

My reminiscence of Giovan Battista Agus through a casual conversation

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The last time I met Giovanni was in Modena (Italy), at the XX Congress of the Italian College of Phlebology (CIF) in Nov 2019. The last day, like all the other speakers, I took the bus to the Congress venue together with the luggage, to leave later directly after our last commitments.

I felt extremely light until I noticed that I forgot my luggage on the platform. My unpleasant discomfort stopped as soon as Giovanni smiling showed the luggage that he had taken for me and everything ended up with a laugh. Someone else added as a joke that I took my chance to lose the Vasculab Server. It was not true, of course, but we can go on telling this as a joke.

We started a conversation and I was naturally led to tell about my travel and phlebologic experience of the previous year in Ecuador (twice in a year), in several non-profit structures and in the Guaranda Hospital.

I was surprised to know that he had the same travel experience, but with a completely different aim. His journey was a serious climbing expedition to reach the top of the Chimborazo Volcan, 6200m without any oxygen cylinder. Taking into account the expansion of the earth at the equator, Chimborazo is much higher than Everest.

Giovanni prepared himself for months, training in an intense way through several repeated ascents to minor heights. He was 75 y.o. when he finally faced the Chimborazo target, with great courage and he did it not exactly in the best weather conditions.



Giovanni and Fausto Passariello together (TEV 2015, Napoli) at the "Taverna del Cerriglio", the place where according to the history/legend the famous painter Michelangelo Merisi, named the "Caravaggio", was stabbed but not killed.

There was a strong snow storm that day and they went, in a line 1st the guide, 2nd Giovanni and 3rd a friend, resolutely directly to the peak, refusing to stop and to get back at the first difficulty.

Well, I really admired him !

In comparison, if a tourist like me can be compared to a professional climber as Giovanni, I reached the Chimborazo refuge by car at the height of 4800m after 10 days of acclimation, experimenting an intense dyspnoea after just 3 climbing steps, definitively forcing me to give up.

I compared Giovanni's climbing to that of Simón Bolívar, "El Libertador", the one who delivered freedom to most countries of South America, to whom you find monuments everywhere from Central America to the southern Land of Fire (Tierra del Fuego). The complete Bolívar poem that Giovanni perfectly knew is reported in the references: it describes the Delirium over the mountain at the summit of the ascent¹.



On the road..., at an altitude of almost 6000m above the sea level.

We shared (at distance) also another experience in Salinas (Guaranda), where I went after having worked a complete day in the Guaranda Hospital and was then too late and unable to meet Father Antonio Polo.

He became a very famous missionary for his solidarity project, who succeeded in assembling together in a unique co-operative society people who struggled in a useless way for several years, selling separately the same objects in a very poor market.

Giovanni met Father Antonio and had a short conversation with him, short because it was conditioned by the bad health conditions of the religious man.

We spoke also about his adventurous complete itinerary of the Way of St. James (Camino de Santiago de Compostela), but we finally arrived to the congress venue, unfortunately breaking our pleasant and interesting conversation.

I would like to add something about his commitment to culture and history of arts and of medicine, features

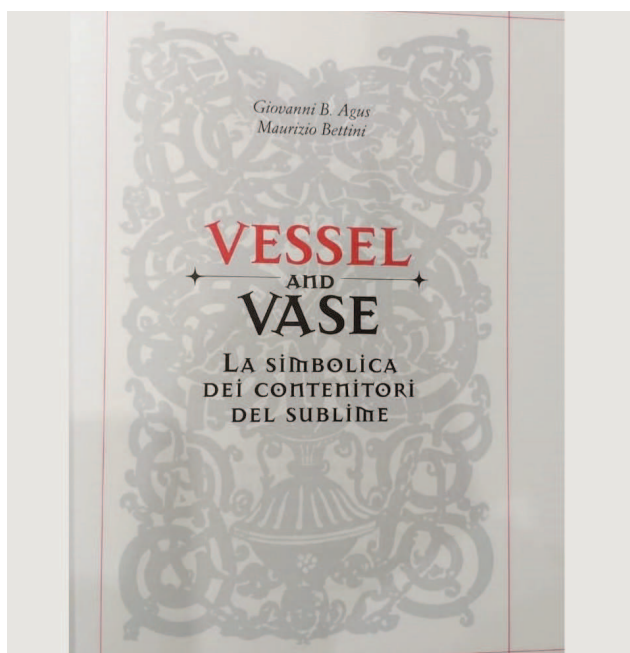
that he demonstrated with his long-lasting efforts in the last years, especially through his Editorials on the *Nautilus* magazine and in the heading “*The Eloquence of Symbols*” in the *Acta Phlebologica* magazine.

Some of these contributions were collected in 1998, in the book *Vessel and Vase*².

As an Editorial Coordinator he led a group of vascular experts aimed to finalize the incomplete book *Vascular Origins*³ by G Marongiu†, committed to the history of vascular diseases.

Giovanni was a fan of venous hemodynamics and followed very closely the cultural background and the principles of CHIVA of Claude Franceschi.

At the presentation of the book in Siena in 2022, he declared in public that Claude was one of the almost 50 pioneers of Phlebology cited in the book, selected from more than 2000 years of history. It isn't then surprising that Hemodynamic Surgery was a frequently touched topic in his Editorials.



Vessel and Vase. The symbolic of the containers of the Sublime.

As witness of the reciprocal appreciation between Giovanni and me and of his consideration of the experience

of JTAVR and Vasculab, let me report one message he sent on Vasculab in 2017 (Date: Wed, 04 Jan 2017 18:37) advertising a new issue of Nautilus, a magazine he was Editor of for several years.

Dear Italian and International colleagues, it's for me a pleasure to send by the courtesy of Vasculab a new issue of Nautilus, the Italian Journal "to promote vascular health through innovative research, education, and technology".

You can find some English articles or English summaries [...] in order to identify the different variables the recurrence ("ReVAS or not ReVAS?") frequently under discussion by the Vasculab, in a personal and original way respectful of the patients.

*This number includes in the Editorial a brief word about the new Journal of Theoretical and Applied Vascular Research, the **Official Journal of the Vasculab Foundation**, born from this experience. [...]*

Regards

Giovanni B. Agus

Professor of Vascular Surgery, University of Milan

Finally, we will miss him, his friendship for many of us, his unconditional love for art and culture, history of medicine, vascular surgery and phlebology. In general, his capability to merge together humanities and science in our daily work.

Of course, ... but I'm simply waiting for the next bus stop.

Fausto



Giovanni and Claude Franceschi at the presentation of the book "Vascular Origins" (Siena, Italy, 2022).

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