

Luciano Girardello
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After a long life filled with well deserved successes, Luciano left us.

When, a long time ago, I joined the Theoretical Physics Group of Milan, a little more than a boy, he hosted me with his friendship and pleasantness. He stood out for being sociable and affable and introduced me to Milan and its countryside, which I did not know, in social meetings and excursions with other young physicists.

I do remember a funny incident very long since that showed his soft-spokenness. We were playing Poker with other two physicist friends; Luciano and another one were served a straight flush both. As this was apparent from the way they upped, very unlike our usually very small bets, I recalled the professionals' rule for comparing straight flushes. When the two showed their hands, Luciano won according to the professionals' rule while the other friend won according to a kids' rule that many applied. The matter was settled after more than three quarters of an hour of heated debate and a phone call to the telephone company information desk. The heat was all on the other friend side, I led the discussion on Luciano's side because a rule is a rule, but he was absolutely unfazed.

He stood out for being absent-minded also. At times I had to repeat him what I was saying thrice at least in order that he realized what I was talking about. But when talking physics this apparent flaw became a bonus, because while outwardly absent-minded, he followed his internal processes and from time to time he came to conceive ideas seemingly unrelated to the subject but relevant instead; not a few times he hit the mark in this way. I keep regretting that on the last occasions I saw him I exchanged his condition for his usual absent-mindedness, which was not.

He had an uncanny ability to understand what was going to be relevant in physics before it came out to be so, and not just in that field; a common friend, who sadly is no longer with us, with some admiration, some envy and some incredulity at the same time, said that if you saw Luciano with a book in his hands, that book would become important and popular six months since. He was right and I agree with him.

Later I understood that he had an iron will under his soft-spoken attitude. Before joining university, he had degreed at high school as an accountant and had worked as a bank clerk. You may imagine how much he suffered then. After a couple of years he, as a home taught student, took the high school examinations that were needed at the time for enrolling at university and was able to join Physics. Next, helped by his uncanny ability to understand what was becoming relevant and his strength to focus into himself without being distracted, he willed himself from bank clerk to professor of Physics.

Shortly after he became full professor he moved to Bicocca, which was just being established, and we had less contacts as colleagues.

Since 1990 however we met almost all summers in August, when he started being a quasi permanent guest of Fausto, a colleague and common friend and my wife's cousin, who sadly is no longer with us too. Fausto (now his son and his widow) owned a large part of a house with a garden in the Alps above Biella, not far from Monte Rosa (as a crow flies, by car it is another trip); my wife has the other part of the house, where we spend much of the Summer. Luciano was there with us, a very pleasant guest as you can imagine. As you can see in the pictures, he enjoyed a beautiful place, was well treated and could spend a really serene August there; but there was a catch. We endeared and soothed him until, before he could understand what was happening, we put him in forced labour!

Rest in Peace, my friend.

Guido