

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
BERNARD F. MICKE
Medical Service Officer, Army, Vietnam War.

2003

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Micke, Bernard F. (b.1944). Oral History Interview, 2003.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Micke, an Appleton, Wis. native, discusses his Vietnam War service as the administrative officer at the 9th Infantry Division hospital. He talks about participating in ROTC for four years at St. Norbert's College, medical training at Fort Sam Houston (Texas), and duty "in the middle of nowhere." Micke touches upon service in the Motor Pool, providing medical treatment for Vietnamese people, and visiting other military hospitals in the Delta country. He comments on the types of people who served in military hospitals and the increase in patients after the Tet Offensive. Serving aboard an LST (Landing Ship Tank) for his final month in Vietnam, he touches upon seeing his first casualties, stabilizing the wounded aboard ship, and then evacuation by helicopter. Micke mentions two rest and relaxation trips in Hong Kong and Tokyo, first impressions of Saigon, and his feelings that the United States should not be involved in Vietnam. He describes performing routine physicals for reservists at Fort Sheridan (Illinois), participating in anti-war demonstrations in Washington D.C., and his feelings that the draft made the Army representative of the American people.

Biographical Sketch:

Bernard Micke was born in Appleton Wisconsin and grew up in Dundas, Wisconsin. He served with the 9th Medical Battalion, 9th Infantry Division during the Vietnam War. Micke earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Wisconsin and completed his residency at Hennepin County Medical Center, Minneapolis. Dr. Micke is a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and resides in Madison, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, 2002.

Abstract written by Abigail Miller, 2002.

Transcription edited by Christina M. Ballard, 2008.

Transcribed Interview:

Jim: -- 2003, and I'm interviewing Dr. Bernard Micke in Madison, Wisconsin. And my name is Jim Kurtz. Dr. Micke, where and when were you born?

Micke: I was born in Appleton, Wisconsin, on July 2, '44.

Jim: And did you grow up in Appleton, Wisconsin?

Micke: Well, I grew up on a small farm in a little burg called Dundas, Wisconsin.

Jim: What was that? Can you spell it please?

Micke: D-u-n-d-a-s. It's actually in the northern part of Calumet County, about 12 miles east of Appleton.

Jim: Okay. And did you go to high school in that area?

Micke: Yeah. Well, I went to – actually, our grade school, our Catholic grade school, had two years of high school, and we were the last group to be involved with that. And then in the last two years of high school I went to Abbot Penning's in De Pere.

Jim: Okay. And what year did you graduate from high school?

Micke: '62.

Jim: Okay, what did you do after high school?

Micke: Went to college at St. Norbert College.

Jim: St. Norbert College. And was that from the fall of '62 to 1966 or thereabouts?

Micke: Yeah.

Jim: And did you graduate?

Micke: Yes.

Jim: And what did you major in?

Micke: In psychology.

Jim: Psychology. And what was your intention of doing with your psychology degree?

Micke: Well, I started grad school – I went to grad school that fall, and –

Jim: Fall of '66?

Micke: Right. In Ames, Iowa, in Iowa state. But I just realized that that wasn't what I wanted to do. And I had been in the ROTC at St. Norbert, so that's how I got into the military. So once I no longer had the school deferment, then I got orders to go on active duty.

Jim: So did you complete the four years of ROTC at St. Norbert?

Micke: Yes.

Jim: So you had – What kind of an obligation did you have, coming out of that?

Micke: Two years.

Jim: Two years. And what branch of service were you –

Micke: Medical Service.

Jim: Medical Service Corps. So when did you get your orders to go to Vietnam? Excuse me, when did you get your orders to go into the army?

Micke: Now, probably – I stayed in Iowa for a couple of months, so maybe – Didn't take them very long. [Laughs.] It was like either the end of '66 or the early '67, and the orders were directly to Vietnam.

Jim: No training?

Micke: No, after training in San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston.

Jim: Okay, so you were sent to Fort Sam Houston sometime early in 1967. What kind of training did you get there?

Micke: Um, it was – what would you call it? – a clearing station, I guess, basically. Um, they were – The gist of it was that if the doc wasn't there that you would be the triage officer to take care of wounds, so it was a little smattering of medicine and –

Jim: So did you get training comparable to like what a field medic would get? Is that --

Micke: Well, yeah, probably, but I think it was more focussed on being a triage – Well, it was obviously to do whatever a second lieutenant does in a

medical service corps. There were administrative things, plus I really remember the focus on the triage part of it.

