



Natal - August 4th - 9th 2013

ISB2013 – A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Santa Maria, January 27th 2013.

As most of you have seen on TV and in other media, Brazil is mourning today the life of 231 youngsters, most of them students from Universities and Schools of the city of Santa Maria. This number will most likely increase in the next few days, as there are 124 people hospitalized, and some of them in critical state. I spent most of the day today in front of the TV in shock. As a professor and a scientist, most of my journey as a biomechanist was done in the company of several youngsters that walked besides me several steps of the way, just like the ones we lost today. I still have so many of them around me today, and it is an exhilarating experience to be able to share so many moments of my academic and of my personal life with them, and to be able to participate in their lives as well.

Therefore, January 27th 2013 is really a sad day for so many parents, husbands, spouses, children, relatives, teachers, friends that had to face one of the worst nightmares of their lives. The ground underneath their feet has suddenly disappeared and there are no words that we can say that will change anything or bring them any comfort. As a parent of two youngsters that are safe today, I can only imagine what people in Santa Maria are facing since last night. As a professor I feel that we have lost part of our youth today, and our journey will not be the same.

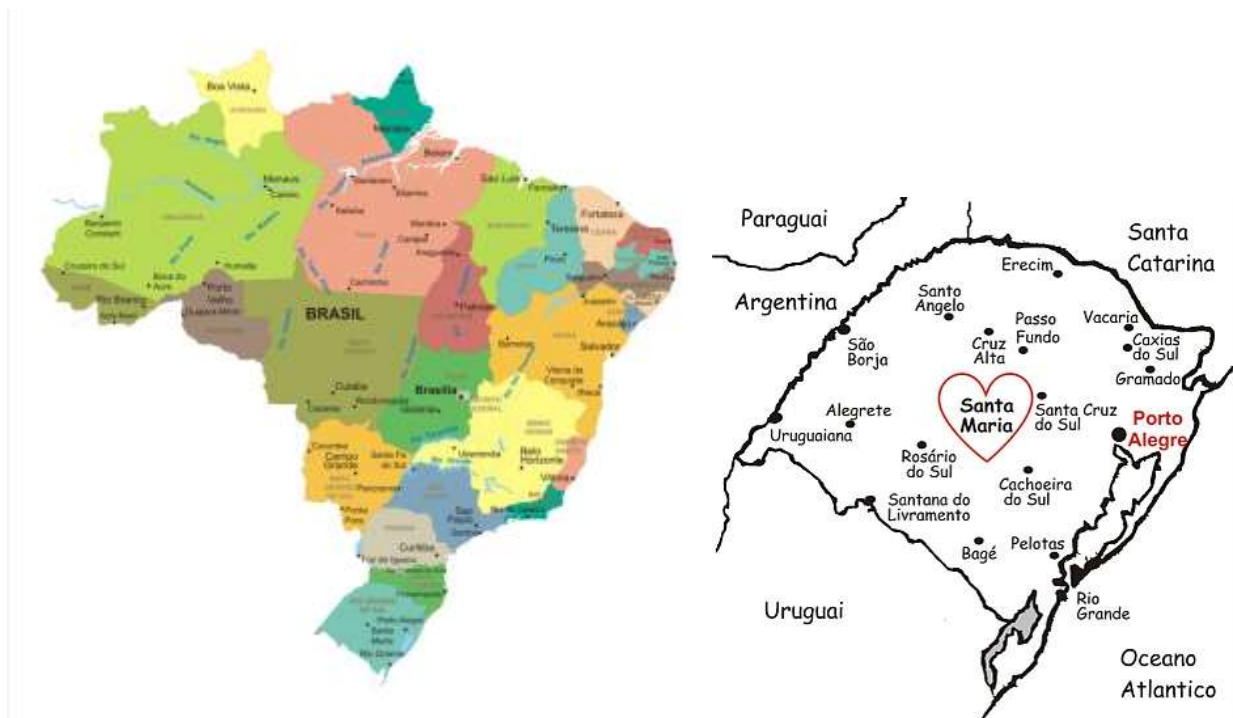
This sad moment in the history of Brazil reminds me that life is really too short, and that the line between life and death is a really thin and delicate line. This year we will get together to discuss science and biomechanics in Natal, but we will also celebrate the lives of those that have given so much to the field of Biomechanics, and that have also impacted the lives of so many of us. Therefore, I would like you to take a brief moment with me to celebrate life, as so many were lost today.

Antonia Zaferiou, our Student Representative at the ISB Executive Council, mentioned that a deadline extension would give us more time to contact and encourage students to come to ISB2013 in Brazil. I really hope that she is able to convince as many students as possible, as the ISB Congress is a fantastic opportunity to meet students and professors, to make new friends and is an unforgettable life experience. Therefore, as President of the Brazilian Society of Biomechanics and ISB 2013 organizer, I decided to accept her suggestion and postpone our deadline for abstract submission for a few days.

OUR FINAL DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSION WILL BE ON FEBRUARY 12TH. Please make sure you get your abstracts ready and submitted by then, as we have a tight schedule and a lot of work to do before August 4th. I will be sending out our second announcement with updated information by tomorrow. Please also check our website, as we have been updating things in there on a daily basis. Before I finish this letter wishing you a good day (or night in my case), here goes a little information on Santa Maria.

SANTA MARIA

Santa Maria is located in the State that I live, Rio Grande do Sul, the last State in the South of Brazil. It is located in (and also considered) the heart of our State, as it is right in the center. It is about 292 km (about 3 hours' drive) from Porto Alegre, Capital of the State where I live.



The city has about 262.368 inhabitants, being the 5th most populated city in the State. It was created after being a camp site for a commission that was responsible to draw the limits of the Spanish and Portuguese dominion in 1797. Rio Grande do Sul was disputed between Portugal and Spain for several years before they finally defined to whom we would belong. Because of that the Gaucho culture has both influence from Portuguese and Spanish.

Santa Maria is also known as City of the Culture due to the large number of schools and educational institutions that it has. It has also one of the largest Public Universities of Brazil, the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), which was created in 1959 and has given the city the name of University City, as most of the development in the region came from UFSM. UFSM has about 27.000 students (or 10% of the population), and had one of the first Graduate Programs (MSc and PhD) in Physical Education. Biomechanics was one of the first fields taught in this Program, and for several years Brazilians had only two places to study Biomechanics at the graduate level: UFSM and the University of São Paulo (USP). Therefore, part of the birth of Brazilian Biomechanics comes from UFSM. From the total of the 229 identified students, at least 101 were students of UFSM, and therefore UFSM and Santa Maria lost so much today.

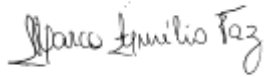
Santa Maria is also the birth place for Paleontology, as in 1902 the first fossil of South America was collected there (Rhynchosauria) and the first Brazilian dinosaur (Staurikosaurus).

It also has the South Regional Center for Space Research from the National Institute of Space Research. Weather, geoprocessing and astronomy are some of the areas of research in this Center.

Our thoughts tonight go to Santa Maria and to the families of all these talented young people that left us today. We will definitely celebrate life in their memory this year.

I hope to see you all in August 4th in Natal this year.

All the best and take care,



Prof. Marco Aurélio Vaz

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