

Pass It On

Meet Phil and Nancy Anschutz, Winners of the 2009 William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership

By Jonathan V. Last

Denver

IT'S EARLY SATURDAY MORNING. THE SUN IS JUST starting to rise when Phil Anschutz steps into his office. The first thing you notice is his jacket. It's eye-poppingly yellow, with silver reflective panels.

Anschutz has just run to work. He and his wife, Nancy, live a few miles from downtown Denver. Anschutz often runs to work in the early morning darkness. It makes sense. The 69-year-old entrepreneur always seems to be in motion.

That sense of perpetual motion is reflected in Anschutz's business interests, which range from energy, transportation, and telecommunications to hospitality, entertainment, real estate, and media. His philanthropic interests are equally diverse. Phil and Nancy Anschutz have spent the last quarter century investing in a broad variety of charitable giving. Their efforts are principled but certainly not programmatic. Their foundation grants include funding orchestras, museums, churches, schools, women's shelters, rehab clinics, the Boy Scouts, the Salvation Army, and programs that serve the underprivileged community. They have launched public service campaigns and anonymous programs to meet small but emergency short-term needs of the truly needy. And they have assisted in the building of a state-of-the-art medical and research center campus.

Explaining how they found themselves involved in so many philanthropic projects, Mr. Anschutz chuckles, "You learn as you go. I think everybody comes to this with particular things that they believe are a good idea or different

things they think should be supported. I mean your list of things is probably different from ours. There is no just one right way to do this."

"The core issue," he says, "is that most people have good intentions. But many people who have good intentions fail to act. For a variety of reasons, they just never pull the trigger. So what good is accomplished if the help that you intended to provide, never occurs, never actually touches anyone?"

For Phil and Nancy Anschutz, enterprise is indispensable. They understand that all paths carry risk, that no outcomes are guaranteed. What matters is action. Before you can accomplish anything, you first have to get off the sidelines. "You make mistakes," says Mrs. Anschutz. "But you have successes, too. And that is when you keep going."

Rig Fire

THERE IS A FAMOUS STORY ABOUT PHIL ANSCHUTZ, and it is worth retelling. In 1967, Mr. Anschutz was operating as a young wildcatter, just getting started in the business and exploring for oil in the mountain west. "I had gone out to spend the weekend visiting my then fiancée, and now wife, in California," he recalls. "I got back in late on a Sunday evening and had just gone to sleep. About two o'clock in the morning the phone rang and the man calling was my drilling superintendent.

Jonathan V. Last is a staff writer at the *Weekly Standard*.

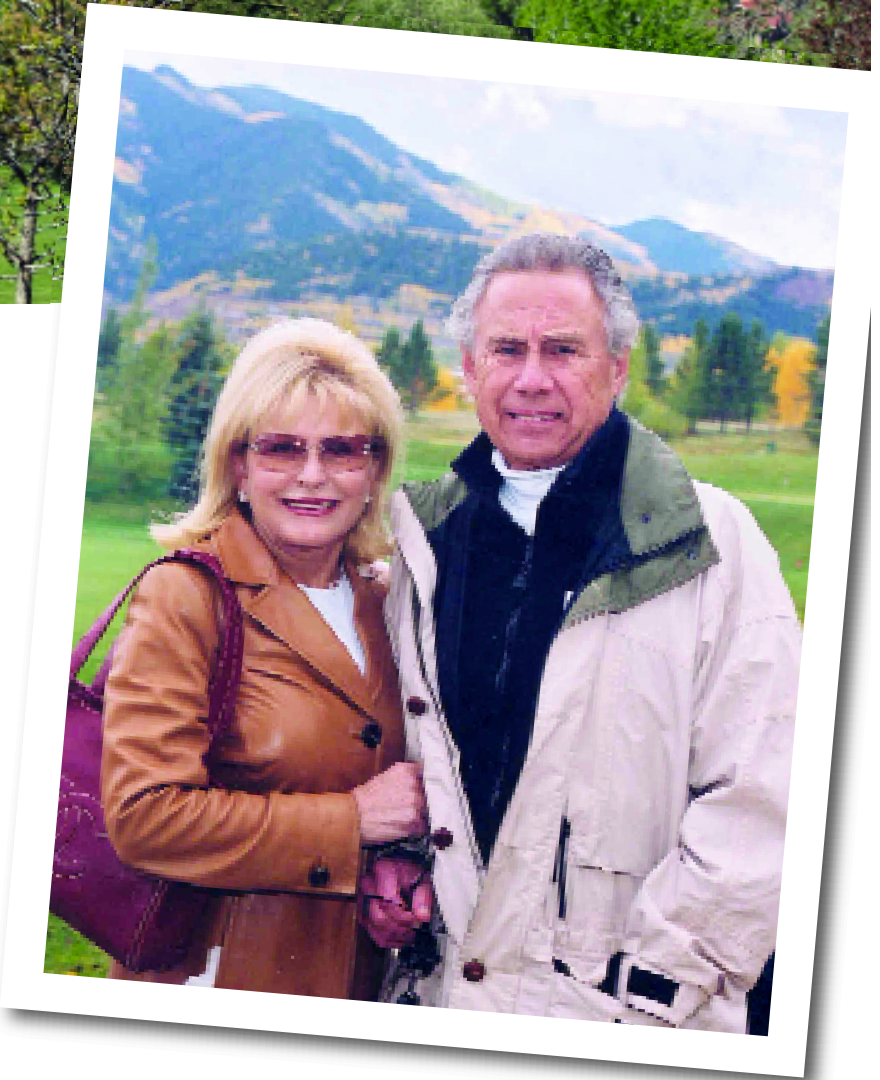
Full disclosure: Mr. Anschutz's Clarity Media Group acquired the *Weekly Standard* in June 2009. This article was commissioned and written before that acquisition.