Jim: And how long was that training?

Micke: March through – Three months, I guess.

Jim: Then you had orders to Vietnam from there. Did you have leave before you –

Micke: Yeah, I had about two weeks, I think, to make it home.

Jim: Did you know where you were going in Vietnam when you got the orders?

Micke: No, not at all.

Jim: Okay. How did you leave the country? Did you go by boat?

Micke: We went by plane from Oakland Army Terminal, I think is where we actually – I mean, that's where we got processed, and then we went by plane, I think, from one of the air force bases.

Jim: From Travis Air Base, probably. And do you remember what – was it a military aircraft?

Micke: No, it was a commercial aircraft.

Jim: Commercial airline. And what route did you take across the Pacific?

Micke: We stopped for a few hours in Hawaii, had time for a martini.

Jim: Awesome.

Micke: Then we flew in to – It wasn't Tan Son Nhut, it was north of –

Jim: Bien Hoa? Bien Hoa Air Force Base. And what time of day did you get to Vietnam?

Micke: I think it was late afternoon, because I think the first thing we did is they just found us a place to sleep for the night.

Jim: What was your first impression getting off the airplane at Bien Hoa Air Force Base?

Micke: Well, it was hot.

Jim: What about smell? Was there any particular smell?

Micke: I don't remember that all that much.

Jim: Okay. Was it raining? 'Cause that was rainy season.

Micke: Yeah, sure was.

Jim: And what kind of a facility did they put you up in?

Micke: I think it was wood barracks.

Jim: Okay. And were you put up with other lieutenants then? Were they medical corps, infantry, artillery, or just –

Micke: I know I flew over on the airplane with one of my classmates from St. Norbert.

Jim: Oh, that's interesting. What was your classmate's fate?

Micke: He ended up in Long Bin in one of the medical – in one of the bigger hospitals there. I think in the EVAC hospital.

Jim: 93 EVAC, probably. Okay, so what was your first day in Vietnam like?

Micke: Well, I don't remember a lot. I do remember they put us on a truck.

Jim: Deuce-and-a-half?

Micke: Deuce-and-a-half, yeah. In the back of that, and we drove to Bear Cat, which wasn't all that far.

Jim: Okay, so you drove to – you got orders to the 9th Division, which was at Bear Kat. And it happens that I spent a year there too. So did you have any impressions of Bear Cat?

Micke: Well, it was kind of like, wow, what is this sitting out here in the middle of nowhere. It was, like, basically a city.

Jim: Was it all cut – Did you see any trees or anything in the area?

Micke: It was pretty flat.

Jim: It was a rubber plantation at one time.

Micke: There was no rubber plantation left.

Jim: So when you got to Bear Cat, did you receive any in-country orientation or anything like that?

Micke: Oh, I suppose, it just doesn't –

Jim: -- doesn't stick out. So were you greeted by any ranking officer in the division or the brigade or the battalion that you were assigned in, that you remember?

Micke: Well, I don't remember the exact detail of that – I mean, I remember our commanding officer was a, probably a major, actually. No, he was a light [?] colonel. He was an obstetrician, and, um -- When I got there the 9th had been there for maybe six or eight months. The people that I sort of came in with were all getting ready to think about getting out. So I think they'd been there about eight months or so.

Jim: So what was your first duty assignment?

Micke: Well, the first thing I had, I was assigned to the motor pool.

Jim: As a medical service officer?

Micke: Yeah, well, for the company. We had what seemed like a lot of trucks and ambulances and jeeps and that sort of thing.

Jim: So were you in charge of seeing that the maintenance was done?

Micke: No. That –

Jim: When did you first start getting medical duties then?

Micke: Probably after about three months. As this first group that -- The division when I went over, I think, went over by troop ship. And when those fellows rotated out, I became the administrative officer for the base hospital, for headquarters and the A company.

Jim: So what were your duties as an administrative officer for the Bear Cat base hospital?

