

Miguel I. Estrada Sámano:

A life of independent practice with social purpose

By: Antonio M. Prida Peón del Valle

Last Friday, April 8th at dawn, Don Miguel I. Estrada Sámano died at his home, former President of the Mexican Bar Association and the International Association of Lawyers (UIA), leading institutions of national and international level of our guild. He died after a long illness, which he faced with tranquility and strength, and that allowed him sufficient time to receive the deserved recognition and affection of institutions, colleagues and friends with whom he made his endeavours throughout his nearly eight decades of lifetime.

Miguel was a pioneer in various fields of law. Together with Don Humberto Briseño Sierra, Don Julio C. Treviño Azcué and Don José Luis Siqueiros, he was part of the group known as the “Apostles of Arbitration in Mexico,” given that they were the first ones to promote in our country the benefits of such institution as an effective mechanism of dispute resolution.

Indeed, due to the recommendation of Don Agustín Santamarina V., partner of the law firm Santamarina y Steta, and Pat Murphy, partner at Baker Botts, he was the first Mexican designated as sole arbitrator in an arbitration submitted to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). He was the first Ibero-American Vice President of the International Court of Arbitration of the ICC, a position that he held for eight years, and was President of the Academy of Arbitration and International Trade (ADACI), which operated under the auspices of the Mexican Bar Association, the National Chamber of Commerce and the Mexican Institute of Foreign Trade, which held its first seminar in Morelia, the birthplace city of Miguel. He was also Vice President of the Arbitration Commission of the Mexican Chapter of the ICC and co-founder of its graduate arbitration program.

In the human rights field, Don Miguel was a promoter of the idea of building, maybe the most antique institution promoter and defender of those prerogatives: the Mexican Commission of Human Rights, which he founded in 1988 together with other colleagues such as Don José Luis de la Peza and Don Mariano Azuela, who was invited to preside it, and Don Ramón Sánchez Medal; Don Miguel was its International Vice President.

As president of the UIA, he has been the only Mexican and second Hispanic American to hold this prestigious position, before this he presided its XXV World Congress, the only one in its history held in our country. As President of the UIA, he organized a seminar on mandatory bar exams for lawyers, an issue that 15 years later still has not managed to materialize in Mexico.

Mr. Estrada Sámano was member of the founding generation of *Ciudad Universitaria*, where he studied at the Faculty of Law of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, he earned a degree in law with the thesis “Notes on Democracy and Political Representation” and he also obtained a Master of Laws at Tulane University in New Orleans.

He developed his career in several law firms. As an intern, in Don Manuel Gomez Morin's, in Don Juan Landerreche Obregón's and in Don Juan Manuel Gómez Morin's; as a partner, in Santamarina y Steta, Creel Abogados, and Estrada Sámano, González Olguín, De Ovando and Martín del Campo; and as counsel in Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt & Mosle, for about 23 years in which he said farewell, for the honor of my law firm, to his professional activity.

Of his work at the Mexican Bar Association, it stands out the drafting of the statement on the violations of the Constitution incurred by President López Portillo by the decree of the so-call "nationalization" of the bank, which the bankers lawyer of that time, Don Ramón Sánchez Medal, described as historical.

In addition to his distinguished career as lawyer, Mr. Estrada Sámano developed his political vocation, derived from his father's activity as co-founder of the National Action Party, militating in it for over a decade, in which he was member of its National Executive Committee and its National Council.

Throughout his career, Don Miguel received the medal *Ex-A-Vall* in Morelia, the medal *Cruz Distinguida de Primera Clase de la Orden de San Raimundo de Peña Fort*, granted by the Kingdom of Spain, the medal *Mercader de la Paz*, granted by the ICC, the award *Generalísimo de Morelos*, granted by the city council of Morelia, and the designation of honorary member of the Illustrious and National Bar Association of Mexico.

For his personality, critical spirit, social commitment and professional career, Don Miguel I. Estrada Sámano left deep impression among those who had the privilege of knowing him and those who receive the fruits of the endeavours undertaken in advance and that will find full reception in the coming time.