Philip and Nancy Anschutz are the most generous givers in the state of Colorado. "When we first started," Mrs. Anschutz says, "we tried to look at areas that were maybe not covered by some of the major organizations that were already in place, where maybe our smaller dollars could have an impact." (Photo above by David Herrera; used under a Creative Commons license. Photo at right courtesy of The Anschutz Foundation)

He was calling to tell me that a well that I had a small ownership interest in, that I was drilling as a contractor for someone else, had blown out and was out of control. In the oil business, that's an extremely serious and dangerous thing. Many people are put directly into bankruptcy after such an event—careers can be ended and people hurt physically, as well as financially."

For a moment, Mr. Anschutz rolled over and started to drift back to sleep. But then he stopped himself. He didn't quite know what to do, but he realized that he had to do something. So he called his chief geologist and told him to meet him at the airport. They rented a small plane and flew off to visit the well site in Gillette, Wyoming.



"We got there about six o'clock in the morning," he explained. "It was cold, windy, and blowing snow. We managed to wake up the airport manager and borrow his car." When they got to within a mile of the rig, the two men could see oil blowing everywhere, the result of the drill bit hitting hydrocarbon unexpectedly. They turned around and drove back to town, and Mr. Anschutz pulled together a crew to try to get the well under control. They worked for nearly 36 hours with little sleep, trying to get the well back under control, but to no avail.

"At about four o'clock in the afternoon I got back in the airplane I'd rented to fly back to Denver because the insurance company, my bank and trade creditors were all asking what I intended to do," he continued. "I got back to my apartment about seven o'clock and turned on the news. The first thing I heard on the news was there'd been an explosion and fire on a drilling rig in Wyoming and it had blown up. Well of course, it was mine. But, at least we were very lucky that no one was killed or even hurt."

That burning well would change his life.

Almost Abnormally Normal

IN A WAY, THE STORY OF THE ANSCHUTZES' philanthropy is also the story of their lives. Mr. Anschutz was born in Great Bend, Kansas, in

1939; Mrs. Anschutz was born in nearby Harper a few years later. They met when she was still in middle school. "I was in seventh grade and he was a sophomore in high school," Mrs. Anschutz laughs. "So of course he wouldn't even deign to acknowledge me at that age. I had to get

to be 20 before he actually looked at me." By that time, Mr. Anschutz was attending the University of Kansas and majoring in business, with concentrations in economics and finance. A few years later, they were married. Today, more than 40 years later, they remain an uncommonly attractive couple. They often run together. He's completed ten marathons. She's completed four.

From the beginning, Mr. Anschutz was a hands-on leader. His father was an oilman, one who had lived through the industry's cyclical booms and busts. After graduating from college, the son took over as president of Anschutz Oil Company from his father, who was in ill health. It was a down period and the business was experiencing very hard times. Somehow, the younger Anschutz built the firm up. Four years later, he sold it to Allied Chemical Company.

