

Faces In The News

Buffett Tries Vaudeville Act, Talks Dividends And Deals

Chris Noon, 05.02.05, 7:53 AM ET

Doers and doings in business, entertainment and technology:



Warren Buffett

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Musical purists may claim there's never a good time to play a ukulele, but **Warren Buffett** saw fit to pull out the good ol' four string at **Berkshire Hathaway's** (nyse: [BRK.a](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)) annual general meeting. And who could blame him-- Buffett was limbering up to parry six hours of questions from shareholders. After a Laurel-and-Hardy opening bit from Chairman Buffet about Vice Chairman **Charlie Munger** ("I'm Warren, he's Charlie. We work together. We really don't have any choice because he can hear and I can see."), it was down to serious business. Buffett said Berkshire's board would discuss the possibility of paying a dividend for the first time in the company's history, but only if the company couldn't find good investments for its cash. "At the moment we've got more money than brains, and we hope to do something about that," he quipped. Berkshire currently has about \$45 billion in cash but no major acquisitions in sight, Buffett added. The [world's second richest man](#) can look forward to sharing a boardroom with his friend, **Microsoft** (nasdaq: [MSFT](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)) Chairman **Bill Gates** -- the [world's richest man](#)-- after shareholders voted Gates onto the Berkshire board.

Berkshire's pretax earnings, to be announced on May 6, will be up about \$400 million for the first quarter compared with the same period last year. But because of a strong dollar, Berkshire will post a loss of about \$310 million in currency trading, said Buffett -- meaning investments will suffer about \$120 million in losses. Some of Buffett's investments include holdings in **Coca-Cola** (nyse: [KO](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)) and **American Express** (nyse: [AXP](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)). Buffett also faced questions about a U.S. federal investigation into a reinsurance transaction between insurance company **American International Group** (nyse: [AIG](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)) and Berkshire subsidiary General Re. AIG has acknowledged that its accounting for the transaction with General Re was "improper". Buffett himself is not a target in the probe, but stated his insurance companies provide reinsurance to several insurance companies. "They could be doing anything with the accounting," he said. [More...](#)