

# **Kent and Jackson State**

## **1970-1990**

**Edited by Susie Erenrich**



**Kent and Jackson State:  
1970-1990**

**Susie Erenrich, editor**

**Viet Nam Generation, Inc. & Burning Cities Press**

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Second Edition

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***In Memory of***

***Arthur Krause  
Reverend John Adams  
Carl Benton***

***and the many others  
who sacrificed so much  
to this struggle.  
Their spirit lives on  
in the hearts  
of those left behind.***



Guards firing on Kent State students. Photo by John A. Darnell, Jr. Used by permission of Peter Davies.

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# Preface to the First Edition

Susie Erenrich

On May 4, 1990, I will return to Ohio to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Kent and Jackson State shootings. I will be joined by friends and family, many of them contributors to this special edition of *Vietnam Generation*, to honor the memory of the six students who were slain.

For some, the legacy of Kent and Jackson State is just a forgettable historical incident; but to those most closely touched by the event, it has been the embodiment of their pain and anguish.

Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, William Schroeder, Phillip Gibbs, and James Green made the ultimate sacrifice for this country. The spirits of these people are very much alive. By looking through the terrible darkness of their deaths, we can see the love that still binds them to the living.

*Kent and Jackson State: 1970-1990* is a collection of essays, songs, photographs, articles, and testimonials written by the people who have lost the most, and have said the least: the mothers and fathers, the wounded students, friends of the deceased, the eye-witnesses, and those who care.

I invite the readers to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Kent and Jackson State shootings with me. For we can never deal honestly with the future if we fail to acknowledge the past.



Using stencils and spray paint, students create "instant memorials" on the Kent State campus, August 20, 1977. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

## Introduction to the Second Edition

*Academic freedom can get you killed.*  
—Spiro T. Agnew

*Kent and Jackson State: 1970-1990* was originally published to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the shootings at Kent and Jackson State. Edited with care and passion by Susie Erenrich, this is a patchwork quilt of a book. A varied collection of personal narratives, scholarly articles, poetry, fiction, and photography has been pieced together to form a powerful and coherent whole. Every contributor to this issue has been personally involved in the struggle over the meaning of the Kent and/or Jackson State shootings in 1970, and the work they submitted to *Vietnam Generation* reflects this deep, long-term commitment. Every writer stands firmly on the side of the students in this controversy, and condemns the actions of the police and military authorities, as well as the higher political authorities, who sanctioned the violent suppression of student dissent. Other anthologies may publish arguments justifying the shootings—we felt that on the twentieth anniversary of the murder of four students at Kent State and two at Jackson State we needed to take a firm stand in support of students and other Americans who protest American policy, and who exercise their First Amendment rights.

In the five years since the publication of the first edition, the popularity of this anthology has underlined the importance of presenting participants' views of history, and the effectiveness of an interdisciplinary approach which does not privilege scholarship over testimony, but presents them side-by-side. We've realized that *Kent and Jackson State: 1970-1990* is not an ephemeral publication, but a long-lived text that meets a strong need for high-quality materials on the Sixties. It's our intention to keep this volume in print indefinitely, preserving the history of an event which has become shrouded in myth.

One of the most remarkable features of the volume is that it demonstrates that the people most deeply involved in activism around the shootings are not immune themselves to the pull of myth and the shift in historical perspective. The shootings at Kent State, at least, reached the status of myth within days of their occurrence, and have become a part of the contested history of the United States. The cover photo, by John P. Filo, has become an American icon. In addition to secondary materials, we've included the text of speeches which were given at Kent State on anniversaries of the shootings; these speeches span almost two decades. An examination of the changing emphases of the speakers is a most enlightening exercise..

For example, Peter Davies, in 1990, equates the Kent State dead with the soldiers killed in the Vietnam war, asserting that "there had never been any difference between these ... victims of forces beyond their control, only what President Nixon had wanted us to see." This desire to see the soldier as victim seems new—there is certainly no hint of it in Davies' 1974 speech. The conflation should be of interest to historians of American popular culture, for it suggests the effective rehabilitation of the veterans' image which began with the publicity about the Vietnam memorial wall in Washington, D.C. in 1981. In 1974, the soldier in Vietnam would more likely have been analogous to the National Guardsmen of Ohio in the minds of most critics of the Kent State killings, while the protesters would have resided in quite a different category. This creation of the larger category of "victims" (typical of post-1981 thinking) also simply erases the category of Vietnam veterans and active duty servicemen who protested the war, and who actively defied the directives of President Nixon. These soldiers, many of whom suffered and died, and these veterans, many of whom still live with the painful knowledge of their complicity in crimes committed by the United States in Vietnam, seem to be closer in spirit to the Kent State protestors than the 57,939 men who died in Vietnam.

A comparison between the sentiments of Kent State activists and Jackson State survivors is even more enlightening. The differences between the Kent and Jackson State shootings seem to lie in the interpretations of, rather than the nature of the crime. Clearly, in both cases, unarmed students were killed by armed members of law enforcement agencies. In both cases there was tension and hostility between the attackers and their victims—the armed men were seen by the students as the representatives of an oppressive system. The students were seen by the armed men as a force which threatened the foundation of their power—"law and order." If all things were equal, public outcry or public apathy should have been the same in both instances. But, as Gene Young writes, "If it were not for the tragic events at Kent State University ten days earlier, this murderous Mississippi morning would have, perhaps, received little or no recognition and indignation."

The black survivors of Jackson State appear to view themselves as part of a larger group, a group which includes all black survivors of white violence. The tradition of struggle against white injustice and willing or unwilling martyrdom to the cause of black freedom is part of the fabric of black southern community life. Though the argument over violent and nonviolent tactics continues, no one questions the necessity of protest. Outside the dormitory where Phillip Gibbs resided, a modest stone dedicated to Gibbs and James Earl Green reads:

Phillip Gibbs will remain in the memory of all Jacksonians as a martyr who nobly relinquished his life for the cause of human brotherhood.... Green, like Gibbs, did not choose to die but was a victim of death's mandate. He nobly takes his station among other martyrs of the cause.

"The cause" is not at issue here, and there is no strong faction arguing that the students were at fault, while the Jackson Police were merely doing their jobs. "All Jacksonians" (including, if the testimony of Dr. Peoples is any indication, the administration) agree that Gibbs and Green were murdered in the same campaign which claimed the lives of Medgar Evers, Emmett Till, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., James Chaney, Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley and Denise McNair. The message here is that no black person in America is safe from racial violence, from an eleven-year-old girl attending church on a Sunday morning, to the leading light of the civil rights movement, and that all must stand together in the fight for freedom.

While the black community can be united in memorializing black martyrs (since all blacks are oppressed), the white community will be unable to agree on just who is the martyr and who is the offending principal in a white against white confrontation. Just as the black community is realistic enough to know that if they want a memorial for black heroes they are going to have to build it themselves, so white dissenters ought to be able to guess that if they want a memorial to their attempt to overthrow the power structure they will get precious little help from the authorities who represent the structure they wanted to overthrow. The administration of Kent State University, whose members are, after all, representatives of state power, will naturally resist efforts to build a monument to those who sought, and seek, to undermine their authority.

The struggle over the May 4 Memorial at Kent State is both strongly symbolic, and ironically akin to the struggle over the construction of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C. When public pressure to build a memorial overcomes official efforts to resist its construction, the battle will shift to the physical and symbolic attributes of the memorial itself.

It was the ambiguity of the the Vietnam Memorial Wall which so upset conservative critics of the design. All those names engraved on a flat, black surface would most likely fail to evoke the patriotic and heroic images upon which our national mythology is built. How could one reclaim history in the face of such a refusal to offer definition? Only after the placement of a representative sculpture of three soldiers was proposed and accepted would the right-wing critics of the Memorial allow the construction process to commence. Now, one could hear them say, now we have a *story*, now we have a *reason* for this war. The students and activists of the May 4 Task Force at Kent State are fighting a similar battle—but this time it is the conservative forces who are arguing for ambiguity.

Memorial supporters want a monument which clearly defines the event,

and one which includes a written description of the historical incident—the shooting of four students by the National Guard at Kent State University, May 4, 1970. Let us make no mistake about it, they say, a wrong was perpetrated here. The University administration, and the conservative critics have bowed reluctantly to public pressure, and have said let there be a memorial, but let us not decide whether the act which was committed was evil or good. When offered the opportunity to accept George Segal's sculptor of Abraham and Isaac, the university turned it down—the symbolism was too obvious. An arch, a set of pillars, a flat, paved area—these were preferable because they would not strongly evoke the incident. And the administration wants no descriptive plaque.<sup>1</sup>

Those who study the rhetorical stance of these articles will also notice that there seems to be a general reluctance to declare that two of the students killed at Kent State—Allison Krause and Jeffrey Miller—were active protesters, and two of them—Sandy Scheuer and William Schroeder—were not. Schroeder's status as a ROTC student further complicates the issue. Clearly, the National Guard did not make any distinction between them, but it is our duty as historians to embrace the complexity of the issue; the murder of both protesting and bystanding students, and the subsequent media treatment of those murders is inadequately understood by those who refuse to examine the stake of the murderers, the general public, the media, and the defendants in claiming the authority to define the dead.

This is not only a problem in the case of the Kent State killings, but of the Jackson State killings as well. As John Peoples explains, the "corner boys" who hung out around the Jackson State campus were a group distinct from (and frequently hostile to) the university students, but, "At night, neither policemen nor campus authorities could distinguish between the corner boys and the students." Riots at Jackson State, in People's description, seem to have sometimes started out as fights *between* the corner boys and the students, and then escalated into riots as both groups joined forces in assaulting white motorists in response to racial insults or grievances. Police, however, turned their guns on students and non-students alike in response to a perceived threat (most likely to their authority rather than their physical well-being), and wounded and killed members of both groups, as well as non-participants—the women taking shelter in their own dormitory.

This tendency to merge the identities of those wounded and killed reflects the desire of the left to make all the students martyrs and the desire of the right to lump them all together as "undesirables." If we fall for this ploy, we will lose the ability to accurately analyze the event, in the same way that we lose our ability to accurately analyze the Vietnam war when we reduce all soldiers to "heroes" or "victims." In the words of Laura Riding,

from *Anarchism Is Not Enough*:

A complicated problem is only further complicated by being simplified. A state of confusion is never made comprehensible by being given a plot. Appearances do not deceive if there are enough of them.

One of the most frequently used words in this anthology is "tragedy." It is a term used by victims, eyewitnesses and scholars to describe the murders of students at Kent and Jackson State. Tragedy, as Bill Gibson suggests in his book *The Perfect War*, is also a term commonly used to describe the war in Vietnam "as if thirty years of American intervention in Vietnam were a Greek play in which the hero is struck down by the gods. In the face of the incomprehensible, absolution: fate decreed defeat."<sup>2</sup> When we use the word "tragedy" we bow to the notion that these events were "no one's fault," that they were decreed by a Higher Power, inevitable, rather than the result of human decision. This is not simply semantic nitpicking—you will notice that "tragedy" and "rage" rarely coexist. Raging at the gods, after all, is a pointless activity and one that can occasionally get you killed.

Reading these articles as I edited them and typeset them was a strong emotional experience. At times I was overwhelmed by anger, and frustrated to tears. No person has spent a day in jail for committing these murders. Gene Young reminds us that this miscarriage of justice was the rule rather than the exception for the black community, and many of the writers here have taken this lesson to heart, connecting their struggle to the greater struggles against racism, poverty, and oppression. I hope that this collection moves you, as it has moved me. Remember the killings at Kent and Jackson State not as "tragedies," but as deliberate and unpunished instances of violence and oppression perpetrated by the state against dissenting groups.

*Those who do not remember are in jeopardy of  
suffering at the hands of those who say they do.*

—Stephen Vaughn

—Kali Tal, *Viet Nam Generation, Inc.*

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Maya Lin has designed a memorial at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center in Atlanta Georgia—dedicated to the activists who died in the struggle for black civil rights. The design was not controversial—most likely because it was built and paid for by civil rights activists and their supporters, who know which side they stand on, and who stands there with them—contains both a symbolic and representative aspect, and clearly honors those who died.
- <sup>2</sup> William Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press) 1986: 435.



Arthur Krause at settlement news conference in 1979. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

## **Four Students: Address Delivered at Kent State, May 4, 1974**

**Peter Davies**

As this is the first anniversary I have been able to attend, I would like to direct our thoughts back to the time before the shootings: to remember the four students who died here, and to reflect on what their families, this university and the community at large so tragically lost four years ago. By recalling who they were I hope to remind our fellow citizens that regardless of all the lurid stories to the contrary, they were the innocent victims of a chain of events that few Americans can look back at with pride. Such unnecessary destruction of human life is far from being unique in our history, but I believe that Kent State of May, 1970 will come to mark a significant turning point in our tendency to excuse official lawlessness no matter how blatant the abuses may be.

The recent federal indictments against one present and seven former members of the Ohio National Guard, no matter what the final disposition of the cases may be, has made it possible for us to assemble today without the sense of injustice that has haunted previous anniversaries. Although many grave questions still remain to be answered, the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court, on three of the civil suits stemming from the killings, has opened the door to further revelations. Those who made the decisions that maneuvered the students and the guardsmen into a confrontation situation have been called upon, by the high court's ruling, to account for their actions in a court of law. Consequently, there is every reason to now believe that justice will at long last be done. This holds equally true for the Jackson State cases which have, I understand, been in a state of limbo pending the Supreme Court's findings on the Kent appeals.

No student, James Michener said on many occasions, did anything for which he, or she, deserved to be shot, and yet we are here today to remember that four died and nine more were injured, two of them permanently. One is Dean Kahler, a gentle young man whose lifeless legs are mute testimony to the horror of what happened on this campus four years ago, and who is with us to share these moments of remembrance.

Who were those four students? Why were they so ferociously condemned as radicals, or passionately hailed as martyrs, when they were neither? Why did their deaths to the bullets of a few national guardsmen set them apart in the minds of a great many Americans? Some of the answers,

I believe, are self-evident in the tone and content of the rhetoric that rolled so glibly off the tongues of our now disgraced national leadership. We all know what was said, and their words fostered an emotional atmosphere of anti-student sentiment which turned into an almost frightening fury at the victims, as though killing students was too mild a punishment for their audacity in refusing to disperse. The facts of what these four young people were doing at the time they died were literally buried beneath an avalanche of official allegations and distortions, and it took almost four years for the parents and many others to dig those facts out into the light of day.

Now that a Federal Grand Jury of Ohio citizens has found probable cause for prosecuting some guardsmen, just as a State Grand Jury found similar cause for prosecuting twenty-five students and others back in 1970, it is time to talk about the human qualities those four young citizens possessed and, perhaps, to explain why I am here today. My contribution toward justice in this incident began, four years ago, with the feeling that any one of the killed and wounded could so easily have been my own child because of the circumstances surrounding that long fusillade of deadly gunfire. Subsequent intensive probing of their backgrounds and life styles by the government, the news media and Mr. Michener, not only justified those feelings, but made me very proud to know the parents of such fine sons and daughters.

When Jeffrey Miller was in fourth grade he, and a friend, on their own initiative, decided to conduct a study of racism in America. To complete this ambitious project they contacted *Ebony Magazine* for additional material and information. It was not until a staff member of the Journal called Jeff's mother to praise her son for his concern and resourcefulness, that his parents learned of his keen interest in social problems at such a young age. Although Jeff very much enjoyed participating in just about every kind of sports activity, his happiness was frequently darkened by the suffering of others, both at home and abroad.

During the last few years of his brief life, spent mostly at Michigan State University, Jeffrey Miller became increasingly concerned about our involvement in the Vietnam war, and as early as 1966 he wrote these words:

The strife and fighting continue into the night.  
 The mechanical birds sound of death  
 As they buzz overhead spitting fire  
 Into the doomed towns whose women and children  
 Run and hide in the bushes and ask why,  
 Why are we not left to live our own lives?  
 In the pastures, converted into battlefields,  
 The small metal pellets speed through the air,  
 Pausing occasionally to claim another victim.  
 A teenager from a small Ohio farm  
 Clutches his side in pain, and,  
 As he feels his life ebbing away,

He, too, asks why,  
Why is he dying here, thousands of miles from home,  
Giving his life for those who did not even ask for his help?

Much was made of the fact that Jeff, with his distinctive head-band, was out there that day giving the national guardsmen the finger and throwing objects at the soldiers from distances of about two hundred feet. We have, in the past, ascribed to his behavior whatever our social and political environments have conditioned us to see in his conduct. Nevertheless, I believe it is fair to say that Jeffrey Miller was simply expressing, inappropriately, the same kind of frustration that motivated Allison Krause to shout obscenities, Dean Kahler to throw a rock, and Alan Canfora to wave a black flag. All were shot by guardsmen. Jeff and Allison were killed and Dean paralyzed in what we were told was a lesson in just what law and order is all about. But what of some of the other victims?

Sandy Scheuer, for example, was faithfully following the instructions of former University President Robert White to attend classes as usual. This generally happy-go-lucky young woman was more concerned with trying to help those afflicted with speech impediments than attending demonstrations to protest America's participation in the killing of civilians in South-east Asia. Sandy had what I call an open heart, one that is as vulnerable to the pain of others as it is strong in the determination to give aid and comfort where it can be the most effective. This loving, outgoing human being had so much to offer those less fortunate than herself, yet she died here four years ago because of that chain of events that no official, with the power to intervene, sought to break before it culminated in disaster.

Sandy was not a politically conscious person, but rather a generous individual who believed she could contribute something constructive toward overcoming our general tendency to shun the needs of the handicapped. As fate, or what you will, would have it, she was walking to her next class in speech therapy when a guardsman's bullet tore through her neck. We shall never know how many Americans Sandy could have helped to conquer their speech problems, anymore than we shall ever know what Jeffrey Miller might have contributed toward improving our society. Both were taken from us violently, just as tens of thousands of fine young Americans were taken from us in a war that few of us understood and fewer still can now endorse. The loss to science, medicine, industry, and the liberal arts, that is this nation's sacrifice to a questionable cause, can never be calculated in terms of impeded progress and parental grief.

If it were necessary to classify Bill Schroeder as symbolic of something in our society, my immediate response would be that almost meaningless label, the All-American Boy. A more appropriate description, perhaps, would be world citizen. This sensitive young man had involved himself in so many aspects of our past and future that it is equally impossible to assess

what we have lost by his untimely death. Throughout his pre-college education he was an honor student, with a keen interest in the history of the American Indian and an abiding love for music. Not only was he a dedicated athlete, concerned about the causes and affects of war, but also he was able to make time available in which he could explore the worlds of geology, psychology and photography. In 1969 Bill accepted an ROTC scholarship, thereby committing himself to four years at college, four years of active military service, and two years in the Army Reserves. Such a commitment at the age of seventeen may, or may not, have eventually been regretted, but whatever the outcome might have been there is little doubt in my mind that he would have faithfully honored his obligation. How is it, then, that Bill Schroeder is dead?

The answer to this question is not easy to come by, but I believe he was out there four years ago today because he was going through that difficult period in our lives when we hover on the brink between childhood and adulthood, when we have to make a decision that is strictly on our own. I think that Bill was confronted with a natural desire to remain faithful to his family's code of behavior and his need to identify with the frustrations that so many of his peers were experiencing following President Nixon's decision to support the South Vietnamese invasions of Cambodia. Had he not possessed such a thirst for knowledge and participation in human events, I doubt that he would have bothered about the noon rally that day. But he did, and he went, and it cost him, his family, and the nation, because he died to a bullet that struck him in the back as he lay motionless face down upon the ground.

Just eleven days before her death, Allison Krause celebrated her nineteenth birthday in the company of her parents and her lover. At that happy gathering was her younger sister, a remarkable person who was to suffer to a degree that few of us could experience without sustaining permanently crippling scars. Her fortitude after May fourth, in the face of such cruel adversity, symbolized for me the spirit of Allison. It is hardly surprising that her parents, and the young man who loved Allison, and myself, should find in this sister the quiet strength of a character that unwittingly became the fountainhead of our determination to establish the truth about the circumstances surrounding Allison's death.

It is difficult for me to speak about Allison because, right or wrong, it was her death that touched me the deepest. Since it happened, I have tried to explain to myself why this should be, but answers such as beauty and youth do not adequately justify the commitment of four years of one's family and business life. I admit to an emotional contempt for male assault upon the female, but it is more likely that I saw myself in Allison as much as I saw her as my own daughter. Despite my political conservatism, I understood why she was out there shouting at the advancing guardsmen with their M-1 rifles and fixed bayonets. On the other hand, it might well have been a response

to the fact that she had shouted at a guard officer, "Flowers are better than bullets," or that she had wept that day, not from the tear gas, but because of what was happening to her, her friends, and her campus. Whatever the explanation for my being here may be, I do know that it began because a part of me died with Allison Krause, and the stubbornness that was one of her inherited characteristics, as much as her love for, and desire to help retarded children, aroused my British blood of never going along with the popular notion that authority is infallible, especially when the facts point to the contrary.

Time does not permit me to speak at length about the four students who died here. Suffice to say that on this fourth anniversary they are remembered as much for who they were as why they are dead. I do, however, want to take a few moments to remind you about the young man who was killed at the University of Wisconsin when the mathematics center was the object of a bomb protest against the war. The fact that the perpetrator of this crime was unaware of the victim's presence in the building is no more excusable than the claim that guardsmen firing into a crowd of students did so without intent to kill. Blowing up a building is just as inexcusable as shooting at defenseless people, and the rationales given for both incidents are equally offensive to my concept of law and order.

There is no denying my sense of vindication now that a Federal Grand Jury and the Supreme Court of the United States have set the wheels of justice in motion. That this is happening, I feel compelled to point out, is in no way due to any great efforts over the last four years by the so-called new left or the antiwar movement, but rather because a few citizens worked day in and day out to get the Justice Department and the courts to recognize the fact that the constitution and the laws of the United States had been violated by the shootings. Now it is up to juries to decide whether or not these violations warrant convictions and compensation. Whatever the outcome, these citizens accomplished this breakthrough despite the intimidating handicap of having to deal with an administration in Washington that had wrapped itself in our flag whilst presiding over the slow and secret burying of our Bill of Rights.

To those of you who share my concern about the future of our country, the reversal of the Nixon-Mitchell decision against ever convening a Federal Grand Jury investigation should inspire you to follow in the footsteps of Paul Keane, Greg Rambo and Bill Gordon, former students who came to the support of the families with their petition to President Nixon, an act of faith which was recognized by Dr. Glen Olds when he accompanied Keane and Rambo to the White House in October, 1971. Apathy and cynicism, as Arthur Krause has said on more than one occasion, will get you nowhere, and he should know, because it was this man who went before the nation the day after his daughter's death and asked if dissent is a crime, if that was a reason for killing her. Not only can you fight City Hall, you can fight the

White House too, if you have the patience and stamina to remain true to your convictions and to work within the channels provided by our democratic system of government.

In a recent article I wrote for *American Report* concerning the Patricia Hearst kidnaping, I expressed my belief that the ultimate human failure in any society is our inability to envision our own children in the tragedies which befall the sons and daughters of others. As the parents of the four students killed soon learned, a great many of us are all too quick to moralize about the lives of strangers that have been destroyed under circumstances comparable, or not even similar, to what happened here. How often do we hear people criticizing a female victim of murder because she was "out late," or she must have been "no good" because she let her killer enter her apartment. The perpetrator of the crime is all too often the object of misplaced sympathy, so it is hardly surprising that the four dead students should become the objects of such chilling venom that one wonders to what extent social guilt inspires vitriolic condemnation of the victims.

Patricia Hearst, for example, existed in an isolated world where summary execution was a day to day possibility, yet there were quite a few ready and willing to suspect the worst and to accuse her of engineering her own kidnaping. After the dramatic bank robbery in San Francisco even the Attorney General of the United States got into the act and accused her of being a "common criminal." After the shootings here, Allison Krause was called the "campus whore" who was "tattooed from head to toe" and Jeffrey Miller was said to be "so covered with lice" he was destined to die anyway from being "so dirty." Such utter nonsense is easily dismissed, but we should ask ourselves why there are people who so quickly condemn the victims. Is it the human trait of selfishness? We can always afford to sacrifice the life of the other guy for the so-called general good of the majority, and this was painfully evident in the reaction to the killings on this campus. Jeff, Sandy, Bill, and Allison symbolized the public's sacrifice to atone for the bombings and burnings committed by others. The fact that they were innocent was irrelevant to the greater need for a tough stand against the weathermen and their kind.

Murder, kidnaping and rape have plagued mankind since the beginning of recorded history, yet civilization is presumed to be at its most advanced stage as we approach the twenty-first century. Recent events, however, suggest that respect for human life is declining in a world where overpopulation is becoming a major threat to our ability to meet such a challenge. The Reverend John Adams put his finger on this problem when he noted that the condensation of James Michener's account of "What Happened and Why" in the April 1971 issue of *Reader's Digest* contained an advertisement for Ortho Chevron Chemical Company. "In advertising insecticides for use in gardens," he wrote, "bold black words stated: 'The balance of nature is

predicated on the fact that one thing dies so that another may live.' Some believe," Mr. Adams continued, "That this is what happened. Some believe that the shooting of students at Kent was necessary in order that other students could live and the society could be preserved." Likewise some believe that Patty Hearst should be abandoned to whatever fate the SLA might decree for her so that others may not become the victims of kidnapping, just as many supported the bombing of Hanoi as a means of forcing North Vietnam to sign a so-called peace settlement. The fact that hundreds of civilians were killed to accomplish this political necessity was irrelevant, just as the Viet Cong's vicious murders of helpless men and women in the villages of South Vietnam is irrelevant to their political goals. Yet all, including My Lai, are contemptible, inexcusable crimes against humanity, crimes which the allies prosecuted so vigorously at Nuremburg, but which the United Nations ignore today.

I could, of course, go on at great length about our feelings toward the violence that seems to have become a part of the daily existence of countless millions who simply want to live out their lives in peace and free from fear. It is so much easier to turn a blind eye on the day to day tragedies which befall our fellow human beings, and sometimes it becomes imperative that we do, otherwise we would all become victims of the pain and anguish that is constantly before us in newspapers and the television screen. So I want to close on a more uplifting note, if not a happy one.

We are here today not to mourn the death of four students, but rather to honor their memory. We are here to recall once again that they were decent young people, like their two black brothers killed at Jackson State ten days later, people who should not, by any yardstick of right and wrong, be dead. There are many more than these six students, but their deaths, like those of the unknown soldiers, are symbolic of the countless victims who died from shootings that were unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable.

To the Trustees, the Administration, the Faculty, and the Student Body of Kent State, I say the turning point we have so recently reached will eventually lead to the long awaited healing of the terrible wounds inflicted here four years ago. The spirit of what Jeff Miller, Sandy Scheuer, Bill Schroeder, and Allison Krause represented for our future has been ever restless until this day. They should never have been killed, but they were, and so it fell to their parents and a few others to make sure that this truth be known. The time will come, I say to you today, when this University will be looked upon as a symbol of the triumph of American justice over the travesty that has haunted you for so many unhappy years.



Reverend John Adams at a rally. Kent State University, August 20, 1977. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

# **Address Delivered at Kent State, May 4, 1984**

**Tom Grace**

Fourteen years ago today, our surroundings were being disturbed by the din of agitated protest, by clouds of teargas, and finally by the horrifying sound of gunfire. Impassioned voices were stilled, some forever, by thirteen seconds of terror—sixty-two shots in all—from M-1 rifles, shotguns and .45 caliber automatics.

By the time National Guard officers finally regained control over their gunmen and had them cease firing, thirteen Kent students lay dead, wounded, or dying. Hundreds more were stunned as if they had been hit. None who saw defenseless people shot down—save the guardsmen responsible for the shooting—will ever be the same. Our lives were permanently changed.

How far away that day must seem for many of you, as we gather inside on an overcast afternoon on a day unlike the one of fourteen years ago. How profound the contrast between those seconds and minutes of terror and the misty serenity of this day.

For those assembled here too young to remember, for those who were guilty of the wanton killings, and for the legions of Americans who cried out for peace in 1970, we are here today to tell all who will listen that our dead classmates will not be forgotten.

Ever year for the past fourteen springs, hundreds—and sometimes thousands—have come to pay respects to the memory of Allison Krause and Sandy Scheuer and Jeff Miller and Bill Schroeder. Some of us who still bear scars from wounds suffered on the fourth of May have come from distant portions of the country to recall our classmates' sacrifices.

With the recent birth of my second child, I have been more aware than ever of the magnitude of the sacrifice made by Sandy and Jeff, and of what was stolen from Bill and Allison. They will never know the joys and trials of parenting. Their families will never see their children grow into adulthood. Why? Because a group of armed men robbed four people of their futures by gunning them down just as they entered the threshold of their adult lives.

I will not attempt to retrace the events that led up to the burst of gunfire. The outcome has become part of our heritage even if the facts and meaning of the killings remain in dispute.

Rather, we will address ourselves to the legacy of Kent State and of what we are memorializing.

The deaths of four students here and of two more at Jackson State occurred because some had the audacity to protest, in sometimes militant fashion, the invasion of Cambodia by U.S. ground forces. The then-governor of California surely spoke for many in the establishment when he intimated a bloodbath for those who opposed the country's policy. It was left to the governor of Ohio, James Rhodes, to make good his western counterpart's admonitions.

Yet if the killings were supposed to silence antiwar critics, then the tactic failed, for the shootings only served to intensify the movement. Never before or since were so many campuses racked by protests. Even today, when I meet a college-educated person of my age, they are able to recall their involvement in protests against the killings and the invasion of Cambodia.

The demonstrators accomplished what electoral activity alone could not—to force the issue of Vietnam and Cambodia into the body politic in such a way that it could no longer be ignored. Over Richard Nixon's strong objections, two U.S. Senators, Sherman Cooper and the late Frank Church, co-sponsored an amendment restricting future operations in Cambodia. Its terms required the executive to withdraw the U.S. forces two months after the original April 30, 1970, invasion.

The politics of protest grew to such magnitude that the system was compelled to respond or face further measures. Cooper-Church, passed in final form as the War Powers Act, marked the first time during the Vietnam experience that Congress acted to restrict a President's ability to wage undeclared war. I have been told by combat veterans who were a part of the Cambodian invasion that they felt their lives had been saved by the protests. If true, then the lives lost here have greater meaning.

Most recently, the War Powers Act served as the basis for the Lebanon debate. Had Congress exercised their power instead of showing only their timidity, some three hundred Marines would undoubtedly now be alive. Missing in the fall of 1983, however, was the vibrant mass movement of the late 60s and early 70s. The apparent lesson is that mass pressure is required to prevent the introduction of U.S. soldiers into unpopular foreign conflicts.

While a mass movement opposing imperial penetration of Third World countries such as Lebanon or El Salvador does not exist on the scale it once did, there remains a widespread skepticism about American foreign policy objectives.

This is a legacy of Kent State and of Cambodia that has become known as the Vietnam Syndrome. There are millions of Americans who agreed with George McGovern when he said it was wrong for our country to support every two-bit dictator in the world. And part of the appeal of Gary Hart and Jesse Jackson is their often-stated opposition to the commitment of

U.S. forces into conflicts in the underdeveloped world. In Jackson's case, he has questioned the very motives and aims of corporation and government policies.

We have today an entire generation of Americans who came to a newfound political understanding during the Vietnam war. Our political outlook was shaped and fashioned by the utter ruthlessness of American policy in Indochina, as well as on the home front in Kent, Ohio and Jackson, Mississippi. Commentators, speaking of a largely white, university educated group, have dubbed us the "Big Chill" generation. While the consciousness of many of the college-educated Sixties generation reflects primarily middle-class aspirations and, hence, is often found wanting on issues concerning working Americans, the poor and disfranchised minorities, it nevertheless forms a basis of opposition to reckless foreign adventures. This, too, is a legacy of Kent State and Vietnam.

On the domestic front, the Kent and Jackson State killings awoke millions of our countrymen to the ugly realities of which minorities and the urban poor have long been aware—that the police and National Guard are the ultimate instruments of rule. At Kent and Jackson, deadly force was used to contain what, in retrospect, was resistance not to government rule, but only to Nixon's war policies.

"Kent State," in the words of former presidential aide and convicted felon H.R. Haldeman, "marked a turning point for Nixon—a beginning of his long downhill slide towards Watergate."

Some apparently are anxious to rehabilitate Nixon. I will always remember him for the siege mentality he developed during the years of protest that engulfed his administration. Illegal countermeasures first used against Black Panthers were next employed against the antiwar movement. Reactionary steps were then taken towards the press and were finally directed at the opposition party headquartered in 1972 at the Watergate Apartments in Washington.

During the unraveling of Nixon's administration between 1973 and 1974, three Attorney Generals, two of whom were convicted for criminal wrongdoing, occupied the office directing the Justice Department. The first two—Mitchell and Kleindienst—blocked federal action on Kent State. Hence, four years passed before the Justice Department, badly shaken by Watergate, succumbed to pressure from 50,000 people who in their petitions demanded action against the Ohio National Guard. A large measure of credit is due to author Peter Davies and churchman John Adams who pleaded and prayed for justice from a department whose stated mission is to uphold the law.

When indictments were returned against eight Ohio guardsmen for their roles in the shooting deaths, they were charged only with conspiring to violate our civil rights. Rather than indict the guardsmen for charges easily

proven, the Department of Justice, as they recently did in the case of the shooting deaths of five anti-Klan demonstrators in Greensboro, North Carolina, chose to prosecute the killers under hard-to-prove sections of the U.S. Criminal Code. This "let's indict the killers for charges we can't prove" mentality led to predictable results.

In 1974, a federal judge dismissed the cases against the guardsmen before sending them to a jury. The charade was played out again three weeks ago when an all-white jury exonerated nine Nazi party and Ku Klux Klansmen in the execution-style killing of five protestors.

The lesson of Kent State? Simply that Mississippi justice prevails in Ohio and North Carolina if the victimized are protestors calling for peace or racial justice. Jesse Jackson's statement that the Greensboro travesty "threatens everyone in a free society" rings true for Kent State as well.

These are unpleasant realities for some, but important lessons for all. For those of us present on May 4, 1970, the foregoing constitutes a lasting legacy. Yet, lessons seldom outlast the living and legacies survive—in part, because of permanent memorials.

Following years of disputes and no small amount of callousness, the new Kent State administration is giving serious consideration to the erection of a fitting memorial to the dead.

Even an unrepentant antiwar activist like myself can feel a welcome sense of openness from Dr. Schwartz. His administration has a chance, as all new administrations do, to right many wrongs and to help heal our wounds.

Here at Kent we already have a grossly-placed monument to insensitivity, for the construction of the gym on the other side of the commons stands out as the single most unfeeling act ever committed by a post-1970 Kent State administration. If the building of the gym represented callous disregard, other memorial ventures, such as were proposed by former KSU President Brage Golding, were simply ridiculous.

The most serious, and in my mind, appropriate, tribute to date was created by the renowned sculptor George Segal. His memorial was rejected by Kent State as being too violent. Imagine that. A university administration that cooperated with police in employing all manners of repressive tactics and public humiliation against its students, its alumni, and—on one occasion—even the parents of slain student Sandy Scheuer, rejected a thought-provoking sculpture of Abraham slaying his son. One can only assume that the thought the sculpture provoked would be ones past administrations could not bear.

The current efforts by the May 4 Committee to choose a suitable permanent memorial will serve as a litmus test of the new administration's sincerity. The Committee, which I understand has an appointed chairman, cannot escape the sad fact that violence was done to defenseless civilians.

While shape and design are not unimportant, what is inscribed or not inscribed will be of lasting significance.

I submit that an inscription which tells in unadorned fashion what happened here is essential. We do not need more gymnasiums to conceal what occurred at Kent State. Rather, we need a Committee ready to act with moral fortitude so future generations can stand near the pagoda and read of how thirteen Americans were killed and wounded by the Ohio National Guard in a protest over the invasion of Cambodia.

"Why should it say that?" some will ask. I answer: "Because that is what happened."

While a student at Kent State I majored in History with a particular focus on the Civil War. The battlefields of that war—America's bloodiest and most-remembered conflict—dot the landscape from Southern Pennsylvania to Western Missouri. Decades after the war, veterans returned to the sites to dedicate monuments to their fallen friends and to commemorate their sacrifices, deeds, and actions. Today, long after the last veterans have died, we can still visit the fields of conflict. We can read the inscriptions on the granite monuments and understand what happened on the banks of Antietam Creek or on the hills surrounding Gettysburg.

It may be inevitable that the Committee's charge of memorializing the controversial killings will itself generate controversy. Yet we must remember who it is that comes back to remember and pay homage. Certainly not James Rhodes or General Canterbury or General Del Corso. No, it is those of us who were wronged and our supporters both old and new. Our feelings—the views of the four families—must not be dismissed again.

None of us are anxious to re-fight past battles, but all of us, like the Civil War veterans who fought either for or against freedom and the Union, will someday be dead. This memorial can ensure that future generations will know and understand the bloody day of fourteen years past. We owe that to the memory of those who died on the other side of this campus.

If Kent State truly wants to make peace with the past, they must make peace with the living. We will not rest until we are certain that our classmates are never forgotten.



Julian Bond and Tom Grace at Kent State, May 4, 1988. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

## **Address Delivered at Kent State, May 4, 1987**

**Tom Grace**

For some it may sound strange to say how glad I am to be here today. Certainly, I have ample reason to be troubled on this, the seventeenth anniversary of the shooting deaths of four of my classmates. I know the killers walk free and that they live out their lives unmolested in nearby Ravenna, in Akron, in Wooster and in any one of a number of other places. I know justice was not done. I know that the one chiefly responsible for the wanton killing of Sandy Scheuer, who died next to me in an ambulance, has had a statue erected to himself on the grounds of your state capitol. How unfitting that James Rhodes, a man who called Kent students brownshirts, is remembered with a bronze statue while those killed by his soldiers still await a suitable memorial tribute.

Those self-appointed overseers of the Kent memorial agonized over the decision as to whether the monument to the fallen should have the names of those murdered inscribed on its walls. They deliberated—without any input from the most wronged—whether to have a historical plaque affixed to the side of the memorial. Apparently, there was no such indecision when Governor Rhodes ensured that one of his favorite sayings was carved into the base of his bronze likeness: “Profit is not dirty work in Ohio.” Perhaps an elderly steel worker friend of mine had Rhodes in mind when he said the words of our 1776 declaration would have more accurate meaning today had it been written to read “life, liberty and the pursuit of profit.” Perhaps this would be a truer description of the aims of those who rule this nation.

In spite of all this I remain happy to be with you as I have on past spring days on the fourth of May. Military veterans have told me of the terrifying exhilaration they experienced after being shot at and missed. On May 4, I was not fortunate enough to have been missed. The fact that my wound was not mortal, however, has enabled me to stay active in a movement for peace abroad, and for economic, social and racial justice at home.

I am also pleased that the man on whose statue pigeons leave their droppings was defeated by a landslide margin last November. Just as the killings at Kent State may have contributed to his May 1970 primary setback, the United Students Against Rhodes—formed here at Kent—can claim at least a small measure of credit for his defeat in the November election of 1986.

Moreover, I also derive great satisfaction from seeing so many of you here on May fourth, both old friends and new. Any number of you were in nursery school when Troop G and Company A of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on us that Monday afternoon seventeen years past. By coming out today you are demonstrating how aware you are of the importance of remembering Kent State. However much we would disagree with James Kilpatrick on who to blame for Kent State, the conservative columnist was right when he wrote recently that "the high school graduate who is ignorant of Kent State... has missed the cultural boat."

I know some of today's young are unaware of the cultural and political significance of what happened here nearly two decades ago, while many others, including those of my generation, have overlooked or forgotten a murderous deed no less horrifying—the killings of two students at all black Jackson State University on May 14, 1970.

Today some in the nation are reading signals from President Reagan that racism is now back in style. "It's just like the old days," he might say, "when we didn't have a racial problem."

