

# Did you hear that story about Bill Gates?: A PR person's view

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I learned from someone who did public relations for Bill and Melinda Gates that they often hear stories of the form, “So I heard from a friend of a friend that their cousin’s hairdresser’s former high school classmate helped out a person who was in a bit of a jam, and the person thanked them and asked for their name. They thought nothing of it, but a week later, they received an expensive thank-you gift. It turns out the person they helped was Bill Gates.”

The story takes many forms. The assistance might be helping to change a flat tire, or paying for his takeout food order after he found himself a bit short of change. And the thank-you gift might be a new car or a paid-off mortgage. The details vary from telling to telling, but the basic shape is the same.

The media person explained, “Whenever somebody tells a story like that, I just say, ‘That sounds like a fun story.’ If it’s true, you don’t want to confirm it, because everybody will expect to get an expensive thank-you gift. And if it’s not true, you just ruined somebody’s fun story.”

They added, “I enjoyed hearing these stories because it gave me insight into what people think about Bill.”

Happy birthday, Bill. Don’t believe all the stories you hear about me.

**Bonus chatter:** What’s actually confirmed true is that Bill [participates in Reddit Secret Santa](#).

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