

## In Memoriam

by JOHN H. COATSWORTH | Columbia University

**Charles Adams Hale**, the preeminent historian of Mexican liberalism and father of LASA's immediate past president, died on September 29 in Seattle at the age of 78.

Charles was born in Minneapolis on June 5, 1930. A history major and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Amherst College in 1951, he returned to Minneapolis to earn an MA in History in 1952 at the University of Minnesota. He married Lenore Rice, Lenny to her legion of friends, the next fall. After a Fulbright year in Strasbourg, the Hales moved to New York City where Charles entered the doctoral program at Columbia University and studied with Frank Tannenbaum whose papers formed the basis for a penetrating 1995 article in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1957 and journeying to brief teaching posts at the University of North Carolina, Lehigh, and Amherst, Charles settled in Iowa City where he became *the* Latin American historian in the University of Iowa's History Department until his retirement in 1998.

Intellectual history punishes beginners because it demands both erudition and subtlety, qualities that come only with much hard work and more time than most can give. Charles's dissertation on "The Problem of Independence in Mexican Thought, 1821-1853" would have made an important book without any further work, but the book he actually published in 1968, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853*, became an illuminating classic that defined an entire field. By the time the book appeared, liberalism—however defined—was rapidly disappearing from intellectual and political landscapes in Europe and the United States and throughout Latin America. Charles persisted almost stubbornly not because his eyes were closed, but because he could see farther than most of us. His method was comparative, seeking the

intellectual forebears of Mexico's leading thinkers not to expose them as pale reflections of European influence, but to understand their originality by showing how and even why they accepted some ideas, modified others, and rejected the rest.

Charles's second book, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, appeared in 1989 as the intellectual terrain was moving through another epochal earthquake. The Spanish edition of his first book had won him a slowly liberalizing Mexico's prestigious Fray Bernardino de Sahagún Prize; his second took the Bolton Prize, awarded by the Conference on Latin American History (CLAH) for the best book in English that year on any aspect Latin American history. *Transformation* brought Mexican liberalism into the twentieth century in a wide ranging and incisive analysis of the interactions between modernization, dictatorship, and the world of ideas both foreign and domestic. By the time it was published, Charles had already received the Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest award Mexico can bestow on a foreign citizen, and had been elected to the Mexican Academy of History.

Charles's last book, *Emilio Rabasa and the Survival of Porfirian Liberalism: The Man, His Career, and His Ideas, 1856-1930*, arrived at my office just days before Charles died. It follows the "transformed" liberalism of the Porfirian elite into the Revolution of 1910 and through the 1920s by focusing on a single resilient individual. Rabasa, as Charles shows, never lost his belief in a "scientific politics" ordered by constitutional norms and managed by an oligarchy of the competent, but he had an unusual capacity to adapt to new circumstances, including the new "revolutionary" regime. He never lost his belief that Mexico's indigenous people were ill-suited to modernization, but he worried

about social issues and eventually espoused an independent Supreme Court as a protection against dictatorship. Charles manages to account for Rabasa's enduring influence without suppressing any of the contractions and ambiguities. In doing so, he connects the focus of his life's work to Mexico's equally contradictory and ambiguous contemporary dilemmas.

Charles's scholarship was matched by a genuine warmth and kindness to colleagues as well as students that became legendary at Iowa and known everywhere. He served, quite without realizing it, as an example to many of us. He believed in the power of ideas. His integrity never faltered. He kept his mind open without sacrificing his standards. Honors and distinctions left him more modest than before.

Charles was immensely proud of his four children. The preface to *Emilio Rabasa* concludes by thanking Lenny, his wife of 56 years, for "constructive criticism, good judgment, and unbounded love." A Memorial Service will be held in Seattle on October 18. The family has suggested that in lieu of flowers, colleagues and friends can make donations in his name either to the Seattle Parks Foundation "for a memorial bench" (860 Terry Avenue North, Suite 231, Seattle, WA 98109) or to LASA for a memorial scholarship for advanced study of Mexican history (LASA, 416 Bellefield Hall, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260). ■