



The Orkin Pest Control company's plaque at the National Museum of Natural History.

of Medicine at UCLA. But the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon cost only \$55 million and the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas, Austin, was named for a mere \$50 million after "Red" McCombs, a San Antonio car salesman. Still, in 2006, Stanford University sold the name of its Graduate School of Management to Nike founder Phil Knight for an impressive \$105 million.

Just do it? Well, no, one may want to pause first. Name games can lead to trouble as well as tribute. For every Rockefeller University, there is a Kenneth Lay YMCA like the one in Katy, Tex., which had to rename itself following the late Enron chairman's conviction for corporate fraud and conspiracy.

And sometimes, there's a real train wreck, like when New York's Metropolitan Opera put investor Alberto W. Vilar's name

on its Grand Tier in recognition of a \$20 million pledge but removed it when he failed to cough up the cash and was soon indicted for an unrelated fraud (the trial was under way at press time). Luckily, donors are like subway trains, there's always another: Sid and Mercedes Bass replaced Vilar's pledge as an outright gift (with a \$5 million kicker in cash besides). That's what one might call hitting a high note.

But careful how you treat those donors. The family of Andre Meyer, former head of Lazard Frères, nearly came to blows with the Metropolitan Museum some years back when it rebuilt its European Painting Galleries, and the Andre Meyer Galleries disappeared. Family members thought his name would grace those galleries in perpetuity. The museum's bosses were reportedly furious that Meyer had promised it his art collection but reneged on what would no doubt be called an "unenforceable oral promise." When his fam-

ily refused the museum's request for another donation for its new galleries, the museum removed Meyer's name. Descendants now joke about "the Andre Meyer wall." To be sure, you don't always get what you paid for. (The Museum declined to comment.)

The family of Avery Fisher had more luck when it heard that his name might be removed from his hall at Lincoln Center, endowed with \$10.5 million in 1973. The family was no longer flush enough to pay for a new building, so no one even bothered to ask them to "top-up" his gift. But—surprise!—they had enough to hire a lawyer and force a compromise: the interior could be renamed but not the building. "Donors have to be very careful," says Rockefeller's Bauer. "Institutions have to be very clear. The definition of perpetuity has changed."

Indeed, what was once a gentleman's agreement is now a

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Name Properties

Here's what some donors have paid for a variety of recent placements:

PRICE	NAME	WHAT/WHERE
\$350 million	Patrick & Lore Harp McGovern	Institute for Brain Research, MIT
\$105 million	Phil Knight, Founder, Nike	Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, Palo Alto, Calif.
\$20 million	Ronald O. Perelman	Ronald O. Perelman Family Stage, Isaac Stern Auditorium, Carnegie Hall, New York City
\$500,000	Orkin Pest Control	O. Orkin Insect Zoo, National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
\$100,000 plus	Jerome L. Stern	Restrooms, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City
\$100,000	Rust-Oleum Corp.	Rust-Oleum Field, Vernon Hills High School, Vernon Hills, Ill.
\$60,000	Kohler Credit Unions	Gift shops, Sheboygan High Schools, Sheboygan, Wis.

Source: Organizations and *CONTRIBUTE* magazine



The heirs of Avery Fisher settled a recent naming-rights squabble with Lincoln Center that keeps Fisher's name on Avery Fisher Hall, but not inside it.

legal negotiation. Law firms have emerged that specialize in naming gifts and they can play hardball. One specialist, who asked not to be named, tries to win clients the right to withdraw endowments and disassociate their names if, for example, a religious institution becomes a secular one. He also touts the value of "deeds of gift" with provisos, barring charities from changing the terms without a court order. "Otherwise they can run amok and embarrass your name," he says.

Ultimately, though, only money talks—and so loudly sometimes that some donors even have begun to demand the right to get their money back should the buildings that bear their names be torn down. "Whose need is greater?" asks lawyer William Zabel, who represented the Fisher family. "In most cases, the power of wealth is greater."

So, when the Wal-Mart billions came a-calling, one school couldn't say no. Elizabeth Paige Laurie's parents, Bill and Nancy—whose father, Bud, co-founded Wal-Mart with his brother, Sam Walton—paid \$25 million to have the University of Missouri's new arena named after their then 22-year-old daughter, even though she attended the University of Southern California. But before a single game was played in the Paige Sports Arena, ABC's *20/20* revealed that Paige Laurie had paid her freshman roommate about \$20,000 to write her papers, e-mail her professors, and so forth, throughout her college career. Missouri would not say if it had returned any of their money, but the school renamed its arena



Wealth management CEO Alexandra Lebenthal advocates buying naming rights as gifts to others.

Mizzou, its nickname, and Paige returned her USC diploma.

Naming isn't always a crass exercise, though. Increasingly, philanthropists are naming things for others—a new trend in giving. One recent example of egoless naming comes from Alexandra Lebenthal, president and CEO of Alexandra & James, Co., a New York wealth management firm. Lebenthal took part in a quiet little campaign to name a children's reading room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's new educational center for Felicia "Flis" Blum, who's spent 30 years there training the docents who give tours of the museum. Blum's husband and Liz Peek, a writer and wife of the head of CIT, the financial services firm, raised the money secretly from friends like Lebenthal and sprang their surprise on Blum at a recent dinner in her honor in the American wing.

"It was really the opposite of ego," says Lebenthal, who hopes the next big thing in philanthropy will be what she calls "Shhh-don't-tell fundraising." She is doing her part to make that happen. "I'm in the midst of raising money for my own secret naming effort," she reveals. "I can't talk about it more than that, but someone else in the city is going to have a big surprise soon, so people who know me should have their guard up—and their checkbooks open."

And even though it goes against the current, they'll have to keep their mouths shut, too. ▲

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PHOTOGRAPH: (TOP) DAVID LAMB; (BOTTOM) ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDFUX