



Otto Jones – RIP

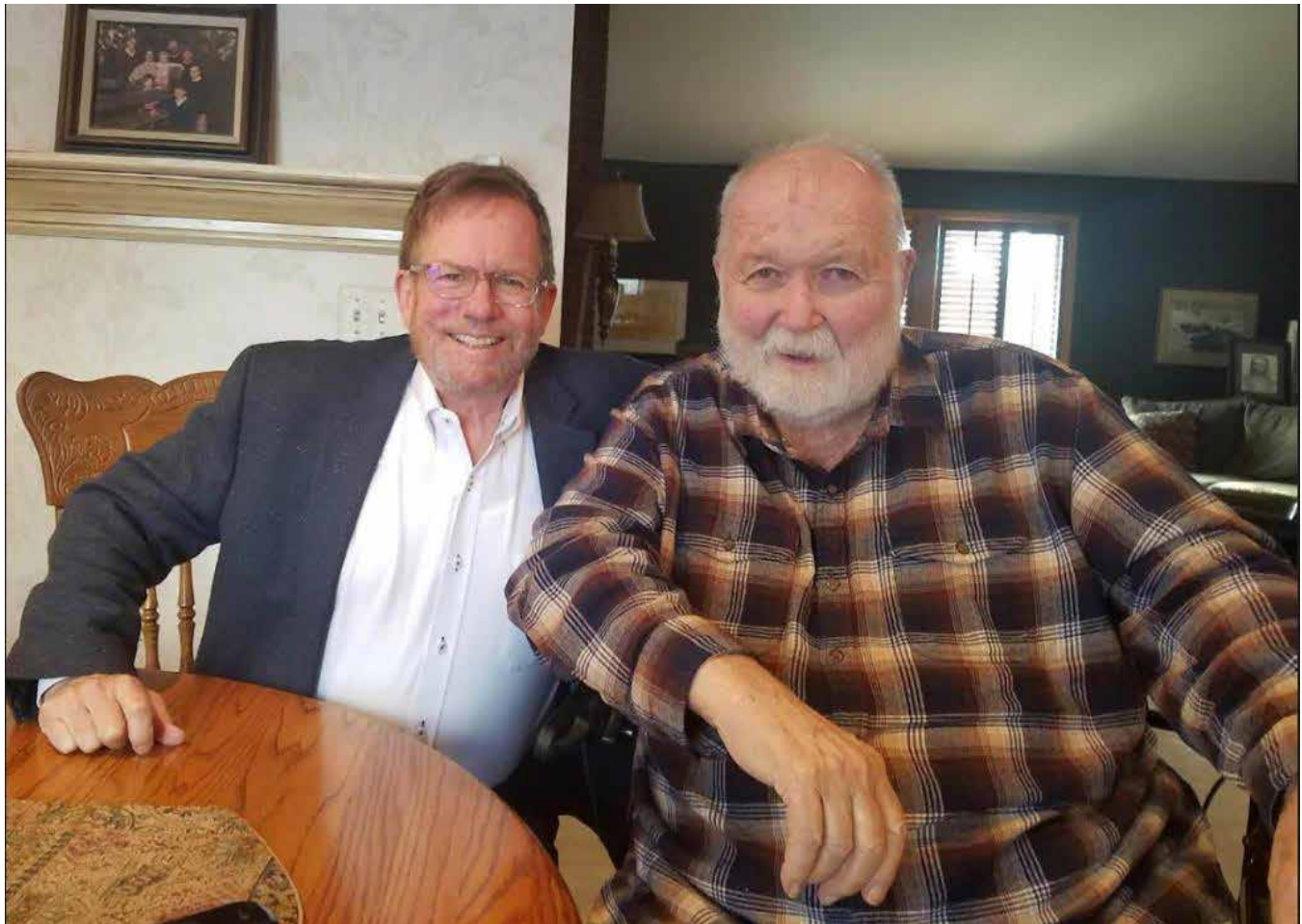
*The guy was awesome; bigger than life;
a pioneer in every sense.*

| By Dave Levine



Otto Jones passed away recently at the age of 83. Few have contributed more to the field of employee assistance and workplace counseling. He served in the Marines, attended Dixie State College and got his MSW from the University of Utah. In 1969 he started the [INSIGHT program, an internal EAP](#) at Kennecott Copper in Salt Lake City serving 1200 employees.

