It is a great honor for me to be here today participating in the celebrations in honor of a great man, my great friend and colleague at the end of a unique, splendid academic career.

Renzo Dionigi has been well known to me since the 1970s for his studies, as a pioneer, on parenteral nutrition that I was trying to introduce in clinical practice in Pisa. At that moment Dr. Dionigi was already well known to me for his research in tumors immunobiology, and well defined as academic Surgeon (Fig. 1).

But I have personally met Renzo only in 1986 when both of us got to be Full Professors in General Surgery. Since the beginning we shared a strong commitment in developing our schools of Surgery, in training young surgeons offering them the best opportunities of growth. A true friendly relationship began and it always got stronger and stronger through the years. This relationship with Renzo was very fruitful to me because he was much more expert with a well developed academic background. My education was totally clinical and my experience in other fields was very poor.

Renzo impressed me since the beginning with his very special attitude to be useful to friends, to others. What can I do for you, hic et nunc, here and now? The true spirit of the true surgeon.

Renzo involved me in ADSE (Academic Department Surgery Europe). So I met Alfred Cuschieri, another master of availability, a lucky day of my life. Thank you Renzo! (Fig. 2)
To Sir Alfred you and I owe the training of many young surgeons. Since 1990 in Dundee and in Pisa as a visiting Professor and then as Full Professor of Surgery, Professor Cuschieri updated me and my co-workers on the evolution of the minimal-access procedures he was continuously and quickly developing. Leading my group towards an extraordinary growth, in real time.

1. Renzo, in a few months both of us will be retired

My Dean proposed that my academic commitment will go on for three years more. I still don’t know if I will accept. Probably here in Varese the new Dean will confirm you for life. But we have lots of new exciting things left to do.

– Surely a big job is waiting for you: updating the best-seller *Textbook of Surgery* (Fig. 3)

– Possibly yearly I am afraid considering how knowledge and technology quickly change and improve

– Surely you will continue carrying your wonderful creative activity as a writer of books moving freely from science to various humanities: history, art, architecture, sports (Fig. 4)

– The same creativity you had in writing very original books on fly fishing, a passion we share (Fig. 5). A passion to be extended to new members of your beautiful family, introducing them to and teaching them the secrets of this art. A very pleasant duty (Fig. 6).

2. Now how to spend riches – the royalties of the best-seller *Textbook of Surgery*?

– Visiting fascinating wild places with the best fresh waters for fly fishing, travelling more and more around the world?

– Improving your performance, hopefully reaching my top level (this is a classic serious competition between fishermen). Although you started much later than me (I did as a boy in an alpine valley not far from here), some promising results have been recorded, thanks to the tutoring of your splendid wife (Fig. 7).

Surely, the fish is very fond of Dionigi and follows him wherever he goes fly fishing.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5. Renzo Dionigi

Fig. 6. Renzo in New Zealand. Not bad at all.
Some years ago I sent you an e-mail, Renzo, with this picture documenting my good results in fly fishing (Fig. 8). After a few minutes your mandatory e-mail response was simply asking: “Where? When? How?”
“Iceland, last week, of course fly fishing!”
It was a challenge. Even though I know very well how smart and quick you are, never and never I’d imagine to receive this impressive document a few days after (Fig. 9).

Well done! Obviously Sir Alfred, a true master also in salmon fly fishing, did the same but before the both of us (Fig. 10).

3. What to do in the near, long future we deserve?

In 2009, at the Annual Meeting of the American Surgical Association, I had the opportunity to appreciate the presentation of Atul Gawande on the World Global Volume of Surgery. This map (Fig. 11) struck me with its evidence of the numbers. One has probably too much, the other has nothing. The suggestion was: till now around in the world, lots of surgeons carry on their valuable efforts in humanitarian cooperation. But we need a more diffuse and systematic social consciousness: surgical Societies and Organizations, the Universities must be involved in a diffuse well-established cultural, moral, ethical, political engagement. A general consensus is needed, involving our young people in the togetherness and return culture. This may be, should be the future of a true, positive globalization.

Renzo, Sir Alfred and I are planning to visit in the near future the “Andrew Cuschieri Hospital” in Cochabamba, Bolivia (Fig. 12). Andrew Cuschieri, a brother of Sir Alfred, was the missionary who founded and developed this small but efficient hospital. Renzo come with us. Please!

The HOPE (Humanitarian Organization People Equality) program has been opened some years ago by the Alumni Association of Sant’Anna School, one of the three Universities of Pisa, where Sir Alfred is Full Professor of Surgery; for many years has been working with our surgical group and with the engineers in technology research. HOPE is supported by my Fondazione Arpa of which Andrea Bocelli is the Honorary President (Fig. 13). The project involves our new generations in humanitarian cooperation for the development of the togetherness and return culture. Not only medical doctors, but also engineers, economists, agriculturalists, managers, experts in peace keeping. So students and trainees with expert tutors move mainly to Africa. Renzo join us with your powerful school, please.
TRIBUTE TO RENZO DIONIGI

4. Carissimo Renzo

We have in common the same age, the same sense of duty and sense of the role, the same educational background from our Masters. They were extraordinary general surgeons. Their generation raised our beloved fatherland from the ravages of war.

They showed us, day by day, our duty:
– first do your best for the supreme interest of the patient;
– commit yourselves to hard cases;
– never hesitate in front of a request of help;
– never say "Tomorrow" if you can do it now or today;
– the sense of role.

Our Masters witnessed the basic lesson of availability which is the essential trait of the surgeon, a trait which must be transmitted to the next generations of surgeons. Our lucky generation has had the extraordinary and exciting and unique task of transmitting to the young surgeons such fundamental values from tradition but mainly the task of leading them into the new world of the great changes in surgery: technology, minimally invasiveness, robotics, transplantations; the task of promoting the culture of multi-disciplinary working, the only one which leads a simple patient to the most appropriate clinical decision.

Carissimo Renzo,
– for your precious friendship
– for your generous availability
– for having built a prestigious surgical school
– for having contributed so deeply to the development of a high-quality University
– for representing a highly positive image of the Italian surgeons

For all these, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

With all the surgeons of my group, your devoted and grateful Pisan friends.

Funding
None.

Disclosure statement
The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.