



ALAN G. WALTON

SCIENTIST, VENTURE CAPITALIST & ADVENTURER

A successful venture capitalist, a pioneer in the field of biotechnology, and an influential scientist and professor, Alan Walton lived a life of adventure.

Of all his accomplishments, Alan was perhaps most proud of his work on the invention and commercialization of differential gene analysis, a widely used diagnostic tool used to identify types of cancer and other diseases. He is also known for his support of the initial sequencing of the human genome and for financing the team that developed DHA, an important component of baby formula. Together, his contributions have touched millions of lives worldwide.

Alan was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II in 2012 for his contributions to the U.K. biotechnology industry, and in 2013 he received the Richard J. Bolte Sr. Award from the Chemical Heritage Foundation. He has authored over 120 scientific journal articles and 10 books and has served on the boards of more than 20 companies.

Raised in wartime England, Alan earned a Ph.D. in chemistry and a D.Sc. in biological chemistry from Nottingham University before coming to the U.S. to launch his academic career. He was a professor at Case Western Reserve University from the early 1960s to the early 1980s, as well as a visiting professor at Harvard during the early 1970s. During his academic career, he also served as vice president of the Biophysical Society and as a science advisor to Georgia Governor and then U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

In 1981, Alan left academia to found University Genetics, one of the world's first biotechnology firms, which initially focused on enhancing and commercializing university-based inventions. The company went public in 1983 and completed a second offering in 1986, in which the original investors were bought out for \$3.6 million (roughly 60 times their original investment). During Alan's tenure as CEO, the company's focus shifted to funding start-up companies, and he began consulting with venture capital firms.

Alan left University Genetics in 1987 to join V.C. firm Oxford Partners (today Oxford Bioscience Partners). He was one of the only academic scientists in the V.C. industry in the 1980s, giving him a unique perspective on the emerging field of biotechnology. He focused on financing university-based technologies with strong patent positions and building new companies around them. By 2007, OBP had more than \$1 billion under management. Alan remained with OBP until his recent passing.

Some of his most notable successes with OBP included: leading the initial financing of Martek in 1988 (researchers discovered DHA and ARA, vital components of mother's milk missing from baby formulas at the time); co-financing Exelixis, the first company in the field of functional genomics (researchers made key discoveries about the genetics of the brain); and contributing key thinking to Gene Logic in 1995 (the company focused on comparing the genes turned on and off in healthy and diseased tissues). Alan was also a founder of the National Conference on Biotechnology Ventures, which, from 1987 until 2002, was part of the origin story of many of today's most prominent biotechnology firms.

Besides his distinguished career in science and business, Alan was also a fearless adventurer. He learned to fly with the British Royal Air Force Reserves as a young man and in his later life returned to this passion for airborne adventures. He co-piloted jet fighters (including surviving a cracked cockpit canopy at 80,000 feet and 2,200 miles per hour) and was among the first people to sky dive over Mount Everest. He completed a bungee jump off the Blaukrans Bridge in South Africa, the world's highest commercial bungee jump (709 feet), and he set a record topped by only two individuals since for a high altitude low opening (HALO) sky dive: 29,650 feet at age 71.

Alan was born in Kings Norton, England on April 3, 1936. He died on July 4, 2015 at the age of 79 at his home in Westport, CT, where he lived with his loving wife E.J. He is predeceased by his daughter, Kimm and survived by his son-in-law Henry and grandson Harry; his son Keir and daughter-in-law Ellie, and grandchildren Emily, Hailey and Tommy; his daughter Kristin; his daughter Sherri and son-in-law Paul.

Donations can be made in Alan Walton's honor to Research!America, 1101 King Street, Suite 520 Alexandria, VA 22314 or <https://www.researchamerica.org/donate>.