

MISCHE, GEORGE, INTERVIEW

S - 1990 George Mische interview in St. Cloud, MN.

4226 George Mische (1937 -) St. Cloud City Councilman 1978 to present.

City councilman, labor organizer, and social activist, George Mische's colorful career included participation in events of both local and national interest. This interview is a discussion of Mische's involvement in and participation in events from Vietnam War protests to the city affairs of St. Cloud.

The first two tapes cover Mische's involvement in national affairs. Done on February 2nd, this part of the interview includes such topics as Mische's involvement in the Catonville Nine incident which led to his imprisonment. Mische also traces the roots of his radicalism by discussing his involvement with the American Institute for Labor Development in Honduras.

The second half of the interview, done on March 9th, covers Mische's involvement in local St. Cloud politics. Discussed are Mische's campaign for city council, his subsequent election, and some of his reasons for running for public office. Mische also discusses his campaign for the mayorship and some of the major issues since his tenure began on the St. Cloud City Council. Included are such topics as the Parkwood Mall debate and the controversy over the building of a new 10th Street Bridge.

INTERVIEWERS: Dr. Calvin Gower and Alan Nielsen

DATE: February 2 and March 9, 1981.

SUBJECTS COVERED: TAPE 1 PART 1

000 FAMILY BACKGROUND:

007 Mother born in 1894 in Buckman, MN, German background, came to St. Cloud in 1915-1916.

013 Father born in 1890 in Cleveland and went to Germany at the age of one.

016 Father returned to United States sometime between 1910-1915.

018 Father's parents came 1907 or 1908 back from Germany.

025 George Mische born July 30, 1937 in St. Cloud.

028 Father worked as labor organizer.

034 Father hired by VA hospital as supervisor in 1922.

038 Mother helped support family after his father died in accident.

047 Father had worked as supervisor from 1922-1956.

055 PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

055 George--youngest of 6 children (Louis, Jerry, Will, Gene, and Margaret).

062 Graduated from Cathedral High School in 1955.

070 traditional boyhood.

075 Recalls granite strikes of the 1940's.

096 Enlists in the army with Gene Lahr in 1955.

108 Enlistment was new program involving six months duty and seven and a half years in the reserves.

134 WORK EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION:

134 Worked for MN Highway Department after discharge from army.
 138 Went to St. Cloud State in fall of 1956 for one quarter.
 150 Became involved in juvenile delinquent work.
 155 Youth work in New York City for five years.
 185 Also went to Jesuit School in Jersey City when he was working.
 210 Transferred to Gannon College in Ely, PA. *Evis?*
 215 Graduated in 1963 majoring in Sociology and Economics.
 220 During college, Mische organized 150 schools for Latin American students.
 248 In 1963 joined the American Institute for Labor Development.
 273 Found out the office in Honduras was a front for the CIA.
 290 Predicted a coup against the President of Honduras.
 360 Were executions during coup and was sent to Dominican Republic.
 375 In 1964, Mische resigned from the American Institute for Latin American students.
 387 Mische felt that Kennedy and Johnson policy in Latin America was different.
 475 In Mische's opinion, many American barons in Honduras were happy when Kennedy was shot.
 490 Mische felt that Honduras was in a state of shock after assassination.

000 SUBJECTS COVERED: PART 2 TAPE 1.000 NATIONAL AFFAIRS:

012 Mische's brother set up Association for International Development in 1957.
 020 Mische traveled around the country raising money for AID. (not Agency for International Development).
 070 In 1967 a year tour of Latin America was planned.
 097 Met his future wife in Chicago in the summer of 1967 and married later that year.
 105 Married by Father Daniel Berrigan.
 144 They lived in New York from October, 1967 to January, 1968.
 163 Moved to Washington to set up a Peace Center.
 170 There were growing protest movements against the war.
 200 Washington and Baltimore riots.
 220 Father Daniel Berrigan had gone to Hanoi to get captured pilots released.
 255 Catonsville, Maryland incident--May 17, 1968 with nine involved.
 270 They burned draft files with homemade napalm with the intent to get arrested.
 280 No resistance to their action.
 345 NBC was stopped by the FBI from showing film.
 360 Trial in Baltimore, October 5-9, 1968.
 365 Bill Kunstler was their lawyer along with several others.
 444 The cost of the trial was only \$5200 after lawyers had donated their services.
 498 Mische got a prison sentence of three years.

000 SUBJECTS COVERED: PART 1 TAPE 2.002 TRIAL, RESISTANCE, AND REFORM:

002 Three year sentence for Mische, Berrigan, and Lewis; and the rest two year terms.
 010 Lewisburg, PA was federal prison Mische was sentenced to.
 018 Robert Thompson was the judge.
 065 During the trial some FBI agents dressed up like nuns and priests to infiltrate a rally.
 100 Permission was asked to give the Lord's Prayer during the trial.
 140 During October, 1969 to April, 1970 they were released on appeal.
 168 Decided not to turn themselves in and instead to go underground.
 190 Mische, Phillip and Dan Berrigan were captured while Mary Moylan was not.

