

Dominique Grebille (1957–2009)

Dominique Grebille died on 27 January 2009 in Caen, France, at the age of 51. He is survived by his wife Elisabeth and his five children, Marion, Claire, Olivier, Pierre and Bénédicte.

Dominique Grebille was born on 13 June 1957 in Guercoëtquidan, France, a small town at the confluence of the rivers Aff and Oyon. He graduated with an engineering diploma from the Ecole Centrale (Paris) in 1980. He then joined the Laboratoire Chimie-Physique du Solide of the École Centrale, where he obtained a PhD in 1982. At that time, military service was still an obligation in France, but as a permitted alternative he chose to join the Group of Blind and Amblyopic Intellectuals for two years. During this time he learnt and then taught the Braille alphabet; he demonstrated this dedication to others on many occasions in his life. Dominique then joined the Ecole Centrale as an Assistant Professor, Maître de Conférences, teaching physics and crystallography, becoming involved with incommensurate crystallography. He defended his habilitation in 1990 and three years later joined the CRISMAT laboratory at ENSICAEN as Full Professor, taking charge of invigorating the crystallography team.

His main research interest was the relation between material properties and crystallography. He very soon recognized that aperiodic structures have to be stabilized to achieve specific properties in complex oxides such as superconductors or magnetoresistive or thermoelectric compounds. He then directed his crystallographic expertise towards the better determination of modulated, incommensurate, composite and aperiodic structures. He was among the first scientists who dived into the analyses of the new commensurate and incommensurate structures of the high-temperature superconducting oxides. This led him to develop and improve new

crystallographic tools, and his studies of modulated misfit phases and composite crystals using superspace formalism are among the most renowned. More recently, he concentrated on high-resolution characterization of multilayers and superlattices exhibiting multiferroic properties, and of materials irradiated by heavy ions. His fruitful scientific achievements include more than 75 articles in international journals.

Dominique was unanimously appreciated as a teacher by his students. Always willing to help and share knowledge, his students and colleagues benefited from his invaluable expertise. In his too-short career, he supervised no less than eight PhD students. All received their PhDs and obtained valuable positions in various laboratories.

Noticing the decline in crystallographic activity among young scientists, Dominique took part in the rejuvenation of the French crystallographic community, organizing the Caen congress in 2003. He then acted as Vice-President of the AFC (Association Française de Cristallographie) in promoting crystallography. Concerned by the social implications of his work, he also carried out a major analysis of the jobs surrounding crystallography, which confirmed the very large extent of crystallographic studies in many fields of science and industry. Last summer he declined the responsibility of becoming the next AFC President, with the news of his serious illness.

It is not possible to mention Dominique's activities without underlining his particularly friendly, gentle and cheerful traits. A brilliant scientist with a modest and active nature, he fully participated in society at many levels and acted in support of the blind. He was also involved ideologically and philosophically in religious matters with great open-mindedness. We remember our convulsing laughter when he was cheating our rigid scientific bureaucracy. His premature death truncates a brilliant career and his vitality and enthusiasm will be missed by the French crystallographic community. You enchanted us and, from your superspace, will remain in our memory forever.

Olivier Pérez

CRISMAT-ENSICAEN, Caen, France

Jean-François Berar

Institut Néel, Grenoble, France

Daniel Chateigner

IUT, Université de Caen, Basse-Normandie, France