

White Bear Lake WWII veteran, and chorus singer, celebrates 100

Bill Kruschel, an active member of Stillwater's Croix Chordsmen, marked his birthday with laughter and song. (Original Article by Talia McWright - St. Paul Pioneer Press 3/9/2025)

The Chordsmen Chorus threw Bill a surprise party after rehearsal at Charlie's Restaurant and Irish Pub with balloons, cake and an award that read "Certified Oldie."

"He can banter with the best of you," friend Cliff Turnbull said. "You say, 'Hi Bill, it's good to see you,' and he says, 'Yeah it's good to be seen.'"

Turnbull described Kruschel as funny, lively and talented. He said Kruschel even rides an electric three-wheel tricycle around his neighborhood in White Bear Lake, despite having impaired vision and being hard of hearing. How he does it, Turnbull said, he'll never know.

Music has always been a large part of Kruschel's life, he said, though he has never known how to read it. In 1933, Kruschel's family moved to a farm after his father passed away. In the attic of the farm, Kruschel said he found an old accordion. "And that was the beginning of it all," Kruschel said.

He also remembers the first time he soloed, he said. It was a cold day in St. Paul in 1950 and the other choir members did not show up to church, but the organist and Kruschel didn't let that stop them. Instead, they performed for the little audience they had.

Last year, Kruschel sang Bing Crosby's "Dear Hearts and Gentle People" at a conference in Minneapolis with Croix Chordsmen director Jay Althof's quartet.

"Bill Kruschel has one of the best voices I've ever listened to," Turnbull said.

Kruschel and Turnbull are both leads in the chorus and sing the melody. The chorus uses sheet music, but as Kruschel cannot read it, he often listens to the group's learning tracks using his hearing aids. Though some days, the tracks are hard to listen to and Turnbull will often stand next to Kruschel and sing in his ear.

Kruschel said he appreciates the group because they each value the tradition of the music and they're just "a bunch of guys that really enjoy singing and competing with one another to sound better."

"Enjoy people and keep smiling," Kruschel said. "Anybody can look growly. My big thing in life was to stay as far away from negative people as I ever could."



CROIX CHORDSMEN CHORUS Summer Public Events

Veterans Memorial Day Service

Monday, May 26, 2025 - 11:30am | Stillwater, MN



All Chapter Sing-Out - Como Park Pavillion

Tuesday, August 12, 2025 - 5:00pm | St. Paul, MN



FOLLOW THE CHORUS HERE FOR ADDED EVENTS www.croixchordsmen.org

An advertisement for The Laundry Room Laundromat. The background shows several rows of modern, stainless steel front-loading washing machines. Overlaid text includes the address "402 N Main Street River Falls, WI", the business name "THE LAUNDRY ROOM RIVER FALLS Laundromat", and a promotional message: "Our BRAND NEW machines take coin or credit card."