

# Press Releases

## Don Tyson, Former Tyson Foods Chairman and CEO, Passes Away

Statement from Tyson President and CEO, Donnie Smith  
Springdale, Arkansas - January 6, 2011

It is with great sadness I report today the death of Don Tyson, former Chairman and CEO of Tyson Foods and a leading member of our company's board of directors. Don passed away this morning at the age of 80 after a brief illness.

As noted in the obituary that follows, Don was known by all to work hard, but also to play hard. He was famous the world over for his "No Bad Days" outlook on life, and well known for telling everyone that "I don't have time to have a bad time." Don's passing will be mourned by all who knew him, especially his family, his countless friends, and business leaders and associates in Arkansas, across the country and around the world.

A small, private family service has been planned and a public memorial service will be held at a later date. We will provide more details later.

### DON TYSON

Donald John Tyson, known to everyone as "Don," son of Tyson Foods, Inc. founder John W. Tyson, and father of current company Chairman John H. Tyson, passed away today, January 6, 2011, at the age of 80, after a brief illness. He was the former Chairman of the Board and CEO of Tyson Foods, Inc., a company he led through phenomenal growth in the 1970s and 1980s.

Don Tyson was born on April 21, 1930 in Olathe, Kansas, the son of John W. and Mildred Tyson. The family moved to Springdale, Arkansas in 1931 to enable Mr. Tyson to develop his business of hauling produce from Northwest Arkansas to the larger markets in the Midwest such as Kansas City, St. Louis and Chicago. By the time Don Tyson was a teenager his father had started hauling chickens to those same markets and had also become involved in other aspects of the poultry business.

After high school in Springdale and Kemper Military Academy in Missouri, Don attended the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, studying business and agriculture, but left before graduating to join his father in the family business in 1952. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree by the University of Arkansas at its May 2010 graduation ceremony.

Through most of the 1950s Don worked with his father to grow the family business, then known as Tyson Feed and Hatchery, supplying feed and baby chicks to local poultry producers in Northwest Arkansas. In 1958 the company became "vertically integrated" by building its first chicken processing plant in Springdale, with Don overseeing the construction and then becoming its first plant manager. The company soon began to grow by acquiring other area poultry operations, and then went public with its initial public offering of stock in 1963 under the name Tyson's Foods, Inc. This was the company name until 1972 when it was changed to Tyson Foods, Inc. The company continued to grow through the 1970s and 1980s with Don leading a series of acquisitions including Val-Mac, Lane Poultry and the 1989 purchase of Holly Farms, which more than doubled the size of the company and made it the largest poultry producer in the country.

Don had moved up progressively in the company leadership, being named President in 1966, and then becoming Chairman and CEO in 1967 when his father and step-mother were both tragically killed in an automobile-train accident in Springdale. He continued to serve as Chairman, President and CEO until 1983 when long-time Tyson executive, Leland Tollett was named President. In 1991 the company named Tollett President and CEO with Don remaining as Chairman until 1995 when he officially "retired" and Tollett was named Chairman and CEO. Tollett, along with another long-time company team member, Donald "Buddy" Wray had worked alongside Don throughout these years growing and running the company. It was often said that Don provided the vision and leadership, and that Leland and Buddy had the ability to profitably run whatever Don bought.

In the late 1990s the company continued to grow, most notably with the acquisition of Hudson Foods in 1998. By this time, Don's son John Tyson had succeeded Tollett as Chairman of the Board of the company and Don Tyson was named Chairman Emeritus. Don continued to provide guidance and support for the company's leadership team, including Tyson's 2001 acquisition of IBP, inc., a purchase engineered by his son John. As a result of the acquisition, Tyson Foods, the largest poultry producer in the world, also became the largest beef processor and second largest pork processor, with annual revenues jumping from approximately \$7.5 billion to more than \$24 billion.

Don was known by all to work hard, but also to play hard. He was famous the world over for his "No Bad Days" outlook on life, and well known for telling everyone that "I don't have time to have a bad time." He

was also well known for his active involvement in state and national politics, having been led by his father to believe that it was a citizen's duty to take part in the political and electoral process.

He was a world renowned fisherman, a founder of the Billfish Foundation that promotes the catch and release of marlin and other billfish, and was a long time member and benefactor of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA), a group that tracks and certifies world records for fishing.

Don also created and led the Tyson Family Foundation, which among other things provides scholarships for post secondary students from communities where Tyson Foods has operations. He has been a well known philanthropist in Arkansas and elsewhere, supporting countless causes, primarily in the fields of education, conservation and the arts.

Don was preceded in death by his father John W. and his step-mother Helen Knoll Tyson, as well as his mother Mildred Tyson; and, by his wife Twilla Jean Womochil Tyson and his brother Randal Tyson.

He is survived by his son, John Tyson and three daughters, Carla Tyson, Cheryl Tyson and Joslyn J. Caldwell-Tyson; his sister-in-law Barbara Tyson; as well as two grandchildren, John Randal Tyson and Olivia Laine Tyson; and, long-time friends Gloria Gray, Ramona Caldwell, Shelby Rogers and Melissa Ramsey.

Visitation will be Friday, January 7, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Sisco Funeral Home in Springdale, Arkansas. A small, private family service is planned for Saturday, January 8, with John Tyson, John Randal Tyson, Leland Tollett, Donald "Buddy" Wray, Jim Blair, Greg Mohney, Ned Tabor and Fred Cameron acting as pall bearers.

Honorary pall bearers include Gary George, Mark Simmons, Bo Pilgrim, Jim Perdue, Archie Schaffer III, David Van Bebber, W.H. Taylor, Tom Schueck, Harry C. Erwin III, Hayden McIlroy, Paul Berry, Lloyd McCord, Woody Bassett, Clark Irwin, Butch Davis, Jim Kever, C.R. Magnus, Vahab Fatourechi, Mike Levitt, Johnny Morris, Joe Fred Starr, Herman Tuck, Dash Goff, Billy Moore, Jerry Jones, Willie Nelson, David Pryor, Dale Bumpers, Jim Compton, Mel Immergut, Joe Washington, and the 115,000 Tyson team members around the world.

A larger public memorial service is being planned, with details to be announced later.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to The Billfish Foundation, The Mayo Clinic and the Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food and Life Sciences at the University of Arkansas. The addresses are below:

The Billfish Foundation  
PO Box 8787  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 3310-8787

The Mayo Clinic  
200 First Street SW  
Rochester, MN 55905

University of Arkansas  
Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food & Life Sciences  
E108 AFLS Building  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

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