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.

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.

Promising Presidency Cut Short