

Remembering Paolo

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When Paolo and I first met in July 1966, we never imagined that we would work together in research for the next 50 years. At that time, Paolo had just completed his military service and I had completed my university studies for a degree in chemical engineering. We started working at the Institute of Industrial and Applied Chemistry of the University of Trieste under the supervision of Prof. Guido Arich, then a senior researcher at the “Aquila” refinery (Total Group) in Trieste. Our research topics were different: Paolo worked on the regeneration of palladium catalysts, and I continued the field of separation processes and thermodynamic phase equilibria explored in my dissertation. I still remember the joint meetings on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, where we discussed with Prof. Arich the results obtained and the problems encountered.

During this period, Paolo began to write some short poems and participated in a poetry contest called “Leone di Muggia” in Muggia, near Trieste, and received an honorable mention.

These years from 1966 to 1971 were fruitful in deepening our friendship on the one hand and in expanding our scientific competence on the other. Even then, I was more interested in theoretical work and Paolo was more concerned with expanding his competence in various experimental analytical techniques. We started pioneering work in the field of liquid-liquid chromatography, which at that time consisted of a burette column and a “detector” that collected liquid fractions that were successively analyzed by gas-liquid chromatography.

Our research activities were greatly complicated by the sudden death of our research director, Prof. G. Arich, in 1971. The head of the institute strongly recommended us to forget our previous activity, which was mainly related to the study of mixtures in liquid state, and to enter the main research field of the whole institute, namely solid state equilibria with reference to ceramic oxides. At this point we received unexpected support from Prof. Paolo Papoff (University of Bari), a good friend of our late professor. He decided to give us a small but significant financial support to continue our previous research activity on thermodynamics of the liquid state. He also insisted on convincing us

of two aspects: the need to compare our results with those of the international community attending various conferences, and the need to spend time abroad in research groups working on similar research topics. For these reasons, in 1974 I spent six months in Paris at the Centre Reacteurs et Processus (Ecole des Mines – ENSTA) with Prof. Henri Renon and Paolo spent six months in 1975 at Queen’s University in New York with Prof. David Locke.

Paolo became assistant professor and began teaching the course Analytical Chemistry, which in the following years was renamed Instrumental Analysis, a course he kept until his retirement, while I began teaching Physical Chemistry.

After the stay abroad, we started to participate in some international chemistry conferences: the Chisa in Prague in 1975 and the Chem Tech conference in Copenhagen in 1977. This last conference gave us the opportunity to visit Prof. Aage Fredenslund at the Faculty of Chemical Engineering in Lyngby.

At the beginning of 1978, within the framework of the new European strategies for the promotion of regional cooperation and with the support of the Italian government, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region developed a joint overall project called “Alpe Adria Initiatives”. Paolo convinced me to help him organize an international chemical engineering conference open to Austrian, Italian and Yugoslav researchers. The conference, entitled “Advances in Separation Science,” was held at the University of Trieste in 1978, and Professor Aage Fredenslund was invited to give the introductory plenary lecture on the UNIFAC method. During the conference Paolo was very active and the main driving force in promoting contacts between Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian researchers, and he was very surprised that this was the first time that these researchers participated in a joint meeting. For these reasons, and with the support of Professor Moser from the University of Graz and various professors from the University of Ljubljana, it was decided to give continuity to this type of meeting with the name “Austrian-Italian-Yugoslavian Meetings on Chemical Engineering”. This conference was to be organized every two years alternately by the three countries.

In the following years, this meeting plays an important role for the young researchers of the participating countries: they can orally present the results of their research in an international competition. During the various meetings of the main organizers, the proposal to publish this new journal was born.

After the meeting in Trieste and due to the obvious mutual interest, we received an invitation from Aage Fredenslund to spend a period in his research group in Denmark. Because of the friendly relations between our families and the fact that my daughter and Paolo's younger daughter were the same age, we decided to spend two months together with the same financial support. Our families enjoyed the stay on an old Danish farm and we were able to make important progress for our research. It was also important to establish friendly relationships with the different members of the research group and especially with Aage and Peter Rasmussen, which have been maintained for many years.

The year 1980 was an important year for different reasons: we both obtained positions of full professor at the University of Trieste and our first participation at the "Fluid Properties & Phase Equilibria for Chemical Process Design" conference.

I remember the following years as fruitful for our research but also for our involvement in differ-

ent committees at the University. Paolo was elected three times head of the Department of Chemical Environmental and Raw Materials Engineering at our University.

At the same time, Paolo became a member of two different clubs: the Lion Club and the 41 Club. For the latter he was local and national president. These activities promoted in Paolo a particular attention to the problems of people with disabilities. For this reason, he was called by various principals as a collaborator to solve the problems for these students. I remember well how anxious he often was about the difficulties of convincing the academic authorities to solve some problems, but also his joy when he succeeded in ensuring access to the various university structures for the non-ambulatory people or in organizing transportation from their homes to the university.

In the last years before and after his retirement, Paolo devoted more time to the publication of some books with a collection of his poems.

I cannot close without remembering what Paolo said to me in the last years at the University before our retirement, "You know that in the end we spent more time with research than with our families".

Ciao