



Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa

Citation

William H. Gates, rooted in the Northwest and in a generation now revered for its spirit of service and community, you have deep roots on this campus as well. Your years as a University of Washington student, we like to think, contributed in some small way to the generous, exemplary, and now globally influential life that you have led.

You came to the University from Bremerton High School, went off for three years of service in the U.S. Army during World War II, and then returned here for bachelor's and law degrees. You also found here a wife, Mary Maxwell, whose talents and ideals matched your own. Among the three children you reared together was a prodigiously gifted son, who appropriated your name, turned the world upside down, and then came to you for help in making his fortune a force for good in the world.

He turned to you not just because you volunteered, not just because you were his father, but because he knew that you had the head, the heart, and the stature for this important work.

Your distinguished legal career spanned more than four decades, most of it at Preston Gates & Ellis, which you helped build into one of Seattle's most admired and most public-spirited law firms. You held positions of leadership in the local, state, and national bar associations, and you chaired a long succession of legal and public-policy commissions, many concerned with making law and government more perfect instruments of justice.

Beyond the law, you have been a trustee, officer, and volunteer for more than two dozen Northwest and national organizations, from the Municipal League to Planned Parenthood to the Seattle Repertory Theater to United Way to the Technology Alliance (which you founded) to the University of Washington. In all these settings, two qualities were constant: the no-nonsense force of your intellect and the deep kindness of your drive to make life better and fairer.

So when the time came, you took your son's cardboard box of charitable appeals and began to build the structure, goals, and philosophy of what is now the world's largest and most breathtakingly ambitious charitable foundation: the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, of which you have been co-chair for 15 years.

Others helped shape the Foundation, but it is deeply imbued with your vision and priorities. Education, at-risk families in the Northwest, public libraries, the most devastating illnesses in the poorest parts of the world—to these challenges the Gates Foundation brings a fresh and searching intelligence as well as money and compassion. Anyone who knows your life can see your mark on the Foundation.

For helping to create this great gift to the twenty-first century, for decades of civic engagement and leadership, and for living out your faith that thoughtful people can join forces to improve our common life, the University of Washington is proud to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.

CRAIG W. COLE
CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

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