James G. "Jim" Oates retired as president of The Leo Group in December of 1999. Shortly after his retirement, The Leo Group, a holding company for Leo Burnett Worldwide, merged with The MacManus Group to form BlCom3 Group, Inc., one of the world’s largest marketing communications networks.

Oates spent his 33-year professional career at Chicago-based Leo Burnett, which currently encompasses more than 300 operating units in 83 markets worldwide and boasts a client roster that includes some of the world’s most recognized brands. He joined the agency in 1966 as a trainee in the media department and moved to client service in 1968 as an assistant account executive on the Vick Chemical business. In 1971, he began a long-standing relationship with Philip Morris, starting as an account executive. He was promoted to account supervisor in 1973 and was named an agency vice president in 1974.

Beginning in 1977, Oates served a three-year stint on GM’s Oldsmobile business before being designated management director of Philip Morris in 1980, becoming the agency’s first worldwide account head. Named a senior vice president in 1984 and an executive vice president two years later, Oates was promoted to vice chairman of Client Services for Leo Burnett USA and elected to the company’s board of directors in 1990. In 1992 he was named chairman of Leo Burnett USA, while he continued to oversee several multinational clients, including Philip Morris, McDonald’s and The Coca-Cola Company.

In 1993, Oates was appointed group president of Burnett’s Asia/Pacific region, currently encompassing 24 offices in 17 countries. Under his management, agency billings for Asia/Pacific doubled in four years, and Burnett’s ranking among agency networks in the region improved from No. 8 to No. 4. Oates was elected president of Leo Burnett Worldwide in 1997. Under his leadership, revenue and profits grew by more than 15 percent per year. As part of a three-person management team, he helped steer the agency toward the creation of
The Leo Group, the merger with MacManus and the formation of B|Com3 Group. He also initiated negotiations with Dentsu, Inc., the largest advertising agency in Japan, resulting in an alliance between Dentsu and B|Com3.

From 1996 to 1999, Oates served on the board of the American Association of Advertising Agencies. Since 1990, he has also served as a board member of The Ad Council, a nonprofit organization that combines the resources of agencies, advertisers and media companies to produce pro-bono advertising for sponsoring organizations, including UNICEF, Earth Share and Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Oates served as Ad Council chairman from 1999 – 2000 and currently is honorary chairman and chairman of the nominating committee.

A native of Kenton, Ohio, Oates attended The Ohio State University on a football scholarship, graduating in 1966 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration.