

KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

HOWARD BUFFETT INTERVIEW
BECOMING WARREN BUFFETT
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

HOWARD BUFFETT

November 19, 2015

Interviewed by: Teddy Kunhardt

Total Running Time: 43 Minutes

TITLE

His childhood

10:18:35:10

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well you know, I can describe my childhood as normal but who knows what normal is. I mean, you know, people often think when they ask that question, you know well Warren Buffett was this famous rich guy. He was not famous and he wasn't rich when we were growing up. I mean you know, he was in the process of making money, but he was at home a lot. We had dinner together, we had Christmases together. We, you know—we—we did what I would think would be a very normal—we had what I think would be a very normal upbringing.

TITLE

Christmas at the Buffetts

10:19:17:23

HOWARD BUFFETT:

I think an average Christmas at the Buffett's was what you would see on TV. I mean it was like, you know, Lots of gifts, a great time, everybody together and we did that year after year. I mean we just—it was a very consistent thing in our lives and we even did it when we were long into our adulthood. I mean it—it was something that we just did for many, many years. Pretty much until my mom died.

TITLE

His siblings

10:20:06:04

HOWARD BUFFETT:

I'm the middle child so of course I got picked on from both ends, had the most difficult part of life in the Buffett family. Ask my sister or brother, they'll tell you something different. But you know, Susie and I were very close in age, we were about 18 months apart and so we were a bit competitive growing up. I think it was good that—that you know, she was a female and I was a male. I think if we were males we probably would have killed each other but—but you know—and Peter was four years behind so he was—and he was—and he was more—I'll call him more passive if that's— you know, if I can use that term, in terms of kind of my personality so you know, we just didn't do a lot together and we didn't clash at all but Susie and I were pretty competitive growing up.

TITLE

Where his name came from

10:21:00:05

HOWARD BUFFETT:

So yeah –my first name Howard was after my grandpa Howard Holman Buffett and my second name Graham was after Ben Graham who of course was you know, a great mentor to my dad and you know, they're both incredible people and you know, I really don't remember Ben Graham but I remember my grandfather, you know, to a certain degree. He died when I was probably maybe ten years old, something like that. You know, we would—my grandpa and I would watch football games together and it would always throw me because—well it did in the beginning—I mean he would—he'd be rooting—routing—rooting for one of these teams and then the score would change and he would root for the other team, and I thought, wait a minute, you were for the other team. And he'd say, "no I'm always for the underdog" and I've never forgotten that. You know it was—it was kind of a life lesson in a sense because he was always for the person who had you know, the least amount of opportunity so that football game kind of represented his philosophy and I'll never forget that.

TITLE

What his father was like as a young man

10:22:25:20

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well he was home a lot, and I always get a kick out this story about you know, how he went across the street once and asked Don Keough if he wanted to invest and you know, Don said, not to face but Don said, “why would I invest in a guy that just sits at home and reads books?” You know, and so he was around a lot, which was great. I mean we had a very—it may—I would say normal—but it may have been unusually normal if that—that doesn’t maybe make sense but I mean, you know, my parents were around all the time and we had dinner together, we went on vacations to dinner—together—went on vacations together. We did, you know, celebrated holidays together. And we even you know, often times had you know, extended family. So I think it was a very—for me, I think the big thing was it was a very stable environment, and you know, my mom and dad were always congenial. I mean we—we never saw—I never saw them fight, ever. I never—I never saw them in an argument. I mean I never saw them mad at each other and so I think that may actually be a bit of a fantasy ‘cause now that I’ve been married, I know that it doesn’t always work that way but I always made the same effort with my wife, ya know to behave the same way in front of our kids and so I think we had the most stable environment you could ever ask for.

