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OBITUARY

GIANFRANCO BISIACCHI GIRALDI
1947–2006

Gianfranco Bisiacchi Giraldi passed away on September 17, 2006, after a long illness. Gianfranco was born in Trieste, Italy close to the Adriatic Sea; there, he pursued his undergraduate and graduate studies. He obtained his PhD from Trieste University combining research stays at Lomonosov University in Russia.

In 1973 he arrived at the Instituto de Astronomía, National Autonomous University, México (IAUNAM) through a bilateral interchange program. His great love for México, the University and his Mexican family motivated him to take up residence as a research scientist at the Instituto de Astronomía. During his first years in Mexico Gianfranco specialized in stellar and galactic evolution. He then experienced a gradual vocational progression towards the development of innovative scientific instruments, which was rewarded in 1985 with the Premio Universidad Nacional due to his participation in the invention of MEPSICRON, a novel photon-counting light detector.

After over seven years serving as Academic Secretary at IAUNAM, he accepted in 1992 the post of coordinator of the UNAMSAT project, a small satellite that was entirely developed and built by the Programa Universitario de Investigación y Desarrollo Espacial (PUIDE) and was intended to orbit the Earth in order to detect meteoritic traces by means of radio Doppler reflection. This satellite has been orbiting the Earth since 1996 and was launched from the Plesetzk base in Russia.

Dr. Bisiacchi was always interested in, and committed to, Mexican technology, particularly regarding original state-of-the-art technology that could be developed at the University, in spite of the inherent functional risks that accompanied this task.

Being a natural leader, he took over the direction of PUIDE and later the coordination of the Centro Tecnológico based at the Escuela Nacional de Estudios Profesionales Aragón, where he developed many other technological projects. Among these, the artificial ionization of the atmosphere stands out, aimed at modifying ambient humidity conditions to either induce rain or clear fog from a region. This new technology is still under evaluation.

Dr. Bisiacchi's legacy includes several well-equipped and operational laboratories distributed over various University spaces. All his collaborators hold vivid memories of his kindness and joy. He will be greatly missed.

Elfego Ruiz-Schneider