

Raoul Cortez

Spanish-language radio and television station owner; b. Jalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, October 17, 1905; d. San Antonio, Texas, December, 17, 1971. Cortez started out as a sales representative for Pearl Brewery and a reporter for *La Prensa* newspaper before negotiating a time slot for Spanish programming on local radio station KMAC. In 1944, Cortez applied for a license to open his own radio station. To get around wartime restrictions on foreign language media, he stated that part of the station's purpose was to mobilize the Mexican-American community behind the war effort. He was granted the license and eventually opened KCOR-AM in San Antonio in 1946, which was the first all Spanish-language radio station owned and operated by a Hispanic.

Cortez was closely involved with LULAC, the League of United Latin American Citizens, a leading national organization promoting civil rights for Hispanic Americans. During his term as director for District 15, which includes San Antonio, he oversaw the *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District* case, marking the end of segregation against Mexican Americans in Texas public schools. In 1948 and 1949 Cortez was elected to two consecutive terms as President of LULAC. In this capacity he worked with Mexican President Miguel Aleman and U.S. President Harry S. Truman to ameliorate the plight of Mexican immigrant workers through the bi-national 'Bracero Program.'

In 1955, Cortez expanded his broadcasting operations to include both radio and television when he launched KCOR-TV Channel 41. This was the first television station aimed solely at a Hispanic market, as well as the first to be broadcast on UHF (Ultra-High Frequency). At first the station aired programs only in the evening, but eventually expanded to include a variety of daytime shows. Programs produced by the station, such as *Teatro KCOR* and *Teatro Motorola*, were written, directed, and performed by popular Tejano actor Lalo Astol, who also had been involved in productions for KCOR-AM. In addition to locally-produced programming, the station aired movies and variety shows either made in Mexico or featuring established Mexican actors.

Cortez's son-in-law, Emilio Nicolas, Sr., helped run the station and solicit advertising. At the time, it was difficult to recruit advertisers, because not many television sets were equipped with UHF receivers. Despite vigorous efforts to bring in enough advertising, the financial difficulties associated with being a UHF station eventually persuaded Cortez to sell KCOR-TV in 1961 to a group of investors that included Emilio Nicolas, Sr. and Mexican media tycoon, Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta. The new owners changed the station's call letters to KWEX.

Cortez has received numerous awards and honors for his groundbreaking work. The City of San Antonio named the Rao'l A. Cortez Branch Library in recognition of his accomplishments. In 2006 the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) gave the NAB Spirit of Broadcasting Award jointly to Cortez and his son-in-law, Emilio Nicolas, Sr. In 2007 the professional publication *Radio Ink* created the Medallas de Cortez to recognize excellence in Hispanic radio broadcasting. Cortez is survived by his son Rao'l, Jr. and daughters Rosamaria Toscano and Irma Nicolas.

Nicole Lopez