

# My memory of Graça

a woman with a deep passion for mathematics  
an incredibly strong person and a very good friend

**Giovanni Pisante**

When I first heard about the new occurrence of cancer from Graça, I could not actually believe it was true. She had to go through a tough life, she fought against cancer some years before and she won the battle, she was declared cancer free by the doctors and was about the time of the latest routine medical checks. The “dangerous years” of higher probability of a relapse were almost gone. Graça was at her best and we, her friends, were happy for her and enjoying to work and to be with her. That email on March 2016 suddenly changed everything.

The passion that Graça had for mathematics and its dedication to the work was clear to anyone that had the opportunity interact with her, even for a short period of time. She loved to share her knowledge with colleagues, to guide and stimulate the students and her perseverance was admirable. She left us too early and we will miss her work, her ideas, her stimulating questions but above all her smile and her spirit.

I meet Graça for the first time about ten years ago in Pittsburgh during a workshop. We had many common friends and we constantly stayed in touch, but it has been only recently, mainly in the last two years, that we started to collaborate on a research project. We had then the opportunity to meet more frequently and anyone who knew Graça can guess that was natural to become friends and not only colleagues.

We shared many mathematical interests and we had a long-term research plan that was giving some nice results. We needed more time to devote to it, so at the end of 2015, she applied for a visiting professor position in the University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”, where I currently work, in order to come in Italy for a period of three months. She was the first shortlisted, she got the position and the scholarship and we were about to plan the details of her visit. It was previewed from September to December 2016. Sadly we had to stop, no

more plans, no more looking for convenient flights, no more searching for a comfortable apartment to rent. We were in stand-by mode, waiting with our finger crossed for the hopefully good results of the medical exams. The good results never arrived, but She never lost the hope to find a path to overcome the difficult situation. She was strong, she was fighting with all her forces and she was willing to work and to do mathematics up to the last day of her life.

Well, since it was not possible for her to come to Italy, I decided that was my turn to go to Portugal. And I was not alone. Together with Massimiliano Morini and Filippo Cagnetti, both close friends of Graça, we planned a trip to Evora in July 2016. She was already going through chemotherapy and consequently suffering a lot so you may think our visit was a tough experience and deeply sad. It was difficult indeed, but not sad. We had a lot of fun and this is the memory that I want to keep with me in the future and share with you. The memory of Graça that, despite all the pain she was going through, was laughing with us, the memory of the nice walks we had together in the city center of Evora, the memory of her singing loud and having fun with karaoke and even working on mathematics.

We knew that probably that would have been the last time we could stay with her and I felt honored because she decided to open her life to us and let us be close to her like a family for these few days.

We will never forget her.



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