10:23:59:10

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Yeah I mean it was, you know, I would constantly kinda go up to the office and say, “you got time to throw the football? You got time to throw the baseball?” And you know, it was typically—it—it would be—it—it—it—I mean I think it was a pretty typical response, ‘I’ll be there in a minute.’ And after the second or third time, you know of kind of prompting him you know, he would always come, he would never say no. He would always come down, throw the football for a while, throw the baseball, you know do whatever it was I was trying to get him to do. So I mean you know, after the second or third time of, you know, prompting him, he always came down. He always would throw the football, throw the baseball, participate, and you know he

was—he was around more than most fathers would be around so I probably had an opportunity to do that more than most kids would you know, have an opportunity to do that but yeah he was—he was always great about that. Most of the time he was very patient with me, you know. It was when my—when I really got my mom to her limit, that’s when she called in the heavy forces and that’s when he had to take a little different position.

TITLE

Household chores

10:25:27:20

HOWARD BUFFETT:

You know he—I don’t remember him really doing much with chores. Basically I think, you know, my mom and dad would pay us a small allowance. We’d clean gutters, rake leaves. We would do things around the house—empty the garbage; we’d do all of that. I mean I remember when it was 25 cents at one point, then 50 cents a week and it was never a lot of money but you know it was you know, the incentive to do it and it was the reward for doing you know what you know, our parents wanted us to do. But I don’t remember him doing much of that. I mean he’s not the kind of guy who would go out and cut the grass and the truth is, today, I would say, you know, that’s not—I’ve learned—the phrase is, what’s your highest and best use of time and obviously with him, his highest and best use of time was not mowing the lawn.

TITLE

His father on an emotional level

10:26:35:23

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well it’s difficult to connect on an emotional level because I think that that’s not his basic mode of operation. I don’t think he could be as successful in business if he were a really like, normally an emotional person. Obviously he has emotions and he expresses emotions; there’s times that that comes and go’s but you know, I would say he’s—he’s a lot of fun but he’s—he’s still in his personal life very direct and very

focused on practicality and reality and so you get that. But it's not—you know in business, you know it probably is a hard-edged approach but personally, even though he's not, you know, I would say extremely emotional, it isn't like the thing most people would imagine because he is the funniest guy I've ever met and part of that comes from how clever he is, and how witty he is, and you know, there's nobody who can come up with better jokes on the spur of the moment than my dad and so he's a fun guy—he is one of the most fun guys to be around from that standpoint.

10:27:53:07

He will come up with the funniest lines that you can imagine and sometimes I sit there and think, how does he do that, you know? But it's -it's—that's him—I mean that—and—and—so that's the part I think, the very clever business part that carries through to his personal life, you know. He's got obviously a tremendous IQ and it's an IQ that can be applied to you know, produce results. I mean, not everybody with high IQ's produce results so I—I just think it's kind of a natural extension of how he actually is.

TITLE

Traits he has in common with his father

10:32:15:06

HOWARD BUFFETT:

You know I think the similarities you would see that I've developed from my dad would come from what he's taught us and all of us kids and I remember certain things, I was driving down dodge street when I was like eleven or twelve years old with him and you know I still remember he said, "just remember it takes you know, twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it." And he was always you know giving us you know, these little bits of philosophy and—and they were great. And I think they build—you know, they—they—they build out a character—they build out, you know, what your sensitivities are, what your priorities are, and so I think, you know, the kind of person he is, I think all three of us kids you know, have parts of that in us and he always tried to stress integrity and at the same time being pretty flexible.

10:33:04:22

Knowing that, you know, all young kids, you know, good kids make mistakes. So, just because you make a mistake, doesn't mean you're a bad person. I think he would always try, you know I got in trouble probably way more than my brother and sister and I think you know, he would always try and take that and use it as a lesson to try to teach me you know why I didn't wanna do what I was doing or you know why I got in trouble, you know, what I could learn from that. So I think all of us would have a lot of the traits that he possesses in terms of how he feels about humanity and treating other people and being fair and honest; I think those are all things that he would've pretty much, you know, to him was important to make sure that we understood those things.