However distressing incidents like Howard Beach are to opponents of racial injustice we would do well to remember that when this university announced plans to build a gymnasium on the site of the killings, KSU students like Alan Canfora rallied behind the slogan "Long Live the Spirit of Kent and Jackson State." In doing so, KSU students of the 1970s carried on what KSU students did in the 1960s when black and white undergraduates blocked the Oakland Police from interviewing potential recruits at this university. It was the Oakland Police who, among other things, had, earlier in 1968, shot down seventeen-year-old Black Panther Bobby Hutton. These struggles of the past point the way forward to what we must do in the present. We must do as Jesse Jackson has said and move the fight from the racial battlegrounds to the economic common ground.

When this commonality of economic and political interests has been realized and effectively acted upon, the movement for social justice has experienced its greatest gains. During the dark days of the Depression, with unemployment at record highs, the men and women of the CIO broke the color line and organized blacks and whites into the same industrial unions. By refusing to acquiesce to the Jim Crow mentality which had crippled past organizing efforts, the unity of workers in the steel, auto, and rubber industries made the union movement into a force for economic and racial justice.

Similarly, during the 1960s, white and black students went to Mississippi to challenge what southern historian James W. Silver termed "the closed society." It was a society imbued with what Silver called an "all pervading doctrine.... white supremacy." When, in 1961, a newly formed group, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) first embarked on

voter registration work in Mississippi they found only 4% of the states black population registered to vote. One hundred years after the start of the Civil War, Mississippi blacks were so oppressed that many did not realize that black people *could* vote. Founders of SNCC like Julian Bond, with whom I am privileged to share this podium, helped break the back of Jim Crow. Into the cauldron of the worst racism in America went SNCC members like Massillon, Ohio native Chuck McDrew and Stokely Carmichael, who spoke on this very spot seven years ago. Against tremendous odds SNCC withstood thousands of arrests, hundreds of beatings and an unknown number of killings. They organized a powerful independent political movement, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. By 1965, along with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, they had generated enough pressure to win passage of the revolutionary Voting Rights Act. The Second Reconstruction had come to Mississippi and Alabama and hundreds of thousands of rural blacks cast ballots for the first time in their lives.

As was the case at Kent State, however, the price was high. During the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign three civil rights workers, Mississippi native James Chaney and two white New Yorkers, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, were murdered by sheriff's deputies. The three were killed, execution style, after being apprehended while investigating the Ku Klux Klan's burning of the all black Mount Zion Church in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Unlike the indecision experienced by KSU administrators, the parishioners of Mount Zion quickly dedicated a plaque to the three in 1966 after they rebuilt their burned-down church. "Out of One Blood God Hath Made All Men," it reads. "This plaque is dedicated to the memory of Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman whose concern for others, and more particularly those of this community led to their early martyrdom. Their death quickened men's consciences and more firmly established justice, liberty and brotherhood in our land."

It was in this same state, however, six years later that elements of the Mississippi Highway Patrol shot to death twenty-year-old Jackson State student Phillip Gibbs and high school student James Earl Green on the evening of May 14, 1970.

Jackson State students on May 7 had been among the millions of college age young who demonstrated against the invasion of Cambodia and the killings in Kent, Ohio. A week later, they had become victims of the very crimes they were protesting. Just as General Canterbury announced one half hour before the Kent shootings that we would find out what law and order was all about, the Jackson police gave the following radio order the evening of May 14: "Call that security guard out there at Jackson State and see if they can't scatter them niggers." Before the night was out, Gibbs and Green were dead and twelve others were wounded, most of them as they took shelter inside their Alexander Hall dormitory.

The lessons of the 1930s and the 1960s teach many things. The state has taught us where there is struggle there will be sacrifice. We have also learned from our history that what is first perpetrated against blacks will also, if left unchecked, be dealt out to whites. This was just demonstrated again last week in South Africa when, for the first time, police used guns to quell white students protesting apartheid.

Yet just as the sacrifices of the civil rights activists broke the back of Jim Crow racial codes, the sacrifices of Jackson and Kent State students helped end the war in Southeast Asia. In fact, it was organizations like SNCC and leaders like Julian Bond who were among the first to oppose the Vietnam war. We must learn that our greatest gains have come when blacks and whites fought together rather than each other.

In 1987 America, racial attacks—whether in Howard Beach in Queens, NY, or in Forsyth County, Georgia, or even at the University of Massachusetts—are on the increase. In 1987 America, unions, once a vanguard in the struggle for justice, are all too often in the hands of those supporting the status quo. In 1987 America, Ronald Reagan is spending millions to arm and equip the Contras in an illegal bid to overthrow the sovereign government of Nicaragua.

Yet there are two aspects to everything. Thousands have marched in Forsyth County and Howard Beach—where a twenty-three-year-old black man, Michael Griffith, was killed in December 1968—to demand justice. The debate is going on in the unions between the old guard and those who advocate a new militancy and for putting movement back into the labor movement. Just last week my own union, the New York State Public Employees Federation AFL-CIO, was among more than twenty-five labor organizations that marched thousands strong in a Washington protest against administration policies in South Africa and Central America.

This is what must happen—an interlocking of movements that can utilize every form of struggle: rallies and marches, petition and boycott campaigns, lobbying elected representatives or electing new representatives who reflect the mass of public opinion in this country against U.S. involvement in Central America.

Although because of lessons learned from Vietnam a *clear* majority oppose war preparations in Central America, a *near* majority—disproportionately black and brown, young and poor—exercise their right *not* to vote because they feel, with considerable justification, there is nothing or no one to vote for.

Yet there is an exception on the national stage. A man who brought two million first-time voters into the polling booths in 1984. A man feared by the big money contributors because of his genuine concern for the disfranchised. A man who only one year after the Kent shooting came to this campus to remember Jeff and Allison, Sandy and Bill. The man, of course, is Jesse Jackson.

In 1984 and again in 1988 Jackson has and will continue to offer the most effective antidote to the social and economic miseries brought on by years of Reaganomics. Knowing what we know, Jesse Jackson realizes that one Republican Party is enough. He stands almost alone in the Democratic Party as a voice for the left out and left behind, be they students who can't get loans or women who can't enjoy equal rights, or workers who can't keep their jobs or oppressed minorities who can't buy a home because the color their skin says no sale. Whether the victimized are jobless blacks in Chicago, striking Chicana women in Watsonville, California, or dispossessed farmers in Missouri, Jesse Jackson has heeded their call.

We cannot afford to retreat from the importance of the Jackson campaign in favor of a Gebhardt or a Gore because they are white and "more electable." Jesse Jackson was the third largest Democratic vote getter in 1984. If we believe in what we are doing, if we are to have an effective national movement that seeks fundamental social change we must have an effective national spokesman. While most Democrats are content to simply dull the sharp edge of Reaganism, Jesse Jackson offers us a real difference and a new direction away from a war driven economy. In this spirit we must work towards 1988 while setting our sights on the 1990s. There will be no immediate victories. Certainly there will be no victory at all without the unity of black and white. Martin Luther King, Jr. electrified 250,000 marchers in 1963 when he told those assembled in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial that "many of our white brothers realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny, that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone."

We couldn't walk alone in 1963 and we cannot afford to go our separate ways behind separate candidates in 1988. This year and next and the year after that we have an opportunity, indeed an obligation to help transform America by uniting the many needy to challenge the truly greedy.

In conclusion we must never forget that the killings at Kent became possible because the killings of blacks became commonplace. We cannot afford to travel the self-defeating road where one social movement works in isolation from the other. We can limit the number of new Jackson and Kent States only be refusing to accept injustice towards anyone.

Let us go forth remembering those who lost their lives while opposing an immoral war. But not only that, let us also go forth with the mission of making America a land free from economic want, free from social injustice and free from foreign war. Commemorations fail to accomplish everything they should if we leave here and return to the routines of our daily lives satisfied that we have done enough for one year.

I propose today no simple plan for the building of a better America. I know simply that we cannot allow a system of injustice to go unchallenged and unchanged.

Like the civil rights martyrs of Freedom Summer, the Kent victims need and will have a memorial. Such monuments will help us and future generations to remember those who died here.

Memorialize them, too, by building a movement in opposition to racial oppression, in opposition to economic inequality, and in opposition to the plans of Ronald Reagan who would use the lives of young Americans to thwart the destinies of the Nicaraguan people. Let us remember the lives of Sandy and Bill, and Phil Gibbs, Allison, Jeff Miller and James Earl Green by struggling to gain better control over our own destinies. They would, I believe, thank us for that.



At 12:24 pm every May 4, people leave the vigil site and come down to the Commons to attend the commemorative program at Kent State University. This photo was taken May 4, 1976 © by John P. Rowe.

## **A Tribute to Arthur Krause: Delivered at Kent State University, May 4, 1989**

**Kendra Lee Hicks**

I am here before you to pay tribute to a man—Arthur Krause, the father of Allison Beth Krause, a student slain in a parking lot on the Kent State University Campus on May 4, 1970.

Most of us here know him as the most prominent leader in the quest for justice for the murders that took place here in 1970, a man whose efforts enable us to gather here today.

When I questioned those who knew him well, I heard these descriptive words mentioned: “strong,” “stubborn,” “vital,” “larger than life,” “warm and generous,” “fierce.” I heard phrases like “the iron man of the Kent State family,” “he was relentless in his quest for justice,” “I felt lucky that I had the benefit of his friendship,” “we are richer for having known him.” I feel fortunate to have met him.

America first heard from Arthur the day after the shootings. When speaking with television newsmen, he expressed the sentiments of the horribly shocked citizens of this country: “Have we come to such a state in this country that a young girl has to be shot because she disagrees with the action of her government?”

We stopped and listened to him. And we heard from him again. For the next four years, Arthur continually asked for justice. He wanted someone held accountable for the death of his daughter. He called for congressional hearings and federal investigations into the shootings. He appealed for the right to a day in court. He pushed through the Ohio District Court, the United States District Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals, and finally to the U.S. Supreme Court, all the while trying to break down the wall of Ohio’s sovereign immunity law—the law that said that defendants could not be sued without first giving their consent to such an action. But he would never back down. As Martin Scheuer, the father of Sandy Scheuer, once told me, “Arthur was a man of principle.”

In the first year of the struggle, Arthur was joined by Peter Davies, an ordinary citizen from Staten Island, NY who had been appalled at the shootings and he himself had spent months researching the shootings, looking for clues to explain why the National Guard had fired:

For almost a year...we tilted at windmills alone, but without his dynamic strength I could not have stayed the course. Arthur's quest was never idealistic. He was always a realist in dealing with the Nixon administration, and despite his grief and anger, whenever we accomplished something that seemed to me a big step forward, he would laugh and say, "that and ten cents'll get us a cup of coffee." We had more cups of coffee than I care to remember.

Elaine Holstein, the mother of slain Jeff Miller, described Arthur as "totally indispensable." She writes, "Indispensable—because my life in those years after our children were killed and we struggled to find some semblance of justice—would have been far more hellish without the Rock of Gibraltar that was Art Krause.."

In 1971, Arthur and Peter were joined by the Reverend John Adams of the United Methodist Church. This addition to the team had a very positive effect. As Sanford Jay Rosen, attorney for the families in the final settlement, observes:

Two people, Arthur Krause and John Adams, are most responsible for the measure of justice the Kent State victims and their families have received. Arthur brought anger and passion to the cause. John brought hope and compassion. Without these two, all would have been for naught."

Arthur's passion was so deep due to the fact that he knew what lay at the root of the problem. As he recalled his life, he said, "I was like everyone else, and then this happened to us." In recalling other episodes of extreme violence in our country before May of 1970, he said:

I feel a great sense of guilt because I realized what was going on but didn't do a damn thing about it. Like most Americans these days, we sit on the fence and depend on the lawyer, the church, and the government to do whatever should be done, but if the government doesn't have the right people on the job, nothing will be done,...and we, the people, have to make the government good. Apathy will not be part of my make-up anymore. Apathy is what caused Kent State.

In 1975, Arthur's four years of persistence paid off. The victims' families were given their day in court. Vindication should have been forthcoming. It was not. Elaine Holstein recounts:

It turned out to be many, many days—some of the most painful days of my life. As we sat in the courtroom and heard our lovely children vilified by the defendants and their lawyers...I found myself increasingly seeking out Art, to become healed by his unshakeable determination and common sense and—most importantly—his humor. Even under the horrendous circumstances that brought us together...Art's brilliant and sometimes bitter wit would break the tension and lift the oppressive burden we all carried and we would feel the blessed relief of laughter that enabled...all of us to survive those terrible months.

When the verdict was announced in favor of the National Guardsmen, it was Arthur that announced that the trial proved that the constitution had been destroyed.

While the families waited during the appeal process, the Kent State Administration once again showed its insensitivity to the history of May 4, 1970. After the construction of the gymnasium annex on Blanket Hill, which destroyed part of the site of the shootings, Arthur Krause vowed never to step foot on the Kent State campus again.

In 1979, when the other families and victims decided on an out-of-court settlement for the murder of their children, it was Arthur who held out on giving in to that decision the longest. While some may have attributed this to his usual stubbornness, others attributed it to the devoted love he had for his daughter Allison. As one of the lawyers put it, "He doesn't want to give in to a settlement because it means he'll have to give up Allison."

Dean Kahler, shot on May 4, 1970, spoke truthfully when he told me "the sense of loss Arthur felt for his daughter was very prevalent when you were around him. He never really fully recuperated from her death. It was the focal point of his life and he was determined to get justice." Tom Grace, also wounded in 1970, observes:

Without Arthur's drive, his fortitude, his unmovable presence, the drive for justice may well have stalled. Our quest is not finished. Yet, Arthur's efforts have allowed us, in some small measure, to answer yes to the question that Doris Krause asked nineteen years ago: "Do we say that there is justice, Allison?"

While Arthur's years in the battlefield of the United States' court system came to an end, the pain of the loss of his daughter did not. And his bitterness toward the Kent State administration did not fade either. Arthur told me this past summer that he was still waiting for an official notification of Allison's death. I am sure that he was conscious of this when he told the *Ravenna Record Courier* in 1986 that the Kent State administration was "a worthless organization."

Arthur's last years were spent enduring the emotional rollercoaster of the May 4 Memorial building process. And he did not keep his emotions to himself. Alan Canfora, another student wounded in 1970, told me of some of his last conversations with Arthur:

As Arthur suffered the pain of his terminal illness, he poignantly described his continued frustrations as a result of the cover-up of his daughter's murder and the continued failure of Kent State University to create a lasting memorial tribute in memory of his daughter Allison.

It's a shame that Arthur could not have observed the final vindication of his daughter's death. But, as pointed out earlier, he was very pragmatic. Arthur

told me last July, "Anybody that would believe that Kent State University would make any attempt to meet the desires of the Kent State families must also believe in the tooth fairy."

What does Arthur Krause's death mean? It's too soon to know the broader ramifications in the struggle to remember May 4, 1970. On a more personal level, Sandy Rosen says it best: "He marked our lives, so that we are richer for having known him and much poorer now that he is gone." Speaking for myself and all of the others who have fought against the white-washing of the facts of May 4, I feel like I've lost my father.

So how do we really pay tribute to such a man as Arthur Krause? Words are not enough.

We could start by emulating his passion for justice. We can remove the apathy from our own lives. We can build a proper memorial to the memory of Allison, Bill, Jeff, and Sandy—one that is fitting to the magnitude of the event. We can head Arthur's own advice, "If you don't stand up for your own rights they will be taken away from you just like they were from Allison." You can love your own children as Arthur loved his.



Benson Wolman, from the Ohio ACLU and Sanford J. Rosen, attorney, at Kent State, May 4, 1976. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

## A 1990 Postscript

**Peter Davies**

When I delivered "Four Students" sixteen years ago many shared my optimism about the future course of justice for the victims of that brutal fusillade of military gunfire. For more than three years the Machiavellian deceptions of Nixon, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, and Kleindienst had successfully obstructed justice to protect the covert role played by Robert Mardian's Internal Security Division in the burning of the ROTC building. If not for the relentless pursuit of the truth, an often heartbreaking crusade spearheaded by the late Arthur Krause, much of what we know today would have remained as buried as those four young people. On that war day in May, the fourth anniversary of the killings, there was a sense of our being on the brink of finally bringing to account those responsible, a feeling that was palpable amongst the thousands who had assembled to hear Jane Fonda and Judy Collins, Ron Kovic and Dean Kahler. The enthusiasm with which the crowd responded to my confident expectations was infectious. Little did we know then that what we thought was going to happen would prove to be nothing more than a political-judicial magic act with mirrors.

The criminal trial of eight Ohio National Guardsmen charged with willfully depriving the victims of their civil rights was abruptly stopped by federal Judge Frank Battisti at the conclusion of the government's case. Despite the findings of the grand jury that had indicted the eight men, Judge Battisti ruled the evidence was too weak to allow the jury to decide whether or not they were guilty. To compound his circumvention of our trial by jury system, he acquitted them, rather than simply dismissing the charges as is usually done in such situations, and thereby forever shielded the eight from further prosecution no matter how strong a case the Justice Department might subsequently develop from new evidence.

The following year we had to endure the unabashed prejudice of federal Judge Don J. Young during the long civil trial. This paragon of judicial impartiality was so overwhelmed by the status and power of some of the principle defendants he actually rose to his feet to greet Governor James Rhodes with the distinctly un-American salutation "Your Excellency." It was Judge young who would play the role of eager watchdog for the defense attorneys just in case they missed something during questioning of witnesses. "Aren't you going to object, Mr. Fulton?" "Huh? Oh! Yes. Objection." "Sustained."

Judge Young's biases so pervaded the proceedings, and his convoluted summation so confused the issue at trial, the jury was left with little choice but to find favor of the defendants. Small wonder two of the female jurors wept as they affirmed their verdict when the jury was polled for the record. In Washington the feisty old senior senator from Ohio, Stephen M. Young, told reporters "the biggest mistake of my life was to recommend to President Kennedy the appointment of my nephew to the federal bench."

During the hot summer of 1975 the Kent State family unit that the late Rev. John P. Adams had forged and nurtured with such devotion went through a crisis of cataclysmic proportions. Differences of opinion on legal strategy and personality conflicts took a heavy toll, and the verdict against the plaintiffs was a blow so devastating some of us, myself included, never fully recovered from its impact. What had happened to what one law professor categorized as "the greatest civil rights case since *Brown vs. The Board of Education*?" Precious blood had been needlessly shed with such a ruthless determination on the part of a few angry guardsmen that the anatomy of murder wasn't even a mystery, yet once again this glaring truth was inexplicably denied. Criminal responsibility had been negated by Judge Battisti, and civil liability rejected by a decision that was soul destroying in its irrationality. We were emotionally and mentally drained by the time we heard the verdict in a locked courtroom under the scrutiny of armed U.S. Marshals. There was one interruption in the reading of the decision when Alan Canfora said, in a stage whisper, "There's no justice in America." Judge Young looked sharply at the offending survivor of the shootings, and one of the marshals moved menacingly toward Canfora. I would not have been surprised if he had drawn his gun. Instead he froze when the deep, booming voice of Arthur Krause warned, "Don't you touch that young man."

Afterwards, we stood around in small groups outside the courtroom, dust filled sunbeams mocking the darkness of what had just transpired, our minds dazed with disbelief. The sight of some of the defendants grinning, pumping hands, and back slapping each other made me feel like vomiting. It was as though they were celebrating the killings all over again. I thought of Allison lying in that quiet glen-like cemetery in Pittsburgh, of Jeff, Sandy, and Bill sharing her eternity, and tried to equate it with those smiling faces relishing their hollow victory. I couldn't. It was too obscene. All that I could hear above their congratulatory banter was a chilling echo of, "This time four, next time more."

The promise of justice on that fourth anniversary had faded and withered like a poisoned tree. My great expectations for the future of Kent State University proved to be as naive and misplaced as British Prime Minister Chamberlain's assurance of "peace in our time."

No memorial to the dead was ever quite appropriate to the administration and trustees unless it was proposed by people considered to be friends

of the state, or from within their own ranks. The stunningly symbolic statue of Abraham about to sacrifice his kneeling son was rejected as being "too violent." Such sensitivity stood in sharp contrast to their servile silence when Governor Rhodes publicly vilified student demonstrators as "the worst type of people we harbor in America." The rejection of George Segal's monument spoke volumes about the university, the community of Kent, and the state of Ohio. When Princeton invited the sculptor to unveil his work on its campus it was gratifying to know that this memorial to the bloody consequences of politically manipulated hatred would rest in a more tolerant and serene academic setting than the site of the deed, a haunting spot of grass and tarmac that the university was determined to transfigure by the construction of a gym-annex. Not even the Tent City protest organized by groups like the May 4th Task Force could dissuade the university from the course it had embarked upon, any more than the arrests of protestors such as John Adams, the parents of Sandy Scheuer, and some of the survivors, would move them to consider an alternative location. Once again the shallowness of their sensitivity was demonstrated when bulldozers began to mutilate the site with the same relentless determination that was evinced by those few guardsmen who fired again and again and again at the backs of fleeing students until their clips were empty.

There was no triumph of justice, nor did Kent State University come to be looked upon as a symbol of anything but repression, the Tiananman Square of Nixon's silent majority's fear of America's flower children.

The settlement of the civil suit several years later brought some solace to some of the plaintiffs, and regardless of its legal and monetary shortcomings, the settlement also brought a positive conclusion to almost a decade of frustration and bitter disillusionment. It could have been a lot worse, and may very well have been but for the lonely battle Arthur and I fought in 1970 to establish a beachhead in our quest for the truth about Kent State.

A long time ago John Adams presented me with a handsomely framed biblical quotation: "Justice, justice shalt thou follow that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy 15:20). As much as this exhortation is very dear to my heart I have learned the hard way that to honor it is to take on judicial dragons and bureaucratic windmills in an endless struggle that can never really be won. For each wrong put right there are always a dozen more injustices crying out for relief.

Injustice in our criminal justice system, for example, is so pervasive it has become an integral part of the system, and its victims all too often as isolated from help and hope as would be an astronaut lost in space. During my 1974 speech I mentioned the plight of Patricia Hearst. Not surprisingly, she was vigorously persecuted by the government and thrown in prison for the sins of her grandfather. Unlike most, however, her family had enough influence to secure the presidential pardon she deserved, but for the tens of

thousands serving draconian sentences, and the hundreds who are innocent, there is no such hope.

By the end of the 1970s I was spent. The very words Kent State turned my stomach. So much had been given by so few in a cause so just it did not seem possible that not one official or guardsman had so much as had his wrist slapped for killing Allison, Sandy, Jeff and Bill. I swore I would never again do battle with those dragons and windmills but I did, this time on behalf of a mother of four caught up in our criminal justice system like a fly in a web.

Just as my involvement in the Kent State case opened my eyes to the machinations of the Nixon administration and the self-serving hypocrisy of Governor Rhodes and his National Guard generals, so my friendship with this courageous woman, a spirited paralegal fighting the injustice of her sentence from behind bars, has given me a comprehensive education in American penology. During the past two years I have learned just how morally bankrupt this system has become, a cancer that is fed as much by our total disinterest in what goes on in our courts and prisons as it is by judges wantonly abusing their power.

I'm not talking about brutal murderers and vicious rapists, but battered women in Minnesota condemned to fifty years *without parole* for daring to finally save themselves by killing their batterers, and about my friend, also a battered spouse, sentenced by a Colorado judge to forty years in prison for theft of property worth \$2,648. As it was with Kent State so it is with this sickening example of judicial madness. Letters and phone calls can only accomplish so much before the need for legal clout become imperative. The attorney I retained in Denver has so far succeeded in persuading this judicial curmudgeon to reduce her sentence to sixteen years, a gesture to mercy that is as unacceptable and offensive as was the Ohio whitewash of May 4, 1970. So this struggle will continue and I cannot rest until she is freed.

The Vietnam war, and the student movement to stop it, tore at the fabric of our cherished values and the fundamental principals of our democracy. America was being torn asunder by a clash of such diverse perceptions of the war that the conflict between patriotism and patriotic dissent became an emotionally bitter struggle of frightening intensity that turned parents against their children, neighbor against neighbor.

As the war dragged on and the casualties mounted so the antiwar movement grew in numbers and determination. Inevitably there were excesses on both sides and disagreement deteriorated into outright hatred, debate into a war of inflammatory, mindless slogans. Demonstrating students waved NLF flags for TV cameras without a second thought for the grieving mothers who might see them on the evening news, parents alone in the agony of their losses to a political crusade few could explain and none understand. Outraged vets in Nixonite hard hats clubbed down protestors

and bystanders alike as they chanted "USA All The Way." Antiwar extremists bombed a university building in Wisconsin, an act of terror that claimed the life of a young mathematician working late. A Mississippi physician wrote an Op-Ed page article for the *New York Times* in which he said that if his daughter was shot by the National Guard because she was demonstrating against the war instead of being in class he would invite the guardsman who killed her to his home to have dinner with him.

The passions that built up prior to 1970 erupted into a vitriolic volcano of senseless, destructive venom after the killings at Kent State. When two black students at Jackson State University were killed ten days later during a 28-second barrage of police, highway guard, and National Guard gunfire, there was a feeling the war had come home with a vengeance, that many more students would be slaughtered before the volcano subsided and reasonable minds in and out of government given an opportunity to begin healing wounds and mending fences. The Watergate scandal contributed a great deal to that process of reconciliation. The idol of the hard hats had fallen in disgrace, and in 1979 Craig Stern of NBC News produced the proof of that truth about Kent State we had for so long, a "for your eyes only" memorandum from John Ehrlichman to U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell dated 11 November 1970, reminding Mitchell of President Nixon's order that "under no circumstances" was Mitchell to convene a federal grand jury. Obstruction of justice by the man who had so solemnly sworn to defend, protect and uphold our Constitution. Worse, of course, was to follow.

The fallout from the war at home and Watergate buried most of the once vociferous supporters of our military involvement in Vietnam and Cambodia. The returning vets were generally treated with contempt, as if they were responsible for all the nation's woes. Almost 60,000 of our sons had come home in flag-draped caskets, young men who had done their duty for God and country, like hundreds of thousands before them, yet even they were not immune to criticism. It became increasingly difficult to find anyone who had supported the war in Vietnam, and the scarred vets bore the brunt of this swing in national sentiment.

The lessons to be learned from that dark era in our history have been taught in our grade schools since 1776. The essence of freedom is the right to be able to speak out without fear of retribution. No matter how unpopular a cause or idea might be we cannot tolerate any attempt to suppress it by unconstitutional means no matter how expedient such means may seem to be at the time. And above all we must always listen to our young people. We do not have to agree with them all the time, but we do have to listen. In the late Sixties we did not listen, so we paid a heavy price for our mistake.

For me a degree of peace did not come until one morning in the summer of 1983 when my wife, Dorothy, showed me the modest Vietnam war

memorial at the American Express Plaza in downtown Manhattan. We were reading the names of a few of the fallen when I saw inscribed on the wall the first paragraph of a May 4, 1970 wire service story: "KENT, Ohio (UPI)—Four students...." I put my hand between this and the name of a private from Oklahoma killed in 1969. There was nothing to say, only to feel, that terrible ache when we pause long enough in our hectic day to day existence to really think about the significance and meaning of Kent State. The son from Oklahoma died defending the Constitution that Allison, Sandy, Jeff and Bill were upholding by exercising the rights it bestows on us all. For the first time I felt and saw that there had never been any difference between these five victims of forces beyond their control, only what President Nixon had wanted us to see. If ever a period in our history since the Civil War deserves the sobering epitaph, "We have seen the enemy and it is us," this is the one.

Twenty years have passed since it happened. They would be turning forty now, most likely married with children, and worrying about escalating college costs. What might have been. On this twentieth anniversary of their unnecessary, so very unwarranted, and totally inexcusable deaths, it is appropriate that this country should also be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights.



Martin and Sarah Scheuer (bottom left) participating in the civil disobedience which led to the mass arrests of the Kent 194, during the gym controversy. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

## Our Beloved Sandy is Gone Forever

*Martin Scheuer is the father of Sandy Scheuer, killed with Allison Krause, William Schroeder and Jeffrey Miller at Kent State on May 4, 1970.*

She was the most precious jewel in our life, she was everything we lived for, and now our lives are an empty shell. Sandy represented everything good in this world. She was a gentle girl blessed with a fine sense of humor, a love for life tempered with compassionate concern for the misfortunes of others—qualities which made her warm personality so appealing to all who knew her. What greater anguish is there than the thought that Sandy's devotion to her studies, her desire to help people, and her ability to fulfill this desire in the field of speech therapy should lead her into the path of a bullet, shot through her lovely neck.

For those on this planet who enjoy American citizenship, their right to life and liberty is guaranteed by the most stirring and inspiring document ever penned by man. Sandy was an American, as were the three who perished with her. They were killed by a state militia without benefit of due process. Yet there is a reluctance to render justice, to uphold their constitutional rights, and this reluctance touches us all, because it damages our reputation as a nation of honorable people.

On May 3, 1970, Governor Rhodes of Ohio unleashed the kind of irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric we associated with Hitler and his cohorts.

"We are going to employ every weapon possible," he said. "No one is safe in Portage County."

He categorized student demonstrators as the "worst type of people we harbor in America," and then, to his eternal shame, cried: "We are going to eradicate this problem in Ohio."

This calculated attempt by Governor Rhodes to salvage his waning chances of winning the Republican primary race for the U.S. Senate no doubt left a deep impression on some of those tired and angry guardsmen. Prior to their arrival in Kent, they were subjected to injuries and abuse at the hands of tough strikers. But Kent State was somehow different. The antagonists were college kids, and Rhodes made it clear that when students get out of hand, they are to be crushed by whatever means necessary. The next day, his words still fresh in their minds, some of the guardsmen felt unsafe; some saw the students as enemies; some used their combat weapons, and one of them eradicated my daughter as she walked to class some 300 feet away. Nearby, Allison Krause lay dying; ROTC student William Schroeder lay prone, unable to comprehend what had happened to him, and why, and on a path 275 feet from the guardsmen Jeffrey Miller lay dead.

The cruel injustice in these deaths is self-evident in the actions of General Canterbury and university president Robert White. The general's pathetic inability to control his men was compounded by his contemptible effort to escape criticism by deliberately distorting the truth and arousing public animosity toward the students—particularly the four who died. The absence of White, enjoying lunch at a nearby restaurant for one and a half hours with the knowledge of the planned rally at noon, as well as Canterbury's determination to forcefully disperse any assembly, exhibited an inexcusable lack of judgement.

America's rush to judgement on Kent State shocked and embittered me. I believe in our sense of justice and the American people's pride in our ability to distinguish right from wrong—the kind of morbid conscience that is democracy and in which Sandy believed so deeply. But now, having judged in the passions of May 1970, most Americans no longer care that the reasons given by the Ohio National Guard for the shooting have been rejected by the Justice Department as unsubstantiated by the facts. Who is listening when James Michener says, "No student did anything that day for which he deserved to be shot."

Human beings were so important to Sandy, and although she believed it was senseless to send her brothers to die in Vietnam, she was not politically active. Instead she directed her energies to helping others through caring and love and making them laugh.

"She was just a happy kid," her roommate said after her death, "And we shall forever remember her beautiful laughter."

This terrible wrong cannot be ignored, if we are a nation of just and honorable people.

Our beloved Sandy is gone, but we cannot believe she has no kindred souls now willing to be her advocates in the halls of justice.

## Anniversary: May 4, 1988

Elaine Holstein

At a few minutes past noon on May 4, I will once again observe an anniversary—an anniversary that marks not only the most tragic event of my life but also one of the most disgraceful episodes in American history. This May 4 will be the eighteenth anniversary of the shootings on the campus of Kent State University and the death of my son, Jeff Miller, by Ohio National Guard rifle fire.

Eighteen years! That's almost as long a time as Jeff's entire life. He had turned twenty just a month before he decided to attend the protest rally that ended in his death and the deaths of Allison Krause, Sandy Scheuer, and Bill Schroeder, and the wounding of nine of their fellow students. One of them, Dean Kahler, will spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down.

That Jeff chose to attend that demonstration came as no surprise to me. Anyone who knew him in those days would have been shocked if he had decided to sit that one out. There were markers along the way that led him inexorably to that campus protest.

At the age of eight, Jeff wrote articles expressing his concern for the plight of black Americans, I learned of this only when I received a call from *Ebony* magazine, which assumed he was black and assured me he was bound to be "a future leader of the black community."

Shortly before his sixteenth birthday, Jeff composed a poem he called "Where Does It End?" in which he expressed the horror he felt about "the War Without a Purpose."

Was Jeff a radical? He told me, grinning, that though he might be taken for a "hippie radical" in the Middle West, back home on Long Island he'd probably be seen as a reactionary.

So when Jeff called me that morning and told me he planned to attend a rally to protest the "incursion" of U.S. military forces into Cambodia, I merely expressed my doubts as to the effectiveness of still another demonstration.

"Don't worry, Mom," he said. "I may get arrested, but I won't get my head busted." I laughed and assured him I wasn't worried.

The bullet that ended Jeff's life also destroyed the person I had been—a naive, politically unaware woman. Until that spring of 1970, I would have

stated with absolute assurance that Americans have the right to dissent, publicly, from the policies pursued by their Government. The Constitution says so. Isn't that what makes this country—this democracy—different from those totalitarian states whose methods we deplore?

And even if the dissent got noisy and disruptive, it was inconceivable that an arm of the Government would shoot at random into a crowd of unarmed students? With live ammunition? No way! Arrests? Perhaps. Tear gas? Probably. Antiwar protests had become a way of life, and on my television I had seen them dealt with routinely in various nonlethal ways.

The myth of a benign America where dissent was broadly tolerated was one casualty of the shootings at Kent State. Another was my assumption that *everyone* shared my belief that we were engaged in a no-win situation in Vietnam and had to get out. As the body counts mounted and the footage of napalmed babies became a nightly television staple, I was certain that no one could want the war to go on. The hate mail that began arriving at my home after Jeff died showed me how wrong I was.

We were enmeshed in legal battles for nine years. The families of the slain students, along with the wounded boys and their parents, believed that once the facts were heard in a court of law, it would become clear that the governor of Ohio and the troops he called in had used inappropriate and excessive force to quell what had begun as a peaceful protest. We couldn't undo what had been done, but we wanted to make sure it would never be done again.

Our 1975 trial ended in defeat after fifteen weeks in Federal Court. We won a retrial on appeal, and returned to Cleveland with high hopes of prevailing, but before the trial got under way we were urged by both the judge and our lawyers to accept an out-of-court settlement. The proposal angered us; the case wasn't about *money*. We wanted to clear our children's names and to win a judicial ruling that the governor and the National Guard were responsible for the deaths and injuries. The defendants offered to issue an apology. The wording was debated for days, and the final result was an innocuous document stating that "in retrospect, the tragedy... should not have occurred" and that "better ways must be found to deal with such confrontations."

Reluctantly, we accepted the settlement when we were told this might be the only way that Dean would get at least some of the funds to meet his lifelong medical expenses. He was awarded \$350,000, the parents of each of the dead students received \$15,000, and the remainder, in varying amounts, was divided among the wounded. Lawyer's fees amounted to \$50,000, and \$25,000 was allotted to expenses, for a total of \$675,000.

Since then we have lived through Watergate and Richard Nixon's resignation, crises in the Middle East and in Central America, and the Iran-Contra affair. To most people, Kent State is just one of those traumatic events that occurred during a tumultuous time.

To me, it's the one experience I will never recover from. It's also the one gap in my communication with my older son, Russ: neither of us dares to talk about what happened at Kent State for fear that we'll open floodgates of emotion that we can't deal with.

Whenever there is another death in the family, we mourn not only the elderly parent or grandparent or aunt who has passed away; we also experience again the loss of Jeff.



March after the commemorative program at Kent State University, May 4, 1976.  
Photo © by John P. Rowe.



Dean Kahler during the settlement news conference, 1979. Photo © John P. Rowe.

## **Statement by the Governor, the Generals, the Command Officers and the Guardsmen**

*This statement was signed by the defendants, as a part of the settlement of the Kent State trial.*

In retrospect, the tragedy of May 4, 1970 should not have occurred. The students may have believed that they were right in continuing their mass protest in response to the Cambodian invasion, even though this protest followed the posting and reading by the University of an order to ban rallies and an order to disperse. These orders have since been determined by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals to have been lawful.

Some of the Guardsmen on Blanket Hill, fearful and anxious from prior events, may have believed in their own minds that their lives were in danger. Hindsight suggests that another method would have resolved the confrontation. Better ways must be found to deal with such confrontations.

We devoutly wish that a means had been found to avoid the May 4 events culminating in the Guard shootings and irreversible deaths and injuries. We deeply regret those events and are profoundly saddened by the deaths of four students and the wounding of nine others which resulted. We hope that the agreement to end this litigation will help to assuage the tragic memories regarding that sad day.



William Kinstler speaking at a rally at Kent State, September, 1977. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

## **Statement by the Parents: January 4, 1979**

A settlement of the Kent State civil suit has been reached out of court in an agreement mediated by Federal Judge William Thomas, and for this we are grateful.

The settlement provides for the payment of \$675,000 in damages by the State of Ohio and for a signed statement of regret and intention by Governor James A. Rhodes, Generals Del Corso and Canterbury, and officers and men of the Ohio National Guard.

We, as families of the victims of the shooting by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State University, May 4, 1970, wish to interpret what we believe to be the significance of this settlement.

We accepted the settlement out of court, but negotiated by the court, because we determined that it accomplished to the greatest extent possible under present law, the objectives toward which we as families have struggled during the past eight years.

Those objectives have been as follows:

1. Insofar as possible, to hold the State of Ohio accountable for the actions of its officials and agents in the event of May 4, 1970.
2. To demonstrate that the excessive use of force by the agents of government would be met by a formidable citizen challenge.
3. To exhaustively utilize the judicial system in the United States and demonstrate to an understandably skeptical generation that the system can work when extraordinary pressure is applied to it, as in this case.
4. To assert that the human rights of American citizens, particularly those citizens in dissent of governmental policies, must be effected and protected.
5. To obtain sufficient financial support for Mr. Dean Kahler, one of the victims of the shooting, that he may have a modicum of security as he spends the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

The State of Ohio although protected by the doctrine of sovereign immunity and consequently not legally responsible in a technical sense, has now recognized its responsibility by paying a substantial amount of money in damages for the injuries and deaths caused by the shooting.

State officials, national guard command officers, and guardsmen have signed a statement submitted to the families of the victims of the shootings which not only expresses regret and sorrow—eight years belatedly—but also recognizes that another method than the use of loaded combat rifles could have resolved the confrontation at Kent State University. The statement also asserts that better ways must be found for future confrontations which may take place.

The Scranton Commission which investigated campus disorders in the Summer of 1970 said that the Kent State shooting was, "unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable." The signed statement of the officials and the guardsmen at least now agrees that the shooting and killing was unnecessary, and now at last, the State of Ohio has assumed responsibility for the act.

We recognize that many others related to the May 4, 1970 event have also suffered during the past eight years—including Kent State University students, faculty, and administrators, as well as Ohio National Guardsmen and their families. Indeed, we believe that some of the guardsmen on Blanket Hill on that fateful day also became victims of an Ohio National Guard policy which sent them into a potential citizen confrontation with loaded combat rifles. We did not want those individual guardsmen to be personally liable for the actions of others and the policy of a governmental agency under whose orders they served.

Yet, the doctrine of sovereign immunity which protects the State of Ohio from being sued without its permission, made it necessary for us to take individuals to court. Only then did the State respond—furnishing more than two million dollars for the legal costs of the defense of officials and guardsmen and finally being willing to pay costs and damages of the victims of the shooting.

We want to thank those who have sustained us in our long struggle for an expression of justice. More than 35,000 individuals made contributions of money for our legal costs. Students and faculty at many campuses, but particularly at Kent State University have furnished us effective support. The American Civil Liberties Union and its volunteer attorneys—as well as many other lawyers—have skillfully and devotedly served us throughout these years. The Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church has faithfully supported us and coordinated our struggle from the beginning. We are grateful to them.

Because of the experience that we have had during the past eight and one-half years, there are other words which we are compelled to speak. We have become convinced that the issue of the excessive use of force—or the use of deadly force—by law enforcement agencies or those acting with the authority of law enforcement agencies, is a critical national issue to which the attention of the American people must be drawn.

