

Shoemaker to the World

Thomas John Bata

September 17, 1914 – September 1, 2008

It is with great sadness that the Bata Family and the Bata Shoe Organization announce the sudden passing of Thomas John Bata, at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto at the age of 93.

As “*Shoemaker To The World*”, Thomas J. Bata was a man of outstanding qualities and achievements who had a positive influence on the lives of many millions of people throughout the world.

He was born in Prague and educated in Czechoslovakia, England and Switzerland. His father Tomas had founded the Bata Shoe Organization in 1894. After his father’s premature death in an aircraft accident in 1932, Thomas J. Bata was guided by his late-father’s moral testament: *that the Bata Shoe company was to be treated not as a source of private wealth, but as a public trust, a means of improving living standards within the community and providing customers with good value for their money.* He promised to pursue the entrepreneurial and humanitarian ideals of his father. This became his life’s work.

Anticipating the Second World War, Mr. Bata, together with over 100 families from Czechoslovakia, moved to Canada in 1939 to develop the Bata Shoe Company of Canada centred in a town that still bears his name, Batawa, Ontario.

The Second World War saw many Bata businesses in Europe and the Far East destroyed. After the Second World War, the core business enterprise in Czechoslovakia and other major enterprises in Central and Eastern Europe were nationalized by Communist governments. Tom devoted himself to the rebuilding and growth of the Bata Shoe Organization together with his wife and partner, Sonja. He successfully spearheaded ethical and innovative expansion into new markets throughout Asia, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Under his leadership the Bata Shoe Organization experienced unprecedented growth and became the world’s largest manufacturer and marketer of footwear selling over 300 million pairs of shoes each year and employing over 80,000 people. “Our customer – Our Master” was one of his guiding principles.

Thomas J. Bata was particularly proud of his association with the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment. He joined the Regiment during the Second World War

and served as a Captain in the Canadian Reserve Army and as Honorary Colonel from 1999 to 2007.

Mr. Bata's consideration for others led to his work with numerous charitable organizations. He was Chairman of the Bata Shoe Foundation. His dedication to Junior Achievement International, Trent University and York University in Canada and the Tomas Bata University in the Czech Republic reflected his special interest in the education of young people.

His business qualities included vision, dedication, energy and drive for excellence. He was also an exceptional mentor to those who worked with him.

He saw business as a contributor to human well being internationally. He always made it a priority to ensure that his businesses not only contributed to the economies of the new markets he entered, but also made a positive difference in the lives of his employees and their communities. Many Bata operations were established with medical, educational and social facilities for Bata employees.

Mr. Bata participated in several leading business organizations. In Canada, he was a former Director of Canadian Pacific Airlines and IBM Canada. He was a founding member of the Young Presidents Organization, Chairman of the Commission on Multinational Enterprises of the International Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to OECD. He was particularly fond of India and was a founding member of the Canada India Business Council.

In addition to his many university doctorates, he was a Companion of the Order of Canada and received the Order of T.G. Masaryk in Czechoslovakia. In 2007 he proudly received the First Lifetime Award for Responsible Capitalism in the United Kingdom.

Tom continually stimulated those around him to be passionate about their work and to continually aim higher. He was a true inspiration to everyone he met. Tom's vision was to "shoe the world". His vitality, wisdom, generosity and sense of humour endeared him to people of all ages.

He enjoyed spending time with his family and friends, whether at home or exploring unfamiliar destinations, skiing, swimming or playing tennis. In fact, he continued to enjoy sporting activities until shortly before his death.

He was an example of how ideals and qualities can and will continue to inspire all of us.

In his own way, Tom has left his “footprint” on humanity.

Mr. Bata is survived by his much loved wife and partner, Sonja (born Wettstein), son - Thomas George who is the present CEO and Chairman of the Bata Shoe Organization; and three daughters, Christine, Monica, Rosemarie, and their families.

The funeral mass and commemoration of Thomas Bata’s life will take place at The Franciscan Church of St. Bonaventure, 1300 Leslie Street, North York on Friday, September 5, 2008 at 4 pm. In lieu of flowers, if desired, donations may be made to Junior Achievement of Canada, 1 Eva Road, Suite 218, Toronto, Ontario M9C 4Z5, 001-416-622-4602, or to the Thomas Bata Foundation in Zlin, Czech Republic, Gahurova 292, www.batova-vila.cz, sekretariat@batova-vila.cz , phone 00420-577-219-083, fax 00420-577-219-086.

If you would like to leave a message of sympathy, you can write to the Bata Family, Bata Limited, 12 Concorde Place, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3C 3R8 or [email us](#).

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