

SUSIE BUFFETT INTERVIEW
BECOMING WARREN BUFFETT
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

SUSIE BUFFETT

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Interviewed By: Peter Kunhardt

Total Running Time: 57 Minutes

TITLE

On her father's interest in everything

03:12:45:03

SUSIE BUFFETT:

You know, he was talking the other night about some baseball something and he knows more stats and more history and more, you know everything. He absorbs everything, and—but the amazing thing is that he remembers it after he absorbs it; it sticks there somewhere so I—I just think he reads for—you know, for whatever's there. It's a lot of business but he's also very interested in what's going on in the community, he's interested in the sports all over the country, particularly the Huskers. You know, everything. It's amazing to me how much he knows and retains.

TITLE

He is an intense worker

03:14:02:22

SUSIE BUFFETT:

No one's ever asked me that before, and I—clearly my immediate answer is yes or no. He's an intense worker, but I don't know if that's the same as being a hard worker. Not that he wouldn't work hard, and doesn't work hard, but he's at the point in his life now where I think, you know he has a lot of control over what he does with his time so I think he worked harder when I was younger, in the sense that he spent—well I was gonna say he spent more time at it but he still spends a lot of time at it. You know, he would live at the office. If he

could live at the office, he would just have the bed there and live there so I still don't know the answer to that, I have to think about that.

TITLE

On her father singing her to sleep

03:15:00:12

SUSIE BUFFETT:

He used to rock me to sleep at night and sing 'over the rainbow' so I have this insanely sentimental attachment to that song, and he actually did a karaoke version that I have on, somewhere on a cd in my house, as a gift for me one time. He—he would just—I think the house was a little crazy with Howie and so he would come home and sit in the bedroom with me and rock me to sleep and sing which was really a lovely memory for me and—and you know the song is just, it's huge for me, that song is really, that's why I have all these Wizard of Oz things around the house.

TITLE

Warren as a father

03:15:49:22

SUSIE BUFFETT:

He was there physically. He was for me, and I think my brothers would have a different answer for this, for me, he was more present I think. I remember one day coming home from school and there was a big box on the dining room table and there was a new dress in it and there was a Slo Poke sucker. I was about 8 years old and my dad took me to the ballet. Now, at the time, that's all it was. It was great but it was that. Now that I'm older, I'm sure my mother forced him to do it. I'm sure he didn't wanna go but I never knew that at the time. So he would do stuff with me that was very sweet and thoughtful and so—and he—and he was always there. I mean he was there for homework help, although it was sort of hopeless to get math help from him because he could get the answer and then he couldn't explain how he got it so it didn't really matter but he was—and he was at the dinner table every night. Very present at the dinner table. I mean I've always had a very strong sense of how much it mattered to him to be—you know, in the

house and there. And I have a very close relationship with him now. I think I've always had a very close relationship with him. But he wasn't—you know, he wasn't the dad out in the backyard throwing the football and he wasn't really the dad, you know, sitting in the bedroom at night reading the stories with us, but I always had the sense he was there whenever we needed him. Well he was there whenever we needed him, 'cause he was physically present. A lot of my friends had dads that travelled a lot. My dad was in the house and there. So I always, I guess there was some sense to me he was always available for anything. I never felt like if we went in the room and he was reading, which he was always reading, he was always reading, that we couldn't interrupt him or talk to him. Or that he wouldn't have time for us or that—you know—that didn't happen.

TITLE

On her father's thought process

03:19:27:21

SUSIE BUFFETT:

Well I always told my mother we'd have to talk in sound bytes because—and sometimes I have gone to his office, once in a while, not very often, and said, "I need ten minutes of attention. Focus here." And—and if you can't do it, I'll come over to your house tonight because if the phone rings and you're gonna answer it, we can't be doing that, right just—right now. And he'll do it. He—he—I've never had him say, you know, no to that but I don't ask for it very often. And it's not because he doesn't want to, it's 'cause I don't think he can do it that often. So if you learn to talk in sound bytes and he can just hear what you need, he will—you know, then he's there. But I learned that early on. If you start going into some long thing, unless you've explained to him ahead of time that it's gonna be a long thing, and you need him to hang in there, you lose him.

03:20:27:14

You lose him to whatever giant thought he has in his head at that time that he was probably thinking about before you came in and really wants to get back to. And he gets back to it sometimes while your mid-sentence if you—if you don't catch him right there.

TITLE

On her mother's support for her father

03:20:55:04

SUSIE BUFFETT:

You know I've always said she's the reason Berkshire Hathaway is Berkshire Hathaway. Because my mother totally supported him, enabled him, you know, she—she got it very early that he was gonna be this—I mean I don't think she knew what he was gonna turn into but she knew that there was something big there and he needed that space and that support to let it happen and she did that, and I don't think most women would've actually been able to do what she did, at all.

