In Memoriam

Lhadi Merhari

The Materials Research Society is mourning the loss of one of its active and dedicated members, Lhadi Merhari of CERAMEC (France), who passed away on February 21, 2013, at the age of 52 from cancer.

Lhadi served as lead organizer of 10 MRS symposia, pioneering various topics at MRS meetings including nanolithography (Fall 1999), nanofabrication (Fall 2000), nanopatterning (Fall 2001), laser remote sensing materials (Spring 2005), and three-dimensional nanoengineered assemblies (Fall 2002 and Spring 2004).

Having studied science at the University of Limoges, France, and at the Oregon Graduate Center in Portland, specializing in electronic engineering, Lhadi completed his PhD thesis on ion-beam lithography. He applied his research to various domains, such as chemical and optical gas sensors, nanocomposite resists, biomaterials and medical implants, transparent conductive oxides, nanophotonics, and more generally nanotechnology. He edited a book on applications of hybrid nanocomposites. Lhadi also expanded his expertise from materials science to areas such as economics. While working at a private research center in Limoges, he contributed extensively to several European research projects and developed scientific and technical projects for industry. He also served as an expert for the European Commission, evaluating and monitoring research projects.

Lhadi's vision of science was unconventional. He never considered being a scientist to just make a career or even to make a living, but rather he viewed it as a means to advance society while having fun, with the liberty to create and innovate.
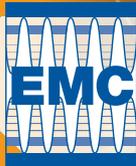
For MRS, beginning with the 2008 Spring Meeting, he initiated and organized a new series of symposia, "The Business of Nanotechnology." Lhadi considered that it was time to summarize the returns that nanotechnology has generated after 20 years of investment, and to encourage entrepreneurship in this field. At the end of each of these symposia, a "Forum for Entrepreneurs" always engaged in lively discussions and exchanges. The 2012 MRS Fall Meeting hosted the fourth symposium of this series, and Lhadi did not want to miss the event, despite his poor health condition, and he made the effort to attend. Having entrepreneurship experience, his attention was drawn to young researchers fighting to start their own company and to bring their novel ideas to market.

Lhadi was generous in every aspect of his life, including science. He did not hesitate to share or to give away his novel ideas when he thought that his colleagues would have more appropriate expertise or more opportunities to develop them. He expected nothing in return except the pride in seeing his ideas brought to fruition. Despite his ill health, Lhadi maintained his fighting spirit, hiding his fear and pain from everyone. He was always eager to encourage and comfort others.

Besides his passion for research, Lhadi was a pilot, proud of his US IFR (instrument flight rules) license that he obtained in three months. He enjoyed nothing more than flying "on top," passing through the clouds to reach the blue sky. Lhadi has now taken off with no plan for landing, and he will stay above the clouds, forever in the sunshine.

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