

UCSD Connect Director Bill Otterson dies November 24, entrepreneur built internationally known program

November 24, 1999

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William W. Otterson, director of UCSD CONNECT at the University of California, San Diego, a successful entrepreneur who used his business experience to benefit hundreds of small start-up companies and tackle large public policy issues, died today of cancer. He was 69.

During his 13 years at UCSD, Otterson built CONNECT into an internationally renowned program that has been studied and modeled by other organizations from as far away as Sweden and as nearby as UC Davis. CONNECT was founded in 1985 by a group of university and community leaders to enhance regional economic development by accelerating the growth of high technology enterprises in San Diego.

Otterson became director shortly after the program's founding and developed the unique characteristics which have enabled the program to make a significant advance in the art of entrepreneurship with the intellectual capital around a research university.

University of California President Richard Atkinson said "Bill Otterson supplied the passion and the drive that transformed CONNECT from a promising idea to a brilliant reality. Under his leadership, CONNECT became an interactive and incredibly

productive program that multiplied exponentially the connections between UCSD and the region's business and industry. CONNECT is becoming a model around the globe because it responds so successfully to what the new economy demands--world-class universities working creatively with an innovative business community. Bill leaves an enduring legacy of accomplishment not only to UCSD and San Diego but to California and the world."

Robert C. Dynes, UCSD Chancellor, said, "Bill Otterson was a whirlwind of a man who had an impact on everyone with whom he came in contact. Much of CONNECT's success is due to Bill, whose entrepreneurial background and dynamic personality were the right combination to lead this innovative program. In testimony to his brilliant vision, Connect has become a model copied throughout the world. He was a man of great personal courage, a dynamo who never allowed his illness over many years to affect his life, his work, his relationships. All of San Diego, not to mention UCSD, will be the lesser for his loss."

Mary Walshok, Associate Vice Chancellor of Extended Studies and Public Programs, where CONNECT is based, said "When UCSD launched its innovative program in technology and entrepreneurship, we knew we needed an energetic, successful entrepreneur to create something better than a research park or incubator. We found Bill Otterson. I had to convince him that he wanted to work within a large bureaucratic organization like the University of California. Years earlier he had fled IBM in order to be his own boss and build his own company. But once we got going Bill developed a new model for cultivating the banks, venture capitalists, law firms, accounting and other support companies needed to launch new scientific ventures."

"Bill was the single most important influence in encouraging our region's growth in modern industries," said University of California Regent Peter Preuss, who is also a successful software entrepreneur. "Whenever there

was something to be done which could enhance the climate for growth, Bill was there leading by example and using his charming insistence to draw all of us into his projects. He relentlessly worked to make San Diego both a better and easier place to develop the industries which are important here today. I, the family and all of San Diego have lost a great friend."

Under Otterson's leadership CONNECT has grown from a staff of two with 30 founding sponsors and a budget of \$100,000, to a staff of fifteen with over 600 members and sponsors and a budget of \$1.7 million.

CONNECT's flagship programs, the UCSD CONNECT Financial Forum and the UCSD CONNECT Corporate Partnership Forum, were developed and refined by Otterson's ideas and drive. Both programs serve to connect entrepreneurs with sources of funding, through venture capital or corporate partnering. Otterson was extremely proud of the number of companies that could trace their initial financing to these successful CONNECT programs. Approximately 80% of the companies that have participated since 1985 are still in business or were successfully acquired. More than \$4 billion dollars has been raised by companies through the two programs.

The UCSD CONNECT Financial Forum and Corporate Partnership Forum are selective programs with a rigorous screening process. Otterson played a key role in working with companies in the "dry runs" or presentation rehearsals, giving critical feedback that, more often than not, shaped the presentation. According to one participant, "His questions were the tough ones, he challenged people to prepare for the two or three questions they hoped no one would ask. Bottom line, when you were done with the dry run process, and you could make your presentation to Bill Otterson and come out smiling, you were ready to talk to any potential investor."

"The first thing Bill taught me was that the world is a place to network, that networking makes us a community" said Martha Dennis, CEO and President of WaveWare Communications, a start-up telecommunications company in San Diego. "Every person was an opportunity to him. No one was unimportant."

Peter Savage, chairman of Applied Digital Access, a San Diego-based telecommunications company, wrote of his relationship with Otterson, "When I came to San Diego, Bill was one of the first people who called and offered assistance in getting Applied Digital Access off the ground, and in meeting people who would provide help, perspective and assistance. These introductions were invaluable as I found my way in a city 3,000 miles away from my experience base."

Jerry Caulder, CEO and chairman of Akkadix, an agricultural biotechnology startup, and former Chairman and CEO of Mycogen, once said of Otterson "He is a combination cheerleader, match-maker, evangelist, lobbyist, and salesman. It's hard to imagine where we would be without Bill Otterson and the CONNECT program he nurtured and shaped to serve the needs of those of us who are committed to building companies."

Otterson also had a deep passion for public policy issues affecting entrepreneurs and business in general. His goal for CONNECT's public policy efforts was to educate industry leaders and elected officials about the impact of proposed regulations on San Diego companies, using solid, peer-reviewed data.

One of Otterson's major projects was to spearhead efforts to reform the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In 1995, CONNECT completed a study of the relationship between the FDA and small West Coast life science companies. With success from this pioneer effort, Otterson recently launched a new FDA study.

"Bill represented the very finest in our entrepreneurial spirit in the United States," said Jere Glover, Chief Counsel of the Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration. "We first became aware of the quality of the work that he and Dr. Mary Walshok produced at CONNECT when we reviewed the 1995 FDA study. Bill's willingness to take on difficult challenges that were important to his industries exemplify the courage and objectivity needed to nurture our critically important small businesses."

