

## **Ian L. Grant Rubber Division Historical Account**

The Alan L. Grant Rubber Division (ALG) opened its doors as a natural rubber trading company circa 1952 as a division of New York City based Imperial Commodities which already had tea and coffee trading divisions. It was named after its first president, Mr. Alan L. Grant.

Mr. Grant's successor was Dave Thomas. The company was focused on supplying the US tire companies during the 1950s and 1960s with a particularly strong relationship with Firestone Tire & Rubber. This relationship will become the cornerstone for a "partnership" that will last decades.

Dave Thomas retired in 1971 and was replaced by Joe Cianci who brought a strong network in the rubber market of Mexico to ALG.

ALG Liberia was opened in the mid-1970s. It was a processing factory located adjacent to Firestone's plantation (the largest in the world). Monthly production reached 1000 tons per month. Much of the production was transported via Firestone ocean vessels to Vera Cruz Mexico.

ALG expanded its presence in Mexico during the in the late 1970s by expanding its relationship with Firestone Plantations. A distribution agreement was reached for the sale of Firestone produced liquid latex throughout Mexico. The operation was made possible when ALG became co-owner of a bulk liquid tank facility located in the Port of Vera Cruz.

Joe Cianci retired in 1977 and Warren Heilbron was hired. ALG's rubber sales grew to 60,000 tons/pa during the 1980s with Mexico accounting for nearly 50% of total sales.

A major and unexpected devaluation in Mexico occurred in 1982. A significant exposure was in jeopardy. What to do? Cease deliveries and demand payment or continue to supply raw material and collect overdue receivables when able. Warren Heilbron chose the latter. Eventually, 98% of all accounts were collected and friends for life were made.

Another result of the devaluation was Firestone's Synthetic Division sought ALG out as a distributor of their synthetic production into Latin America. It seems Firestone took a hard stand in Mexico that didn't go well. They respected the way ALG managed such a desperate situation and signed a distribution agreement in 1985.

Warren Heilbron retired in 1990 and SVP Lee J. Muenzen was promoted to fill the vacated position. Lee Muenzen had to navigate a very difficult period of time. Civil war broke out in Liberia in 1992. This had dramatic implications on ALG's business. Its liquid latex supply chain shifted away from Firestone Liberia to Guatemala and Thailand. The civil war lasted nine years in all. ALG was out of the latex business in Mexico and abandoned its pilfered and damaged rubber factory in Liberia.

It was during this period that the company's resources were redirected to growing the synthetic rubber business it began in 1985. Lee Muenzen's direction during this period of reinventing the company earned him a promotion to COO of Imperial Commodities Corp and ended his carrier in London as Managing Director of our sister company.

Lou Mucciolo began working at ALG in 1982 and was made President of Alan L. Grant Rubber Division in 2005. He held the position till 2011 when the RCMA Group acquired ALG. Lou Mucciolo accepted the position of Commercial Director of RCMA Americas, Inc and relocated to Norfolk, VA.

In 2011, the decision was made to fully integrate the business and the name of Alan L. Grant under the RCMA Group's banner. The willingness to diversify and differentiate from the norm that was displayed throughout the history of Alan L. Grant Rubber Division will continue to live on under the RCMA Group's name.

Acknowledgement

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