

Luzerne Music Center, Camp Chingachgook Pay Tribute to Philly Dake

By James H. Miller

Philly Dake, philanthropist and matriarch of the Stewart's Shop Corporation, who passed away earlier this year, was deeply committed to young people and the local institutions that enabled them to thrive, the Luzerne Music Center and Camp Chingachgook on Catskill Bay among them.

In memory of Dake on Thursday, July 19, students of the Luzerne Music Center played a special concert in the Rotary Lodge at Camp Chingachgook to a room full of campers. Both groups of children have in common Philly Dake as a benefactor, yet it was the first time they had ever been brought together.

"Knowing that we have one of the best music camps in the country just miles away from one of the best summer camps in the country, we thought they needed to get to know each other," said Perrin Dake, son of Philly Dake.

Mr. Dake has two daughters that currently attend Chingachgook. The family has a long legacy of doing so. To date, 19 members of the Dake family have passed summers at the historic camp, and the family, via individual and company contributions, has sustained

Chingachgook for decades. One of the most immediately recognizable results of those contributions is the camp's open-air verandah, called the Dake Verandah.

The music center has been equally strengthened by the generosity of the family. "Without Philly Dake, I don't know if the music center would still be there," said Elizabeth Pitcairn, CEO of the Luzerne Music Center.

Philly Dake was a strong supporter of the Music Center ever since the camp was founded in the 1980s. Her generosity has made it possible for low-income students to attend the camp on scholarships.

"She believed exposing children to music was good for society," Pitcairn said. "We are carrying on that tradition."

Three student ensembles from the Music Center performed Dvorak's String Quartet, also called the "American," Antonio Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Flutes, and the gallop from Jacques Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld," otherwise known as the can-can.

Prior to the concert, Pitcairn introduced the Chingachgook campers to her highly regarded 1720 Stradivarius violin, the so-called "red violin," which inspired the film of the same name, and is

valued at several million dollars.

"Camp Chingachgook has come a long way in its hundred years," said Billy Rankin, Camp Director. He noted that the "positive direction" the camp has moved in over the years is due to the support of alumni like the Dake family.

Following the concert, the children were treated to "Philly Vanilla," the Stewart's ice cream named after Philly Dake.

Philly Dake and her husband, Charles, ran Saratoga Dairy before it matured into the Stewarts Shop Corporation. Philly Dake played a leading role in the business for 50 years, at one point as Executive-Vice President. In 1947, she developed Stewart's Make Your Own Sundae service, which has helped make the business a colossal success.

Dake was instrumental in the establishment of the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and threw her financial support behind the Saratoga Hospital, Skidmore College, the Adirondack Girl Scout Council, and countless other organizations and charities.

"She set the bar pretty high," said Perrin Dake. "She and my father liked to give back and they liked to do it with a smile on their face."