

Cornerstone

MORRIS FREE SCOUTS Nick Ripperger.

A historical look at highlights of UMM

Remembering the "Morris Free Scouts"

Cornerstone received replies from a Free Scout "adoptee," current UMM history associate professor, Roland Guyotte, and a former Free Scout, Nick Ripperger, '72:

Roland : "Here are some random recollections. The MFS probably dates from about 1970. It was originally a prospective chapter of a national fraternity. Jim Ramsay and Bob Sater were among the originators. I think Tom McRoberts was faculty adviser then, before going off to Oregon to graduate school. Members gathered socially, had club traditions, and intramural athletic teams. ...members tended to be politically liberal and joined (along with many other UMM students) in protests against the Vietnam War. Some were active in community service while at UMM, and several went on to careers as social workers, teachers, community organizers, and employees of local government...

"...some retained an attachment to the 1960s "counterculture": the MFS especially liked the music of The Doors...a few found spouses through the MFS...Certainly many have remained lifelong friends and gather informally from time to time..."

Nick : "The Morris Free Scouts was a combination of spontaneous organization and unplanned obsolescence. In the spring of 1969, Phi Sigma Epsilon placed an ad in the Vanguard, the UMM student newspaper at that time, announcing that it wanted to start a "colony" on the Morris campus. After a couple of meetings with representatives from St. Cloud State, Gay Hall residents of 2A formed the colony, consisting of original members Jim Ramsay, Bob Sater, Rod Labatt, Les Buesgens, Robb Morin, Ron Bell, Greg Banken, Don Gilmore, Al Colliander, Jim Shekleton, Jim Moore, and Steve Boese. In the fall of 1969, the fraternity house was established at 109 W Seventh St. The Phi Sigs quickly became an unconventional fraternity, however, and when they insisted that women be allowed as members, the national organization disavowed them. As a result, they had to disassociate themselves from the national and change their name. Jim Shekleton came up with the name, "Free Scouts," which was readily accepted over the contender "The Party Boys." Sue Stumm and Barb Schmidt became the first two female members of the "frarority." Faculty members Roland Guyotte and Tom McRoberts also were adopted.

During that time, "Touch Me" by the Doors became the anthem of the Free Scouts. Because of the loose requirements for becoming a member, eventually a number of students, male and female, associated with the group. Individually they tended to be

politically active, and in 1972, about half of the students on the campus assembly were Free Scouts. As the core group graduated, and the secondary and tertiary groups followed over the next few years, the Free Scout presence at UMM faded. By the mid to late 1970s, their presence on campus was gone.

Friendships continued, however, and in the mid 1970s, gathering at the Rand Bar in St. Paul became the annual reunion of the Free Scouts. Life after college, as it was during college, was treated somewhat irreverently, and a number of "accomplishment" awards were given out, including the Nowhere Man, the Capitalist of the Year, and the Sieve of the Year. Basically, Sieves were those who let opportunities slip through their hands or did something extraordinarily stupid during the year. Usually, there was no lack of candidates. (Editor's note: Rumor has it that Ripperger is currently in possession of the Sieve Award.) Over 25 years have passed, but Free Scouts still get together on occasion to recall old times and to dance to 'Touch Me.' "