Carlos Manuel Gasteazoro (1922–1989)

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In mid-1989, Carlos Manuel Gasteazoro passed away in Panama City, the victim of cancer, 67 years after his birth in the same city. He spent most of his career struggling to understand and write Panama's history. His achievement lay as much in training students and promoting others' research as in his own publications.

Carlos Manuel attended the Colegio La Salle in Panama and then traveled to Lima, where he studied history, literature, and law at the University of San Marcos. He later received his doctorate from the University of Seville. His residence in Spain led naturally to compilation of documents about colonial Panama in the AGI, Simancas, and other archives, which were published in Mexico in 1956, under the title Introducción al estudio de la historia de Panamá.

On his return, Carlos Manuel became professor of history at the University of Panama, where he devoted the rest of his career to training young scholars in documentary research and historical writing. He also founded the university press in 1969 and served as its director until 1986. While insisting on a Panamanian history, Carlos Manuel translated and published a number of fine English-language texts about the country's past. Always strapped for money, he often had to write prefaces and do the editorial work himself. One of his major accomplishments was the 16-volume Biblioteca antológica de la cultura panameña, to which he contributed a study of the statesman Ricardo J. Alfaro.

Although most of his work dealt with the Spanish period of Panama's history, Carlos Manuel also wrote on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His two-volume documentary collection, La historia de Panamá en sus textos (1980) contains fine explanatory material and the most complete annotated bibliography available on modern Panama.

An indefatigable worker, Carlos Manuel Gasteazoro was deeply committed to two important projects during his last few years: commemoration of the Columbus quincentenary and publication of a university textbook on the history of Panama. His many students and colleagues in Panama will certainly complete those initiatives in his memory.

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