TITLE

His mother

10:40:54:23

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well my mom was like the biggest part of my life growing up. I mean you know, even though I got disciplined on a regular basis and she was the one doing it, she was still my best friend. And you know, she was somebody who I could go to with almost any problem, or any issue, any situation, even if I knew I was going to get in trouble, I knew she would handle it in a way that I could confide in her or ask for help so she was— I think she was very unusual. You know, everybody might say that about their mom, I don't know, but you know I think she was very unusual because she was somebody who you know could be the discipliner and the best friend at the same time. And I think that's a very hard thing to do. My mom was kind of always radiating joy and radiating friendship and people would be very attracted to her. And she was somebody who was really easy to be around, somebody who would help anybody, I mean whether she knew him or didn't know him or maybe even didn't agree with them, she would still help them and—so I think she was a very unusual person in that way.

10:42:23:06

She was a bit of a free spirit. But—but she, you know, wasn't way out there, you know, she was somebody who I think—and I think that's

what make—I think being a free spirit is what made her be so open and so giving and willing to accept in anything anybody, and I don't think that's normal and—and I think she did that to a much greater degree than most people could do or would do.

TITLE

Traits he shares with his mother

10:43:02:14

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well I think my mom, probably it's still very deeply, and I—again I think it's probably for all three of us, but you know, an obligation to help other people, an obligation to respond to people who are in need. My mom was always helping people. I mean that—her whole life was about helping other people. And so I think that there wasn't any way we could be around her without absorbing that and having it become like part of our DNA. I mean I just think, you know we're all—all three of us are very responsive people to situations where others don't have what they should have or have what they need to have and then I think, you know, with her and my dad setting up the foundation, it just gave us the financial ability to respond to a lot of that and that's what we've spent a good part of our lives doing in the last you know, ten years or more.

TITLE

His father's rationale for giving away money

10:44:06:21

HOWARD BUFFETT:

I would say that she was not frustrated at all that my dad was not giving away a large amount of money because he has a very logical, you know, rationale for that. I mean I remember when Ted Turner criticized him you know, for not giving away more money. I thought, well that may be your opinion but it's a very narrow opinion because my dad is taking money and making more money and he—the more money he has, the more money he can make and so you know, his ability to make money and generate returns as a result of not giving it away too early actually means it will be a much greater—I mean a

much greater benefit later on and that's a very rational argument and I think my dad's right about that. And so I think she understood that and I think you know from time to time, she might have been a little frustrated, you know trying to get him to loosen up here and there but I think overall, it wasn't this great frustration that he wasn't generous. He's very generous in his own way, but he does that based on you know, his analytical analysis of how he sees things and how he views things and it's very hard to argue with most of how he analyzes things.

TITLE

His father's way of analyzing circumstances

10:45:35:11

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well I think it depends on what the circumstances are. I mean I can remember when I— we were out in Emerald Bay one time, and I don't remember exactly how old I was, but it was— you can actually figure this out, because it was when the strike was going on at the paper in Buffalo, New York. And I just sat there fascinated kind of listening to his side of the conversation and then he would hang up and I'd ask him some questions and he would explain to me. I mean, at that point in time, what he's seeing is he's seeing a set of circumstances that he knows when he's gonna start losing money, he knows how much money he's gonna lose and he knows what his tolerance level is for losing the money for the long-term gain—of getting guys back to work. He's got that all calculated out and he knows what that is. Now, his decision on that may not be the same as somebody else's decision but his decision is usually the best decision when it comes to something like that and so, you know, in that case, he's seeing pretty much numbers. I mean he's seeing, you know—you know, what can I afford, how far can I afford to go before it costs me enough that I can't recover it and so I would say that's a numbers game and I think most of what he does is a numbers game and that's what he focuses on.

