

§ 1. Though he is, in many ways, unremarkable and we have never met before, and he hasn't given me any particular clues to help me pick him out, it's not hard to spot Steve Sires in the lobby of his hotel, simply because he's the only man here who looks exactly like Bill Gates, the computer millionaire and head of Microsoft. "I **figured** you'd recognise me," he says, rising from his chair to shake my hand, in his Bill Gates glasses, with his Bill Gates hair, Smiling his Bill Gates smile. Steve Sires is a civil engineering consultant who runs his own business and, twice a month or so, gets paid to jet across the continent and look like Bill Gates. He's hired for business functions mostly - product launches, industry seminars and conferences. He isn't the only professional Bill Gates lookalike in the world, but he is, by most accounts, the best.

§ 2. We walk over to a business-district restaurant. I'd made a reservation for two, under 'Gates'. I'm worried this might annoy Sires, but he just laughs and admits that it's something he's never tried himself. The hostess doesn't even blink when I drop the name. As she leads us to our table I imagine a few glances sent our way, but they're likely just that, my imagination. Sires assures me that he causes much more talk back in Seattle, where the real Gates is occasionally known to walk among the masses. "People have reported **spotting** Bill at Burger King or eating popcorn at a movie, Sires says. "I wonder how many times people see me and think "Why in the world would Bill Gates be shopping in a cheap supermarket?"

§ 3. When Sires moved to the Seattle area he had no idea why people kept stopping him on the street or asking him for stockmarket tips in the checkout line. "I didn't know who this Gates guy was," he says. "Turns out I lived 20 minutes from his house." Sires initially ignored the much-remarked-on resemblance. Then, his wife cut out a newspaper ad placed by a local agent who handles lookalikes. She'd called the agent. He got me a job at the grand opening of a performing arts centre. I did it for free. But my picture was picked up by Associated Press." Soon, Sires was travelling to events, his appearance fee running to several thousand dollars.

§ 4. So Steve Sires is famous. Actually, what he has is better than fame — it's celebrity, without any of the complications of actually being Bill Gates. "I've got a great deal," he admits. "I get a *little* attention. It's fun to get a little attention. But at the end of the day, I can always go home to my real life."

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When Steve first realised he looked like Bill Gates

- 1) he started selling stockmarket tips.
- 2) he immediately started making public appearances for money.
- 3) he didn't think it was particularly important.