

Robert William Lutt

Music Educator and Visionary

1929-2011

Bob Lutt, founder of Cazadero Performing Arts Camp and an internationally renowned music educator, passed away at his home on Wednesday, October 26, 2011 after an extended illness. He was 82. His beloved wife of 62 years, Beth, was at his side.

Born in a small Nebraska town in 1929, Bob's love of music was nurtured from an early age. He spoke often of his mother, an accomplished singer, who encouraged him to join the high school band. He chose trombone, but would later become proficient at many musical instruments.

In the fall of 1946, at the age of 15, Bob graduated from high school and entered Wayne State College. A precocious student, he was also the first person in his extended family to attend college. He chose three focuses of study - engineering, political science and music – but it was his love for music that would put into motion an extraordinary, six-decade career as an educator and visionary.

While at Wayne State, Bob met the lovely Beth Hart. They were married shortly after graduation. He was immediately hired by Oakland High School in Oakland, Nebraska just 15 miles from where he had grown up in Norfolk. He reformed the band and choral programs, going on to win several awards at the annual Nebraska all state music festivals. During his tenure, Bob was selected Nebraska High School Band Director of the Year.

During summer breaks, Bob studied for his master's degree in music and conducting from the University of Colorado. Upon completion of his degree in 1954, he responded to an ad for Director of Instrumental Music at Berkeley High School, competing against 300 other applicants for the coveted position. Berkeley was a far cry from his native Nebraska in nearly every aspect, but the search committee had someone specific in mind, a straightforward, experienced, dynamic educator who could raise the bar on Berkeley's already exemplary music program. Berkeley would become Bob and Beth's home for the next 57 years.

Bob's 20-year tenure at Berkeley High School precipitated extraordinary growth in the instrumental music program. During the "Lutt Era," as it was often referred, the young musicians under his baton participated in the Winter Olympic Games Opening Ceremony at Squaw Valley under the tutelage of Walt Disney, the World Expo in Seattle, the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, and were invited to perform for capacity crowds at Disneyland ten times. For fifteen consecutive years, the Berkeley High bands garnered superior ratings at the California Music Educator's annual festivals. Bob's marching band appeared annually at the University of California at Berkeley football games through the 60s representing the away team or guest teams. Bob was honored by the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce in 1961.

During these prolific years, Bob and Beth had an extraordinary moment of serendipity. In Bob's words, *"I asked the Berkeley High principal where my wife and I could go for the weekend affordably and he mentioned a small camp in the redwoods. When we got there, it nearly took my breath away. We loved the enormous redwoods and the creek. I had really enjoyed music camp in high school and since Berkeley didn't have such a thing, I asked if I could start one."*

The campsite was without electricity and had only one rustic rehearsal space and a handful of tent platforms. Owned by the City of Berkeley and operated by the Parks and Recreation Department, the bureaucracy alone would have sent a lesser man packing, but Bob was persistent and persuasive. Together with friends, students, the local Rotary and Lions club and the community at large, Bob began the arduous process of making the camp a viable summer destination for young musicians.

"In the summer of 1957 I took my band to Cazadero for the first time. It was an immediate success! I had friends in the San Francisco Symphony and although I couldn't pay them, I could provide the teachers and their families with a good time. Word travelled and more and more came to teach and coach. Then the Symphony changed their contract from nine months a year to twelve. So we hired teachers from everywhere -- they'd come for a week. We've had some very fine ones. In the first year, we had 65 campers. Eight years later, there were 800 kids coming to up to Caz each summer."

A summer session at Cazadero was remarkably different than most music camps. Bob, though an accomplished musician, never viewed the camp as a breeding ground for prodigies. Although many Cazadero campers went on to prestige and fame, Bob's philosophy was that the camp experience was as important as the music instruction. Particularly during the 60s and 70s, he took pride in maintaining, according to son, Bill, an "island of sanity in a sea of change." Within a few years of its opening, there were waitlists.

As the camp's reputation grew, so did its prominence on the political front. Beginning in the 70s and continuing into the new century, Cazadero consistently received the California State Legislator Award for Public Service.

In 1969 Bob was appointed director of the bands and lower brass at San Francisco State University. In collaboration with the San Francisco Foundation, he developed a program that would allow university music students to teach at Cazadero each summer for a salary and college credits, a fruitful marriage of two of Bob's passions.

Bob retired in 1984 after 35 years. A quiet life was not, however, in the cards. Bob came out of his 18-day retirement and began planning international youth music festivals. In 1984 he launched World Projects Corporation, an international music education events company. In 1985, the company organized the Pacific Basin Music Festival in Honolulu, Hawaii. Five hundred students participated in this first event and today, 25 years later, the festival hosts 1800 students annually. World Projects would quickly gain a reputation for large-scale performing opportunities: for the World Expo in Brisbane,

Australia, Bob and World Projects vetted over 600 bands worldwide and 4800 students were allowed to participate in the event. In 1990, Bob and World Projects launched the international music festival at the iconic Sydney Opera House, an event that now enjoys worldwide popularity; an average of 1400 students attending each year. His work with the New Zealand Band Directors Association had such a profound impact that an annual award was named for him: the Robert W. Lutt Award.

World Projects went on to anchor programs in Japan, Singapore, London, San Francisco, and New York City's Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. For the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Bob and World Projects assembled 2,000 international students for the opening ceremony marching band event in Olympic Stadium.

During his life Bob was honored numerous times. Bob was named to the board of directors for the august World Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles from 2000-2002. He was inducted into both the California Music Educators Hall of Fame (2009) and the American Music Educators Hall of Fame (2010). The same year, he was the recipient of the Jefferson Award in recognition of his outstanding service to his community.

He was a beloved presence at Cazadero every summer, conducting the concert bands with his inimitable style and sharing his memories with new and returning campers. A new amphitheater, named in honor of the Lutt Family, is now the crown jewel of the 46-acre campsite that is among his greatest legacies.

Bob had a remarkable memory for names and faces. In recent years he joined members of the Cazadero staff at public events and camp fairs, meeting former students again after decades. "Of all the students I've ever had, you're one of them!" was among his favorite sayings, but he *did* know them and it was clear that he had touched their lives indelibly.

Bob is survived by his wife and devoted partner, Beth; his sons William and Brian; his daughter Rebecca; four grandchildren, Sara Beth, Nanticha Amanda, Derek and Sachiko Beth; and tens of thousands of musicians worldwide, young and old, whose love of music was nurtured and inspired by him.

A celebration of Bob's life will be held November 26, 2011 at the Berkeley City Club at 1 PM. The family has asked that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Robert W. & Beth H. Lutt Cazadero Music Camp Endowment Fund. Details are available at www.cazadero.org.