President Carter, on December 6, 1978, in his speech on the Thirteenth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, said, "Of all human rights, the most basic is to be free of arbitrary violence..." He then noted that citizens should have the right to be free of violence which comes from governments.

We deplore violence in every form for any cause and from every source. Yet, we believe the average American is little aware of the official violence which has been used across our land indiscriminately and unjustifiably. Twenty-eight students have been killed on campuses in the past ten years. A long but unnumbered list of residents in minority communities have been killed by police unnecessarily.

We find it significant that just a few weeks ago the United States Commission on Civil Rights held a consultation in Washington, D.C. on, "Police Practices and the Preservation of Civil Rights" in preparation for the conducting of hearings on the use of deadly force in selected cities. That is the issue with which we have had to be concerned. It is an issue with which a growing number of citizens are becoming concerned.

Through our long legal and political struggle we have become convinced that the present federal law which protects citizens from the deprivation of their civil rights by law enforcement agencies or those acting with their authority, is weak and inadequate. It is a provision which is little used—but, when it is used, it has little use. A citizen can be killed by those acting under the color of the law almost with impunity. The families of the victims of those shootings or killings have little recourse and then only through an expensive and lengthy process.

We believe that citizens and law enforcement must, in the words of the signed statement of the settlement, find better ways. We appeal for those better ways to be used not only on campuses but in cities and communities across the land. We plead for a federal law which will compel the consideration and use of those better ways.

We are simply average citizens who have attempted to be loyal to our country and constructive and responsible in our actions, but we have not had an average experience. We have learned through a tragic event that loyalty to our nation and its principles sometimes requires resistance to our government and its policies—a lesson many young people, including the children of some of us, had learned earlier. That has been our struggle and for others this struggle goes on. We will try to support them.

For Allison, Sandra Jeffrey, and William,  
For Peace and Justice,

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Krause  
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Schroeder  
Mr. and Mrs. Martin Scheuer  
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Holstein



March led by Arthur Krause and Rev. John Adams, Kent State University, August 30, 1977. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

# Twenty Years Later

Holly Near

When the students at Kent State were killed and then the violence and killings later the next week at Jackson State, I was doing *Hair* on Broadway in New York City. *Hair* was an antiwar musical reflecting the discontent and confusion that invaded society as a result of violence and racism. We protested the Kent murders the evening of May fourth by refusing to sing the finale, "Let the Sun Shine In," and instead invited the audience to participate in a silent vigil. A few years later, I was invited to write and sing a song for a Kent State memorial at which I joined Ron Kovic, Jane Fonda, Dan Ellsberg, Judy Collins, and many other long-time activists who gathered there. The song has grown over the years, new verses being added as violence continues to interrupt human potential.

Students in our country, at Kent and Jackson State  
Shot down by nameless fire one early day in May  
People cried out angry,  
"You should have shot more of them down!"  
But you can't bury youth my friend  
We grow the whole world round.

And it could have been me  
But instead it was you  
So I'll keep doing the work you were doing as if I were two  
I'll be a student of life, a singer of song  
A farmer of food and the righter of wrong  
It could have been me but instead it was you  
And it may be me dear sisters and brothers before we are through  
But if you can die for freedom  
Freedom, freedom, freedom  
If you can die for freedom I can too

The junta broke the fingers of Victor Jara's hands  
Said to the gentle poet play your guitar now if you can  
Victor started singing until they brought his body down  
You can kill that man but not his song  
Because it's sung the whole world round

And it could have been me  
But instead it was you  
So I'll keep doing the work you were doing as if I were two  
I'll be a student of life, a singer of song  
A farmer of food and the righter of wrong  
It could have been me but instead it was you  
And it may be me dear sisters and brothers before we are through  
But if you can sing for freedom  
Freedom, freedom, freedom  
If you can sing for freedom I can too

Woman in the jungle so many miles away  
Studies late into the night, defends a village in the day  
Although her skin is golden like mine will never be  
Her song is heard and I know the words  
And I'll sing them till she is free

And it could have been me  
But instead it was you  
So I'll keep doing the work you were doing as if I were two  
I'll be a student of life, a singer of song  
A farmer of food and the righter of wrong  
It could have been me but instead it was you  
And it may be me dear sisters and brothers before we are through  
But if you can live for freedom  
Freedom, freedom, freedom  
If you can live for freedom I can too

One night in Oklahoma, Karen Silkwood died  
Because she had some secrets that big companies wanted to hide  
There is talk of nuclear safety and talk of national pride  
But we all know it is a death machine and that's why Karen died

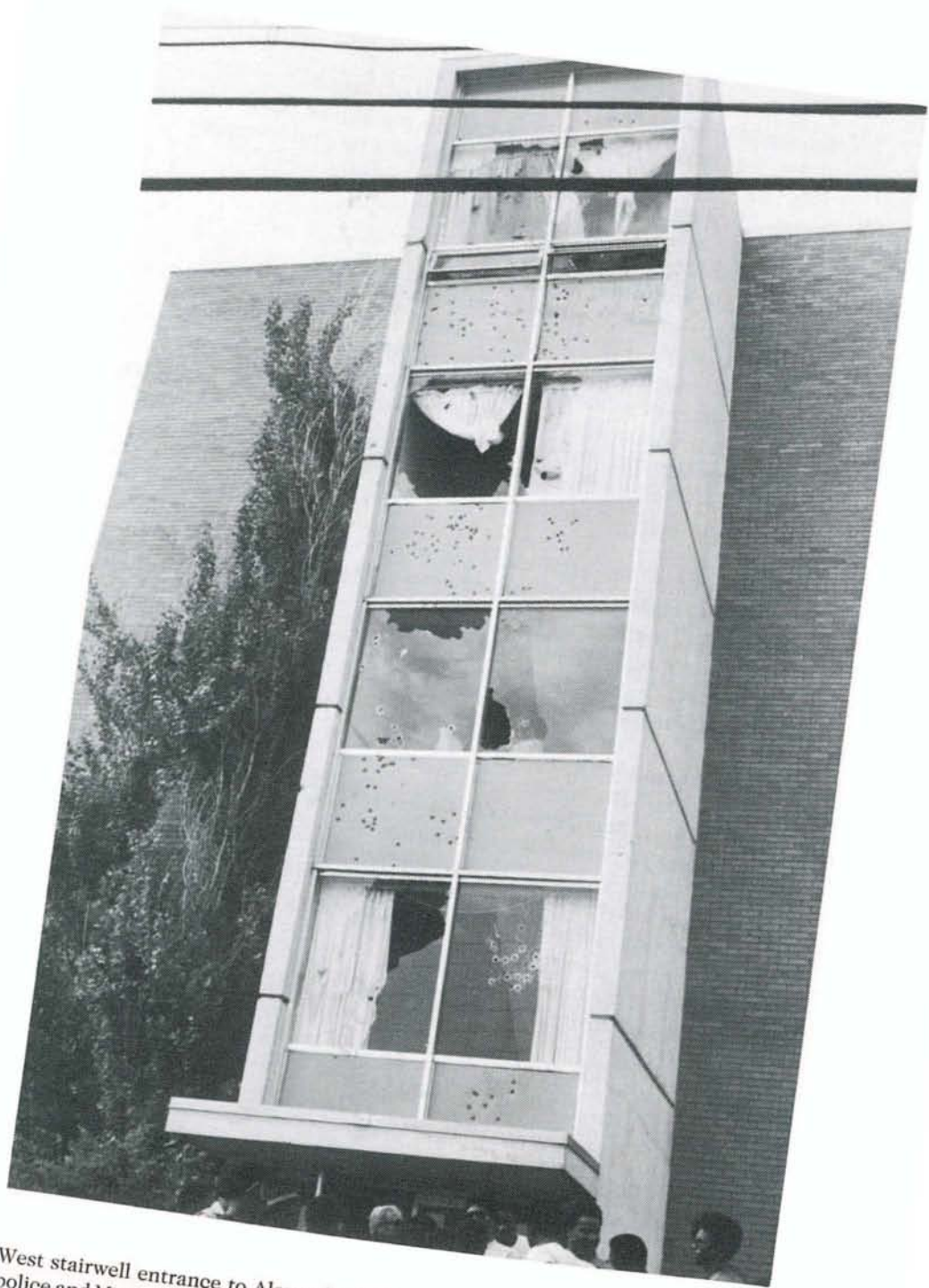
And it could have been me  
But instead it was you  
So I'll keep doing the work you were doing as if I were two  
I'll be a student of life, a singer of song  
A farmer of food and the righter of wrong  
It could have been me but instead it was you  
And it may be me dear sisters and brothers before we are through  
But if you can die for freedom  
Freedom, freedom, freedom  
If you can die for freedom I can too

Women shot in Montreal by a man so full of rage  
Makes me think of ancient time, back in the Middle Ages  
This was not a single incident, this was not a one time tragedy  
People all around the world must fight misogyny

And it could have been me  
But instead it was you  
So I'll keep doing the work you were doing as if I were two  
I'll be a student of life, a singer of song  
A farmer of food and the righter of wrong  
It could have been me but instead it was you  
And it may be me dear sisters and brothers before we are through  
But if you can fight for freedom  
Freedom, freedom, freedom  
If you can fight for freedom I can too

The songs of Nicaragua and El Salvador  
Will long outlast the singers who face the guns at war  
They sing at the line of fire  
And they sing from a fire within  
All across the land the poets stand  
*El pueblo unido jamás sera vencido.*

And it could have been me  
But instead it was you  
So I'll keep doing the work you were doing as if I were two  
I'll be a student of life, a singer of song  
A farmer of food and the righter of wrong  
It could have been me but instead it was you  
And it may be me dear sisters and brothers before we are through  
But if you can die for freedom  
Freedom, freedom, freedom  
If you can die for freedom I can too



West stairwell entrance to Alexander Hall, a women's dormitory, where Jackson police and Mississippi highway patrolmen fired on a crowd of black students. Photo © by David Doggett.

# **The Killings at Jackson State University, May 1970**

## **Reminiscences of Dr. John A. Peoples, President, Jackson State University, 1967-1984**

*I hardly expected to receive the call in early February of 1990 from the Jackson State University Student Government Association requesting me to speak to a student assembly about the May 14, 1970,\* killings. However, I was not surprised that they wanted to know more about the incident, even though it happened twenty years ago. Half of the present day students were not even born at that time, the rest were babes in arms. To me it was refreshing to know that this current generation of Jackson State University students were something more than a partying apolitical group, as they had been characterized. I accepted the invitation to speak to the students at one of the several Black History activities scheduled for February 20. My presentation to the students was not a formal address. I thought it more appropriate to talk to them informally, and to entertain questions. The following is the gist of my remarks:*

Importantly, it should be understood that the events of May 14,\* 1970, did not occur in a vacuum. There were indeed some salient antecedents going back at least ten years. Starting in the early Sixties, the "Black Civil Rights Movement" had erupted into a bloody struggle all over the nation and certainly more intensely in the South. An integral part of this struggle was the "Black Student Movement," which had a strong Southern counterpart. In Mississippi, the State government authorities placed tremendous pressure on the Black college presidents to restrain their respective students from any kind of racial protest. One Black college president had been fired in the late Fifties reportedly because he did not handle an on-campus protest to the satisfaction of the State authorities.

When I accepted the presidency of Jackson State in March, 1967, I found it necessary to make it clear to the Governor, as well as to the State College Board, that I would not suppress peaceful student protest on campus. Right away I would have the opportunity to test out my manifesto. In May, barely two months after I assumed my duties, I had to deal with my first riot. The Jackson police chased a student driver down Lynch Street onto the campus

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\*The shootings actually occurred shortly after midnight on May 15, 1970.

with sirens blowing and blue lights blinking. They didn't catch the student, but they stopped at a men's dormitory where students were jeering them out of a window. One of the policemen fired a shotgun into the window, wounding a student football player in the face with bird shot. The students subsequently staged a sit-down on Lynch Street in protest of the unwarranted shooting. I brought in a delegation of students and street boys into the President's home in an attempt to calm the students. When I thought I had it under control, a bus load of Tougaloo students accompanied by young white faculty drove onto Lynch Street and enticed some of the Jackson State students to come back into the streets, keeping the disturbance going. The next day the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), sent a representative over from Atlanta, who attempted to get the Jackson State students to march on the city of Jackson. The Jackson State student leadership, after conferring with me about the danger of such a march, refused to participate. Not to be outdone, the SNCC representatives organized a group of non-student "corner boys,"<sup>71</sup> who were marched back and forth down Lynch Street. At the corner of Lynch and Rose, two blocks from the campus, one of the corner boys, Ben Brown, was shot and killed by policemen after an altercation.

In March of 1968, in the evening of the day that Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, the Jackson State students again took to the streets and threw stones through the windows of all white motorists passing through the campus. At that time Lynch Street was a major thoroughfare and the blocking of the street impeded the passage home of the whites who lived in the then-majority white community a mile west of the campus. The city policemen came in with "Thompson's Tank"<sup>72</sup> and tear-gassed the students out of the streets.

In April of 1969, a group of Jackson State students got into a fight with a gang of corner boys and were chased back down Lynch Street as the two groups threw stones at each other. It did not take long for both groups to turn their anger against the white motorists driving through Lynch Street. The situation became a riot and again the policemen came in Thompson's Tank and tear-gassed the students and corner boys away from the street area, ending the disturbance.

Thus, we come to the year 1970, the most tragic year in the history of Jackson State University. From my point of view, I kept hoping that students' riots, which had become an annual spring ritual, would cease. After all, the campus had experienced three consecutive years of major disturbances, all in March, April or May. I had importuned the City of Jackson to place three stop lights along the stretch of Lynch Street that ran through the campus. These stoplights were disliked by motorists who felt that they had to run an "obstacle course" to get through the campus. But I thought the lights were thoroughly necessary to provide for some four

thousand students to cross back and forth between dormitories and the Student Union on the north side of Lynch Street to the library, the classrooms, and the Dining Hall on the south side of this busy street. I had opposed proposals by the State to build a bridge across the street because the condition for a bridge was that I would have to force all students to cross the street only via the bridge. This would be impossible to do along a three-quarter mile stretch. So, with the three stop lights and three to four-hundred white motorists driving through the campus daily, I was acutely aware that Lynch Street at Jackson State was a riot waiting to happen.

And the riot did happen. On the night of May 13, 1970, one week after the Kent State killings, a gang of students who claimed that they had been called racist names by white motorists began to throw stones at cars containing whites. They were joined by corner boys and the disturbance got beyond the control of campus police who called for city police help on Lynch Street. The street was barricaded as during previous occasions and the situation cooled down during the late hours. On the next day, May 14, I pleaded with the city police authorities to keep up the street barricades so as to prevent any through traffic until we could be sure that the situation had cooled down. But they would not agree. They said that there were a lot of people driving home from work who would be inconvenienced if they could not drive through Lynch Street. That night, at about 10:00 PM, a crowd of students and corner boys began to throw stones at white motorists. At that time the city police agreed to close off the streets leading to Jackson State.

About 11:00 PM, some corner boys set fire to a dump truck and the city fire department had to be called. The fire department was provided an escort of policemen and highway patrolmen by the city of Jackson. The firemen put out the fire at the truck and then drove around the campus to another fire which had been started at the other end of Lynch Street. The police escort took the short cut directly east on Lynch Street, where they encountered a crowd of students standing in the yard of Alexander Hall. The policemen ordered the students to disperse and go inside their dormitories. Some of them did, but most of the men continued to stand inside the yard behind the fence. Someone from among the students threw a bottle into the street. When the bottle crashed onto the pavement, the policemen, both inside and outside of Thompson's Tank began to fire into the dormitory and the yard both on the north and south sides of the campus. Two men were killed, one a Jackson State student, Phillip Gibbs, and the other a Jim Hill High School student, James Green. Another twenty-two students, mostly women, were wounded.' Considering the twenty-second fusillade, it was a miracle that twenty or thirty students were not killed.

The ordeal that the students and I went through during the night that followed is a story in itself, which I am dealing with in a more comprehensive work. I will say here that many heroes arose from among the students to help

me to gain control of the situation and prevent further bloodshed. There were obviously many villains who perpetrated the heinous act of violence. None of these villains were brought to justice, even after county and federal grand jury hearings. Some of the persons wounded still carry in their bodies the particles from the shotguns, rifles, and machine guns used in the merciless fit of rage of the lawmen.

Twenty years later, the only visible signs of the incident are the pock marks on the wall of the southwest stairwell of Alexander Hall and the "Gibbs-Green" monument on the lawn of Stewart Hall, the dormitory in which Phillip Gibbs resided. Lynch Street between the north and south side of the campus has been made a part of the Jackson State campus, and a plaza with a coordinating midway has been installed. The students of today know little, and officially are told nothing about this salient event in the history of Jackson State University. It has become unfashionable to talk about "negative" things in this era of "progress" in our State. But the Jackson State students don't seem to think so.

### **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> "Corner boys" was the name given to the group of young high school dropouts and unemployed young men who stood or sat on the corners of Lynch and Dalton and watched the coeds. There was enmity between them and the regular students. But whenever there was a campus disturbance, they would invade the campus and mix with the students. At night, neither policemen or campus authorities could distinguish between the corner boys and the students.
- <sup>2</sup> "Thompson's Tank" is an armored car of the type used by S.W.A.T. teams today. This vehicle was named for the late Mayor of Jackson, Allen Thompson, whose police force used it mainly to quell civil rights demonstrations. This same tank would be used in the fatal shooting of May of 1970, in which two students would be killed and twenty-two wounded. Noteworthy is that very recently there was a decision by the current Jackson city government, of which three of the seven City Council members are Black, to reactivate the tank for use by the city. This decision has received mixed reactions from the citizenry.

# **Lynch Street: The May 1970 Murders at Jackson State University**

**Tim Spofford**

One warm Mississippi night in May, 1970, lines of blue-helmeted lawmen marched up a darkened street at Jackson State College. They stopped in front of a women's dormitory to face a jeering crowd of black students.

Someone threw a bottle, and it popped like a gunshot. There was a roar of submachine guns and shotguns, a 28-second barrage that lit up the sky, downed power lines in a shower of sparks, and blew out the dormitory windows. Two black students were killed and twelve others wounded.

It was the second time in ten days of antiwar protests that lawmen had fired upon students. The last time was at Kent State University in Ohio, soon after President Richard Nixon sent U.S. troops from Vietnam into Cambodia. After the killing of four white students by National Guardsmen in Kent, Ohio, there were confrontations between students and peace officers across the nation. Campuses of all kinds felt the unrest: seminaries, military academies, women's colleges, teachers' colleges, and black colleges.

Jackson State was a black campus in Mississippi's capitol city. Lynch Street, one of the main roads through the city, bisected the campus, where students sometimes hurled rocks at passing white motorists during tense times in the racially divided city. May 13, 1970, was one of those times. Both students and nonstudents on Lynch Street that night threw rocks and assaulted a campus ROTC building near Lynch Street. They tried to set it ablaze, but failed. On the next night, May 14, they again tossed rocks and set a dump truck afire in the street in front of a men's dormitory.

About seventy officers, Mississippi Highway Patrolmen and Jackson city police, were dispatched to the dormitory. To scatter the students, one patrolman opened fire over his head, shooting into the dormitory. No one was hurt.

The blue helmets then moved up Lynch Street behind Thompson's Tank, an armored van, and stopped to face a crowd of about one hundred jeering students behind a chain link fence in front of a women's dormitory named Alexander Hall. The white men stood facing the black crowd for several minutes. The shooting began.

Afterward, the peace officers claimed they were caught in a crossfire between dormitory snipers on both sides of Lynch Street.

What follows are accounts of the incident from four students and one patrolman at the scene, as related during a civil trial in Biloxi, Mississippi, about two years after the killings.

"Would you state your full name please?"

"Vernon Steve Weakley."

Weakley was the first witness for the plaintiffs and one of twelve students wounded at Jackson State. Speaking into the microphone in a low voice, Weakley told the court he was a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity, and that he worked part-time in a post office in Jackson. After work at 9:30 on Wednesday night, May 13, 1970, the first night of the unrest, he had gone to the Jackson State campus for a fraternity meeting. Weakley said students were throwing rocks at cars that night, and a crowd attacked an ROTC building.

Weakley was asked if he had been involved in the violence.

"No, I wasn't," he replied.

On the next night, Weakley testified, again he had returned to the Jackson State campus after work. He and some friends had left the campus for a while to have beer at the Red Carpet Lounge on Lynch Street. At about 11:30 PM, they returned to the college, and Weakley had stood talking with friends near the chain-link fence in front of Alexander Hall's west wing. He recalled seeing lines of officers marching east up the street toward the dorm.

"As the police and Highway Patrolman arrived," Weakley said, "you had an officer with a white shirt on, whoever he was, with the bullhorn talking...." Students were cursing and three or four tossed rocks at the lawmen, Weakley recalled. "At that time, I saw a bottle thrown. It seemed as if it came, to me, from the opposite side of the street." The bottle shattered in Lynch Street.

"It seemed to me as soon as it hit behind the officers—they were facing Alexander Hall, you know—they just started shooting," Weakley said. "I turned around to run, and the next thing I know I was hit and knocked down. I was hit in the right leg and I was bleeding real bad and my leg was burning."

"Did you hear any sniper shots at all at that point coming from any area on the Jackson State campus?" Attorney Taylor asked.

"No, I didn't."

Tuwayne Davis Whitehead took the stand. A thin, twenty-one-year-old junior, she majored in special education and commuted to Jackson State from Canton, her hometown twenty-eight miles north of the campus. Since she had always been a commuting student, Whitehead testified, it was only by accident that she had been in Alexander Hall on the night of May 14, 1970.

"We was going to have a final physical education examination that night from six to eight, so we had to stay over," Whitehead said.

Lacking a ride home after her exam that night, she had gone to Alexander Hall to see friends on the third floor of the west wing. The group was listening to records and playing cards in the dorm when she heard a yell: "They are marching in front of the dorm!" She and her friends scurried down the hallway to the west wing stairwell. On the landing between the third and fourth floors, they found other women crowding the windows overlooking Lynch Street. From these same stairwell windows, according to the Highway Patrolmen, a male sniper had opened fire.

"When I got to the window," Whitehead told the court, "I went to look out, but I only got a glance. That's when someone shouted that the officers was fixing to shoot.... I turned to run and I got halfway down the stairs, and I felt something hit me in my back. I fell down the stairs and I crawled behind a wall and there I stayed up until the shooting had stopped.... While I was behind the wall I noticed that my arm was bleeding. It had been cut open, and I could see buckshots, or whatever they was, bouncing all around me, and glass and everything falling around me."

"You were hit in the arm?" she was asked.

"In the arm and the leg and back."

"How did you feel while this shooting was going on?"

"I was scared to see all this coming around me, coming straight at me. I could hear this noise like shooting going on and bullets bouncing all around me and everything. I was just scared to death, because I just knew I was dead. Wasn't nobody up around me or nothing, I just knew I was dead."

"Did you see a man, a sniper there firing shots out of the broken window?"

"No, not at all."

"Up to the shooting, had you seen a man anywhere in the dormitory?"

"No, not at all."

Leroy Kenter, Jr. was the next wounded student to testify. He was a tall, muscular youth with a beard—a sophomore back in 1970. After he had been shot at Alexander Hall, Kenter lay in traction for nearly two months. Kenter's left thigh bone had been shattered and the leg shortened by a half-inch. Bullet fragments remained in his right leg.

Kenter told the court that on the night of the shootings he had been talking with friends in front of Alexander Hall just after saying goodnight to his girlfriend. Like many other students, Kenter had never seen the dump truck ablaze two blocks west in front of Stewart Hall, and he had not heard the Patrol shooting in the alleyway alongside the men's dorm. When the peace officers began marching up Lynch Street toward Alexander Hall, Kenter said, he had no idea who they were: guardsmen, patrolmen, or police. He recalled seeing objects tossed over his head toward the lawmen when they turned to face the students at Alexander Hall.

"Then the front line dropped down to their knees," Kenter testified. "They leveled down in order for the back line to see over them.... That's when I ran.... The bullet knocked me out. I was laying there and I didn't really think I was shot. I figured I was hit with a blank bullet because I couldn't believe that people would shoot live ammunition into a girls' dorm. So I said to myself that I was going to lay there until they got through, but after they stopped, I tried to get up. I couldn't... and that's when I reached down and felt my leg, and that's when I came up with a handful of blood."

"Had you heard any sniper shots immediately before these police officers started aiming their weapons?" Kenter was asked.

"I hadn't heard any shots."

Redd Wilson was a slim, wiry Jackson State senior studying to become a social studies teacher. He had been shot in the upper left thigh on the night of the killings. After taking the witness stand, Wilson testified that on the first night of unrest, May 13, 1970, he had been among the crowd charging across the campus and shouting, "Let's burn the ROTC building!" The crowd had thrown stones at the ROTC barracks, Wilson said, but he had not. He was there just to watch, he said, and he never saw the firebombing attempt later in the evening.

"Excuse me," Judge Walter Nixon said to Wilson. "Why were rocks being thrown at the ROTC building, and why was there talk of burning the ROTC building down?"

"Because there are some students who resent an ROTC branch on the Jackson State campus," Wilson replied. "They feel it is a branch of the military."

On the next night, Wilson testified, he had been talking with friends in front of Alexander Hall after just saying goodnight to his girlfriend. When the lawmen arrived at the dorm, Wilson was standing near the west wing. Students were shouting, "We are not going to run!" Staying to face the guns was a matter of courage, Wilson told the court. That was why the students had not run from the police.

Only "a couple of seconds" after the officers had arrived, Wilson testified, a bottle flew from the crowd of students. It burst like a .22 shot on the Lynch Street pavement.

"Immediately after that happened," Wilson added, "they started to shoot."

Highway Patrolman Thomas Latham was sworn in and sat in the witness box. He told the jury that on the night of the killings he had been armed with a 9mm sub-machine gun. Latham had been one of two Patrolmen on the campus with such a weapon, which could fire 700 rounds per minute.

"How many times did you fire this sub-machine gun?" he was asked.

"I don't know, sir," Patrolman Latham answered.

"Could you give us an estimate?" he was asked.

"I fired one short burst, probably eight or ten rounds," Latham said.

"And at what target did you aim that weapon when you fired that burst?"

"Across the top of Alexander Hall, the west wing."

"Why did you fire there?"

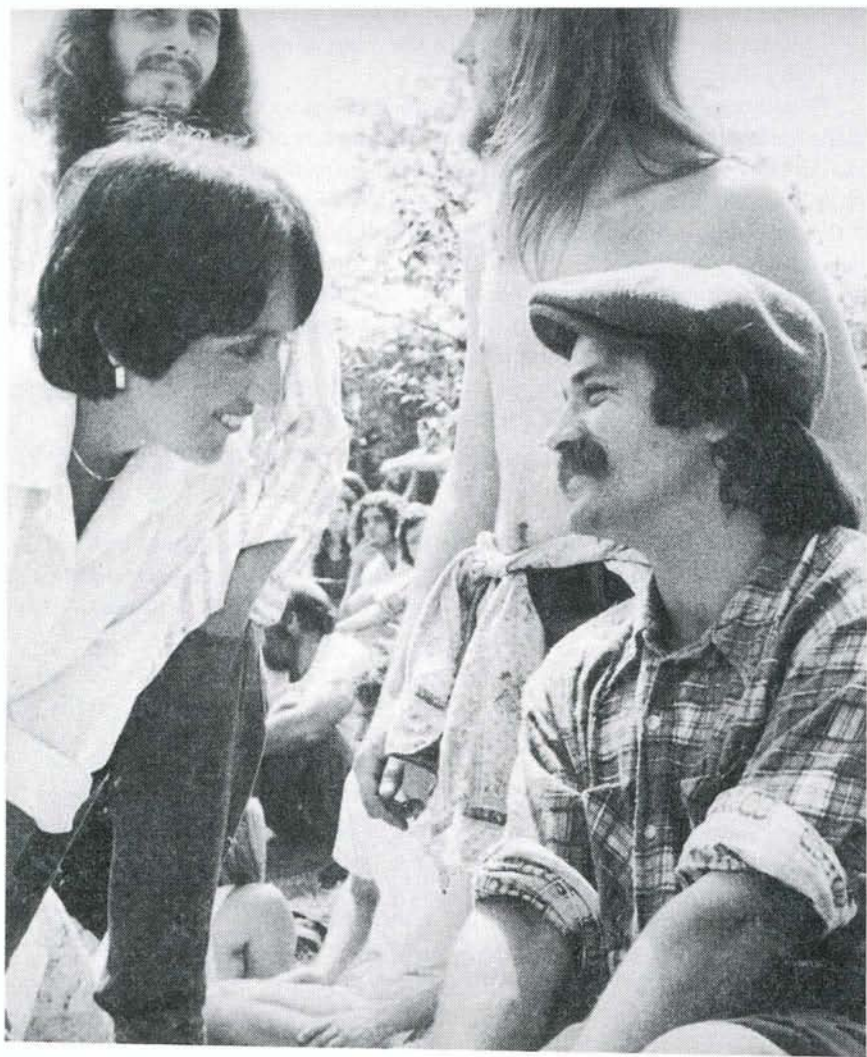
"Someone hollered that there was a sniper up on top of the dormitory," Latham testified. "I looked up. I saw some flashes of fire after the shooting had already started—the other officers had started shooting. And I shot at what I thought was in the direction of where this sniper was, across the top of the building. I was looking up through some power lines."

Deputy Attorney General William Allain, the state's defense attorney for the Patrolmen, began cross-examining Patrolman Latham, asking whether he was married, how many children he had and how much schooling and service in the armed forces he had.

Allain then asked Latham, who had been armed with a submachine gun, if he was afraid for his life at Jackson State.

"Yes, sir, I was," Latham said. "I thought I was going to die right there in that street."

On March 22, 1972, the all-white jury in the Jackson State case ruled unanimously in favor of the lawmen. The deaths of James Green and Phillip Gibbs, as well as the wounding of a dozen other black students, went unpunished.



Ron Kovic and Joan Baez attend a rally at Kent State, August 20, 1977. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

# **Mississippi Killing Zone: An Eyewitness Account of the Events Surrounding the Murders by the Mississippi Highway Patrol at Jackson State College**

**Vernon Steve Weakley**

It's hard to believe that twenty years have now passed since the murders at Jackson State College occurred. The images, sounds, emotions, and even the raw smell of gunpowder are as vivid in my memory today as they were the night this tragedy occurred. The profound and lasting effects of that night, emotional and physiological, remain with me to this day. In a strange sort of way, it has helped to make me what I am today. I have often wondered what type of effect that night had on the many other students and participants, especially the police and highway patrolmen who were, like myself, part of this never-ending nightmare. The "Kill Them All and Let God Sort Them Out" mentality that prevailed on May 14, 1970, was the catalyst for events which will be remembered as a dark stain on Mississippi's history.

A long time friend—who made his way to the Jackson State campus only a few seconds after the shooting ceased and who witnessed the screams, moans, and raw surging emotions of all concerned—tells me that the reason he has religiously written, called me with sometimes annoying frequency, and kept in touch with me over the years is rooted in his own response to the traumatic incident. He is anxious about my well-being because, on the night of May 14, he was incorrectly informed that I had been killed by the highway patrol.

I can honestly say that what happened that night caught me by surprise.

Jackson State College was a very large black college set in the capitol city of Mississippi. For years it had been rumored that the powers that be in Mississippi desperately wanted to correct the mistake they had made by placing a black college in the capitol rather than a prestigious white university. In 1970, the student body was not very involved in local or national politics. Although JSC had a few radical students, most students could only be considered moderately active at best. I do recall a handful of students trying to hold a rally in front of the cafeteria building to show support for the students who had been killed at Kent State on May 4, but the

event went practically unnoticed. Students brushed by the small gathering, as I did myself, to get inside the lunch room. We couldn't relate to what went on at a white college; we had trouble relating to what went on in the world around us. As sad as this may sound, the overwhelming majority of students at Jackson State merely wanted to get their schoolwork done, party, and have a good time. I wonder if the the authorities would have used the extreme force and brutality they applied on the night of May 14 had they known how passive we really were.

It was not unusual for large numbers of students to congregate in front of either the women's or men's dormitories at JSC. These dorms were at opposite ends of the campus, and a major thoroughfare, Lynch Street, ran through the heart of the campus. The night the murders occurred, I was in the company of a group of fraternity brothers and sorority sisters gathered in front of the women's dorm. We were engaged in the usual Que-Delta social chatter when a truck came speeding down the street and passed us, heading in the direction of the men's dormitory. In the truck was a white man who screamed obscenities out of his window. A few minutes later the Jackson police and highway patrol could be seen in the distance, marching slowly past the men's dorm. They appeared to ignore the screams and jeers of the male students, and walked by them as if they were not there. Young men were inside the campus fence and hanging out of the dorm windows. In retrospect, it seems as if the officers had deliberately chosen to make their point at the women's dorm.

The women's dorm had the usual complement of students milling around it, lying on the grass, perched in windows, and seated on the walkway. As the police and highway patrolmen approached, most of the students did not move. I think we all felt that they would continue on past us and leave the campus. Instead, they stopped in front of the west wing, turned, and faced us. One of the city policemen used his bullhorn to order us to get inside the building. This demand was met with loud jeers and protest from the crowd. All of a sudden a bottle was thrown from behind the police and arced in the direction of the cafeteria. From where I stood inside the campus cyclone fence, some twenty feet from the police line, the bottle appeared to hang in the air for an instant before it fell downward on the officers. Something in my gut told me all hell was about to break loose. All unknowing, Vernon Steve Weakley was about to become a part of history and witness to the unthinkable.

The moment the bottle hit the ground the police and highway patrolmen appeared to go crazy. They began to fire their weapons as if all they had been waiting for was an excuse to fire. Howard Levite, Ruby Patrick, James Grant, Johnny Byrd and I all turned and tried to make a mad dash—along with all of the other students—for the small, glass doors of the dormitory. But I was shot in the leg in front of the dormitory wing and knocked to the ground before I could take two steps. I found myself lying on my stomach with my

head facing the dormitory wing. From my vantage point (if you could call it that) I could see students crammed into the dorm, and students pushing and screaming as they tried to get inside. People were wounded in the back as they struggled to get into the building.

Although I have been repeatedly told by the authorities that the shooting only lasted a few seconds, I could swear it lasted a lot longer. In my memory it went on for five or ten minutes. The sky lit up as if it was day. I could hear the loud blasts of shotguns and automatic weapons. While I lay motionless I could feel a rain of shotgun pellets on my legs and backside. Then all noise ceased and for a few seconds there was an eerie silence. As abruptly as the noise stopped, it began again; but this time the air was filled with the screams and cries of the students, many of whom had been wounded by the gunfire or injured by flying glass and the mad crush of bodies pushing at the doorway. Blood was everywhere.

I was in a state of shock, cold and trembling violently as I lay on the ground. Though I knew I had been wounded, it didn't hurt, didn't even seem to matter. I could feel my pants leg wet with blood. Then the cold feeling was replaced with a warm tingling sensation in my leg. I saw Howard Levite, one of my fraternity brothers, peering out from a door inside the dorm. I screamed out to him to help me. How he distinguished my voice from the others, I don't know. I could tell from the look on his face that he was also in a state of shock, looking out over the mass of bodies on the ground. Though I'm sure he was afraid, he was the first person to stand up after the shooting and he moved toward me, stepping over people who lay in the doorway. To this day—though until now I have never been able to share this with him, or with anyone—I admire him for the courage he showed in the face of danger. I was terrified that the highway patrolmen, still only a few feet behind me, would kill Levite. I wanted to scream to him to go back, but the words would not come out of my mouth.

I started to try and get up on my own, but I stumbled and fell over. By this time Levite had made it over to me and begun to pull me to my feet. Our backs were to the patrolmen. As he put his arm around my shoulder, I felt a violent tug on my other arm which spun us both back to the ground. A big, burly highway patrolman pointed his weapon at us and said, "Nigger, you'd better stay your ass on the ground."

"I think he's shot in the leg."

"Stay your goddamn ass on the ground until the ambulance comes."

Another patrolman came over and said, "Leave those niggers alone." Pointing, he continued, "There's a dead nigger over there a more seriously wounded one next to him."

Both moved in the direction the second patrolman pointed. I focused on a body a few feet away from us, lying face up on the ground. Blood still spurting from the injured student's head. Another student was kneeling next to the dying man, crying and slowly rocking back and forth. The full effect

of what was happening started to hit me. Tears flowed down my face. A patrolman pushed the crying student abruptly out of the way and started to tend to the wounded student. By this time another severely injured student was carried to the area where we lay. Shot in the thigh, his pants were still smoking, and he just stared into space. Levite, though ordered to leave by a police officer, stayed by me.

Most of the students who could walk had gotten up and taken shelter inside the building. Only about twenty of us were still on the ground. Most were injured or attending to the injured. Levite helped me up, and we struggled towards the dorm. A highway patrolman ran towards us. We froze in our tracks, but he passed us and ran around the side of the building. We heard a shotgun blast, and then the patrolman screamed, "Goddamnit, you better halt, nigger!" We quickly moved inside.

Inside the building there was blood and glass all over. The entryway, the stairs, the first floor hallway were all covered with blood. Levite and I slipped in the sticky liquid and fell against the wall. There was blood on the walls and ceiling. The women in the dorm were still screaming, and the sound echoed and reverberated through the building. They were crying, screaming, fainting, vomiting. Some were trying to revive girls who appeared to have fainted. I began to worry about what had happened to Ruby Patrick, a close friend, who had been standing outside with us when the shooting started. I grabbed Levite and asked him, "Where's Ruby?" Levite calmed me, told me she was okay, that another fraternity brother, James Grant, had taken her upstairs after I got shot.

I've always had a problem dealing with crowds of crying people. I guess it goes back to when I was a small kid watching my parents, friends, and neighbors cry and show emotion and my grandparents' funerals. On my way up to Ruby's room my heart felt as if it was going to explode. As I leaned on Levite and hobbled down those corridors, Levite must have noticed something was wrong. He kept asking me if I was okay, and saying, "I think maybe you've lost too much blood, Swalos." (Swalos was my nickname.)

When we arrived at Ruby's room no one said anything for a few minutes. Ruby and another girl were crying. No one could believe what had just happened. I edged my way to the window. The streets were lined with the Mississippi National Guard. Ambulance sirens were shrieking and their lights were flashing up and down the street. I shook my head and said to myself that this must all have been planned in advance. How could so many guardsmen be here so soon?

Over a bullhorn, someone announced that all the wounded should come out of the building. Levite and Grant helped me back down the stairs. As they started to put me in the last empty spot in a packed ambulance, a young woman named Mayhorn was brought out. Her head was bleeding, cut all over as if she had been hit full blast with buckshot. She was screaming at the top of her lungs. I told them to let her have my seat. The paramedic

immediately said no, and warned me that I had lost a lot of blood, that her wounds looked worse than they were, and that I should squeeze in. I told them I couldn't ride in there under those conditions, and got out.

By this time the highway patrol and police were gone. The National Guard were courteous, and even looked a little remorseful. Another ambulance pulled up, and my frat brothers motioned to them to come over to us. All of a sudden, I felt a pat on my shoulder. It was my older brother Stanley; our mother had sent him over to check on em. Mom got a call that I had been shot and my brother said that they had called every hospital in Jackson, but I wasn't listed. Meanwhile this paramedic checked my leg too, and told me that I should get in the ambulance. Instead of going to the hospital I insisted that my brother take me home. My nerves couldn't take it any more. I was afraid that the authorities would do something to those who had witnessed the shootings, hurt us or threaten us to keep us quiet. I know this may sound silly now, but that was how I felt after the shootings.

Facing my mother was tough. She had asked me not to go to the College that night because of the disturbances of the night before. But she didn't argue; she hugged me and told me she was glad I was okay, and started to see to my leg. The bullet had made a clean exit, and the bleeding had stopped. She gathered her coat and car keys to take me to the hospital, but I said I didn't want to go and asked if our family doctor could take a look at my leg. She called, and he told her to bring me to his office early the next morning.

Although I went directly to bed, I didn't sleep. I went on an emotional roller coaster ride: I would get cold and begin to tremble, my heart would pound so loud it sounded like a drum; then I would all of a sudden calm down when I realized I was safe at home.

