



J. Robert Epstein

J. ROBERT BEYSTER

1924–2014

Elected in 1989

*“For outstanding scientific and engineering contributions
related to nuclear energy and national defense.”*

BY BOB WERTHEIM

JOHN ROBERT BEYSTER, entrepreneurial business leader and founder of Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), died of natural causes on December 22, 2014, at his home in La Jolla. He was 90 years old.

Bob Beyster’s philosophy was “Those who contribute to the company should own it, and ownership should be commensurate with a person’s contributions and performance.” He put this philosophy into practice when, in 1969, he founded SAIC with a handful of scientists. From the beginning, SAIC was an employee-owned firm. The business—the largest employee-owned research and engineering firm in the United States—grew to annual revenues of \$11 billion before it was split into two separate companies in 2013.

Bob was born in Detroit on July 26, 1924, to John F. and Lillian E. Beyster and grew up in Grosse Ile, Michigan. He attended Slocum Truax High School in Trenton, Michigan, and was salutatorian of his graduating class. As he prepared to graduate from high school, the United States entered World War II, and he enlisted in the Navy. He was sent by the Navy to the University of Michigan, where he was enrolled in the V12 Officer Training Program. He was commissioned as an ensign, and eventually served on a destroyer based in Norfolk, Virginia, before leaving the service six months later.

He received his BSE in engineering and physics (1945), and master's (1947) and doctorate (1950) degrees in physics, from the University of Michigan.

In the early 1950s, Dr. Beyster worked briefly for the Westinghouse Atomic Power Division on the company's nuclear submarine program. He soon followed many of his college associates to New Mexico to work as a research physicist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, where he met his wife to be, Betty Jean Brock. The couple were married in Austin, Texas, in September 1955. In 1957, Bob joined General Atomic in La Jolla, as chair of the Accelerator Physics Department, where his research on neutron thermalization led him to coauthor the book *Slow Neutron Scattering and Thermalization* (with D.E. Parks, M.S. Nelkin, and N.F. Wikner; Addison Wesley Longman, 1970).

In 1969 Dr. Beyster raised money to start SAIC by investing the proceeds from selling stock he had received from General Atomic, combined with funds raised from the early employees who bought stock in the young enterprise. Initially, the company's focus was on projects for the US government related to nuclear power and weapons effects study programs. As SAIC grew, Dr. Beyster fought to preserve the values that had made the young company successful—employee ownership, entrepreneurship, a flexible and decentralized organizational structure, technical excellence, high standards of ethical conduct, and a firm belief in customer service. He developed one of the first high-tech corporations with broad-based employee ownership and profit sharing, and he demonstrated that broad-based financial inclusion could work and prosper. SAIC attracted and retained highly intelligent and motivated entrepreneurs who helped the company grow and diversify. When he retired as chair in 2004, the company had annual revenues of \$6.7 billion and more than 43,000 employees.

With his beloved wife Betty, Bob Beyster was an active participant and philanthropist in the San Diego community. In support of their longstanding interest in education and health care, they made major gifts to the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), including its Sulpizio Cardiovascular

Center and Beyster Institute, University of Michigan College of Engineering, the University of San Diego Hahn School of Nursing and Health Science, the J. Craig Venter Institute, Salvation Army Door of Hope, Father Joe's Villages/St. Vincent de Paul, San Diego Regional Fire Foundation, KPBS, the San Diego Public Library, La Jolla Music Society, Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS), Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, and the Foundation for Enterprise Development (FED).

Dr. Beyster founded the FED in 1986—dedicated to the growth of US-based science and technology companies through research, education, and services that advance innovation, entrepreneurship, and broad-based ownership. In 2004, the FED launched the Beyster Institute at UC San Diego's Rady School of Management to advance the practice of employee ownership with technologists, entrepreneurs, executives, and educators.

Committed to education, Bob wrote or coauthored approximately 60 publications and reports, as well as the books *The SAIC Solution: Built by Employee Owners* and *Names, Numbers, and Network Solutions: The Monetization of the Internet*.

A fellow of the American Nuclear Society, Dr. Beyster chaired its Reactor Physics Division and Shielding Division. He was a member of the National Academy of Engineering, a fellow of the American Physical Society, and served the US Strategic Command Strategic Advisory Group. He also served as chair emeritus of the board of directors of the UC San Diego Foundation.

The Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) designated Dr. Beyster an Honorary Program Manager for his distinguished contributions to the agency over his career. He also received the Engineering Manager of the Year Award in 2000 from the American Society of Engineering Management, the 2001 Spirit of San Diego Award from the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Lifetime Achievement Award from Ernst & Young in 2003, and recognition as a Supporter of Entrepreneurialism from Arthur Young and *Venture* magazine at their Entrepreneur of the Year awards ceremony for his efforts to support and promote entrepreneurship.

In 2006 the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (EDC) recognized Dr. Beyster with the Herb Klein Civic Leadership Award for his outstanding leadership in addressing regional challenges through collaboration with public, private, and civic partners. Dr. Beyster is the recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the University of California, San Diego's CONNECT program for providing 25 years of outstanding service to the community. The Horatio Alger Association for Distinguished Americans selected him to receive the 2008 Horatio Alger Award. This honor is bestowed upon those individuals who have overcome adversity to achieve great successes through the American free enterprise system. In 2014 he was awarded the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Medal for Distinguished Public Service.

Dr. Beyster was an avid sailor and longtime member of the San Diego Yacht Club. His interest in the sport peaked when the United States lost the America's Cup in 1983 to Australia. Convinced that the loss reflected a weakness in the naval architecture technology selected by the New York Yacht Club, he suggested to fellow San Diego Yacht Club members Dennis Conner and Malin Burnham that SAIC's naval architects could provide the winning edge. They agreed, and SAIC became a major participant on the technical team, playing an instrumental role in helping Conner's boat *Stars & Stripes* defeat the Australians in 1987 and bring the Cup back home to the United States—an outcome of which Bob was particularly proud.

Bob Beyster is survived by his wife of 59 years, Betty, of La Jolla; daughter Mary Ann of La Jolla; sons Jim of San Diego and Mark of Las Vegas; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and a sister, Virginia.

A public memorial tribute to the life of J. Robert Beyster was celebrated on January 31, 2015, by hundreds whose lives were enriched by his.

