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For This Author, Life As A Cuban Exile Is The Ultimate Trip

By [CHRISTINE DIMATTEI \(/PEOPLE/CHRISTINE-DIMATTEI\)](#) • 21 HOURS AGO

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(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wlrn/files/styles/x_large/public/201711/dr_ochoa.jpg)

Dr. Rolando Ochoa, author of "Cuba 18, U.S. 50," visits the WLRN newsroom.

TERENCE SHEPHERD

By his own admission, Dr. Rolando Ochoa is not much of an air traveler.

But on a flight to San Diego a few years ago, it occurred to the Miami Dade College professor just what a trip his life has been so far. And the legs of the journey were far from ordinary: from child star in his native Cuba. to political refugee in his late teens, to budding music artist, to banker, to educator.

Now, they serve as chapters in his book, "Cuba 18, U.S. 50: My Fifty Year Trip."



Listen

4:32

WLRN's Christine DiMattei interviews Dr. Rolando Ochoa about his memoir, "Cuba 18, U.S. 50."

"Most of the book is written in a retrospective style," says Ochoa, who's one of the local authors featured during this year's **Miami Book Fair**. (<https://www.miamibookfair.com/>)

Before Fidel Castro came to power, Ochoa's father (also named Rolando) was the "Bob Hope of Cuba," the host of a wildly successful television show. When he caught young Rolando lip-synching a song one day, he asked his son if he wanted to join the act. Ochoa said yes and before long, the youngster had his own show. (This past July, Ochoa's father was honored by the city of Miami when a portion of Southwest 12th Court was designated "Rolando Ochoa Way" in honor of his contributions in film, television and radio.)

Things changed dramatically for Ochoa and his family in 1962, when they arrived in the United States as political refugees just two weeks before the Cuban missile crisis. Mastering English and earning a living were among the struggles Ochoa confronted. After a brief stay in Los Angeles to jump-start his entertainment career and a stint in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War, Ochoa returned to Florida where he eventually became a successful banker.

Inevitably, certain chapters of Ochoa's life have made their way into his business curriculum at Miami Dade College, where he teaches mostly juniors and seniors.

"I tell them so many anecdotes that one time a student came to me and said 'Professor, you're making up all these stories right?'" Ochoa recalls with a laugh.

Ochoa told the student that, no, all the stories are true.



The Miami Book Fair

“Transition and Achievement”

(<https://www.miamibookfair.com/event/transition-and-achievement-dr-roland-ochoa/>)

Dr. Rolando Ochoa discusses his memoir, “Cuba 18, U.S. 50”

Saturday, Nov. 18 @ 5 p.m.

Miami Book Fair
Miami Dade College’s Wolfson
Campus Room 7128 (Building 7, 1st Floor)
300 NE Second Ave., Miami, FL

(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wlrn/files/styles/x_large/public/201711/little_rolando_1.jpg)

Rolando Ochoa was a child star in his native Cuba in the early 1950s.

CREDIT ORIGINAL BOOKS

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