The next morning I went to Dr. Britten. (I found out later that many of the wounded students refused to go to the hospital. They, like me, feared reprisals from the authorities if their names were printed in the newspapers. Like me, many students went to their family doctors.) He told my mom and me that I would be alright. Then he gave me a hard look and said, "Son, I've taken care of you and your mom all of your life. Me and your mom would sit up with you when you were a little boy and discuss what you would be when you grew up. I know how hard it is for young black kids to sit back and watch the inequity in America. But the way to change it is not by foolishly throwing your bodies up against bullets and tanks. You've got to mentally rise above all the obstacles they throw at you, work hard to become successful, and from there, work within the system to change things. I know in your eyesight older black people like myself have let you down. But it's not true. We are just working at the pace in which the system will let us. Perhaps when you get to be my age, the pace will be quicker."

Then he shook his finger slowly in my face and said, "Now get out of here and don't ever put this type of stress and worry on your mom again."

Dr. Britten didn't know it, but what he said really stuck. At that time I certainly wasn't the militant he obviously thought I was, but the concepts he put forward continued to puzzle me for a long time. What he was saying was simple, but it took me years to understand it.

Later on that day I was visited by the FBI. An agent questioned me, and seemed to indicate that there may have been a sniper. I told them that was a ridiculous idea. During his interrogation, he mentioned—as if he wasn't really supposed to tell me—that there was an inquiry being held at the Masonic temple down the street from the College. After he talked to me, he insisted on taking my bloodstained and tattered jeans with him.

I went to the Masonic temple. Antoine, the man who had knelt over the murdered student, was giving testimony on stage to what appeared to be members of the media, the mayor's staff, etc. The questioners also seemed to want to focus on the "sniper." But I, and the other students, know that it was only the popping sound that bottle made when it hit the ground that caused the officers to start firing.

After the meeting I went on campus. I looked like it had been hit by the Black Plague. Most of the area was empty. A few parents were hustling their kids out, packing their things in trucks, and hiding their faces from the media. Journalists were everywhere. The school had been officially closed for the year because of the shootings. I can't begin to describe the rage I felt that day as I watched black people scurrying like ants to get off campus. In one single, calculated blow the black population of Mississippi had been thoroughly intimidated. I guess I expected to see students demonstrating, sit-ins, or something. But all I saw was beaten people. The police authorities of Mississippi had closed our institute of higher learning, cut us off from the one avenue to advancement which was available to us. I was depressed for weeks. In close and personal terms, I lost the one thing I needed to help me work through my pain—my friends and my college relationships. So the healing process was difficult and lengthy, as it probably was for all of the students who were part of the events at Jackson State College on the night of May 14.

At the time of the shooting I was employed at the post office. About two weeks after I was wounded, I was picking up mail from the box on the street next to the Governor's mansion. This was a regular thing, and there had never been a problem. But on this particular day I noticed two young highway patrolmen standing near the box. Usually the Governor's mansion is as quiet as a tomb. You'd never see anyone in it, much less guards patrolling the grounds, and I had a bad feeling about the situation. But I told myself I was just paranoid because of what had happened at Jackson State, and walked over to do my job, still limping a little because of my wounded leg.

One of the patrolmen folded his arms and blocked my path. I didn't want trouble, so I gave him a wide berth and tried to keep my composure. I didn't want them to know I was afraid of them. I reached the mailbox, emptied the mail into the mail sack, and began to walk back to the post office on the sidewalk. The officer seemed annoyed that I was ignoring him and moved up very close to me, so close that I had no choice but to go through him, over him, or step off the sidewalk into the street to avoid him. I chose the latter.

It was a Saturday afternoon. Capitol Street was empty. No one was around. Tears started to flow from my eyes, and I relived the emotions of the Jackson State shootings. Although I hadn't done anything to provoke this behavior, still this man had chosen to force his will on me, shoving his might down my throat.

The highway patrolman put his hand on his revolver. He was only inches in front of me, as if he was going to push his chest into me. I stopped, looked him in the eye, and, I took a deep breath and began to slowly bob my head up and down, preparing myself for what was to come. I could see the other patrolman over his shoulder, about twenty yards away, coming towards me at a fast walk. I was not going to let them kill me as they had killed my schoolmates. I stepped forward and my foot touched the street. I looked the man in the eye to let him know that I was making an effort to avoid trouble, but, if he moved into me or began to pull his revolver out or put his hands on me, one of us would die. He burst out laughing and moved back as I passed him. I looked over my shoulder. He didn't follow me, he just kept laughing. When I passed him, the other patrolman started laughing too. When I reported this incident to my supervisor (rumored himself to be a Klansman and a racist) his response surprised me. He seemed genuinely concerned for my safety, and called an inspection by a black union steward, and by his superiors. The incident was eventually investigated by agents from Washington, D.C., but to my knowledge, nothing ever came out of it.

Those patrolmen don't know it, but they also helped me to solidify my resolve to fight racism, and to shape my thinking about the state of Mississippi, highway patrolmen, and racism in general.

Shortly after I confronted the patrolmen, I was contacted by Constance Slaughter, a black woman attorney. She asked me if I would participate in a lawsuit with the families of the two slain students and some of the other wounded students. We sued for thirteen million dollars, but it wasn't about money.

The incident at the mailbox had made it crystal clear to me that someone had to take a stand against injustice and racism. Without that incentive, I probably would have been like the other countless students who ran away from campus and refused to take part in any organized effort to demand the state of Mississippi take responsibility for their crime. Most people feared reprisals, and rightfully so. But I knew I had to stand up for what was right.

Although there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell of winning, something inside of me screamed, "You must do it!"

The court case was held on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. All of the evidence presented during the trial clearly showed the highway patrolmen to be responsible for the violence. The most damaging testimony against the Highway Patrol came from the Jackson Police Department. The city policemen were found not to have fired during the shooting; in fact, a city police captain who was supposed to have been in charge of the operation testified that all the officers, including the patrolmen, had orders from him *not* to fire. The Highway Patrol obviously had a different agenda. The captain also verified that it was peaceful on campus on the night of May 14, and that the sole reason the officers were on the Jackson State campus was to protect firemen who were putting out the dumptruck fire. Since the campus appeared calm, they elected to walk through the grounds to get to the vehicles they had parked on the other side of the school, past the women's dormitory. This officer claimed he had no intention of stopping at the dormitory, but that the highway patrolmen decided to order the students into the building. He, along with the other officers, claimed to have heard what they thought was a gunshot (the bottle breaking). The highway patrolmen began to fire without authorization, and the rest is history. The police captain claimed that he, personally, had screamed repeatedly at the patrolmen to make them cease firing. After it was over, the city police took off immediately, and the highway patrolmen stayed and took over from there.

I didn't have much problem with the way he presented this, except that I was right there and I never heard him screaming. But it was true that after the shooting all I saw were highway patrolmen until the National Guard arrived.

The most vivid memory I have of this trial was the testimony highway patrolmen. It was shocking and saddening to see how stupid, how unprofessional, and uneducated these men were. I don't want this to sound like an indictment of the current Mississippi Highway Patrol, because it's not. Shortly after the Jackson State trial, the Patrol began to change its image. For years they were the most feared law enforcement agency in Mississippi. My parents, grandparents and neighbors would tell horror stories of how brutal and racist the Patrol was, and of how they murdered black people on the highways. But now many blacks are highway patrolmen. In fact, a guy by the name of Lewis Younger, a Jackson State student at the time the shootings occurred, was one of the first blacks to graduate from the highway patrol program. For a few years after the trial the Governor would pay surprise visits to Jackson State University and show Lewis off, as if to make amends for what the Highway Patrol had done. I think that if most people at JSU didn't respect Lewis and know him as an intelligent and good-hearted

person, that the mending process between white Mississippi and Jackson State and the black community would never have occurred. Black attitudes were quickly turning militant, and blacks were embracing the idea of armed resistance since the shootings; secret meetings and organizations sprang up everywhere after the event. Lewis helped defuse that at Jackson State.

During the trial, I found out that the big, burly patrolman who had spoken to me so callously the night I was shot was a guy by the name of Lloyd Johns. It was obvious from his demeanor that he had no regrets about firing on students. And his racist attitudes were emulated by his men—it was as if they were all trying to carbon copies of Lloyd Johns. As I sat and listened to their testimonies, I couldn't help but wonder if these men had families and kids of their own. How would they feel if the shoe was on the other foot? If their brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters were forced to undergo such treatment? The patrolmen seemed proud of what they had done, and even laughed and snickered about it while they were on the stand. This stood in stark comparison with the testimony of the police, who seemed openly ashamed of their role in the murders.

I recognized Lloyd Johns as I stood waiting in the hallway for the next session to begin. I heard his voice, the same voice that had said, "There's a nigger lying over there." For a few seconds I just stared at him. He looked me dead in the eyes, as if to say, what the hell are you looking at. He was only three or four feet away, and I was scared stiff. I could feel sweat dripping down my chest and arms inside my clothes. My hand began to clench into a fist.

"So, Vernon, what are you doing?" said a soft voice behind me. It was Constance Slaughter, who put her hand softly against my back and whispered in my ear, "He ain't worth the trouble you'd get yourself and me into today. Let me kick his ass in the courtroom, not out here in the hallway."

As fate would have it, Johns was one of the first men up on the stand. His testimony was arrogant and full of hate. He was the image of the dumb redneck country-boy, the kind of person good Mississippians hate to be mistaken for. From his testimony, it was obvious he thought he ought to get a medal for his fine police work at Jackson State. It was easy to see how things could get out of control with type of adult leadership.

Constance and the other New York lawyers did a good job of making this guy look bad. But I don't believe he ever noticed. To this day he probably brags about how he told the world the truth about black people at the Jackson State trial.

My own testimony was uneventful. My lawyers painted me as a fine, upstanding fraternity man. I talked about how cruel the highway patrol had been after the shootings. Call me naive, but after listening to the testimonies of the witnesses, I thought the evidence clearly proved that the murders at

Jackson State were unprovoked. My earlier pessimism disappeared and I thought for sure we would win in Mississippi.

The case did draw a lot of positive publicity that, in my opinion, did the black people of Mississippi a lot of good. But nothing could erase the fact that we lost badly. Justice had once again failed to be meted out in Mississippi. We appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court in New Orleans, and for a few years after that I kept in touch with Constance Slaughter. From time to time I would receive articles from her detailing the lawyers' efforts. Finally I received a letter that said we had won. It was as if a great burden had been lifted off my chest. Then the case went to the Supreme Court.

Years would pass before any word would come. Then one day, as I watched the national news and heard that the Supreme Court had decided not to hear the Jackson State in light of a recent negative ruling on Kent State, my little girl asked me, "Weren't you a part of that?" But for some reason I couldn't answer her. I just sat there shaking my head and watching the network news. I can't begin to explain how confused I was about the Supreme Court's decision. I felt the justice system had let us down. I felt that it was not only Mississippi's justice system that was infected by prejudice; the highest court in the land suffered from the same disease.

It was at that moment that Dr. Britten's words made sense to me. It was up to myself and other young blacks to come to the forefront, roll up our sleeves, and dig into the American system to effect the changes we seek. Blacks must become an integral part of the fabric of our society before our needs, feelings, thoughts, and demands will be considered. Although we are faced by great obstacles, we must continue to move forward inch by inch and to struggle to claim our rights. We must not sit back and expect white people to do it for us. The pace will be slow sometimes, and sometimes it will be faster, but we must continue our journey forward.

# **May 15, 1970: The Miracle at Jackson State College**

**Gene Cornelius Young**

This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one. Or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle.... The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. If we ever get free from all the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others.<sup>1</sup>

—Frederick Douglass (1857)

With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. How could they be initiators, if they themselves are the result of violence? How could they be the sponsors of something whose objective inauguration called forth their existence as oppressed? There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation.

Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons—not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized. It is not the unloved who initiate disaffection, but those who cannot love because they love only themselves. It is not the helpless, subject to terror, who initiate terror, but the violent, who with their power, create the concrete situation which begets the “rejects of life.” It is not the tyrannized who initiate despotism, but the tyrants. It is not the despised who initiate hatred, but those who despise. It is not those whose humanity is denied them who negate man, but those who denied that humanity (thus negating their own as well). Force is used not by those who have become weak under the preponderance of the strong, but by the strong who have emasculated them.<sup>2</sup>

Back at Jackson State, nearly all students who lived on campus had gathered on the dimly lit lawn in front of Alexander Hall. They were told that President Peoples would address them. Many moved through the weeping crowd, searching for friends to make sure they were all right. Others were shouting there should be a march downtown to show they would never submit to the white pigs. But the students who opposed the march yelled that the National Guard had sealed both ends of Lynch Street. A move off the campus would mean only more bloodshed.<sup>3</sup>

In the glow of the dorm lights, a male student addressed the sobbing crowd on the lawn. He was Gene Young, a former civil rights worker called “Jughead.” He was known for his imitations of Martin Luther King, Jr.

and his “I Have a Dream” speech, which he knew verbatim. Some students had asked him to perform it now, to soothe the crowd. So he tried.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

But the crying continued, and when President Peoples arrived in the yard, he was startled. He smelled gunpowder and blood. The sight of all the broken windows and the crying students sickened him. And all the talk of a march downtown scared him. Peoples turned to the students for suggestions.

“Jughead, help me,” Peoples said. “How can I calm them down?”

“Doc, why don’t you pray?”

So they brought President Peoples a table from the dorm and he lifted his tall, thin frame upon it. The students knelt and bowed their heads as he said a prayer. “There’s been a slaughter tonight,” he told them, and he asked the students to go back to their dorms so there would be no more killing. But their grumbles told him there was no way the students would leave.

“We ain’t goin’ in, Doc,” Jughead yelled. “Every sister, get with a brother—all of you—come out from the dorm and bring some blankets!”

After Peoples left to call local hospitals, the students sat on the lawn under the dark sky. They prayed and sang freedom songs—the same songs they had learned as youngsters in the civil rights marches and church rallies of the early 1960s.

Ain’ gonna let nobody turn me ‘round  
Turn me ‘round, turn me ‘round.  
Ain’ gonna let nobody turn me ‘round,  
I’m gonna keep on walkin’, keep on talkin’  
And marchin’ up to Freedom Land.

They stayed there all night on the lawn, sobbing and singing, just waiting for the sun to rise.<sup>4</sup>

The murders of Phillip Gibbs and James Earl Green would have been just another page in the long history of racist violence inflicted upon Blacks in my native state of Mississippi. But, coming on the heels of the murders of four white students (Allison Krause, Jeffrey Glenn Miller, William K. Schroeder, and Sandra Lee Scheuer) at Kent State University in Ohio, ten days earlier, conscientious and compassionate individuals could not ignore the tragic events on an all-Black college campus in Jackson, Mississippi.

Growing up in Mississippi in the early 1950s, you became accustomed to the countless acts of racist violence endured by Blacks and you accepted the reality that in this tyrannical system of southern white supremacy and

segregation, that no white person would ever be held accountable for victimizing Blacks. During this period, which preceded the era of highly publicized civil rights protests, the only way to describe racial relations in Mississippi was that of the oppressor (white) and the oppressed (Black).

Indelibly etched into the collective memory of most Black Mississippians are the acts of almost legendary proportion, in which whites viciously harassed, brutalized, and murdered Blacks. I can never forget being informed of how a young teenage Black male was lynched and murdered in Money, Mississippi on August 28, 1955. Brutally beaten, shot repeatedly, and severely disfigured, the body of young Emmett Louis Till was thrown, carelessly, into the muddy waters of the Tallahatchie River. This was the price he paid for allegedly "flirting" with a white woman, and even though there was a mockery of a trial, no one ever served a day in jail for this shocking and sadistic act. Similarly, in April of 1959, Mack Charles Parker, a truck driver accused of raping a white woman, was taken from his jail cell and lynched by a mob of masked white men in Poplarville, Mississippi. No one ever served a day in jail for the murder of Mack Charles Parker.

Were it not for the indefatigable investigative persistence of Medgar

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## MARTYRS OF MAY 14, 1970

PHILLIP GIBBS (1948-1970)  
FROM RIPLEY, MISS., WAS  
A JUNIOR STUDENT AT  
JACKSON STATE COLLEGE  
AT THE TIME OF HIS  
DEATH.

JAMES EARL GREEN (1953-  
1970) WAS A SENIOR  
STUDENT AT JIM HILL  
HIGH SCHOOL OF JACKSON  
AT THE TIME OF HIS  
DEATH.

PHILLIP GIBBS WILL  
REMAIN IN THE  
MEMORY OF ALL  
JACKSONIANS AS A  
MARTYR WHO NOBLY  
RELINQUISHED HIS LIFE  
FOR THE CAUSE OF  
HUMAN BROTHERHOOD.

GREEN, LIKE GIBBS, DID  
NOT CHOOSE TO DIE  
BUT WAS A VICTIM OF  
DEATH'S MANDATE.

HE NOBLY TAKES HIS  
STATION AMONG OTHER  
MARTYRS OF THE CAUSE.

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## CLASS OF 1971

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Inscription on the monument dedicated to Phillip Gibbs and James Earl Green,  
placed outside Gibbs' dormitory at Jackson State University.

Wiley Evers, Mississippi's first NAACP Field Secretary, little or nothing would have been known or revealed regarding these and other heinous and inhumane acts which took place in Mississippi. Medgar Evers, who would also be victimized by the virulence of the violent racial climate in June of 1963, was, primarily, responsible for providing the impetus for many of the positive changes in Mississippi's political, educational, and social institutions. At the age of 37, Medgar Evers was gunned down by an assassin's bullet in front of his home in Jackson, as he returned from a civil rights mass meeting. His leadership in advancing numerous causes which called for progressive change and his legion of accomplishments were unparalleled during this period of the Black struggle for freedom, justice, and equality.<sup>5</sup>

The arrival of Freedom Riders in Mississippi issued in a new era of civil disobedience and my participation in demonstrations to protest their arrest, incarceration, and accompanying acts of harassment and brutalization, served as my introduction to the freedom struggle. As a twelve-year-old, seventh grade student at Lanier High School in the spring of 1963, I followed the lead of my older brothers and other schoolmates who walked out in protest of the inequities, injustices, and inherent racism which permeated every sphere of existence in Jackson, Mississippi.

Attempts to desegregate the public facilities at the Jackson bus station were met with harsh resistance and, as bad as the jails of Jackson and Hinds County were, the Freedom Riders housed here were deemed to be a bit more fortunate than their brethren who were transported to the state penitentiary at Parchman.

With each passing day, the atmosphere of racist resistance grew stronger, as did, too, the determination of the Black community. Shortly after my release from jail for participating in a mass march, I was chosen to speak at a community rally to encourage greater support for the ongoing activities in Jackson. Both Lena Horne and Dick Gregory were in Jackson that evening to show their support, and I had to stand in a chair to reach the microphone in order to address an audience which had filled the auditorium of the Masonic Temple on Lynch Street. Medgar Evers was there that evening, too, but within a matter of days, because he was perceived as being the chief of the rabblers, troublemakers, and "communists," his life would soon be terminated.

The summer of discontent continued on many fronts and I was arrested again, this time "trespassing" at a city park designated for whites only. Later, with others from the Jackson freedom movement, I attended the historic March on Washington and I could not help but think of Medgar Evers on that warm, beautiful August day, when the preacher from Atlanta shared his vision before the multitude of marchers assembled in front of the Lincoln Memorial:

## *Mississippi Killing Zone*

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

I was happy to be a participant in this monumental and memorable effort. I was proud to be among the contingent of Mississippians who were present, and I was inspired and instructed by the message:

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

The protests continued—demands for desegregation of public facilities, integration of the public schools, ending racial discrimination in employment and business practices, and eliminating practices which prohibited full participation in the political process, were among the many thrusts of the rejuvenated civil rights movement. The tensions created from the increased and continuous onslaught of the status quo were routinely met with continued racist violence. The jubilation and euphoria from being at the March and hearing the dream was short-lived. After my thirteenth birthday, the nation was shocked and saddened by the tragic bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on Sunday morning, September 15, 1963. The dreams of four young girls had been deferred and added to the long list of those who had become victims were the names of Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley, all fourteen years of age, and Denise McNair, age eleven. A few weeks later, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the thirty-fifth President of the United States, would have his rendezvous with destiny while riding in a motorcade in Dallas.

The Freedom Summer of 1964 would provide a painful preview of how white America responded when the victims of racist violence were white—"outside agitators"—sympathetic supporters of the Black struggle. Along with Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and others, my testimony on police brutality in Mississippi was inserted into the *Congressional Record* of the United States House of Representatives.<sup>6</sup> A few weeks later, while I was traveling with Anne Moody on a fundraising tour for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the national media reported on the search for three civil rights workers missing in Mississippi. The interest in this investigation was intense and the conscience of this country was aroused because, this time, two of the three civil rights workers were white.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill on July 2, 1964, I met Mrs. Fannie Chaney, the mother of the Black civil rights worker, James

Chaney, and while she found some comfort in national interest in the case, she believed that her son was already dead. Regrettably, Mrs. Chaney was right. During the long and exhausting search for Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney, the media noted the discovery of several Black bodies that were unidentified and one was reported to have been wearing the familiar CORE t-shirt with the words "Freedom Now" printed on the back. Another gruesome and grotesque reminder of the insignificance and indifference illustrated when there is a loss of a Black life in Mississippi:

America has strayed to the far country of racism. The home that all too many Americans left was solidly grounded in the insights of our Judeo-Christian heritage: all men are created equal; every man has rights that are neither conferred by nor derived from the state, they are God-given. What a marvelous foundation for any home! What a glorious place to inhabit! But America strayed away; and this excursion has brought only confusion and bewilderment. It has left hearts aching with guilt and minds distorted with irrationality. It has driven wisdom from the throne. This long and callous sojourn in the far country of racism has brought a moral and spiritual famine.<sup>8</sup>

Antiwar protests against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, demands for changes in campus governance, calls for the establishment of Black Studies programs, issues of injustice, inequality, and discrimination characterized the climate of student activism which swept across the campuses of this nation in challenges and confrontations. In the spring of 1970, no institution of higher education was left untouched by controversy and the courageous chorus calling out for change.

In the climate of the May 4 shootings at Kent State University, and the murders of three Blacks in Augusta, Georgia (all shot in the back) on May 11, the campus protest at Jackson State was like most others, but the historic racial hostilities were additional ingredients that made for an explosive and lethal situation.

Following several days and nights of protest and campus unrest at Jackson State and disturbances along Lynch Street, law enforcement officers from the City of Jackson and Mississippi Highway Patrolmen marched onto campus to confront a jeering crowd of students who were assembled in front of Alexander Hall, a women's dormitory. As the evening went on, tensions grew and taunts and racial epithets were uttered. The sound of a thrown bottle was heard shattering against the pavement.

Following a thirty second fusillade, Alexander Hall had been riddled by more than 230 bullets. In the aftermath of this wanton display of police violence, Phillip Gibbs, age 21, a pre-law major from Ripley Mississippi, and James Earl Green, age 17, a senior at Jim Hill High School in Jackson were dead. Several other students had been wounded and all present had been

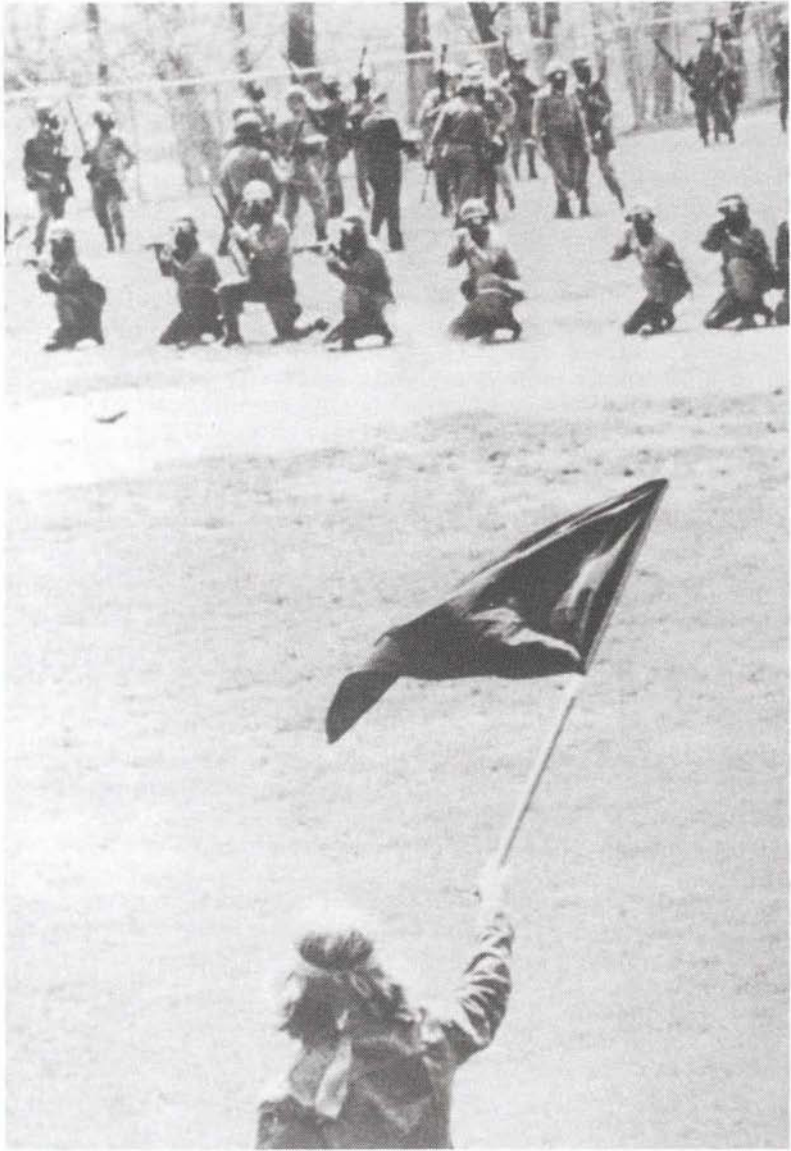
traumatized by the unwarranted and deadly act which they had just witnessed.

Once again, in Mississippi, the victims were Black and the perpetrators were white, and as was true in the case of so many others, no one served a day in jail for committing this criminal act. If it were not for the tragic events at Kent State University ten days earlier, this murderous Mississippi morning would have, perhaps, received little or no recognition and indignation. Considering the size of the crowd of students present and the amount of deadly force directed at them, the miracle is that only Phillip Gibbs and James Earl Green died on May 15, 1970, at Jackson State College.

But it is not too late to return home. If America would come to herself and return to her true home, "one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," she would give the democratic creed a new authentic ring, enkindle the imagination of mankind and fire the souls of men. *If she fails, she will be victimized with the ultimate social psychoses that can lead only to national suicide.*<sup>9</sup>

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder & Herder) 1972: 41.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> Tim Spofford, *Lynch Street: The May 1970 Slayings at Jackson State College* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press) 1988: 78-79.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> The Civil Rights Research and Documentation Project, *Remembering Medgar Evers.... For a New Generation* (Oxford, MS: Afro-American Studies Program, The University of Mississippi) 1988.
- <sup>6</sup> *Congressional Record*, U.S. House of Representatives, 16 June 1964: 14001-14005.
- <sup>7</sup> Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dial Press) 1968.
- <sup>8</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "Racism and the White Backlash," *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper and Row) 1967.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



Alan Canfora shortly before he was wounded by National Guardsmen at Kent State, May 4, 1970. Photo © by John P. Filo.

# **The May 4 Memorial at Kent State University: Legitimate Tribute or Monument to Insensitivity?**

**Alan Canfora**

Soon after November 15, 1988, when Kent State University leaders announced their scheme to reduce the long-awaited May 4 memorial from \$1,300,000 to \$100,000—a controversial reduction of over ninety percent—a local citizen wrote to the Kent newspaper: “Hip, hip, hooray, three cheers, halleluja... this May 4 Memorial situation is disgusting. Those students got just what they asked for, let’s forget it...”<sup>1</sup>

The May 4 Memorial, as advocated by the families of the Kent State massacre victims and Kent State University (KSU) student activists since 1980, was always intended as a “permanent and proper memorial tribute” dedicated to those four Kent State students who were brutally gunned down on a sunny spring afternoon on their campus by the sixty-seven bullets fired by the Ohio National Guard during an antiwar confrontation on May 4, 1970.

Unfortunately, however, since the May 4 Memorial design was announced in 1986, conservative anti-memorial pressures were apparent both publicly and privately.

In July of 1986, the Ohio Convention of the American Legion publicly condemned the May 4 Memorial as “a memorial to terrorists” and “an insult to patriotic veterans who served their country honorably and well.”<sup>2</sup> The Fraternal Order of Police and other organizations and individuals added their voices to the anti-memorial chorus.

Privately, conservatives among the KSU administration soon became convinced to pursue only a half-hearted May 4 Memorial fund-raising campaign in response to the howls of their conservative friends. Despite repeated inquiries and complaints from memorial supporters, KSU officials never mounted an effective public campaign to publicize the memorial design or solicit construction funds.

Instead of a national fund-raising drive promoted by a comprehensive fund-raising committee guided by professional fund-raisers, KSU’s May 4 Memorial fund-raising campaign was meager indeed. A few KSU bureaucrats worked part-time with no committee or professional fund-raisers. Only a select few foundations and a portion of the KSU alumni were approached for May 4 Memorial funds. The general public was not ad-

equately informed concerning the design, the importance of the memorial, or the need for funds. Under \$50,000 was raised for memorial construction during two years.<sup>3</sup>

Only a few years earlier, KSU leaders successfully raised over \$6,000,000 for a KSU Fashion Museum and Fashion Design School. For the sake of "fashion," KSU leaders hired professional fund-raisers, assembled over 170 prominent Americans from coast-to-coast as a fund-raising committee, promoted a national advertising campaign and easily raised the six million for their fashionable cause.<sup>4</sup>

As the twentieth anniversary of the Kent State murders occurs on May 4, 1990, the eyes of the nation will focus on Kent State University and seek to learn valuable historical lessons. Officials in the arch-conservative administration of KSU President Michael Schwartz will vainly attempt to promote a false historical judgement—a fraud—when the "mini-memorial" is dedicated.

In defense of the ongoing attempt to minimize the historical significance of the lives and deaths of the four slain KSU students, President Schwartz seeks to continue to blame the American people for a "lack of interest" and "lack of support" for the May 4 Memorial. Instead of admitting that KSU consciously failed to promote the memorial or raise the construction funds, KSU provocatively continues their long-standing contribution to the cover-up of murder by minimizing the historic significance of these lives and deaths.

On May 4, 1990, the dedication of a small fraction of the entire memorial design will invite an inevitable expression of protest and disharmony on a day which should stand for a national message of hope, healing and reconciliation. In the absence of legitimate, principled leadership at KSU, a great university risks its future image and reputation as a result of strident conservatism and the arrogant abuse of power.

Perhaps a historical review is in order for those who remain unfamiliar with KSU's sad record of insensitivity.

In 1970, after days of militant student demonstrations in response to the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, the President of KSU was literally out to lunch when approximately seventy Ohio National Guardsmen attacked a peaceful student rally on campus under the noonday sun. KSU President White's lunch was interrupted by a university functionary who informed him that KSU students were shot to death in a KSU parking lot.

Parents of the slaughtered KSU students only learned of the deaths of their children from news reports or phone calls from friends or relatives who heard the tragic news. KSU leaders who had thoughtlessly turned campus authority over to armed troops could only shut down the bloody university—too late for some students.

KSU insensitivity toward the victims was apparent again when the dormitory-fee refund check was mailed to the parents of slain student

Allison Krause. The KSU check was mailed to her grieving parents "payable to Allison Krause."<sup>5</sup>

While outraged parents of the students killed joined with the nine wounded students and others who demanded justice, KSU officials failed to raise their voices. A cover-up of murder was initiated by National Guard officials, politicians, and the courts. KSU leaders remained silent for many months until a national petition drive demanding a federal investigation forced a new KSU President, Glenn Olds, to join that ultimately failed effort.

Parents of the KSU victims filed a costly lawsuit against the KSU President, National Guard members and Ohio's Governor which was finally settled out of court in 1979. Meanwhile, KSU's "official" annual May 4 commemoration activities ceased after 1975. KSU leaders felt that five years was long enough to pay tribute to the memory of its murdered students.<sup>6</sup>

In response to the callousness of KSU administrators, KSU student government leaders formed a student organization to continue the commemorative programs without the participation of a KSU administration that did not want to be bothered with the inconvenience of May 4 any longer.<sup>7</sup> The student group, the May 4 Task Force, began a comprehensive education campaign and agitated in support of the families of the KSU victims by seeking to re-name four buildings and cancel classes on May 4 in memory of the dead students. KSU leaders refused, and in late 1976 announced a plan to build a massive gymnasium on part of the May 4 confrontation site.

A six-month protest began on May 4, 1977, after the annual commemoration program when thousands of KSU students marched against the gym construction. Hundreds of students then occupied the KSU administration building and began a protracted protest which included a 62-day "Tent City" occupation of the May 4 site and over 300 arrests. The parents of slain student Sandra Scheuer were among those arrested in protests against the gym's desecration of a historic area. A *Cleveland Press* columnist wrote at that time: "Well, I call it obscene. And I weep for those poor, sorry, stiff-necked Establishment flacks who run Kent State. They are wrong. They are wrong. They are indeed obscene."<sup>8</sup>

After the fiasco of the gym construction controversy, KSU "flacks" added insult to injury when they arrogantly refused the offer of a donation of a \$150,000 memorial sculpture by renowned sculptor George Segal, commissioned by the Mildred Andrews Foundation of Cleveland. The sculpture, "Abraham and Isaac," symbolized a biblical theme of intervention and reconciliation. KSU leaders condemned it as "too violent" and refused the generous offer.

A KSU leader suggested that sculptor Segal make another version including a "nude or semi-nude coed" enticing a soldier with her "charms." This sexist, insensitive remark was condemned as yet another blot upon the

sorry record of KSU administrators.<sup>9</sup> Princeton University soon eagerly accepted the valuable Segal sculpture, and it remains there today.

The absence of an appropriate May 4 Memorial lingered as a controversy when a new KSU President, Brage Golding, promised a "memorial arch" (symbolic of military victory) near the killing ground prior to the tenth anniversary of the May 4 shootings. This plan was withdrawn amidst criticisms and contrasted sharply with a thoughtful call for an appropriate May 4 Memorial by the students of the May 4 Task Force and the families of the KSU victims during the tenth annual commemoration events.<sup>10</sup>

The May 4 Task Force student memorial proposal was ignored by the KSU administration for years until a broad-based movement pressured KSU leaders to convene a committee to study the memorial question and approve a "permanent, proper, lasting memorial."<sup>11</sup> Finally, in January of 1985, the KSU Board of Trustees approved the May 4 Memorial proposal. At that time, I publicly praised the "wisdom and foresight" of the favorable memorial decision by the KSU trustees and administration. I also noted my hope that the decision to build a May 4 Memorial "will bring an end to any controversy in the future about May 4."<sup>12</sup>

A few months later, on May 4, 1985, the fifteenth anniversary of the 1970 events featured U.S. Senator Howard Metzenbaum and the families of the victims who joined university officials on the KSU Commons during a day of unity and peaceful common purpose due to the anticipated memorial.

A feeling of unity among all concerned continued into early 1986, as demonstrated by my written comments in the *Daily Kent Stater*, when I praised "the enlightened administration of KSU President Schwartz" and added: "President Schwartz has acted as a guiding force as KSU addresses a brighter future." However, almost prophetically, I also observed, "This will probably be the last great opportunity for KSU to properly pay a lasting tribute to these four slain KSU students. And it may well be the final opportunity for KSU to provoke another May 4 controversy which isn't necessary."<sup>13</sup>

In fact, after 1985, KSU President Schwartz began to boycott the annual May 4 commemoration events due to his growing arrogance and abuse of power apparent by 1986.

Unfortunately, KSU failed to include the students, the families of the victims or other May 4 Memorial supporters in the process of choosing a memorial design, promoting the memorial, or seeking memorial construction funds. Consequently, after a national design competition which yielded 698 memorial designs, the KSU administration of President Michael Schwartz was able to fire the original May 4 Memorial designer supposedly due to a discriminatory rule requiring U.S. citizenship.

Although Ian Taberner—the original designer—was a Canadian citizen, it is clear that he and his design were rejected due to artistic differences with autocratic KSU President Schwartz nearly one hundred days after his

Canadian citizenship was promptly admitted by Taberner.<sup>14</sup> The second-place design, a seventy-foot square granite plaza surrounded by thirteen pillars, designed by Bruna Ast of Chicago, became the new May 4 Memorial design.

Simultaneously, in the summer of 1986, Schwartz rejected a second offer of a donated "Abraham and Isaac" sculpture by George Segal. Ivan Boesky was willing to purchase copies of the sculpture for KSU and his own private collection months before he was arrested on Wall Street. Negotiations broke down when KSU's Schwartz rejected the request of the victims' families to locate the sculpture near the site of the 1970 killings. Schwartz' petulant decision to again refuse the Segal sculpture prompted the father of slain student Allison Krause to comment: "As far as we're concerned, the university doesn't exist.... That is a worthless organization. We're really disappointed that the university has been so heartless." Mr. Krause's wife, Doris, added, "Why should we make any of our wishes known if they wouldn't care? As far as Kent State is concerned, they can do as they please. They have always done as they pleased."<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, in 1986, Schwartz isolated May 4 Memorial advocates from the fund-raising process so that the conservative anti-memorial criticism was able to effectively stifle memorial fund-raising from 1986 until the memorial was reduced by over 90 percent in late 1988.

Not surprisingly, during this period, relations deteriorated between Schwartz and the students of the May 4 Task Force. The Taberner citizenship controversy and the failed fund-raising controversy combined to ensure openly hostile relations between Schwartz and the May 4 Task Force students and most of the KSU victims' families. Students blasted Schwartz's "abuse of power"<sup>16</sup> and made other public complaints, including statements such as: "There are people in the administration, higher-ups, who want the memory of May 4 erased...they're more interested in tuition than the truth."<sup>17</sup>

Coincidentally, a May, 1988, survey by the KSU Faculty Senate revealed that among the 383 KSU faculty members surveyed, "75 percent said they felt the university administration was very autocratic or somewhat autocratic."<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, the failed KSU fund-raising campaign invited headlines locally and nationally, including, "Lack of Progress on Memorial at Kent State Stirs Controversy,"<sup>19</sup> and "KSU Memorial: Little Money, a Lot of Blame."<sup>20</sup> KSU functionaries began to recite a litany of lame excuses in response to criticisms of their invisible memorial fund-raising campaign.

KSU Vice-President William Shelton (now President of Eastern Michigan University) and KSU attorney Robert Beck emerged as the chief defenders of KSU's failed campaign. These two testily responded to the criticisms because they were in charge of KSU's pitiful memorial fund-raising efforts.

Repeatedly, Beck would claim that the public and wealthy contributors

"are not interested in the bricks and mortar process."<sup>21</sup> Beck and Shelton refused to assemble a national fund-raising committee, attain a professional fund-raiser to spearhead a campaign, promote national advertising, or solicit donations nationally and publicly.

Martin Scheuer, father of slain KSU student Sandra Scheuer, complained to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in early 1988 that KSU wants "to bury the past.... I can't do anything about it, so we are just sad about the whole case. People should know what happened so it won't happen again." Mr. Scheuer, nearly eighty years old, expressed a wish to see the memorial built before his death. He was pessimistic.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after, KSU President Schwartz dishonestly wrote in his own hand to the Scheuers: "I want to assure you that we are doing everything we can to raise enough money to build the memorial."<sup>23</sup>

Everything we can?

A national fund-raising committee, professional fund-raisers, national advertising and national fund-solicitation were all crucial factors utilized by Schwartz, Shelton, Beck and other KSU leaders to raise over six million dollars for the KSU Fashion Museum and Fashion Design School just prior to their lackadaisical May 4 Memorial fund-drive.<sup>24</sup> Only the anti-memorial conservatives were happy that KSU failed to promote a serious memorial fund-raising campaign.

