

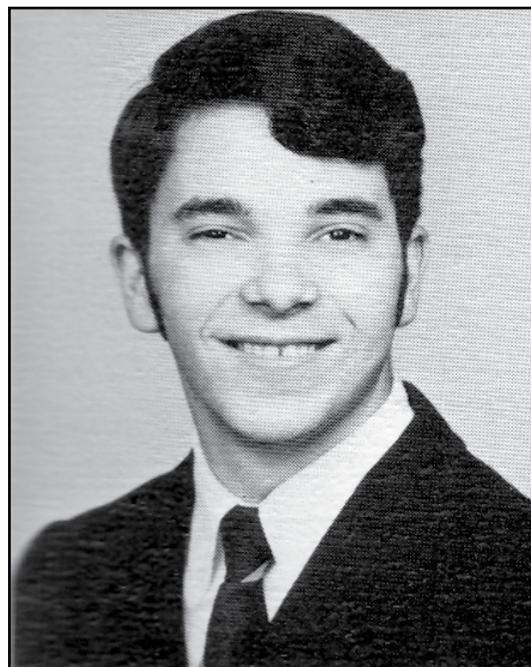
Memories of St. Joe's

By Peter Apicella
1A Amoebas

Let me start by saying most of my memories today are ones that make me smile. Of course when you end up in Bro. Swallow's office your first day after a brief fight in the cafeteria (hell it was his fault.... lol), but then we were both let off the hook promising not to be back anytime in the next four years, It was a good day after all! Day two has always been memorable as well. I'm sitting in the window seat on the bus to take us back to Willowick, via East-lake North, and all of a sudden Bro. Aaron approaches me at my bus window. How could he know about my day one is all I could think. So he beckons me to lower the window, and next came a big surprise. He asked my name and once I answered, he reached up, shook my hand saying so nice to meet you Peter Apicella; I'm Brother Aaron. He then turned and walked away. Wow! What else was in store for me?

My life at St. Joe's changed quickly after getting my freshman football uniform and running out on the practice field, Coach Bill Gutbrod hollers for me to come over to him. What now? He says Pete, does your Mom know you're out for football. I said sure coach! He smiled a bit wryly and said great, bring me a note from her tomorrow. No note was to come as I had torn up my knee earlier that spring playing baseball. I knew Coach Gutbrod as my family moved onto East 293rd for my 5th grade and the Gutbrod family lived across the street. My brother Rick (class of 71) and I even helped the Gutbrod family move into their new home on the lake, but it still wasn't getting me on the Viking football field.

As I learned many years ago when a door closes another opens if you're willing to look. So my Mom suggested strongly that I audition for the Viking Chorale as I loved singing since football was out. I'm so glad I did as the guys I sung with became a team under our Instructor, Director and Coach, Tom Weiss. Many of us still gather at the Trout Club, thanks to Gaetano (Tom) Montagna yearly to commiserate, eat great food including the trout



pate and more, drink wine and even sing a bit. With the Glee Club, we recorded an album at Cleveland Recording junior year, and in one take! We sold the album to raise money to travel to sing in Pittsburgh. Bob Somrak, Bob Vargo, Vic Gattozzi and I were shocked when we were checked in to a huge suite!

I also can never forget singing with the Glee club at Browns Stadium on Thanksgiving in the snow. We got closer to the guys in the marching band as a result of the times we sang to their freakin' great music! Who can forget seeing the football field filled from sideline to sideline with the SJHS Marching Band? And the Glee club was no small number either. There is a great photo with us all in our yearbook of Tom Weiss out in front of over 100 guys arranged on the stage of the Purple Palace.

I was also opened up to the idea of participating in our school musicals providing even more open doors to new opportunities and meeting guys from all the SJHS classes plus gals from schools all over NE Ohio. I was so fortunate junior year to be selected as the understudy to senior Bob Tabernik, but due to a loss of his voice, I was informed early on a Friday morning with the news that I was to play the part of Billy Bigelow that evening in our musical Carousel. Thanks to the cast and crew especially Fran Soeder, assistant director to Bro's Dwyer, I did it successfully and remember it today like it was yesterday! The following week, I informed my parents I was hosting a cast party at the house. I remember being the last one to get there and they ran out of sloppy joes and virtually everything else. Guys & gals filled up the house from bottom to top. In fact, I couldn't even get into my bedroom because there must have been 30 or more people on the floor doing a seance in the dark with a couple of candles. My father had a blast with the house full of St. Joe's guys and gals from their schools plus a few faculty. He told me the next day he counted 300 attendees!

And don't forget the Mixers. My first experience with a St. Joe's Mixer was in August prior to freshman year. I got all dressed up and went with my sister Mary, VA Class of '68 and a couple of her friends. Whoa; I couldn't believe how crowded a gym could get even in the hot summer! We saw and listened to some great music during our time at St. Joe's including the Sensations, Bocky & the Vision, the OJ's, the Choir, Brooklyn Bridge and many more. St. Joe's was the place for music and the mixers attracted gals from all over NE Ohio. And because these events were so popular and welcomed by so many, 10 years ago when prompted by then VASJ president, Brian Menard, and in "concert with my friend Vic Gattozzi we named that first annual VASJ big friend/fund raiser the "Classic Mixer" which went on to become "Continue the Dream."

Ok, so what about my education at St. Joe's. I had some amazing teachers including Tom Weiss, Eddie Esch, Jerome Lennon, Roger Lancaster, John Storey, John Dempsey, Mike O' Grady, Chuck Wa-

lukas, John Tigue, Michael Bacha, Tom Corrigan, Joe Radigan and more. I was challenged by all and appreciated being accepted for who I was with few exceptions. One last note. In fact, I even had the opportunity to recount this experience with him Sunday night this week. Father Ken Templin, AKA Brother Ken, was my advisor and at some point, I was in his office. I asked then Bro. Ken to draft a letter to my Mom saying I was doing the absolute best I could do hoping I would get a break from her on the studying front. I'm sure you all know the answer. "She won't believe a word of this" was Bro. Ken's reply. Enough said!

Ok.... One more thing. I loved my time at St. Joe's. I love it even more today as I get to meet, interact with and support the great students who are part of our legacy.