

# The Secret of Wealth

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*America's Wealthiest Man*

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For more information about this book, or the topics of wealth, abundance and philanthropy, or about its author visit the World Wide Web site:

**<http://www.SOWAbundance.net>**

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## Introduction

On the cover of this book, you read that I am *America's wealthiest man*. It's true.

Of course, I am not *America's richest man*.

You may be wondering, "What's the difference?"

Answering that question is the purpose of this book.

But let me say this much at the start. As words are used in this book, *rich* refers to an absolute measure of capital assets. So there can only be one "richest man" or "richest person" in any group. The one with the most assets wins the title.

*Wealth* is very different. It refers to the abundance one experiences in life.

*Rich* measures something which exists outside of you. *Wealth* measures something that grows up deep inside of you and makes your life qualitatively different — in fact, *much better*.

Many people seek to become *rich* so that they can have the experience of being *wealthy*. They want the sense of wellbeing that abundance provides. Unfortunately, the world is full of people who have large incomes, even great riches in the form of assets, and yet they have not found the *wealth* — genuine abundance — which is the real point of their quest.

Here is what one of them said after he had started with nothing, became a millionaire by age 28 and built a fortune so large that he could afford to give the Smithsonian its largest gift ever — \$100 million: "I believed that money would bring happiness. And I believed that I had acquired everything my quest for more could provide. Still, I had not found joy."<sup>1</sup>

Eventually this man did find joy — true wealth and a sense of deep abundance — pursuing the goal of giving away a wheelchair to every one of the 150 million people in the world today who need them. He has not achieved his goal — *yet*.

But his goal has given his life new purpose.

Once he was *rich* and enjoyed all the things money could buy. Today he enjoys the sense of purpose and peace of mind that no amount of money by itself can obtain. Today he knows the joy of being truly *wealthy*.

In the same way, America's two richest men — Bill Gates and Warren Buffet — have made headlines in recent years not because they have accumulated more riches but because they have decided to give away most of their vast fortunes. Apparently being the richest people in America is not enough. Now they want to be wealthy too.

The good news is that one does not have to first become a billionaire or even a millionaire in order to be wealthy. Just as the world is full of people who are rich but know nothing of the joy that comes from being wealthy, the world also is bursting with people who are not materially rich and yet know the joy of living truly wealthy lives.

They have discovered the *Secret of Wealth*.

The purpose of this book is to share that secret with you so that you can unlock the power of wealth in your life and know the priceless joy of abundance which is given only to the world's wealthiest people.

There can be only one "richest man" or "richest person" at any one time and place. But the title of "wealthiest" can be shared. In fact, it is meant to be held in common. Why? Because as your sense of wealth grows, the world we share is enriched.

Now I urge you — break open the secret. Embrace the secret. Embody the secret. And feast on the wealth that is waiting for you.

<sup>1</sup> The story of Ken Behring is told in AARP magazine (September-October, 2004).

## 1. The Twins

Olivia and Todd were curious 12-year-old twins who had the incredible fortune of living just a few blocks from a wonderful bookstore where they had come to know Mr. Peabody.

Mr. Peabody worked part-time at the bookstore, but he seemed to live there almost full-time. If he was roaming the aisles wearing a vest with the store's name discreetly printed over the left breast pocket, he was working. If he was sitting in a booth at the coffee bar with a book on the table in front of him, he was just there.

The twins had met Mr. Peabody by accident one day when they went to the bookstore to buy their mother a gift for her birthday. It was a late Saturday afternoon and most of the stores in town would be closing in a half hour. They had put off the task and then forgotten it for a few days. In truth, they went to the bookstore because time was scarce and it was the closest place to buy anything. They had no idea what to buy their mother, but they knew she liked to read and they figured in a store full of books they could find something she might like.

After a few moments in the store they were full of doubt. Surrounded by various displays of books about a host of topics, they were overwhelmed. They realized they could not tell how a book would appeal to their mother by its cover — and yet they really had no other basis on which to make a choice.

That's when they met Mr. Peabody.

He had quietly slipped up on them, so the simple question he asked startled both of them. "Can I help you?"

They turned to find a short, round, slightly stooped old man with just a wisp of hair on the top of his head. His eyes twinkled and his smile was the sort that could melt the hardest heart — or put startled adolescent twins instantly at ease.

"We have a problem," said Olivia.

“And what is that?” the old man asked. His voice was as warm as his smile was wide, making it clear that his interest was genuine.

Olivia rattled off all the things that had brought them to this seemingly impossible situation. As she spoke, her sense of helplessness and guilt grew. Todd nodded in agreement every time Olivia took a breath.

When she finished he waited just a fraction of a moment, as if to allow Olivia’s free floating anxiety a chance to settle on the floor. Then, through his smile, he said ever so softly, “I think we have just the thing for your mother. Follow me.”

In a few seconds he was standing in front of a small shelf of small books, one of which he pulled out and handed to Olivia.

Olivia opened the book to find a brief and simple tale of children who dearly loved their mother. From page to page they struggled to tell her why and how they loved her in more than a dozen different ways. Olivia was touched by how so many of the little accounts paralleled her own experiences and feelings.

She didn’t notice that Todd was looking over her shoulder until she heard him say, “Olivia, that could be us. It’s perfect!” They looked up when they heard the old man’s soft voice ask, “What do you think?” Todd was about to repeat his judgment that the book would make a perfect gift when Olivia, always the more practical, asked: “How much?”

“It’s nine dollars,” said the old man without bothering to look at the book’s cover for a price. “Nine dollars and a few cents for tax,” he corrected himself.

“That’s all?” asked Todd, grabbing the book from Olivia’s grasp and handing it over to Mr. Peabody. “We’ll take it.”

So began the precious friendship of the 12-year-old twins and Mr. Peabody, the retired school teacher who was recently widowed and, at this moment, just happened to have some room in his heart and some time on his hands to share with two young children the wonders of the universe — and their important places in it.