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*FROM A BOY IN CUBA TO A CORPORATE PRESIDENT*

## Luis Alcalde always has heeded his father's words: No one can take away what you know or who you are



By JONATHAN NAWN  
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Luis Alcalde last week was named president of Columbus-based PICA (Professional Investigating & Consulting Agency, Inc.) Corp., charged with overseeing the brand protection, loss prevention, risk management and security consulting needs of predominantly global Fortune 500 clientele and their counsel.

Alcalde readily admits he has come a long way from his Cuban roots.

When U.S.-trained Cuban exiles unsuccessfully invaded Bahía de Cochinos, known to most Americans as the Bay of Pigs, in 1961, Jorge Alcalde, Luis' father, was among those arrested and charged by the Cuban government of Fidel Castro with taking part in an anti-revolutionary plot.

After 18 months in prison, he was given the option to leave the country in the hull of one of the many ships returning to the U.S., having delivered a ransom for the captured revolutionaries. Leaving a successful law practice, a farm and an apartment in an affluent Havana neighborhood, the Alcalde family immigrated to the United States with only the clothes on their backs and started building a new life. Luis was eight years old.

"My father always said, 'Luis, there are some things that nobody can take away from you, you can only take them away from yourself: what you know, what type of person you are, your honor and your ethics,'" said Alcalde. "I have always followed those principals."

Through a refugee resettlement program, the Alcalde fam-

ily found itself in Columbus. Jorge Alcalde never practiced law again, but did manage to get his Cuban law degree recognized as a bachelor's degree and eventually began teaching high school Spanish. Following his father's career, the family moved to Martin's Ferry, Tenn., and finally back to Columbus where Alcalde graduated from Reynoldsburg High School.

A naturally curious person and a voracious reader since he was able, Alcalde studied political science at The Ohio State University and went on to earn his law degree from the same. Heeding the advice of Professor Lawrence Herman, Alcalde, like Herman, started his professional career by serving in the U.S. Army JAG Corps as a prosecutor and defense counsel.

"I went in with one very specific idea: to get as much trial experience as I could get," said Alcalde.

His plan worked. In Germany at the height of the Cold War, he tried more than 120 court martials, an often lengthy and Byzantine process, in a three-year period.

"This was between '81 and '84, that's Reagan and Carter. So we've got a ton of troops over there. There's a lot of tension; these are very spirited troops that trained hard and at times got into a lot of trouble," said Alcalde, adding that he tried cases of rape, murder, "the whole gamut."

With the trial experience under his belt, Alcalde returned to Columbus and accepted a position with the state attorney general's office, overseeing administrative disciplinary cases under then-Attorney General Anthony Celebrezze Jr.

His Spanish language skills eventually were utilized at Crabbe Brown and James LLP where he litigated international business matters in Latin American and Spanish-speaking countries for more than 20 years, attaining a reputation in the legal community as a tenacious litigator and consummate arbitrator.

"Due diligence is kind of his corner stone. When Luis takes on a project, there is truly no stone left unturned," said Larry James, longtime friend and associate.

In the thick of a prolific career, Alcalde could fit some definition of a workaholic — though he has rejected the punch-in, workaday attitude and adopted his own perspective on daily life.

"I call it the seamless web. Most people live their life with a very strict separation between work and what they consider their non-work life," said Alcalde. "I find that to be kind of restrictive because to a great extent it implies that what you're doing at work isn't as fun or interesting as what you're doing in the rest of your life."

James likens Alcalde to the creative and ideological protagonist of Ayn Rand's "The Fountainhead," Howard Rourke.

"He could fit that description of the Renaissance man, when you think of someone who went to law school in the old traditional sense to pursue that noble art of intellect," said James. "If Luis were sweeping streets, he would turn it into an art form."

As the new president of the PICA Corp., he'll make good use of that talent.

"I believe in education, keeping your mind fresh, and understanding what the younger generations are doing and how they're thinking, that's the only way you'll stay relevant," he said. "People tend to get insulated when they get older and that is something that I try to fight against."

When he's not in Sao Paulo representing Luis Vuitton — or another exotic locale representing another distinguished company — it isn't uncommon to find Alcalde in the Clintonville home he shares with his wife Elizabeth Tarpay Alcalde. He most likely will be immersed in a book, part of his ongoing philosophy of personal continued education.