

I defended my Tesi di Laurea in Physics in the Fall of 1968, a messy year at my Alma Mater, the University of Bologna. I had graduated with top distinction, - and received a National Research Council appointment to continue studies in Bologna. However, I was not ready for settling down, and when a few months later I was offered a fellowship to spend a year at Indiana, I could not resist the "GO WEST, YOUNG MAN" call. In late Summer of 1969, with the added complement of a Fulbright fellowship, I packed for Bloomington. It turned out to be a most important decision in shaping my future in many ways. For that, I owe much to Professors Louis Kibler, Frank Edmonson, Louis Pataki and Martin Burkhead.

In a sweet, auspicious way, my arrival to Bloomington was memorable, enough so to suggest a measure of "Bloomington Magic" at work. I was the only passenger of an Allegheny Airlines flight from Indianapolis to Bloomington, on a sunny Saturday morning. The flight attendant, a very friendly - and handsome - young woman, chatted with me through the duration of the flight - all 50 miles of it ...did I say it was a non-stop flight? The cab driver who took me from the airport to Eigenman Hall, a graduate student residence center, was named Dan D'Andrea: his grandfather was an Italian immigrant. Learning that I was an Italian student, Mr D'Andrea invited me to have Thanksgiving dinner with him and his family, later in the Fall. I soon forgot about it, but I was most pleasantly surprised when, a few days before Thanksgiving Mr D'Andrea located and reminded me of his earlier invitation. Then he drove me to Thanksgiving Dinner at his house, with his charming family. One big point for "Hoosier hospitality is no accident", indeed.

In the afternoon of that first day, I walked by the lounge of the Center and noticed a group of students playing Latin American songs on the guitar. A while later, I was invited to join them for an evening to the movies at the von Lee theater, and to play soccer on the following day. That became a regular activity in my life at IU: Saturdays to Nicks and the von Lee, Sundays to play the beautiful game in the field surrounded by the Little 500 track. Later in that day, I walked across campus, scouting the route from dormitory to Swain Hall, the home of the Astro department. In passing near a student residence hall, near the Jordan River, I heard the sound of a piano, coming from the lounge in

that building. A very skilled person was playing. So I sat in the grass and listened for a while. He or she played two of my favorite songs: "Bridge over Troubled water" and "Stardust". It turns out that one of my most precious properties back in Italy was a music LP that contained about a dozen renditions, instrument-only, of Stardust: each by the likes of John Coltrane, Lionel Hampton, Oscar Peterson, etc... The author of Stardust, Hoagy Carmichael, was then very high in my music rankings. A few days later, telling the episode to one of the grad students at Swain, I learned that Hoagy had been a Law student at IU, but had spent most of his student years composing music in a joint across the street from Swain Hall and the Law School. I remember commenting that, if there is a God, it appeared to me that She spends weekends in Bloomington, Indiana.

The Astronomy PhD program at IU allowed, even encouraged candidates to design a research plan that took advantage of national research institute resources – such as NASA and NSF centers - as part of the PhD training. I did so by connecting with the National Radio Astronomy Observatory: NRAO. I thus spent 1970 to 1972 shuttling back and forth between Bloomington and Charlottesville, Virginia, headquarters of NRAO. This “victory march” did however hit an obstacle. Military service was then compulsory for young men in Italy. Service could not be delayed past my 26th birthday. Rather than military service, I chose an alternative, civilian option, allowed by a then recently passed law: 2 years of "technical assistance" to a developing country yielded exemption from military service. So I got myself a job teaching Physics in the National University of El Salvador. I called the program “Pax Italica”, which endeared me to the Italian Ambassador, an old Venetian with a good sense of humor. Between December 1972 and January 1975, the full Peace Corps of Italy in EL Salvador was me. Those were two very intense and formative years, in more ways than one.

I returned to Bloomington in early 1975, to defend my PhD thesis, which in the meantime had been published. I had planned to spend only a few weeks in Bloomington, but I stumbled into an unexpected situation. I had spent only 5 semesters at IU, which was short of the required residence credits for a PhD candidate. The Astro department was great in resolving the emergency: in the

matter of a few days, the resources for a Teaching Assistantship were found for me to stay in Bloomington for the necessary time. In early 1976 I defended and was granted the title of "Doctor of Philisophy": a gross typo in the front page (sigh...) of the thesis document which, incredibly, nobody noticed until it was too late.

There were 2 other important outcomes of this stretched-out period of residence in Bloomington: (1:) I got to watch some of the best basketball any college team ever played – that was the 1975-76 PERFECT SEASON and (2:) I met Martha Haynes, then a 3d year graduate student who, curiously, was following the same path I had taken, and was planning to also do her PhD thesis research at NRAO. Less than 2 years later she was to become my wife. Forty years later, we've had successful, professional careers, are still married and in love. Must be that Bloomington magic is still working my way.

As a “coda” to this story, I want to mention that only two weeks ago an important discovery was publicly announced. An IU/Cornell collaboration led by Professor John Salzer, the Chair of the Astronomy Dept. at IU, discovered what appears to be the most chemically pristine galaxy known, which opens an unprecedented window to the history of galaxy evolution. John was a postdoctoral fellow working with me in the 1980s. He and his group at IU maintain a fertile, rewarding and fun collaboration with Martha’s and my group at Cornell.