




GRIFOLS

INSPIRED BY THE PAST
INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE

A Historical Perspective

BY JAN M. BULT



GRIFOLS IS THE FIFTH LARGEST COMPANY in the plasma protein fractionation industry with headquarters in Barcelona, Spain. The name comes from the family who founded the company. It all began in 1857 with Jose Antonio Grifols Morera, a medical doctor who practiced homeopathy first in Vilanova and later in Barcelona. He was so popular with patients that they were waiting on the stairs for their turn. His work was succeeded by Jose Antonio Grifols, the grandfather of the current President of Grifols. He followed in his father's footsteps and studied medicine and also practiced homeopathy. The most important decision he took that affected the future of the company was to go to Germany to study hematology for two years. Very early he knew the importance of microbes and became very meticulous about hygiene. He would never touch anything that was touched by someone else. His hand washing routine was very intense. He would not touch a coin and in a restaurant he always used a napkin to clean silverware before he used it. Bread was never touched with his hands and he drank beer with a straw. In 1940 he started the company that later became GRIFOLS.

His son, Victor Grifols Lucas, an inspired technology visionary, continued to build on the establishment of the Grifols company. He was born in 1919 and with his wife, Nuria, he has five children – Victor, Quique, Nuria, Alberto and Raimon. Three of them are active in the company, one is working as a lawyer and is providing legal counsel and another one is practicing medicine. Many people know Victor Grifols Roura, the current President and CEO of the company. Almost 25 years ago in 1985 he took over from his father as the Managing Director of Grifols, following the family tradition.

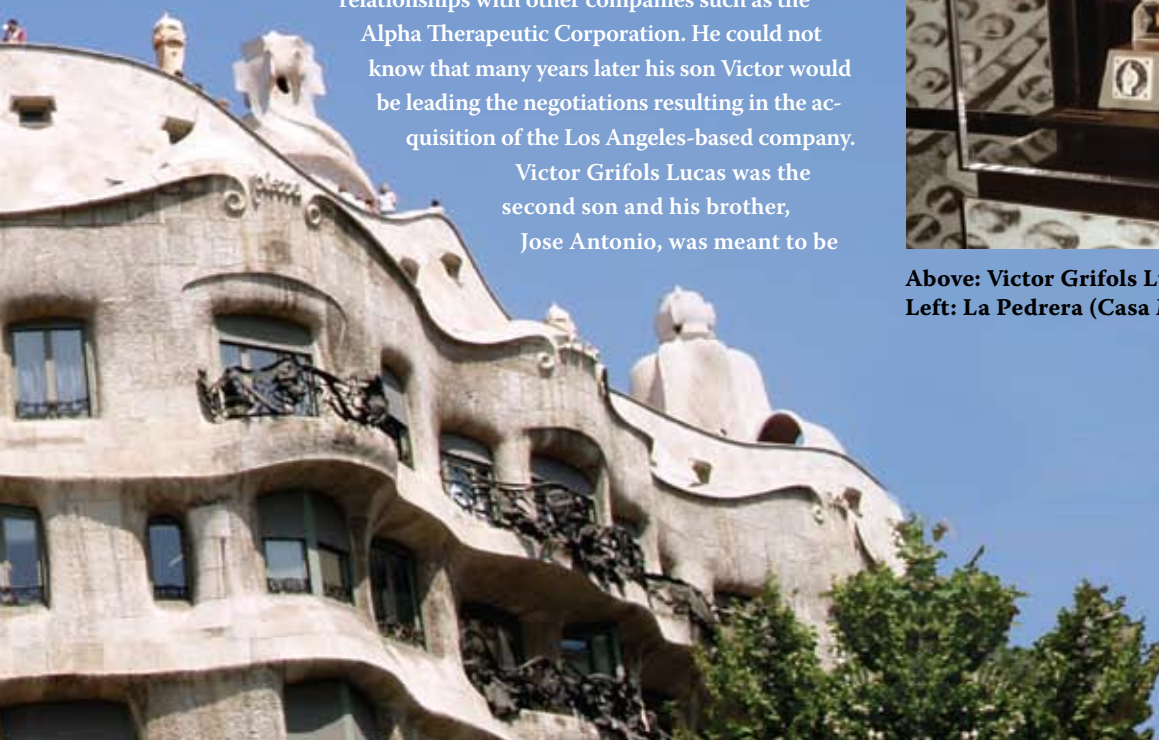
Victor Grifols Lucas, who is 90 years old, had a vision to further develop the company. He forged relationships with other companies such as the Alpha Therapeutic Corporation. He could not know that many years later his son Victor would be leading the negotiations resulting in the acquisition of the Los Angeles-based company.

