

3. PRE-VIETNAM WAR PERIOD

- 1956** Marquette U. 75th anniversary. U.S. Military Assistance Advisor Group (MAAG) began training South Vietnam forces.
- FALL 1956** MU Enrollment: 10,000+. Original GI Bill expired.
- NOV 1956** President Eisenhower won re-election in a landslide, again defeating Adlai Stevenson and serving 1957 – 1961.
- 1958** MU NROTC was one of 23 schools chosen for the Naval Enlisted Scientific Education Program (NESEP). Initial NESEP 1956 training was at Bainbridge, MD and Purdue; and in 1957 at San Diego plus Washington. Navy NESEP students attended classes continuously through summer; Marine NESEPs spent summers at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, VA after their third year. The program allowed for 18 majors in engineering, science and math.

NESEP was integrated with NROTC at MU from 1958 until the mid-1970s. The purpose was to increase retention of experienced enlisted trainees by providing them with college degrees and officer status. NESEP achieved a very low attrition rate of 10% or less.

A Navy study showed that between 1950 and 1954, MU NROTC commissioned 108 ensigns, of whom 17 remained on duty in 1957; and 27 Marine 2nd Lieutenants, of whom 12 remained on duty. The overall MU retention rate of 21.5% was just above the national average; the MU Marine rate of 44.4% was outstanding.

A similar 1960 study showed the rate of college disenrollment for NROTC students was parallel to the civilian rate, about 30%. This was due mainly to poor grades, not Navy issues.

The Navy felt 30% disenrollment was too high. Standards were raised and counseling began. Penalties had been light in cases where “regulars” took advantage of navy funding, then dropped out of NROTC.

MU’s strong science and engineering programs help prepare NROTC students for emerging jet aviation and nuclear-powered ships, both requiring extensive post-commissioning training.



Alumnus J. Forrest George Trembley has his naval aviator wings adjusted by his wife Beverly. Trembley was later shot down and listed as MIA over North Vietnam.

SUMMER 1958

Capt. Joseph M. McDowell, USN took command of MU NROTC, serving until 1960.



Capt. McDowell

SPRING 1959

Navy census showed MU NROTC had 215 Midshipmen enrolled.

SUMMER 1960

Col. Edward G. Kurdziel, USMC, a charismatic leader, took command of the MU NROTC Unit. A Georgetown graduate, Kurdziel saw extensive action in the WWII Pacific Campaign and Korean War. In 1963 he was transferred from MU to Camp Pendleton, CA and then Washington D.C.



Col. Kurdziel

Kurdziel retired and returned to MU as civilian Dean of Students. He then became Director of Personnel, eventually serving MU for 27 years. His MU NROTC experience helped quell student protests in the late 1960s.

FALL 1960

MU Enrollment: 11,000+. Varsity football (and track) were losing money due to low attendance and losing records; both were dropped by Fr. O'Donnell. Protests against this were small, brief and futile.

Navy Enlisted Nursing Education Program (NENEP) gave College of Nursing students NROTC equivalence; graduates were commissioned as Navy Nurses until the late 1970s, when women were admitted to NROTC programs.



Col. Kurdziel and Sister Mary Thomas congratulate the first five women to graduate from the NENEP program at Marquette.

NOV 1960

Senator John F. Kennedy (D-Mass) defeated Richard Nixon and was elected U.S. President. He took office 20 January 1961.



1960 JFK campaigning in the old Marquette gym.



Marquette University
campus in 1960 before
major campus expansion

22 OCT 1961

Berlin Wall: Communist German Democratic Republic (GDR) began erecting the “Berlin Wall” to prevent passage between East and West Berlin. The wall remained in place for 28 years and came to symbolize the Cold War. Restricted travel ended on 9 November 1989, and the reunification of Berlin took place on 3 October 1990.

1962

Fr. William F. Kelley, S.J., replaced Fr. Edward J. O’Donnell, S.J., as MU President, serving until 1965.

FALL 1962

MU Enrollment: 12,000+ (four times the 1943 enrollment.)

SPRING 1962

Nanka Castulik (NROTC office worker) was the first woman enrolled in an NROTC class, Navigation 132. She earned good grades. Co-eds formed "Navy Belles" to support NROTC Anchor & Chain and sports events.

NROTC Anchor & Chain Glee Club, directed by senior Lynn Foell, came in second in the MU Varsity Varieties, closing with the rousing Navy and Marine Corps hymns.

22 OCT 1962

Cuban Missile Crisis: President Kennedy announced a naval blockade of Cuba effective 21 October, due to construction of Soviet missile bases in Cuba. On October 28 Soviet Premier Khrushchev backed down and withdrew his fleet of ships en route to Cuba.

This crisis sent ripples of uncertainty through the ranks of MU NROTC students, who imagined being activated if war broke out.

MAY 1963

NROTC graduating class sent seven ensigns to 24-week Nuclear Propulsion School, Bainbridge, MD.

SUMMER 1963

Capt. Bernard A. Theilges, USN arrived to command MU NROTC, serving until 1967.



Capt. Theilges

11 NOV 1963

President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, TX; VP Lyndon B. Johnson became U.S. President.

1964

MU NROTC 25th Anniversary.

U.S. Vietnam involvement gradually grew, accelerating in 1964. Progress was slow and depressing despite heavy enemy casualties. Later, endless Chinese manpower joined the Viet Cong. Shocking incidents were reported. President Johnson's "Domino Theory" (if one Asian country falls to Communism, they all fall) lost its validity. U.S. operations in and from neighboring Laos and Cambodia drew criticism.

EARLY 1964

NROTC Vitalization Act of 1964 signaled that NROTC was more than a reserve program: 80% of men in the program went into the regular Navy while 20% went into the Naval Reserve.

U.S. post-WWII military grand strategy shifted from “rapid mobilization” to “deterrence.” The shift brought an increased need for regular officers versus reservists. NROTC’s Holloway Plan accomplished that goal (retention rose to 38%), but Army and Air Force unpaid ROTC programs fell short of quotas.

At this time it cost the Navy \$36,000 to train an Annapolis graduate, but only \$9,000 to train an NROTC graduate.

Department of Defense launched an ROTC Bill in Congress, with pay and scholarships for all services patterned on NROTC. At first it was sidelined by the Civil Rights Bill. Then it passed the House as H.R. 9124 on 23 June 1964, and the Senate (amended) on 28 September.

SUMMER 1964

Association of NROTC Colleges (ANC) 19th annual session met at MU. A total of 140 officers from 53 NROTC universities attended. MU NROTC students served as guides and aides.

During this session the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred: North Vietnam attacked destroyer U.S.S. Maddox. Three North Vietnamese torpedo boats advanced on Maddox; U.S. warning shots were ignored. Four N. Vietnamese were killed and six were wounded. All vessels were damaged but there were no U.S. casualties.

Previously, President Kennedy had begun reducing U.S. training troops in South Vietnam. The Gulf of Tonkin incident was used to justify President Johnson in sending combat troops to South Vietnam, and led to escalating hostilities.