

horizontally over the year, through a wide array of media including print and, most importantly, television. It was in 1985 that LBC was launched, and Pierre El Daher, chairman of the LBC Group, remembers Choueiri's pitch. "The LBC station had been launched around three months earlier, and Antoine stormed into my office, telling me, 'You have something good here, and I'll be your media rep.' I simply couldn't turn him down," he says. The Choueiri Group was immediately appointed media representative of a nascent station that was to become one of the region's most successful endeavors.

Today, the Choueiri Group and its 500-strong staff represent 17 satellite television stations, 11 print titles, seven radio stations and a lot of outdoor. It works with MBC, LBC, *An Nahar*, *Al Hayat*, *Al Safir* and Dubai Media Incorporated – to name just a few. It operates in 11 markets and has 14 subsidiaries, and is said to control around 70 percent of the region's television spend. And its founder worked closely with the GCC Advertising Association, which was founded in 2005 and later became the Advertisers' Business Group, representing the region's biggest spenders.

involvement, Lebanon's basketball scene would not be what it is today. Indeed, when Antoine Choueiri became president of basketball club La Sagesse (pictured, above) in 1992, few would have bet that this team would win 19 championships in 10 years, including twice winning both the Asian Club Championship and the Arab Basketball Cup. He gave up his interest in 2005 out of disappointment at the way the Lebanese basketball industry was managed.

Success such as Choueiri's cannot be achieved without generating criticism and making some enemies. But despite accusations that he pursued his own profit to the detriment of his partners, Choueiri wouldn't shift his position. And for many, Antoine Choueiri's most appreciated quality was his loyalty. Clients often became close friends of his; he was, for example, the godfather of LBC chairman Pierre Daher's daughter, and his friendship with late publisher and MP Gebran Tueini, (assassinated in 2006) was unwavering.

Choueiri enjoyed time with his seven grandchildren and all the people close to him, either in his East Beirut office or in his house in the mountains. He leaves an impressive heritage. He will be remembered and missed – by his family and friends, first and foremost, but also by a whole industry that, through his death, has lost some of its spirit. He is survived by his wife Rose, his two children Pierre and Lena, and his grandchildren. ■

