Jean Henri Alexandre

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A little more than a year ago, I wrote a tribute to Jean Henri Alexandre [1]. I am here today to remember him 2 weeks after his passing.

A funeral eulogy is something more than a retirement speech; you are assailed by other memories and there is more sadness in recounting them. I have reread my article from last year entitled: “A just tribute to a Great Surgeon, a Great Friend and a Gentleman of Surgery”.

But today I want to add two aspects that I had not highlighted previously: Alexandre’s willingness to teach and his stringency which led him to support those whom he felt merited it.

Way back in 1982, even if for a short time, I had the good fortune to have him as my master and was a first-hand witness to his underlying passion and dedication which compelled him to teach and motivate his group both in scientific meetings and in the operating theatre.

Regarding his commitment to “meritocracy” I want to recall a personal anecdote: perhaps few people know how EHS was founded. Up until 1997 there existed the GREPA (Groupe de Recherche et d’Etudes de la Paroi Abdominale) which had “expanded” from France to Italy with the annual meetings alternating between France and Italy from 1994 onwards.

In 1996, the congress was organized by J.H. Alexandre and I was vice president of the congress and incoming president of 1997 congress. What happened?

In 1994, the G7 Meeting (the gathering of Presidents Clinton, Kohl, Mitterand, Eltsin etc.) was organized in Naples and it was a great success and I thought to myself: “why not organize a similar international gathering for abdominal wall surgery?”. So, I invited in Naples the most important European Surgeons for a scientific meeting on

the state of abdominal wall surgery in their respective countries. England, Spain, Germany, Norway, Austria, etc., were all represented by distinguished colleagues. This opened GREPA up to Europe. However, during the General Assembly, there were those who timidly asked to turn the page and found a new European Society and the next year in Cologne the EHS was created and I had the privilege of being its first President.

And Alexandre Jean Henri, who was in the General Assembly on the day of the inauguration, turned to me with a smile and winked at me as a sign of his satisfaction. Then, at the end of the Assembly, he said to me: “Good Job Francesco! You shall be the first EHS president.... you deserve it!” At that moment, with his blessing, I knew that the organization’s success was ensured.

I was lucky enough to have a privileged relationship with Alexandre: we were in touch often and met at all the meetings throughout Europe from Capri to Saint Moritz, from Paris to Naples. He was always generous in his advice and forthcoming in affection and esteem.

Thanks, Jean Henri for all you gave to me. I am convinced that you will continue to be close and follow me even from the afterlife.

Reference

1. Corcione F (2018) TRIBUTE to Jean Henri ALEXANDRE—now leaving the EHS board. *Hernia* 22:213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10029-018-1754-8>

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