Micke: We had – It was – I don't know how many beds they had in there. It was four Quonset huts put together, with a centerpiece and – it didn't really get a lot of casualties. They only got, you know, sort of sick bay people. We had a fair number of Vietnamese patients. One of the – It sort of deals with – Our commanding officers was at – He had gotten in with the local

midwives and did some of the difficult deliveries. I think he even might have done some C-sections. So we always had Vietnamese –

Jim: -- in the hospital.

Micke: -- in the hospital, yeah. And once in a while, we'd get some casualties. But it wasn't – That wasn't our main – I mean, we were so close to Long Bin with the big EVAC hospitals.

Jim: So how were these Vietnamese recruited into the hospital? Did medical teams go out to villages around?

Micke: Yeah, they would call the MEDCAPs. So we got some through that, and then the base also had a fair number of Vietnamese that worked there, civilians. So I think we got people through that.

Jim: Did you get any sense for what these Vietnamese people felt about the Americans and the war?

Micke: I guess I didn't have any – I never really got any sense of hostility from anybody, although I wasn't that sensitive to what they were thinking.

Jim: Sure.

Micke: We had several Vietnamese who worked quite specifically with the hospital – couple of interpreters and a couple of other people. It was good folks.

Jim: Did you have any – Did they have any medical responsibilities, or were they more administrative and janitorial and stuff like that? In the hospital?

Micke: My responsibilities or the Vietnamese?

Jim: No, for the Vietnamese. I'm sorry.

Micke: Yeah, the only thing was – It was the interpreters.

Jim: Okay. What were your duties as an administrative officer at the hospital?

Micke: Well, I guess it was like with any other, you know, platoon leader. You had to discipline, schedule and all the usual stuff – supply, I mean, make sure that was there and – I had some great sergeants. [Laughs.]

Jim: Sergeants are what make things work, so – Did you ever get assigned any perimeter duty or anything like that when you were there?

- Micke: No, fortunately I didn't have to do anything. Well, first of all I don't think Ber Kat was very – It didn't need to be, sort of, defended very heavily, since it was out of the way of most activity, I think.
- Jim: Did you see any Australians or Koreans in that area?
- Micke: No, but we had Thais who were there.
- Jim: Were they there as a combat unit? Did you have any experience with them?
- Micke: Not directly. I think they must have had their own medical –
- Jim: Okay. So – let's see – did you get off the base very much after duties?
- Micke: Yeah, quite a bit, actually, which was – I mean, that was very enlightening. We had a – Besides being lieutenant for this particular thing I also had assigned a lot of other little duties for the battalion. So we had ended up going frequently to Tan An and My Tho, which was two bases of our other two battalions, B and C.
- Jim: Okay. Those were down in the delta in Four Corners, am I correct?
- Micke: Yeah.
- Jim: And what would you be doing down there?
- Micke: It was inspection sort of stuff.
- Jim: So you were there kind of as a record-keeper for the inspections? Do you have any impressions of Can Tho?
- Micke: It wasn't Can Tho, it was My Tho.
- Jim: My Tho, and what was the other one?
- Micke: Tan An.
- Jim: Tan An.
- Micke: Tan An, that was the tough one. We had a – It was sort of in a bunch of paddies, it wasn't – on the edge of a little city, but it was a muddy place [laughs]. It wasn't built up very well. And we lost one of the docs there from some mortar fire one night. And this fellow was from Harvard.

- Jim: Were you down there ever when the place was mortared? Do you know what kind of facilities for bunkers for mortaring?
- Micke: I think they had what we had, which was sort of conixes [trenches], sand bags and –
- Jim: Did you have any trouble with rats or snakes in those conixes?
- Micke: No.
- Jim: What was your impression of the weather down in the delta, as compared with Bear Cat? Was it summer?
- Micke: It was similar. I mean, in the rainy season, it was rainy, and in the dry season, it was very dusty.
- Jim: And what color was the dust? Remember?
- Micke: I think it was just tan.
- Jim: Yeah, okay. Just regular old dust. Down there, did you sense any difference in the attitude of the population, when you were down at those other two bases, Tan An and My Tho?
- Micke: I don't know that I did. I mean, again we didn't spend a lot of time with – outside of the bases. I mean, in My Tho one time we went to, oh, just the city market, which was just fascinating: selling all kinds of things, including eels, which struck me – [laughs]
- Jim: Did you eat any of the food at the market?
- Micke: Oh, some of the food.
- Jim: What about beer, pop, water? Any impressions on that? In the market areas and indigenous?
- Micke: Never got into that. The other thing, besides those two places, we obviously went through Saigon each time we went back and forth.
- Jim: So you went by road when you went down to –
- Micke: Yes, Jeep.
- Jim: Was it a convoy?