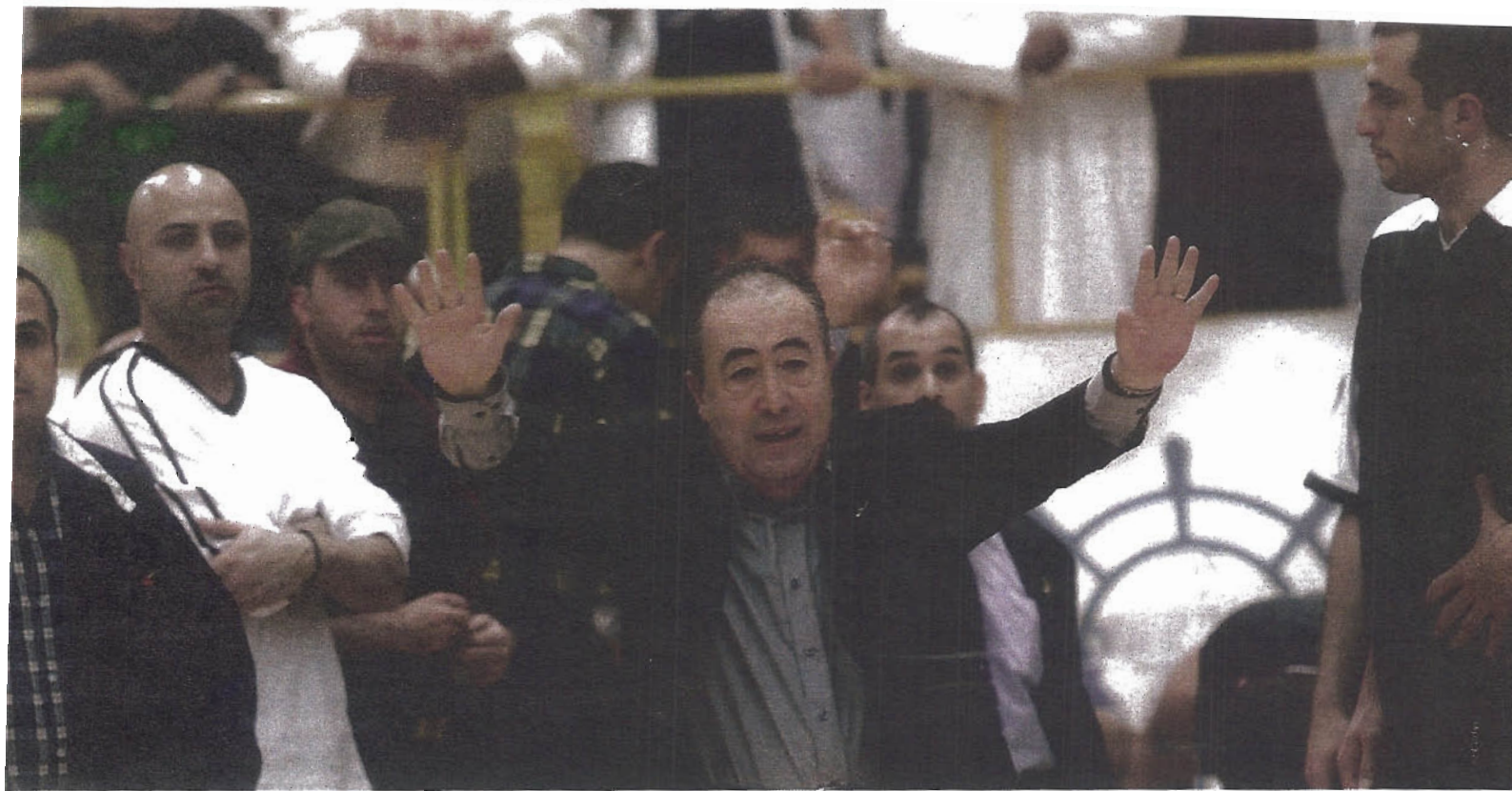


ROSE CHOUERI
Antoine Choueiri's wife



PIERRE AND LENA
Antoine with his two children

PASSION. Antoine Choueiri left his mark on whatever endeavor he felt compelled to embark on. Take sports, his other passion. Without his



A life remembered

The industry looks back at Antoine Choueiri and how he changed advertising in the region



MAZEN HAYEK
MBC GROUP DIRECTOR OF MARKETING,
PR AND COMMERCIAL

You either loved Antoine Choueiri or hated him; he never left you indifferent. He earned all kinds of mixed emotions, yet truly deserved one reputation: as a workaholic top-achiever who believed in the principle of "never say die."

He was often the engine behind business and political discussions: sharp, witty, street-smart, a lover of figures, a tough negotiator, a risk-taker, and an optimist with a unique sense of humor.

He also came across as a modest and emotional man, someone who stuck by his friends and allies at all times, yet who fiercely fought his opponents until they surrendered.

He rarely under-delivered, even when it came to a verbal, non-written agreement. Choueiri had the same kind of appreciation for advertisers and agencies, coupled with his obsession with enlarging the ad market in the MENA region while striving to help advertisers and agencies meet their business objectives and reach their desired bottom lines.

The media-representative, outsourced-ad-sales business model in the region would not have survived the global trend of advertisers conducting business straight with the media had it not been for Choueiri's clout, added value and proven indispensability in the market.

The gradual split between brand agencies and media buying units in the late '90s would probably not have made business sense without Choueiri's sustained support and backing.

Choueiri gave charities and needy individuals the kind of moral and financial support that only a self-made man from modest origins would know how to give, in dignity and silence.



GEORGES CHEHWAN
CEO OF GROUP PLUS

I have the utmost respect for Antoine Choueiri, someone I've worked with closely for seven years. He gave a lot to advertising in the Middle East. He helped to increase the volume of the market by making sure that ad spend would grow. However, even though he has passed away, I don't think anything will change for now; the structure he established has sound foundations and his son is a good person. Of course, some people will try to approach the media, but we won't be witnessing any radical change in the near future on top of the global changes that are already happening.



RAJA TRAD
CEO OF LEO BURNETT, MENA

In the 30 or so years that I knew him, I learned that any relationship with Antoine Choueiri involved more than just agency-media interaction. In dealing with Antoine, I was dealing with someone in whom the professional and the human being were inseparable. His big heart, his warm personal approach to building business relationships, and his commitment to do all he could to improve the industry made Antoine a friend, a colleague and a great business partner. Antoine was a man of his word. He was honest, giving, and driven to better the industry. Antoine contributed immensely to the communications industry at large. He was always concerned about what could be done to improve the standards of the industry, and worked tirelessly to achieve these improvements over the years.

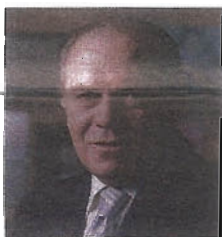


LANCE DE MASI
PRESIDENT OF THE IAA UAE CHAPTER, AND PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN DUBAI

Does anyone believe for a second that the passing of Antoine Choueiri lessens his impact on the communications industry? The business model he invented helped shape an industry, fueling its prosperity in good times and survival in times bad.

His efforts caused the pie to grow and provided advertisers and consumers with media options that would never have been sustainable without his commercial imagination and support. Many a communications agency owes its size to Antoine Choueiri.

I remember him as innovative, pragmatic, fair, and generous in his dealings. As an industry and personally as people and professionals we owe him a debt of gratitude.



JOSEPH GHOSOUB
CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF THE MENACOM GROUP

Antoine Choueiri was a trailblazer; we, like boy scouts, follow the path he cleared for us. For many of us, the hesitant entrants to the business of media in the '70s, Choueiri was our inspiration, model and hero. He rolled out before us the Middle East mediascape and flagged where the opportunities lay.

