Homage to Professor Ismael Mena, M.D. on the occasion of bestowing of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the University d'Auvergne in Clermont-Ferrand, France on January 15th, 2004.

Excerpts from the presentation by Professor Jean Maublant MD, vice-president of the University d'Auvergne in charge of International Public Relations-policies.

Prof. Guy DARCOURT MD, Prof Gaston MEYNIEL MD. Prof. Ismael Mena MD, Prof. Alan BOUVIER

It is a great pleasure to introduce to you Professor Ismael Mena, Emeritus Prof. Radiological Sciences, UCLA School of Medicine. This ceremony fulfils a personal plan developed during more than twenty years of meetings and scientific exchanges, but this ceremony is also an homage fully justified by the important influence that Ismael Mena has had on French Nuclear Medicine. The scientific career of Ismael Mena is very rich and evidently I will have to limit myself on this occasion to some aspects that are personally relevant.

Ismael Mena was born in Chile and conducted his medical studies in Santiago, initially working as a specialist of Internal Medicine at the Hospital of the Catholic University of Chile. At the end of the 1950 and beginning of the sixties, he travelled to the University of California in Los Angeles in order to study the new discipline of Nuclear Medicine. Upon returning to Chile at the beginning of the sixties he was the founder of the Chilean Society of Nuclear Medicine. At this time he began also important collaborative work with George C. Cotzias, MD from Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York, USA. The Brookhaven National Laboratory is a centre equipped with cyclotrons, linear accelerator, nuclear reactors where particle physics is investigated, a little in the concept that we have today in the accelerators of CERN in Geneva. In this site famous physicists work and in characteristics that are very American, they work in collaboration with a team of medical researchers. Ismael Mena joined the group led by George C. Cotzias, a brilliant physician of Greek origin. This collaboration led eventually to the discovery of the treatment of Parkinson's disease by L-Dopa. I believe it would be interesting for the physicians present in this conference if I were to say some words related to this inspiring history

that is rather unknown.

Cotzias' team was interested at the beginning of the decade of the sixties among other things in the problem of the analysis of the distribution of Manganese in the human body. After having analysed by means of neutron radioactivation analysis extremely minute concentrations of these oligoelements in live tissues they were able to define the distribution and metabolism of this metal in normal subjects. The next stage consisted on studying possible abnormalities of this metabolism in patients suffering from acute manganese poisoning. In the north of Chile there had been reports on the clinical presentation of acute manganese poisoning in miners working in the extraction of this metal. In work coordinated by Ismael Mena at the Catholic University of Chile, Cotzias and his group were able to study some of these patients and report that many of the symptoms produced by the poisoning with Manganese are similar to those observed in Parkinson's Disease. Thus Manganese poisoning appeared as an experimental model for Parkinson's Disease and this opened very interesting perspectives for the development of an efficacious treatment for both diseases. In a few years, Cotzias, Mena and their team were able to demonstrate the therapeutic effect of L-Dopa, a precursor of dopamine, initially on chronic Manganese poisoning and later on in patients with Parkinson's Disease. L-Dopa became the gold standard of treatment of this clinical entity. Unfortunately a short time after this great discovery Cotzias died of a lung cancer and his death was the reason for an absence of scientific recognition for this important discovery.

Ismael Mena appeared deeply involved for nine years of this great adventure related to the extra-pyramidal system. This appeared far removed from Nuclear Medicine but would be later on the basis for brain-imaging studies developed by him.

In 1973, one of the pioneers of Nuclear Medicine, Professor George Taplin MD of the University of California in Los Angeles inventor of Lung Scintigraphy and the utilization of Radiocoloides in Nuclear Medicine, was performing his research work at the department of Nuclear Medicine at Harbor/UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles and he was planning to retire from his academic activities. He gathered the invitation of the University of California to Ismael Mena to share the Department of Nuclear Medicine at Harbor/UCLA Medical Center as a Professor of Radiology and he fulfilled this position and developed it actively until his retirement in 1995.