After years of blaming the victims at Kent State, KSU apologists Schwartz, Shelton, and Beck began to consistently attempt to "blame the slow fund-raising on lack of public interest in the effort." If the public could be blamed for a "lack of support," KSU leaders hoped to escape the criticisms of memorial supporters, satisfy conservative memorial critics and make a final grand contribution to the long-standing campaign to cover up murder and deny the significance of the lives and deaths of KSU students in 1970.

On November 15, 1988, the situation came to a crucial, climactic turning point. Tipped-off by a *Kent Record-Courier* news story, the May 4 Task Force became aware that KSU leaders were considering a reduction or elimination of the long-delayed memorial.<sup>25</sup> On the morning of November 15, I was quoted on the front page of the *Daily Kent Stater*: "The Schwartz administration reneged on a promise to aggressively promote the necessary fund-raising for this crucial memorial project. Any decision to reduce or reject the long-awaited May 4 Memorial will be highly controversial and will invite protracted disharmony for the University prior to the 20th anniversary of the KSU shootings."<sup>26</sup>

The May 4 Task Force called an outdoor news conference in the KSU Student Center Plaza at noon prior to the announced KSU trustees' meeting where the fate of the May 4 Memorial was at stake.

Our news conference turned into a spontaneous pro-memorial rally. I attacked the dismal KSU "purposely-failed fund-raising campaign" and complained that the May 4 Memorial languished as "the best kept secret in

America.” Mentioning the failures of Schwartz, Shelton and Beck by name in front of several TV cameras and other media representatives earned me a retaliatory personal attack from Shelton during the KSU trustees’ meeting which followed.

Just prior to the trustees’ vote to reduce the May 4 Memorial by over 90 percent—from \$1,300,000 down to only \$100,000—Shelton screamed, “Alan Canfora is not the conscience of Kent State University...the siege is over—this administration will not be held hostage under the guise of pseudo-morality!”<sup>27</sup>

Seeking to shift the blame from himself for the memorial crisis, Shelton smokescreened and created various transparent illusions before he again blamed “the cost of the project, the type of project, the perception of the [conservative] public as to the intent of the memorial,” and, Shelton concluded, “there is a lack of a substantial constituency for this project.” Again, Shelton blamed the public for a lack of interest and support for the memorial.<sup>28</sup>

The KSU Board of Trustees, content as usual to approve almost anything suggested by a full-time KSU bureaucrat, voted unanimously to reduce the long-awaited May 4 Memorial from \$1,300,000 down to a \$100,000 “mini-memorial.” Memorial architect Bruno Ast, in from Chicago for the day, valiantly and vainly argued to convince the trustees to agree to build part of the original design with the hope that “an angel” would generate future funds to complete the original design. However, Ast was ordered to create “a new and totally different design” for only \$100,000.<sup>29</sup>

The students of the May 4 Task Force remained determined to oppose KSU’s attempt to minimize life and death and the historical importance of May 4, 1970. At a news conference, on December 8, 1988, the May 4 Task force and my own educational group announced our intention to proceed and raise funds to complete the May 4 Memorial construction at KSU.<sup>30</sup>

Within one hour, KSU issued a news release from ultra-conservative KSU trustees’ chairman William Risman which prevented and condemned any further May 4 Memorial fund-raising to complete the construction on the KSU campus as “unauthorized and unethical.” KSU had purposely failed to raise construction funds for the memorial and now KSU sought to prevent others who would expose their conscious ineptitude.<sup>31</sup>

However, pressure against KSU continued to increase. Soon after a national *New York Times* article in early December of 1988,<sup>32</sup> Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio announced his support for full construction of the May 4 Memorial<sup>33</sup>.

Wounded KSU student Robert Stamps’ article published in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* urged complete memorial construction.<sup>34</sup> Parents of the slain students and nearly all other wounded students also voiced support for full construction of the memorial. Wounded student Jim Russell condemned the reduced memorial as a “bargain-basement memorial.”

Wounded student Tom Grace wrote: "Those of us who suffered gunshot wounds on May 4 are backing the original memorial design. We are opposed to university schemes for a scaled-down version of this important memorial." The mother of slain student Jeff Miller wrote: "Please be assured of my deep commitment to the construction of the complete May 4 Memorial as originally designed by Bruno Ast." Sandy Scheuer's parents similarly agreed.<sup>35</sup>

When the KSU trustees and administration announced that they would sponsor a "memorial ground-breaking ceremony" on January 25, 1989, after the KSU trustees meeting, the May 4 Task Force students announced that they would sponsor a protest.

Surprisingly, although the parents of slain student Bill Schroeder had written in early January, 1989: "...we agree to let you add our names to the campaign for a \$100,000 (plus) memorial to May 4, 1970," when the university trustees held their next meeting on January 25, 1989, only the Schroeders were on hand with KSU leaders and mysteriously offered their approval of the smaller memorial.

The pro-memorial voices had obviously been heard since November 15. At their meeting on January 25, 1989, just prior to their "ground-breaking ceremony," KSU trustees shockingly reversed themselves and approved not a new memorial design, but a fraction of the original Bruno Ast design. The May 4 Memorial was no longer totally aborted. This announcement, which may ultimately lead to complete memorial construction, did not prevent a silent May 4 Task Force protest demonstration during the ground-breaking ceremony which stole headlines across America.<sup>36</sup>

During the spring of 1989, noted author Harlan Ellison came to KSU and raised over \$2,000 for the "alternative" May 4 Memorial campaign.<sup>37</sup> The nineteenth annual May 4 commemoration program featured a variety of speakers who criticized KSU's insensitivity and urged full memorial construction.<sup>38</sup>

A May 5-6, 1989, reunion of Kent State Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) veterans also generated a barrage of anti-administration, pro-memorial statements. A desperate attempt by the frantic KSU administration to block the SDS reunion failed.<sup>39</sup>

In response to the increasing shrill anti-May 4 Memorial maneuvering by the KSU administration, a group of long-time May 4 activists formed a non-profit educational corporation to promote a memorial and raise awareness nationally. The May 4 Center filed for tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). They attained that tax-exempt status in November, 1989, and have embarked upon a national campaign to create a May 4 Memorial. Our "parallel plan" seeks tax-exempt donations to build a memorial either in the city of Kent, Ohio, or to complete the May 4 Memorial on the KSU campus. They also seek to create an educational center in Kent

to broadly promote May 4-related education and to encourage continued student activism.<sup>40</sup>

As the twentieth anniversary of the May 4 massacre approaches, it is significant to note that the May 4 Task Force students stand opposed to KSU administration plans to dedicate their tiny portion of the May 4 Memorial on May 4, 1990, without a commitment to complete memorial construction in the future. A major demonstration for full memorial construction is inevitable.<sup>41</sup>

A *Daily Kent Stater* student newspaper writer expressed the frustration of many KSU students recently when she wrote, "...the [reduced] May 4 Memorial is really a joke.... It is unfair to memorialize something that captured national attention and national horror the way the May 4 shootings did in such a cheap manner."<sup>42</sup>

Arrogant KSU President Schwartz insulted the families of the KSU slain students recently when he invited these parents "out to lunch" at noon on May 4, 1990, after the 11:00 AM student demonstration against the dedication of his "mini-memorial." The parents of slain student Sandy Scheuer criticized this as "insensitive and inappropriate" especially since their daughter was executed during a noon hour 20 years earlier while another KSU President was "out to lunch."<sup>43</sup>

An additional concern among the families of the May 4 victims, the students of the May 4 Task Force and other May 4 activists involves the curious scheme by the crude KSU administration of President Schwartz to insist that the May 4 Memorial is simply a memorial to "the events" and not the slain students. A related peculiar question concerns Schwartz's adamant refusal to allow the names of the four murdered students to be placed prominently upon his little memorial "to the events." As Schwartz stated callously to a *Newsday* reporter in 1986, in opposition to placing four names on the memorial: "...the martyr issue is one that we were not interested in, to be very honest with you."<sup>44</sup>

Former KSU Vice-President Shelton, responsible for the failed memorial fund-raising campaign and the "abortion" of the memorial has said, "the public perceives it as a memorial to the students only, but it's a memorial to the event."<sup>45</sup>

So how about this "event" and this "memorial"? The Kent State "tragedy" of May 4, 1970, produced the greatest campus massacre in American history—four students slaughtered—the only incident where American women students were executed on their campus, and the single, outstanding factor which triggered the only national student strike in U.S. history.<sup>46</sup>

In May of 1970, nearly 500 American campuses shut down when nearly five million American students joined the national student strike of May, 1970. President Richard Nixon was pushed to the point of emotional and

physical collapse. American foreign policy was directly affected and the U.S. war in Southeast Asia was hastened to an early end.

Twenty years later, conservative Kent State University President Michael Schwartz gambles recklessly when he arrogantly attempts to force a false historical judgement upon Kent State students, American students, and the American people. Was the May 4 Memorial at Kent State University really reduced because of a "lack of support" and "lack of interest" among the American people? Does KSU seek to impose a false historical judgement by minimizing the significance of the lives and deaths of students?

Less than two hundred days after the November, 1988, decision to reduce the May 4 Memorial at Kent State, Chinese students were gunned-down at Tiananmen Square at Beijing. Since then, other students have been brutally shot down in Romania, South Africa, El Salvador, in the Middle East and elsewhere. Will American students also be shot down again? Clearly, since the scheme to reduce the May 4 Memorial was announced, the monumental importance of a national or international May 4 Memorial has become greatly enhanced.

In memory of Allison Krause, Jeff Miller, Sandy Scheuer and Bill Schroeder—and in memory of other American students killed at Jackson State University, Orangeburg College, Southern University, the University of Kansas, North Carolina A&T, the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and elsewhere—a May 4 Memorial must serve as a lasting reminder that it is never proper to fire weapons into crowds of unarmed student protesters.

For those students shot down and killed from Kent State and Jackson State to Beijing and South Africa—and for those future students who will risk their lives—this May 4 Memorial will stand forever as a symbol of freedom and hope as well as a tribute to those already fallen.

The current portion of KSU's "May 4 Mini-Memorial" begs for completion. Even the 555-foot Washington Monument took 38 years to build because construction was halted in 1854 for nearly 25 years by the arch-conservative "Know-Nothing" political party. The intentional failure of "Know-Nothing" KSU officials to secure support for a significant May 4 Memorial simply reflects KSU's long-standing record of blatant insensitivity.

In memory of Allison, Sandy, Jeff and Bill, and in memory of all other students killed unjustly elsewhere in our nation and our world, the Kent May 4 Memorial must stand as a legitimate tribute and not as a monument to insensitivity. Especially for student activists of the 1990s, and the uncertain future, a proper Kent May 4 Memorial is not an important symbol of our "intent to prevent the use of excessive force against future campus protests."<sup>47</sup>

## *The May 4 Memorial*

Clearly, the American people remember. The American people care about freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom to dissent. We will prove the American people remember and care. We will attain a proper Kent May 4 Memorial.

### **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Eunice Standsbury, letter to the *Kent Record-Courier* (hereafter KRC), 5 December 1988: 4.
- <sup>2</sup> "Legionnaires Try to Block KSU 'Terrorist' Memorial," *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (hereafter CPD), 11 July 1986: 1.
- <sup>3</sup> "Canfora Condemns Administration for Memorial Cop-Out," *Daily Kent Stater* (hereafter DKS), 9 December 1988: 4.
- <sup>4</sup> "Modified Memorial Lacks Original Meaning, Sincerity," editorial, *DKS*, 18 November 1988: 4.
- <sup>5</sup> KSU treasurer voucher #363909, 21 May 1970.
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- <sup>7</sup> "Caucus Backs KSU Appeal," *Akron Beacon Journal* (hereafter ABJ), 7 October 1975.
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- <sup>9</sup> "McCoy Comments on Segal Sculpture," *DKS*, 14 November 1978: 3.
- <sup>10</sup> "KSU Group Asks Memorial for Four Slain in 1970," *CPD*, 17 April 1980: 4D; also *ABJ*, 17 April 1980.
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- <sup>20</sup> "KSU Memorial: Little Money, a Lot of Blame."
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- <sup>22</sup> *CHE*, 2 March 1988: A3.
- <sup>23</sup> Michael Schwartz, letter to Martin and Sarah Scheuer, 26 April 1988.
- <sup>24</sup> KSU Foundation files, KSU archives.
- <sup>25</sup> "Memorial Decision Looms at Kent State," *KRC*, 11 November 1988: 1.
- <sup>26</sup> "A Dilemma: Save or Scrap Memorial," *DKS*, 15 November 1988: 1.
- <sup>27</sup> "KSU To Cut Memorial Cost," *KRC*, 16 November 1988: 1.
- <sup>28</sup> KSU trustee meeting tape, property of Kent May 4 Center, 15 November 1988.
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- <sup>32</sup> "Terrible Event Echoes in Dispute on How to Remember It," *New York Times* (hereafter NYT), 14 December 1988.

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- <sup>41</sup> May 4 Task Force Resolution, 12 October 1989.
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- <sup>44</sup> "Memorial Opens Painful Wounds at Kent State," *Newsday*, 24 July 1986.
- <sup>45</sup> "Persistence Pays Off for KSU Victim: Memorial Gets OK," *CPD*, 20 November 1988: 1B.
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## **Brothers and Sisters on the Land: Tent City, 1977**

**Miriam R. Jackson**

For two months during the late spring and early summer of 1977, a group of tents sat on Blanket Hill at Kent State University. The little colony, called Tent City, was the response of a student group called the May 4th Coalition to a plan by the University to construct a gymnasium annex on part of the site of the student-National Guard confrontation of May 4, 1970. Neither appearances before the KSU Board of Trustees nor demonstrations had done any good at persuading the administration to change its plans, so the young Coalition had decided, on May 12, 1977, to take over the hill with tents and people, to remain until the administration backed down.

The immediate controversy surrounding the University's gymnasium annex plans revolved around the impact construction would have on the May 4 site and the memory of those who had died there. A more general, though related controversy raised a question about the entire antiwar movement and the Vietnam war era: what deserved to be memorialized—the “noble cause” of military victory over the revolutionary insurgents (the “Viet Cong”) or the activities and memories of those who had opposed it? Adherents to the “noble cause” theory saw nothing in the events of 1970 to be memorialized, generally feeling that the “rioters” had gotten what they deserved and merited only oblivion. Former antiwar activists and some politicians and media writers, however, felt that the Kent State dead, cut down unjustly, ought to be remembered, leaving the land on which they had died as their memorial. And there was the question of a larger memorial—a more thoughtful nation reconsidering where its “interests” lay abroad and at home.

That was not all that made Tent City. There was the communitarian feeling of the 1960s, the environmentalism of the 1970s, which produced concern for grass and trees, groups living and planning communally. But at base it stood as a living social and political statement by those at Kent State about the meaning of the deaths of 1970. During the period of its existence, it was a potent reminder, to KSU and to the entire nation, that some soul-searching needed to be done about how the Vietnam war era ought to be viewed.

At a meeting on the first full day of Tent City's existence, May 13, 1977, its occupants decided that certain rules would have to be made and followed for the sake of the political objectives of the Coalition. Since the group had announced its intention of remaining on Blanket Hill either until the annex was moved or until the Coalition was, it realized that it would have to make every effort not to give University authorities any excuses for evicting it for other reasons. Habits of long standing would have to be drastically altered or even eliminated for the duration of the occupation. Thus, the first sign greeting visitors and recruits to Tent City read:

Welcome to Tent City  
Please! No drugs  
No alcohol

Additional instructions requested, "No violence and no gym."<sup>1</sup>

Although it is certain that someone smuggled in an occasional joint or a can of beer, the rules, in general, stood up quite well. Cooking was done communally, in hibachis, as no fires were allowed. Meals were usually vegetarian, from mixed motivations of preference and economy. Littering was strongly discouraged and the tents were moved every few days to avoid killing the grass.<sup>2</sup>

In short, there was no ready excuse for KSU to dismantle Tent City, so it tolerated the settlement for as long as it thought it could. In the meantime, the Coalition had the moderate pleasure of knowing that its existence was costing the University time, embarrassment and money on a daily basis. If KSU officials would not listen to arguments about the ecological, legal, political and historical defects of the gym site, perhaps they could be pressured into changing their minds by the creation of a bad public relations image. An unremitting media focus on Tent City and its relation to 1970, the Coalition calculated, could produce sufficient public relations nightmares for a University desperately trying to avoid further publicity about 1970 issues to force the Board of Trustees to change the site.<sup>3</sup>

Tent City stood as both a political statement and as a living, futuristic community. Participation in it became a "way of life," as had draft resistance groups during the 1960s. Its members, like their 60s predecessors, lived "in opposition to the majority culture...moving toward an alternative consciousness and community." They constructed their own conceptions of reality, as opposed to what Barrie Thorne calls "conventional understanding of the real, the possible and the moral," trying to place themselves in clear opposition to ideas "predominant" in the national culture in preparation to persuade the public to view reality their way.<sup>4</sup> Tent City fostered a strong feeling of solidarity among its otherwise diverse residents because everyone was there for the same reasons and was taking similar risks (of eventual arrest) by remaining.<sup>5</sup>

The administration at first tolerated Tent City as a moderate nuisance which it expected would disappear at the end of Spring quarter in early June. But despite cold, rain, two violent windstorms, final exams, the coming of summer vacation and mild police harassment, it remained for two full months, until police, enforcing a court order, dismantled Tent City and physically removed its stubborn occupants and supporters. In the end, the sixty-two days of Tent City were to constitute (at the very least) the longest sit-in in the history of the student movement in America.

There appears to be a strong consensus that the Tent City phase of the 1977 gym struggle was its most unified and positive one. Beyond that, there are considerable differences in the way Tent City was perceived by both participants and observers. Some, for instance, remember the community as a nearly ideal combination of participatory democracy and effective political protest.<sup>6</sup> Others remember sensing problems with the community, its democratic processes, and its political outreach activity. Such recollections clearly reflect the degree of integration achieved by the individuals involved at Tent City during this period, as well as their own political perspectives. They also reflect the goals and ideals such people saw as being met or partially unmet, necessary or unnecessary parts of Tent City.

To Jonathan Smuck, for instance, Tent City was not an entirely satisfactory experience. A curious combination of anarchist and communitarian, Smuck believed in the ideals represented by Tent City and was distressed when they were not met. He worried about the influence the Maoist Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB) seemed to be starting to wield over the activities and decisions of the Coalition, the growing influence of several individuals in the group through a sort of status-through-endurance system and the overdoing of what might be called "re-education" efforts there. Too soon, he believes, Tent City became: "1) mystical; 2) isolated (introverted); and, 3) passive."<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps it was unrealistic for such people to have hoped for effective group activities without the emergence of leadership. (Indeed, not all of those emerging as Coalition leaders during this period felt entirely comfortable with their roles, conflicting as they did with the leaders' own ideals of egalitarianism.) It is also likely that most of the complaints made, then or later, about the supposed extent to which the Tent City community did not live up to its ideals of participatory democracy came not from those who disapproved of leadership *per se*, but from those annoyed that others, for one reason or another, were more politically effective than they, were gaining increasing amounts of influence of the Coalition with ideas of which they disapproved. Therefore, what seemed to be simple demands for openness from some Tent City participants and observers were often actually attempts by those less influential than they would like to have been to compete more effectively with influential Coalition factions, particularly the RSB.

Some Tent City residents maintained that the community provided a marvelous opportunity to build a kind of "Movement culture," but complained, then and later, that some community members neither held to the kind of Movement lifestyle that might have had some appeal for the local community nor hesitated to manipulate language by juxtaposing "militant" and "liberal" rhetoric to intimidate their internal opposition. Fatimah Abdullah, for instance, generally liked the community's atmosphere, but was bothered by some of the more contradictory aspects of its life. Members, she recalled, were not often in their tents at night. They were downtown drinking beer or elsewhere "getting high." They kept to their drinking and drug rules on Blanket Hill, but not in general. This fact, she says, hurt Tent City's image in the eyes of area residents, but most Coalition members seemed indifferent to this potentially serious public relations problem. They said they wanted to convince the public that their cause was just and reasonable, but refused to compromise on the very matters of lifestyle that were helping to prevent many from giving them a sympathetic hearing.<sup>10</sup>

While the residents of Tent City tried out their experiment in community and political statements (with generally positive but occasionally contradictory results and responses), Kent area residents were taking note of the settlement. Even President Olds and his wife, Eva, expressed positive sentiments about Tent City and paid a visit there. The atmosphere seemed so relaxed to them in comparison to the tension they had encountered in both campus and community settings at the time of their arrival at KSU in 1971 that they could cope with Tent City rather easily.<sup>11</sup>

The Blanket Hill community certainly charmed many visitors, part of the charm arising simply from its wooded setting. The setting actually overwhelmed some previously indifferent people with new concern and opinions, once guided tours and private contemplation had taken place. This process produced an important convert to the Coalition's cause, a convert whose subsequent efforts in the Coalition's behalf would last throughout the summer: Joyce Quirk, the Trustee who had stumbled into supporting annex construction at two crucial meetings in 1976 and 1977.

A visit to Tent City did what two acrimonious board meetings had failed to accomplish: it gave Quirk an understanding of the basis for the Coalition's position and caused her to start questioning her previous position. After perhaps two more visits, she decided to change her position to opposition.

There's no question.... I completely changed my mind. I realized at that point that [constructing the annex] was just a ridiculous thing to do, and it was going to be...extremely...serious. After going up there...I knew I'd really made a very serious mistake... that we [the Trustees] all were.<sup>12</sup>

Although public response to a large June rally at Tent City was, in general, quite positive,<sup>13</sup> there was no indication that either the Trustees or the administration had any intention of backing down. Indeed, a number

of faculty members who had signed a student newspaper ad at the beginning of June, worried about the possibility of a confrontation (when and if construction began) sent a letter to their colleagues concerning a meeting called to discuss taking "a more active and constructive role than we have assumed to this date" in the controversy.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, bidding on annex construction contracts was coming to an end: all state construction appropriations had to be absorbed in contracts by June 30, the last day of the current biennium. Perhaps it was the pressure of this deadline that had caused the Trustees to table a motion made by Joyce Quirk to alter the annex site at the Board meeting on June 9 on a 3-2 vote.<sup>15</sup>

KSU President-elect Brage Golding made several comments during a telephone press conference in June that boded ill for the fortunes of the gym struggle specifically and recognition of May fourth in general. "It would be nice," he said, "if the gym could be delayed, so we could get a clear delineation of the various positions. But my understanding is that the contractors are ready, so any change now might imperil the gym completely, and that we can't afford." Golding realized the controversy might make his entrance "difficult," but hoped everything would be settled by the time he came in September. "I take the protest quite seriously, but my understanding is that the gym is not on the site of...you know what." He concluded his remarks with the ominous observation that, although he felt "as badly as the students" about 1970, he hoped there would not "continue to be a memorial publicly in the national press every year. Seven years is seven years, and it isn't doing Kent State any good."<sup>16</sup>

The extended presence of Tent City, in the meantime, was clearly beginning to have an impact on the area press. It was uncomfortable with the spectacle the community was creating and wished some compromise could be found to at least move the project away from Blanket Hill, if not further. The *Cleveland Press* was especially unhappy with the extended tenure of Tent City because of the presence there of "drifters with nothing better to do, rebels without a cause and frankly, some kooks." It blamed this phenomenon on the coming of "firebrand civil rights lawyer" William Kunstler. The paper hoped officials would "bend" and that the Coalition would stay "cool."<sup>17</sup>

The growing polarization was now also beginning to be echoed in letters to editors of area papers. One, from Richard Larlham, exclaimed that, "We have had all the foolishness we are going to take from students who insist on causing trouble." The responsibility for the events of 1970 lay, he said, "entirely on the shoulders of those students, professors and outside agitators who planned and carried out the riots on [sic] Kent...." Larlham wanted the Trustees to assert themselves about what he saw as unjustified demands to honor Kent State's role in the antiwar movement—including the honor implicitly in the gym struggle—and he threatened to organize a taxpayers'

coalition in order to restrict public funds "to the use of education" if he failed to see such a change in Trustee behavior very soon.<sup>18</sup>

Another letter, however, took a completely different tone. It suggested that the Trustees move the annex—preferably to the KSU stadium, which was not currently being used to capacity, possessed both ample parking space and accessibility, and which had neither trees nor memories to be uprooted. The writer believed that the Board could gain more respect from the Ohio legislature by rethinking its stand than by simply reacting to the fear of losing its state construction appropriations. Plans could always be changed. A taxpayer of a different sort than Richard Larlham pointed out to the Trustees that their present position was similar to those of military, state, and University officials in 1970 and pleaded with them to "go back to the table and think and meditate before blood is shed again at KSU."<sup>19</sup>

Whatever the realities of public opinion toward the Coalition and chain reactions of political activism might have been, it is clear that both Coalition members and sympathetic media people believed (or, at least hoped) that both were important and positive factors in the gym struggle and for a new national movement for social change as well. Nevertheless, one could feel the tension growing day by day, in that last week of June. The annex construction contracts were signed on June 27, completing the web of obligations incurred by the KSU Board of Trustees for the annex as presently planned. In a forum conducted June 25 with the Coalition, President Olds had warned that injunctive action would be sought to remove Coalition members from Blanket Hill if they failed to leave of their own accord.<sup>20</sup>

The Coalition soon decided to prepare for a mass, nonviolent arrest, probably in the presence of some of the families of the wounded and dead of 1970, and to worry about its next step later. The Coalition's decision forced the University, in turn, to start planning for this eventuality. If mass arrest was inevitable, how could it take place so carefully as to avoid anything like a repetition of KSU's human and public relations disaster of seven years before? William Kunstler had asserted the impossibility of a second massacre at Kent State, and to the extent that University officials worked in fear of what such an event would do to the University's already tarnished image, Kunstler's assertion was well-founded. Determined as the majority of Trustees might have been to go ahead with the annex plans, they knew they would have to make careful plans for any contemplated arrests as well. One of the factors behind the 1970 disaster had been the loss of University control to outside military authorities; KSU officials like the Trustees did not want to repeat at least that surrender of autonomy.

At the beginning of July, the Coalition put out a leaflet asking supporters from in and out of state to "come to Tent City to stay." Coalition strategy was contained in the following plea:

Now we need your support. THE GYM CAN STILL BE MOVED. The key is your physical presence. A large number of persons at the time of removal standing alongside the parents cannot be moved. The University will stand incapable of taking any action if thousands of us mobilize our strength and our strength is you. JOIN US AND THE VICTORY IS OURS<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, the Coalition was intent on following a strategy of mass passive resistance originated by Gandhi during India's struggle for independence against the British in the 1940s and used by unions, the civil rights, and the antiwar movement in the United States. It seemed to be the most appropriate resistance tactic "alternative history" had to offer.

In a last-ditch effort to end the controversy, Trustees George Janik and Michael Johnston and KSU Vice-President for Finance Richard Dunn flew to Columbus on July 7 for a meeting arranged by Kent's state assemblyman, John Begala, to discuss annex "rotation." This plan called for the shifting of the annex about forty feet from its presently projected position, at a cost of about \$750,000.<sup>22</sup> Rep. Begala had helped formulate the idea after news of the rising level of tension at KSU prompted him to call Glenn Olds. The President had said he was frightened. Begala suggested rotation as a possible "mature response" to the problem. What worried him was the strong possibility that such a change might produce demands from underbid contractors for the rebidding of construction contracts and uncertainty as to whether annex rotation would produce breach-of-contract suits.<sup>23</sup> What worried Olds was the likelihood that the compromise would not satisfy the Coalition, would anger right wing people, and would prove too expensive to be feasible. Begala, however, had volunteered to try to get the money and to talk to the Coalition, believing the right wing "could be isolated if we all pulled together."<sup>24</sup>

But Begala's optimism was misplaced. The Board of Trustees gave not the slightest indication of its intention to pass the requested resolution and Coalition spokesperson Greg Rambo dismissed the plan. He was virtually positive that the Coalition, if and when it was called upon to vote on the question, would choose to reject rotation. Rambo pointed out that rotating the annex would not move it entirely away from the May 4 site. He commented that three quarters of a million dollars was a lot to move a building forty feet and suggested, instead, a joint Columbus conference to "discuss putting the gym money in escrow pending development of plans for a smaller building."<sup>25</sup>

The Coalition never seems to have voted on the matter. The idea was put forth to the Coalition leadership and the group seems simply to have accepted their judgement that rotation was a bad thing without ever really discussing it seriously. So much for the idea of mass participation in decision-making—the Coalition was clearly being controlled, at this point, by a small, but "critical mass" of influential people. Begala's plan had

depended on the willingness of both sides to compromise, and failed when both sides clung to their basic positions—despite all his attempts to moderate them.<sup>26</sup>

By July 8, it was clear that neither side was going to back away from a confrontation. Although President-elect Golding had a reasonably friendly meeting with Tent City people, outgoing President Olds did not. When he appeared at about midnight—to tell the Coalition that it must vacate the site because it was time to hand it over to its major contractor its members merely chanted “Move the gym!”<sup>27</sup>

Old’s eviction notice was to be read formally to the Coalition by KSU police early on July 10.<sup>28</sup> The Trustees were expected to finalize plans for injunctive action at a meeting at KSU’s Stark County Branch that afternoon.<sup>29</sup> Joyce Quirk had suggested to President Olds that the Federal Mediation Service be called in to try to resolve the situation, but got no response, as late as July 9.<sup>30</sup> Quirk might have been determined to shift the construction site by any means available, but Olds clearly was not interested in any such suggestions.

On July 9, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* pleaded editorially for peace at Kent State. Both Coalition concern and University exigency were understandable—could the annex not be shifted a bit? Perhaps the Coalition was justified in its suspicion that the University had, indeed, “quietly sought to withhold any official recognition of the events of May 1970.” Why, the editorial did not venture to suggest. Lack of recognition had been unwise, though, because May 4 had been a historical event worth memorializing, and because, “Had the University done so years ago, much of the passion of the current controversy would not have arisen.” So far, things had gone well. Restraint had been maintained on both sides. Now, however, as it was time for the tents to come down and the annex to go up on Blanket Hill, the coalition was going to have to concede defeat. The *Plain Dealer* sympathized with the Coalition, but felt its options had run out; it appeared to be the time for the Coalition to be “reasonable” and take its loss gracefully. A noble effort had reached the limit of its capacities and failed.<sup>31</sup>

The KSU Trustees duly met near Canton. They went into Executive Session almost immediately and made a quick decision. Only Joyce Quirk voted against a motion to go to Portage County Common Pleas Court the next day for an injunction to remove the Coalition from Blanket Hill.<sup>32</sup> The Board had apparently decided to persist with its original construction plans out of a sense that its control was being challenged, from fear of incurring financial and legal problems if the plans were changed, because of peer pressure and out of sheer stubbornness.<sup>33</sup>

Given the intensity of arrest planning and the generality of assumptions that arrests would indeed take place, Portage Country Common Pleas Judge Joseph Kainrad turned out to have a complicated surprise for everybody at the conclusion of his court session. Kainrad handed down a two-part

injunction. The first part ordered the Coalition to vacate Tent City, as the University had asked. The second, however, ordered the University to delay construction until the Coalition's case could be heard, as Coalition attorney Bill Whitaker had requested.<sup>34</sup> For Coalition members who had been expecting a simple order to vacate, this decision presented problems. It raised the possibility of successful court action to move the construction site and threw the desirability of mass arrest into serious question as an appropriate tactic. The choice between delayed or immediate arrests, waiting to try "The System" through the courts, or immediately making a militant statement outside such usual channels of protest, guaranteed a lengthy, complicated and emotional last-minute Coalition debate.

The debate lasted for about four hours, during which period perhaps eighty people spoke. It soon became evident that opinion was sharply divided and that both sides were displaying a great deal of emotion. Ron Kovic pleaded with the group to put its bodies "on the line," his eyes filled with tears and his voice cracking. Person after person passionately denounced Judge Kainrad and the "Establishment" he stood for, insisted that Tent City must be defended at all costs, and pledged to "take the bust" tomorrow. Others argued that Tent City was not the object of the Coalition's struggle. It was beginning to sound, they said, as if the Coalition were more concerned with saving Tent City than it was with moving the gym annex. If a judge had provided the Coalition with a chance to have its day in court, why not use it and think about the arrest option later? The Coalition's public support might suffer if it faced arrest when it could have gone to court; wasn't public support important? Nor had the May 4 families expressed their desires; should not the group wait for that?<sup>35</sup>

In fact, the families were also divided and ultimately announced that their only consensus was on individual action.<sup>36</sup> The Coalition vote, when finally taken, was perhaps two to one in favor of immediate arrest. It was clear that the retention of Tent City had become an issue in itself in the minds of many people; the abandonment of the community now carried too many negative implications to make it a politically or emotionally feasible option. The decision to hold the Hill until removed by the police, the determination to "make a stand," obviously held militant appeal. Whether or not such a tactic was the best at the moment was not quite the same question, though some who considered themselves radicals certainly failed to include potentially successful court litigation in their range of options.

Just as conservatives and even liberals entangled in conventional thinking concerning the acceptable parameters of dissent were uncomfortable about the prospect of even nonviolent civil disobedience under such circumstances (especially given the choice offered by Kainrad's dual order), the Coalition radicals who swung the vote in their favor that evening were tied to rather narrow "militant" notions of what kind of behavior would be appropriate. Some who had tried to argue both from a radical and a

pragmatic perspective had promoted the use of the court (or any other channel of influence or power available) as a newly-available weapon. Since "The System" had provided the Coalition with an instrument to fight for some of its plans and ideas, why not take advantage of it? But the emotional pull of Tent City and the general desire to make a stand outweighed such considerations in the end. Thus, the stage was set for a mass arrest on Blanket Hill on the morning of 12 July 1977.

An open letter to the Board of Trustees written in June by one Coalition member expressed some of the hope, frustration, bitterness and pride that hundreds preparing for the arrest felt. For seven years, he maintained, people like himself had tried every available channel to achieve accountability for 1970. He had learned much from failures of petitions and court cases; now he was learning more about the nature of justice in contemporary American society. To him, the Trustees were the local reflection of a national problem.

Seven years later, you remain a harsh teacher. Your latest course instructs us we cannot even have the land where that terrible chain of events occurred: You tell us [you] must build a gym there. Oh, we've learned our lessons well. Seven years have taught us not to be surprised at your insensitivity and injustice. If Watergate taught us that some outrages may be covered up with lies, then you've taught us that others can be covered up with buildings.

Bill Arthrell understood things now: "I am camped at Tent City. I am determined to hold the land," he declared. He believed doing so might break a cycle of seven years of injustice with action and by the building of an alternative consciousness:

Seven years is too long to wait for justice. Seven years is too long to bear the pain of injustice. You will not build a gym on Taylor Hill. We will resist you with petitions, rallies, tents, injunctions and our bodies if we must. We are not learning our lessons from you anymore. We will become our own teachers.<sup>37</sup>

Eight o'clock arrived on Blanket Hill on July 12 and KSU police officer Donald Schwartzmiller began to read Judge Kainrad's injunction. For those sitting massed under the pine trees, their arms and legs linked to those on either side of them, the reading was almost impossible to hear because of the chanting.

The crowd of observers, supporters and media gathered on the Taylor Hall balcony now numbered about two thousand. Many chanted and sang with the sit-in members as the police closed in and began, person by person, to remove the Coalition from Blanket Hill. Legal power battled symbolism and enthusiasm for the hearts of the observers. A new verse was added to the traditional civil rights song to fit the occasion:

People are the power, we shall not be moved;  
People are the power; we shall not be moved.  
Just like Tentropolis, up on Freedom Hill;  
We shall not be moved.

They sang Stephen Stills' "Find the Cost of Freedom" and a sudden, haunting quiet descended upon the Hill. It sounded like a hymn was being sung, under the old pine and oak trees. Its words floated out through the still morning air to the ears of the observers and the advancing police. Many had come that day expecting violence, fearing another 1970, but the Coalition evoked only the sadness of that year and its roots in the American youth culture, especially in its singing of Neil Young's "Ohio." And in the wake of the singing, a strange peace prevailed, under the different forms of power held that day by the police, the observers, the media and the May 4th Coalition. One could feel an almost tangible power, a kind of dignified hope and confidence, seated there under the tall, silent trees on the Hill, amidst its memories, good and bad. For many, participation in this mass arrest was a personal statement of commitment to the 1970 dead by being there to defend their memories.<sup>38</sup>

The arrest of two of the May 4 couples—one with all four of their children—was probably the most poignant moment of an occasion already laden with emotion. The wire service photo of the arrest of Martin Scheuer—a Jewish refugee from Germany whose daughter, Sandy, had been killed at Kent State in 1970—surely captured the one ignominious point in an otherwise good day for University public relations. After all, what the University had to do that day to achieve a good public relations image was rather minimal: make sure nobody got hurt.

There was a certain orchestrated quality to the arrest of the "Kent 194;" inevitable, probably, for a procedure practiced so carefully for so long by both sides. A frightened and nervous Joyce Quirk grew rather relaxed once she sensed that nothing serious was going to happen, and spent the balance of the morning observing and taking notes.<sup>39</sup>

The day so long dreaded by so many people had turned out to be a public relations victory for both sides. University officials and police were roundly congratulated for their professional handling of the arrests<sup>40</sup> (no one had received more than bruises and numb fingers) and the Coalition was lauded for its disciplined nonviolence. The county sheriff was so pleased at the way the arrests had gone that he decided to drop the charges of resisting arrest leveled against those Coalition members who had not left the Hill voluntarily. Only contempt charges were left.<sup>41</sup> William Kunstler's prediction that Kent State protesters would not be attacked a second time proved accurate; the care with which the July 12 arrests were conducted demonstrated that, however much the University and the nation dislike reminders of 1970 (or

perhaps because both did), neither wanted it to happen again. Kent State, certainly, could not risk mistreating Coalition members (especially when they were clearly engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience) without wreaking havoc with its public image. The TV cameras protected the coalition that day.

The future looked terribly uncertain, all the same. Even as the Coalition meeting that night became a raucous medley of chanting, cheering, and stomping for arrivals fresh from jail, no one could say that the Coalition was closer to moving the annex site than it had been before. All it could say was that the national and international news coverage of the mass arrest had probably increased the pressure on University officials to change the construction plans. On July 12, the Coalition had certainly made a statement—as it had by maintaining its community for sixty-two days—but it had lost Blanket Hill and Tent City, at least for ten days. There was much to be discussed, much to be planned. For the effort to persuade Americans that the Vietnam era was worth remembering as it related to the deaths at Kent State had only just begun on the evening of July 12, 1977.

What is the legacy of Tent City? It was certainly the high point of the May 4th Coalition's struggle to keep the entire 1970 site clear of construction. Overall, it represented the best of the ideals and aspirations of the Coalition: peace, honor, honesty toward the past, courage, egalitarianism, communitarianism, and environmentalism. Coalition members of all political persuasions looked back on it later as a hopeful experiment in dignifying the past and suggesting the future, whatever their other feelings about its problems and contradictions. Never again during the gym struggle would there be that kind of physical or community base in which the Coalition could live and function—perhaps many members anticipated that and partly for that reason resisted the court order to vacate the hill.

Scattered student sit-ins occurred at various campuses during the decade following the ultimately unsuccessful gym struggle. (Yes, the annex was duly constructed, as planned.) These protests involved other issues (usually tuition, apartheid or Central America policy) and did not last as long as Tent City. Surely, though, they took some inspiration from its spirit, tactics and ideals. As late as 1989, one could feel the echoes of Tent City, 1977, however apparently inadvertent, as a part of a slowly rejuvenating American labor movement, the United Mine Workers, set up Camp Solidarity, peacefully occupied company territory and engaged in other acts of nonviolent civil disobedience as part of the months-long Pittston coal strike for retention of pension and health benefits in Southwestern Virginia.

Truly inspiring events created by struggling people are never really lost to history. Thus, Tent City will never be forgotten by those who care to learn and read. It was only one phase in an ultimately losing struggle, but it still

achieved something by its experience, its example, and its consciousness-raising.