After that, he was free to strike out on his own, forming The Anschutz Corporation, the company that remains at the center of his business universe. Anschutz focused first on a sector he already knew: oil. "I was determined that the name Anschutz would mean something in the oil business," he told an

The William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership

THE PHILANTHROPY ROUNDTABLE IS honored to have been asked by the William E. Simon Foundation to administer the William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership. The foundation is named for its principal benefactor, the late financier, philanthropist, and Secretary of the Treasury, William E. Simon Sr.

The purpose of the William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership is to highlight the power of philanthropy to promote positive change and to inspire

others to support charities that achieve genuine results. The prize is intended to honor living philanthropists who have shown exemplary

leadership through their own charitable giving, either directly or through foundations they have created.

The prize honors the ideals and principles which guided William E. Simon's many philanthropic initiatives, including personal responsibility, resourcefulness, volunteerism, scholarship, individual freedom, faith in God, and helping people to help themselves.

The Philanthropy Roundtable would like to thank the 2009 Selection Committee, composed of Kimberly O. Dennis, Betsy DeVos, Frank J. Hanna III, Adam Meyerson, W. Fred Smith Jr., John M. Templeton Jr., M.D., J. Peter Simon, and William E. Simon Jr.



Mr. Anschutz bought out the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1988; eight years later, he merged it with the nation's largest railroad, Union Pacific. (Public domain photo; courtesy of Wikipedia)

interviewer in 1974. So he took the initiative. “A young man sometimes doesn’t know what’s impossible,” he explained. “Where more knowledgeable, experienced people would fear to tread, young people sometimes move. I did. I was aggressive, worked hard. Sometimes we didn’t know what wouldn’t work. We tried it and it often did work.”

As the business prospered, Mr. Anschutz expanded into other areas. He went into both real estate and farming. For a while, he was the largest single landowner and farmer in Colorado.

In 1982, Mr. Anschutz sold 50 percent of a sizeable oil field to Mobil Oil Company. He used the capital to enter new sectors. He bought a railroad company and then, after learning the business, bought out the giant Southern Pacific Railroad, and eight years later merged with Union Pacific Railroad. In a separate undertaking, he utilized the rights-of-way underneath the rail lines to lay fiber optic lines across the United States, helping to create the high-speed network upon which early internet traffic would ride. With this infrastructure in hand, he merged that com-

pany, Qwest, with U.S. West, one of the Baby Bells, the dominant telecom business in the region.

In the late 1980s, Mr. Anschutz began to think about expanding further into real estate development in California. This led to constructing sports arenas and entertainment venues, and then building or buying a variety of sports and entertainment-related companies to more fully utilize the venues. The company now owns and operates facilities and conducts operations in the United States and a number of other countries around the world.

In 2000 and 2001, Mr. Anschutz expanded further into media and entertainment by purchasing several movie theater chains, merging them into a single entity: Regal Entertainment Group, now the world’s largest movie exhibition company. He entered the production side of the film industry, starting Walden Media and Bristol Bay Productions.

Along the way, the Anschutzes had three children, two daughters and a son—and somehow remained, as a reporter for *Fortune* admirably described them, “abnormally normal.”

The Anschutz Foundation

AS THE ANSCHUTZES WERE CREATING A GROUP OF operating business companies—and raising three children—they were also embarking on what would become an increasingly ambitious life of philanthropy.

Today, The Anschutz Foundation has an endowment of approximately \$1 billion. The Foundation gives grants to a number of charities each year—and the Anschutzs give still more privately, often anonymously. They are reluctant to discuss specific dollar numbers; Mr. Anschutz demurs that they give “a significant amount.”

But as with their career in business, the Anschutzs’ philanthropy started much more modestly. In the beginning, they gave here and there, as things occurred to them. “For many years, Phil had been doing a variety of things anonymously that nobody ever knew,” explains Mrs. Anschutz. By the late ’70s, however, they recognized that “it was time to pull it all together and put it into one entity.”

“I helped my father set up a foundation in 1978,” Mr. Anschutz explains. “That led us to begin thinking about setting up a foundation as well—a foundation for ourselves. We finally did in 1983. We started at that time with a lot of good intentions, not a lot of capital, because we were still very much in the business of building capital.”

“I never had a mid-life crisis, thank goodness,” Mr. Anschutz chuckles. “So we began to see this instead as a midlife opportunity to do things.” They started small. “When we first started,” says Mrs. Anschutz, “we tried to look at areas that were maybe not covered by some of the major

organizations that were already in place, where maybe our smaller dollars could have an impact. One of the first things that we actually looked at, because of Phil’s father, was health care.”

