

Presentation of the 5th and 6th issues of volume 29 of *Annali di Igiene*, dedicated to the memory of Prof Carmine Melino

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Key words: Hygiene, Museum, Railways, Occupational Medicine, Industrial Medicine, Capri
Parole chiave: Igiene, Museo, Ferrovie, Medicina del Lavoro, Medicina Industriale, Capri

On the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the death of our beloved Colleague Prof Carmine Melino, the *Annali di Igiene* decided to dedicate a series of scientific contributions to his memory, to be published in a regular issue of the Journal. In fact, the papers submitted for this purpose were many more than a single issue could contain, so two issues, the 5th and the 6th of 2017, were involved. Except for a group of short ceremonial contributions, which describe and comment on the fundamental aspects of both Prof Melino's well-known scientific life, and of his far more secret life as a writer and a poet, the original papers were regularly submitted to, and had to overcome, the scrutiny of anonymous referees, as usual.

The biography of Prof Melino, detailed in the first paper by his beloved son Gerry, today a world famous molecular biologist,

describes his severe education in a senior highschool of classical studies in a small city of southern Italy, which made him familiar with Latin, Greek and literature, followed by brilliant medical studies at the University of Naples. Interested, from the beginning, in the advancements of both Occupational Hygiene and Public Health, he first followed a career in the Laboratories of the Medical Research and Health Control of the Italian State Railways Company, soon reaching the top position as Chief Medical Inspector; but later he decided to leave this position to embrace an academic career in Public Health at the Sapienza University of Rome, beginning as a simple Assistant under a great mentor, Prof Vittorio Del Vecchio. After a position of temporary Professor of Hygiene and of Occupational Medicine at the newborn University of L'Aquila (a daughter of Sapienza University)

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in the '70s, he returned to Rome as Associate Professor in the '80s and there remained for the rest of his academic life. But, after his retirement, he continued his studies and research until his death.

In addition to his son's description, the characteristics of such an unusual man, who made science and humanities live together, are detailed by other witnesses in their short papers. **R.A. Knight**, a British academic, describes Melino's research as "pioneer" translational, because, in his position, he could easily transfer his research results from the University into the Medical Service of the State Railways; but he is particularly fascinated by Prof Melino's life in his *buen retiro* of Capri, consisting of scientific meditations but also poetry, painting, deepening the island's history and mysteries: an integration of two cultures, the opposite of what theorized by C. P. Snow; also **D. R. Green**, another academic, American, often a guest of the Melinos in Capri, could directly experience there with Carmine full days of scientific debate, but also of poetry and literature in such a magic landscape; **M. Piacentini**, an Italian academic, highlights the figure of an indomitable researcher and poet, who went on in spite of all the obstacles that time put along his life, the early loss of his wife, the physical decadence of the last years; **C. Marmo**, a former medical student, schoolmate of Gerry, tells the story of his own refusal to start a Public Health career under the mentorship of Prof Melino, followed, years later, by the unexpected acceptance by this generous professor to help him to transform an unpublished book on occupational cancer into a successful manual. Unlike the others, **C. Notarangelo** was one of his closest co-workers at the Railways Laboratories, and recalls the years with Melino, the young Chief, who was a restless proposer of new ideas and an original experimenter of new organizational

solutions, and in this way made the Railways Laboratories great, but he had the moral courage to leave all that suddenly, to follow a career of professor at the university he always dreamed of.

Finally, we publish the witness of a formerly young researcher of Sapienza University, **A. Finazzi-Agrò**, who began his academic career as a biochemist while Melino started it as a hygienist, both went to L'Aquila simultaneously as professors, and simultaneously came back, years later, to Rome, but Finazzi-Agrò went to Tor Vergata, the Second University of Rome, born as another daughter of Sapienza, of which he later became Rector Magnificus. He describes his love, shared with Melino, for ancient scientific apparatuses, developed by both during the long, snowy evenings of the winter months at L'Aquila; a love that brought Melino to found the Museum of Hygiene at Sapienza, a story described in detail by myself et al in this issue of *Annali di Igiene* (page 397).

From my part, when I moved from Milano University to the Chair of Hygiene at Sapienza in 1986, I immediately experienced a special feeling with Carmine Melino, who was living his final years as professor: I was fascinated by his personality, I encouraged him to produce new editions of his well known books and manuals and I could follow, step by step, the founding of his last project, the Museum of Hygiene. But, above all, I was granted the special honor of being invited to write the preface of some of his books, in particular the one dedicated to the life and achievements of Vincenzo Cuomo, another lover of Capri, where he lived for decades as the island's doctor, and its meteorologist. Melino, for me, until the day of his departure, remained and still remains, thanks to his fresh personality and never ending enthusiasm, the *youngest* among the hygienists of all generations.