



Some Flashes of a long and sincere Friendship

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Abstract. This contribution is dedicated to the memory of a friend, Nichi D’Amico.

Some day in 1996, recalled in Rome during a Meeting for the 2019 SAIIt Centennial Meeting.

Do you remember when you discovered that I would come and work at the Astronomical Observatory of Bologna as an associate astronomer? Certainly. I remember that I told Bruno Marano, then director, ...aah, Nichi D’Amico is coming to Bologna. Yes, Bruno replied, he is also working on globular clusters, you will be happy about that! But I guess he is going to IRA, is he not a radioastronomer? Yes, he is, but he is studying millisecond pulsars, and there are many millisecond pulsars in clusters ... just look at 47 Tucanae, as you’ll have already seen. Yes, I know. Got it, but we work on “classical” stellar evolution ... for us, globular clusters are a laboratory, they are our toys. Now this Nichi arrives from Palermo and gets his hands on our games? Are we sure it will be all right ...?... in short, a pitch invasion. Go easy, he’s good and you’ll make friends.

Rome 2019: *In other words, you did not want me there. Well, yes, but then we became friends, I even bequeathed to you all my possessions in Sardegna! Good boy, I fixed all the things you had left in random order.*

November 2001. Someone tells me: “Nichi won the competition for astronomo ordinario, he’s coming to Cagliari, will be appointed director of the Observatory and will work on SRT ...” Great, so I’ll go back home to Bologna after six years. I phone Nichi and tell him ... “If you like, I’ll leave you my car, it’s a Fiat Uno; it’s old, I won’t bring it back, you can use it when you need it” *All right ... I’ll take it ... so we pass the baton in this too. A few months later:* ... *“I’m thinking of changing all that you set at the Observatory ... even the main office. Poggio dei Pini is out of the way, too far from San Basilio, where we are building SRT. We are going to Selargius, I found an interesting solution”* “Is that right? What about Carloforte?” “... well, it’s beautiful and historical, but far away in space and time, it has become unmanageable. We’ll give it back to the State”. “Wow!” ... I was impressed by the strength and determination with which he planned, innovated and managed both the Observatory and SRT. I wouldn’t have been able to do that.

In the early 2000s ... towards SRT. A long history of meetings, documents, infinite discussions with him and with all radioastronomers. Since I came from a different world, ignorant of this subject matter, I learnt a lot about antennae, instruments, tendering

procedures and contracts, as well as about the complex psyche of a person who puts in his intelligence, culture, rationality, stubbornness, and his very soul to make the things he loves.

15 October 2015. A bombshell: Nichi is the new President of INAF. Gosh! This is a real surprise. Good or bad? Since I knew him well, one thing was for sure: he would not save energies and, thanks to his character and his outlook on life and science, he would apply his work method, made up of in-depth culture, will, tireless commitment and determination. And so it was.

Until His last day. 14 September 2020, our last call, about 19:40 when he told me: *ok, Flavio for the Astronomical Olympic*

Games and the events you will organize with SAI, or the ones in Bologna, etc. - no problem. We are real friends, no frills. When you call me, or you need something, I'll be always there for you, and willingly come and take part in the events. So we can have a little chat, just like old times... when you did not want me in Bologna because you were afraid would steal your globular clusters!

All right Nichi, we agree on that. I'm going to have dinner. *Me too. However, we should go deeper into the matter with more calm.* Ok, I'll call you Tomorrow. Bye-bye.

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