

Nathan Safir

Safir, Nathan. Trailblazer in Spanish-language broadcasting and founder of KCOR-AM, the first full-time Spanish-language radio station in the United States. Safir was born July 14, 1914, in Hartford, Connecticut, to David and Bertha Safir. The Safirs moved to Monterrey, Mexico, on business when Nathan was only six months old. At the age of twelve, Safir enrolled in the Texas Military Institute in San Antonio, Texas. By the age of sixteen, he had enrolled at the University of Texas in Austin to pursue his life-long dream of a career in journalism.

In 1930, Safir graduated with a Bachelor's degree in journalism and began working as a print journalist. Following the outbreak of World War II, he served three years in the United States Army and was stationed in Germany. In 1942, he married and had two sons, David and Larry. Like his father, Larry Safir also took an interest in broadcasting and now owns and manages the Univision television station in McAllen, Texas.

When the war ended, Nathan Safir began producing a weekly Spanish-language broadcast on KTSA-AM in San Antonio. Then, on December 24, 1946, he helped found the first full-time Spanish-language radio station in the United States at KCOR-AM. This was important to both Hispanic broadcasters and Hispanic audiences throughout Texas, because it gave them regular access to news, information, and entertainment of particular interest to them. Prior to this, Hispanics had been required to purchase blocks of time from mostly Anglo-owned stations in order to broadcast Spanish-language programs. KCOR-AM played a variety of types of Mexican and Mexican-American music and featured such popular DJs as Mateo Camargo, who provided a mix of music and talk. Soon, Safir also would help establish the first full-time Spanish-language television station, KCOR-TV. Despite success with both the radio and T.V. stations, Safir did encounter some difficulty convincing businesses and advertising agencies to advertise in a Spanish-language format.

Although there were others, including Rauil Cortez, who pioneered Spanish-language broadcasting in the Southwest, Nathan Safir generally is recognized as the individual most responsible for its founding. He was named President of the Texas Association of Broadcasters in 1975, and, in 1982, received the Pioneer Broadcaster of the Year award from the Texas Association of Broadcasters. On May 1, 1989, the National Association of Broadcasters acknowledged Safir's important role by inducting him into the Broadcasting Hall of Fame.

In 1990, Safir retired as general manager of KCOR-AM after working for 44 years in the business. On September 7, 1996, at the age of 83, he died at home following complications from diabetes and was buried in Agudas Achim Memorial Gardens in San Antonio. Nathan Safir is survived by his wife, Lillian Safir, his two sons, David and Larry, his brother Alex Safir, and four grandchildren.

Ray Cano, Jr.