Terry Bibbens, Entrepreneur in Residence at the Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration said "Elements of the 1997 FDA Modernization Act contained the solutions recommended in the 1995 and 1997 CONNECT studies. While Bill's charter was limited to the UCSD and San Diego community, he knew that to support and protect his charges, he sometimes had to take on the nation and he usually won." The U.S. Office of Advocacy, Small Business Administration in Washington DC will recognize Otterson on December 2 with a Vision 2000 award for Leadership in Small Business Issues.

Otterson was a tireless advocate for the industries CONNECT represents, attending public meetings, contacting elected officials, and rallying the support of high- tech CEOs. His own politics were not secret. He would often introduce himself on campus as "the only Republican." However, his commitment to the issues he championed transcended partisan politics. He took on issues important to the university, such as animal research, and was the development chairman of C.U.R.E., the Committee to Understand Research and Education. He took a leadership role in the effort to establish a low-level radioactive waste disposal site in California and was appointed to the Southwestern Low Level Radioactive Waste Commission. He was a co-founder of the National Association of Cancer Patients and was always ready to provide encouragement to cancer patients.

In 1997, Otterson and CONNECT conducted a survey to find out the personnel needs of high-tech employers. The study made news in San Diego when it was determined that in one six-month period San Diego high-tech companies would need to recruit 3,000 engineers, a number that couldn't possibly be met by the local talent pool.

As a result, Otterson convened a CEO Coalition to identify recruitment issues. The effort grew into an unprecedented collaboration among San Diego's industry organizations. A high-quality recruitment video, "A World of Opportunities" was produced and, led by the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, a regional theme was introduced, "San Diego: Technology's Perfect Climate."

Beyond the programs and the politics, Otterson created a newsletter that became a family album for the high-tech community. The newsletter developed tremendous reach and influence primarily because he never missed a chance to tell who was doing what. He was a walking encyclopedia of other people's achievements. Writing for the newsletter or leading a meeting, he talked like a glad-handing salesman, able to recall hundreds of names and faces in a flash and then give a summary of what each had done or was trying to do. He was honest about his opinions and ecstatic when readers responded, negatively or positively. He received letters to the editor from Congressmen and businessmen, students and faculty. The CONNECT web site was constantly updated with photos he took at events and meetings. Today, the CONNECT Newsletter reaches almost 10,000 people a week in an email version, a fax version, and on the CONNECT web site.

In his career prior to joining CONNECT, Otterson was a successful entrepreneur, serving for eight years as the CEO of Cipher Data Products, a computer tape drive company which he restarted and eventually took public. He was a member of the board of directors for Overland Data and had previously served on the boards of Acucobol, Quintessential Solutions, Vista Capital, Remote Control International, and Cipher Data Products.

In the community, Otterson was a board member and past president of the UCSD Cancer Center Foundation, former chairman of the San Diego Council of the American Electronics Association, a co-founder and board member of BIOCOSAN, a cofounder and current board member of the San Diego Telecom Council, and a current board member of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. He was appointed to the Governor's Cancer Research Council and the Governor's Council on Biotechnology.

For his work with CONNECT, Otterson received numerous awards from diverse organizations such as the National University Continuing Education Association "Innovation Award in Continuing Education," U.S. Small Business Administration "Innovation Award of the Year," National Association of Corporate Directors "Director of the Year," San Diego Venture Group "Man of the Year," San Diego Press Club "Headliner of the Year," UCSD Alumni Association Award for Distinguished Service to the University, and the Price Waterhouse Biotechnology InCyte Award for service to the biotechnology community. He was honored in 1998 with the Spirit of TEAM San Diego Award by the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, the BIOCOSAN Award to Industry Supporter, and the Gray Cary Ware & Freidenrich Award for Outstanding Support of Entrepreneurship. He was

recognized by the San Diego Business Journal in 1999 as a Master Entrepreneur along with Dr. Irwin Jacobs, Dr. Robert Beyster and Neal and Linden Blue.

One of Otterson's proudest moments was his 1996 Entrepreneur of the Year Institute's National Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the Support of Entrepreneurship. On December 1, the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce will honor him with The Pete Wilson Courageous Leadership Award for exemplary leadership in service to the San Diego region.

Otterson was born on March 28, 1930 in Oakland, California. He went to Oakland High School and attended Stanford University, earning a BS degree in engineering and an MBA. From Stanford he went directly to the U.S. Air Force where he served at Wright Patterson Air Force base in the computer center. He held positions with Standard Computers and IBM.

He loved to sail, especially in San Francisco Bay and kept a membership in the St. Francis Yacht Club. He traveled extensively and wrote of his adventures in the CONNECT Newsletter. He loved good wine, good food and was passionate about opera and Shakespeare.

Joseph Hu, a young Chinese tenor who lived at the Otterson home when singing 11111 here, told a story recently about Bill's ability to inspire and encourage. He had confessed that he felt totally unprepared for the Cascon role in Tosca he was here in San Diego to sing. "Soldier, let's walk," Bill said with his high voltage grin. By the time the two walk- talked around the block, Joseph's courage had somehow been restored. "I came back knowing I could do it, and I did it well," Hu said simply, tears pouring down his face.

If you knew Bill, you knew he had cancer. "When Bill developed cancer 20 years ago, it could have been a downer," said Dr. John Mendelsohn, president of M.D. Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas and former head of the UCSD Cancer Center. "But he made it a life-changing event and dedicated his efforts to the community of San Diego and the people he loved. San Diego will forever be indebted to him for what he built."

Otterson is survived by Anne, his wife of 38 years, sons John and Eric and daughter Helen.

The family has requested that in lieu of flowers donations be made to the William Otterson Memorial Fund at the San Diego Foundation or the UCSD Cancer Center. A memorial mass will be held early next week.

(November 24, 1999)