

Sol Kerzner, South African Casino Tycoon, Is Dead at 84

Written by Administrator
Friday, 27 March 2020 19:12 -

In 1994, he acquired the bankrupt Paradise Island Resort in the Bahamas and converted it into a 2,300-room resort called Atlantis — a brand that he also used in Dubai in 2008, when he opened the \$1.5 billion, 1,500-room Atlantis, the Palm, in Dubai. His company said a firework display, the centerpiece of a \$20 million launch party, had been the world's biggest and had been visible from space.

Working with his son Howard, who was known as Butch, Mr. Kerzner built his first casino in the United States in 1996, on an Indian reservation in eastern Connecticut, naming it the [Mohegan Sun](#).

A decade later, the Kerznerns took their company private for \$3.6 billion, including debt — a move described by some analysts as a rare misstep in light of the financial chaos that was about to roil the global tourism industry.

By 2011, the company had renegotiated the debt, effectively becoming a management company rather than an owner-operator, [Reuters reported](#). He retired to his family's 25-acre estate near Cape Town in 2014, four years after he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for services to the Bahamas.

His personal life, well-chronicled by gossip columnists, was one of extravagance and ostentation punctured by tragedy. In 2006, Butch Kerzner was killed in a helicopter crash in the Dominican Republic. The second of his four wives, Shirley Bestbier, committed suicide soon after the birth of their second child.

His first marriage, to Maureen Adler, ended in divorce. His third marriage, to Anneline Kriel, who, representing South Africa, was crowned Miss World in 1974, lasted from 1980 to 1985. In 2000 he married Heather Murphy, a model; they divorced in 2011.

He is survived by four children, Andrea and Beverley, from his first marriage, and Brandon and Chantal, from his second.

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