TITLE

His mother's involvement in social issues

10:47:05:01

HOWARD BUFFETT:

You know, when you're a kid growing up, you don't always pay attention to everything your mom and dad were doing but there were some things we couldn't ignore because—'cause she would kind of pull us into them or we would—you know, there were big enough things going on in life that—that they had some kind of influence but you know, I remember her being very involved in—in like, the women's league of voters. Not getting really into—I don't ever remember getting really into the political part of politics, but I remember getting into the, you know, the part that encourages people to vote, participate and be part of the process and—and that—and that—and—and her involvement in that was very much about coming from the angle of civil rights. That—that all groups were involved, all groups had a fair opportunity to be involved. So I think you know, we saw that, what she was doing and spending her time on. You know she used to go down to what we would call the projects of North Omaha and—and do different things and I went with her quite a few times when she went down and—and you know, got engaged in different activities and I saw a lot of that, and I saw her engaged in that, and I think that absolutely wears off. I mean, you—you see that and you pick it up and—and you learn things from it and I think what—you know, what I learned from it, was that she was a very compassionate person who had empathy for circumstances that—that were not circumstances that you or me would want to be in and—and so I think it was her actions that I learned from, not—not what she would talk about but what she would do.

TITLE

A creature of habit

10:48:48:20

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well he's—my dad's a creature of habit, there's no question about that. Whether it's you know, hamburgers or cherry Coke's or whatever. I mean, you know, he—but I think a lot of us are that way but you know, he also has had a very clear philosophy of you know, doing what you're good at and sticking with that. I mean he used to always tell me, you know “everybody has a circle of competence and stay within it.” And then he'd always remind me mine was a little bit

small, but you know, I mean jokingly but I mean you know, and there—there's a lot truth in that. I mean that is great advice. People get in trouble when they get outside of their element, when they get outside of their competence level and so you know, he's somebody that lives in that circle and that means you create certain habits, it means you do things a certain way on a pretty normal basis and that's what he does but I don't think that's so unusual. Most people have personal habits that just don't change. And you know, somebody might focus on him because he's famous today. And so you know, they zero in on something. The truth is, that's probably not much different from 95% of the people in this country.

TITLE

How Omaha suits his father

10:50:06:14

HOWARD BUFFETT:

I think Omaha is a great place for my dad because he—he doesn't want to be you know, in big groups. He doesn't want to be—he doesn't look for attention. I mean you know, he—he—he doesn't avoid it today because it's part of what his—kind of goes with what he's done and what he's accomplished but you know, he—he—he's—he's a loner in a sense. He—he is not somebody who's going to follow a group; he's not somebody who cares about being a groupie. He's not somebody who cares about you know, going to parties or being involved in, you know the things that a lot of people want to be involved in. So I think Omaha fits well. I mean he can—you know people have respected him well in Omaha; he's somebody who can kind of blend in and—and he's obviously very friendly and—and so when he's around Omaha and people see him, it's an easy thing for him. Omaha's easy for him. New York would not be easy for him. And so I think you know, Omaha is a perfect place for him and it was a perfect place for us to grow up as a family.

TITLE

His father's unique qualities

10:51:33:04

HOWARD BUFFETT:

I would say, the one thing my dad does that almost nobody else does—I mean a lot of people write about this is that you know, he zeros in on something, he gets to understand it and know it better than probably most people would have the patience to do and then he sticks with it. I mean, you know, he hasn't made these brilliant investments you know, all the time. I mean he does some that are very complicated and very intelligent and very difficult. I'm not—you know I wouldn't, you know, say that isn't a part of what he's done. But you know, buying—you know going out and buying branded companies and hanging onto them for twenty or thirty years is something that anybody could do but people—but most people don't do it because they don't have the patience and everybody wants to get rich quick, everybody wants to make a buck today. And so what makes him really different than most people is he's just—he's in it for the long haul and that is him and so that's a very different trait than a lot of investors have. And it isn't that there aren't other guys out there like Wally White's or other people you know, that—that have a similar investment philosophy but he's done it extremely well and as he's gotten—you know as he—as he's earned more money, he's placed bigger bets and he's just stuck with those bets and that has really paid off for him. He doesn't stick with something when it doesn't make sense anymore. I mean you know, he's gone in and out of some investments but for the most part, he's somebody who is very—he's a very loyal person and he's very loyal in his investments.

TITLE

His father's competitiveness

10:53:41:16

HOWARD BUFFETT:

My dad's very competitive and I think he's also pretty smart about what he decides to compete in or with. You know, he's—he's not gonna try to take something on that he won't be successful with but when he's into something, he's extremely competitive.

