

Puerto de Anza - Gateway to Prosperity

Ricardo Valenzuela, June 2008

It was the month of May 1983, and following the advice of Milton Friedman I was on board a Pan-American jumbo jet crossing the Pacific Ocean. My destination was Hong Kong with a short stopover in Tokyo to visit my friend Kenny Kataze. After a couple hours of travel, I landed at Hong Kong's impressive airport where my friend Cathy Devlin was already waiting for me. Cathy was the representative of the National Bank of Detroit in Asia.

As we left the airport riding in an elegant Mercedes that Cathy's husband proudly drove, I had no idea the impact that this trip would eventually have on transforming my consciousness. It would give me a different perspective of the world as seen through a prism which produced visions that I had never before conceived. A prism to open my eyes and make me realize the chaotic situation of my country, which in those days was going through one of its worst crises.

In the next few weeks I had the opportunity to see, understand, and experience the wise words of Milton Friedman, who, in a very assertive letter a few months before had written, "If you really want to see free markets in action, go to Hong Kong. The US abandoned them [free markets] long ago." I could now understand why he considered Hong Kong the last bastion of economic freedom in a world where every day tyrannical governments were pushing their people deeper and deeper into a black abyss of poverty and desperation.

During those weeks I was constantly in awe seeing how that little place, which 30 years before had been the bordello of the orient, had developed into one of the most prosperous places in the world, the most important commercial port in Asia serving 1,500 ships a month, and a powerful economic magnet attracting capital from all over the world that transformed it into the new financial capital of the globe. What was the secret producing that miracle? Freedom. I had left my country just a few years before, when the government expropriated the banking system. Now I could see banks from all over the world opening big branches to take advantage of the paradise of freedom called Hong Kong.

After a few weeks I flew back to the U.S. a transformed man and, allowing my imagination to wander, I could see and visualize a Mexican Hong Kong. As a proud Sonoran, my mind drew it on the valleys, the mountains, and the deserts of my beloved Sonora. However, for the moment I had to abandon that

beautiful vision. Then I had to face the sad reality of a poor Mexico oppressed by socialism, corrupt government, and a lack of freedom.

Twenty years passed, and in the summer of 2003, I had an invitation from a couple of my friends to a lunch meeting with a very special man described by many as the new business star of Sonora. When we arrived at the restaurant, I was impressed when I saw the six and a half foot, 280 pound guy who made me feel small, even though I am six feet one inch tall. One of my friends said, "This is Raymundo (Chamundo) Garcia de Leon." As we shook hands, I instantly had the feeling that I had found a real kindred spirit.

Over the next few months I had the chance to learn the incredible epic story of Chamundo's business successes, the latest being his appointment as Secretary of Economic Development of the State of Sonora. Chamundo served as the economic czar of the State for a couple years and then, having fulfilled his commitment to the governor and drawn by his love for the world of business, he left the position. About a year ago, I learned that Chamundo had acquired what used to be the Mascareñas ranch east of Nogales, Mexico. At that instant, knowing this man so well with whom I share not only friendship but libertarian ideals it was clear something real big was about to happen.

Fifteen years before, a business man from Tucson, Jeff Mathews, had approached me with the idea of acquiring that same land and telling me that he was in control of more than 1,000 acres contiguous to Chamundo's land, and on the USA side of the border. Unfortunately, after months of futile efforts, lack of leadership, and especially lack of the kind of capital needed to acquire the land in Mexico, the project was abandoned.

Last January I got a surprise call from my friend Charles Dumont, a man with a story of success similar to Chamundo's but with sweet international flavor and connections all the way to Dubai, Europe, and even Hong Kong. I had not seen Charles for a few years and after getting caught up on personal events, he surprised me with the news that he had gotten control of the complicated puzzle representing the land on the USA side attached to Chamundo's. After he gave me all the information, he invited me to promote my old vision of a bi-national city in coordination with Chamundo.

After I confirmed the authenticity of Charles' incredible accomplishment, we initiated a series of events beginning with a meeting among the two parties: Mexico and USA. The understanding between Chamundo and Charles was fast, natural and automatic because they are men who not only share a vision, they are also the kind of visionaries described by James Allen when he wrote, "Those

who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night."

They are also two men who, when they hear the defeatist songs of those sad souls who say something is impossible, can be described by Einstein's famous quote, "Great spirits always encounter violent opposition from mediocre minds."

After a few months of hard work, I can now aver that Sonora and Arizona are emerging as the place of birth of a project which will have worldwide impact. The troubled border between Mexico and USA is giving birth to a new place through which both countries join together in a fraternal order. There will be a new city which is not going to be another field of confrontation along the border, but a place of innovation and wealth creation beyond our imagination: the product of a new partnership between two states and two nations, no longer uncomfortable neighbors. This will be a place where the formation of private capital will be within the reach of all people looking for a better life — and the formation of that kind of capital is what builds The Wealth of Nations.

The Mexican side of the project is called The Port of De Anza and it could not have been named more appropriately. It is a door that opens in the present to show us the future. This future is already arriving with a lot of challenges and but for the lack of understanding by some people, is already reaching out shaking the whole world. This is a future that here not only will find an open door, it is a future that will embrace and welcome the same way Hong Kong did forty years ago.

The Anza Port is a gate that as it opens shows us the world of dreams building itself into reality. It is a door to a shelter in the middle of a worldwide economic storm. It is shade in the center of the desert. It is an oasis where people can not only dream, but they can grasp the tools to make their dreams come true. Come and join us in this new world.