MISCHE, GEORGE, Interview

218 Mische was captured in Chicago in May, 1970.
 305 Police didn't have a warrant for his arrest.
 440 Mische started his prison term on May 26, 1970.
 460 Mische served 25 months in prison and was released in 1972.

465 PRISON REFORM:

~~465~~ Released from prison early because of good behavior.
 470 Wife allowed only three hours of visiting rights per month.
 490 Worked for prison reforms, especially uncensored mail and work release programs.

000 SUBJECTS COVERED: PART 2 TAPE 2.

005 PRISON REFORM:

005 Worked from 1972-1976 on prison reform and investigation.
 017 Tried to show that the majority of those serving time in prison were poor.
 075 Involved in fund raising for reform programs.
 096 Serious illness stopped his activities in 1975.

108 POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY:

108 Returned to St. Cloud in 1976.
 125 Belief that the country is founded on radicalism.
 205 Getting the hostages home was more important than national pride.
 264 Mische and Nolan worked to oust Carter as the Democratic nominee one and a half years before 1980 election.
 280 Cronyism is worse in national affairs than state affairs.
 315 The political structure is dominated by the economic structure.
 325 Belief that if the country could survive Johnson and Nixon, the country can survive Reagan.
 350 Impression that the Jesus movement began its involvement in politics began during the Nixon administration.
 480 The myth of political freedom.

000 SUBJECTS COVERED: PART 1 TAPE 3

010 CAMPAIGN FOR ST. CLOUD CITY COUNCIL:

010 Spent six months recovering from illness in 1976.
 017 Original plans were not to get involved in local politics.
 020 Started business in St. Cloud in February, 1977--The Joint Bar.
 035 Learned that the neighborhood tried to close the bar down before he purchased it.
 052 Got involved in political activity on the liquor license issue.
 175 Made decision to run for office.
 185 Jim Nahan decided not to run in the primary because of the bridge issue.
 220 Mische's ward did not have a primary.
 246 Three way race in the general election--Mische, Nahan, and Steve Atkins.
 275 Mische won by 115 votes in a close election.
 297 Southside gave the most support.
 313 Started a four year term in April, 1978 with the city council.

320 MISCHE - FORD COALITION:

- 320 Mische and Alice Ford became a coalition against the rest of the council with each one being willing to second the other's motion in order to bring discussion.
- 343 Through their initiative committee members were rotated each year to prevent several people from gaining power.
- 385 Alice Ford resigned from the council.
- 393 Following Ford's resignation Mische did not get a second for any of his motions in a year and a half.
- 434 According to Mische Alice Ford was pressured into leaving town by economic forces.

000 SUBJECTS COVERED: PART 2 TAPE 3.005 ST. CLOUD CITY COUNCIL TERM:

- 005 Mische's belief that his wife was fired from her job because of his views.
- 015 Devoted 60-80 hours each week for city council business.
- 065 From 1952 until the present over 80% of the city council members were business people.
- 140 Major issues on council for Mische.
- 145 Biggest issue was openness in government.
- 160 Following 1980 election--atmosphere on council changed.
- 178 Tenth Street Bridge issue.
- 195 The difficult issue of having a four-lane bridge voted down but never receiving an affirmative vote for a two-lane bridge.

000 SUBJECTS COVERED: PART 1 TAPE 4001 CAMPAIGN FOR MAYOR:

- 001 Decision to run for mayor.
- 080 Mische's belief that it was important that Al Loehr was not re-elected.
- 100 Suspicion that the media engineered what happened in the primary.
- 110 Had over eight hundred campaign signs torn down.
- 136 Cars vandalized.
- 141 Menacing phone calls received.
- 153 As soon as a wire tap was installed the phone calls stopped.
- 167 St. Cloud Times supported both Loehr and Huston.
- 290 In interview with KCLD Mische stated terms for his resignation.
- 365 KCLD interview tape lost and St. Cloud Times misquoted him.
- 400 St. Cloud Times ran 21 or 22 anti-Mische issues after primary election.
- 433 A poll showed 75-80% favored filling Mische's vacated seat if he resigned by an election.
- 460 Amendment was passed to fill vacancy by election if more than one year of term was left.

000 SUBJECTS COVERED: PART 2 TAPE 4.002 FUTURE PLANS:

- 002 St. Cloud City Council.
- 202 Resignation issue.
- 097 His plans for next election were not certain.
- 108 Grounds for libel against St. Cloud Times.

- 120 Don Casey--editor of St. Cloud Times followed Mische around.
- 140 Mische felt atmosphere in St. Cloud since spring of 1980 was much more favorable.
- 153 Mische will get chance to become re-elected.
- 180 Mische will get more involved in El Salvador issue.
- 210 Mische plans to get more involved in state and national affairs.
- 241 A personal disappointment for Mische was the 10th Street Bridge issue.