- Micke: You just went by yourselves. It was probably pretty safe. [Laughs.] We didn't – There was a couple of times when we were able to stop in Saigon for a little while, you know. Went to Chu Lai to the PX, and on one occasion we were able to go to one of the hotels downtown where they – I forget the name of it --
- Jim: The Rex?
- Micke: Yeah, probably the Rex.
- Jim: And the Continental was down there, which was a big French one.
- Micke: Yeah, that was across the street.
- Jim: Did you have any impressions of Saigon?
- Micke: Oh, I thought it was just an incredibly fascinating place. And, you know, obviously at one time a very beautiful place too.
- Jim: Did you have a chance to go to any of the markets or anything in Saigon?
- Micke: Not really. There was one, I think it was one Sunday, they had some tour that they took us to – sort of a bus tour around Saigon. Ended up, I think, at the zoo and places like that.
- Jim: Did you get to the cathedral? Very impressive building. The post office, which is right on the same square as the cathedral.
- Micke: No.
- Jim: Did you have any impression of the American presence there, or was it just overwhelming with all the trucks, Jeeps and other vehicles?
- Micke: Yeah. I mean, it seemed – other than the sort of main streets – it was – I don't think that – Well, the traffic was pretty impressive, with all the motorcycles and all kinds of stuff. It was a challenge to ride through that.
- Jim: So did you have a driver drive you through?
- Micke: Yeah.
- Jim: Did you have any trouble with traffic, like when you drove down to the delta outside of Saigon, 'cause there so many rice paddies, there aren't many roads down there.
- Micke: Well, it was Highway 1, I think, down there. Didn't have any trouble.

- Jim: Okay. When you were down in the delta area, did you have any opportunity to eat any of the fish that were caught locally? Or did you just eat American food?
- Micke: No.
- Jim: Did you have any impression about the amount of aircraft in the air around Saigon area and Bear Cat?
- Micke: Well, we had – there was one right there, based in Bear Cat, by the village, you know.
- Jim: Was it attached to the 9th Division, so it was their air unit and so, with the regular helicopters and stuff like that.
- Micke: Oh yeah, the other way we got to Bear Cat and My Tho sometimes was by helicopter sometimes, which was kind of fun. I mean, that was enlightening to be up above and see things and –
- Jim: How did you like the temperature when you got up in the helicopter too?
- Micke: An improvement.
- Jim: It was an improvement. Let's see, you had to have been there during the Tet offensive. Can you tell us what your impressions of that were? And where you were?
- Micke: Well, like I said, I was in Bear Cat, and we really didn't have anything – nobody lobbed anything into Bear Cat, actually. If there was anything, it was very minimal. But it was – the one thing we did do fairly soon after is we went to Chu Lai, and we had a MEDCAP [Medical Civic Action Program] there, so we saw a lot of the damage that was done to them.
- Jim: On a MEDCAP, what kind of personnel went along?
- Micke: [Unintelligible.] You know, usually a couple of docs and a corpsman, to organize things and relax by the sea. Lot of people.
- Jim: What was the experience like – we were talking now about battalion surgeons, aren't we, we're talking about doctors. What kind of experience did these people have?
- Micke: Well, the fellows that I was with were people who were in the midst of their residencies who got drafted. So we had a surgeon, who had maybe two or three years of surgery residency, and the company commander was

an internist who turned out to be a cardiologist. A family practice fellow from Illinois, who actually had been in practice a few years. Let's see, who else was there? In any case there was – they – the surgery fellow, he ended up wanting to go to a more active place where he could do more surgery, and he did at the end. He went to the 4th Division. Um, but the internist and the family practice followed – I think we ended up with another surgeon later. You know, they were content to deal with what came into the –

Jim: So what type of treatment would be given by these MEDCAPs?

Micke: Well, mainly it was a matter of medicines for pains, stuff like that. I mean, it was really before I was positioned, so I don't know all that they did. You know, but they certainly weren't capable of doing surgical stuff or anything like that. I think they did triage things in various places.