TITLE

On her father's positive impact on so many

03:22:50:16

SUSIE BUFFETT:

He's an amazing person, starting with his integrity, and there's not, you know, an ounce of greed there in him, and never has been and never will be. He doesn't—he doesn't really care about the money. He's doing what he does—what he loves to do and by accident, you know he makes a whole bunch of money doing it. But if he—if he didn't make a whole bunch of money, he'd be ok with that, as long as he was doing it. I think there's a competitive piece of him that wants to do it better than anyone if he can. But the mark of that by accident is the money in this. It's not—it wouldn't matter if it was something else, if it was something he loved and he was doing really well.

TITLE

How Warren handled money with his kids

03:23:39:02

SUSIE BUFFETT:

We grew up in this very normal sort of situation I would say, kind of the regular father knows best kind of situation. He—we got an allowance, we all walked right out the door the minute we got it and went to three different drug stores and bought candy and magazines and did whatever we did with it. And I'm sure he's told you the slot machine story. So yeah, he's no dope. "Here kids, put your money in the slot machine." Then of course he opens the back and gets all his money back. But he wasn't—he wasn't really—my mother was more, you know, the person who dealt with the money in the house when we were kids. And I worked and had my own—I had this thing in my room, it wasn't a piggy bank but it was where I dropped all my paycheck money from my job. So I never felt like he was cheap or whatever word you wanna use for him, thrifty? Yeah I mean there's the famous story about the kitchen with me. I had some trouble with that one just because I thought I was asking for a loan, I was not asking him to give me the money. I thought, oh come on, can't you do this. But I think—I used to joke with my mother, I said "I'm gonna be on the cover of People magazine someday homeless." Because my dad will be like this super rich guy and you know we'll all be wandering around but he's—he definitely loosened up as we've gotten older. I think part of it is that—well part of it's my mother of course, she I'm sure was just poking at him I'm sure for years. The other part is I think, you know, he's got three children now who are adults, and we're not gonna turn into different people, Whatever we are, we are and you know, it's not that bad so it doesn't make him nervous anymore. But I, you know I just—basically I think he's been right.

TITLE

Her mother

03:25:55:21

SUSIE BUFFETT:

Well the first thing that comes into my mind is she was and I think almost everybody who ever knew her would say this; she was one of the best people you'd ever know. She was completely non-judgmental and could see the good in anyone. I always used to say, she could explain to you why Jeffrey Dahmer cut those people up and put them in a freezer and you know, poor Jeffrey, he must've had this happen

and that happen, he didn't really mean to do this. I mean my mothers the only person who could find some good in everyone and I think everybody felt like they were her best friend because she— and the reason they would have felt that way is because the care and interest she had in them was genuine. I don't know how she did it; I mean sometimes I just think you know, it was very real. I called—I called her at the Plaza hotel one time years ago, she and my dad were in New York. They had just gotten there, my dad answered the phone. He said, "Well mom's out in the hall, she's been out there with the bellman for about half an hour." I thought well, of course she is. Pretty soon she's gonna come back, she's gonna know all his kids name, she's gonna be sending a check for the daughters dance camp. She's—and—and she'll call him in a few months to check and see how things are going, 'cause she'll care. She was very, very unusual that way and it was—you know—it was 100% authentic. I've never known anybody who had so much ability for unconditional love and complete just sort of acceptance for who you were—whoever you were.

TITLE

On how her mother helped her father

03:28:13:11

SUSIE BUFFETT:

Well it's a little hard for me to talk about early on 'cause I was you know, busy being three. But I know he came—he was a very awkward, insecure young man. I mean I'm sure he's told you, they had a special room for him at the school, because he was such a problem and he—you know I mean he—he was—which I always like to tell especially young people because I think, you know, if you screwed up, or you know, look—look what this guy turned into. And not just the money but the person that he is, the human being that he is. So anything's possible, pretty much. But my mother, I'm sure as she did with everyone, but did it in a much more intense way with my dad. I mean she can see the good in everyone, she could see the potential. She, I think understood how much pain was there. And she was really good with people who were in pain or had experienced some personal pain and she was very good at sort of—you know she functions—functioned in a lot of ways as a therapist honestly, cause

she would ask a lot of questions, she cared deeply and then she would sort of help you think about things differently.

03:29:35:11

I think with my dad, she talked to him about a lot where the pain was coming from, why, you know, whatever was going on with him was going on. She probably heard him—I mean I'm sure that some of the things he probably said to her early on about how successful he might be, or what he wanted to do or—I'm sure she probably thought, oh right, we'll see but then of course it came true. But she would've been very supportive and nurturing and you know, I—he—you know, like I said, he was present in the house physically and he was there but he was upstairs reading all the time and she really in some ways had to develop her own life outside of that which I completely get but—yeah I mean she was always so loving towards him and so, she would—you know she would always publicly talk about you know, how great, how smart, how wonderful which she believed and it's all true. I just think it was sort of over the years, it just sort of—you know it was what he needed. I don't know how to describe it exactly. I mean they had a very, you know, physically together, they were very sweet with each other.

03:31:44:21

You know, she was so physically affectionate with him and he was with her but I don't know if he would have been that way if she hadn't sort of initiated all of it and sort of made him comfortable. But she was very—they were very—they were very, you could tell they loved each other. It was—it was very clear to me that they did.