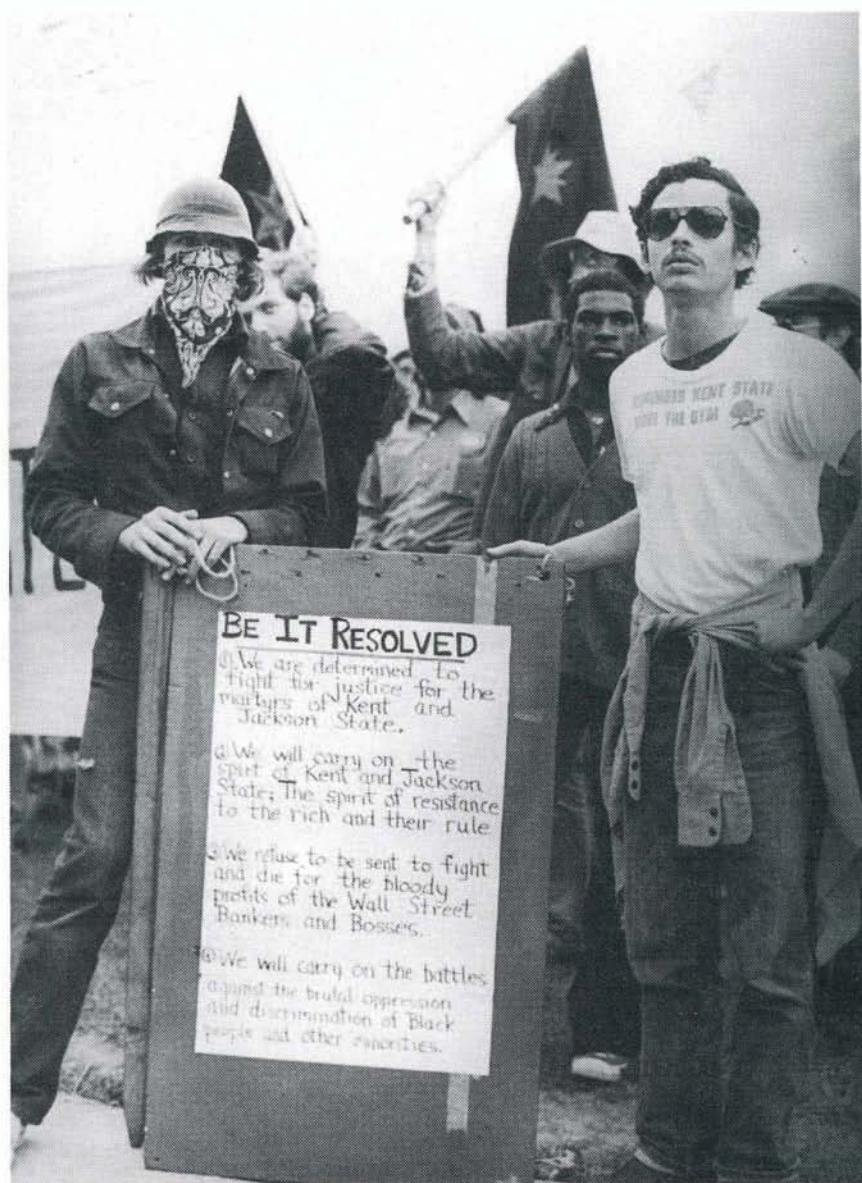
### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Author's recollection.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Deb Ungericht, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, (18 May 1977).
- <sup>3</sup> Thomas R. Hensley, "Kent State 1977: The Struggle to Move the Gym," in Thomas R. Hensley and Jerry M. Lewis, eds., *Kent State and May 4th: A Social Science Perspective* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt) 1978: 131.
- <sup>4</sup> Barrie Thorne, "Resisting the Draft: An Ethnography of the Draft Resistance Movement," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University (1971): 197, 227, 321.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 147, 164.
- <sup>6</sup> Dave Perusek, interview with the author, 2 May 1981.
- <sup>7</sup> Jonathan Smuck, interview with the author, 7 January 1981.
- <sup>8</sup> See Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1980. Also, see discussion in Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973) of this phenomenon. Both authors focus on the rise of what became the Weatherman faction of SDS between 1968 and 1970.
- <sup>9</sup> For a detailed description of this process as applied to an earlier era (but in a way quite relevant to the Coalition), see Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1976.
- <sup>10</sup> Fatimah Abdullah (Eve Rosen Morris), interview with the author, 18 and 19 August, 1981.
- <sup>11</sup> *Daily Kent Stater* (3 June 1977).
- <sup>12</sup> Joyce Quirk, interview with the author, 10 June 1981.
- <sup>13</sup> See *Record-Courier*, 6 June 1977.
- <sup>14</sup> "Concerned Faculty" letter, 8 June 1977. In author's possession.
- <sup>15</sup> *Record-Courier*, 10 June 1977.
- <sup>16</sup> Quoted in *Record-Courier*, 10 June 1977; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 10 June 1977.
- <sup>17</sup> "Kent's Newest Dilemma," editorial, *Cleveland Press*. Reprinted as *Record-Courier* editorial, 10 June 1977.
- <sup>18</sup> Letter from Richard Larlham to *Record-Courier*, 13 June 1977.
- <sup>19</sup> Unsigned letter to *Record-Courier*, 13 June 1977.
- <sup>20</sup> *Kent Weekly*, c. 29 June 1977.
- <sup>21</sup> May 4th Coalition leaflet, c. 1 July 1977. In author's possession.
- <sup>22</sup> *Record-Courier*, 9 July 1977.
- <sup>23</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 7 July 1977.
- <sup>24</sup> John A. Begala, *Reminiscences on May 4, 1970 and Its Aftermath*: 11-12. Unpublished manuscript in possession of the author. Cited by permission of John A. Begala.
- <sup>25</sup> Quoted in *Record-Courier*, 9 July 1977.
- <sup>26</sup> Marie Carey, interview with the author, 21 May 1981; Fatimah Abdullah, interview with the author. The author also wondered later whether the Coalition should have "rejected" this proposal. See Marting Lipset, *Rebellion in the University* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971: xii-xvi) for a definition of the term "critical mass."
- <sup>27</sup> Quoted in *Akron Beacon Journal*, 9 July 1977.
- <sup>28</sup> *Record-Courier*, 9 July 1977; *Akron Beacon Journal*, 10 July 1977.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 9 July 1977.
- <sup>30</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 9 July 1977. A story concerning a similar suggestion made by Congressman John Seiberling appeared in the *Record-Courier*, 8 July 1977.
- <sup>31</sup> "Keep Peace at KSU," editorial, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 9 July 1977.

- <sup>32</sup> Author's recollection; *Akron Beacon Journal*, *Record-Courier*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *New York Times*, 11 July 1977.
- <sup>33</sup> Harriet Begala, interview with the author, 4 June 1981; Dennis Carey, interview with the author, 14 May 1981; Thomas R. Hensley and Glen W. Griffin, "Victims of Groupthink: The Kent State University Board of Trustees and the 1977 Gymnasium Controversy," prepared for the 1979 meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois (18-21 April 1979). Cited by permission.
- <sup>34</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Record-Courier*, 12 July 1977; *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 18 July 1977. For Pareisi's arguments on behalf of KSU, see *Motion for Temporary Restraining Order with Notice*, filed 11 July 1977. To author courtesy of Bill Whitaker.
- <sup>35</sup> Author's recollection of arguments. Also see *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 18 July 1977, for an account of the meeting. Both the author and faculty member Barbara Child argued in this vein.
- <sup>36</sup> Albert Canfora, interview with the author, 12 August 1981.
- <sup>37</sup> Bill Arthrell, "An Open Letter to the Board of Trustees of Kent State University," June 1977. Copy in author's possession, courtesy of Bill Arthrell.
- <sup>38</sup> Author's recollection.
- <sup>39</sup> Joyce Quirk, interview with the author.
- <sup>40</sup> See, for instance, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 13 July 1977.
- <sup>41</sup> For area and national newspaper coverage of the 12 July arrests, see *Record-Courier*, *Akron Beacon Journal*, *Cleveland Press* and *Plain-Dealer*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, 13 July 1977; *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 18 July 1977.



Meeting at Tent City some time between May 12, 1977 and July 12, 1977. Photo © by John P. Rowe.



Members of the Revolutionary Student Brigade state their demands. Photo © by John P. Rowe.



Robby Stamps and Bill Arthrell attending a rally at Kent State, August 20, 1977.  
Photo © by John P. Rowe.

# Save the Pooch

**Robert Stamps**

It was the first hot spell of the year in Ohio, and, in Kent, a small college town at the tip of the Bible Belt, our spirits, weighted down so heavily from winter snow, were soaring. Before the day's end they would climb higher still.

We anticipated a huge, excitable crowd, what with all the threatening phone calls and hate mail we had received. The war at home had hibernated for the winter, and now it was awakening like a hungry, angry bear.

My only pair of wide bell bottom jeans stayed safely hidden in the closet of my dormitory room. In the dark ages before the capitalists discovered that a hefty return could come from the counterculture, I had strained to find a pair, coming across them of all places in the Army-Navy store six miles down the road in Ravenna, the conservative county seat.

For this special day I would dress like a gentleman, forsaking my boots for shiny dress shoes and my blue jeans jacket for a sport coat I had bought in downtown Kent at the used clothing store for three bucks. Ah, and I remembered to shave.

"There are plenty of fascists running around in blue jeans," Allie had lectured the group. "Let's not give the media the opportunity to label us as dirty hippies or revolutionaries."

The fully developed and yet hastily conceived conspiracy was born to us two weeks before, in a council, outside the dorms under the still, leafless spring trees. We sat in the darkness to conceal our identities, far from the stray microphone of a narc, the camera of a G-Man, or the notebook of a campus cop.

An odd dozen we were, black, white, girl, boy, eastern seaboard liberal and home-grown Cleveland working-class radical. We passed radical politics around like a sweet doobie, and we had comradeship to share. Still, we were a brigade of nonconformists, and no one flashed an SDS card or the Chairman's little red book. Precious little dogma, considering the tenets of the time.

To the best of my knowledge, neither was anyone the beneficiary of smuggled monies sent north by Fidel Castro to foment revolution, as was alleged in Washington. America got an A+ for scapegoating. Fidel's grant would have been consumed by record albums, assorted intoxicants, and

other staples of equal revolutionary merit anyway, not weapons or mimeograph machines. This was social change with a back beat.

But if social unrest was our avocation, it was reflected as well in our studies. There were no marketing majors in this clan. Future yuppies perhaps, but business tycoons, no.

Sarah and Sam were lovers. In their senior year, in a flower child ceremony, they would marry. Later, in the 70s, they would divorce.

And Lars Christensen, the Errol Flynn of campus agitators, rented a room like the rest of us in Tri-Towers. He was never there.

I lived in Tri-Towers as well, in a single room with a mattress on the floor and just enough space for a stereo and a refrigerator. My door, like others, stayed unlocked. *Mi casa was su casa.*

Built only three years before, the modern style of Tri-Towers thumbed its nose at the common dormitories and campus buildings within its view. In fine dialectical fashion, its costly rooms were hideouts for the radical elite of the University. The ground floor connected the three air-conditioned residences in a space-station like arrangement. In the center was a lounge, complete with rehearsal rooms with pianos, television rooms, study rooms, and a large, uncluttered, circular meeting room in the center, nicknamed "The Pit," with a thick, Lenin-red carpet. That spring, the Pit would become the headquarters for the Kent People's Army.

Intrigue is not best considered in the barracks, however, and so we snuck out into the spring evening to make our plans.

Lars, the future history teacher, began: "It seems to me," he said, "that we should give up on trying to organize anything this spring. It is April already, and not much is going down. Nothing exciting on this campus since the Moratorium last fall. Can we stop kidding each other that we can get this campus hopping by June? Organizing is a slow, painful process. The mood around this campus is one of apathy. I'm tired of handing out leaflets all day in front of the Student Union for rallies that no one shows up for."

The smooth young man with the red beard waited tolerantly for Lars to finish. He disagreed with Lars, but needed Lar's speech nevertheless as a preamble to his own. He spoke so quietly I labored to hear him.

"Students around this school are sheepish," he said, as if he were beginning a lecture. "Even the ones who want to get politically involved. They need direction. They need leadership. They need an event to rally around. They will come out by the thousands."

As I was about to offer an idea, he began again: "Do you all remember last year, when Rebel Davis was passing out flyers that contained the famous four letter word outside the Union?"

We remembered. The cops had arrested him on the spot and hauled him off to jail.

"When the administration refused to make his suspension hearing public, what happened? Three hundred students took over the building in

protest. Over one hundred of them were arrested.

"The next day, eight thousand students ringed the campus in support. *Eight thousand*. And one week before that, any one of you would have given me that apathy speech."

Lodi, an Ohio biker nicknamed for his home town, took exception.

"Well, the administration is a lot smarter now, and they aint into provokin people like they used to. You know damn well they leaned hard on those students who took over Music and Speech Building. Some of em are on probation, and some of em aint around no more to do any complainin'."

He pointed his finger at the group each time he raised his voice. We felt his eloquence.

"Students are runnin scared round this campus, and most of em dont want to get thrown out on their butts over some protest that dont make a damn bit of difference. It just gives Agnew the excuse to call us bums."

"His new word is radiclubs," Lars said, and we all laughed nervously.

The woman from Toledo sat with her legs crossed. Her long brown hair was parted down the middle. She looked at no one in particular when she spoke: "Here is the plan...."

There was a professor on campus in whose class I had the good luck to enroll. In those turbulent years when QUESTION AUTHORITY became a theme song, he downplayed his Ph.D. and asked his students to call him Jonathan. His casual nature, however, did not stem from any deference to the fashion of the times or from a disbelief in the enormity of his influence over young people. He took great pride in what he did, but he felt it his task first and foremost to convey a sense of mistrust and even of scorn toward established institutions, and, if he would give anything at all to his students, it would be to present to them the edge of critical thinking. This he did with a mountain of statistics, all committed to memory, and persuasive manner of speech.

And so at eleven one morning, I left my Spanish American Literature class, which was always benign as a sheep, and crossed the street in my fringed leather jacket to Social Problems. On any given day, it could be the gospel according to C. Wright Mills or Eldridge Cleaver.

I was to be the bearer of what I considered to be a crucial message for the class, and my own experience at public speaking was limited. Standing in front of a large class in a larger auditorium, I stuck my hands in my pockets and I cut loose.

"This being a Social Problems class and all, and the fact that we've been talking a lot about the war and things, I am very pleased to announce that for your edification and amusement, next Tuesday at noon, in front of the Student Union, a group of concerned students will napalm a dog to

demonstrate scientifically the effects of this incendiary on a living organism. Everyone is invited, there is no admission charge, and we look forward to seeing all of you there."

A few rows down, in the middle, a girl moaned, "Oh God."

A veteran in the back with a green army jacket bolted for the door and shouted, "You're sick!" He pushed the door open and disappeared.

Later in the day my phone rang. "This is Jonathan, your Sociology prof. Is anyone else in your room right now?"

"No."

"I've just gotten a phone call, a call from a man who identified himself as a police informant. He claims to be enrolled in Social Problems, but he wouldn't give me his name or tell me for whom he works."

"Do you believe him?"

"Perhaps not, but I wanted to tell you what he told me. He claims that possession of napalm is a federal offense, and that all of you will be arrested next Tuesday and charged with federal crimes if you go ahead with your demonstration. I have reservations about having an informant in my class, but I think you and your people need to be extremely careful."

I thanked him.

"Where do you have the napalm?"

"Can't tell you that Jonathan."

"Whose dog are you going to use?"

I said nothing.

"Can you at least raise bail money so we can go down to the Ravenna jail and get you out?"

"Thank you, Jonathan. It has all been arranged."

"I don't know how you could say that. Bail could be set extremely high."

"Incarceration would only increase the publicity. See you in class."

The five iron that stuck its head through my door announced the arrival of Mickey, a member of the campus golf team and the resident mediator of the sixth floor of Leebrick Hall, the single room dorm for Tri-Towers. It was his role to intercede in the recurring hubbubs that broke out between the doves and the hawks in the sixth floor lounge. Each floor had its own den just before the elevators, and daily, after dinner, the debates began. Vietnam, marijuana, ROTC on campus. Each side considered the other ignorant, naive, and hoodwinked. When push came to shove, as it sometimes did, Mickey would be right there with his golf club diplomacy.

"All weekend long there has been talk around the dorm about this napalm thing. You a part of that?"

"Yes, yes, I am."

"I don't want to tell you what to do, but some of the other guys on the golf team plan on showing up, and they're not too pleased with the whole idea, to say the least."

He tapped his club on the floor.

"You would be smart if you didn't show up," he told me, and he left my room without fixing his gaze on mine.

Monday's sultriness lingered into the evening. Touring the campus with Lars, we handed out the remaining leaflets amongst the other dorms, retreating before having to answer any hostile interrogations.

Lars had been elected Master of Ceremonies for Tuesday's demonstration.

"You ready for tomorrow?" I asked him.

"If you mean have I done my homework, then the answer is yes," he said. "I know what I'm going to say. But the rumors I've heard about the governor's office being there, and the police—what if they arrest us before we even have a—"

"A chance to make our statement."

"Right. What happens then?"

The Student Union was a Hyde Park of sorts. Its entrance was a stage for moralizing Christians, for Yuppies, and for the brown nosers from student government. For the spectator it was always a treat.

Having much preparation in front of me, I cut Jonathan's class Tuesday morning and stopped by the campus police station to pick up the bullhorn we had reserved. In my dorm room I finished dressing, pirating a tie from a business major down the hall. Polished and alert, we all gathered in the Pit, linked arms, and headed straight for the Union.

We talked and laughed along the way, but our hearts were in our throats and we could think of nothing else but whatever awaited us. First, I noticed the police, ringing the crowd: motionless, erect, with big sunglasses and wooden batons. They looked like movie extras from *Billy Jack*.

An old lady pushed a leaflet in my hand. Representing the ASPCA, she carried hundreds more under her arm. A stone's throw from her stood a deputy with an empty leash in his hand.

Quickly, Lars switched on the bullhorn. It would not work. And so, raising his voice instead, which created much more drama anyway, he began: "Napalm is a greyish, tough, jelly that once ignited may reach 2,000 degrees centigrade. The flaming gel becomes sticky and adheres quite well to human or animal flesh."

The crowd was becoming angry, and people were beginning to hoot. At the back of the crowd I saw golf clubs gleaming in the sun.

"Napalm burns with an orange flame and generates a huge amount of smoke. One bomb can plaster gobs of stuff over an area the size of a football field."

Lars' voice was beginning to crack.

"Officials of the company that accepted the contract to manufacture napalm stated that they did so in part because they felt that 'good, simple citizenship' required that they supply their government and military with the goods that they need when they have the technology and have been chosen by the government as a supplier."

(At the 1966 price of fourteen cents a pound, the company would receive over forty-two million dollars for the 300 million pounds of polystyrene converted to napalm.)

Lars had lost all traces of objectivity.

"Inhuman acts done against any civilian population constitutes a crime against humanity, according to the Nuremburg principles."

He put his notes and his bullhorn on the ground. His white on white dress shirt was untucked and he was so disturbed it hurt to look at him.

"How many of you have come today to see a dog napalmed?"

The people booed.

"And how many of you are prepared to use physical force to stop us?"

The people cheered. Like a conductor, Lars silenced them with his waving arms, took a deep breath, and lowered his voice.

"I have some news for you. I have some real news for all of you, my friends. There is no napalm. There is no dog. There never was. The way we see it, you have all done the right thing by coming here today, and we applaud you. But we need for you to know that halfway around the world, napalm falls daily on your brothers and sisters, and we don't seem to hear their screams. What do we all know of the anguish of yellow people in Vietnam?"

Lars scanned the crowd. "There is someone here today from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Fine. What about a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to People?"

Lars had a last breath in him. "Thanks to all of you for your effort. We hope to see you at other rallies on campus."

The silence in the air was for us golden. After a minute perhaps, someone in the heart of the crowd began the applause which spread outward like a ripple in a pond, and the clapping embarrassed us with its endlessness and its sanction.

We twelve walked slowly back to Tri-Towers, speaking very little. Before Vietnam moved from television to textbook, Lars would see the inside of a jail cell no less than twenty times. My path would take me elsewhere, but, like him, my life's priorities had been cemented on a warm spring afternoon, by a hound who never even existed.

## **Simple Themes and Complex Realities in the Spring of 1970**

**Tom Dietz**

Each year on May 4 I walk into the forest and spend an hour or two sitting above a valley, reflecting on the Spring of 1970 and my life since then. As an ecologist, I know the world and the flow of events in it are too complex to capture directly. Humans mold and structure perceptions and memories to make sense of them. As personal and planetary history moves forward, our vision of the past can become simple and the context of events can disappear. My annual retreat is a way to sustain the complexity of that Spring while I try to understand it.

In ecology, there is a tension between complexity and simplicity. Ecologists love the complexity of the biosphere and struggle against the loss of living diversity caused by deforestation, pollution, and other human activities. But ecologists also value abstract models that make sense of the world. For many of us, contemplating how the simple process of Darwinian evolution produced the complex reality of life on earth is fascinating and rewarding. Ecology is a dialogue between our models and the complex natural history of the planet.

Personal understandings of the world and its history also are conversations between complexity and a simpler view that we can comprehend. Looking down on a wooded valley I realize that the forest in my mind is a dialogue between me and the forest in the world. In turn, the Spring of 1970 in my mind is a dialogue with a complex reality. Reflecting on that time I find some simple themes in a complex, diverse reality. Both the simple and the complex are valuable, each incomplete without the other.

The simple story of Kent is one of dramatic events: the May 1 rally, Water Street that night, the burning of the ROTC building, the shootings, evacuation, continued martial law, indictments, seizing the library, the gym controversy, and so on. These are the first things I think about and usually the first things I'm asked about. But I've found it impossible to make sense of the dramatic events by themselves, and difficult to explain them to others. They lack context and the complexity that comes with it. Without context, Spring, 1970, does not have meaning. It is from the complicated details that the themes and understanding emerge. Over the last twenty years, several themes and details have become important to me.

## **Community**

The networks that linked people and organizations at Kent were extensive and dense. Organizations grew from other organizations. Fellowship of Reconciliation, Kent Free University, Kent Anarchists, Environmental Conservation Organization, Kent Legal Defense Fund, and Kent Community Project were sustained by the same people, and each of these organizations overlapped with many others. This web of relationships, this community, was the movement. It was where we learned and supported each other. I don't believe the energy and creativity of that period could have existed without it.

## **Greens, Feminists, and Gays**

April 22, 1970, was the first Earth Day, and marked the birth of the new environmental movement. May 6 "Project Earth" was to have taken place—Kent State's environmental teach-in. During the Spring of 1970, the women's liberation movement and the gay liberation movement were also active at Kent. All were part of the community. For example, the first working groups of the environmental, women's liberation and gay liberation movement were sponsored by the Free University. Green, feminist, and gay perspectives expanded the concerns of the antiwar movement. These new visions of politics demonstrated the political importance of everyday life and the value of intuitive, personal understanding. And, in turn, the green, feminist, and gay movements benefited from the understanding of structure and power developed in antiwar politics.

## **Art and Politics**

Art was political and politics incorporated the vision and creativity of art. To the list of organizations above I could have added the Needle's Eye, the Tuesday Night Cinema, the Folk Festival, and Gentle Thursday. Art was part of the community and not separate from politics. This made the art more emotionally powerful, while the politics became broader and deeper. Even the Ohio prosecutors seemed to understand this when they included in the Grand Jury Report an attack on the Jefferson Airplane.

## **Playfulness and Discipline**

Simple images of dramatic events filter out both the playfulness of that spring, and the seriousness as well. Fictional accounts seem to have only two kinds of activists: the grim revolutionary and the naive flower child. The flower child might pass out free chili at the student union to show that "there is such a thing as a free lunch," or wear a Nixon mask at rallies. The grim activist would work endless hours to raise several hundred thousand dollars as part of the Kent Legal Defense Fund's efforts to fight back against Ohio's

prosecution of the Kent 25. But in reality, the same people did both. The playfulness allowed experimentation, relieved tension, and provided the powerful weapon of humor. The discipline got things done.

After a time, my thoughts in the forest turn to the present. Recent changes in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and southern Africa offer some hope of progress on problems of racism, poverty, imperialism, and authoritarian rule. But there is much more that needs to be done. The struggle around these issues remains difficult. And new problems are growing urgent. Over the last twenty years our worst fears about damage to the planetary environment are proving true. Sexism and racism are still prevalent. And weapons of mass destruction threaten millions.

The enormity of these problems is discouraging. But over the last twenty years social movements have persisted and grown, and I believe this decade will see activism flourish. There are lessons for the 1990s in the themes that help me understand the Spring of 1970. First, movements have grown too specialized, issue specific, and professional. The networks that make a community should be strengthened so that the community can inform and sustain us. Second, art and playfulness must have a central place in political action because we will need creativity and laughter. Finally, the green and feminist movements offer profound insights not found in other strains of progressive politics and should be at the core of our thinking. But green and feminist thinking must also confront problems of structure and power, and can benefit from the insights of more traditional analyses. The problems we face now cannot be understood or solved by a narrow perspective.

Spring, 1970, changes for me each time I think about it. Different parts of that complex time become important as personal and planetary history move forward. The present provides the basis for understanding the past, for finding themes and lessons. Reality is so complex that we can always learn from it as the dialogue between the simple and the complex continues.



Students and activists tear down the fence surrounding the gym construction site.  
Photo © by John P. Rowe.

# On the Trouble at Kent State

Carl Oglesby

It was not until sixteen and a half years after the event, in the *New York Times* of October 9, 1986, that conservative columnist William Safire reported "sitting with [Reagans' Secretary of State] George Schultz in 1970 watching and listening to the film of the shooting at Kent State; stunned, the former marine said, "That was a salvo." From the sound, he knew an order had been given to fire at the students, and—a good Administration soldier, but not one to march over cliffs—he would not accept explanations that the shooting had been sporadic.

That is point number one: that the shooting was planned, ordered, and intended.

Point number two emerges from a simple reflection on the above fact and its completely unambiguous status. Just as with George Schultz, no one who has studied the evidence in this case with a half open eye and an unbiased mind has ever been able to reach any conclusion other than that the shooting was premeditated. Yet despite this fact, the government has never done anything at any level to probe for an answer to the obvious questions, namely: Who authorized the planning to shoot people at KSU and who gave the order to keep the truth from coming out?

Thus, the central facts about the Kent State shootings twenty years later are exactly the same as the central facts about the other cardinal assassinations of the Vietnam period, those of John Kennedy in 1963, and of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy in 1968. In each case we confront, first, a conspiracy to carry out the actual murder and, second, a second conspiracy to cover up the first one.

Nor does it take a blathering paranoia to say so. The evidence of conspiracy in the JFK and MLK cases has in fact been explicitly reported and acknowledged as such by the U.S. Congress itself, which in 1979, after two-year-long investigations reported that JFK was "probably" and MLK was "likely" killed by conspiracies, not by lone, self-motivated madmen. Despite pretending to still believe that Lee Harvey Oswald pulled a trigger that day in Dealey Plaza, the House Select Committee on Assassinations found and reported strong if indirect evidence that Oswald was exactly what he said he was in his one confrontation with the media before he himself was murdered—a "patsy." Oswald's assassin, Jack Ruby, was found to have had deep and extensive ties to precisely the segments of organized crime, the New

Orleans Mafia under Carlos Marcello and the Miami Mafia under Santos Trafficante, that had the strongest motive to eliminate Kennedy.

In the King case, the congress found that James Earl Ray was indeed the killer, but that he was operating in cahoots with his brothers and that their motive may not have been simple racism but rather a desire to collect a bounty that had been placed on King's head less than a year before by southern fascists with links to a shadowy Tennessee organization called the Southern States Industrial Council.

As to the Robert Kennedy case, there has been no official investigation since that of the Los Angeles police department upon which the conviction of Sirhan Sirhan was based, but students of the case (perhaps most notably Allard Lowenstein, an aide of RFK's who was himself subsequently murdered) have produced compelling factual grounds for assuming that here too we face a conspiracy of killers, not a lone madman, a conspiracy that was itself protected by a higher-level conspiracy of official cover-up artists.

Set in such a context, we must see the KSU killings and their cover up as the doings of forces based somehow within the "legitimate" government and capable somehow of subverting the powers of "legitimate authority" to their own ends. These ends were, in all these cases, apparently shaped by the Vietnam war and by the fanatical conviction among American ultra-rightists that the war against Communism justifies any crime against dissent and even against the Constitution itself.

This is what we face in the case of the KSU shootings: an effort to intimidate the forces of popular dissent, first, by murderous violence and, second, by the absolute protection of the guilty principals from the least legal penalty. The message is: If your dissent becomes too strenuous or seems about to make a real difference, we will kill you where and when we choose and you won't be able to do a thing about it; and we will do it in such a way that others look on and understand, so that your death will set an example. The politics of the Death Squad.

Why do people believe that political murder works? For one thing, surely, because it so often does. As we can now say with great certainty, JFK was about to withdraw U.S. military forces from Vietnam and to normalize relations with Castro's Cuba at the moment at which he was murdered. When Johnson took over, those plans were out and the era of escalation in Vietnam and the militant isolation of Cuba was upon us. The difference made by Dealey Plaza was the difference between JFK's 16,000-man U.S. expeditionary force and Johnson's half-a-million-man army. The difference made by the assassination of Robert Kennedy, who had become by the time of his death a proponent of U.S. disengagement, was the difference between winding the war down starting in 1969 and winding the war to a higher intensity, as occurred under Nixon.

In the case of King, the result was less direct but equally profound. When King, "the Dreamer," died, the Dream died with him, or at least suffered major trauma and prolonged deactivation. The Dream in this case, of course, was the proposition embodied in King and his political work that nonviolent action within the framework of the U.S. Constitution could in fact bring about fundamental change in public attitudes and official policies. When King was gone, the stage was left to a generation of leaders who did not share King's vision or values, or who at least felt themselves compelled by the circumstances of King's death to take up a politics of violence, or in the parlance of the time, of "direct action." When the civil rights movement's leadership vacuum was filled by Black Panthers such as Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton, it was only a matter of a very short time before black leadership had been essentially eliminated altogether by the forces of state repression. In fact, repression had a much easier time politically with the Black Panthers than it had ever had with King's Southern Christian Leadership Council and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Those of us who were close to the Panthers knew that their violence was overwhelmingly an expression of rage, grief, and frustration, and that in purely human terms it was infinitely forgivable as a reaction to the violence visited upon the black community by white fascists and, in particular, by the assassination of King.

But this did *not* mean that Panther violence made the least sense from a political standpoint. On the contrary, the only political result of the Panther's explicit and indeed vociferous rejection of nonviolence was to confer a kind of retroactive legitimacy on the forces of white repression. There are clearly conditions and circumstances in which this would not be the case, but for the United States of the late 1960s, any action taken by the dissenting forces that tended to move confrontation from nonviolence to violence was uniformly negative for dissent. The repressive state was *always* the winner when the movement gave vent to its passions and expressed itself in violent ways.

I believe this has a bearing on the Kent State killings.

About two months before the Guardsmen whirled around upon the students and unleashed their murderous fire on the Kent State campus, a group of young antiwar radicals from Students for a Democratic Society met secretly at a townhouse in Manhattan to assemble a bomb—a bomb with which they intended once and for all to transcend symbolism and draw actual blood. The bomb was powerful and was packed with nails. When it blew up accidentally in the basement of the townhouse, it instantly killed three SDSers of the pro-violent Weathermen, the faction which earlier had overseen the dismemberment of SDS on the grounds that SDS, as an organization committed to nonviolence, no longer had a mission to fulfill. SDS was in this sense the King of the antiwar movement, and the Weather-

men were its Black Panthers. Except that in this case, the death of SDS was the doing not of a paid outside assassin, but of its own children, children who dared in their colossal inexperience and arrogance to believe that they could adopt a politics of violence in their struggle with the repressive state and win.

Some victory. Besides killing three of their best people, the only thing the Weathermen achieved by the attempt to escalate the level of internal violence was to lend urgency and a perverse aura of legitimacy to the forces that were already only all too eager to abandon the least restraint and go for the movement's jugular.

I cannot prove that the shooting at Kent State on May 4 was in any direct way motivated by the Weatherman townhouse explosion of March 6. But as one who went through that period as an activists and was in a position to watch the transformation of American attitudes both toward the war and toward the antiwar movement, I know for a fact that the movement's apparent adoption of violent means of struggle made it incalculably easier for the National Guard to kill white students in Ohio—and for the State Police to kill black students in Mississippi ten days later—and get away with it.

I freely acknowledge the seeming paradox in this line of reasoning. On the one hand, the powers of state repression would never have permitted the victory of the nonviolent antiwar movement without at last adopting violent counter-measures against it. That is to say, nonviolent activists cannot expect their nonviolence to be a shield. On the other hand, I am saying that the abandonment of the posture of nonviolence and the adoption of physical intimidation as a mode of political struggle provided a kind of legitimacy to repression, a hunting license, which repression would otherwise have lacked, as in a certain respect the Weathermen provided a kind of license to the individual National Guardsmen who agreed and planned to shoot to kill unarmed students.

But there really is not contradiction here. Nothing the movement could have done in the 1960s would have kept the Nixon state from loading live ammunition. Rewind the tape and play through those days again with the Weatherman madness deleted, and *still* repression would fire its guns, just as repression had fired its guns in the Battle of People's Park in Berkeley in May, 1969—ten months before the explosion at the townhouse. But perhaps—just perhaps—the guns of repression could not have been fired so easily in the absence of what many would have regarded as direct provocation. And perhaps—again, just perhaps—once they were fired, the willingness to let the assassins get away with it might not have been so widespread within the general population.

This is of course totally speculative. There is no way in the world to prove that the beginnings of the May 4 shooting are perhaps in part to be found in the self-bombing of March 6. But I am at the same time convinced

that there is a symbolic if not an actual connection between these two grim events, and that the lessons of Kent State cannot be fully perceived without a study of the lessons of the Weatherman townhouse. These events are permanently linked in the horrifying dramaturgy of that time, and they need to be studied in unity.



Kent State students take cover from national guard fire. Used by permission of Peter Davies.

## **From Kent State to Tiananmen: Some Personal Reflections**

**Ken Hammond**

For me there has always been a connection between Kent and China. When I entered Kent State as a freshman in the fall of 1967 I was already interested in Chinese history and politics. My older brother had just returned from serving in Vietnam. The Cultural Revolution was unfolding in China. And I was becoming more and more involved in the antiwar movement.

In studying China's modern history, I learned about the May 4, 1919 demonstrations in Beijing, which gave rise to what became known as the May 4th Movement. On that date thousands of students from Beijing's universities assembled at the Gate of Heavenly Peace, in Chinese called Tiananmen, to protest against the betrayal of China by the Western democratic governments, led by the United States, at the Versailles Peace Conference. The victorious Allies, having won the war to "make the world safe for democracy," and having raised the standard of self-determination for all peoples, had just agreed to give the former German territorial concessions in China to Japan rather than return them to Chinese control. The warlord government based in Beijing had acquiesced in this, and triggered the student demonstrations.

These protests turned into riots with the homes of leading politicians being attacked and burned, and with large scale street fighting in Beijing. In the following months and years the movement grew and broadened, to become a call for modernization, social justice, and an end to imperialist manipulation of China. One current within this movement developed into the Communist Revolution which eventually won control of the country in 1949.

In the late 1960s, as students in America were confronted with the war in Vietnam as a current living example of imperialism in action and sought to find ways to combat it, the Chinese revolution was taken up by many as a source of ideas and experience to learn from. Both the tradition of May 4, 1919 and the activism of young Red Guards in the contemporary Cultural Revolution were seen as examples to be emulated. In the Cultural Revolution we saw, or seemed to see, a truly revolutionary, anti-authoritarian mass movement, in which ordinary people, students and workers, were participating in politics in their own name, and fighting against the bureaucratic, elitist Communist Party, which had set itself up as a new ruling class.

Unknown to us at the time, the participatory democratic potential of the Cultural Revolution had already been aborted by the time most of us were taking up the study of Chairman Mao's thought. In February of 1967 mass organizations of workers in Shanghai, China's largest and most industrialized city, had overthrown the leadership of the Municipal Communist Party and had established the Shanghai Commune, loosely modelled on the Paris Commune of 1871, and attempting to create forms of mass direct democracy. Within three weeks this Commune was disbanded at the direction of Mao Zedong, who at this crucial juncture could not bring himself to give up the monopoly of power held by the Communist Party.

The Cultural Revolution from this point on degenerated into a struggle among factions within the Party for control, with the participation of "the masses" only a crudely manipulated sideshow. In light of the recent developments in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, one wonders what might have been possible if this Chinese forerunner of Solidarity had been allowed to develop.

Meanwhile, students in the United States, influenced in part by the propaganda of mass mobilization in the Cultural Revolution, were building their own mass movement for peace in Vietnam and social justice in America.

At Kent State the movement grew greatly from 1967 to 1969. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) became a significant presence on campus in the 1968-69 school year. Political education was carried on at rallies, marches, and in "dorm raps," focusing on the involvement of the university in both the war and in other social injustices, such as racism. SDS self-destructed, both at Kent and nationally, in the summer of 1969, but the political consciousness which had begun to develop among large numbers of students continued to ferment. In the wake of the arrest and expulsion of numbers of SDS leaders and activists, the movement seemed to subside in the fall of 1969. But in fact it was only dormant.

It seemed that winter that people desperately wanted to believe that Richard Nixon actually was telling the truth when he claimed to have a secret plan for peace in Vietnam, and that he only needed to be given a chance to make it work. When, in April 1970, he unveiled the invasion of Cambodia, the sense of having been lied to, and been made fools of, released feelings of rage and frustration among students at Kent and universities across the country. The rebellion of May 1-4, culminating in the murders and woundings of May 4, was the result. The historical irony of May 4, 1919, and May 4, 1970, was bitter indeed.

In the immediate aftermath of the shootings at Kent, twenty-five people—students, faculty, and youth from the community—were indicted by a special state grand jury, which also issued a report blaming the trouble at Kent on pernicious cultural influences like rock'n roll, and the contamination of foreign ideas. No legal action was ever taken against the soldiers

who shot down unarmed students who were nonviolently protesting for peace. When the families of killed and wounded students sought justice from the soldiers and officials responsible, the state, at public expense, resisted for seven years, then settled out of court without allowing a judgement of guilt to be rendered.

The killings at Kent State, though they unleashed a great wave of protests in the month immediately following, with hundreds of schools closed across the country and hundreds of thousands of students taking part in protests, resulted in the collapse of the radical mass movement among young people in America. Once the first wave of outrage passed, and over the summer of 1970 students had a chance to reflect on what had happened, a terrible realization came over the movement. The lesson of Kent State was that white, middle-class students, if they pushed their protests too far, would be brutally murdered, just as blacks, latinos, and peoples of the Third World routinely were. This led to a grim calculus of risk. Sadly, for the great majority of young people, the conditions of their own oppression were not harshly felt, and the oppression of others, while worth the risk of arrest or even getting one's head cracked, was not worth having one's head blown off.

Nonetheless, the movement had taken its toll on the war. The Nixon government was also facing its own grim calculations, and recognized that the war could not be won. The U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, and by 1975 the war was truly over. During these same years, Nixon also launched his opening to China. The Chinese, having backed away from direct democracy in 1967, and with the Party reconsolidating its rule, were beginning to move away from their support for revolution in the Third World. Deng Xiaoping, bureaucrat *par excellence*, was reemerging into political prominence, and needed only to await the death of Mao to launch his own program.

Mao died in 1976 and within two years Deng was firmly in the driver's seat. His "pragmatic" policies of economic reform, part of which was the opening of China to outside investment, were welcomed by the Western powers. But from the outset Deng's policies were clearly most beneficial to the Party bureaucrats and flunkies who dominated all aspects of the economy. As central planning was relaxed, it was these very Party hacks (and their children) who were best positioned to profit from the new climate of "free enterprise."

In the course of the 1980s, the reforms did give rise to some new economic forces, especially in the countryside, where income rose dramatically, and some peasants independent of the Party were able to launch ventures of their own. But while the slogan of "getting rich is glorious" was seen in the West as a banner for China's conversion to capitalism, the Party bureaucracy was in fact reaping most of the profits.

