

Being in the Glee Club was a critical part of my education at St. Albans. I well remember my first exposure to Mr. Dirksen -- my first Glee Club practice. I was very nervous at the prospect of having to sing in front of others -- especially the NCS students. I think I had to sing a few notes of a familiar song so that he could put me in the tenor section. He described singing as a physical exercise and that put me somewhat at ease. Not like the football field, but not all that different.

My memories of singing in the cathedral are vivid still. For some great occasion, the Glee Club was singing from the balcony of the North Transept. Mr. Dirksen watched Mr. Calloway conducting in the Crossing and masterfully anticipated the beat so that our contribution would arrive down there in sync with the rest of the chorus. I can still smell the scores that were reproduced like blueprints.

The operettas were another peak STA experience. I was perfectly happy to stand in the back and sing chorus. Before the opening of *Houseboat*, he warned us to pay special attention at the end of the calypso song. The crowd loved it and sure enough, he had us sing an immediate encore. What fun. My last year, Mr. Dirksen decided I could handle one line and cast me as the executioner in *The Rose and the Ring*. In the final rehearsal, I delivered my five words. "Louder, he said." Again, "Louder!!" After my third try, he leapt from the piano bench up to the stage in a single bound and delivered the line as he wanted it done. After the lights stopped rattling, I got the message.

My brother Kirk, STA '56, was also deeply affected by his time with Mr. Dirksen. He became a lifelong lover and performer of choral music. Kirk sang in *The Flamingo Hat*, which may be the most beautiful of the operettas.

I am eternally grateful for the times I spent learning from and singing with Wayne Dirksen.

Chris White
STA '63