TITLE

On how her mother served as a therapist

03:32:23:14

SUSIE BUFFETT:

My mother came from such a different kind of childhood, so it certainly wasn't from her personal experience that she was you know, able to do that. You know, she did that with so many people, on a smaller level of course 'cause she wasn't married to them and living with them but she was somebody—I mean that's why—I mean she had all these people who you know, she functioned—she functioned

as a therapist for a lot of people because she would listen to people about their family stuff, and their personal stuff, and you know, whatever was going on in their lives and would sort of talk them through it and get them to look at things differently, think about things differently and feel better in the end.

TITLE

On her parents coming from conservative families

03:33:23:08

SUSIE BUFFETT:

It's—It is interesting to me that they both came from these very conservative republican families so similar in so many ways, and my—both sets of grandparents were actually friends separately. Yeah I—it—I still sort of think—how did this—how did they both come out the way they did, because it's completely not—you know what they were getting at home from their parents at all. I mean my Grandpa Thompson was—he had this little chair we called his nest when he was older; he'd sit there and he had all his stuff around him and there were two pictures, little cut-out black and white pictures taped on the wall next to him and one was my mother, and one was Ronald Reagan. You know so, it's just—it's funny to me, I don't—I'm sure it was my mother who—but I will say my dad probably from his dad still had a deep sense of sort of what's right and sort of, human rights and I—I mean so he would have gotten this, some of the integrity part of him would have come from his father, so it—it just got sort of morphed into a liberal-democrat kind of thing. But I'm sure my mother—you know she got involved in this panel of American women and it was a big thing and a lot of civil rights work going on in Omaha in the early 60's and she was very active and my dad was there, I'm sure she'd come home and talk to him about it and you know, I—I think he probably just agreed with her and felt like she was doing the right thing and—and—yeah but I—I do think about that periodically, about how strange it is that they both came out of these—super nice people, I mean my mothers parents could not have been more—they were wonderful people. But—and part of Grandpa's thing, I mean I used to think you know, part of grandpas thing was he would just kind of poke at you to get you to argue with him. So I'm not—I—I—you know

sometimes I think he said things he didn't even think were true to get you to think about what you were saying and argue with him. But he still had Ronald Reagan's picture taped next to him.

TITLE

Her paternal grandparents

03:35:51:15

SUSIE BUFFETT:

I—I'm the oldest grandchild on that side. So I was ten when grandpa died and we spent a huge amount of time with all of my grandparents actually when we were kids, so I have a lot of memories of grandpa. We used to take these rides out in the country and they had—I still can't figure out now how we did this, but they had a car that had like a luggage rack thing along the back? I guess, I don't know, I don't think it was that unusual at the time and my cousin and I used to flip around on the luggage rack and—we spent a huge amount of time with—with all of my grandparents when we were kids so I have a lot of memories of grandpa and then my grandma didn't die until I was I don't know what, 30 some years old so I remember her very well. I st—you know—both—I—I remember all my grandparents.

TITLE

Her paternal grandmother

03:36:56:11

SUSIE BUFFETT:

She was a tough cookie. You know, I didn't personally experience anything you know, with her; I got along with her actually quite well. And I—but you know, I was also the one who was here and I was—at the end of her life, the last few years, I was the one, you know taking her to the doctors, paying the bills and I did a lot of stuff at the end, the last probably 5 or 6 years for her so—

TITLE

Omaha in the 1960's

03:37:57:03

SUSIE BUFFETT:

I was in high school – I mean I graduated in 1971, so I was—in junior high and high school in the 60’s in Omaha; there was a lot more going on here than probably people think that weren’t here and I was in a very racially mixed high school so we had plenty going on actually in school too and my mother was very active in the North Omaha community and was physically present and involved with a lot of agencies in North Omaha doing her Panel of American work—American women, and she was right there on the ground working. My dad was 100% supportive but—I—and I think the only reason he probably wasn’t more there is— it was—he was—you know, he was doing his job. So, but—he was completely supportive, and you know he did do some things. He—he helped start the boys club here with his uncle Fred. He—and he was quite active in that. He helped start the black bank here and then of course he tried to join Highland Country Club, the all-Jewish country club while his friend Nick Newman tried to join the non-Jewish club, basically to force it to happen. And—he was—and he was—he cared a lot about that because it was something I think he thought he could do and he could make it happen and it mattered that it happened, so he was—he was not doing a lot personally but he did a few things in a big way and he was 100% behind my mother.

