December 3, 2014

Warren,

I am delighted and honored to participate in The Giving Pledge Program that you and Bill initiated. Your Pledge Program to encourage those of extreme wealth during their respective lifetimes and/or at death to provide at least 50% of their net asset values to charity is quite noteworthy and commendable. Hopefully, in my case it will be more than 50%. “God Willing And The Creek Don’t Rise”, I will live long enough to continue to compound my net assets.

In many of the letters that I have read from others they have articulately outlined the reason for their philanthropy. My philanthropic DNA was inherited from my mother who dedicated her life to the service of others. While she did not have a lot of treasure, she contributed her time and worked tirelessly serving those in need. She infused in me the virtue of philanthropy. I asked my mother why she was always away working on charitable programs. She spoke to me of Winston Churchill who said, “You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give.” My mother had great admiration for Churchill. She also told me that in her view the true measure of financial philanthropy is not how much one gives but how much one has left after one gives. She truly lived by this directive. That sets the bar pretty high and would suggest that perhaps a 50% hurdle is too low.

While I have taken care of my children and want them to enjoy comfortable lives, I do not believe that those who provide their offspring with luxuriously upholstered lives serve them well but rather saddle them with a terrible burden. The trappings of extreme wealth are quite dangerous if not intelligently and responsibly directed. Hopefully, I have imparted my views to my children and they will act accordingly. It is my view that humility is the true virtue of extreme wealth. We all know second and third generation wealth where the recipients were actually born on third base but think and act like they hit a triple.

I truly believe the greatest philanthropic gift a wealthy individual can bequest to his/her offspring is a true commitment and responsibility to give back. Hopefully, I have imparted these views to my children and trust they will follow their father’s guidance. I have always tried to get them to understand that none of us really own anything – we are all just passing through.
Thank you again, Warren, for the privilege and honor of participating in your program.

God Bless!
Go Cornhuskers!
Go Irish!

Best regards,

John W. Jordan II