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Subject: Our visit with Bill & Warren - A Special Journal

We are sending this to a few of the special friends who have been receiving our trip journals to share with you the unusual experience that we had last night. We had chosen to delay our return to Alaska by one day, so we could attend a United Way 'thank you' event which featured Bill Gates & Warren Buffet as the featured guests.

As two people not particularly used to glitterati type functions, we were considerably awed by the evening's events. The outside tented affair on a beautiful sunny evening was held at a 10 acre Lake Washington estate in Medina, an eastside Seattle suburb. The invitation described the location only as the Reed Estate, and the hosts were never introduced, resulting in much speculation as to whom they were. Given that the past two years the function was at the residences of Gates (1999) & Paul Allen (2000), they certainly were in good company. Belatedly, we found out that we could have attended the previous events, but that's another story.



When two mature bald eagles landed in the tall Douglas Firs shortly after we arrived, we had the feeling that we had entered a most unusual Disneyland. There was close to a one to one ratio of staff to guests. You would be offered a drink refill before your glass was half empty.

Promptly at 7:30 PM, the group assembled in front of a small platform which faced the lake front. Margaret Larson, anchorwoman for the local NBC affiliate, was the moderator. She introduced the two whom she described as the two wealthiest men in the

world. At that point, Mr. Buffet (hereinafter called Warren) raised two fingers indicating he was merely #2, which brought a laugh from the audience. The goal of the panel was to explain their attitudes towards philanthropy, which they did quite effectively.

Mr. Gates (hereinafter called Bill) went first. He explained that about a dozen years ago, he read an article in *Fortune* Magazine about Warren's attitudes towards giving & philanthropy, and that he had used it as the basis for forming his own philanthropic goals. Interestingly, Joann & I had read and saved the same article, and had used it in forming our own approach towards giving.

We were extremely impressed with Warren who met all the descriptions we had read about him. He has a very warm, relaxed, unpretentious, & common sense personality. He discussed that he felt it was his

responsibility to seek out unique objectives that governments would not or could not serve. As an example, he cited the actions of the Rockefeller family 75 years ago in funding black colleges at a time when no other source of major funding was available to these institutions. Warren pointed out that he was a winner in the "ovarian lottery" awarding him a "lucky ticket" in life. He said that in 1931 when he was born, there was a 1 in 50 chance that he would be born in America, the land of opportunity. He had a 1 in 2 chance of being born male, which in that era meant that he had many more career opportunities. He stated that had he been born 2000 years earlier, he might have been food for some large animal. The fact that he has the ability to, as he described it, "accumulate capital", wouldn't have meant much to a hungry carnivore.

Bill followed up by discussing how he was introduced to giving by his mother who was long active in United Way. When Microsoft was a young company, his mother told him it was time to get involved. He protested that he was too busy with his company, but the end result of his protestations can be seen in the Gates Foundation, which is the largest private charitable foundation in the history of the world.

On our way to our table for dinner, we passed by the Gate's table and realized that we were about to walk by Bill. The extrovert in the family immediately reached out to shake his hand, and started a brief conversation. Her husband merely shook his hand, and mumbled something that may have sounded like "thank you" (Bill had funded the evening's events).

The event was attended by almost all of the major 'beautiful people' in Seattle including both billionaires & mere millionaires. Harrison Ford was pointed out to Carl across the room. Joann missed the sighting, but Carl's observation was that he is very gray and wears glasses. Nevertheless, Carl admits that he would be considered good looking by most females.

The Seattle United Way last year was number four in the U. S. after Chicago, New York, and Washington, D. C.. This year it was number two after Chicago. For next year there is no dollar goal, just to be number one.