DON DANIEL'S SPARK, A LEGACY THAT CONTINUES TO SHINE

For the Spaniards he was a Mexican and for the Mexicans he was a Spaniard, but without a doubt he left his mark in both Mexico and Spain.



In this month when we Mexicans remember those who have departed, I want to pay tribute to Daniel Montull Segura, grandfather of my wife Mari Carmen. A few days ago we visited as a family Salsadella (La Salzadella, in Valencian), in Castellón, his hometown, and that trip encouraged me to write his story.

Daniel was born on February 2, 1888, the eldest of five siblings. When he was eight years old his father fell ill, and he, after school, helped his mother in the shop. Later he was a grocer's apprentice in Vinaròs, where he only earned his food, but learned happily. At 14 he moved to Valencia, got a job, and with his first salary enrolled in an academy. He later became a manager in a warehouse in Barcelona.

On September 26, 1906, with his parents' blessing, he set sail for Mexico. He arrived in Veracruz on October 23, at the age of 18 and with practically nothing. He started as a delivery boy and then as a coffee and match seller. Later he was a traveling salesman for La Central, the largest match company in the country. He was proactive and resourceful:



when he was in the capital, he would get on the delivery carts to greet customers and listen to their complaints.

Don Daniel had a full life but not one exempt from difficulties. He lived through the Mexican Revolution, the Cristero War, and the 1929 crisis. He was in Spain shortly before the Spanish Civil War and during that time traveled on a train that was bombed. During World War II he could not visit his native country. His children, Daniel and Mercedes, died at an early age.

After facing unfair treatment, he resigned from La Central and in 1915 founded the match factory La Corona. In 1934 he returned as a partner to La Central, the company where he had worked, and was its president from 1939 until his death. This trajectory is told in a few lines, but what he went through to achieve it were adversities transformed into opportunities. That was his secret. He used to repeat a phrase he learned from his father: opportunities in business are like thrushes, "when they pass by, you catch them".



He was honest, punctual, generous, and neat. I remember him well-dressed, with a carnation in his lapel. He was a very loving grandfather. His wife, Carmen Vallès, was his anchor. His daughters Carmen, Pilar, and Marisa married respectively Lorenzo Servitje, founder of Bimbo; José Barroso, who ran the El Fénix factory and was president of the Red Cross; and Jerónimo Arango, who established Aurrerá.

He never forgot his roots. Like a good indiano, the emigrant who makes a fortune in America and returns to his homeland, he built the Villa México residence in Salsadella. Together with Tomás Molins and other match manufacturers, he also built Plaza México and contributed to restoring the parish that had been burned in 1936, during the Civil War. There is an avenue named after Daniel Montull and another after Tomás Molins.

He always returned to his origins with deep affection, and that practice has remained rooted for five generations. We hope it continues for many more: there is a family commitment to their roots in Salsadella.