Jim: So you'd have a standard load of medications and stuff that you'd bring out to these things. And were they done in fairly secure areas? I mean, did you ever have any difficulty with the natives or anything like that?

Micke: I remember we went to one by boat –

Jim: Now was that down in the delta?

Micke: No, I don't think it was that far down. It was somewhere around – I know we did some right after Tet in Saigon, ChoLon– it was the eastern side of the city.

Jim: Do you have any vivid memories of the damage or stuff like that?

Micke: Oh, yeah. I mean, it was leveled. I mean, there was like a home with one wall left up.

Jim: Okay. What type of people – the enlisted men you had to deal with, were they draftees, career people?

Micke: Well, sort of a mix. I think, mainly they were draftees. Um, there was some – Some of the more experienced corpsmen – medics or whatever the heck they were – were up to E-5s and E-6s. And they were very, very good. I mean, they knew a lot about what they were doing and were very trustworthy people. I don't know, the draftees were a mix of people, and there were some, I know some had college experience and stuff, so –

Jim: I'm going to turn the tape over.

[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

- Jim: The enlisted personnel in the medical company you were involved in: did you have any discipline problems?
- Micke: Oh, some. I mean, it was mainly about drugs, meaning marihuana. But it wasn't huge.
- Jim: Did you have trouble with VD and alcohol too, or was it just mainly the drugs?
- Micke: It was mainly drugs. But then again it wasn't all that bad mostly.
- Jim: Was this marihuana available on the local economy? Is that what –
- Micke: [No audible response.]
- Jim: Okay, so when you -- basically spent your whole tour in the same slot in the medical battalion?
- Micke: Well, the last month I went down to the river Ain (??), to the brigade that was on the Mekong.
- Jim: What city was that?
- Micke: Well, it was out of My Tho.
- Jim: Okay.
- Micke: But that last month we just sort of cruised up and down the river. That's where I saw the bulk of the casualties that I saw while I was there.
- Jim: What were they – from mines or snipers?
- Micke: Yeah, I guess the worst ones were from mines. I remember vividly one fellow who lost both legs. Took him on board, so --
- Jim: And were they evacuated by helicopter, or were you on a –
- Micke: Well, yeah, helicopter, or maybe small boats that went back and forth.
- Jim: When you were on boats, were you on those things, I think they call them "swift boats"?
- Micke: I wasn't on the small boats, I was on the LST [Landing Ship Tank].

- Jim: LST – it was converted World War II thing. And did they have hospital facilities right on that boat then? What – How big were they?
- Micke: Well, it was mainly like one big operating room, plus a ward of beds and stuff. I mean, they didn't keep people on there very long -- they just stabilized them.
- Jim: Stabilized them, so they could move them on to other areas. Was that by choice that you got moved down to the delta? Or did they decide that it was time for you to move on to somewhere else?
- Micke: [Laughs.] I think I was just offered the opportunity of [?].
- Jim: So you spent your last month there – did you have a short-timer's calendar or anything? Were you pretty excited about getting out of there?
- Micke: Yeah, I must have had a calendar. I guess I wasn't that – I don't remember being that obsessed with it.
- Jim: Okay. Did you take R&R anywhere?
- Micke: Yeah, we did. I had two actually.
- Jim: Okay. Where did you go?
- Micke: The first one was to Hong Kong, and the second was to Tokyo.
- Jim: Did you go with some friends, or did you just go?
- Micke: On both occasions I went with somebody from my own unit.
- Jim: And how many days were they?
- Micke: I think five and six.
- Jim: Five and six. Did you ever get down to Vung Tau when you were –
- Micke: No, I always wanted to do that. I mean, it's nearby.
- Jim: And did you ever get up by the Cao Dai temple in Tay Ninh? And Wili Bau Din (??), the Black Virgin Mountains? So basically your experience was from Bear Cat down to Bien Hoa, Saigon and My Tho and Tan An in the delta. Where did you leave country from?
- Micke: Tan San Nhi (??).

