



The duty free world has paid rich tribute to Alberto C Motta Snr, creator and Chairman of Motta Internacional and the founding father of Americas duty free, who passed away last month aged 90.

Mr Motta opened the region's first airport duty free store in Panama City in 1949. He fought to establish the duty free concept in the country and throughout the Americas, spreading the duty free word in Latin America, and opening similar airport operations in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Peru and Guatemala.

He was a key figure in the formation and growth of the International Association of Airport Duty Free Stores (IAADFS), whose President is Mr Motta's son, Alberto 'Pancho' Motta Jr. The Moodie Report joins all his friends and great admirers in the business in sending our condolences to the Motta family on their loss and to the company he formed on the passing away of a great leader.

David Bernstein, long-time IAADFS President and former Chairman of Duty Free International: "Don Alberto Motta Snr was the dean of duty free in the Americas and most instrumental in establishing and nurturing the IAADFS. Even more important was his stature as a humanitarian, family man and distinguished business man with many successful interests in the world of duty free, aviation insurance, banking and cattle ranching.

"A leading citizen of Panama, he was also internationally well known and loved. I, like many others, was privileged to have had him as a friend and mentor and will miss him greatly."

Dan Daly, former head of Seagram Duty Free and a long-time friend: "Our industry has lost one of its great

Last month one of the duty free industry's truly great influences passed away. Alberto C Motta Snr helped conceive and shape the business in the Americas, playing a pivotal role as it gained regulatory legitimacy down the years and flourished as a retail channel. In this special tribute senior figures from the business pay homage to a man one described as "the doyen and lighthouse of our industry".

pioneers. I have lost a teacher and an old and very dear friend. Many successful businessmen achieve greatness by stepping on or over those that they encounter along the way. Alberto Motta, on the other hand, always extended a hand of friendship and co-operation to those he encountered; a far more difficult, but far more rewarding, path."

Harry Diehl, Chairman of the Advisory Board, Gebr Heinemann: "The loss of Alberto C Motta Snr at the age of 90 has left us with precious memories but also an obligation to live in his reflected intelligence, loyalty and fairness. He was the doyen and lighthouse of our industry and it will be very hard to find anyone to replace him.

"He was a very great man and many of us are very sad to hear the news. He brought joy and humanity and wisdom to all of us. After him and his family I named Panama, Panama-motta! What a great man and what a great family."

Lars Johansson, Owner, Imagination Unlimited International: "Of all my memories of this great man there is one theme that runs throughout. Don Alberto always treated you like family. And if you take a look at the great family he created, being treated like one of his own is the greatest gift he could bestow upon you."

Joe Lyons, DFS Group: "I will remember Alberto Motta Snr as a great duty free pioneer, an industry leader and a wonderful human being. He was a kind man who lived life with spirit and enthusiasm for the duty free business, his family, and for Panama. In the 36 years I knew him, he never changed. He was always positive with a can-do attitude, ready smile and an endless supply of jokes and stories.

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Excerpts from The Golden Book*

Mr Motta passed through Shannon Airport just after the (world's first) liquor store had opened in 1947, and on his return home he went to the Minister of Finance and told him about duty free.

"Of course he didn't understand what I was talking about," Mr Motta remembers. "But he was a good friend and tried to help. Eventually he suggested we take advantage of a law that said if taxes had been paid on imported goods and it could be proved that the goods were re-exported, then the taxes could be claimed back." This formed the basis of an airport operation that lasted for the next ten years.

He is revered among the elders in the business as much for his sense of humour as for his commercial acumen. When asked recently how he managed such an extensive family board of directors, he replied tongue in cheek: "I just tell them all what they think, then tell them what to do."

His view that margins are less important than volumes is summed up in a favourite expression, "Sell and repent... but sell."

**Duty Free 1947-1997, written by Julian Fox, 1997*

"Despite his great success, he had a great touch and related easily to business and political leaders as well as to waiters, bell captains and hourly employees who keep businesses going. The company got it right in their release after the funeral: 'On Thursday we will resume operations with the spirit and verve characteristic of our founder.' My deepest sympathies go out to the family on their loss."

Enrique Urioste, CEO, InterBaires: "I had the great honour to meet Mr Alberto Motta a few years ago. Undoubtedly, he was a successful businessman and the head of a great family. He built a great company, always thinking big, and also provided major contributions to the whole industry. He was one of the pioneers of the duty free industry and an unavoidable reference for all the newcomers.

"If there is one thing that I would like to highlight about Mr Motta, that was his human angle. Since the very first day I met him he impressed me with his very charismatic personality, a great human approach, very positive thinking and a great sense of humour.

"Although we did not see each other very often, he always demonstrated a high interest in my personal and professional developments, always with a kind word and wise advice. Both from a personal and a professional standpoint, I will miss Mr Motta very much."

Colm McLoughlin, Managing Director, Dubai Duty Free: "I had read on occasions of the contribution to our industry of Mr Pancho Motta. I had noted that he visited the Shannon operation in the early days, and that he was an exciting, innovative, and charming person.

"When I finally met him, about ten years ago, I was not disappointed; I found a truly unique innovator. On each of our subsequent meetings I got to know him better and on each occasion I learned from him. When I heard of his death I had the same feeling as when my own father died. He will be missed, and I will miss meeting him.

"Among my special keepsakes is a book on Panama which he signed and gave to me when I visited Panama a few years ago. May he rest in peace."

Martin Moodie, Editor and Publisher, The Moodie Report: "There are only a few individuals during the 60-year history of duty free who can truly be considered as having shaped the industry. Alberto C Motta Snr was one of them. In 1949 he opened the first airport duty free store in his region, in Panama City, and he fought tirelessly down the years to legitimise and nurture the whole concept of duty free. He leaves behind an immense legacy – one embracing family, company, industry and country."

Michael Payne, Executive Director, IAADFS: "Alberto was a legend in this industry and was loved and respected throughout the world. Among his many legacies are his remarkable family, his lifelong contributions to his country of Panama of which he was their best ambassador, a thriving and hugely successful business and so many friends that only he could keep up with them. His life is one to celebrate and admire." ■



InterBaires CEO Enrique Urioste with Mr Motta: "He had a very human approach," says Urioste



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