

Brief history on the trip to Omaha - Suzan Murphy
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Dr. Al Auxier made initial contact with Warren Buffett's office sometime in the late 90's with a request for Mr. Buffett to come to The University of Tennessee. Finally, in 1999, Mr. Buffett agreed to host a group of students in Omaha, and Al went there with a group of 25 students.

Al continued to take a group of students to Omaha every year. Fast forward to February, 2003. One of the UT students brought a book written by Jim Clayton (*First a Dream*) about how he started Clayton Homes. A couple of months later, Mr. Buffett bought Clayton Homes for \$1.7 billion. As a reward, Mr. Buffett came to the University of Tennessee in October, 2003 and presented Dr. Auxier with one share of Class A stock from Berkshire Hathaway (current value over \$100,000) and each of the 40 students on the trip was presented with a share of Class B stock.

After Al Auxier's retirement in 2006, I made my first journey to Omaha with 34 students. Josh Funk wrote a story about the visit and the Associated Press ran the story with a picture of our group. The article literally ran in every newspaper in the country and Warren Buffett's office was inundated with requests from other schools to visit Omaha. During the 2006 visit, every student was allowed to bring a book for Mr. Buffett to sign, we were allowed to take individual pictures with Mr. Buffett and we were there with one other school.

Due to the overwhelming requests for visits, Mr. Buffett's office decided that schools could only come every other year. Therefore, the University of Tennessee did not make the trip in 2007.

In 2008, we were allowed to bring over 50 students to Omaha. At this meeting there were two or three other schools, and Mr. Buffett mentioned that since UT gave him the idea to purchase Clayton Homes, we were allowed to visit every year. I immediately emailed his assistant and she checked with Mr. Buffett to make sure this was true. We have gone to Omaha every year since!

The trip has changed significantly over the years. This year we were there with seven other schools and were allowed to bring only 20 students—at least 7 must be female. We are no longer allowed to bring books, and we are not allowed to take individual pictures with Mr. Buffett. This year, we were there with a school from Brazil, Ivy (Canada), MIT, UCLA, UC Davis, University of Houston and Holy Cross.

In spite of the changes, the trip is still a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the students, some of whom get to ask Mr. Buffett a question. We practice our questions for months before the trip and other schools usually comment on the high caliber of our questions. Mr. Buffett has a Q/A session which lasts for about two and a half hours, and he rotates alphabetically by schools. Every year he is funny, touching and extremely personable.

We always bring a gift for Mr. Buffett and these have included books signed by Pat Summit and William Bass, a basket of goods from Bush Beans, a painting of a local artist, a Sports Illustrated article on Pat Summit signed by Pat Summit, a beautiful silk orange tie. This year, I knitted a cardigan and hat for Mr. Buffett's assistant, Carrie Sova who had a baby last fall. Carrie is the one who decides which schools are invited to come back, and I have developed a personal relationship with her. She has told me how respectful our students are compared to students from other schools and how much she and Warren appreciate that. This year, Mr. Buffett mentioned Clayton Homes and how we always get invited to come back every year. He also mentioned Peyton Manning being a UT alum.