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RICHARD DE ROCHEMONT, 78, DIES

RICHARD DE ROCHEMONT, 78, DIES; MADE 'MARCH OF TIME' NEWSREELS

By WALTER H. WAGGONER
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Richard G. de Rochemont, an award-winning film maker and former executive producer of "The March of Time," the newsreel program, died Wednesday at Hunterdon Medical Center in Flemington, N.J., after a long illness. He was 78 years old and lived in Manhattan and Flemington.

Mr. de Rochemont, who spent most of his career as a correspondent and film producer with the Time-Life organization, retired in 1980 as president of Vavin Inc., which he established in 1955 to produce informational films.

Mr. de Rochemont started as a newspaper reporter in Boston and New York in the late 1920's, but soon abandoned the printed page for the fast-growing newsreel industry.

As executive producer of "The March of Time," he won an Academy Award in 1949 for his production of "A Chance to Live," about Boys Town in Italy. He also received several awards from the Government of France, including commander in the Legion of Honor and commander in the Order of the Merite Nationale. Began in Films in '30

After working for The Boston Advertiser and The New York Sun, Mr. de Rochemont began his film career with the old Fox-Movietone News in 1930. He was foreign editor of the newsreel company in 1930 and 1931, and then was stationed in Paris until 1934, when he joined "The March of Time."

He was European correspondent and then managing director from 1934 to 1940 and managing editor in New York until 1943. Under his direction in 1941, "The March of Time" produced "The Story of the Vatican," the first sanctioned film of the papal state.

In 1943 he succeeded his brother, Louis, as executive producer of "The March of Time." He remained in that post until November 1951, when Time Inc. dismantled its film-producing division.

After two years as a vice president of J. Walter Thompson, the advertising agency, Mr. de Rochemont established Vavin Inc., producing films for such organizations as the State Department and the Ford Foundation. Links With France

Mr. de Rochemont was born on Dec. 13, 1903, in Chelsea, Mass., a descendant of a French Huguenot family. From 1943 to 1946, Mr. de Rochemont was president of France Forever, an association of Americans in support of a free France, and also a vice president of the French-American Club, which represented the French colony in New York City during the war.

He was the author, with Waverly Root, of "Contemporary French Cooking" and "Eating in America." He was also the author, as a result of a dinner conversation with the publisher

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Alfred A. Knopf, of "The Pets' Cookbook," published by Knopf in 1971.

Mr. de Rochement attended Cambridge (Mass.) Latin School and Williams College and graduated from Harvard College in 1928. He is survived by his wife, the former Jane Louise Meyerhoff.

Illustrations: photo of Richard G. de Rochemont

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