Title: “The Snowball”

Author: Alice Schroeder

Publisher: Bantam Dell

Length: 838 pages

Price: $23.00

Reading Time: 10-15 hours

Reading rating: 7 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall rating: 4 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

“The Snowball” written by Alice Schroeder, with a large amount of input from Warren Buffett, is a great book about a great investor. This is the first Warren Buffett book with full support from Warren Buffett himself, and with such support comes great insight into Warren's life. The book gives an interesting explanation of how the Buffetts came to live in Omaha. In addition, it covers a lot of his reasoning behind why he invests the way he does and tells of relationships with such people as his long time partner Charles T. Munger.

One of the most interesting parts of the book described Buffett's view of the stock market being more like a weighing machine rather than a voting machine. In the 1990s he gave a speech in Sun Valley to very rich Internet tycoons explaining why the sustained growth and value of technology stocks could not be sustainable. Like all people who hear what they do not want to hear, they became angry and made rude comments about Buffet losing his edge. They would say, “Warren, with his unwillingness to buy technology stocks, missed the boat.” But, as we all know, the technology bubble burst just like the real estate bubble burst.

Schroeder also explains in great detail some of Buffett's best lessons. When he was ten years old, Buffett learned three important lessons. One: do not over fixate on what you had paid for a stock. Two: do not rush unthinkingly to grab a small profit. Three: if you make a mistake investing somebody else’s money, someone may be upset with you.

The book is full of stories about Buffett giving good advice and very few people listening. It is very similar to what is currently happening in the investment world. I have watched my portfolio go down during the current recession and have looked for good advice to calm my nerves. With over 40 years of winning investing, what better person to learn from than Buffett?

Buffett has made several appearances in the media within the last year. One of the underlying themes of his appearances has been that this is a great time to invest. It amazes me how people can sell off stocks during a declining market or make comments like, “I will start investing when stocks rebound.” I am not a financial guru, so I rely on advice from those who are.

You will enjoy reading some of Buffet’s most famous sayings. When Buffet was thought to have lost his edge during the technology bubble, he would say, “Lookit. Would you rather be the world’s greatest lover, but have everyone think you’re the world’s worst lover? Or would you rather be the world’s worst lover, but have everyone think you’re the world’s greatest lover?” It is little parts of the book that kept it interesting for me. At the same time, I knew I was gaining great insight into one of the greatest investors the world has seen.

“The Snowball” has to be one of the most interesting biographies I have read. It gives a great historical account of the earlier years of Buffett as he is faced with great hardships accompanied with an tremendous entrepreneurial spirit.

Ronnie Stillwell is a visiting Assistant Professor Of Computer Information Systems in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. For previously reviewed books, visit our Website at [www.wcu.edu/cob/](http://www.wcu.edu/cob/).