The hospital of Harbor/UCLA has unique characteristics that made it especially attractive for students and researchers in the United States. It is a public hospital that accepts primarily patients referred for pathologies that are being investigated in that place. This hospital has large physical installations for clinical research in many specialities and in the area of Nuclear Medicine it was the site where Professor Taplin developed all his initial work. Here in this special place Ismael Mena developed with great success his department of Nuclear Medicine that has been particularly strong in the area of cardiac and brain imaging studies.

I came to his team in March of 1982 in order to work in Scintigraphy Imaging of the heart and had the pleasure of spending two unforgettable years in his midst. I had the opportunity to participate in the origin of the first installation in California for tomographic studies of the myocardium that today are universally utilized in studies of Nuclear Medicine.

However, there are some very important personal characteristics of Ismael Mena that marked our relation with him. My spouse and I accompanied by

three little children will always remember the warm and committed reception by Ismael Mena during the stormy night of our arrival in Los Angeles. He and his spouse Maria had prepared the house that we had rented especially, in order that we would have the essentials to initiate our life there, the warmth of his reception and his unconditional support in all difficult moments are excellent memories that we keep from this experience. I believe that we mutually appreciated each other after my time to return to France arrived. Later on, Ismael Mena decided to recruit other French physicians and effectively many of them successively visited and worked in his Center. Many of them are present here this evening and please allow me to cite them in chronological order to the visit to Los Angeles. The first visit was mine, from Clermont-Ferrand afterwards two investigators from Inserm of Clermont worked there to study cardiac tissue culture techniques, Nicole Moins and Pierre Gachon. Later on physicians like Laurent Philippe of the University of Tours, Jacques Darcourt of the University of Nice arrived in Los Angeles., Jacques Darcourt was eventually married to Cecilia Mena, the daughter of Ismael that lives in Nice where he is the Professor of Nuclear Medicine and father of 4 children, grandchildren of Ismael and Maria. After that, Octave Migneco arrived in Los Angeles, also of the University of Nice and currently in the city of Lyon, George Baillet from Paris, actually in the city of Dunkerque, Frederic Paychat of the University of Paris, Bernard Lambert of the University of Bordeaux, Laurent Itti, presently in Paris, Jean-Christophe Cauvin and Emmanuel Itti of Lyon. If Ismael feels probably like the father of these French physicians, I myself feel a little bit like the oldest brother of this very vital group and I am especially pleased to encounter them here as actors of this very important event.

It is very difficult to describe in such a short time all the aspects of the career of Ismael Mena that have been so rich and fulfilling. However, I want to describe just a few particular achievements. In the scientific level, Ismael Mena undoubtedly, has found world recognition in Nuclear Medicine and as an example in 2002, he participated in the organization of the World Congress of Nuclear Medicine as the President of the International Scientific Committee.

With respect to France, Ismael Mena has not only participated in the training of young French Nuclear physicians but among them in the training of his son-in-law Jacques Darcourt and through there has been a selective contribution to an increase of the French population. Ismael Mena's contributed also to the development of French computers for the applications of functional images in Nuclear Medicine that are today essential for modern Nuclear Medicine. This industry was helped significantly in 1980 at a time that due economic difficulties there was the danger of this industry disappearing. Ismael Mena led an initiative in the USA at that time to generate a list of directors of nuclear medicine services that pressured the French government to support this industry and therefore prolonging its survival for 20 more years. I also have discovered in his Curriculum Vitae that in 1966 Ismael published a paper on the biological risk of the French bomb but this has not been a difficulty in our personal relations

Ismael Mena is an insatiable worker, but he is an organized person and has known how to cultivate a rich and magnificent family life and has organized with success the education of his 4 children. His wife Maria is an admirable woman admired by all of us and like it is well said "behind a great man there is always a great woman" and he owes her certainly very much. I believe that the Mena family owes her that most of them live together in Santiago, Chile, a splendid city where the Mena family has regrouped almost completely in the beautiful outskirts of this town.

Ismael Mena you have been and will always be object of my admiration. Very

sincerely, I wish to thank you for everything.

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