TITLE

On her mother’s singing

03:40:10:09

SUSIE BUFFETT:

She was singing all the time when we were kids. She—it was—most of that happened after I left, being the oldest of the three of us. And she loved—I mean she loved singing and when she got sick actually, one of the things she was most worried about was that she wouldn’t be able to sing again. But she—I think when—once Howie and I were both gone, and my dad being the character that he is—I mean I think she figured out she was going to have to figure something for her life because my mother would never in a million years have been happy being Mrs. Warren Buffett. I mean that is so not who she was. And so staying in Omaha I think would have meant to her, oh gosh, you know

getting involved in all kinds of stuff that just—it was so not her thing, it—it would of killed her, she couldn't have done it. So I think the singing was a great outlet for her. She loved it. She saw it as—you know I think it was something that was just her. And my dad loved it too; I mean he was so supportive of that and so I think she started to think—I—probably once Howie was out of the house for sure, she started to see the writing on the wall here and you know just started trying to figure out how she could at least have some more—as she called it, you know, a room of her own. Which ended up being outside—not a room in Omaha. So it was partly the singing but I think it was also—you know, Howie, well that came later, I was gonna say Howie married a woman with four great girls and then they had their own child. And you know, it—it—it started to morph into this thing where there were a lot of grandchildren and you know she just wanted to spend more time travelling around and doing things. But I was so kind of not there during the singing stuff. You know, I knew it was happening but I only saw her sing a couple times because I lived in California at the time.

TITLE

On her mother's move to California

03:42:53:07

SUSIE BUFFETT:

I do remember—I—I—it was devastating for him and I came home because I—I—I—I can't say I was mad at her exactly, but I kept thinking, how can you leave him? He's so—he can't function by himself. He can go to the office and do all that stuff but I'm not sure he knows how to make a piece of toast. So I came home, I was—I—you know I—I had a hard time understanding it; I understand it really well now but I had a hard time understanding it at the time. It—I stayed home for—and I live—I stayed at the house with him. I don't know if he remembers this. It's funny because I remember a lot about it but I remember doing his laundry at one point and you know, whatever, it got done and I folded it and took it upstairs or something and he said, "Well that was fast." And I thought, he probably doesn't know it—he probably thinks it takes 6 days to do the laundry. I don't know, he's never done anything like this. But I stay—I just stayed with him because I was so worried about him and I—I think I was home for at

least a month, then I went back to California, I'm not sure what I was doing with my job, now that I think about it but—then I—I—I don't remember talking to her a lot about it at the time but you know I mean, every—life went on and everybody got used to it but it was a hard time.

03:44:43:00

I know it was a hard time for him. I mean I can't even imagine what he felt like. In fact I did make a joke at one point, I said you know, mom could—we could make a tape of mom yelling, you know, "Bye Warren, I'll be back later!" And then have the door slam and you would just think she was here because he was always off reading and doing something, you know and he didn't—I don't think he knew what she was doing most of the time you know. You know, she was off doing stuff either with the kids or in the community and then she had—you know we used to joke—we had that little—we had a door hangar that had Lucy from Peanuts in her—you know, her little psychiatric booth that says the doctor is in and we would hang it on the door at the house because she would go—she would leave the house at like 11, 11:30 at night and be gone for hours and she would be driving around seeing what I used to call her patients and that's what she would do. She would drive around and visit people who were having problems with whatever and you know, listen to em. So she wasn't really spending time with my dad; that was the funny part. So you know, that's why I told him at one point, I said, "we could just make a tape of her, you'll think she's here then."

TITLE

On her father meeting Astrid

03:46:21;16

SUSIE BUFFETT:

Well yeah, and there's many versions of this story, and I can only tell you my version, because I—and I think this is true, although I've heard so many other versions so who knows what's true. I knew Astrid before my parents did. Astrid was friends with other friends of mine. She's older than I am but—but she used to work down there in the old market and I would be down there when I was home. I lived in California but when I came home, everybody hung out down there and we were down there so I knew her—I didn't know her well but I did

know her before my parents did. And then she got to know my mother from being at the French Café. So—and Astrid’s a very sweet person, she’s a—she’s a true caregiver, really. So my mother had told multiple women, I mean I can name em but I won’t right now to sort of look in on him you know, because as we all know, he can’t turn on the light switch. So, I mean my aunt Dotty was one. So there were several women friends of his who I think were calling him up to go to movies, not to date him, just to hang out, give him something to do. So Astrid was one of them and she—you know I—I don’t think my mother, well I’m almost sure that its true, asked Astrid to move in with him, that I’m sure did not happen. I think that was a surprise, but I also think, you know what, my mother made the choice to move so something’s gonna happen eventually. So I think that my dad knew As—well I’m sure he knew Astrid before my mother moved because she was down there at the Café when my mother was singing and Astrid was around the house actually sometimes. My mother was having parties with people that were, you know, involved at the French Café and that she knew from the market.

03:48:32:22

And Astrid was around, she—she’d been in the house before—I think before—I know before my mother left. So I don’t think it was quite the setup that people make it sound like. I think there were more women—this sounds kind of weird but—there were more women—you know she’d asked a bunch of her friends; check him out—check in on him, take him some soup, go to a movie, you know whatever, and Astrid was one of them and you know, she ended up staying.