Mrs. Anschutz continues, “There were early commitments to health research. Also, we made commitments to people who were on the streets, the homeless, and shelters for abused women. There were commitments to church and faith-related organizations.” As the foundation grew, so did the spectrum of gifts. Today, the list of organizations receiving support from the Anschutzs runs to the hundreds.

The Anschutzs credit their children for the expansion of the charitable interests. Now adults, all three of the children play leadership roles and have joined the board. “Our universe of gifts continues to

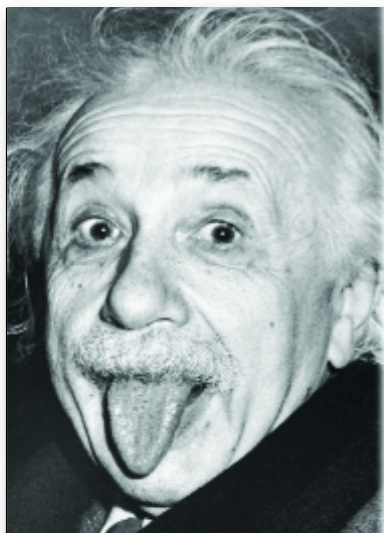
grow and broaden, particularly as the children get older and are now active participants,” says Mr. Anschutz. Mrs. Anschutz adds, “They are bringing in more diverse interests than what we first started with, certainly.” One of the areas their children and their children’s spouses—who

Denver Police Foundation

THE WINNER OF THE WILLIAM E. Simon Prize receives a \$250,000 prize, payable to the charity of his or her choice. Mr. and Mrs. Anschutz have decided to donate the award to the Denver Police Foundation, which is chaired by their son, Christian Anschutz. The Denver Police Foundation supports Denver’s law enforcement community through two major initiatives.

The Public Safety Program serves as a liaison between citizens, the business community, and the Denver Police Department, on matters of public safety. Since 2003, the program has provided funds for initiatives including the purchase of gunshot trauma kits for each of the Department’s patrol and SWAT cars, defibrillators for each of the six district substations and headquarters, domestic violence cameras, Explorer Scouting program sponsorship, chaplains’ uniforms, DVD drives for investigations, suicide prevention training, and support for Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons.

The Police Officers’ Charitable Aid Program provides financial assistance to active Denver Police Officers and immediate members of their families during times of medical crisis, long-term illness, or death. Since 1999, the program has assisted more than 370 officers and their families with medical emergencies, accidents, injuries, house fires, and funeral expenses.



As a student,
he was
no Einstein.

CONFIDENCE

Pass It On.

THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER LIFE
www.fachettellife.org

now have children of their own—are passionate about is education.

Like The Anschutz Corporation, The Anschutz Foundation is clearly the product of a temperament which places a premium on action.

“How Can You Make a Difference?”

WHEN ACTION IS AT A PREMIUM, DIRECTION can seem discounted. Looking at the diverse list of projects, Mr. Anschutz acknowledges as much himself: “I’m sure there are those who could say—and they might be right—that our philanthropy lacks at times a little discipline.” He pauses, and smiles. “I’m not so sure that we want to change. I think we still prefer to look at a spectrum of things as opposed to having one cause or two causes.”

Yet when one looks more closely at the Anschutzs, it becomes clear there is a single operating principle creating a through-line for their giving. As he puts it, “The basic concept here that we have always operated from is how can you help people? How can you make a real difference? Once you see an opportunity, jump in and see if you can get it to work.”

There is a key recognition at the heart of the Anschutzs’ philanthropy. They know that personal involvement is important—these are, after all, two very busy entrepreneurs who raised their own children. But they also recognize that money is indispensable. “We try to be involved personally through time,” Mr. Anschutz says, “but the biggest impact that we can really make is to be able to contribute in a financial way in order to make things happen quicker, more efficiently perhaps, and sometimes on a different scale.”

That often means giving anonymously. “We have always seen anonymity as a high form of charitable giving,” he says. “There are few instances where our name is on something. If

there is a reason to name names, a valid reason to use it, we will agree to attach our name. If, for example, the gift creates other contributions that encourage further support or helps to validate a project which in turn might bring broader community support. But, by and large, we think it’s probably most effective to be quiet.”

As in his business ventures, Mr. Anschutz’s work in philanthropy has involved a lot of on-the-job training. “This has been a learning process for us,” both Nancy and Phil acknowledge. “It is like everything else people set out to do. You grow within it.”