TITLE

His mother's role in his father's success

10:54:06:21

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Oh I think my mom was a huge part of my dad's success. She was the foundation; she was kind of the rock in terms of always holding everything together and she did that in a lot of ways. She did that for him emotionally, she did that for us as a family, she did that in a way that she took on probably more responsibility than a lot of wives would have taken on just to make things work and she was very committed to that and she was very committed to making our family work and to do that, she was very committed to making sure my dad was very successful.

TITLE

On his mother's decision to move to California

10:57:39:02

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well it was—it was hard for me. I think, you know, I took the position that that's—whatever the decision and conversation was with her and my dad was none of my business. I mean I just never did ask about that and that wasn't what I was really concerned about because there were—there were always—you know it wasn't— it was almost like nothing changed with their relationship. I mean it wasn't like it was some you know, big thing that caused problems and created bad feelings. I mean nothing—nothing like that ever happened that I ever saw so it was just more the idea that she's moving away—you know physically moving away. I mean probably a very selfish reaction on my part because it was like, you know she's going to be further away, I won't see her as often. She won't be as involved, you know, on a regular basis. So my reaction was more probably about how it affected me and I just—I just felt like that was not—it's not my business; I mean they need to work that out and so it wasn't something I really got very deeply involved with.

10:58:51:16

I mean I—I think one of the reasons it was important for her to leave Omaha was because she just felt like she was kind of trapped in this environment, that—that everyone knew who she was, that she

couldn't have her own identity, that she couldn't kind of just go out and do something without people recognizing her and—and that was true. And so, even though she was a very giving person, everybody needs you know, their own life and they need their own, you know, time where they can privately do what they want to do and she couldn't do that in Omaha and she really couldn't do that in Omaha and so I think, you know, she wanted to move somewhere where she had some autonomy, where she could just be herself and not always worry about being pulled into something or being recognized.

10:59:54:22

She was kinda—when she moved—when my mom moved to San Francisco, obviously we didn't see her as often and that was why I wasn't you know, thrilled about her moving but you know, if you could take these little snapshots as to when we had Christmas or when we did other things together, you—you wouldn't have known that anything had changed and so I think it's pretty unusual. I don't think that's a normal set of circumstances but it worked for them and it worked for us.

TITLE

On Astrid

11:00:57:09

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well Astrid is, you know, a very self-contained person. She's not somebody who is looking for attention or wants attention. I think she's one of the few people in the world, to be honest with you, who could be with my dad today and I think my brother and sister would give the same answer, and none of us think that she's there for any other reason, that she's there to support him. I think that's very unusual. I think very few people would do what she's doing and have it really be what comes naturally for them and so—but she's a very private person.

11:01:53:22

I never get asked about you know, how did it work Astrid and my mom and if I did, I would just say, you know who cares? I mean I—you know, they—they made it work and that's what matters. And so, again I felt like it was just not something that involved me or was for

me to be involved with. You know, when you have kids, you know, there's things that your kids will ask you to help with and for the most part, you stay out of there personal life and I felt like you know, that—that's, Astrid my mom and my dad, however they're working it out, that's their personal life and that's not my business.

TITLE

On his mother getting sick

11:02:45:05

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Yeah I remembered because I was on my way to a board meeting in India that I served on and I remember saying to her, well I'll go to the board meeting and I'll be back and I'll see you when I get back. And she actually broke down, and she rarely cried. And she just started crying. And said, no you need to stay here, and you need to come out for the operation. And so that's—that's when we all went out and she had this, you know amazing—I think it was fourteen hours or someth—it was an amazingly long operation but she came through it very well. You know, she—she did not talk a lot about that. I mean she—she wasn't looking for sympathy or you know, she just would kind of tell us what she thought we needed to know. Other people probably knew much more about it than I did to be honest with you, 'cause I always felt like you know, I didn't pry into her business or—or you know, I don't pry into my dad's business; I mean you know, they're—they're gonna tell me what they're gonna tell me, and I think that's typically how you should treat people.

