

He's in business to help: A Drink With ... Robert Wallace

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Robert L. Wallace grew up in Baltimore's Cherry Hill. After graduating from Baltimore Polytechnic, he got degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and the Amos Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College. Wallace, 50, is chairman of BITH GROUP Technologies Inc., an information technology consulting firm he founded 14 years ago. He's also the founder of Entreat Learning Systems, which is aimed at helping minority and women entrepreneurs. Wallace lives in both Mount Vernon and Clarksville with his wife, Carolyn. They have five children.

How do you describe yourself?

I'm an entrepreneur. I look for value and opportunity in life.

But, you do something interesting with some of your business profits every year.

If we've been blessed, we take 10 to 15 percent of our profits and we plow it into the mission field. We've built churches in Ghana, schools, clinics - primarily in Africa, but also in Latin America. Our main thing now is building orphanages for children whose parents have died from HIV/AIDS. ... As you know, it's a huge problem in Africa. So far, we've built three buildings of a 12-building orphanage and school campus in Tanzania, near Mount Kilimanjaro.

It sounds like business for you isn't just about making money.

I didn't get into business just to get into business. It's a means to an end. The end is to help humanity. I'm a Christian. I have Christian values and morals. So, the business just provides a means to help humanity. To spread the Gospel.

Do you have other passions in life?

I do. ... Physical health is important to me. I exercise. I'm careful with what I eat. I find I can be more competitive in business if I'm physically fit. But every now and then, I have a Krispy Kreme moment. I get a few doughnuts and hide away and eat them. And I don't tell my wife ... My problem is I love sugar.

Are you ever a slug?

No. Even when we go on vacation. I drive my wife crazy. She'll say, "sleep in, stay in bed." And every morning, I'm up at 5 o'clock ... I want to see everything. I want to experience everything. We go all over the place - Mexico, Africa, Asia, Hawaii. My wife tries to get me to relax. But, wherever we are on the planet, I'm up at 5.

What do you do in your down time? Read, see movies?

My wife will tell you I'm the most intense person she knows. I'm intense because I'm trying to accomplish as much as I can in the time that I have ... I go to the movies every now and then. But, I love to read. Always have. When I was at Poly, I played football. I would hide my books in my football bag until I was out of sight of my peers. I would take out my books and read. It was glamorous to be a football player, but not so glamorous to be into reading. So, I was a closet bookworm.

What kind of books do you read?

Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich. Norman Vincent Peale ... all nonfiction. If it isn't engineering, it's business. I don't read novels. I don't have the time ... When I read, I read for knowledge. I don't read for pleasure. I don't know if that's good or bad, but it is what it is.

It sounds like knowledge is what gives you pleasure.

That's true. When I go to foreign countries, I'm a sponge. I don't go to the tourist places. I go right to the communities. I go to the guts of the culture. I want to know it. ... It is this thirst for knowledge. What I find is that the older I get - the more I experience - the more I realize how little I know. And that's humbling.

ROBERT WALLACE'S DRINK AT GEORGE'S ON MT. VERNON SQUARE:
NON-ALCOHOLIC MARGARITA ON THE ROCKS WITH SALT
**article taken from The Baltimore Sun*