

Tim Visk

Class of 1977

When Tim Visk started at Morton College, the memory system on a computer resembled the Wright Brothers' first flying machine.

Fast forward 35 years and computers today at Morton College have a 4-gigabyte memory or about 40 times greater than back in 1977.

"How times have changed," noted Visk, who handled all the non-network areas in information technology (IT) like registration, payroll and finance in his role as the College's Coordinator of Administrative Computing.

Visk fondly recalls how the proverbial "putting the cart before the horse" was the best move when it came to installing the College's computer mainframe equipment.

"There wasn't a freight elevator, so they used a crane to deliver the equipment to the Data Center on the second floor," said Visk, who retired in June of 2012 after 35 years at Morton College. "After that, the windows were installed. It was kind of unique."

When it comes to computer history, Visk is unique, too. He accumulated a Smithsonian-like data base of knowledge.

"I'd be struggling with something for days and then I'd finally ask Tim," said Richie Pawlak, a computer programmer at Morton College, co-worker with Visk for 28 years and fellow die-hard White Sox fan. "He had the solution in minutes, especially when it came to programming questions."

Visk holds a special place in Morton College's lore. He was part of the first class when the new Morton College campus opened at its current location at 38th Street and Central Avenue in 1975. Visk went on to earn his Associate in Science degree in Data Processing.

"I really didn't have a career path when I started at Morton College," Visk said. "I chose to stay here as long as I liked it."

Visk, who never had more than a 10-minute commute to Morton, liked it enough that he stayed to work for nine College Presidents. He was part of five major software migrations and served as a committee member on numerous search committees, including several Presidential searches.

The native of Stickney organized the Morton College Athletic Association's golf outing for the past 25 years. The outing, which raises money for athletic scholarships, is a year-around task with securing a site, negotiating costs, getting prize donations, finding volunteers, organizing foursomes and all the other details associated with an event.

While Visk picked up the handle, “Voice of the Panthers,” for his work as the public-address announcer at home basketball games, the graduate of Morton West High School carefully used his voice in the capacity as President of Morton College’s Classified Union, Local 1600.

He quietly went around building coalitions and proceeded in a patient, steady manner necessary in contract negotiations, which often are complex, lengthy and a give-and-take processes. Protecting workers’ rights was his main objective. HH His long-range concerns are the same of any union person with pensions and health care costs at the forefront.

When Visk led, others followed. At an employee recognition ceremony, Visk started the well-deserved standing ovation for Alyce Vujtech, the matriarch of the Business Office who was being honored for her 40 years at Morton College.

“Tim is a consensus builder,” noted Perry Buckley, former President of the Cook County College Teachers Union, Local 1600. “He has that rare ability to bring people together who are at the opposite sides of an issue. He accomplishes this in many ways, but his two most important traits are his honesty and openness.”

When Visk started at Morton College, the Classified Staff was not part of a union.

“It’s a good story,” says Visk in a soft voice describing how the Classified Staff Union came to be at Morton College in the early 1990s. “SEIU (Service Employees International Union) came into to organize. The vote went against. A year later, the CCCTU (Cook County College Teachers Union) contacted us to join the faculty here.

“It was an easier sell to the staff. A vote was taken and it was successful. We gained a lot of the rights the faculty had. We share common issues to unite with. Why do it singularly? Let’s do it together.”

Buckley called Visk a very effective and hard-working chapter chair.

“His greatest gift to Morton and to Local 1600 was finding future leaders while building up a very strong and impressive team,” Buckley said. “Tim has brought on an executive team and recruited new members who now are in a position to take over when he steps down. Tim did what far too many Union leaders fail to do: He recruited his replacements.

“I would also like to add, on a personal note, that Tim is what we South Side Sox fans would call ‘a good guy.’ He is far more than a colleague; he is a friend.”

In retirement, Visk plans to finish remodeling his home’s basement. It’s a project he has been working for the past 15 years. He’ll still have a hand in the MCAA golf outing, an event Visk is proud to have raised \$250,000 for student-athletes at Morton College. He’s also become vice president of the Morton College Foundation.

“One of my goals was to get new blood for the union,” Visk said. “Everybody can’t be doing the same thing all the time. It was time to install some new members. It’s your union – get involved.”