TITLE

How his father handled Susie's sickness

11:03:56:02

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Yeah well I mean, I think he was—he would have done and was trying to do whatever he could to support her. And you know, one of those things was to physically be there. And I could remember when—when I would go back you know, it was unpredictable. I mean you didn't

know—I would go with her sometimes when she would get her treatment, and sometimes she would just have to go home and rest, other times she would wanna go take a walk and sometimes that was two blocks, sometimes it was ten blocks. You know, just completely dependent on how she felt physically and I think—I mean my dad did what all of us tried to do, which was just be there physically to spend time with her and support her the way that she wanted it.

TITLE

On learning that his mother died

11:04:46:15

HOWARD BUFFETT:

So I was, I'd just gotten off an airplane and landed in Johannesburg South Africa, and my s—my—the guy there Peter Kinero who was to pick me up had—I call—I always would call Peter and say ok, I'm here, I'm getting my bags, I'll be out in twenty minutes or something and Peter said you need to call your sister. And I said, "well, it's like 2 am or something, I'll call her in a little bit." And he says, "No you have to call her right now." I actually thought something happened to my dad. I don't know why I thought that, I guess I thought, you know, my mom had this recovery, it was successful and why would anything happen to her at that point. And so I called my sister and she told me what was going on and it was like, ok, how do I get home? She was like, "get a private airplane." I said, "well it won't matter because you know, it's still gonna take the same time to get home and they'll have to get a—you know, I mean where's the plane gonna come from?" And we were all talking about the logistics of how to get back because at that time, she was on her way to the hospital. She hadn't actually died. And so, you know, she was trying to figure out how—she was actually going to the airport and getting on a plane, going to Idaho and I was trying to figure out how to get home and then she let me know that she died. So then, it was like, ok I just need to figure out how to get back and they kinda—Susie just slowed everything down, and just made sure that you know, I could get home and it was a long trip home.

TITLE

On coping with death

11:046:37:13

HOWARD BUFFETT:

You know, it depends on who the person is, what the relationship is. I mean I—I have—this is gonna sound strange but her death was not that difficult for me because I think I had an amazing relationship with her when she was alive and she was a huge part of my life so when she's gone, there's nothing I can do about that, but I had no reason to look back and feel like, I should have done this or I wish this had happened or anything like that. So I mean, I think for me, it may sound strange but it was not that difficult. It's—it's difficult to lose someone, don't get me wrong. But it was not that difficult to deal with the fact that you know—I mean I—I think it's one of the things that I learned from my dad. I mean you know, it's a practical part of it. I mean there's nothing I can do about; there's nothing I can change about it. It's a fact, it's—you know, it's happened and you have to deal with it. And so for me, I just looked at it as I had had, you know the greatest mom, the greatest life with my mom, she was my best friend, always supported me, so there was nothing for me to look back and go, I wish it had been different.

TITLE

His father's decision to donate his fortune

11:08:12:09

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Yeah. We actually talked about it for months, to be honest with ya. I mean the first time, he sat down with Susie at our house when I was in Omaha, and just talked to Susie and I about it, some of the ideas he was thinking about and you know, we had a little back and forth on his—what he was thinking and what did we think of it. And then, as he kinda got more geared up on trying to get something done, we all kind of had some input on it and discussed it and then he decided how he was going to do it.

TITLE

His relationship with Bill Gates

11:08:51:10

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well, my guess is it's complicated but I don't know. I mean you know. They're friends, they're probably a little competitive. They're—they have different interests but you know, they have some things that are parallel. I mean I'm sure—I don't—I mean I don't ask how his relationship is with Bill Gates, I don't really know how to answer that. But I'm sure it's a—I'm sure it's not simple.

TITLE

The future of Berkshire Hathaway

11:09:25:11

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well, ultimately, when my dad's gone, what happens to Berkshire will be a decision by the board. And there's no guarantee the board will put me in as a non-executive chairman; my dad has suggested that, the board has been very supportive of that. If that's what I'm asked to do, that's what I'll do.