At the same time certain groups within society were being dramatically left behind. Most importantly, students and educators, tied to institutions which had no way of generating income to use as bonuses or subsidies and

thus help keep up with inflation, saw their real purchasing power shrink while factory workers, taxi drivers, and even peasants had great rises in prosperity. At the same time, the efforts to make industry and agriculture more "productive" led to layoffs and the dislocation of superfluous labor from the factories and countryside. Many of these people wound up on the streets of major cities, where they had no legal status, no social services, and little prospect of improving their lot.

The demonstrations which broke out in Beijing in April 1989 were a direct result of the policies of Deng Xiaoping. The students who launched these protests, in attacking the corruption of the Party leaders, and in their calls for "freedom and democracy," were looking for a way to break the monopoly of the Party on economic, entrepreneurial opportunity. They were joined in the course of the movement by two other major groups; professionals from government ministries such as telecommunications or the New China News Agency, and large numbers of unemployed people, largely displaced rural workers.

In the weeks from mid-April to the beginning of June, the Western media, particularly the American television news organizations, made Beijing the focus of their operations in a completely unprecedented way. The role of the TV cameras and reporters, as well as the American government radio station Voice of America, in the development of the demonstrations cannot be underestimated. The students made their banners in English so the American audience could read them. And the reporters breathlessly repeated rumors invented by student leaders and fed to the newsmen as part of movement strategy. American anchormen gleefully reported that the Chinese government was no longer in control, and that its end was only a matter of time.

In the end, the government, which had been virtually paralyzed due to deep disagreements as to how to respond to the students' demands, resolved once again, as it had in 1967, to preserve at all costs the monopoly of power of the Communist Party. The result was the military assault of June 4, in which perhaps 700 people were killed and thousands wounded. Economic reform, and indeed the nation's economic health, was greatly set back. But the Party, despite its loss of prestige and credibility, remains in control.

What I find interesting in all of this is the way in which the media, and the great majority of politicians, have responded to the killings in Beijing. Of course, I can only consider this in light of the response of the same media and politicians to the killings at Kent State. As a student at Kent, I was directly involved in the events of May 4, 1970. And having lived in Beijing for two years in the mid-1980s, I had friends involved in the events of April-June 1989. In both instances unarmed young people demonstrating for what they believed in were shot and killed by government soldiers. But in the aftermath of Kent State, where the students who were shot were, after all, American kids, the state sought to put the survivors in jail, and the media

endorsed the murders as, at worst, a tragic mistake, but one which the unruly students brought upon themselves.

By contrast, the media and the mass of politicians cannot seem to say or do enough to express their righteous indignation about the killings in Beijing. The ten years of praise for Deng Xiaoping's supposedly pro-capitalist reforms evaporated overnight. Indeed, there seems to be almost a guilty sense of "we won't get fooled again" on the part of reporters and anchormen who once gushed about the triumph of discos and democracy. And the politicians in Congress are delighted to have an issue on which they can assume the moral high ground, without having to worry particularly about the practical results of their posturing.

Obviously, this is not to say in any way that the condemnation of Deng Xiaoping and his cronies is undeserved. Rather, it should be noted that the killings in Beijing were part and parcel of the policies Deng has pursued, not merely since 1978, but from the 1950s on. So long as the Communist Party is a self-serving, ruling elite, alienated from the people it claims to serve, it will seek, by any means necessary, to preserve its power. We learned at Kent State that the same is true for those who hold power in the United States.

It has been twenty years since I saw friends and fellow students murdered by soldiers for protesting against the policies of their government. On the nineteenth anniversary of the killings at Kent State, May 4, 1989, I found myself at a rally at Harvard called to support the student demonstrations taking place in Beijing. Some friends and I were passing out a leaflet, urging that in our support for the Chinese students, we should also remember that democracy is something which must be lived every day, and that the problems of social and economic injustice in our own country should not be forgotten or set aside. As the Communist ruling classes of Eastern Europe are being turned out of power and a new era in the worldwide struggle for real democracy seems to be beginning, my hope is that as Americans we will not be seduced by a smug myth of the triumph of capitalism, but will redouble our efforts to keep alive the truth about power and oppression which is the lesson of both Tiananmen and Kent State: that only when governments serve the public interests of ordinary people, and not the private interests of the wealthy and privileged, will it be possible for society to be truly free.



## **Recalling the Kent State Killings**

**Joseph J. Lewis**

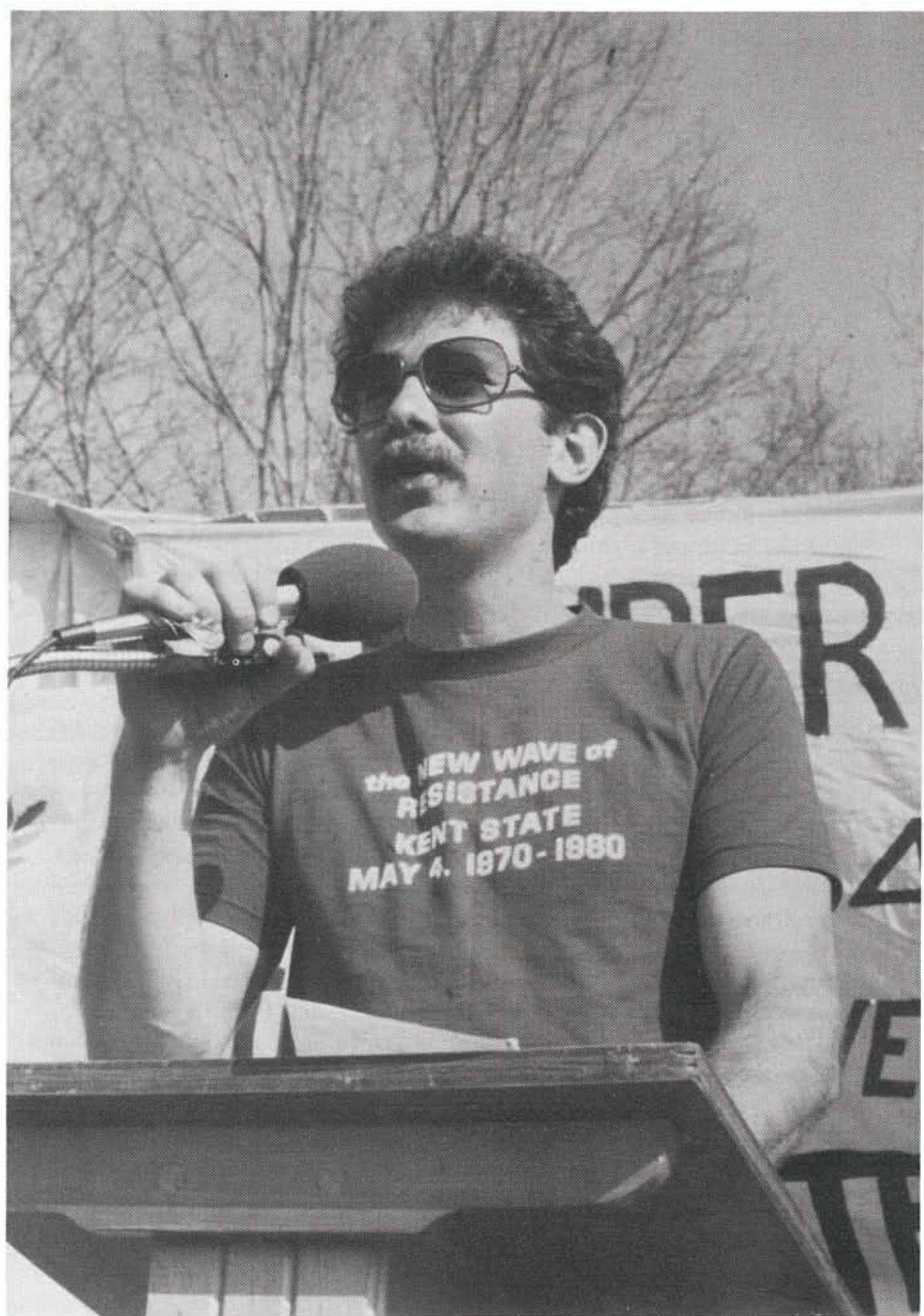
Three or four years after the killing of Allison and Jeff, Sandy and Bill, the father of an old high school friend asked me how long I intended to go on dwelling on things that had happened in the past. I replied, indignantly maybe, that I would always remember that day. I never dreamed it could ever lose any of its profound impact on my life. It is important to remember that terrible tragedy to prevent forever its recurrence.

Twenty years is a significant time block in a human lifetime. Long enough that vision toward the past is refocused. It seems from here that the issues then were more clearly defined. But the basic issues remain through history—freedom versus responsibility, respect for human rights, the common good. Recent months' happenings throughout the world prove the universal desire for people to be free. Tiananmen Square, the Balkans....

One can only marvel at the patience of Nelson Mandela, who waited in prison these many years for the privilege of leading his people to freedom.

Individual freedom was the issue twenty years ago as we protested the occupation of the Kent State campus by the Ohio National Guard. Nine of us were wounded and survived. Four gave up their lives.

They would be forty now, with half-grown kids, perhaps.... We honor them for what they were and what they believed in and we miss what they might have become.



Greg Rambo speaks at the tenth anniversary commemoration of the Kent State shootings, May 4, 1980. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

# **Beggar's Bullets**

## **Captain Trips Bums Clevo or What a Short Dull Trip It Was**

**a song by Chris Butler**

*A blackened stage. On a rear screen, images fade up and out of Water Street in downtown Kent on May 1, 1970. Walter's Cafe... a bonfire in the middle of the street... a cruising cop car... police in riot gear... shattered storefront windows... finally, a looted hardware and lawn care store... then a shot of Steve Drucker with an expression of absurd glee wheeling a green Scott's lawn fertilizer spreader down Main Street!*

*A pin spot hits a performer with an acoustic guitar. It's me, and I sing:*

holster that fist, boy  
ummmm... that's what I used to say  
back in the days when I had words and reason  
in my armory

gone... all gone... wasted now  
outgunned... arrested  
my words netted in their newspapers  
reason bounced off their helmets

just like history  
we plot in poverty and silence  
you know we have to...  
they took away our drums

every window is my enemy's eye  
every rock is a beggar's bullet  
and when I bring the two together

it's my turn, my time, this street is my state

I am riot  
not just some whiner  
with a city's worth of sidewalks now  
stacked in my armory

and I'm a poet  
I rhyme in cobblestone granite  
the art of the instant arc  
my only ideology

and every window... my manifesto  
every rock... a beggar's bullet  
when I bring the two together

it's my turn, my time, this street is my state

and when I see a mountain... I see ammunition  
and when I see a mountain... I see ammunition  
beggar's bullets flying  
through your televisions

into your living rooms  
round the corner of Tank and Bayonet  
down all your lovely boulevards  
now draped in gas and barricade

am I senseless? no!  
exhilarated? absolutely!  
cause one thing that's for sure  
I'm not a victim anymore

every window...  
every window...  
... the excruciating tension between yes and no  
...between the only two choices I ever seem to have  
... of either being anxious or depressed  
every window...  
... is my skin  
... my song  
... my biography

and every rock is a beggar's bullet  
when I bring the two together

it's my turn, my time, this street is my state

and when I see a mountain... I see ammunition  
and when I see a mountain... I see ammunition  
beggar's bullets flying  
through your televisions

*The song pauses for the "guitar solo," a slide fades up of Jeff Miller—the innocent, idealistic high school picture that all the TV stations used. I hold up Jeff's sweater that I never returned... his copy of the Dead's album Live Dead that I also never returned. The "solo" is his story.*

i had all their records. i had all their records and i'd played them so many times i'd worn them out. then i'd buy new ones and wear *them* out. even today i can sing ever note, every drum part, every solo from "st. steven" straight through to "turn on your lovelight." i could play them too. i'd brought my drum set down to school, but my roommates said uh uh we've got to study this  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and so it being the Twang Age and all, i'd gone out and bought my first electric guitar—a single cut-away Les Paul Junior for 50 bucks. it would be worth around 500 now. i got the money working part-time at an antique shop called airflow junk, the owner paying me \$10 a day under the table, unless he was high. then he would ask "have i paid you yet?" and i'd say "no." this would happen 2 or 3 times on a good day.

now, i would spend hours noodling along with their tunes especially the ones on the live album til i got the licks right, and was very impressed that a band of known drug abusers could play a song in 11/8 time and more or less come down on the 1 together. the music was only a simple major scale—book 1 page 1 lesson 1, but to me that was the beauty of it! so imagine my excitement when i opened the cleveland plain dealer's friday magazine and saw that for one night and one night only belking bros. proudly presenting in their first area appearance... the grateful dead.

on d-day, 7 or 8 of us cut classes, piled into my vw, drove the 30 miles from kent to cleveland, coped with a flat tire not spare and ran out of gas twice. see, my bug's 'fuel delivery system' had a hole in it and could only take an 8th of a tank at a time no gas gauge either. but we had anticipated all this. we'd left 6 hours before showtime so we *could* get lost. we had the proper amount of controlled substances in our bloodstreams. we knew there was a long journey ahead of us... after all, this was the dead! so there would be adventures built in and ordeals to endure and little trials and challenges to experience and that we could and would triumph because when it came right down to it we knew this one shining truth—we were immune! nothing could stop us.

and so of course we found a parking space right in front of public hall—proof! and so of course we bumped into the rest of the kent contingent in the lobby—more proof! and oohhh the stage was ssssssoooooo beautiful

could you believe all that equipment? they'd replaced the stock speaker cabinet grill cloth of their guitar amplifiers with tie-dye! even the p.a. stacks were tie-dye! even... hey! there they are! even the *band* was in tie-dye! ...and jumping like a willy's in a 4-wheel drive.

but good as it was, it was not good enough. i had to get closer closer i wanted to be the music not watch it it seemed so phony so square this arbitrary 4th wall concept separating 'band on stage' from 'people in audience' weren't we all one? and didn't we lose so much with the artificial divisions we were forced forced! to live with dictated mind you dictated! by a straight society who didn't know they just didn't know.

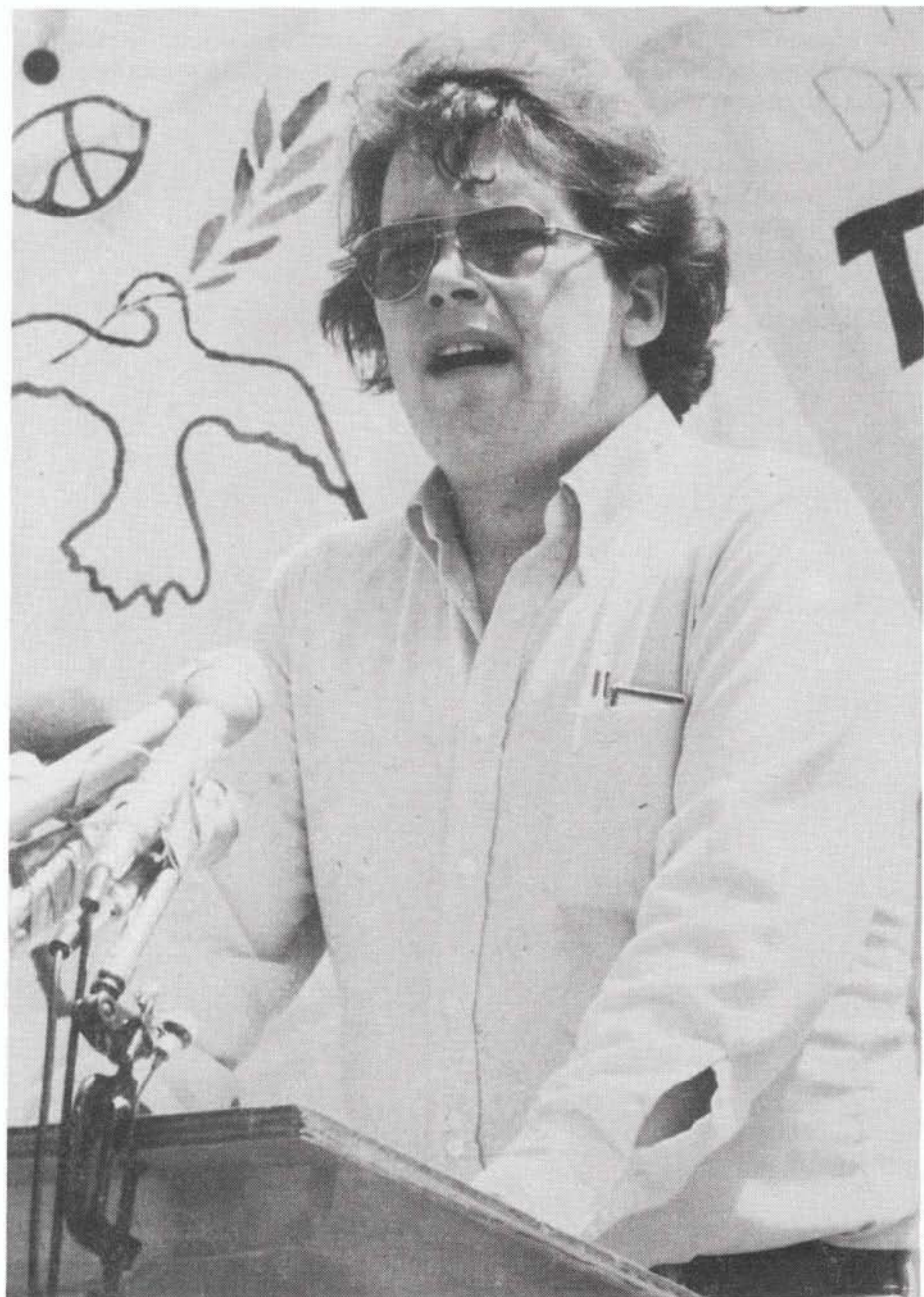
the hell's angels who had been hired as concert security had all gone to take a collective leak or gang rape or hippette or something and magic magic magic of magics there was an open door right by the stage no one was watching it the band had drifted into "dark star" and they had fired a spotlight at the cut glass mirrored ball and pinpoints of light careened around the hall fast at first and then slowly slowed down and then aahhhh actually went the *other way* and no one else had seen the unguarded door but me it was for me there are no accidents. a path had been cleared and it was my duty and destiny to take it. so in i went and the next thing i knew i was in the wings on the stage and oh it was wonderful and this beautiful lady said hi to me and it was Mountain Girl! *the Mountain Girl!* a real merry prankster and she smiled at me and asked if i wanted a beer and i said yes and she showed me a whole wash tub a whole wash tub! of iced coors and i had one of the *band's* beers! and then i had a few more and then i heard the unmistakable opening lines to "st. stephen" the patron saint of hungary i am half hungarian it was no accident there are no accidents and off we went and i knew the rumors must be true that owsley had really brewed up a batch of his finest and had put it in a mason jar and before each show garcia would *dip* his finger in it it's true i was there it sounded like it anyway and i was it and i sang along and danced and we worked it ~~we~~ that's right we! we worked through the whole 2 sides of the album and i was the band the band was me and pigpen lurched into "lovelight" and i sang along and then i grabbed 2 empty beer cans and i started playing when the percussion breaks came right on cue i knew where they were i was on jerry's side of the stage that wonderful face so deep lined and wise with that wonderful beatific look of pure knowing and i sang louder and banged the cans harder and that wonderful face and its halo of hair slowly took forever drifted floated over to me to me and he was no more than a foot away i could smell the seat and the reefer smoke on him and from out of that wonderful mouth and those twinkling eyes came at the top of his lungs WILL YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP YOU FUCKING ASSHOLE!!!!

I sold my guitar back to the guy i'd bought it from for thirty-five dollars and lent my drums to my friend Jeff Miller. He didn't get to play them much. Three weeks later he was shot and killed by the Ohio National Guard.

*The image has cross-faded during the last paragraph to the picture of Jeff in a cowboy shirt and headband giving the finger to the National Guard. I sing the chorus one last time:*

when I see a mountain... I see ammunition  
when I see a mountain... I see ammunition  
beggar's bullets flying  
through your televisions

*The image fades to black. The world has changed forever.*



John Rowe addresses a crowd during the May 4, 1980 commemorative program. Rowe provided most of the photographs for this volume, allowing us to select them from his extensive collection documenting activism at Kent State.

# **The Big Chill: The Stifling Effect of the Official Response to the Kent State Killings**

**Bill Whitaker**

*against perception so solidly in place  
it is all but useless to assert anything  
so subversive as fact.*  
—Lewis Lapham

The official version of the events of May 4, 1970, were contained in the report of the Special Grand Jury issued on October 16, 1970, on behalf of the State of Ohio. The Report also indicted twenty-five people, including students and one faculty member, and completely exonerated the State and National Guard for the consequences of their actions. The Report played to public perceptions, was orchestrated to further solidify those perceptions, and was completely unencumbered by fact. The most startling example of the State's refusal to deal with the truth is that the Grand Jury, despite making seventy findings, did not find, acknowledge, or even mention that four students had been shot and killed and that nine others had been wounded.

The manipulation of public perceptions was not new then and has since, of course, been raised to an art form. What makes the successful manipulation of perceptions in 1970 most insidious, however, is the fact that it in effect condoned the murder of those engaged in dissent, condoned the criminal persecution of the survivors, and created an immediate chilling effect on the exercise of fundamental Constitutional rights which continues to this day.

Although two credible investigative bodies produced reports more consistent with the facts, i.e., that the shootings were unjustified, unwarranted, and inexcusable criminal acts, their effect on public perceptions was carefully minimized. The first report prepared by the FBI was sealed from the public and never published, except for a short summary which was leaked to the press. The second report, prepared by the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, chaired by William Scranton and hereafter referred to as the Scranton Commission, was released to the media and thus the public in two carefully thought-out stages. The main body of the report, which contained general nice-sounding findings about student dissent

without conclusions or accusations, was initially released at a press conference amid great fanfare. The findings about Jackson State and Kent State were released in two separate reports at later dates after Mr. Scranton and other Commission members had left town and were unavailable to the press. At the time one commentator, I.F. Stone, made a remarkably accurate prediction. Commenting on the fact that the Scranton Commission Report honestly and thoroughly showed that the killings were unjustified and unnecessary, he went on to say:

*And yet there is not the slightest chance that anything will be done about it. The Chairman of the Commission William Scranton will turn up at the White House one of these days to be photographed with the President, an innocuous statement will issue from the White House, and that will be the end of the finding.<sup>1</sup>*

As it turns out there were photographs with the President; and innocuous statement was issued, and twenty years later *absolutely nothing has been done about it.*

It was against this background that the official story emerged from the Special Grand Jury in Portage County, Ohio. The extent of the distortions and the viciousness with which the Grand Jury reported them is as startling today as it was twenty years ago. A review of the official story and its effect is in order.

The main purpose of the report appears to have been the complete exoneration of the National Guard, thus clearing Governor James Rhodes and other State officials responsible for permitting the troops to commit murder. The report's central conclusion:

We find however that those members of the National Guard who were present on the hill adjacent to Taylor Hall on May 4th fired their weapons in the honest and sincere belief and under circumstances which would have logically caused them to believe that they would suffer serious bodily injury had they not done so.

They are not, therefore, subject to criminal prosecution under the law of this State for any death or injury resulting therefrom.

This most complete exoneration was in direct contradiction to the Scranton Commission's Report, the FBI's Report, and all available evidence. The Scranton Commission found unequivocally that "the indiscriminate firing of rifles into a crowd of students and the deaths that followed were unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable." The FBI found that "six Guardsmen, including two sergeants and Captain Srp of Troop G stated pointedly that the lives of the Guardsmen were not in danger and that it was not a shooting situation." The FBI report which was available to the prosecuting official running the Grand Jury also noted: "We have some

reason to believe that the claims by the National Guard that their lives were endangered by the students was fabricated subsequent to the event."

The Grand Jury went on to support its conclusion with "facts." That "58 Guardsmen were injured by rocks and other subjects," that the Guardsmen were "surrounded by several hundred hostile rioters," and that 200 bricks taken from a nearby construction site were used. The FBI, after interviewing every Guardsman and checking all the medical records, found that only one Guardsman, Lawrence Shaffer, was injured on May 4, 1970, seriously enough to require any kind of medical treatment. That injury occurred ten to fifteen minutes before the shooting (and apparently did not hinder the said Mr. Shaffer when he shot Joseph Lewis shortly thereafter because, according to Mr. Shaffer, Mr. Lewis, who had nothing in his hands, gave him the finger). Photographs, the Scranton Report, the FBI Report, and every other study of the May 4 shooting established that the Guard was not surrounded at any time.<sup>2</sup> No bricks were ever found on the Commons or on the hill that day.

That the Grand Jury so flagrantly distorted facts and exonerated the Guard should not have been surprising. The Grand Jury was called for by Governor Rhodes and he appointed his good friend and political associate, Attorney General Paul Brown to direct and supervise the grand Jury. Paul Brown then hired as Special Assistant Prosecutors for the Grand Jury, the Chairman of the Portage County Republican Party, Seabury Ford, and another close friend, Robert Balyeat. The local Republican Judge, Edwin Jones, presided and gave the Grand Jurors their instructions. Although most jurors were selected randomly, Judge Jones and Prosecutor Balyeat handpicked the Grand Jury Foreman, a Mr. Robert Hastings who was a former client of both men. The tenor and tone of the direction the Grand Jury received was revealed in an interview given by Seabury Ford to a reporter for the *Detroit Free Press*, William Schmidt. The interview was published in both the *Free Press* and the *Akron Beacon Journal*. Mr. Ford stated, "They should have shot all the troublemakers," and he asked, "Why didn't the Guard shoot ore of them?" He went on to justify it all with what he perceived to be brilliant logic: "The point about the shooting is, it stopped the riot—you can't argue with that. It just stopped it flat."

Many of the falsehoods contained in the Grand Jury Report are obviously deliberate, beginning with the preface which was designed to influence public perceptions about the fairness of the Report. The Grand Jury claimed that it had available the FBI Investigative Report, and that the report was examined in detail. The truth, as one of the prosecutors later testified under oath, was that the prosecutors did not show the FBI report to the Grand Jury. The Grand Jury also claimed that the witnesses called had "fairly represented every aspect, attitude, and point of view concerning the events" and further claimed that this "clearly indicated an effort at complete impartial-

ity with a full and complete disclosure of all available evidence.” In fact, the Grand Jury failed to call the Commander of one of the units that fired the fatal shots. The Commander was one of those who had told the FBI pointedly that the lives of the members of the National Guard were not in danger and that it was not a shooting situation. There were also many other witnesses in a position to provide objective information about the shootings that were not called.

The Grand Jury found it somehow probative to write: “It is obvious that if the order to disperse had been heeded, there would not have been the consequences of that fatal day.” It did not explore the fundamental question of by whom and by what authority the prohibition against the exercise of Constitutional rights was issued. It appears from all reports that the prohibition and the subsequent order to disperse was issued by the National Guard even though there was no declaration of martial law. By what authority is another question. The State attempted, after the fact, to give the Guard such authority by claiming that a proclamation issued April 29, 1970, empowering the Guard to act against a Teamsters’ strike, provided the authority. That proclamation, however, did not mention Portage Country, Kent, or the University. It read:

Whereas, in Northeast Ohio particularly in the Counties of Cuyahoga, Mahoning, Summit and Lorain, and in other parts of Ohio in particular Richland, Butler, and Hamilton Counties, there exists unlawful assemblies and roving bodies of men acting with intent to commit felonies and do violence to persons or property in disregard of the laws of the State of Ohio and of the United States of America.

... The Commanding Officer of any organization of such militia, is authorized and ordered to take action necessary for the restoration of order throughout the State of Ohio.

That order was amended on *May 5, 1970*, to include Kent and Kent State University.

Obviously, there was no authority permitting the military to prohibit the exercise of Constitutional rights. The significance of this issue is that Constitutional law and fundamental Democratic principle clearly forbid the military from usurping civilian authority. On May 4, there had been an absolute abdication of civilian authority and Kent became “a model of exactly the kind of military suppression of civil disorders that the historical principle of due process forbids.”<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the clear violation of due process under color of State law, and notwithstanding the clear violation of State and Federal law, all of which resulted in the direct deprivation of the most sacred of all Constitutional rights—the right to life—the perpetrators remain today untouched by the criminal justice system. The Grand Jury Report exonerating the Guard

carried the day and the Justice Department, following the State's lead, declined to present any violations of federal law to a federal grand jury.

The State Grand Jury was not content to merely exonerate the Guard in its deliverance of the official story. It felt the need to lay the blame and further chill the exercise of First Amendment freedoms. The manner in which the blame was cast as well as the fact that most of the observations were not supported by fact says much about the mindset of those directing the process. The report found many to blame:

Those who were present as cheerleaders and onlookers, while not liable for criminal acts, must morally assume a part of the responsibility for what occurred.... protesters...engaged in their usual obscenities, rock throwing, and other disorderly conduct.... [Those who when ordered to disperse on May 4th] quickly degenerated into a riotous mob.... [A group of] intellectual and social [misfits called the Yippies].

The Grand Jury was clearly affected by matters of lifestyle. In noting that epithets came from male and female rioters alike, the Grand Jurors found it "hard to accept the fact that the language of the gutter has become the common vernacular of many persons posing as students in search of higher education."

In an attempt to profoundly and adversely effect change in the manner in which a university is run, the Grand Jury cast much of the blame on the administration and the faculty. In attacking the administration the report stated:

The administration at Kent State University has fostered an attitude of laxity, over-indulgence, and permissiveness with its students and faculty to the extent that it can no longer regulate the activities of either and is particularly vulnerable to any pressure applied from radical elements within the student body or faculty.

The Grand Jury made this finding despite the fact that the University in April of 1969 had banned SDS from campus, expelled most of its members, initiated prosecutions which resulted in four of its leaders spending six months in Portage County Jail, and one of its leaders being sentenced to prison. As the FBI Report noted, the University had experienced no problems with student unrest since that time. What the Grand Jury was suggesting to the University remains unclear (assuming Seabury Ford was not positing their solution in his interview in which he also suggested that "this country won't simmer down until the police have orders to shoot to kill") but the threat of draconian penalties was obviously implied. The attack on unspecified members of the faculty was particularly chilling: "The faculty members to whom we refer teach nothing but the negative side of our institutions of government and refuse to acknowledge that any positive good has resulted during the growth of our nation." The Grand Jury also accused the faculty

of attempting to inflame their students in the hopes of inciting unrest. As one of the twenty-five indicted was a faculty member, and as the charge against him was inciting to riot, the message was clear: such behavior on the part of the faculty would not be tolerated.

The immediate power of the Grand Jury was the threat to send twenty-five people to prison. For nearly a year the lives of a group of people called collectively the "Kent 25" were disrupted by this very real threat (given the atmosphere at the Portage County Courthouse the judges, who must be elected, were not about to consider probation). The uncertainty of the future, the difficult and all-consuming task of preparing the defense, and the disgrace and ridicule many felt created an enormous and often psychologically damaging burden. It was later revealed, after this punishment was inflicted, that, as with the rest of the Grand Jury Report, the indictments were not based upon fact.

By the time the trials began a new prosecution team had been installed. The Republican administration had been defeated in the fall of 1970, and the new Governor and Attorney General appointed three new special prosecutors. In order for the new prosecutors to prepare for trial, they needed to read the transcript of the Grand Jury's proceedings, including the testimony of the witnesses. Upon completion of that reading the new prosecutors realized that there was not a shred of factual evidence to support the charges. That fact, however, did not dissuade these folks from attempting to obtain convictions.

The prosecution team devised a strategy by which they would begin the trials with their strongest cases involving the most serious charges. They had hoped these early cases would result in such severe sentences that the remaining defendants would, out of fear, negotiate pleas for lesser sentences. The plan did not work. Under the expert guidance of attorneys Benjamin Sheerer of Cleveland and David Scribner from the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York, a thorough and effective defense was prepared.

The prosecutors chose the case of Jerry Rupe to begin the trials. They chose Mr. Rupe, a former student, because he was charged with arson in the burning of the ROTC building on May 2, 1970—a crime sure to incite the passions of the jury—and, more importantly, because Mr. Rupe had been convicted of selling marijuana—a fact that they were sure would cause the jury to convict regardless of the evidence. Their strongest case, however, did not result in the necessary conviction; the jury was hung, the felony charges dismissed. The second case, also an arson charge, had to be dismissed when the only prosecution witness testified that he was not sure the defendant was the man he had seen at the ROTC building on May 2. This witness later explained that he had been attempting to tell the prosecutors since the time of his testimony before the Grand Jury that he could not

identify the defendant, but no one would listen. The third, and what would be the final trial was so weak that the Court had to direct a verdict of acquittal. With defense lawyers Jim Hogle and George Martin (who had also tried the *Rupe* case) still seated at the counsel table the chief prosecutor rose and stated that he wanted short recess because he had an announcement to make. A short while later he told the Court that there was no evidence to support the charges against the remaining defendants and he requested that they all be dismissed. The motion was granted.

The Grand Jury Report itself ultimately went down in flames—literally. A lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court in Cleveland on behalf of the Kent 25, various faculty members, and others who might suffer from the chilling effect of the report. In *Hammond v. Brown*,<sup>4</sup> Judge William K. Thomas ordered that the Report be expunged from the County files and publicly burned although he recognized that the Report had already begun to take its intended effect.

Judge Thomas ordered the Report expunged and destroyed for several reasons. First, he found that it was illegal under State law and that the Grand Jury had no authority whatsoever to issue a report. Second, he found that the Report's continued existence "irreparably injure[d] the right of each of the accused indicted to fair trial, protected by the Due Process clause." Finally, he found that

A report of the Special Grand Jury, an official accusatory body of the community, that criticizes faculty members for "over-emphasis on dissent," thus seeking to impose norms of "behavior and expression," restricts and interferes with the faculty members' exercise of protected expression.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, after many days of testimony the Court found that the interference and restriction was already happening and found that it was happening because of the Report:

Because of the Report instructors have altered or dropped course materials for fear of classroom controversy. For example, an assistant professor of English, after reading the Report, "scratched three poems" from her outline in her Introduction to Poetry course. The poems are "Politics" by William Butler Yeats, "Prometheus" by Lord Byron, and "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold.

In "Politics," Yeats writes "And maybe what they say is true/ of war and war's alarms."

A university professor may add or subtract course content for different reasons. But when a university professor is fearful that "war's alarm," a poet's concern, may produce "inflammatory discussion" in a poetry class, it is evident that the Report's riptide is washing away protected expression on the Kent campus.

Other evidence cumulatively shows that this teacher's reaction was not isolated. The Report is dulling classroom discussion and is upsetting the teaching atmosphere. The effect was described by other faculty witnesses. When thought is controlled, when pedagogues and pupils shrink from free inquiry at a state university because of a report of a resident Grand Jury, then academic freedom of expression is impermissibly impaired.<sup>6</sup>

The combination of the exoneration of those who were responsible for the shooting and killing of students, the charging of innocent students and faculty with criminal acts, and the thinly veiled threats against the University community by the only official body with the power to take action which published a report on the May 4 tragedy, clearly had an enormously chilling effect on a variety of freedoms protected by the First Amendment. There is much evidence that the effect of the "washing away of protected expression" continues today. The "dulling of classroom discussion" and the upsetting of the University atmosphere was, as the Court noted, irreparable.

The Scranton Commission in commenting on the years of unrest immediately proceeding the tragedies at Kent and Jackson State, noted that "It is not so much the unrest of the past half dozen years that is exceptional as it is the quiet of the twenty years which preceded them." Equally exceptional but not as surprising in light of the official response is the twenty years of quiet that followed.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I.F. Stone, *The Killings at Kent State* (New York: New York Review Book) 1971: 15. Emphasis in the original.
- <sup>2</sup> An excellent analysis of the evidence is provided by Peter Davies in his book *The Truth About Kent State A Challenge to the American Conscience* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux) 1973.
- <sup>3</sup> David E. Engdall, "The Legal Background and Aftermath of the Kent State Tragedy," *Cleveland Law Review* 3.22 (1973).
- <sup>4</sup> 323 F. Supp 326 (1971)
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 349.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 350.

# Kent State: What You Still Don't Know

Galen Lewis

While the media gears up for the twentieth anniversary of the Kent State shootings, those of us who are still interested in the subject can expect to be awash again in the same old photos and rhetoric. There will be the officer in the jeep with the bullhorn, a line of troops moving up Blanket Hill in a mist of tear gas, a girl weeping over a lifeless body. These images, though redundant, are important both as reminders of the senseless tragedies wrought by senseless policies and as a history lesson for those people too young to remember 1970 and what it meant to the life of a nation.

As pure history, Kent State is well documented. There are hundreds of photos and thousands of pages of eyewitness accounts, official logs, evidence lists and court testimony. As political and legal history, Kent State is a miasma of manipulation and deception to which the media was a naive, if not willing, accessory after the fact. The most important questions about Kent State were never closely examined by the media, which instead chose to accept the official line about what happened. Kent State was a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle with all the major figures filled in and only the background missing. For most, that was enough.

There have been a few individuals who have looked at the unanswered questions about Kent State, but they have rarely pursued the answers with vigor. There are some good reasons for investigators to become discouraged. The official record is voluminous. A large part of the most crucial body of evidence was never made public because it was obtained through the grand jury process. Attorneys for the governor, the university and the guard successfully filed motion after motion to keep this material out of the public record.

Boxes of federal grand jury materials were turned over to attorneys for the dead and the wounded students *after the trial had begun*. The judge in the first civil trial had ordered that the plaintiff's legal team be able to see the material, but it arrived so late in the proceedings that members of the legal team were forced to stay up all night, for many nights, reading the material and then appear in court the next day to carry on with very little sleep. After reading the material, it was obvious to the plaintiffs why the attorneys for the defendants had waited until the last possible moment to turn it over. As it turned out, the late nights and hard work were negated when all attempts to introduce the material in open court were stymied by the judge and opposing attorneys.

The legal team for the plaintiffs encountered similar problems with material contained in the state grand jury files. A comic note was added when a very frazzled, middle-aged Portage County clerk arrived in the doorway of a courthouse meeting room, panic in her eyes, clutching an armload of papers to her bosom. A portly gentleman had to coax her into letting plaintiff representatives have the papers. He reassured her that they were required by law to release the files while he pried her fingers from the bundle.

These materials contained the full record of the grand jury, including testimony notes, deliberations, evidence lists and written and phone communications. Plaintiffs' legal team were permitted to view the materials, take notes and then leave. It was their understanding that sometime after they left the courthouse, the materials were destroyed. While they were never able to confirm the fact, to anyone viewing the record it would have been obvious why certain individuals would want it destroyed.

Just exactly what questions could be answered if all the facts about Kent State had been made public? Among them would be the following: Was there an order to fire? Who gave the order? Was the burning of the ROTC building planned by officials or was it a spontaneous act carried out by rampaging students? What were the numbers of agents and the extent of undercover activity on and around the Kent State campus during those crucial four days in May? Was there a conspiracy on the part of some national guardsmen to cover up what happened on the day of the shootings?

The most important unanswered question of all: If Kent State was an event important enough to be discussed in school books, commemorated by thousands and remembered by millions, why hasn't there been a serious effort on the part of the media to establish once and for all what really happened on May 4?

Those of us who tried to establish the truth in the courts failed—or was it that the courts failed us? It is a peculiar feeling for an admirer of the Constitution to experience the legal system as an adversary rather than an avenue for the truth, or to consider the media from a post-Watergate perspective—as dupes for the official line. But the courts, the media, and the public of 1990 are more cynical and suspicious than they were in 1970. We've come a long way—maybe.

Paramilitary operations on U.S. college campuses, while unheard of at one time, seem more plausible now. Officials using legal and extra-legal means to suppress the truth about their actions have become common place. Journalistic dismissal of official versions of events in favor of independent reconstructions have become a necessity.

I've seen reference of late to the "two histories" of our country. There is the official, sanitized history which our children read about in their textbooks and then there is the true history of secret government opera-

tions, cover-ups, conspiracies, classified documents, and public lies. Frances Fitzgerald, in writing about Iran-Contra and the trial of Oliver North, makes reference to the new "modernist drama," in which, like "Einstein's universe, the simple, old-fashioned questions cannot be answered directly, and the most serious questions have jokes for answers." Perhaps Kent State was the first of a genre.



