

Historical Perspective of Veterans Memorial Park - 2009

The Veterans Memorial Park concept came into being some 3-4 years ago from a letter to the Editor asking why Rolla did not have a Veterans Memorial Park. This was brought up at a KWVA meeting, by the then Commander - Les Burris' wife (Marge), and we agreed there should be a park honoring our veterans. At that meeting, the KWVA members nominated Councilman Stan Spadoni, in absentia, to be our Council spokesman. They selected Harrison Meaux as spokesperson and I accepted.

After the meeting, I called Mayor Jenks and floated the proposal for a park and he agreed. He referred me to City Administrator John Butz and he agreed and has been working with me since day one. When I called Stan Spadoni to inform him he was nominated in absentia by the KWVA. He too was for the park and asked me to inform the Mayor & City Adm. that he would be our Representative on the Council, which I did. Stan did a lot of work on the resolution for the proposed park and the Memorial Day presentation at the Lions Club Drive site. He continues to work on our behalf as Councilman.

We all know the previous site had many problems, e.g. access that would be 20 years down the road, etc. This problem was brought to the City Council and Councilman Lou Magdits proposed the present site, which was shovel ready and accessible. The Rolla Veterans Organizations accepted the site. Like the previous site, there was no money in the City budget for creation of the park. We, the veterans, would have to promote and plan methods to raise the money and it was agreed upon.

The first meeting of the Veterans Memorial Park Committee, July 2007, was with the Commanders of all the Veterans Organizations in the Rolla area. We met at the VFW - Post 2025 Hall and discussed the proposal for a Veterans Memorial Park that would be for all veterans and not a Korean War Veterans Park. We needed to elect a Chairman to speak for all the Veterans Organizations. Since I belonged to the KWVA, and the KWVA was the spearhead of this project, I did not wish to be chairman by selection but only by election. I was elected by the Veterans Organizations and have been working in that capacity since then.

As Chair of the Veterans Memorial Park Committee and interim Chair of the South Central Region Veterans Group (SCRVG), I represent all the Veterans Organizations. I have consistently made it clear that the park is not a Korean War Park, but a park for all Veterans. I have been working closely with the City Administrator, City Engineer and Park Director during the past 3-4 years regarding the park development. I shall strive to continue this support for our park until such time that the Committee desires a different chair. We are pleased that several local groups and businesses are helping and encourage them to solicit others who may wish to provide expertise or assistance.

The SCRVG is open to any service club, group, organization, school, or government entity with an interest in promoting the Veterans Memorial Park. The SCRVG will include the following counties; Crawford, Dent, Howell, Laclede, Maries, Oregon, Phelps, Pulaski, Shannon, Texas. Anyone wishing to create or contribute memorials or monuments to the park please contact us or visit our website, scrvg.org. If you wish to give a monetary or materials donation you may do so, through our local Veterans Organizations with 501c designations, and receive a charitable tax receipt.

Sincerely, Harrison 'Papa' Meaux.
kjun@fidnet.com tel. #573-364-5247