Gode Wüstefeld, Berlin, May 29th, 2023

I would like to take a look back: How I met Vittorio

I was very lucky to meet Vittorio. This was by pure chance, about 40 years ago. I met a friend, a teacher and a scientist.

I met him for the first time in the first days of January 1980, I remember this very well. On January 1st, I started my new job at the Jülich Nuclear Research Centre, a large national laboratory in the small town of Jülich, located between Cologne and the Dutch border. I had just finished my PhD in Berlin and started as a postdoc in Jülich, in a field that was completely new to me: accelerator physics.

Vittorio arrived a few days later, as a consultant and on leave from the University of Naples. We shared the same office. He explained to me very well the subject of his studies. He was working on an "isochronous storage ring" and "coherent beam instabilities".

This was all completely new to me. I had never heard of it before. But the physics he presented sounded very promising to me. From the beginning there was a certain sympathy between us, and we decided that I would join his work. He was excellent and patient in introducing and explaining the physics to me.

A few weeks later, Vittorio’s student, Luigi Palumbo, arrived from Naples and joined us. The first thing he did was a drawing on the blackboard. A sketch of the Gulf of Naples, the city, Vesuvius in the background and a bright sun high in the sky. Like a window to Naples. Very different from our daily situation in Jülich, where the weather was around zero degrees, humid with short and grey days, as is typical for this area in winter.

For about a year and a half we formed a small enthusiastic group, based in Jülich and Naples. In the course of this work I was often in Naples. Vittorio enjoyed showing me some of the most amazing places in and around Naples. In addition to the city and several museums, we also visited Pompeii, Herculaneum and Capri. For me it was a very fascinating and sunny city, full of history, full of life.

Vittorio was a very open-minded person, physics was just one topic of his interests. We had many discussions about everything, like films, history, nature and so on. Above all he was very interested in finding out common roots between Italy and Germany, for example in language and history. His charming nature made it easy for him to get in touch with other people and he soon made contact with Italian and Spanish students working in the Jülich lab. We got together with these students from time to time to cook and enjoy some Italian atmosphere.

Our collaboration came to an end in the summer of 1981. I had to work on several other accelerator projects. Finally, I moved to Berlin, to the BESSY storage ring. But the subject of our work was not forgotten. It lay dormant for almost 20 years.

Around the year 2000, the opportunity came up to return to the work, which I had learnt from Vittorio. With a small group at the new BESSY storage ring, we succeeded in installing an isochronous machine optics.

In this mode the beam emits intense THz radiation of exceptional quality. This radiation is most likely the best diagnostic tool for studying coherent beam instabilities. These results initiated a worldwide interest in this kind of beam physics.

It was only a short period of close collaboration, but since that time a deep and lasting friendship developed with Vittorio.

Thank you Vittorio for everything, I will keep you in best memory.