This has led the Anschutzs to an entrepreneurial view of philanthropy. Goals are important and measurement metrics have their place, but there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the panoply of needs in this world. “It is sometimes difficult to measure the progress you are making in the success of a project,” Mr. Anschutz says. “And I suspect many times, certain things are just not measurable. I mean, sometimes you need to have an instinct that a project is probably a good project, that it will benefit people in the medium and long run. Are there parameters to measure success? Certainly, on some projects there are. On some projects, it is more difficult. And, of course, you can always worry that you might have done things better if you had only done them differently. It’s one of the imponderables, I suppose, with charitable giving.”

Pass It On

ONE OF THE ANSCHUTZES’ MOST RECENT SIGNATURE projects is at once both quiet and ubiquitous: the Foundation for a Better Life. The initiative was conceived by the Anschutzs to celebrate common-sense values—the kind of bedrock principles so foundational that they



Reaching beyond yourself.

COMPASSION

Pass It On.

The Foundation for a Better Life's multimedia messaging has reached billions of viewers.

often get lost in the shuffle. Concepts such as “respect,” “service,” and “leadership.” The Foundation for a Better Life (FBL) creates public service ads spotlighting dozens of these ideals across a number of different mediums. FBL then coordinates with media organizations that donate placement for the billboards and public service ads. They do not sell anything, they accept no donations, but they do remind people of positive ideals and principles, with the hope that they will seep into the public consciousness.

“It’s an entrepreneurial idea applied to a philanthropic platform,” Mr. Anschutz says. He understands how some people may see the project. “If you had ten people in a room, and half of them came from large foundation staffs—what I’ll call the ‘inside the beltway’ of the philanthropic community—four of the five might say, ‘That is the stupidest idea I’ve ever heard.’” He laughs, continuing, “But if the other five were entrepreneurs, they hopefully might say, ‘Gee, that is an interesting idea. You are actually impacting people’s lives utilizing modern media on a broad scale with a positive, uplifting, life-reaffirming set of messages.’”

Food banks, charter schools, and homeless shelters are a good way to help people, Mr. Anschutz notes, but in the long run, people grounded in solid values will be better situated to prosper on their own. “The Foundation for a Better Life started on one TV station in Denver, which ran public service ads,” he recounts. “It is now in over 200 countries all over the world on TV and the internet (Values.com).” Messages put together by the project also run

on thousands of movie screens, appear in newspapers, on radio, and are featured, at any given moment, on somewhere between 10,000 and 12,000 billboards across the country. They appear regularly in Times Square.

The spots are made with very high production values and feature inspirational figures ranging from Albert Einstein and George Washington to Kermit the Frog. Unlike many public service ads, which seek to cajole the viewer into making a contribution or signing up for a list, the Foundation for a Better Life ads are pure message. “One of the most unique things about them,” Mrs. Anschutz explains, “is that there is no ‘ask.’ They are not promoting some cause or asking for money. It truly is just a public service reminder.”

The Anschutzes carefully monitor the program’s impact. “We measure results through Nielsen so that we know how many eyeballs are seeing the ads,” Mr. Anschutz says. “Now, at the end of the day, someone could say, ‘This is very nice, but how do you know that people are actually acting on or doing something about the message?’ I suppose we would say if you are creating impressions in the billions—that is what this is, by the way—and if you assume that there is a take rate, then you logically assume there is a retention rate.”

“All that matters is that people absorb the ideas,” he continues, “that it will positively affect how they conduct themselves in our society and they will be open to sharing them with others.”

“There is a tagline,” Mr. Anschutz concludes, “and the tagline is always, ‘Pass it on.’”

Yet the Anschutzs aren't constrained by any single theory of philanthropy. While the Foundation for a Better Life engages the culture, other ventures get down in the trenches, helping people in immediate need, working through local community foundations in a handful of American cities.

"We try to help people who are really down and out," says Mr. Anschutz. "They might need \$500 to fix the car, or some money to buy clothes so they can go to a job interview, or get dental work done, or help one of their children who has a serious illness." Those in need, working through the local implementing foundation, can get a one-time, small-scale grant. Often, it's all they need to carry them through a crisis.

"Individually, these are relatively small amounts of money to help people in dire need," Mr. Anschutz continues. "Always with the message that (a) it is anonymous, and (b) they do not have to do anything to earn it—that this is simply an act of kindness, so they should 'pass it on' and do some act of kindness for somebody else. Again, we're encouraging those individuals with the same message of 'passing it on,' once again."