After a few years of successful interventions and returning guys to their jobs, Otto took the program external and named it Human Affairs Inc. or HAI (in 1985 changing the Inc. to Int'l), and expanded first to serve US Steel in South Chicago. He hired Barb Lavelle to lead the US Steel program there, and established the formula that seemed to mark his career—*get good people and get out of their way*. Glen Roderick in Cleveland (Standard Oil), Larry Stockman in Houston (Exxon), Kathleen Stevens, then Tom Cooper and Jodie Collins in Dallas (Diamond Shamrock & ARCO), Drew Cannon in Boise (Idaho Power & Boise Cascade), Art Lysne in Spokane, Daryl Logan in Anchorage (Exxon), Nancy Osman in Philadelphia (Bell Telephone), Monica



Guidry in Houston (SOHIO), Lance Ness in Whippany (Exxon), and so many more—all folks who were instrumental in the evolution of EAP. At the Salt Lake headquarters, Otto added three key MSWs: Howard Worthen, Jay Youell, and Betty Lynn Davis to increase management—never a passion for Otto but the start of needed infrastructure for the growing company.

IBM was a milestone for the industry starting in 1983, as well as for Otto. Bill Stopper, Steve Marcus, and Ted Childs from IBM led by consultant Dr. Dale Masi sought out the most innovative solution they could find. That pursuit resulted in staff offices near IBM locations throughout the US, as well as an addiction focused peer support program, standardized alcohol/drug assessments, a brief treatment clinical practice, and more. The staff office approach to counseling is economically unthinkable in today's network- and virtual-oriented care delivery, but this was pre-internet and even before PC's. Otto shared the IBM population with Carl Tisone and Rick Hellan at Personal Performance. Consultants (PPC), each company running different geographic regions. On point for the IBM account at HAI was Mike Alexander, a tremendous talent who went on to run the Aetna Foundation, Regence Health account team, and the Urban League in Portland. Other key staff and partnerships included Bruce Blythe in Atlanta, Deb Bridwell in Lexington, John Kennedy and Jerry Ivers in California, me in Washington DC (IBM), followed by Dave Harrington in DC who also led the re-engineering effort for Otto.

The son of an itinerant miner, Otto hardly fit anyone's stereotype of a social worker. He was as comfortable on a horse driving buffalo to summer pasture as he was in a corporate setting. An unspoken rule for staff in Salt Lake was to join in the bi-annual activity at his ranch where hay bales were gathered and stacked until they filled his barn. And he connected with a diversity of people in his signature Levi's and cowboy boots. From individual clients at all socio-economic levels to meetings with US Senator Orrin Hatch who he lobbied for more equity in

mental health benefits to Yale Law and healthcare privacy savant, Jon Neiditz, who marshalled HAI into Knox-Keene compliance. Like others, I think Jon both winces and smiles thinking back on his time with Otto, who would've been the alpha male at an NFL Combine; an inherent leader with a big heart.

Other key growth highlights were the Drug Enforcement Administration, FAA, and USA Today/Gannett. Keith Tellefson and Brad McDonald at Honeywell partnered with Otto to establish the first 'managed mental health' model with the EAP providing the counseling network, pre-cert, medical management, and claim payment. Bev Hill in Dallas (leading Texas Instruments) and Kathy Young in Danbury (for Union Carbide) followed a similar model, and Sears was another huge addition which added Penny Duncan in Chicago.



Otto sold HAI to Aetna in June 1988. It was thoughtful foresight by CEO Ted Kelly and Sr. VP Jay Rippes who recognized the importance of behavioral in the broader healthcare landscape. It was probably also time for more accounting rigor beyond the creativity that CPA Mike Midgely and Pam Giles in Finance afforded. Bob Martin and later Jim Plack ably filled Otto's shoes at HAI, but clearly more wing-tip than Otto's cowboy boot flair.

After HAI, Otto continued to flourish. His bison herd grew to over 1000 head, and he sold some and turned others into venison. He also raised and sold exotic animals like reindeer, musk ox, and ostrich, with clients including Bo Derek and Ted Turner. In fact, he invested heavily in ostrich just prior to legislation forbidding the import of ostrich to the US. Genius, timing, luck, persistence? All that was Otto.

Beyond the growth, what achievements did Otto contribute to the field? Otto 1) helped move the EAP model from an occupational alcoholism emphasis by peers, to a 'broad brush' focus by professionals, 2) migrated EAP to international locations, 3) introduced Managed Mental Health or EAP as gateway to a company's "mental & nervous" benefits, 4) brought a customer-focused, entrepreneurial and business orientation to traditional social work and mental health care, and 5) kept it fun.

Otto's injuries from a severe buffalo goring (during the Aetna acquisition, no less) and the physical demands of ranch life caught up with him, and he's now at rest. Many of us strive to make positive contributions in this world and Otto was a terrific model. These few reflections just scratch the surface on what Otto contributed to the field and the hundreds of folks he directly launched into workplace counseling.

Thanks Otto, RIP