03:49:25:12

And mother and Astrid were very close. You know, they really, really loved each other. I have the sweetest card that my mother saved that Astrid wrote when she was sick; I don’t think it was the last time she was sick, I think it was another time, I’m not sure but—I mean it’s just a very beautiful card Astrid sent, saying how worried she was about her and she loved her and strange as it may seem to people, I always think, you know, who cares? If it’s working with the people directly involved, who cares what anyone thinks? You know, I think that my mother was—she loved Astrid as a person and I think she also was glad that she was there because she loved my dad; she wanted him

taken care of and happy and Astrid is—there’s no one better than Astrid. I mean she’s just—she loves my dad, she wouldn’t care if he had one cent. I mean she just loves him. And so that was—you know, it worked well for everyone. Astrid didn’t want to be out travelling with my dad, my mother and my dad travelled together and you know, went to visit the grandchildren and did stuff with some of my dad’s friends in New York who now have become friends with Astrid too, and you know in this very weird way it worked. And I do remember one time my mother telling me that a friend of hers, and I will not name the person because she is still alive said, “you know, I—I wish I could have done that.” You know, she said. And—I—you know I think that it was very—you know, it was unconventional and I’m sure it looked weird to people but nobody was faking anything. I mean my mother wasn’t acting like she liked Astrid or Astrid wasn’t acting—you know, it was all—it was all real and it worked, you know.

TITLE

On her father, her mother, and Astrid’s relationship

03:51:23:18

SUSIE BUFFETT:

We had Christmas together every year until 2002 was the last Christmas, ‘cause 2003 she was sick. Yeah I mean it was just, you know it just turned into this new normal and everybody was fine with it. You know my kids never didn’t know Astrid. Astrid was like—in some ways, Astrid was—you know she was more present in their life in a lot of the time than my mother just because they went over to their house—when they were little they were over at the house all the time spending time with her so the younger kids didn’t know anything different. I don’t know how they ever sorted it out in their head when they were younger, why grandpa—with Christmas he’s with grandma and—you know, I don’t know. But you know it just—, and it—it probably took a few years to figure out how it was gonna all work and—but then it just turned kind of turned into what it was and everyone kind of understood it.

TITLE

On her mother’s illness

03:52:39:12

SUSIE BUFFETT:

Well I actually was in Arizona with her in October of 2003 and she'd had the biopsy the day before she came to Arizona so I was with her in Arizona at this Fortune most powerful women conference and she'd told me she had a biopsy the day before and I didn't really think much of it and so we got home and the biopsy results were not good. It was stage IV oral cancer and I still didn't really know what that meant because I'd never known anybody that had oral cancer so, and you know, some cancer is not horrible and some is a death sentence and oral cancer I think is sort of somewhere in between. So she called me and told me this and I think—I think I looked it up on the Internet. I can remember where I was sitting when all of this was going on. It was such a weird thing because at the time, what I read was it's black men who drink and smoke. And I thought, ok she's none of those things. Including she didn't smoke or drink. So my dad, I can't—I think I may have called my dad and told him not to look on the Internet which I'm sure he already had done, so it wasn't too long after that.

03:54:17:07

We did go—so she and I went to New York to visit the doctor at Sloan Kettering; she knew she wanted to do it in San Francisco but she just wanted to get—have somebody else to look at her X-ray's or whatever they had. So—or biopsy report. So we went to see this doctor in New York and on the way in the cab she said, "Now, if I forget to ask the question, will you please remember to ask him if I can still color my hair after I have the surgery?" So I was like, "ok." So we were in there for like this awful thing, and we're leaving and I said, "you forgot to ask the question mom." She said "what?" I said "she wants to know if she can still color her hair after this surgery?" He said, "yes, that's ok." So, and then we flew back to California and I—I'm sure at that point we'd already scheduled everything. And it was quite a big surgery and it had turned out to be less than they thought it was gonna be. It was still I think like 12 and a half hours or something. They had thought they were gonna have to take some bone out of her leg to rebuild some bone in her mouth, but they didn't have to do that. If they had to do that, I can't imagine how much worse it would have been but they still had to take a whole bunch of tissue from her arm to put inside her mouth after they did you know, the stuff they had to do with her

tongue. So I—we all—we were all there and my dad and my brothers left after a few days and it was—it was really awful for a while. I mean she was in the ICU and it was really awful. She couldn't talk; and she couldn't—I mean she had a tracheotomy and it was really bad. And then I stayed with her for a month I think and then I really was with her for the next about four months or so with a few short exceptions.

03:56:14:04

I came home for Christmas because it was the first Christmas we were gonna have without being in California so I came home a little bit off and on. But I really stayed almost the whole time. My dad came out every weekend. It was hard, it was not—it was hard, I mean because it was such an awful; she couldn't talk, she couldn't swallow, she couldn't eat, she couldn't—you know, it was terrible.

