, about 150 pesetas³ a day, then in the end you had something"

And, despite some setbacks, Andrés was the winner of fitting skill competition.

"They gave me the material to make the piece, which was made up of two parts: male and female. When I took the measurements to make the female, I made a mistake changing length by width in the drawing, so I ran out of material. But I told the manager that I had been given too little material and he gave me another piece. I did it again and I became the champion"

Related assets

Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_1018	Spanish Champions in Brussels. Andrés is the third on the right (Source: Lluís Fradera, second on the right)

² Guillermina Teodosia Martínez Cabrejas (Íscar, Valladolid, 10 January 1917 - Madrid, 10 June 2008), better known as Mariemma, was a Spanish dancer and choreographer. From the beginning of her career, she toured all over the world.

³ 150 pesetas are approximately 0.9 €.

Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_1019	Spanish Champions at the VII International VET Competition. Andrés is the third on the right (Source: Lluís Fradera, firts on the left)
	WSI_2103	Brussels travel notebook 1958, by Andrés Martínez Jiménez-Balaguer. Some quotes below
	WSI_2104	1957 International Competition Rules
	WSI_2148	Brussels 1958 Certificate of participation

Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_2196	1958 Trophy won by Andrés Martínez Jiménez-Balaguer, ES
	WSI_2212	1958 Spanish National Competition, trophy won by Andrés Martínez Jiménez-Balaguer, ES
	WSI_2215	1960 Barcelona, certificate of participation
	WSI_2216	1959 Spanish Competition, card of participation

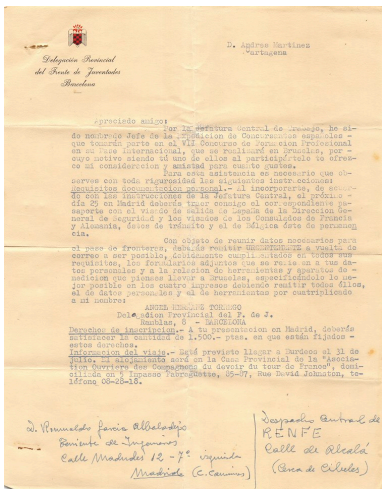



Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_2217	1958 housekeeping information, Spanish team
	WSI_2218	Brussels 1958, winner certificate, photocopy
	WSI_2219	Clipping newspaper 1958, arrival to Madrid of the 7 Spanish winners
	WSI_2220	Clipping newspaper 1958, Success of the Spanish team in Belgium




Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_2222	Clipping newspaper 1958, Success of the Spanish team in Belgium
	WSI_2224	Clipping newspaper 1958, Success of the Spanish team in Belgium
	WSI_2233	Clipping newspaper Success of an apprentice from Bazán


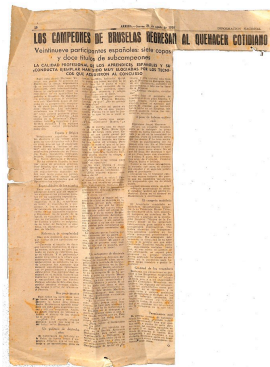


Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_2529	Clipping newspaper 1958, Success of the Spanish team in Belgium
	WSI_2542	Clipping newspaper Champions come back to their day-to-day business
	WSI_2543	Clipping newspaper Spanish Champions in Brussels

Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_2544	Clipping newspaper The third from Brussels

Brussels travel notebook 1958, by Andrés Martínez Jiménez-Balaguer

Andrés hand-wrote an interesting and detailed diary of its participation in the WSC Brussels 1958. He tells in detail every moment of the trip, the work during the competition, the social program, and every feeling and experience.

These are some quotes from that notebook.

"We left Paris to cover the last leg of the journey to Brussels, leaving at noon and arriving in Brussels shortly before eight o'clock and before dark (...)"

"The student hostel where we stayed, the Emile Gryson Teaching and Research Centre, is a wonderful thing (...)"

"On Monday, as announced, the competition began. First, an opening speech, followed by the handing over of emblems and plans. Then we went to our respective workshops, and there they drew lots for workplaces and handed out the materials to start working in the afternoon. The piece for the competition turned out to be the one submitted by Spain, which made it easier for me, as I had already done it in the national competition (...)"

"On Tuesday we worked in the morning from 8 to 12 (...) In the afternoon we visited the port of Antwerp (...)"

"On Wednesday 6th in the morning we worked (...) In the afternoon we visited the Estrella Artois breweries where we were treated to very strong beer in bulk (...)"

"On Thursday 7th in the afternoon, visit to the great marvel that is the World Exhibition (...)"

"On Friday I already finished the male in the morning and in the afternoon, I left the piece already fit. That afternoon my Irish counterpart delivered his work (...)"

"On Saturday I delivered the piece after the French competitor. I did it at 11:35 minutes. I picked up the tools and, in the afternoon, I rested (...)"

"On Sunday we visited the cities of Ghent and Bruges, ending in Ostend (...)"

"We had dinner at half past seven in a wonderful place, the Casino of Ostend (...) the dinner was of great gala, they even gave us half a chicken each, with the blissful habit of cutting it with a knife and fork, we didn't like that (...)"

"Then we were taken to the theatre hall, which was also wonderful (...) we witnessed the performance of a very famous choir, with men and women and several musicians, all Hungarians (...)"

"Monday goes by without trouble or fanfare (...)"

"On Tuesday 12th we left on a trip to Germany, heading for Cologne (...)"

"We finally arrived back in Brussels in the evening (14th), and there we had a hearty dinner. After a good night's sleep, we all got ready to go to church together (...) At the same time, preparations were being made at the residence for the awarding of prizes.

Returning from the church with our Spanish armbands on, we made our way to the assembly hall and entered by nationality. After waiting seated in the comfortable armchairs of that luxurious place, the ceremony began with a speech in French by the president of the Belgian competition (...) Then Mr. Albert (...) named the champions, starting with the skill of fitting. We were very excited as we waited for the jury's decision. First, the champion of category A, who was our Spanish representative, who took the stage to general applause, mainly from the Spaniards. After handing him the cup and the certificate, Mr. Albert went on to name the champions. It was the turn of my category and I was already impatient. He began with the usual words (...) "The champion of adjustment in category B was... the Spanish representative Andrés Martínez Jiménez-Balaguer". And, like an automaton, I made my way very excitedly and with applause, as always, to the presidium where, after congratulating me, I was presented with the trophy. At that moment, the photographers did their job, flashing their flashbulbs again and again (...)"

"At the end of this event we left very overjoyed (...)"

"The following day, the 16th, we left Brussels for Spain (...)"

"On the 21st, already on the train from Murcia to Cartagena, I was so nervous and excited that I couldn't stand up. I hadn't even wanted to eat during the journey. Finally, at the station of Los Molinos I unloaded my bags (...) My whole family came running and there were many hugs (...) My father, crazy with joy, was shooting rockets that exploded with a loud roar. With them I went home and there, amidst the congratulations of the neighbours, the table was set for a small banquet (...)"

"I went to the company to inform them of my arrival (...) Everyone congratulated me (...)".

"I am back in my daily work and in my working environment with my colleagues.

The long awaited and dreamed trip has come to an end and all that remains of it are the memories of those countries and the joy of the competition.

Now the postcards, representative objects, photos, etc. are the only trace and memory of this trip, which has had its sorrows and bad times, but it has also been interesting and beneficial. May God grant that this great trip will not be the last".