"Now, let's go back to those five people from the traditional philanthropic community," Mr. Anschutz says seriously. "If you explain this to them, some would say, 'Now that is a really stupid idea,' because there is the old maxim of it being better to teach a man to fish than to give a man a fish. There is great validity in that, but nevertheless, while you are teaching him to fish, he and his family may have immediate and real needs."

"Sometimes," Mrs. Anschutz concludes, "you have to give a man a fish."

The Anschutz Medical Campus

AT THE SAME TIME THAT THEY'RE ENGAGED IN quiet charitable projects, the Anschutzs have also been leaders in more traditional, capital-intensive philanthropy. Perhaps the best example is Colorado's new Anschutz Medical Campus.

In the late 1990s, the University of Colorado Hospital in Denver was rapidly outgrowing its space. Administrators started eyeing a decommissioned army hospital east of Denver. The hospital, Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center, was a small set of buildings surrounded by vast expanses of alfalfa fields. With that kind of space, there would be enough room to develop what the administrators had hoped might become a state-of-the-art complex. The president of the hospital met with the Anschutzs, who immediately stepped forward to lead the effort. Within a few days, they committed to a \$25 million initial gift to jump-start and help validate the project.

In the years that followed, the Anschutzs



Mr. and Mrs. Anschutz contributed over \$100 million to what would eventually become the Anschutz Medical Campus at the University of Colorado Hospital. (Photo courtesy of University of Colorado Foundation)

continued to lead, eventually contributing over \$100 million to the effort. In 2007, thanks in large measure to the Anschutzs' leadership, the Anschutz Medical Campus opened its doors. "Phil gave us confidence that we could do it," says Dennis Brimhall, who served as president and CEO of the hospital for 17 years. "He's a man who can see around corners. That's real vision—to see things other people can't see."

The campus also features a state-of-the-art outpatient center, which is already recording 600,000 visits per year. Another building on campus houses the medical and dental schools. Yet another is home to the Cancer Center, which boasts cancer survival rates well above the Colorado average. The Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Center has its own facility, and across the street is the CeDAR Center—a drug and alcohol recovery unit with its own small campus which the Anschutzs have also championed.

On a different part of the campus, in a separate set of twin high-rise buildings, are programs designed for research and clinical trials, and a new health and wellness center is scheduled to break ground in late 2010.

"The idea," Mr. Anschutz explained to the *Denver Business Journal* in 2008, "is creating something on par with the Mayo Clinic and with Johns Hopkins, a national destination and identity with research and patient care expertise at a world-class level." The hospital is well on its way. For 2009–10, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked it among the best in the nation in 6 of 16 medical specialties, including diabetes and endocrine disorders, gynecology, kidney disorders, respiratory disorders, rehabilitation, and rheumatology.

The Anschutzs consider the hospital an important philanthropic success, even as they try to redirect credit for the result. "I want to make sure you understand that it was not just us who helped to make this happen. In fact, our part was relatively

small in some ways. It was a cooperative effort of many people working together,” Mr. Anschutz emphasizes. “By coming in with early dollars, we helped create early synergies and hopefully helped to make other things happen. As you get organizations and individuals working with each other, you create a certain early momentum that pulls in yet other people, other funds, and other kinetics.”

For-profits for Charity

THAT INSTINCT FOR LEADERSHIP HAS LED THE Anschutzes in recent years to pursue some of their charitable goals through for-profit enterprises. They had, for example, long been bothered by the dearth of family-friendly movies produced by Hollywood. So in 2000, Mr. Anschutz decided, as he put it, “to stop cursing the darkness.” He firmly believed that there was a market for family movies with positive, life-reaffirming messages. Mrs. Anschutz told him, “Phil, this is one of the nuttier things you’ve ever done, so at least keep your day job.

He did, but his nutty, light-a-candle idea sparked something. In 2001, he formed Walden Media and Bristol Bay Productions. Between them, they’ve already released more than 25 films. Some of them are blockbusters, such as *The*

Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Their film *Ray* won two Oscars. Many other Anschutz productions, particularly *Amazing Grace* and *Holes*, were also critically well-regarded, award-winning productions.

Though Walden Media and Bristol Bay share the vision with The Anschutz Foundation, they are not formally connected with the Foundation. Nevertheless, in their own way, they represent philanthropy by other means. “Movie production is not a good investment,” Mr. Anschutz says, “so maybe you should just think of it as philanthropic in a sense.”

