

## Charles Billmyer makes our latest gift

OUR LATEST GIFT for the Heckewelder House endowment campaign was made by a long-time guarantor, Charles Billmyer. Through his generous support, the main office area was underwritten.

Charles grew up in Allentown, PA. His family has a long history with The Choir. He remembers his father telling him that his grandmother, a church organist, was an acquaintance of J. Fred Wolle. She would take the train from Shepherdstown, WV to visit Charles's family and attend the Bach Festival. Charles studied piano as a child and can remember dutifully practicing Bach's inventions.

It was when he started choral singing that he truly began to appreciate Bach's music. As a graduate student in electrical engineering at the University of Rhode Island, Charles wrote to the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce about tickets to the Festival. The Chamber forwarded the letter to Dr. Ifor Jones, who personally responded to Charles and told him about student-priced tickets. Charles donated the handwritten letter from Dr. Jones to our archives a few years ago.

Charles and his wife Elizabeth began to attend Festival in 1953 and missed very few of these annual events until his wife became seriously ill in 2001. They were active "ambassadors" for The Choir, inviting friends and family to Festival each year. Their Festival group was known to go up to the top of the mountain to sing Bach Chorales during the intermission of the Mass in B Minor. Charles and Elizabeth became guarantors in 1981.

In addition to the Heckewelder House endowment gift, Charles made a gift for the endowment of the second cello in memory of his wife Elizabeth.

When asked about his long-term support and commitment for The Choir, Charles said, "It has been interesting to see the evolution of The Choir from the grand English style to the present day. The Choir is impressive. Heckewelder House is an ideal setting for The Choir's office. I am happy to have been able to support The Choir in such meaningful ways."

Charles is a wonderful supporter and advocate. His generosity helps ensure that future generations will enjoy The Bach Choir.

