
CINNA LOMNITZ
MEMORIES

Ismael Herrera Revilla
Decan of Instituto de Geofísica
Departamento de Recursos Naturales
Mathematical and Computational Modeling
Instituto de Geofísica - UNAM México

Dr. José Francisco Valdés Galicia has invited me to write these paragraphs in memory of Dr. Cinna Lomnitz Aronsfrau. Although I certainly regret his recent death, I have warmly accepted this opportunity to express my admiration for his brilliant career and refer to the long and close friendship I had with Dr. Lomnitz for so many years.

At the end of 1962, I was appointed by the Governing Board of the UNAM, interim Director of the Institute of Geophysics for 1963. The reason was that Dr. Julián Adem Chaín, decided to interrupt his term as Director as he took his sabbatical year at the U.S. Weather Bureau in Washington during 1963. In such character, I led the delegation that attended the international meeting of the IUGG (International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics) representing the Institute at the Berkeley Campus of the University of California. It was then when I met Cinna Lomnitz. On that occasion he gave an interesting lecture. I had already heard of him and was interested in his acquaintance as he was then apparently the only Latin American seismologist with a PhD, he was also widely known and recognized. I saw the young man, high and slender, personal characteristics that always distinguished him.

Julián Adem shared with me his concern to promote the development of the Instituto de Geofísica and the need to promote human resources formation, and to hire already trained staff if possible, if we could attract from other countries. Obviously, Cinna, being a distinguished Latinamerican was one of the few opportunities that we had at sight. However, in 1964 he was appointed head of the seismological network in Berkeley12.

At the end of 1965 I was again in charge of the Instituto de Geofísica Direction and the 6 of January of 1966 the UNAM Board of Governors appointed me as Director for the period 1966-72. Doctor Ignacio Chávez was then Rector (President) of UNAM; but soon the situation changed, as in April 1966 the Rector and the majority of the directors of schools, faculties and institutes were caught up in a meeting by a student revolt, and we had to present our resignation. However, some days after the UNAM Board of Governors confirmed our appointments.

In May of 1966, engineer Javier Barros Sierra was appointed Rector of UNAM for the period 1966-70. Barros Sierra to its time, named Emilio Rosenblueth Coordinador de Ciencias (Sciences Dean), with whom I had a great friendship. Since the end of 1965, Emilio, had already made me a comment about Dr. Cinna Lomnitz wishes to leave his job in Berkeley and return to Latin America. Immediately I got in touch with Dr. Lomnitz offering him a research position, at the highest level (I think that it was simply of researcher, as three levels which exist today were not yet established).

In April 1966, Dr. Cinna Lomnitz Aronsfrau arrived to Mexico. He came alone; the rest of his family would arrive subsequently. I personally accompanied him to help locate a suitable lodging for his temporary accommodation. I have a nice memory of the place chosen: a house located on Calle del Arbol, at San Angel, beautiful and whose owner claimed to be descendant of Cortes, a great portrait of him was at the entrance. I guess that Cinna was very pleased of the place and, even more, he loved it, because the place that spent the last years of his life and the house in which he died is a few blocks from that magical corner.

A great friendship was established since then between us. In its early years our families shared that friendship. Our children had similar ages. Through us, Cinna's family was acquainted with many of the mexican customs that were then unknown to them. Recently, on the occasion of his death, his son Claudio told me that they loved parties we did where we shattered piñatas.

Since then Cinna and I treated each other always with special affection. In addition, that affection and circumstances of our lives kept us close each other. I was appointed Director of CONACyT in 1970. I returned to UNAM in 1973 to the CIMASS, today IIMAS, due to my research interests; in 1974, we went together to organize RESMAC. When in 1983, the Board of Governors appointed me as Director of the Instituto de Geofísica (IGF) for the period 1983-89, he came along with his student Alejandro Nava and the seismic RESMAC network; this time it was an explicit move to help strengthen the seismology research in our Institute, very lifeless then. That decision of Cinna was a fundamental element that allowed at the Institute, and in our country, a period of uninterrupted progress of Seismology so far.

I consider this occasion proper to make public my gratitude for his invaluable support. And finally, I want to add only that with his death I personally lose a great friend and our institutions, the IGF and UNAM, lose a great seismologist and an eminent scientist.

Mexico City, Mexico
