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# 'Uncle' Warren Buffett And 'Cousin' Jimmy Make Beautiful Music

**Mogul, Singer Feel Like Family  
But May Have DNA Tests  
To Be Sure of Connection**

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Even Jimmy Buffett's most ardent devotees -- the margarita-sipping superfans who call themselves Parrot Heads -- might not have heard one 2003 composition by the troubadour of laid-back island living.


"I bought Berkshire way back when it was cheap," he sang in the ditty, strumming softly on an acoustic guitar. "I bought Berkshire way back then, and I do nothing but keep...it."

A two-line ode to the stock of **Berkshire Hathaway Inc.**, which currently trades at more than \$84,000 a share, might seem out of character for the singer of "Margaritaville" and "Cheeseburger in Paradise." Jimmy Buffett is indeed a longtime Berkshire shareholder, and his short composition was played on videotape at Berkshire's annual meetings in 2003 and 2004.



In fact, the singer has also been friends with Warren Buffett, Berkshire's 74-year-old chairman and chief executive, for more than 20 years, both men say. They don't see each other often, but they talk on the phone regularly about business. They have even performed music together. And they plan to collaborate again at a New York charity dinner for Conservation International tomorrow night.

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Warren Buffett

Besides sharing a surname, the two men have long suspected that they also share a common genetic history. "Warren leaves messages for 'Cousin Jimmy' and always has," says the singing Mr. Buffett, 58. "I'll take it from him." The singer calls the financier "Uncle Warren."

No one knows for sure. The two are only now coming to the end of a two-decade process of determining how or whether they are actually related.

The attempt to link the two strains of Buffettmania has been spearheaded for more than 20 years by Doris Buffett, Warren's 77-year-old sister. "I've spent a lot of time and energy trying to connect up the two families," says Ms. Buffett, who heads a charity for battered women called the Sunshine Lady Foundation Inc. Despite years of research, she has been unable to establish a conclusive link. She says she is considering DNA testing to make a certain determination.



Jimmy Buffett

Jimmy Buffett, Warren Buffett and Doris Buffett act more or less as though they were long-lost relatives. Ms. Buffett has been a guest of the singer at performances. Her brother says he has never been to a Jimmy Buffett concert, but he has seen one on TV.

Warren Buffett last May played ukulele and sang "Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue (Has Anybody Seen My Gal?)" at the opening of Jimmy Buffett's Cheeseburger in Paradise restaurant in Omaha, Neb., where the elder Mr. Buffett has lived most of his life. He was accompanied by Cousin Jimmy. The two didn't rehearse, says Warren Buffett: "He asked me what key I played in. I said, I don't know."

Jimmy Buffett says he chose Omaha as a location for his restaurant -- one of 14 in the chain, which is a joint venture between Mr. Buffett's Margaritaville Holdings Inc. and **Outback Steakhouse** Inc. -- because it is a midsize city, but also because of Uncle Warren. "He's such a cheeseburger freak," Jimmy Buffett says. "He said, 'If you put one in Omaha, I'll buy the first cheeseburger.'" Warren Buffett says he is still a regular customer.

The friendship between the two Buffetts dates back to the early 1980s, when Doris Buffett sent letters to 116 other Buffetts around the U.S. seeking information about her family's history. "I had nothing better to do," she says. "So I became an amateur genealogist."

One of the letters landed on the desk of Jimmy Buffett, where it sat, unanswered, for two years before Ms. Buffett finally heard back from the singer's office. Then, the two began corresponding, and in 1983 arranged to travel together, along with the singer's parents, daughter, nanny and others, to Norfolk Island -- a remote speck of land in the Tasman Sea, between Australia and New Zealand, where there happens to be a large population of Buffetts.

Norfolk was settled in 1856 by descendants of the men who had participated in the 1789 mutiny aboard HMS Bounty, according to local historical societies. The mutineers' families relocated from the more remote Pitcairn Island, led by one John Buffett, a shipwright who settled on Pitcairn in 1823. There are

46 Buffetts on the Norfolk electoral rolls, out of a permanent population of 1,574, according to Grant Tambling, the island's administrator, and 12 Buffett children enrolled in the island's only school.

Jimmy Buffett says he grew up hearing tales of the South Pacific Buffetts from his mother, Peets Buffett. John Buffett, he says, came from the same part of the United Kingdom as he believes his own ancestors did.

The singer and Ms. Buffett found a warm welcome among the Norfolk Buffetts, who are descendants of the many children -- legitimate and otherwise -- of John Buffett, according to Ms. Buffett. "There are just oodles of them over there," she says. "And they're very nice." Jimmy Buffett ended the trip by performing a benefit concert for the Norfolk Island Central School.

What they did not find, however, was evidence of a family tie between either Jimmy or Warren Buffett and the Norfolk Island Buffetts.



Pamela Jones

Jimmy Buffett serves the first burger from the Omaha Cheeseburger in Paradise restaurant to Warren Buffett.

Not long after they got back from the South Pacific, Ms. Buffett introduced the singer to her brother at a lunch in Washington, D.C. It was that meeting that inspired Jimmy Buffett to buy 15 shares of Berkshire Hathaway stock in 1989, he says, adding that he has been buying it regularly ever since. How much does he own? "A lot," he says with a laugh. The share price has risen by about \$75,000, or more than 800%, since the year he first bought it.

So far, Ms. Buffett has traced her family's roots to the late 17th century on Long Island, where a John Buffett was married in the town of Huntington, in 1696. Meanwhile, she says, the furthest she has gotten with Jimmy Buffett's family is the town of Rose Blanche, on the southern shore of Newfoundland.

"Trying to relate the two families has been a little more problematic," she says, owing to hazy recollections, wishful thinking and murky records. "There are plenty of miscellaneous Buffetts."

Ms. Buffett recalls with a laugh her recent visit to a genealogical society in England, where a researcher told her it would be difficult to find many records on Buffetts, because the family is "very obscure."

In fact, the strongest evidence she has providing a link between the families is a photograph of a family of Canadian Buffetts who trace their ancestry back to the same part of Canada as Jimmy Buffett does. One of the men in the picture, Ms. Buffett says, bears a striking resemblance to her father, Howard H. Buffett, the late Republican Nebraska congressman of the 1940s and '50s. "My father didn't have a common ordinary, everyday face," she adds. Still, there is not even documentary evidence that the person in the photograph is related to either Warren Buffett or Jimmy Buffett.

But the big-name Buffetts want to believe in their connection. "I do see some family resemblance," insists Jimmy Buffett, who adds that he has always "just kind of assumed" a family relation.

Both Buffett men say they are willing to participate in Ms. Buffett's DNA test, although they add that so far, at least, she hasn't made definite plans with either of them to conduct it.

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