

The Class of 1984 Selects...

William K. Parker, Ph. D. (Class of 1961)



Parker saw his first opera when he was a 17-year-old AFS exchange student in West Germany. The experience changed his life. Returning to the United States, he entered Princeton University where he earned a degree in Germanic languages and literature. He was a college senior before he took his first voice lesson.

The New York City Opera baritone won major singing competitions in France, Germany, and Canada, but the turning point in his career came in 1980 when he won first prize in the Kennedy Center- Rockefeller Foundation International Competition for Excellence in the Performance of American Music. Parker was honored by the Butler Rotary Club and the Butler Symphony Association as a "native son." He wore the medal he received on a ribbon around his neck during concert performances. Best known for his comedy roles in opera, Parker performed with major European and American opera companies, including

Pittsburgh Opera.

He died of AIDS in 1993 at the age of 49. Parker spent the last years of his life working on a project he called the AIDS Quilt Songbook to benefit a New York housing organization for homeless AIDS victims.