

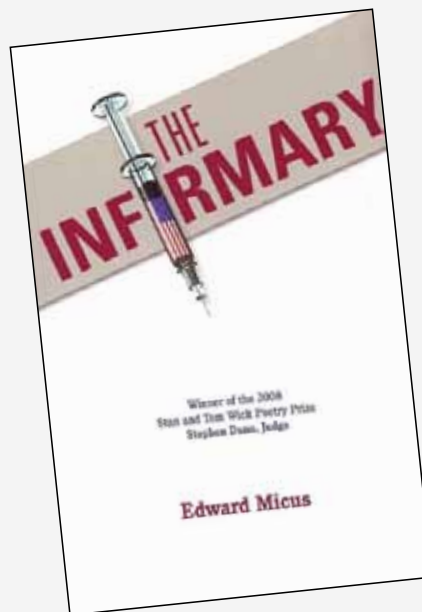


Edward Micus

Never too late

The Vietnam War took away a part of author Edward Micus, but it gave him something in return: his award-winning art.

By Brittany Nash



"The Infirmary"
by Edward Micus.

Although being in the 50s isn't typically the time in one's life to start winning awards, author Edward Micus proves otherwise. Named the winner of Kent State University's Stan and Tom Wick Poetry Prize, judged by Pulitzer Prize winner Stephen Dunn, Micus isn't a young buck trying to break into applauded writing circles. A finalist for the emerging voice category for the Minnesota Book Awards, he sees the irony in this title. "The joke is that at least I wasn't submerged before I emerged," Micus laughs.

Micus, now retired, formerly the assistant director of the Center of Creative Success at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU), Micus is a familiar face on campus and at other area colleges.

in Pennsylvania for a reading. "I am indebted to Rick [Robbins] because I never send stuff," he says. "He told me to get it out there and send the manuscript. I probably wouldn't have. When I got the [Kent State] call I was surprised."

Micus won the award for his collection of Vietnam War poems call "The Infirmary." The poems show a different, personal experience of the war.

"The thing about writing about that war is that so much is written," Micus explains. "It's overdone and pretentious and tends to, as some films do, glorify the soldier and the war. I'd like to think they [his poems] deal with the insanity or the depravity of the whole affair; the waste of life. War, especially that one, allows humans to behave their worst at times. I guess, ironically, you can see American boys at their very best, and occasionally, at their very worst."

"I still teach sometimes here [MSU] and sometimes at South Central [College]. It's nice to have the time...I have the luxury of hanging around until something strikes me."

While he enjoys being in the local college classrooms, it's his week teaching at Kent State in Ohio with Dunn that has Micus sedately excited.

"I'll be going to Kent State and doing a reading with Stephen Dunn, so that will be kind of cool," he says. Micus will teach with Dunn for a week before heading to Gettysburg College

Micus offers a reading of one of his poems. He slips on the signature black plastic-framed writer's glasses and reads "Wake."

His voice is gravelly as it wraps around his words. His pauses peppered throughout label him a war vet; a member of the 1st Air Cavalry. Every piece is linked directly or indirectly to the Vietnam War. He has his reasons.

“The Vietnam experience, the infantry experience, the combat experience was the experience of the poor black man, the poor white man, the poor red man, the poor brown Hispanic man. They were the ones who paid the price of all that insanity. When I came back, I felt an obligation to write something about the war and my sense of it. I felt obligated, and I felt a sense of responsibility.”

It was not a responsibility he wanted, or one he took lightly.

“Ironically, I don’t think about the audience, the readership. I suppose the poems try to take a political stance,” he shrugs. “In a sense, the war was tragic. And as it was, it offered me an opportunity: a trigger and motivation to write.”

The conversation pauses. It’s not that he doesn’t know what to say or that the questions are hard to answer. It seems memories are provoked, and how to articulate them clearly has him looking off into space only to return a few minutes later.

Micus’ focus returns.

“I suppose that ‘Wake’ poem probably...” He clears his throat and looks away. “Uh, these war poems have to be tough because of the sensitivity... so they may sound or appear to readers as

being harsh. You know they are not pleasant poems for the most part.”

He seems apologetic and almost wistful for his honesty, for the insight on human behavior he

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displays in writing. A new book about a 22-year-old obsessive-compulsive girl living in the Vietnam Era, a new collection of short stories called “Twerps,” again influenced by Vietnam, an older piece about a young man avoiding being drafted by having everything on the health list. The humor of their situations is found, but so is the desperation.

Fifty isn’t a conventional age to win awards, but it is a conventional age to dispel myths and uncover half-truths and impart wisdom. For that there is no apology. [M](#) [m](#)

Upcoming event

Book reading and signing

November 19
 Good Thunder Reading Series
 Minnesota State University, Mankato
 Talk on craft: 3 p.m., Ostrander Auditorium
 Reading: 7 p.m., Centennial Student Union room 253





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