Victor Grifols Lucas was the second son and his brother, Jose Antonio, was meant to be

the natural successor of his father. Jose Antonio was a physician with an enormous interest in blood and plasma. He was the first scientist to present his work on plasmapheresis as a real and reliable technique to obtain plasma in Lisbon and also the first in publishing them in 1952. He felt that there had



Above: Victor Grifols Lucas
Left: La Pedrera (Casa Mila) by Antoni Gaudi





Pictured left to right: Victor Grifols, Victor Grifols Lucas and Alberto Grifols.

to be a way to re-infuse the red cells to the donor to avoid waste of red cells when collecting plasma. He foresaw that plasmapheresis would be the technology that would be used for the collection of plasma. He also went to Boston to visit Dr. Edwin J. Cohn, the developer of the fractionation technology that is still used as the basis for the manufacturing of so many plasma protein therapies. But then a tragedy happened. Jose Antonio went to a medical congress in Rome, came back ill and thought he had a flu. His father looked at his blood under the microscope and found the devastating evidence of leukemia that then took his life two weeks later.

Victor Grifols Lucas experienced a great deal of changes when the company was still growing. He is considered by many as a hard worker, and as a matter of fact, he is still working developing new ideas and providing technical advice to the company. This exceptional man experienced the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, economic pressures prior to the re-installment of democracy in Spain and was able to stay focused and grow

a company that developed and continues to have an excellent reputation. As an example of his pragmatism and ingenuity, after the Civil War there was not a lot of material available, so he designed a lot of technical equipment by himself. "You had to do it yourself", he said.

His father and brother went to Lausanne, Switzerland to learn more about microbiology and freeze drying. Many problems were faced in the beginning. There was no vacuum pump available and gas was used with a petrol flame to evaporate the water. One can only imagine the difficulties. There was no choice other than trying to be inventive because under the Franco regime, it was difficult to obtain money.

Grifols has a museum in Barcelona that highlights many of the historical developments of the company. Currently, a second museum is in development that will be opened in Los Angeles, California. On an evening in May 2009, I had the opportunity to meet several of the Grifols leadership in their museum and learned a lot about the history of the company.

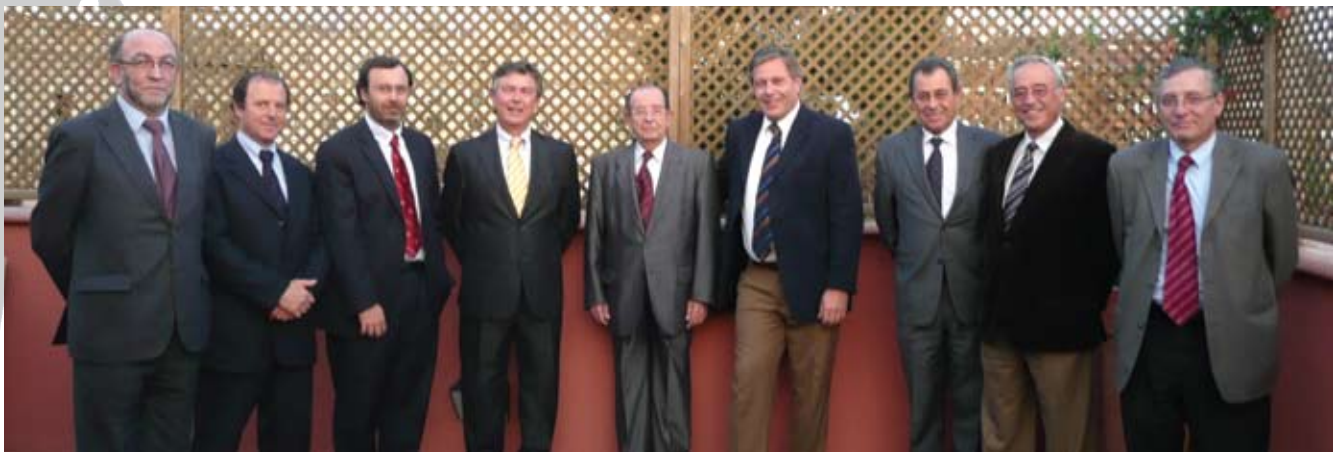
Walking around in the Grifols museum is very impressive. There are multiple examples of equipment developed by Victor Grifols Lucas. While listening to this man when he tells the fascinating stories that go with it, you realize that a lot of excellent work has been done in the 1940s and 1950s that formed the basis for an industry that saves so many lives.

As mentioned earlier, his son Victor Grifols Roura is currently leading a successful organization. He is extremely proud of his father and shows that. Many in the company welcome the continuing advice that they receive from him. His advice is respected, helpful and leads to continuous improvement.

Both father and son are unanimous when it comes to safety. Safety starts with the donor and it underscores the importance of collection centers and the good work that is done by all involved in the collection of plasma.

GRIFOLS is more than a name. ●

JAN M. BULT is PPTA's President



The Grifols leadership team with Jan M. Bult, PPTA President, at the Grifols headquarters in Barcelona, Spain.