His life and achievements were a lesson for us in not only shaping the media industry



MARK BUTTERFIELD
HEAD OF MEDIA AT UNILEVER NAME

Choueiri's death marks the passing of an industry icon who dragged Middle East media on to the world stage and shaped how media transactions are carried out today.

He was a man who saw the bigger picture – not just for his clients but for all clients. His death marks a sad and regrettable loss of a business partner and friend.

perspective but also in understanding and assimilating the demanding work ethos.

Choueiri was a keen basketball enthusiast. He almost singlehandedly built an active interest for the game in Lebanon. I was not surprised by his passion for the game; basketball has that sort of dynamism.

It has all the elements of an elaborate boardroom drama. You tackle challenges, you dexterously make your way, and you dunk the ball to clinch a point. Isn't that what every business is all about?

He was influential. After all, his business represented some of the world's leading names in the industry – from Lebanon's LBC Sat to the MBC Group, Al Jazeera Network, *Al Hayat* daily and Dubai Media Incorporated. But in building this business empire, he was also creating room for others to grow and prosper. That, I believe, is his legacy.



RAMZI RAAD
CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF TEWA/RAAD

March 9, 2010 is surely a turning point in Middle East media history, as it will always be remembered as the day when its knight in shining armor exited the battlefield for the last time.

From the days of the pan-Arab magazines' dominance, to the development of the pre-recorded video cassette as a lead advertising medium, to the spread of satellite TV, Antoine Choueiri charted new courses for advertisers, advertising agencies, media owners, publishers, planners and buyers across the Arab world.

His reconciling spirit and generosity touched the majority of players in the communications industry in this part of the world; his loss will continue to echo for years to come.



MUSTAPHA ASSAD
CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF PUBLICIS GRAPHICS

The world has lost a great man, but Antoine Choueiri has left his mark. He was a leader, a fighter, an innovator, a husband, a father, a colleague. To me, he was a dear friend, a brother. I consider his family to be my family.

I could tell you how Antoine was known as the "Godfather" of media in the Middle East. I could also tell you that he was highly intelligent, possessed an endless generosity, and was very pragmatic. I could tell you that he developed and maintained excellent personable working relationships with his agencies and clients. And that he was a fighter, with business acumen and outstanding salesmanship, who never stopped until his mission was achieved. I could also tell you that he founded the Choueiri Group, a very successful, well-structured organization. And he treated each friend and business partner with great care and attentiveness. This is how the world will remember Antoine Choueiri.

He liked to excel at everything he did, and he usually succeeded, with the exception of predicting football results. Over the years we had ongoing football bets for a small sum paid to the winner after each match played. I was unlucky a couple of times, and handed over cash when my teams lost. Antoine, on the other hand, would write me a check every time he lost – and he lost many times. I couldn't bring myself to cash the checks, as I knew these were occasions to be cherished. So, instead, I framed every check and hung it on my wall. I never let him live it down, especially when he would visit and I would proudly show him more than 25 framed checks hanging on my wall.

From the years our families spent living together in Paris, escaping the Lebanese war, to all the memories and laughter we shared, I will never forget Antoine. He left us too soon, but he left us while he was at the top of his game. Antoine Choueiri made his mark on the world, and he will always be remembered. ■



ALEX SABER
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AT PUBLICIS GROUPE MEDIA

Antoine was a visionary who laid the foundation stones of the Arab media landscape – after all, he created what we have today.

Antoine is an institution, a glowing torch for the industry, and leaves a legacy in very safe hands.



MARWAN KAI
HEAD OF MIS GULF

I have had the privilege of knowing Antoine for as long as I can remember. Before he became the great media mogul and pioneer the industry knew, Antoine was family. Antoine and my late father [Elie Kai, another industry pioneer] were friends and brothers well before they were partners. Antoine, Rose, Lena and Pierre were always around when I was younger, and my most vivid memory was the cursing that he and Elie engaged in over their endless backgammon and biriba sessions. From a professional perspective, Antoine was as influential in my career as my father was.

His impact and influence on the industry are there for everyone to see; when we talk about the media and advertising industry, some might argue that Antoine was not one of the pioneers, as there was a generation before him. But few would disagree that he's had the biggest single impact and influence on this industry.

He was instrumental in shaping how the media evolved in this part of the world. He was a great champion of growing this industry and of developing and rewarding human talent.

But all the industry and professional attributes are nothing compared to the human side of Antoine Choueiri: the man was the most compassionate, humble, caring person one could meet. He cared about people, people he knew well and people he hardly knew. I cannot ever recall anybody approaching Antoine for a cause and being turned away; he used everything in his means to help and do good.



Owing to space constraints, we have shortened many of the tributes above. Many contributors remembered Antoine Choueiri at much more length. To see these contributions in their entirety, go to communicate.ae.