TITLE

On her father's reaction to her mother's illness

03:56:44:05

SUSIE BUFFETT:

I mean he—you wanna see him read the paper, that's when he reads the paper. The morning—the day she was going into surgery that morning, he and I were in the hospital room with her and they were gonna take her in ten minutes and she said to me "come in here, come here." So we went to the bathroom, and he's you know like this, reading the paper. I'm sure he's crying behind the paper, he's just sitting there. And she said, "now he's a wuss." She said, "I told him," they were gonna do whatever they do initially and within 45 minutes they would know if the cancer had spread. So she said, "I told him, if the cancer's spread, I want them to close me up and not do anything else," she said, "and I don't think he's gonna tell them that's ok, I think he's gonna tell them to do whatever they can do." So she said, "you have to make sure he does that." I said "ok." So fortunately the cancer hadn't spread but—and then they took her off into the operating room and about 45 minutes later, Doctor Eisley came in and said it hadn't spread; this is—this how freaked out my dad is. So—and we all are but this is—this is really huge. Doctor Eisley comes in and says, "it hasn't spread, you know, we're gonna continue, now it's gonna be a long time." And we said ok. And so he walked away and my dad looked at

me, and he said, “what did he say? Did it spread or not spread?” I said, “no, it did not spread.” He said, “Oh ok.” And then he felt like we could go get something to eat. You know, that’s—it was—it’s funny, there’s some of it he can’t—you know he just can’t. The thought of something happening to her was for him, was the worst thing that could happen. But she—you know she came out and I think he probably needed to go home at that point. He needs to go disappear into his office and he knows she’s got excellent care and he knows I’m there and you know I’m gonna call him if there’s any reason to call him. And he showed up every weekend and—

03:58:56:12

The first time he showed up actually it was kind of funny, he call—it was probably a week later or something; he called me and he said, you know, “let’s go to Johnny Rocket’s when I get there, get some dinner.” And I said “ok, but,” I said, “we have to get—I have to get mom in bed first.” Now, she’s in bed in the hospital but there’s like a whole thing that has to happen. I said, “I have to get her ready for bed before I can leave.” He said, “Well how long does that take?” I said, “Well, it takes about two hours.” “It does?” “Yeah.” But it was great because he came and he sat in the room and he watched all the stuff we had to do just to get her ready to kind of go to sleep for the night. And then we went to Johnny Rockets and you know, he was—he was good. We surprised him the one time that she—when she finally took the thing— they had removed the tracheotomy thing, whatever it is. And we didn’t tell him that when he got there that time that she was gonna be able to talk. And so that was kind of a fun moment, and he walked in.

TITLE

Her mother’s love of U2

04:00:15:06

SUSIE BUFFETT:

She loved U2 and, so at night, every night when she went to bed, I always say went to bed, she was already in bed, but when she went to bed, we would—she had a feeding tube so—and she couldn’t talk so she would write these notes to me. It’s funny; I have a huge pile of paper of all the notes she wrote for me when she was sick. She didn’t know I kept them, sorry. ‘Cause some of them were so funny. But she

would write me a note every night of the songs she—we had the Rattle and Hum DVD which is an old DVD and she loved it and we—she'd write the songs that she'd wanna listen to that night and the last song was always, 'All I Want Is You'. So we would play the song—we would show them on the DVD, the songs, and then we would shoot the pain meds in the feeding tube, and the sleeping meds and then we'd put on 'All I Want Is You' and she'd go to sleep to that. So in November, I was in Washington in the Library of Congress at something with Bono and he said, and they hadn't met either. He said, "how's your mom doing?" And I said—I said "she's, you know, she's doing fine." I said, "She listens to—she watches to the Rattle and Hum DVD every night before she goes to bed every night." He goes, "really?" And I said, "yes" and I said, "and she listens to different songs every night but we always end on the same song." So, when she died, he called and he said, "I wanna come sing the song at her service," which was really sweet.

04:02:04:23

She met him on May 10th, which is his birthday and mothers day that year. They—Bono and Ali and I think both of the girls, Jordan and Eve were in New York, and we were there, it was after the Berkshire meeting. And I mean, she was like a little kid. She was so excited, so excited to meet him. And—so they came over to the Hotel and we had lunch and you know, just—we had the dining room and the suite and it was really nice and they—they just had a very instant—really wonderful connection and he brought her, over on my wall over there, this very amazing painting that he did of her as a total surprise. And actually, He told me when he, the—Katrina, his assistant had asked for a picture of my mother for this painting that he wanted to do and we sent him the picture that's in the painting over here which is her in Ghana; she was dancing with a lot of women in Ghana. And Bono said to me, "you know, It was so interesting when I got that picture 'cause," he said, "most people send you know, sort of you know—a head shot" but he said "I got this picture of your mother, it sort of captured who she was even though I didn't know her." So he did this really, very cool thing that's over there for her. And they just had a w—and then she and I went to France and stayed at his house in Eze in late June, just before she died. That was—She wasn't sure she was gonna make the trip, but it gave her such energy to be there. On the way home, she never went to sleep, she had the headphones on and she was listening

to U2 the whole way and—just Howie said, “what happened down there,” he said, “she’s like a new person.” So it was very—it was a short but very lovely relationship.

