

VareseNews

“We’re organising a meeting to save the Observatory”

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At last, the GAT President (and one of the founding members of FOAM13) is also talking, and, in this case, directly to me, maybe because there is no one else at the moment. **All the same, I thank him for finally coming out into the open.**

What a shame he missed yet another opportunity to start a dialogue, which I have never shied away from; quite the opposite. I don't think talking to me through other people, or through the newspapers, is the best way.

I fully understand that I am not his target; others are ... **I can only answer for my actions**, which everyone can see – even he. Indeed, the GAT President has taken part in events organised by me, in the audience, and has never said they were “worthless”, also because it would have been difficult to say that to **Charlie Duke, to Walt Cunningham, to the President of the Province, or to the President of INAF** (the National Institute of Astrophysics); I could go on. **Mr Guaita** was present at the National Congress of the UAI (the Italian Union of Amateur Astronomers), where he has his space, like so many other speakers. If FOAM13 was a gathering of incompetents, why did he join us?

We will publish the praise received from teachers and scientists with whom we have collaborated, whose opinions of our results are different from that of the GAT President.

Leaving me aside, there are a lot of other people who worked hard, achieving excellent results. I will let them speak about their work. We can organise a meeting with journalists and specialists, who can give

their impartial opinions of our work. Of course, the opinion of the Presidents of INAF, or of NASA is more authoritative than that of an amateur astronomer, no matter how long his career.

There might be a mathematical difference between what has been achieved in 40 years and what has been achieved in only 5 (I am referring to when I started collaborating with FOAM13), but beware, the quality and the audience involved in the event also count.

I respect the work carried out by GAT and its associates, many are friends of mine, and valuable volunteers at FOAM13. Nevertheless, at the GAT conferences, there are not as many participants as there are during our events.

I have never said we are looking for life in outer space. I talked specifically about the SETI programme, but I will let those responsible talk about that. They have all been informed that their work is currently under unjustified attack.

Do you really want to talk about numbers? Fine! Does the GAT President know that the Space-Planetary Pavilion in the Museum of Flight, of which I am the curator and where FOAM13 organise educational and cultural activities, **receives about 100,000 visitors per year? Two years ago, there were 200,000.** Does the GAT President know that we reach people from every part of Italy and abroad?

In 40 years, did he ever see so many people at the photography exhibitions he used to organise? Has he forgotten that, at the last exhibition, those of us from FOAM13 brought the Command Module, Sputnik and the Apollo space suit, to entice people to the exhibition? Do we really want to play 'who reaches more visitors' game? It seems pointless to me, because we have already won from the start. I don't even dare imagine the results we could have achieved in 40 years of business!

Now Mr Guaita talks about the 'economic unsustainability' of the Observatory, as we have been denied a subsidy that had been assigned to us because of our expertise and our service to the territory, not because we are nice guys! Any foundation or association worth its salt is, or should be, supported when it provides a service to the people.

Why did he not attack Varese Province, when we signed the agreement? I am surprised that, although he is the GAT President, and one of the founding members of FOAM13, Mr Guaita has never participated in the activities of the Observatory (since 2010, I mean, when I began collaborating with FOAM13), perhaps by helping FOAM13 with his experience. Why does he speak after years of absence, except at those events that were to his liking? It seems that FOAM13 is the responsibility of others and not also his. It is easy to say, "It's got nothing to do with it; I knew nothing about it, it's the fault of these incompetents!"

Ultimately, the President of GAT is attacking everything he believed in, when, as the GAT President and founding member of FOAM13, he strived to get the Observatory in Tradate, as did all of the founding members and people of Tradate.

Talking publicly about it, now that we are in economic difficulty (which is not our fault) is like scoring an own goal or, as the saying goes, "taking candy from a baby".

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