- Jim: And did you come back to get discharged from the military?
- Micke: No, I had another year.
- Jim: You had another year. Where were you assigned there?
- Micke: Fort Sheridan in Chicago.
- Jim: And what were your duties there
- Micke: It was a -- It wasn't a hospital -- it was a clinic. I was an administrator for that. They did a lot of physicals there for reservists from the Chicago area and Wisconsin, and so it was mainly scheduling that.
- Jim: So were you assigned there because it was close to Wisconsin?
- Micke: Well, I mean they gave us a couple of choices. [Inaudible.] It wasn't my first choice, but it was one of them.
- Jim: When you came back, did you notice any change in the attitude of the American people about the war?
- Micke: I guess my attitude had changed. I mean --
- Jim: Well, let's go through it -- you said that you'd like to talk about it. What was your attitude? Let's start with ROTC, college, grad school and then going into the military. If you could just take us through that, that would be --
- Micke: I would say, during college and ROTC, I mean, I guess it seemed like we were doing the appropriate thing in terms of supporting the South Vietnamese.
- Jim: Your ROTC -- was that two years mandatory?
- Micke: Yes.
- Jim: So you elected to stay with it?
- Micke: Well, I think even the first -- while I was there, we still had the notion -- we were still on the right side of things -- I think it became evident through the course of, while I was there, that that might not be the case. I had the good fortune of -- the first group of fellows that was there were, I would say, thoughtful people, who questioned what the whole thing was about. Not just for themselves being there, but just the whole idea of it. They actually had quite a good library in Bear Cat, and we got to reading some

good books about the history of Vietnam, going back in the French period, the Japanese, I mean the Second World War, and the opportunities we could have had to allow them to have their freedom. Instead of this, we sort of stepped in and sort of took over for the French in a way, so.

- Jim: You weren't provided any of this information while you were in college, ROTC or anything?
- Micke: Well, if I was, I don't remember it. Or at least I don't remember with that slant.
- Jim: Okay. So did – Was Tet the thing that kind of pushed you over the edge or changed your mind?
- Micke: No, not really. I think it was before then. I think it was more just the sense of, like, this is their country, this is their civil war. We don't have much reason to be here.
- Jim: Was that an attitude you noticed with your peers that was kind of catching up?
- Micke: [Inaudible.]
- Jim: How about the combat arms? Did you sense that they were feeling that way too?
- Micke: No, not really. Again, I may not have been exposed to enough of that to know, to have a good feel for that?
- Jim: So was the reading and then meeting the people –
- Micke: Well, and just, you know, these forays out of the base to various other places in Saigon, MEDCAPs and stuff like that. I guess it was just a sort of accumulation of things.
- Jim: Did you have any impression of the government that we were supporting? I think General Thieu was the president when you were there. Were you there when they had one of their elections or anything like that?
- Micke: I don't really remember.
- Jim: Okay. Did you have any impression about the way the Vietnamese people were being governed by the South Vietnamese government?
- Micke: I really can't think of anything.

- Jim: Okay. Was your feeling – Did you in any way manifest your feeling that you felt that we maybe weren't doing the right thing?
- Micke: Not in any – not on the street or anything. But I think we – like I say, the kind of group of us, the medical staff group, administrators, that were all, it came out, pretty much of the same mind.
- Jim: What about the doctors?
- Micke: Same thing.
- Jim: Same thing. Everybody just felt that maybe this was somebody else's fight and that we really didn't need to be there, so -- Did you get a sense that the Vietnamese people, like when you're on MEDCAPs, wished that we weren't there?
- Micke: No, I don't remember anything like harassment or "Yankee, go home!" thing.
- Jim: Have we explored this enough from your perspective?
- Micke: Yeah, I would say so.
- Jim: When you got back and out of the army, did you participate in Vietnam Veterans Against the War or anything like that?
- Micke: Yeah, I did.
- Jim: That was based on your – What type of activity -- I mean, I'm not familiar with what they did exactly?
- Micke: Well, the main things we did was I went to Washington a couple of times.
- Jim: Oh, to the big marches.
- Micke: Well, the other thing too is that when I got back and out of the service, I went to back to medical – well, not to medical school, but undergraduate school to get credits. 'Cause one of the things that I came to the conclusion of was that I wanted to go to medical school after – while I was there.
- Jim: Okay.
- Micke: And so I needed about a year-and-a-half of undergraduate credit in science to get, to qualify for that. So I did at UW-Milwaukee, and during that time – it was in, well, culminated in spring of 1970 –

