

1960s



Dr. Harry F. Bangsberg and family before his 1967 trip to South Vietnam.

Promising Presidency Cut Short



March 24, 1967, edition.

The 1967 death of President Harry Bangsberg was made more devastating by his youthful enthusiasm as successor to Dr. Charles Sattgast, whose own death ended his 26-year presidency. The way Dr. Bangsberg died also was tragic — in a plane crash with seven other educators on a U.S.-sponsored trip to assess higher education in South Vietnam. A child of Wisconsin and infantry vet, he saw education as a path to social change. His first building project was the A.C. Clark Library, completed in 1966.

A New Focus on American Indians

Discussion of Bemidji's indigenous history and how to serve students from surrounding tribal nations coincided with the American Indian political movement of the late 1960s. In 1969, Bemidji State launched the first collegiate Ojibwe language program and a degree in Indian Studies. The next year, the Anishinabe Family Center opened on campus, and native students formed the Amerind Club, which became the Council of Indian Students. Momentum led to completion of the American Indian Resource Center in 2003.



American Indian artifacts, 1960s.



Protest over interim BSC presidency, 1967.

Faculty and Students Rise in Protest



Vietnam protest at Bemidji City Hall, 1969.

In a year rocked by the 1968 assassinations of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, faculty and students in 1968 began to publicly oppose America's war in Vietnam. Protest, always peaceful, came in classroom digressions and at campus forums. In 1969, marchers in black armbands strode downtown and engaged in public dialogue with Bemidji's city manager. In 1967, students had also protested delay in appointment of a president to succeed Dr. Bangsberg.



Pine Hall lounge, 1960s.