TITLE

On her mother’s death

04:04:20:11

SUSIE BUFFETT:

No she did not die of cancer, I think everyone thinks that. She died of a stroke. She had—she and my dad had gone to Cody, Wyoming which they did every year with a bunch of friends, Herb Allen has a ranch there, and I was in Boston at the Democratic Convention and for some reason, I decided to come home a day early and I had come home, I was dead tired from being up way too late every night and I was gonna watch, I think it was John Kerry was gonna speak that night and my dad called and said, I need Doctor Easley’s phone number. This was I don’t know, 8 o’clock at night or something and I—I didn’t ask why or anything, I just thought “boy, this is not good, whatever it is.” I got him Doctor Easley’s phone number and then he called back about 45 minutes later, maybe not quite that long, and he said, “something happened to mom, I’m in an ambulance, you need to come.” Now, I thought well, he would call me if she stubbed her toe. So we’re gonna figure this out. I said “ok.” So I called NetJets and got a plane and he called back again and he said, “you need to find your brothers and bring them,” so I said “ok.” So, I call—Peter was in Omaha, and I called Peter, and I said “there’s a plane at midnight.” And Howie, I found Devon in the Walgreens in Indiana on her cell phone. And I said, “where’s Howie?” And she said “he’s on his way to South Africa, he’s on a plane.” So I said, “ok, I don’t know what’s going on,” I’m still in my head thinking, we’ll get this figured this out.” So I said “just have him call me when, you know he lands.” I think Devon gave me the phone number of somebody who was picking him up or something. Anyway, somehow I figured out what I was supposed to do. And Peter and I got on the plane, and I packed a bag for like three weeks ‘cause I, totally in my head, I’m thinking, ok we’re gonna call in the nurses, we’re gonna call in Kathleen, my mothers assistant forever, the most amazing person, and we’ll fix this. So, ‘cause my mother had this little group of

nurses that had taken care of her. So How—Peter and I landed, I don't think I talked—I—well I think I did talk to Howie, right before, we must have just landed before I took off. I said, "I don't know what's going on but I'll call you." And so we got to Cody; It's the weirdest thing for me, I was in the hospital with Mrs. Graham after she fell. And so there was a lot of sort of déjà vu, Herb, it was during a Herb thing and it was in a hospital that's there for skiing accidents and not, you know, people having strokes and—

04:07:33:18

So we went into the hospital room and my dad was sitting there. He'd been sitting there all night holding her hand. I was so proud of him because he hadn't done any you know, excess measures or whatever. You know, he—he—when it came down to it, he knew what he was supposed to do, and he did it—which was nothing. She had a little oxygen thing on her face and I thought this was so interesting because she had told me a few months earlier that her biggest fear was dying—suffocating, and dying. And so I thought, well, she's not gonna be gasping for breath, so that's good, she didn't want that. My dad went to sleep then, and Peter went to sleep and I sat with her and my one regret is that I didn't bring my iPod. I thought, oh she would have loved to have some music playing, but I forgot that part. So I sat with her and I just kept putting my hand on her heart to see if she was breathing and at one point, you know I didn't feel anything. So I went out and I got the nurse and I said, "can you come in here?" She said, "No, she's gone." So I have to say, one of the worst moments of my life was waking my dad up to tell him that. It was horrible, and a total shock, you know she'd been fine. She'd been fine, they went off to Cody, and she was fine. And they were having dinner and, you know, she didn't feel well after dinner and she had the stroke. So—

TITLE

On her father's reaction to her mother's death

04:09:34:02

SUSIE BUFFETT:

You know, he just was sad, crying, sad. I thought, in my head at the time, I thought, in my head at the time I thought, God, I don't know if he'll ever get out of bed, this is like the worst thing ever. And—but he

did, I mean but we—so we went—took a while to get out of the hospital because they have to do all of this stuff with you know, she's in Wyoming, we have to move her out of the state and all this—there's just a lot of paper work that goes on then. And you know he had to do stuff with Mark Hamburg at Berkshire and make sure that whatever stock wise—you know, all that stuff and there were a few people that I needed to call because I didn't want them to hear it on the news, I mean obviously Howie but there were a couple other people, so I did that. And I sat in the room with her, I didn't—for some reason I didn't want her to be by herself. So everybody kind of went into their little jobs we had to do and then we flew her home. And it was the day before my birthday, so I got home and I went to the mortuary, did what I had to do at the mortuary, my dad got under the covers, and I got home from the mortuary and the door bell rang and it was the UPS man with my birthday presents from my mother, which I opened last year. I waited ten years, yeah.

TITLE

On her mother's memorial service

04:11:00:14

SUSIE BUFFETT:

She told us the music, she wanted only family and she—yeah—and then she had one thing she wanted me to read, she had—she had given us some stuff. The only thing she didn't tell me was where to put her ashes, so I figured, well she must've figured I could figure it out because that's the only thing I didn't know, but she had been telling me since I was, you know ten years old—what funeral—we had a joke about her funeral music. So all of a sudden, she died, and I thought uh-oh, now I have to remember all of those songs, which I remembered all but one. So I had Brad Underwood come over and he put together this whole thing of the music for us and—and then we actually put—had played one of Peter's songs, and then we ended the service with her singing, here's to life because it just seemed perfect. So yeah, I mean the funeral music has been queued up for years.

04:12:06:00

Well then Bono—the first call I got when we landed was him saying “can I come sing?” And I thought, well it's gonna be so little, I don't know if it's worth your time really, but he said “no, I really want to do

this.” So he—he flew in with Ali, his wife and Bobby Shriver and practiced with Mike the night before, my son. Mike played the guitar and Bono sang. Which was amazing of him and beautiful.