- Jim: Hot time.
- Micke: -- with the Cambodian thing, so there was a lot of things going on on campus, and protests and, um. Well, actually the school shut down at the end of the year, so.
- Jim: Did people know that you were a veteran? Or --. Yeah. Were you treated any specific way, good or bad, because of that?
- Micke: I don't remember that.
- Jim: Okay. Do you have any anecdotes or anything like that from your trips to Washington that would be of interest for these protests? Or for these marches, rather?
- Micke: No, we went from medical school.
- Jim: Was it like a bus trip? Cars?
- Micke: Yeah, it was a Dodge Dart. It was five of us in there, which was pretty cramped.
- Jim: [Laughs.] Yes.
- Micke: So it was an all-nighter driving out, and an all-nighter driving back.
- Jim: So you just went to the march and then drove back. Do you have any impression on how it was organized or anything like that? Or did you just go out and march down the street and come back?
- Micke: Pretty much.
- Jim: Okay. And you said it was the Vietnam experience -- was it the Vietnam experience that triggered you to want to go to medical school? Watching a doctor's work and stuff like this?
- Micke: [Inaudible.]
- Jim: Is there anything more than you'd like to say about that?
- Micke: Well, I mean I was just impressed with them as people and -- I guess one of the things that, you know, made it particularly attractive I think was the fact that they did a lot for the Vietnamese people. It seemed like that was pretty important. I mean, it seemed like both the MEDCAPs and also of course the people we had in our facility on an on-going basis. It was like -

- We were there in a war, but it was like the other side was as important to people, or people in general was really the issue.

Jim: Okay. Well, I think I've covered what I was prepared to talk about. Have we covered what you need to talk about?

Micke: Yeah, I guess so. I mean, I guess the other thing – One thing I always thought about is the fact that one of the reasons I think the Vietnamese war, or the Vietnam War, ended was the fact that there was a wide variety of people there. I mean, I guess I contrast that now with this current paid army. I mean, when there was a draft, it was – I mean, I'm sure the rich people never got there either, but there was a wider variety of class. I think that serving that war and serving duty now – and what I said about our high school, we had – There were five boys in that group. Five boys that graduated from that tenth grade, and three of us were in Vietnam. All five of us were in the service. So it was – And from that, when I went on to med school, I met friends who went on to be an attorney, two others had gone to college, one took a master's degree. It was like of the five, it wasn't like – I mean, we were five farmboys, but [laughs]. But I guess what I'm saying is that I sort of fear what goes on now as this sort of army that's paid for from the underclass. Nobody sort of speaks of them much so much. Like I have lots of lots of [pitious?] patients in my practice, and I can think of only one person that I know that's been in this Iraq conflict. And I think you kind of lose touch with it in a personal way, with the people who are in the service.

Jim: Well, let me ask you – that leads really to a question: do you sense that negative effect of the Vietnam War was that move away from a citizen army with the mixture of people?

Micke: I think that's a loss. You know, not that I would encourage more wars, mind you, but I think the relative democratization of the services – People have – There's more at stake for more people. You know, it's like if you don't have a kid there, at least you know Johnny next door. You know, right now, I mean, especially here up in Madison, Wisconsin, I don't think there's a big bunch of people in the service from here. I mean, proportionally. I think of them as being – There's other people: there's Blacks, there's Chicanos, there's –

Jim: Do you also feel that maybe the military makes some better decisions when they've got this wider group of people that – People aren't going to do stupid things if they're only there for a couple of years. I think that's a very important point. Is there anything else?

Micke: No, I mean I guess I -- I mean, it was a very –

- Jim: You thought it was a positive or a negative experience for you?
- Micke: It was a crucial experience. Very important one in my life, I think.
- Jim: It helped you make decisions about what you wanted to do?
- Micke: Going back to the wall [in Washington, DC], it was hard. [Sobbing.]
- Jim: Yes.
- Micke: I knew the people, real people.
- Jim: Real people. You could put it in a time frame that you were there, and people you were there with.
- Micke: Yeah.
- Jim: Yeah, terrible. Well, I think we should wind 'er up then, doc. I think it was excellent. I really appreciate an op—

[END OF INTERVIEW]