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## In Memoriam: Rafael C. Benitez

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## BURTON A. LANDY\*

Rafael C. “Benny” Benitez was a dear friend and mentor. I cannot think of anyone who had a more profound influence on my legal career, nor who I admired more. He will be missed and long remembered.

Although incredibly busy and forever embarking on new initiatives, Benny always found the time to lend a helping hand and offer guidance and direction to others. I will set forth just a few examples of how he touched and enriched my life and career.

I met Benny shortly after he retired from Pan American Airways and joined the faculty at the University of Miami School of Law. I “volunteered” (i.e., he immediately put the arm on me) to work with him in the organization of the first Inter-American Aviation Conference at the law school. He then encouraged me to continue participating in later conferences around the hemisphere, to present papers, and publish on the subject. Before long, under his guidance, I developed Aviation Law as a new practice area for my firm.

Benny again “volunteered” me to contribute a section on “Latin American Economic Developments” in the early days of the *Lawyer of the Americas*, which he founded and guided. Fortunately, as the publication grew in acceptance and prestige, we obtained a sufficient number of worthy articles, so that in time we were able to develop this “filler section.”

When Benny established the Foreign Students’ Graduate Program of Comparative Law, he prevailed on our firm to host reception at which time we afforded the foreign lawyers an opportunity to visit a local law firm and view the “nuts and bolts” of the practice of law in the United States. A number of long-term professional relationships were established.

Benny also encouraged and assisted me when I taught a graduate course at the law school on Commercial Law of Latin America. Because there was no available textbook in English, I was forced to dig in and learn the academic component to add to

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my practical experience. Frequently, he obtained guest lecturers to pinch hit for me when I was traveling on business.

We worked side by side in a number of international organizations and served together on the Council of the Inter-American Bar Association. He provided me with strong support when I ran my successful campaign for President.

Benny was always able to find “the silver lining in the storm clouds.” When things were not going particularly well with a project, he would often tell the story about Pagan the baseball player in his hometown of Juncos, Puerto Rico. It seems that a group of “wanna-be ball players” played every Saturday morning and the losing team had to buy lunch for the winners. Apparently, Pagan was frequently on the losing side, but would invariably proclaim, as he wolfed down his rice and beans, “*Perdimos el juego, pero almorzamos como reyes.*” (We lost the ball game, but we are eating like kings.)

With the passing of Benny, “*perdimos el rey*” (we have lost the king).