

Rómulo Antonio O'Farrill [Jr.] (1917-2006), media entrepreneur

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Rómulo Antonio O'Farrill Jr. (1917-2006)
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O'Farrill, Rómulo Antonio [Jr.] (1917-2006), media entrepreneur, was born on 15 December 1917 in Puebla, Mexico, the eldest son of Rómulo O'Farrill Silva (1897-1981) and his wife, *née* Naude. His father was an automobile industrialist, and later publisher, who co-founded Telesistemas Mexicanos, *Novedades* and *The News*, as well as the Instituto Mexicano de Rehabilitación. A street in Mexico City is named after him.

The O'Farrill family of Mexico represent a traditional and powerful group with interests in the media, publishing and other industries. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, County Longford brothers Stephen O'Farrell (b. 1807) and Joachim O'Farrell (b. 1809) emigrated to Spain and then to the Caribbean region, together with a third brother whose name is unknown. Stephen went to the United States, Joachim to Mexico and the third brother to Cuba (although the well-known O'Farrill family of Cuba, descended from Richard O'Farrill of Montserrat, may have not been directly linked to the Mexican branch). Joachim O'Farrell settled in Puebla and changed his name to Joaquín O'Farrill. He had a daughter, Rosa María, and at least two sons, José Adrián and Miguel, the latter being Rómulo O'Farrill Silva's grandfather.

Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. was raised in Mexico City. In 1933 he was sent to study at St. Anselm College, a school run by Benedictine monks in Manchester, New Hampshire (US), where he learned English and graduated in 1937. He later obtained an MBA at the Detroit Business Institute.

In 1949 Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. and his father obtained from the government the concession for XHTV-Channel 4, the first commercial television station in Mexico. The first remote transmission was made in July 1950 from the Auditorium of the National Lottery, and consisted of a programme televising a raffle for the subscribers of the *Novedades* newspaper. The first televised sports event, a bullfight, was transmitted the following day. The first commercial broadcast was the state of the union address of President Miguel Alemán Valdés in September 1950. The O'Farrill's television holdings increased and developed into Telesistema Mexicano, later renamed Televisa, which Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. first managed and eventually headed as chairman of the board.

Together with another media specialist, Andrés García Lavín, in 1969 the O'Farrills established a newspaper chain that distributed the newspaper *Novedades* in the states of Acapulco, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo. In 1950, they also launched *The News*, which until its demise in December 2002, was one of Latin America's most well-distributed English-language dailies.

Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. has sat on the board of several corporations and banks, including RCA Victor de México and Sears Roebuck de México. In 1962-1963 he was president of the Inter-American Press Association. He was also a founding member of the Mexican Council of Businessmen, and honorary consul of Ireland in Mexico for over twenty years. O'Farrill Jr. and his various companies are reputed to have maintained close relations with the Mexican governing elite and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. married Hilda Ávila Camacho (d. 2003), eldest daughter of Maximino Ávila Camacho and Feliza Casazza, and a niece of the former Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho.

After a long illness, Rómulo O'Farrill Jr. died on 18 May 2006 in Mexico City.

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