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**THE PAST 40 YEARS: REFLECTION ON THE EVOLUTION OF
IMMIGRATION LAW AND PRACTICE**

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UT Conference on Immigration and Naturalization

With the effort of several Hispanic law students, The University of Texas School of Law, working with Assistant Dean Byron Fullerton, organized its first Conference On Immigration And Naturalization, which was held in the Hemisphere Plaza Convention Center in San Antonio on October 13-14, 1977, thus setting the precedent for holding the annual UT Conference on Immigration and Naturalization every year since 1977, almost always in San Antonio. Those student leaders were Horaciol Barrera, Jose Garcia, Jorge A. Gutierrez, Oscar M. Laurel, Jr. and Rene O. Oliverira. In later year, Rene Oliverira went on to be elected to the State Legislature. First speakers at the UT Conference included Charles Gordon, Jack Wasserman, Robert Shivers and Eugenio Carzola with the keynote address being made by INS Commissioner Leonel Castillo.

Development of the Association of Immigration and Nationality Lawyers (AINL)

The practice of American immigration law developed post-World War II led by retired Immigration Examiners of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in New York. The Association of Immigration and Nationality Lawyers (AINL) was formed in 1946. Josh Koenigsberg led the effort along with Edward Dubroff, Gus Lazarus, Anita Streep and Haskell Barst. Early practitioners focused on the representation of foreign nationals that were deemed to be excludable based upon membership or association with the Communist Party.

AINL was a New York-focused organization until the early 80's. As immigration bar practitioners expanded in New York and westward, AINL filled a necessary role in providing information on immigration law developments through its annual conference and its *President's Letter* and later the *Immigration Journal*. There was very little written material and in fact, many of the INS Operation Instructions and regulations were published in so-called "blue pages" that were not even available to the practitioner. Leading authorities who had experience provided invaluable insight including Jack Wasserman, Charles Gordon and Sam Williamson who was one of the early pioneers in Texas along with Beaumont Martin, Lauier McDonald and Harry Gee. To some significant degree, the bar originally depended upon former INS officials and State Department officials in the Visa Office that were available to the bar, particularly Cornelius Scully, Chief of the Regulation and Legislation Section of the Visa Office of the U.S. Department of State.

American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

AINL held its first national conference in Texas in San Antonio in June, 1981; changed its name to the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) at a Board of Directors meeting held at the Houstonian in Houston, Texas in August 1981; established its first national office in Washington, DC in September, 1981; and hired its first permanent executive director, Warren Leiden, in February, 1982.

In addition to the University of Texas, the Texas Chapter also held regular conferences providing the necessary education to develop a much larger immigration bar.

With the growth of the immigration practice, the AILA Texas Chapter expanded its membership from a handful of lawyers in 1977 to a chapter today that has over 1,300 members.

Board Certification

In 1979 the Board of Directors of the State Bar of Texas approved standards for Board Certification in Immigration and Nationality Law allowing a significant number of attorneys in the intervening years to become Board Certified in Immigration and Nationality Law.

Other Developments

Upon his election in November, 1976, President Jimmy Carter appointed Houston City Comptroller Leonel Castillo, the first Hispanic American to be Commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

In addition to the valuable information provided through AILA and UT Conference, other indispensable sources of information early on was Charles Gordon's indispensable treatise *Immigration Law and Procedures* written and edited by Charles Gordon and subsequently co-edited and written by Stanley Mailman and then Stephen Yale-Loehr.

Another important source of information early on was *Interpreter Releases* published by the American Council for Nationality Service and its Editor, Maurice A. Roberts. There were also key individuals in government, particularly in the U.S. Department of State. Cornelius Scully, Chief of the Regulation and Legislative Section of the Visa Office regularly attended AINL/AILA and UT conferences to provide indispensable information from the point of view of the Visa Office.

The Public Law Institute published one of the first books as a result of a CLE that was no more than ¼" thick and generally there were little sources of information unless one took advantage of attending the UT Conference and AINL Annual Conference to hear the early leaders in the immigration bar.

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Title search: The Past 40 Years: Reflection on the Evolution of Immigration Law and Practice

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