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On trusting Bob Hope

Did mistrusting Bob Hope's protestations at being on The Forbes Four Hundred for two years in a row seem uncharitable of us? Well, it was, a little bit—and we correct that error this year (p. 34). But there was a reason for it. More than a few of our multimillionaires have to be dragged kicking and screaming from behind the scenes, and some of them are not above telling a little fib or two to get away. One billionaire, for example, had our researcher just about convinced that he was so strapped he didn't even remotely belong on our listing at all—until a news clip reached us that reported the sale of one part of his assets for \$500 million, and made it clear there was at least as much more where that came from. So it's no reflection on Bob Hope that we went with what we thought were reliable sources in the face of his denials. Nor, we maintain, is it a reflection on us. But when we are proved wrong, we're glad to get it straight. Thanks for the memories, Bob.

Sung and unsung help

A project like this one cannot be carried out without the help of a lot of people, far more than can be acknowledged, but we try. Dozens of sources (see p. 193) all over the country contributed leads, ideas, financial and biographical information that helped flesh out our list. We could easily have multiplied the number of pages spent listing them if so many had not requested anonymity.

Beyond them, there are co-workers behind the scenes at FORBES who don't qualify for the few coveted bylines each year, but whose contributions were essential to getting the project done anyway. This year researchers Michael O'Reilly, David Montgomery, Reed Abelson; consultant Jonathan Greenberg; former reporter Jay Gissen; and the staff of the FORBES library were foremost among them.

The Four Hundred requires more than bodies. Beyond the sheer number of people involved is the intensity of the research effort itself. FORBES reporters found themselves dispatched all over the country to track down leads for The Four Hundred this year—to Washington, D.C.; Boston; Detroit; Seattle; Portland, Ore.; San Francisco; Los Angeles; San Diego; New Orleans; Jackson, Miss.; Birmingham, Ala.; Miami; Fort Lauderdale; Palm Beach; Orlando; Tampa; and St. Petersburg.

The same, of course, goes for the other articles in this issue. When we sent Executive Editor Jim Cook to Palm Springs we expected him to come back with more than a suntan. We expected a story about the richest Indians in America—which we got (see p. 26). But he also brought back an arresting story, not visible until someone went there, of one of the world's great resorts undergoing dramatic and probably irreversible change, much of it not for the better (p. 20). The effort involved in doing this kind of reporting is time-consuming, troublesome, costly—and invaluable. Journalism is like real estate: Never buy until you've gone out and seen it for yourself.

The Editors