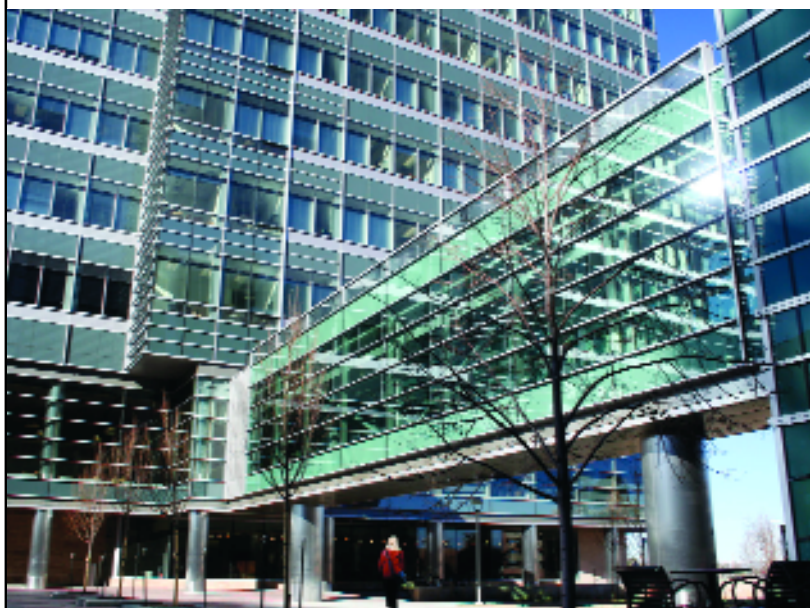
It was the same thinking that led him to invest in soccer, a sport which has been a positive influence for children across the globe. Major League Soccer (MLS) has gone from an upstart, fringe sports league in the mid-1990s to a growing and promising endeavor, thanks in large measure to the Anschutzes. Mr. Anschutz at one point owned six of the ten MLS soccer teams. Today soccer is the fastest growing sport in America, thanks in large part to the increasing number of children now involved in the sport.

“There had to be a reason why this is the world’s number one sport,” Mrs. Anschutz explains. “It turns out that it is so wonderful for children because all you need is a pair of shoes and a ball. You do not have to have exceptional ability to be able to play, compete, and enjoy the game.”

Mr. Anschutz adds, “It has the potential to be applied to a wide base of people, a low participation cost, and the advantage that it creates positive, healthy lifestyles for children.” An early involvement in sports leads to all sorts of good outcomes for kids. “It keeps them healthy, provides them with achievement of goals and purpose, and can give them a life-affirming self-confidence that they carry with them for the rest of their lives.”

Future of the Foundation

IN A WAY, THE COUPLE HOPES THAT THE ANSCHUTZ Foundation will be similarly character-building for their own children. From the start, the foundation has been a small operation. In the beginning, it was just the two of them, but throughout the years they’ve been mostly of one mind. “We share the same goals for the foundation and for our philanthropy,” Mrs. Anschutz says. “Once in a while, I’ll go off in an odd direction, but it is very rare.” Her husband adds, “We discuss with each other our priorities, which things are important,



“The idea is creating something on par with the Mayo Clinic and with Johns Hopkins, a national destination and identity with research and patient care expertise at a world-class level,” Mr. Anschutz says of the medical campus. (Photo courtesy of University of Colorado Foundation)

which things can make an impact. It started with the two of us, but it has now expanded to include our children and their spouses.”

“We wanted to involve the entire family, and have our children and their spouses start learning what it means to be able to give away money responsibly,” Mrs. Anschutz says. “And you hope,” continues Mr. Anschutz, “that this feeling, this sense of obligation, gets passed on to your children, your grandchildren and your grandchildren’s children.”

Even so, the organization remains small—the Anschutzes, their three children, two sons-in-law, three outside board members, and four full-time associates. “We meet on a regular basis,” explains Mrs. Anschutz, “and we go through all the ideas and proposals. It used to be a little more informal, but now with our children assuming more and more leadership, they prefer a bit more structure.”

The Anschutzes have not yet fully made up their mind about the foundation’s future. “We wanted it to be an ongoing entity,” Mr. Anschutz says. “At times, we have discussed the idea of sun-setting it, letting it give out its funds and going out of business. Each time I think that through, I conclude that it is not a very good idea, as there should be long-term aspirations and long-term commitments to needs. However, there are arguments on the other side of that issue, as well, donor intent being one. Indications of growing government interference and controls on mandated areas of philanthropic giving are others.”

Asked how donors can keep their intent safeguarded from generation to generation, Mrs. Anschutz laughs and replies, “Other than brainwashing our children?”

