

*August 1999*

## **BOYZ II MEN** **MEN II BOYZ**

Recognizing the little boy in a grown man is not always an easy task, although most of us, especially the men and their wives, I suppose, know that he's always in there somewhere. Despite the ties, the shaving lotion and the false bravado made necessary by our competitive world, snakes, snails, and puppy dog tails are what they're really made of. My favorite "little boy becoming a man" story has always been about my son Jeff, who is now 27 and long since on his own. He was a five year old in 1977 and being prematurely pushed into Little League by his ambitious and vicariously proud father. Before his first official time at bat and while waiting at the on deck circle, he intently observed the current batter who, as fate would have it, was a lefty, and batted from the right side of the plate. When it came time for Jeff to hit, he used the image and example of the last person he had seen and walked up to the right side of the plate as well. My son, however, was a right-handed batter and by so doing, was now facing the rear of the batting cage instead of the opposing pitcher 45 feet away. For what seemed like an eternity, Jeff continued to

face the back of the cage, frozen into inaction by his obvious nervousness and lack of experience in the grown up world of Little League baseball. It was only when his coach came over and picked Jeff up at the waist, turned him 180 degrees in the air and cried "play ball" that the stands let out a sigh of relief and a hearty round of applause. His Dad, of course, was mortified—being the budding example of a worldly raconteur. He hadn't remembered ever making a mistake like that, even at five and certainly not in 1977, '87 or '97 for that matter as the years moved on.

Cut away to June of 1999, for an example of how a man—a sophisticated raconteur—can become a little boy under the same circumstances of anxiety and intense social pressure. Yours truly had been invited along with his wife to visit the home of Bill and Melinda Gates for an evening of cocktails, dinner, and conversation culminating in what would presumably be a check written at a later date to a most worthy philanthropic organization. I mean, come on now, how many of you, aside from the