



FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD

In Memory of Heberto Sein

HEBERTO SEIN DIED on October 31 in a hospital in Mexico City just three weeks after he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. He was 78 years of age. His family, and many of us who were his friends, joined together at his burial in the beautiful Parque Memorial at the edge of the city. A steady downpour of rain fell as the casket was lowered into the grave, and it symbolized how all of us felt in the awareness of our loss. Then, on Saturday, November 5, many more of Heberto's friends gathered at the Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City for a memorial service, during which a number of persons spoke about his life and what his spirit and friendship had meant to them.

There have always been a few persons over the years who, in addition to being distinguished as individuals and by their vocations, are also known everywhere as Friends. Heberto Sein was known throughout the world as "The Mexican Quaker," and the Society of Friends as a whole gained from his example. He was a man of profound faith, and his faith was in "that of God in every person." Some who did not share his faith felt he was naive in his belief in the goodness of others. Thank God that there are persons such as Heberto who provide a counter-balance to the world's realism!

During the 36 years that I was fortunate enough to know Heberto, I never heard him speak an unkind word about anyone. Even more significant was the fact that his thoughts were consistent with his words—he *felt* kindly toward everyone, even those who had caused him suffering.

Heberto's work for many years was that of a free-lance interpreter at

international conferences. This took him all over the world—from the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945 to the ILO in Geneva. Heberto looked upon all of these conferences as an opportunity to help people communicate, solve problems, and search for understanding and peace across the barriers of language. He performed this service superbly well, using both intermittent and simultaneous interpretation as the situation required.

This unique skill of Heberto's also served in Friends meetings for worship. Many of us have been awed when some Friend, guided more by fervor than by brevity, would speak for five or ten minutes in meeting, following which Heberto would translate the entire message word for word into Spanish, or French, or English, according to our

needs!

It was Heberto's letter to the AFSC in 1938 that led to the organizing, in the summer of 1939, of the first Friends Service Unit of Volunteers in rural Mexico, which helped the *campesinos* of Santa Ana del Pilar, Coahuila, build the first primary school building the village ever had. Since that year, thousands of young men and women from the United States, Mexico, Latin America, Europe, and many other countries of the world have given of their time and of themselves in these projects of community service, working under the direction of Mexican village leaders on projects the communities themselves have chosen as being important. During all of these years, Heberto served as a wise and inspiring counselor.

Heberto also had a lifelong concern to help in the building of a movement for creative nonviolent social change as a means to correct the serious inequality, injustice and exploitation within the human family. He prepared numerous articles and conferences on this subject and was working on others up until his last illness.

The memorial service at the Casa de los Amigos was a period of solemn rejoicing that we had been privileged to know Heberto Sein and had been warmed and supported by his friendship during these years together.

Anyone wishing to communicate with Suzanne Sein, Heberto Sein, Jr., Daniel Sein and Magali Sein de Zepeda may write to them at Monte Blanco 1135, Mexico 10, D.F.

Edwin Duckles, Clerk
Mexico City Monthly Meeting



Courtesy of Suzanne Sein