



An encounter with the 'oracle'

by Kevin McQuaid
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The last time Warren Buffett had an encounter with a Riverview High grad, he hired him.

Todd Combs, Riverview class of 1989, was hand-picked by Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Inc. last fall, legend has it, after writing a letter to the "Oracle of Omaha."

In time, Combs may replace Buffett as chief investment officer, overseeing Berkshire's \$100 billion investment portfolio.

Gred Bockhold's interaction has, so far, been more modest. But if writing a letter can land one of the world's most coveted investment jobs, who knows where a simple question about dessert could lead?

Bockhold, a 2007 Riverview grad now a Stetson University senior, was in Buffett's hometown this

week for the "global investment research challenge," a sort of NCAA basketball tournament for finance majors.

While there, he and 250 other competitors sat in on a Q&A with Buffett. When the questions turned pedestrian – Buffett was asked if Berkshire would someday pay a dividend ("Never") and how he would lower the federal deficit – Bockhold stepped to a microphone and mixed things up.

"If you could eat ice cream with any person in history, who would it be? And what type of ice cream would you get?"

Everyone laughed, including Buffett, known for his affinity for ice cream and cherry Coke. But then he answered – seriously.

The event concluded, Bockhold and his teammates were headed back to their hotel when a voice behind them said something about ice cream. Turning, they saw Buffett, chatting with his daughter.

After an escalator ride and a quick photo, Buffett said he enjoyed Bockhold's inquiry.

"Sometimes I get tired of financial questions," Buffett said, according to Bockhold.

Bockhold then tried to close the deal – to share some ice cream, naturally – but Buffett said he was busy.

Bockhold is going to be busy soon, too. Next month, he graduates. In July, he will start work at SEI, a financial services firm.

He does not rule out working at Berkshire, though.

"I'd jump at it," Bockhold said. "Warren Buffett sticks to his guns and hasn't failed anyone yet."

Oh, and Buffett's answers to Bockhold's questions?

Chocolate chip, and his father.



Students meet financier Warren Buffett. From left are Filip Vurdelja, Buffett, Rebecca Simmons and Gregory Bockhold
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