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Famed physicist, attorney Tabin dies at 92

By DOUG SHERWIN, The Daily Transcript
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Renowned physicist and attorney Dr. Julius Tabin, who worked on the Manhattan Project and later represented General Atomics and the Salk Institute, passed away last month at the age of 92.

He died of heart failure on Aug. 25.

Dr. Tabin's work with General Atomics and the Salk Institute led the Chicago-based intellectual property law firm Fitch, Even Tabin & Flannery LLP to open an office in San Diego. Tabin was a partner at the firm for 56 years.

"He was well thought of," said San Diego attorney Jim Schumann, a partner at Fitch Even. "He was a mentor to many of us, including myself. I wouldn't be here in San Diego (if not for Tabin). It was a loss of a friend."

Born on Nov. 8, 1919, Tabin earned his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Chicago. Following the completion of his doctoral thesis, he joined a small group working on the Manhattan Project as a research assistant for Enrico Fermi.

While gathering a sample during testing, Tabin was exposed to excessive radiation and was forced to leave the profession.

He switched to the law, getting his degree from Harvard Law School in 1949 while simultaneously teaching physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 1950, he joined Fitch Even, which was then called Soans, Glaister & Anderson. His practice focused on client counseling, litigation and licensing in the areas of patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets, and antitrust law.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Tabin helped foster key clients in California, including SAIC Inc. (NYSE: SAI). He became a name partner in 1963, and practiced with Fitch Even until his retirement in June 2006.

"He was recruited following World War II by General Dynamics Corp., when they decided to go into the nuclear reactor business and decided to start the company known as General Atomics," Schumann said.

Company officials wanted someone who could handle patents created by the program's research and development office. Fitch Even still represents Poway-based General Atomics.

Tabin played key roles in establishing peaceful uses of atomic energy in the realms of medicine, energy and research. In addition to representing clients working in the nuclear field, he helped establish the legal precedents for biotechnology as lead outside counsel for the Salk Institute and a number of biotech and pharmaceutical companies.

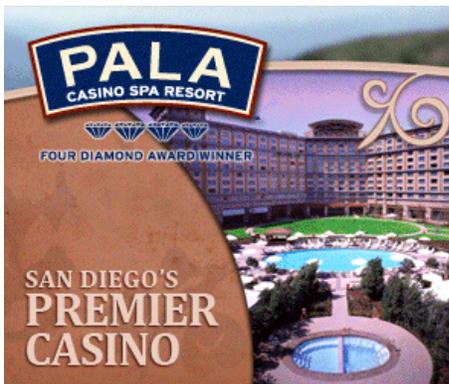
Tabin developed numerous licensing programs for Salk, licensing the institute's research to major pharmaceutical companies throughout the world. Fitch Even opened its San Diego office in the late 1980s.

"Dr. Tabin was really looked to for his expertise in licensing and overall corporate counseling," Schumann said. "He seemed to have a knack for problem solving for companies. He was able to see solutions to vexing problems that his clients had."

As a side project, working with colleagues at the University of Chicago, Tabin was responsible for the development of a corner-reflector mirror device which, left on the lunar surface during an Apollo mission, has been a critical tool in measuring the distance between Earth and the moon.

Tabin was married for 58 years to the late Johanna Krout Tabin, a well-respected psychologist who trained under Sigmund Freud's daughter. He is survived by two sons, Clifford and Geoffrey Tabin; seven grandchildren; and his older brother, Seymour Tabin.

Clifford Tabin is currently chair of Harvard Medical School's Department of Genetics. Geoffrey Tabin is an elite mountaineer, ophthalmologist and University of Utah professor who has devoted much of his career toward eliminating treatable blindness in the developing world.



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