TITLE

His father's legacy

11:09:50:12

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Pretty Amazing. I mean, you know, he's done a lot for many, many people. I mean I think one thing—You know our society measures things in wealth and if you want to measure it that way, he has probably made as many people wealthy as any single individual ever did, and did it in a very unique way. And a lot of the people that he has helped over that period of time are very generous people, and so they have helped millions of other people. And so it's just—it's—it's really—it's—it's almost like the pay it forward, you know, movie where, you know you just, you know, I—I'll help you, but you have to help other people. And it's happened naturally. I mean it's happened without him ever—he would never suggest to somebody you know,

who has made money whether it's through his—you know through him doing it or some other way of doing it, he would never suggest how you should spend your money. You know, he would be glad to give advice on it, he would be glad to share his experience with it, but he would never say this is what you really should do. And so I think, you know, in his case, he has made—he has given a lot of people the opportunity to use, you know, financial resources to help a lot of other people in the world, and that's something not everybody can say.

11:11:27:00

You know I think it's hard to say what his legacy is because I think different people will interpret it in different ways. I think he is someone who will absolutely be remembered for Berkshire Hathaway and what he built and that's been the most important thing to him in his life and so I think that'll be—I—I think to me, that'll be the overreaching part of his legacy that the majority of people will talk about when he dies and the majority of people will remember him for.

TITLE

His challenging nature as a kid

11:12:13:03

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well somebody had to keep my dad on his toes so I mean, you know, I—I—I kept challenging him a little bit, I was a very challenging kid. You know, my mom played the biggest role in trying to keep everything under control. I am, you know, probably even what I do today is a bit of you know, what I did when I was a kid; which is, I like challenges. I want to do things differently, I'll push stuff to the limit and I'll take risks and that's just who I am and—and that's how I'm made and so as a kid when you don't have good judgment and you don't understand the consequences, sometimes you—you do more things than you should do, and I was that kid, I did that and you know, there was times when I, you know, would really push it to the limit. And not illegal things, not things where I was gonna end up in jail, I never came close to that.

11:14:10:16

I wouldn't give up on anything that I thought I had a chance at getting done or accomplishing so I think you know, my mom saying I would

survive in any circumstances is probably a fair description. I would give it a good fight. And I think that's part of what drove me when I was young. I mean I always wanted another challenge. I was never satisfied with what I had.

TITLE

His father during the Solomon Brothers scandal

11:19:01:08

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well he was pretty pre-occupied. I do remember it for one reason because it was the—right in the heart of it was when I got a call and—and I was asked if I wanted to go to work at Archer Daniels Midland at ADM. So I called him 'cause I wanted—I called two people. I called Don Keough, who was president of Coca-Cola at the time and I called and Don talked to me about it and then I called him, and I got a hold of him and he just said, "I can talk tonight as long as you wanna talk but you know, I'm getting ready to go into a Congressional Hearing and you know, but I'm available tonight for as long as you wanna talk." So you know, even under all that pressure, this is what he was so good at. Under that pressure, he could—he could kind of compartmentalize things so he could deal with that and he could step away from it. When I talked to him that night, you would not have known he was involved in something as huge and as critical as what was going on at Solomon. You—you—you would never know it. I mean he was totally focused and—and relaxed and we talked for more than an hour that evening talking about my decision to go. So I mean, I—I think that's the best example I can give to you about how he was then. I mean he was very, I'm sure inside he was tied up in knots, and tense and you know, upset but he did a pretty good job of not showing it. I can't remember exactly, I know he was getting ready for the testimony because he was in New York and he was with a bunch of lawyers and with you know, different people and whether it—whether it was the next day or not, I—I don't know exactly what the timing was because I don't remember that but he just—I remember him referring to it and saying "but I can talk to you as long as you want to talk to, you know, tonight. Just call me."