“It’s something that we talk about frequently,” she continues, “because it is such a major concern of mine. I do not want to see us become a Ford Foundation or a Pew Foundation, where the men who actually created the capital behind it would not have believed what would happen to their efforts.” She pauses for a moment and continues, “But yet, because it is an important idea to pass down to children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, there is part of us that wants to see it continue, for those family members to continue to be a part of something for generations to come.”

“This Is an Opportunity”

IF THOSE GENERATIONS YET TO COME WANT TO understand Mr. Anschutz, they will need to remember that burning oil well. It was a forma-



“Movie production is not a good investment,” Mr. Anschutz says, “so maybe you should just think of it as philanthropic in a sense.” From top to bottom: *Amazing Grace* (photo courtesy of Bristol Bay Productions), *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (photo courtesy of Walden Media), and *Charlotte’s Web* (photo courtesy of Walden Media).

tive experience in his life. In some ways, it all goes back to that burning oil well.

After seeing his rig in flames on the evening news, Mr. Anschutz headed immediately back to Wyoming, knowing, once again, that he had to do something. He called the other interest-owner in the well. The next day, the two met at the Casper airport. They negotiated a contract in a



The Anschutz family has invested in Major League Soccer in part because of the benefits of soccer for kids. "It is so wonderful for children because all you need is a pair of shoes and a ball," says Mrs. Anschutz. "You do not have to have exceptional ability to be able to play, compete and enjoy the game." (Photo by Keith Miner; used under a Creative Commons license.)

single, five-hour-long session. Lacking writing paper to commemorate their agreement, the final terms were written on a barroom tablecloth.

The upshot was that Mr. Anschutz would receive an additional ownership interest in the well and surrounding acreage in exchange for accepting total liability and bearing the total cost of trying to put out the fire. The deal in hand, he boarded a plane for Gillette. After takeoff, he could see the fire illuminating the night sky from 100 miles away. The flames were shooting fire hundreds of feet into the air. His rig was totally destroyed. Looking at the inferno, he thought to himself, "This is the end. I'll never be able to overcome all this."

In typical Anschutz fashion, he gathered himself. Then he moved forward.

"What happened was this," he explains. "I began the next day to lease all the oil and gas rights I could on trend with the wildcat discovery. I agreed to pay for the lands within 30 days. That was with money I didn't currently have. I convinced my banks to give me more time and more money. I convinced the recalcitrant insurance company to honor its obligations and my creditors and suppliers to have confidence in me. Then I sold a portion of my interest in the well to raise the money needed to calm the scared bankers, creditors, and suppliers and pay for the new leases I had committed to purchase."

In the meantime, Anschutz approached Universal Movie Studios. He had heard Universal was considering making a movie about legendary oil field firefighter Red Adair, so Anschutz told them he'd sell them the rights to film Adair's crew putting out an actual drilling rig fire—his! (The footage was used for what would become the John Wayne movie *Hellfighters*.) He then used the down payment he received from Universal to pay Red Adair, who had refused to come to the job site to try and put out the fire until the young Anschutz, of questionable financial means given his current predicament, agreed to pay him a portion of his fee—in advance.

The lessons he learned from that ordeal have shaped his thinking ever since: "You have to have the initiative, be able to be pragmatic and tenacious, seeing all of the opportunity that could exist, and work like hell and not worry too much about what people think."

Mrs. Anschutz says that the incident captures everything about their approach to philanthropy. "Phil got the call in the middle of the night and started to roll over and go back to sleep. But then he realized, 'I have to get up and do something. This is an opportunity.' Sometimes, you need to get up and do something, even if you're not sure what that something is at the time."

"Not Rocket Science"

INITIATIVE—GETTING UP AND DOING SOMETHING—is the cornerstone of the Anschutzes' philanthropy. It is what gives them the vision to see a cutting-edge medical complex where others see alfalfa fields. It is what gives them the confidence to invest in some of the philanthropic endeavors they've given to.

"That is the first step that a person who wants to be involved in helping make society better has to reach," Mr. Anschutz says. "Do you live your life for yourself but with good intentions, or do you intend to do something about it? And sure, you're going to make mistakes. We've made our share. But it's okay. Maybe we do not achieve everything we hoped for and some efforts you contribute to simply do not work in the way you intended."

But mistakes aren't lamentable. Good but empty intentions are.

"Be good stewards with the good fortune God has bestowed, and attempt to do what you can with what you've got," says Mr. Anschutz. "It's usually not rocket science."

Pass it on.

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