



Library podcast

Gilbert Anderson and Deborah Jacobs

[00:00:00] Gilbert Anderson: Librarians seemed to have this deep feeling that they want to help you. And that's certainly helped me in my formative years. In fact, I would say the library kept me out of a lot of trouble, as a growing pre- and post-teenager.


[00:00:19] Deborah Jacobs: I feel so lucky to have come to be the City Librarian at Seattle Public Library in 1997. It was an amazing time. There was an amazingly strong economy. It's hard to remember that time. And the community loved the library. And so for me, finding people like you who, we might remember, you were a little suspicious of me when I came. I was young, and I came from a small city. The little girl from Corvallis.

[00:00:56] GA: I remember that. When I was on the Foundation board, and when it came time to vote on this little girl from Corvallis who was running this tiny library and about to come to this big city with a big library -- I didn't vote for her. It was probably the dumbest thing I've ever done, looking back on it. And we really had a very nice relationship at work, and also a little bit socially.

[00:01:23] DJ: Do you remember one of the first things -- and I think it's part of what made us so close -- was that sunny day when we went to Bill Gates, Senior's, house and that's when he handled all of the fundraising from his kitchen. And he politely knocked a bunch of -- a big stack of -- requests off his table and said, "This is just from this morning's mail," or something like that.

[00:01:47] GA: He says, "These are the ones I've already rejected."

[00:01:59] DJ: And then he said, "How much are you asking my son and daughter-in-law for?" And we had agreed not to say a number, but you kicked me under the table. I had just had some lemonade, and I coughed up, "Twenty million dollars," (laughs) as I was drinking that lemonade, and, well, sure enough election night we found out that the citizens had approved almost \$200 million bond measure, which was a great night. But the next morning I woke up, and I listened to my voicemail and there were about four messages that had come after midnight, the last time I had listened to my voicemail. And one was from Patty Stonesifer. And in that wonderful voice of Patty's she said, "I'm sitting with Bill and Melinda, and it looks like the bond measure's going to pass. So we want to follow up with you and talk to you about a \$20 million donation." And that got me out of bed really fast. (laughs) And excited and into the office to begin rolling up our sleeves to do even more.



[00:02:52] GA: You started to raise \$40 million and somebody on the board thought, “If it’s so easy to raise half of it, perhaps we have the wrong number to shoot for.” And it was decided by everybody but me (laughter) that we had to raise \$60 million. And we ended up raising \$83 million. But really, that was quite a personal challenge, I’ll tell you.

[00:03:18] DJ: Libraries to me are the cornerstone of democracy, and I think the process we used was true to the democratic spirit of truly listening and making it be the people’s library.

[00:03:30] GA: Absolutely. Working with the library and the library board and with you was the greatest experience I’ve had in my short 85 years.

[00:03:40] DJ: I want to say to you how lucky I am to have you in my life and to have you here, sitting with me, and to know that we’ll always have these memories that we’ll share.

[00:03:51] GA: It’s been a great ride, I’ll tell you.

[00:03:54] DJ: And everybody’s enjoying it.

[00:03:56] [MUSIC]

