

MSC Vets Club

Much of this column comes from personal recollections as a student and employee of Moorhead State College (MSC), now Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) In the late 1960s as many returning Vietnam Veterans were enrolling in college, campus Vets Clubs were formed. The same happened at MSC about 1969 when a group of Vietnam Veterans started meeting informally. The group called themselves the MSC Vets Club and was later recognized as a campus affiliated organization. The group met once per month during the academic year on Thursday evening. The MSC Vets Club has an interesting history, both good and not so good. First, the good. The club informally helped returning Vietnam Veterans get back into civilian life, start college and was a sound board for complaints and concerns with the college, the VA and the negative treatment by society. Vietnam Veterans were not welcome back in the same positive manner as Veterans from WWII. The treatment of returning Vietnam Veterans was due to many events. It was the longest war to date for the country, it became increasingly unpopular with the citizens and there was a very strong anti-war movement in the country. Compounding the situation was the fact that the Veterans were often returning singly not as a unit or group. Veterans organizations such as the American Legion and VFW did not welcome them as members. The GI Bill used by many WWII Veterans wasn't established for Vietnam Veterans until 1966. Campus Veterans were 3 or 4 years older than their counterparts and had war experiences. Given all of these issues, Vets Clubs were extremely helpful to our returning Veterans. MSC Vets Club members would help other Veterans in choosing classes because the older members knew which faculty members were accepting of Veterans in their classes; not all were.

Now for some stories. During a peace rally one Saturday morning, the plan was to take down the American flag at the main gate. Vets Club members were at Mick's Office and heard about it, decided to go to campus and protect the flag. The group of about a dozen surrounded the flag pole and dared anyone to take it down. The Vets Club also had some problem with meeting locations. At one time, they met at the Newman Center but were asked to leave when the Priest found a member and his girlfriend making out in the sanctuary. Sunset Lanes was home for a time but the meetings were followed by drinking and the Club was asked to find a new location. Finally, the American Legion offered the Club the basement of their building where the Club found a home. To say the Club liked to drink is an understatement. Once a month the Club would hold a 'kegger' on Saturday evening for anyone wanting to attend. It was a money maker. However, the Club would hold a practice 'kegger' on Friday evening. The Vets Club were intensely loyal to its members and did a great service for those returning from the war. The Club changed its by-laws for an international student who had served in the Norwegian Navy, allowing him to be a member.