TITLE

On her father’s relationship with Kay Graham

04:14:10:23

SUSIE BUFFETT:

I don’t think so; I don’t think anything would have threatened my mother really, because their relationship was so solid and so—it was sort of such a different relationship than he would ever, ever have with anyone else, that I don’t think—I don’t think anything threatened my mother at all. No, I mean—I don’t—I—I don’t think so. In fact I’m—I just can’t imagine. And I just adored Mrs. Graham, I mean she and I had a very close relationship, so I don’t think so.

TITLE

On her mother’s philanthropy work

04:15:09:15

SUSIE BUFFETT:

She was working with Allen Greenburg, my ex-husband who still runs the foundation and is amazing, doing women’s reproductive health work around the world and then there was—there’s a little piece too that’s college scholarships—well it’s not that little it’s twenty something million dollars but my mother loved travelling to sort of the worst parts of the world and meeting the people and spending time with them and learning about what—you know what she and the foundation could do to make their lives better.

TITLE

The Susie Buffett Foundation still follows her legacy

04:15:56:04

SUSIE BUFFETT:

110%, I am so proud of what we do. And—and—and we have our board meetings and I just think—I almost cry at every board meeting because I just think she would be so proud, it's absolutely what she would do and that is my biggest job in my opinion, is to make sure every penny is spent the way she would want it spent.

TITLE

On her father's diet

04:16:55:21

SUSIE BUFFETT:

He loves it. He's the worst eater and he loves it, and he's healthy, that's the problem. He's healthy. So, you know, I said to him once, "what—what if your doctor tells you, you had to eat only lettuce or you would die?" He said, "then I would eat only lettuce but I'm not gonna do it now." You know, he has like perfect everything and he eats the worst possible—I mean it drives—I—you know, he doesn't drink water—he doesn't drink water! He doesn't do anything he's supposed to do! And he's healthy.

TITLE

On her mother's appearance on Charlie Rose

04:17:46:23

SUSIE BUFFETT:

Charlie had been working on some sort of large thing about my dad and he had wanted to talk to my mother and my mother sort of went back and forth because she doesn't like to go back and forth because she just didn't like to talk to anyone. So she finally agreed because it was Charlie and she trusted him and she figured he would be good to her so she was gonna do it and she did it and thank god she did. So we— Charlie set it up in a room at the Plaza so she wouldn't have to do anything because she was really not so good at this point still. We sort of did this thing where we think one thing a day, what are you gonna do for—you know, because she was so tired still from the radiation. So she that morning had actually said, "I don't know if I can do this." And Charlie knew that this might happen, and was fine with whatever worked. And so, she said, "I'll try," she said, "maybe I'll just

do it for ten minutes. I just feel tired and I'll do it for ten minutes." I said ok, we'll go down there and tell Charlie, you'll do what you do. So we went down there and she started the interview with him and I think it's 45 minutes long, about. She didn't cough, she didn't have to drink her water, she was completely amazing I think and I'm so grateful now that she did it because it's the only thing that we have, but she was fabulous. And so we were leaving and walking down the hall and she said, "how'd I do?" And I said, "Mom you were great," you know, "it was—couldn't have been better." She said "wha—are you sure, you know, I didn't make any mistakes?" "I said no, you're going to be totally happy with it, it was fabulous." And she said, "lets go to Bergdorf's." So we did, we went to Bergdorf's where she sat in a chair but she was still at Bergdorf's.

TITLE

Her father's legacy

04:19:47:12

SUSIE BUFFETT:

I think he would want it to be about him—his character and who he is as a person. I don't think he would necessarily want it to be that he was you know, the second richest guy or whatever he is. I think he would want it to be about his character and who he is. And—and even though I—I don't think of him as a philanthropist, 'cause he doesn't personally give away the money except he gives away all the money to other people to give it to, I think that would be the other piece to it; is that, you know, with all that money he did make, he made sure it went out to do as much good as it could do in the world and not to sit and you know, pay for 25 boats and 16 houses and—he just doesn't care about that; he cares that it goes out to do a lot of good. I would think he would hope that his legacy had to do with his character and who he is as a person rather than how much money he made.

TITLE

On the Laguna Beach house

04:21:20:05

SUSIE BUFFETT:

Well, we bought the house—we—my parents bought the house in 1971; I was a senior in High School so—and it was a little bit of a haven I think for my mother to kind of escape and sit and look at the ocean. She really was very, very connected to that house. My dad, you know, doesn't get connected to anything like that. He was—he liked being out there because we were all out there and I think that was fun for him and you know, he liked just hanging around out there but he has no real sentimental connection to it and I think actually it would be painful for him now to be there. It was so—It just was so *her*. Howie wrote me a letter after he went there after she died and he said, "I don't think I can come back again. It's—it's just too painful." I don't feel that way. I like it that it feels like her but you know, everybody's different that way. It's—it's a very—you know it's just a special place, and it's—it's right by the ocean and it's open and it just feels like her when—and some of my friends have stayed there and said, "I like going there because it reminds me of your mom."

END OF TRANSCRIPT