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## A MEMORY OF PROFESSOR JOAN ORÓ ON THE CENTENNIAL OF HIS BIRTH.

**Abstract**

Professor Joan Oró was born in Lleida (Catalonia, Spain) in 1923. He was one of the most important scientists of the 20th century. Last year 2023 was officially announced as the “Joan Oró year” by the Government of Catalonia, with many scientific and outreach activities having been conducted in his memory. His figure remains today as an outstanding role model for young scientists in particular in space science. His deep interest about the origins of life made him soon decide to spend his entire life in the pursuit of unravelling the mystery of our own origin, and the possibility that life could have started elsewhere in the universe. His main discovery took place in 1959 while working at the University of Houston and made him a world-leading scientist. His discovery of the abiotic synthesis of Adenine, a fundamental molecule of the DNA revealed the mechanism with which nature had manufactured it billions of years ago under the conditions of an early Earth. This discovery led Oró to advise NASA on a number of projects, including analysing lunar samples and in particular, the Viking probe searching for life on the planet Mars. Joan Oró managed to correctly interpret the results of the first biochemical tests carried out on the surface of the red planet. He also proposed the theory that the building blocks of life had arrived on Earth based on material from the impacts of comets. Beyond science, he drove a number of initiatives to promote science both in USA and in his home country. He was a driving force behind the creation of the first research organisms in Catalonia. It should be also stressed that Oró used his worldwide renown to advocate peace and the use of science for peaceful purposes. Among many other distinctions, Professor Oró received the Oparin Model for the Study of the Origin of Life and was considered by many to be worthy of a Nobel Prize. Joan Oró symbolises striving for a dream, a goal. Coming from humble beginnings he became an extraordinary contributor to space science and astronautics.