

There are undoubtedly many stories that bring Pepe Santaballa to mind. I first met him when I joined the Bank in 1976. My earliest memories of Pepe are from his time as Head of the IDB's Insurance Section. It is also impossible to forget his stints in other Bank units, as well as his terms as president of the Employees' and Retirees' associations. However, the story I want to share now dates back to when Pepe headed the office responsible for employee relations. One of his duties was to notify an employee's family of a death, or vice versa if the employee was away on a mission.

Well, that is where my story begins. In October 1991, I was on an analysis mission for an education project in Chile; the mission chief was Xavier Comas. I was visiting the Chilean city of Concepción with Aurora Belmore. We arrived at the meeting venue, and as soon as we walked in, one of the secretaries asked, "Who is Mauricio Bertrand?" I replied, "I am." She informed me that she had received an urgent call from Washington, D.C., from Mr. José Santaballa, with a message asking me to call him back as soon as possible. And, as I mentioned earlier, since one of Pepe's main roles was handling family-related notifications, I braced myself for the worst possible news regarding my family.

The young woman kindly connected me with Pepe Santaballa, and the moment our conversation began, the first thing he said, "Nothing has happened; everything is fine with your family. I told the secretary to please let you know it wasn't bad news"—well, she had forgotten to do that, leaving me with no choice but to fear the worst. In the end, Pepe told me the call was to inform me that my supervisor, Maritza Izaguirre from the Project Analysis Department, had nominated me for the 1991 Antonio Ortiz Mena Award. He wanted to let me know I had won and that everything was being arranged for me to return to Washington, D.C., as soon as possible to receive it in person. That is what I did.

Once at the Bank's headquarters, I told Pepe about receiving his call while in Chile; what could have been a sad story turned into a funny anecdote shared between us.

You will always be remembered, dear Pepe!!!!