



Invited Letter

Enrico Drioli and His Life Time Love Affair with Membrane Science

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In the summer of 1976, I visited the Bend Research Inc., a small start-up company founded by Harry Lonsdale and Richard Baker. At that time the company had a dozen employees and its business was contract research in membrane science and technology. Richard showed me their laboratory and introduced me to the people working on different membrane related projects. One of the persons I was introduced to was Enrico Drioli, a young professor from the University of Naples. I was very surprised because I could not remember having ever seen a professor working in the lab himself and especially not in a place like Bend. In the evening, Richard and I were invited by Enrico for a delicious 5 course dinner prepared by his wife Vittoria. After Dinner, we had a lively discussion about the present and possible future relevance of membrane science and technology during which Enrico surprised us with his basic knowledge and his convincing arguments. He also told us that he had chosen Bend Research Inc. as a place for his sabbatical because both Richard Baker and Harry Lonsdale had worked successfully for several years in membrane science and technology and were experienced in writing research proposals with new ideas to generate public and private funding. Therefore, Enrico was convinced that this was the best place to extend his knowledge about the development and application of membranes. After our first meeting in Bend, I was convinced Enrico was an outstanding person and we became close friends.

Shortly after our first meeting, Enrico was appointed as the first director of the CNR-Institute of Membrane Technology at the University of Calabria. Under his guidance, the ITM-CNR grew rapidly and to an important membrane research institution in Europe and Enrico became one of the most important experts on the applications of membrane and he was and still is being invited as a key-note lecturer all over the world. Enrico also was the driving force in the creation of the European Membrane Society which was established in 1982 with the objectives to stimulate the exchange of knowledge between scientists of different European countries by mutual visits of scientists, joined research projects and periodic meetings.

Enrico is also a gifted organizer. The conferences he organized in Italy, in the charming cities of Ravello or Stresa and Perugia bring back happy memories. Enrico not only organized membrane conferences, workshops, and seminars in Italy, but all over the World. He convinced governmental agencies of many countries to provide funding for membrane research and development activities. He also invited visiting scientists and PhD.-students to spend some time in laboratories of the ITM-CNR to learn the basics of membrane technology. With all these activities, Enrico has contributed to the popularity of membranes more than anyone else. Enrico and his colleague Lidietta Giorno also edited a number of books covering the various aspects of membrane technology. He invited me to

contribute one or more chapters in several of these books which I thankfully accepted. In a joint venture, Lidietta, Enrico and I also published a text book which provides a comprehensive introduction to membrane science and technology. After my retirement from my position at Twente University, Enrico has invited me every summer for several years to teach a two-week course at the ITM-CNR on various aspects of membrane science. The courses were well attended by a number of students from different countries with Enrico being a magnificent host. He took care of all my needs during the stay in the ITM and invited me at least every second evening to a delicious Italian dinner. Since I don't speak the local dialect to order a meal, it was generally somewhat complicated for me, but not when I was with Enrico. The only thing I had to do was to tell the waiter "I will have the same dish as my host but only half of every item and instead of the bottle of drink I would like a bottle of local beverage". By this mode of ordering, I always ended up having a very delicious meal.

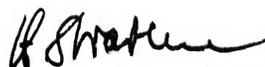
When Enrico organized conferences and seminars in countries with little knowledge about the application of membranes, he asked scientists from the membrane community to present key-note lectures. Having been also often invited, I travelled together with Enrico to many interesting and sometimes exotic places all over the world.

This brings back an incident which shows that Enrico has a good sense of humor. Once in 1982, Richard Baker and I were in Beijing. We knew that Enrico was also there at the same time and we decided to meet him and have a cup of coffee together. It is difficult to find a person in a city as large as Beijing. But to find Enrico was no problem. We just went to best hotel in town which at that time was the brand new *Sheraton Great Wall* hotel and there he was. He invited us generously for a coffee billed on his room number. The next evening, we went again to the Sheraton to have a coffee with our generous friend. But he was not yet home. So, we enjoyed our coffee without him and put the bill on his room number just to let Enrico know that unfortunately we had to drink the coffee without him. During our stay in Beijing, we had a couple of coffees in the Sheraton on Enrico's room number. Since it worked just fine for a couple of times even in other hotels in Beijing we made it our magic coffee number. By now, I have forgotten the actual number, I only remember that its first digit was 8. Enrico must have wondered how all the coffee orders were billed on his account, since he hardly drinks coffee because he definitely prefers drink. Two years later, we found out that our magic number had some limitations when we travelled with Enrico to Lanzhou, a remote place in the north of China, where he had organized a membrane seminar and had invited Richard and me to present some lectures.

When we arrived in our hotel we had coffee on our magic number. But this time, the waiter insisted that the room number or at least the first digit, i.e. the 8 was wrong. Because this hotel had only 5 floors and all their room numbers started with floor number as the first digit. So we learned that our magic number was OK only for hotels with 8 or more floors.

My personal friendship with Enrico was not only limited to our mutual professional interest, but it includes also our families. We spent wonderful days in Grotine, Enricos beautiful home in Bolgheri, and Enrico visited us in Tübingen and also spent a relaxing time sailing with us and friends on the Ijsselmeer in the Netherlands.

I wish Enrico all the best and good health for the years to come to be able to not only further promote membrane science and technology all over the world, but also for all his friends to enjoy his company and generous hospitality.



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