11:21:04:02

Ya know after 7 or 8, whatever he told me, I don't remember. But I mean that's—that in itself is a pretty amazing characteristic because, ya know, a lot of people would break down under that. A lot of people would not handle that pressure as well as he did but I—I think that's one of the things that makes him really unique and I think that's a trait that I've really kind of inherited or learned or however you do it from him. I love pressure, I love being under pressure. You put me under pressure, I'll respond better than if I'm not under pressure, and I learned that from him. I watched him do that his entire life. I mean this is a guy, you just keep throwing stuff at him and he won't slow down, and he won't—he won't let it deter him from what he's trying to accomplish and—and I watched that and I love that characteristic. I think it is—it's an amazing characteristic to have and—and I don't know if that's a learned characteristic or if that's part of your DNA or what it is but it's something I think he helped me learn how to do and I love it and my wife will tell ya that. Ya know, I'm that way and I think he's very much that way.

TITLE

The Howard G Buffett Foundation

11:22:29:13

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well it's got this amazingly unique name, the Howard G Buffett Foundation, which actually it came from when my parents set it up; they set it up under our names and Susie's changed hers, which is an interesting story because she stole the name from me. And then Peter changed his, I just never changed mine but you know, we have evolved over time but one thing we have been consistent on is agricultural development, particularly in developing countries although we do some here in the United States. We've worked pretty consistently on the preservation of water resources or the impact of water resources in particularly more specific to agriculture and then we've really, the last five or six, seven years, we've worked a lot on conflict mitigation.

TITLE

Getting outside your comfort zone

11:23:24:23

HOWARD BUFFETT:

Well you know, I think my farming is kind of a funny thing 'cause my—my—it's not something that you would think I would've ever do. It's not something I thought I would've ever done growing up. My mom used to say I didn't have enough Tonka toys when I was little and I think that actually may be true so you know, I love big equipment. Again, farming is a huge challenge. I love challenges and it's something—I had no idea how you farm. At—at—at twenty years old when I rented a farm for the first time, I had no idea what I was doing. But that's—that's my life. I mean I—I—I have done—most things I've done in my life, I've had no idea how to do them in the beginning and I've had to learn how to do them.

11:24:20:08

And I think something people don't understand; you know my dad always says stay in your circle of competence. But that doesn't mean stay in your comfort zone. That's very different. My dad would go outside his comfort zone I'm sure all the time and I go outside my comfort zone all the time and it's what challenges you to learn and do better and to be able to expand what you do do in your lifetime and so you know, you should never confuse those two things and—and so farming for me was totally getting outside my comfort zone. I had no idea how to do what I was doing but I learned it and today it's a huge part of what I do in my lifetime—in my life and it's a huge part of what our foundation does and I think it's a great lesson. And—and obviously I would never have done it without those kinds of things, without the encouragement from both my mom and dad and—and—and my dad as a role model, watching him do all these things as he goes, not—there's not a textbook for what he did. There's not a textbook for what I do. I don't want a textbook. Alright, I want to write part of the textbook and that's what he's done in his lifetime, is he's wr—he has written a whole new book about business, about philanthropy and some of those things are successful and some of them aren't.

11:25:45:00

But you know, when he—when he wrote the letter to us, saying here's the money I'm going to give you and here—here's how it's going to work and here's the process and here's what I think what you should do. He put something in that letter that was incredibly important to me which is exactly how our foundation behaves. You know, "If you're gonna try to bat .1000, you won't do many things that are important but if you're willing to basically strike out a couple times, you can really change something big." And he did—that's a paraphrase; he said it a little differently than that but that—that's what it was. It was basically a license to go take a risk. It was a license to go out and try to take on some really big issues and it was his way of saying, it's ok to fail. You don't have to succeed every time. And one of the biggest problems in philanthropy is everybody feels they have to tell a success story and I start by telling people what we did wrong, what we failed at because those are the lessons. It's easy to talk about the things you got right; it's hard to talk about the things that you got wrong. And that—that is ex—that's another trait that my dad taught me, is you know, it's not about, you know just talking about the success. It's as much as talking about what didn't work and what went wrong and how—how do you help other people not make the same mistake or how do you use that in your future decision making.

No, no, no, no, no it goes hand in hand with your mothers core—your—her core principles and philosophy of life, so thank you so much, you really—you really—oh room tone sorry.

That was awesome.