



Claude Détraz (1938-2020)
A committed and visionary physicist of the European science

Claude Détraz, born on March 20, 1938 in Albi (Tarn), France. An alumnus of the École Normale Supérieure, he started his research career at the CNRS in 1962 studying atomic nuclei. Claude Détraz was a great visionary and scientist who played a very large role in the advancement of nuclear physics in France and in Europe.

In 1962 he joined the Institute of Nuclear Physics at Orsay, a laboratory created by Irène and Frédéric Joliot-Curie. Starting from his early years in research he did outstanding work in nuclear structure, at Berkeley, Max Planck Institute in Heidelberg the University of Colorado and at Orsay. The latter is where he started experiments on mass measurements using transfer reactions. Later at CERN at the PS, along with the team of Robert Klapisch's, he showed the first evidence of deformation in exotic nuclei at a shell closure ($N = 20$). Based on these results, he was convinced that beams at GANIL would become a unique tool in the field. A brilliant and excellent researcher, he was able to effectively communicate to any audience his passion for research and the quest for going beyond what was known.

He took up positions with a large scientific responsibility in France and in Europe. After being the president of the Nuclear Physics section of the National Committee of the CNRS,

he took up the position of the director Grand Accélérateur National d'Ions Lourds (GANIL) from 1982 to 1990. It was during his tenure that a new focus and teams were created to open avenues in the then upcoming field of "exotic" nuclei (short lived nuclei that are born and die in the stars). During the same period 1980-1990, he played a key role in putting in place the European committee for nuclear physics, NuPECC (Nuclear Physics Collaboration Committee, within the European Science Foundation). The Committee was built on the efforts of Hélène Langevin (Paris) and Paul Kienle (Munich) and finally saw the light of day in 1988. He was its first elected Chair from 1989 to 1992. NuPECC continues to play a key role in guiding coherently European nuclear physics.

Always close to industrial applications and to innovations, connected to nuclear physics, he helped to create in 1991 the company Pantechnik, in the region of Normandy, and was its chairman of the board of directors. In 1991, he was appointed as the technical advisor in the cabinet of the Minister of Research, Hubert Curien. In 1992 he was appointed as the director of the National Institute of Nuclear Physics and Particle Physics (IN2P3)/CNRS, a post he held until 1998. In 1999, he was appointed as the Scientific Director at CERN in Geneva, where he was in charge of the fixed-target experimental program until the end of 2003. He was a member of the Higher Council for Research and Technology (Conseil supérieur de la recherche et de la technologie) in France and numerous international committees throughout his career.

He was honored for his scientific work and also more generally for research, in France and abroad, through numerous distinctions: Joliot-Curie Prize from the French Physical Society, silver medal of the CNRS, Commander of the Order of the Legion of Honor, Gay Lussac - Humboldt Prize from the Humboldt Foundation, Honorary Doctor JINR Dubna and others.

Claude Détraz was a committed physicist throughout his life, a tireless defender of cutting-edge research being integrated into society. Research, he said, "is the act by which an advanced society expresses its faith in an open future. It's great ambition to as deeply as possible to explore nature, life and the man itself". The idea that research must be integrated with society was a guiding force throughout his life. It explains, in part, his political commitments by his participation in societal responsibilities (Councilor of Orsay, Mayor of Maison-Maugis in the Orne).

Claude Détraz was a brilliant and knowledgeable personality, his impact and role in our field will forever remain with us. We will miss him...

Sydney Galès, Dominique Guillemaud-Mueller, Alex Mueller, Daniel Guerreau and Marek Lewitowicz