Activists from all over the country rally at Kent State on August 20, 1977, to support the memorial effort. Photo © by John P. Rowe.

# **“Mediated Reality” of Kent State: The Friction Between Fact and Fiction**

**J. Gregory Payne**

One of the major themes of a book I published ten years after the shootings on May 4, 1970, *Mayday: Kent State*, was the belief that a decade, and the culmination of the legal battles, would provide the needed perspective for a less passionate assessment of the shootings and the people that it touched. Thus, in 1990, as we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of an event that signaled the beginning of the end to America's involvement in the Vietnam war, one could assume that such a twenty year vantage point would provide the opportunity to finally piece together an accurate, factual and widely accepted answer to the public and journalists overriding concern for who, what, when, where and why.

Yet a review of the large body of information dealing with the Kent State shootings reveals divergent and conflicting explanations of responsibility, culpability, accountability and significance even after twenty years of careful and exhaustive study. The sole point of agreement seems to lie in the assertion that, to an entire generation, Kent State is a beacon whose bright, troublesome beam still continues to serve as a marker of divisiveness, mistrust, and a failure in ethical and moral leadership.

An indication of the lasting impact of the Kent State shootings, and of the eventual settlement on an accepted history, is NBC's February, 1981 docudrama *Kent State*. Even with its disappointing audience share, the docudrama reached over eighteen million people. Nationally broadcast one year later, *Kent State* is available for rental on videocassette worldwide. With the relatively short life cycle of printed books, and the small audience interested in scholarly articles and research, the docudrama is easily the most dominant “mediated reality” of the May 1970 events at Kent State.

Viewers tend to regard *Kent State* as historically accurate, and not affected by dramatic embellishment. Given television's dominance as a popular culture medium, and its major impact in melding the public's perceptions of current and past events, further study of the *Kent State* docudrama is warranted in the attempt to assess the production's actual historical accuracy and the decisions which influenced the creation of the final product. Employing a method similar to that used by Louis Cusella in his enlightening critique of the movie, this essay offers an empirical assessment of the *Kent State* production<sup>1</sup>.

## The Docudrama Genre

Today, due to its pervasive impact on the inculcation of values, norms and beliefs, and its ability to shape not only our present and future but to define and modify our perception of the past, television has been called America's new religion.<sup>2</sup> Americans, who average seven hours of daily telecommunion, now have a mediated reality based on television, rather than a world view derived from diverse sources. Hence, television plays a significant role in defining our nation's frame of reference. Describing the distinct characteristics of the television medium, Gerbner and Connolly write:

Television requires no mobility... television does not require literacy. Unlike print, it provides information about the world to the poorly educated and the illiterate. In fact, for those who do not read (by choice or inability), television is a major source of information, much of which comes from what is called entertainment. Television is unique in all history. There is little age-grading of the symbolic materials that socialize members into community. Television tells its stories to people of all age groups at the same time. Television presents its message, and, most importantly, unlike books, movies, etc., most people use television *nonselectively*.<sup>3</sup>

### Docudrama: Fact/Fiction?

*The most important thing in doing any historical piece like a piece on Kent State is being accountable: accountable to the friends and parents, to the facts themselves. People should be forced to look facts in the face to prevent events like Kent from happening in the future. The audience should never be able to say, "That's Hollywood." It should make them think.*

—Mary Dollarhide, actress in the theatrical production *Kent State: A Requiem*<sup>4</sup>

Docudrama often adopts a historical plot and theme but employs dramatic license in various modes to enhance the viewer's interest.<sup>5</sup> Acknowledging this mode to have been popular with Shakespeare, Dickens, Steinbeck, and others aiming to entertain as well as to highlight perceived injustices of their time, *Boston Globe* columnist Jack Thomas nonetheless views the television docudrama format as problematic:

Docudramas have the potential to educate as well as to entertain but they also represent a threat to truth because viewers have no way of knowing where documentary ends and dramatization begins.... Of all the indignities heaped upon us by television, none is more dangerous than the business of re-staging the past, of blurring fact and fiction so that we lose our sense of what is true and what is not.<sup>6</sup>

This perspective is not shared by all television critics. *USA Today's* Ben Brown concludes that no one "has an exclusive claim on 'the truth,'" and

maintains there are always "more sources...more angles...more ways to look at the same set of circumstances." Recapitulating similar attacks in the past by "reality guardians," Brown writes:

Should we measure Monet's lily pads by the standards of botanical photography? ...the same people who are screaming for an end to "docudrama" are in even more dangerous territory. Afraid that we're not capable of being good media consumers, they want to license truth-tellers. Journalists get a membership card; artists need not apply.<sup>7</sup>

To what extent can television historically portray an event if dramatic license is favored by directors, producers, writers, and network executives solely to enhance advertising profits by keeping the viewers entertained? The widespread dependence on the television medium for entertainment and information suggests that there are ethical considerations facing today's docudramatist, especially in light of the findings of Elihu Katz on the impact of the medium's mediated reality: "In effect the media event as it actually happens is less important than the event as represented by television. The broadcast is what the mass media audience reacts to—not what actually takes place."<sup>8</sup>

What were the definitions, expectations, and responsibilities of the docudrama format among those involved in "Kent State?" How did these differ from those outlined in the academic critiques of the movie by agents removed from the production process? What were the strengths and limitations of this format? Four critiques of the film offer insights into these important areas of concern.

In his analysis of *Kent State*, Cusella identifies "information constraints...that face every television docudrama," due to the "very nature of the form."<sup>9</sup> Such limitations require the docudramatist to make choices. In *Kent State*, he argues, the result of such decision making was a rhetorical purgation to "correct, refine, and cleanse the image of the four students who were killed."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he describes the limitations of the docudrama format, and offers his overall evaluation of the production: "*Kent State* may be classified...as real fiction because the historical event and the characters never can be depicted with the breadth and depth or detail in which they emerged and can never be totally susceptible to empirical verification."<sup>11</sup>

John David, in a comparative critique of the television docudrama and the stage production *Kent State: A Requiem*, concludes that the play was more "historically accurate" and "dramatically powerful."<sup>12</sup> Yet he praises a commercial network's attempt to reach millions with a "film based on a subject that still elicits very strong responses from both sides of the political spectrum." Like Cusella, David comments on the constraints and dominant influence of the television medium.

The “cathartic” objective identified by Cusella and the “significance of the event” rationale discussed by David are recognized by D. Ray Heisey and Carl M. Moore as only two of the possible intents or purposes of the docudramatist.<sup>13</sup> In addressing the genre in general and the *Kent State* film in particular, Heisey and Moore strongly assert the claim for a purely factual approach to the presentation of history, especially if the work is advertised as the “truth.” They suggest the following eight steps will satisfy the “burden of truth” for docudrama:

- 1) Not omitting significant materials.
- 2) Not adding untrue material.
- 3) Not embellishing.
- 4) Avoiding methodological errors.
- 5) Acknowledging production constraints.
- 6) Verifying realities included.
- 7) Seeking alternate interpretations.
- 8) Acknowledging the rationale for inclusion and exclusion.<sup>14</sup>

In applying these prerequisites to *Kent State*, Heisey and Moore conclude the film failed to meet the “burden of truth.”

Jerry M. Lewis, in his critique of *Kent State*, argues the docudrama format makes “special truth claims that need to be rigorously evaluated.” Classifying *Kent State* as a “panoramic docudrama,” which he defines as combining the “documentary format with drama by placing composite or totally fictional characters in real events,” Lewis summarizes the crucial concerns of the critic: “In docudrama the analyst must evaluate not only the film’s dramatic qualities but the accuracy of the factual aspects of the film as well.”<sup>15</sup> Judging the film to be “visually accurate” and “chronologically correct,” Lewis, nonetheless, concurs with Heisey and Moore that *Kent State* is flawed by “factual errors” which seriously challenge its validity.<sup>16</sup>

## **DocuDRAMA or DOCUdrama: Whose View Will Dominate?**

*A nation is the creation of its historians, formal and informal.*  
—Kenneth Boulding<sup>17</sup>

*How much do we see on television that really raises our conscience?  
Today’s television tries to trivialize anything in its path.*  
—Norman Lear<sup>18</sup>

The period since the airing of *Kent State* and the publication of the book in February, 1981, and reviews of the movie have crystalized some important philosophical debates on docudrama, specifically among principals involved in the production, and those authors of scholarly critiques of the

movie. These widely divergent and opposing viewpoints are in keeping with the general confusion surrounding the making of *Kent State*.

I served as the historical consultant to NBC's *Kent State*, and as a principal source for the movie, and I can thus afford some insight into the various historical-dramatic conflicts precipitated by the docudrama format.

From the initial meeting with Max and Micheline Keller, executive producers of the film, it was apparent that our views coincided on the goals of *Kent State*. The docudrama format should be similar to the initial approach of the first great filmmaker, Lumiere: to tell a story based on the fact without dramatic embellishment.<sup>19</sup> The author's concern, shared by parents of the dead and wounded students, as well as many other researchers, met Heisey and Moore's "burden of truth:" the movie should follow a historically accurate storyline and theme. It should rely on more credible accounts of the 1970 incident than the announced principal source, James A. Michener's *Kent State: What Happened and Why*.<sup>20</sup> The Michener account had been the selling point for the networks, but was widely assailed for inaccuracies and the author's proclivity to employ literary license.<sup>21</sup> The Keller's support of a historically accurate presentation guaranteed that more credible accounts and additional substantive information would be provided to Gerald Green during his initial script writing period.<sup>22</sup> Thus, from the onset the attempt was made to satisfy Heisey and Moore's requisites, to present "alternative interpretations of events, characters, and messages... to allow the 'truth' to be challenged and tested by alternative accounts... to guard against any embellishments."<sup>23</sup>

*Facts are not as important as dramatic impact.*

—production member of *Kent State*<sup>24</sup>

Director Jim Goldstone and executive producer Phillip Barry held a view of docudrama which contrasted with the Kellers and my own. The discussions held, and decisions made throughout the project revealed that they favored a generally accurate story line but reserved the right to exercise varying degrees of dramatic license to ensure the project was entertaining. This approach echoed the sentiments of another great pioneer in film: Melies, who opposed the strict realist approach of Lumiere and opted for artistic imagination in his films.<sup>25</sup> They downplayed the following areas of importance, which were deemed crucial by the historical consultant to *Kent State*:

- 1) The need for substantiation and verification of facts through cross-referencing of sources.
- 2) The overriding importance of historically significant events even if they interfered with the production's overall dramatic theme.
- 3) The need to adequately establish the historical and political context of the tragic event.

- 4) The problems which composite individuals cause by altering the historical reality presented to the viewing audience.<sup>26</sup>

Goldstone maintained that artistic license allowed directors of docudrama to take the necessary liberties to enhance, dramatize, and compress the message in order that it be intriguing to the viewer.

*The story-line should be focused on the romance of Allison Krause and her boyfriend with the shootings and events as background context.*

—Dennis Consadine, NBC movie executive<sup>27</sup>

NBC's input also reflected divergent perspectives on docudrama. Consadine favored making the film a backdrop for a romantic episode involving one of the victims and her boyfriend as they experienced their last weekend together. Yet other NBC personnel, namely Karen Danaher and Hamilton Cloud of the movie division, strongly supported every effort to emphasize the incident, to gather all the available facts, and to guarantee that the events of May 1-4, 1970, were portrayed accurately and within a meaningful historical context. Concurring with the historical consultant, their goal was to present the facts to the American people, to hopefully increase the understanding and consciousness of an event which had not been satisfactorily resolved or even thoroughly examined by the nation's judicial branch. This outlook, described by John David as "breaking the silence surrounding the Kent tragedy," stressed the necessity of keeping the 1970 events as the film's primary focus, rather than having them serve as a backdrop for a production characterized by fictionalized relationships, composite characters, and misconstrued events<sup>28</sup>.

Those favoring the factual approach recognized the limitations of the medium, as expressed by film critic Richard Meran Barsam:

[C]ontrary to popular belief, the facts do not speak for themselves, especially in the cinema. They require structure and interpretation, elements that reflect the filmmaker's vision.... when we acknowledge that film is an art, we also acknowledge that the purely factual film is something of an impossibility.<sup>29</sup>

The crucial and chronic problem was the question of whose vision would guide the production of *Kent State*, and how closely that perspective would satisfy the burden of truth.

Gerald Green's first script dispelled the belief that *Kent State* would be a whitewash of the facts. The storyline addressed all of the historically significant points. Questions regarding the mysterious ROTC fire were adequately explored. Viewers would be challenged to form their own conclusions about who actually set the fire. Green captured the flavor of the division between the townspeople of Kent and the university

community; he explored the roles various politicians played in precipitating the confrontation.

This first version was rejected by the network: their argument was that Green's script was too political, and lacked meaningful dramatic relationships. Green's script employed dramatic license sparingly; the writer emphasized a story line verified and substantiated through numerous credible sources. With full knowledge of the countless examples of error in the Michener book, the network still favored basing the movie around the work due to the author's commercial appeal.

*It's an outrage to history, to their good names, to put the victims in places where they weren't.*

—Peter Davies<sup>30</sup>

As the release of production money from NBC was contingent upon a general agreement and acceptance of the script among all members of the production team, the Kellers agreed in the spring of 1980 to bring in Richard Kramer for a "dialogue polish." This "polish" was ordered to meet the demands of those who favored a more dramatic and less political script. Assurances were made to the "pro-history" forces that the polish would not result in major deviations from Green's story line. In early July, a revised script was reviewed. Historical accuracy had been sacrificed in favor of an emphasis on interpersonal relationships. Principals were now placed at events that they had not attended. Bill Schroeder and Sandy Scheuer, two of the victims of the Monday shootings, were included in a scene depicting the Friday, May 1 rally on the Commons. In fact, none of the four murdered students had been there. Schroeder, Scheuer, Krause and Miller were also shown watching the ROTC fire when, in reality, some of them were not even on campus at the time. Schroeder had left Kent on Friday night and did not return until late Sunday evening. Even more disconcerting were the rather maudlin portrayals of town and state officials. Had they been just "befuddled" victims of the situation that weekend, as the revised script suggested?

The pro-history faction submitted nineteen single-spaced pages of criticisms, covering everything from inaccurate personal characteristics to entire scenes which were misconceived and unsubstantiated. For example, the screenplay seemed to strongly suggest that "radicals" had started the ROTC fire on May 2. In fact, after years of controversy, there is no proof that they set the blaze. The breakdown in communication among various officials at Kent—city, university and state officers—was another problem the revised script glossed over. Thus, Mayor Satrom's decision to call in the National Guard lacked context.

It was equally disturbing to the pro-history faction that *all* of the national guardsmen were depicted as young and inexperienced in riot control. Many

eighteen-year-olds had joined the guard to avoid going to Vietnam, and there was irony in showing college-age kids pitted against college students. Yet in meeting the burden of truth, the historical interpretation should not imply that it was primarily youthful guardsmen who fired the fatal shots. Evidence from the trials and the FBI report revealed that many of those who turned and fired were older guardsmen who had several years of riot training. Did the guard actually shoot because they panicked, as suggested in the script? Surely many of the guards had been in situations much worse than that which they faced at Kent—Governor Rhodes had called out the National Guard forty times during the period from 1968 to 1970.

Neither did the script meet the burden of truth in replicating the Guard's march. Most of the guardsmen who actually discharged their weapons were members of Troop G. Many of the same men had, moments earlier, knelt on the football field and aimed their rifles at protesters in the Prentice Hall parking lot. As all the soldiers marched back towards the commons, many of the members of Troop G looked back over their right shoulders. The guardsmen ascended Blanket Hill near the pagoda and momentarily disappeared behind the crest of the knoll. Twenty-eight of them spun around 180 degrees, marched back to the hilltop pagoda, and fired at students in the parking lot hundreds of yards away. The guard did not shoot into the larger group of students on the patio in front of Taylor Hall.<sup>31</sup>

The evidence showed the "dialogue polish" to be radically different in approach from the first script. Dramatic license was now characteristic of the project, and there was little emphasis on historical fact. Finally, the script now focused on the love affair between Barry Levine and Allison Krause.

The historical consultant informed the Kellers that an initial letter sent earlier to NBC in support of the accuracy of the Green script would now be refuted by another letter. It would assail the new dramatic approach for a failure to capture the context of, and significant events which took place during, the Kent State shootings, and criticize the dramatic embellishments. Other production team members who had favored the approach represented in Green's script also strongly protested the so-called dialogue polish. Complicating matters was the threat of parents of the dead students to sue to stop production if particular facts were ignored.

The conflict over the script continued throughout the production of the film. Production, publicity, and editing meetings were characterized by heated arguments. Several members of the production team threatened to quit the project unless a more accurate story line was adopted. Discussions, negotiations, and trade-offs were extensive and ongoing, and involved almost every scene in the script.

*It's difficult to understand why the writer who turns history into docudrama insists on making us see things that never were and never bothers to ask themselves why or why not.*

—John Sighthaler<sup>32</sup>

As the production team assembled in Alabama in May in preparation for the shoot, the historical consultant, involved in summer school in California and not privy to the decisions made on location, was summoned to Hollywood and asked to prepare "detailed fact sheets" of the events of May 1-4, 1970. The detailed fact sheets were supposed to aid Richard Kramer's rewrite efforts on location in Alabama. During the process of preparing and sending these documented fact sheets, several tersely worded requests from the director and producer Barry were relayed through the Kellers for further substantiation and documentation *by mail* of the material provided to Kramer. Facts which contradicted the Michener book were of special concern. Clearly, the burden of proof was on the historical consultant to verify his data and research rather than on the dramatic forces to defend their fictionalized account. The only source provided to Kramer in Alabama for the re-writes was the Michener book.

*Come to Alabama, but don't talk to the actors or the writer.*

—Jim Goldstone, director<sup>33</sup>

Confusion reigned on the Alabama set, and in the Hollywood office of Interplanetary Productions. As the production date neared, with the script in complete disarray, the historical consultant was invited to join the production team in Alabama. On location, however, contact between the historical consultant, the writer, actors, and other production personnel was deliberately limited. Formally, all communication among the principals was to be filtered through Goldstone. As a result numerous underground meetings provided the only opportunity to share research materials and slides, to acquaint those interested with various accounts of the event and aftermath. It was clear from these meetings that most of the actors were of the opinion that the movie should concur as closely as possible with the events of the 1970 tragedy. Actors frequently changed the dialogue during the actual filming, offering a more factual interpretation of the event represented.

*The audience should be confused about the ROTC [fire] because no one knows to this day who actually set it. We can't assign blame when history can't verify it.*

—Jeff McCracken, actor<sup>34</sup>

One example of such a troublesome scene was the May 2 ROTC fire. Charles Thomas of the National Archives suggests that outside agent provocateurs might have actually set the ROTC fire. The script insinuates

that the students started the blaze, though the FBI report and other reports failed to identify those responsible.

Some members of the production staff found police ineptitude in the case of the ROTC fire "unbelievable." After the historical consultant provided substantiation for their assertions, dramatic forces countered with the argument that to depict the scene as such would confound the audience.

*What we are doing is all fact... it's not a docudrama.*

—Jim Goldstone, Director<sup>35</sup>

One of the most disturbing elements of the struggle between the two factions was the tendency of the dramatic forces to de-emphasize their own attempt to embellish. During interviews conducted in the editing period, the director and other members of the production team publicly stated that *Kent State* was "all fact." Attempts by the historical consultant to correct this misinterpretation were often met with surprise and verbal reprimands by members of the production team and network. Their argument was that *Kent State* was the first docudrama to have such extensive input from a historical consultant actually on location with the director and production team. Mere presence on the set was employed as a datum to support the argument, ironically waged by the dramatic forces, of the "factual" approach they maintained characterized *Kent State*.<sup>36</sup> The claim of truth, according to one executive, means ten extra rating points.<sup>37</sup>

*Kent State* marked the first time each scene of a final script had been completely annotated using a cross-reference of sources. Given the controversy surrounding the May 4 incident and the numerous interpretations offered to explain that event, NBC's legal department required each scene be substantiated to obtain an errors and omissions insurance policy for the movie. The constant struggle between the pro-history and dramatic forces resulted in the script undergoing eight revisions during the course of the production. The final script comprised 227 pages, with 563 scenes. The annotated script was later included in the NBC press package as proof of the entire film's emphasis on "fact." Absent was an explanation of the intense pressure and ongoing negotiations which resulted in some scenes being substantiated by Michener's work only as a trade-off for more accurate depictions of more crucial events in the movie. There was no discussion of the fact that much of the dramatic material which found its way into the film had done so by way of Michener's publication, and only in the face of heated protests.

Compounding the controversy between factions during the postproduction and editing phases of the project was the change in airdate for the film. In the fall of 1981, as the director attempted to piece together the story from the eight reels of film shot for each scene, the producer was informed that the network would air the movie during February "sweeps

week," rather than on the eleventh anniversary of the incident, as originally planned. The added pressure to produce a final product heightened the number and intensity of conflicts between the pro-history and dramatic forces. So pressed were the director and producer to meet the deadline that the final cut of the movie did not include the recorded musical soundtrack, featuring Grace Slick, Richie Havens, and others.

NBC opted to run a historical docudrama against CBS's television premier of Burt Reynolds in *Hooper*, and ABC's remake of the sensual hit *East of Eden*. NBC's decision meant the network would remind Americans of Kent State only four weeks after Ronald Reagan had been inaugurated president, and at a time when America was celebrating with parades and other patriotic activities the end of the Iran-hostage ordeal.

The controversy and lack of agreement on the goals of production which earmarked the making of *Kent State* also characterized the reviews of the film. Generally, critics accepted the claim of the *New York Times* that the "ambitious and cumulatively powerful" television movie was "factual," and most reviews were favorable.<sup>38</sup> Ohio's largest newspaper, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, concluded: "the flaws were inconsequential compared to the way it showed the political and personal realities which turned an antiwar protest at an obscure Ohio university into a national shame."<sup>39</sup> The *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* judged the film to be a "clean, largely accurate frightening look at the deaths of four students."<sup>40</sup> Those familiar with the controversy surrounding the 1970 incident and its aftermath identified particular inaccuracies, and what one victim's mother termed a lack of "political depth."<sup>41</sup> *Los Angeles Times* columnist Howard Rosenberg blasted the film for deleting the important historical and political context of the event, and the failure to include evidence of possible White House involvement in the tragedy and the alleged cover up of the incident by the Justice Department in the years that followed: "If truth did become a victim of the 1970 Kent State tragedy, as many have charged, the same can be said of Sunday night's three-hour TV movie depicting it."<sup>42</sup>

The confusion evident in the production process was also apparent to some reviewers. Michael Munzel of the *San Francisco Chronicle* described the film as "a fragmentary picture, lots of little things which fail to add up to a whole. It's like looking at a Byzantine mosaic carefully reconstructed from the rubble of an ancient wall—an impression emerges but too many tiles are missing for the image to be clear."<sup>43</sup>

Attacking the profit motive of television and the inherent need to present "dramatic hysteria" to achieve high Nielsen ratings, Daniel Henninger termed the film "moralistic chin-dribble."<sup>44</sup> His review suggested that American television adhere to the principle of "the honest truth" in such film visions. *Newsday* viewed the film as a valuable prod to convince Americans to remember the tragic event but again faulted the film for its "lack of historical context."<sup>45</sup>

Parents and friends of the slain students and those wounded at Kent State identified dramatic liberties evident in the production, but concluded that the final product was "far better than we had anticipated... the film achieves what we had hoped for: a visual recounting of the *Justice Department's Summary of the FBI Investigation*."<sup>46</sup> Mrs. Florence Schroeder, mother of ROTC honor student Bill Schroeder, killed at Kent State, judged the film to "finally show how senseless the murders were. People have called and said they never knew it was like that... Bill was so far away."<sup>47</sup>

Author Peter Davies criticized the film's lack of political depth and its indication that "four young people were so wrongfully killed, *not* that the shooting itself was wrong." Nonetheless, Davies praised the film as an important medium to portray the horror of the event to millions.<sup>48</sup> Dean Kahler and Robbie Stamps, both wounded at Kent State in 1970, concluded the film was cathartic and powerfully effective in presenting the "innocence of the students at the time of the shooting."<sup>49</sup> Upon receiving his Emmy Award for "Outstanding Directing," Jim Goldstone told the viewing audience he accepted the award as a "tribute to the memory of Allison, Jeff, Sandy and Bill, and the terrible injustice that still plagues the Kent State killings."<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

Evidence presented in this paper highlights the diverse viewpoints, expectations and opinions of those directly involved in NBC's *Kent State*. The experiences of the *Kent State* production vividly illustrate the degree and extent of difficulty facing those agents seeking to achieve historical integrity in an inherently dramatic medium. The findings of this essay further highlight the problems facing the critic in the effort "to evaluate not only the film's dramatic qualities but the accuracy of the factual aspects of the film as well."<sup>51</sup>

The task of the critic is compounded by the fact that docudramas such as *Kent State* represent more than just entertainment for the viewing audience. The docudramatist must bear the ultimate responsibility for the fairness and accuracy of these productions. To millions of Americans, NBC's *Kent State* serves as the official public interpretation of the events of May 4, 1970, at Kent State.

It is essential that ethical, judicial, cultural, and political factors remain priorities in the production of docudramas such as *Kent State*. In watching docudramas on such controversial events as the shootings at Kent State, the public frequently performs a neglected forensic function. It serves as judge—rendering the verdict of public opinion on the troublesome historical event. It is on this point that the NBC docudrama factually and dramatically makes a most important contribution to the history of Kent State: it boldly conveys to future generations of viewers the veracity of the

1970 President's Commission finding that the shootings were "unwarranted, unnecessary and inexcusable."<sup>52</sup>

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Louis Cusella, "Real Fiction Versus Historical Reality: Rhetorical Purification in *Kent State—The Docudrama*," *Communication Quarterly* 30.3 (Summer 1982): 159-164. See also J.A. McCall and J.L. Simms, *Issues in Participant Observation* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley) 1969.
- <sup>2</sup> George Gerbner and Kathleen Connolly, "Television as a New Religion," in Michael Emery and Ted Curtis Smythe, eds., *Readings in Mass Communication* (Dubuque: WC Brown) 1980: 21-28.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> Mary Dollardhide, interview with the author, 22 October 1981.
- <sup>5</sup> For a discussion of docudrama see Hoffer and Nelson, "Evolution of Docudrama on American Television Networks," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 45: 149-163. See also Carl H. Moore and D. Ray Heisey, "The Burden of Truth: Historical Accuracy vs. Dramatic License," paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Annual Convention, Anaheim, CA, November 1981, in which the authors assimilate Hoffer and Nelson's modes into the following: verifiable recreations of events and characters; recreation of events with fictional or composite character; recreation of characters with fictional or composite events; and, speculations of what might have happened to real persons or at real events.
- <sup>6</sup> Jack Thomas, *Boston Globe* (9 Feb 1985): 21.
- <sup>7</sup> Ben Brown, *USA Today* (8 Feb 1985): 12a.
- <sup>8</sup> Elihu Katz, "As the World Watches," *Media and Values* 25 (Fall 1983): 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Cusella: 160.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> John David, "From Stage to Celluloid: A Comparative Analysis of Historical Accuracy between *Kent State: A Requiem* and *Kent State*," paper presented at the Speech Communication Association's Annual Convention, Anaheim, CA, November 1981.
- <sup>13</sup> Heisey and Moore: 4.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*: 7.
- <sup>15</sup> Jerry M. Lewis, "*Kent State—The Movie*," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 9 (Spring 1981 and Winter 1982): 16.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Kenneth E. Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3 (1985): 20.
- <sup>18</sup> Norman Lear, keynote speech, "TV and Ethics: Who's Responsible?," Television and Ethics National Conference, sponsored by Emerson College and the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Boston, MA, 6 December 1984.
- <sup>19</sup> In Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, excerpted in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1979: 10-11.
- <sup>20</sup> James A. Michener, *Kent State: What Happened and Why* (New York: Random) 1971.
- <sup>21</sup> Carl M. Moore and D. Ray Heisey, "Not a Great Deal of Error?" unpublished paper, Department of Speech, Kent State University, 1971; Heisey and Moore, "Burden of Truth:" 1-2. In this last article, the authors identify problems with Michener's research: Michener and his aides relied on memory and sketchy notes; persons whose behavior was described at length were never interviewed; direct quotes were attributed to people without authentication; certain "facts" were never verified; inaccurate newspaper stories were used in place of firsthand accounts; Michener modified the interviews provided him by at least one of his own assistants; and, the source of certain information is never properly credited in the work.

- 22 This material included J. Gregory Payne, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Selected Interpretation of the May 1970 Kent State Incident," Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Speech Communication, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1977); Peter Davies, *The Truth About Kent State: A Challenge to the American Conscience* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux) 1973; Thomas Hensley and Jerry Lewis, *Kent State May 4th: A Social Science Perspective* (Dubuque: Kendall Hunt) 1978; Carl Moore and D. Ray Heisey, "Not a Great Deal of Error?"; Scott Bills, *Kent State: Ten Years After* (Kent: Kent Popular Press) 1980; I.F. Stone, *The Killings at Kent State: How Murder Went Unpunished* (New York: New York Review of Books) 1971; Joe Ezsterhas and Michael Roberts, *Thirteen Seconds* (New York: College Notes and Texts) 1970; Phillip Tompkins and E.V. Anderson, *Communication Crisis at Kent State* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers) 1971; John P. Adams, *At the Heart of a Whirlwind* (New York: Harper & Row) 1976; The President's Commission on Campus Unrest (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office) 1970; Ottavio M. Casale and Louis Paskoff, *The Kent Affair* (New York: Houghton Mifflin) 1971; *I Was There* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing) 1974. In addition, articles, microfilms, and other related materials were provided from the "May 4 Archives" at both Kent State University and Yale University. Personal interviews with the following were also transcribed for the historical consultant: Barry Levine; Robbie Stamps; Mr. and Ms. Arthur Krause; Mr. and Ms. Martin Scheuer; Mr. and Ms. Louis Schroeder; Elaine Holstein; Alan Canfora; Chic Canfora; Sanford Rosen; David Engdahl; Glenn Frank; Rodney Biddle; Charles Fassinger; Raymond Srp; John E. Martin; James Ferris; Sgt. McManus; Okey Fisher; James Pierce; William Perkins; Myron Pryor; Russell Repp; Robert James; Jerry Lewis; Lloyd Thomas; Dan McGee; Harry Jones; Alexander Stevenson; Ron Kane; John Adams. These are the major interviews, but approximately 50 to 75 more were included in the material available to the writer.
- 23 Heisey and Moore, "Burden of Truth:" 5.
- 24 Kent State production assistant, interview with the author, June 1981.
- 25 In Kracauer: 10-11.
- 26 Personal list of considerations of historical consultant.
- 27 Dennis Consadine, NBC Movie Division Executive. This view was expressed in a Kent State publicity meeting in Burbank, CA, 22 November 1980.
- 28 David: 1.
- 29 Barsam, *Nonfiction Film*: 582.
- 30 Peter Davies, in conversation with the author, 5 June 1980.
- 31 In Lewis, *Kent State*: 15, the author does praise the movie's success in conveying the historical and dramatic movements leading up to the shooting: "From the tear gas game to the shooting, the film is visually quite accurate and compelling."
- 32 John Sigenthaler, *USA Today* (28 January 1985): 1d.
- 33 Jim Goldstone, statement made to author.
- 34 Jeff McCracken, interview with the author, 10 August 1981.
- 35 *New York Times*, 8 February 1981.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 "The Televised Past," *Television Quarterly* 16: 59-64.
- 38 *New York Times*, 8 February 1981.
- 39 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 9 February 1981.
- 40 *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 8 February 1981.
- 41 Elaine Holstein, correspondence with the author, 15 February 1981.
- 42 *Los Angeles Times*, 9 February 1981.
- 43 *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 February 1981.
- 44 *Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 1981.
- 45 *Newsday*, 10 February 1981.
- 46 Arthur Krause, correspondence with the author, 15 February 1981.
- 47 Florence Schroeder, correspondence with the author, 12 February 1981.
- 48 Peter Davies, correspondence with the author, 14 February 1981.
- 49 Dean Kahler and Robbie Stamps, interview with the author, 28 January 1981. See Heisey and Moore, "Burden of Truth:" 7. Preliminary findings of a study by Heisey and Moore on reactions to the movie by those who were present at Kent State in 1970 reveal "four categories of objections: to the unwarranted making of the film itself, to the inaccurate physical setting, to the faulty portrayal of persons, and to the faulty portrayal of events and sequences."
- 50 Jim Goldstone, Emmy Award presentations, CBS, 24 September 1982.
- 51 Lewis: 16.
- 52 *President's Commission*: 287-290.

# **From Kent State to Tiananmen: Some Personal Reflections**

**Ken Hammond**

For me there has always been a connection between Kent and China. When I entered Kent State as a freshman in the fall of 1967 I was already interested in Chinese history and politics. My older brother had just returned from serving in Vietnam. The Cultural Revolution was unfolding in China. And I was becoming more and more involved in the antiwar movement.

In studying China's modern history, I learned about the May 4, 1919 demonstrations in Beijing, which gave rise to what became known as the May 4th Movement. On that date thousands of students from Beijing's universities assembled at the Gate of Heavenly Peace, in Chinese called Tiananmen, to protest against the betrayal of China by the Western democratic governments, led by the United States, at the Versailles Peace Conference. The victorious Allies, having won the war to "make the world safe for democracy," and having raised the standard of self-determination for all peoples, had just agreed to give the former German territorial concessions in China to Japan rather than return them to Chinese control. The warlord government based in Beijing had acquiesced in this, and triggered the student demonstrations.

These protests turned into riots with the homes of leading politicians being attacked and burned, and with large scale street fighting in Beijing. In the following months and years the movement grew and broadened, to become a call for modernization, social justice, and an end to imperialist manipulation of China. One current within this movement developed into the Communist Revolution which eventually won control of the country in 1949.

In the late 1960s, as students in America were confronted with the war in Vietnam as a current living example of imperialism in action and sought to find ways to combat it, the Chinese revolution was taken up by many as a source of ideas and experience to learn from. Both the tradition of May 4, 1919 and the activism of young Red Guards in the contemporary Cultural Revolution were seen as examples to be emulated. In the Cultural Revolution we saw, or seemed to see, a truly revolutionary, anti-authoritarian mass movement, in which ordinary people, students and workers, were participating in politics in their own name, and fighting against the bureaucratic, elitist Communist Party, which had set itself up as a new ruling class.

schooling white activists in the tactics of nonviolent resistance.<sup>3</sup> White students from the north and west saw a different America while registering voters in the South. Their vision of social change catapulted the nation's campuses into the center ring as the youth movement (New Left and otherwise) swelled after 1965. It was the experience of white radicals and countercultural advocates—not always in tandem—that produced the “long fine flash” imagery: the stellar conjunction of innocence, energy, virtue, and heroic idealism that heaved and collapsed, crashed and burned.<sup>4</sup> The revolutionary fantasies of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) has been a prominent theme of recent books on the antiwar movement.

Yet another centerpiece of the decade was the Vietnam War, burdening the domestic economy, undermining the government's commitment to social reform, straining the social fabric—and comprising the quick “proof” of all claims of American malevolence while leering into every television-lit home. Stir in the potent mix of mainstream political personalities, the verve of New Frontierism, the inflated rhetoric of the Great Society, the deliberate pursuit of polarization—culminating with the return of the jowly, hard-bitten Richard Nixon, the shrewd cynic-king. There were strange days. Shorthand stereotypes have been our staple pop-culture handles on the convoluted reality of the 1960s. But the reign of the simplistic has not served us well. In 1987, former SDS activist James Miller wrote, “...As a mood of smug tranquility began to settle over the political culture of the United States in the early Eighties, I found myself increasingly uncomfortable with both the neoconservative scorn and the facile nostalgia that have typified popular attitudes about the Sixties.”<sup>5</sup> Naming the problem, however, does not resolve it. How do we recollect complex, genuine history and commemorate meaningful events while preserving authenticity and continuity?<sup>6</sup>

The Kent State shootings of May 1970 were a bitter capstone to several years of heightened intolerance and confusion within the antiwar movement. The same years marked growing tension within American society overall—a nation in the moody grip of generational division, racial hatred, class hostility, and taut chauvinism—the refusal to let sleeping dogmas lie. Many themes and sub-themes coalesced at Kent State University in the spring of 1970. The students' May 4th rally, while their campus was under military occupation, showed again the courage, naivete, and bravado of young activists. The indiscriminate violence of National Guardsmen epitomized the majority's inchoate longing for a *resolution* of the youth movement's challenge to conservative mores and traditional political authority. The media coverage illustrated once again the abiding bias in favor of white victims of official violence—though student revolutionaries shared the blame with local officials and guard officers. It was eerily similar to the year before, May 1969, in Berkeley, during the struggle over People's Park—when activists stood throat-to-bayonet with ranks of the National Guard,

when young women walked up to guardsmen and put flowers in their rifle barrels, and when a white youth was killed by police shotgun fire and many others were wounded<sup>7</sup>.

Rather than the unfolding of high-level conspiracy, the Kent State murders were the bloody results of rampant fear and polarization, stoked by irresponsible politicians and lawmen. Yet, a get-tough policy was clearly on the agenda. For at least a full year in advance of May 1970, spokesmen for the Nixon administration had routinely and harshly disparaged antiwar demonstrators. Even then, their remarks merely reaffirmed J. Edgar Hoover's viewpoint of 1 November 1965, when he said, "Anti-Vietnam demonstrators in the U.S. represent a minority for the most part composed of halfway citizens who are neither morally, mentally nor emotionally mature. This is true whether the demonstrator be the college professor or the beatnik."<sup>8</sup> It was a code of name-calling well rooted in previous red scares and witch-hunts—scoring "deviants," banishing protesters to society's periphery. The name-calling found new corrosive currency in the midst of chaos at home and floundering warfare abroad.

## **May 1970**

The Kent State story has become reasonably familiar over the past twenty years, though gaps remain. It is important to remember that student unrest in northeastern Ohio was part of a nationwide movement, and that demonstrations in May 1970 were part of the most extensive country-wide student uprising in U.S. history. True, Kent State University was in the Midwest, tucked away from coastal war zones like Berkeley and New York City. It rested in the American heartland, near Akron and Cleveland, not far from Amish farmland southward in Hartville. Kent was a greenbelt town, nicknamed "Tree City." Its 900-acre campus bore the signs of steady, planned growth. By spring 1970, construction was underway on a twelve-story library. The inner core of the campus remained largely open, a broad Commons bordered by tennis courts, a wooded hillside, and a grassy knoll called Blanket Hill. Kent State's New Left activists bore the late-1960s stamp of confrontation and sharp rhetoric about the imminent revolution. The local SDS chapter led active protests in the spring of 1969 but had collapsed by the end of the year. As elsewhere, then, in early 1970, there was no broad-based antiwar group to coordinate leftist protest at Kent State.

Quickly, in the wake of President Nixon's dramatic announcement of April 30, that U.S. troops had launched an offensive into Cambodia, there was the spontaneous rebuke of street sit-ins, marches, and anti-government rallies. Mayor Leroy Satrom heard rumors that a radical guerrilla army was headed for Kent and asked for outside assistance. On Saturday night, May 2, the wood-frame campus ROTC building was set afire. Paranoia struck deep. Residents feared for their property and lives. The National Guard

arrived and took charge of the town as well as the university. The Guard's bivouac on the southern edge of the campus looked like vintage war footage. Such was one student's recollection of the soldiers' arrival: "They were getting out of their vehicles ... and it looked more like a movie than it did real life. I had to keep reminding myself that everything that had happened was real."<sup>9</sup>

On Sunday, May 3, Governor James Rhodes flew in for a brief verbal assault. Holding a press conference at the local fire station, he likened protesters to Nazis and terrorists. "They're the worst type of people that we harbor in America," he said.<sup>10</sup> Monday was a bright, sunny day. By noon on May 4, two thousand students had gathered on the Kent State Commons to rally against Nixon and Rhodes. The protesters' shouting drowned out a police bullhorn telling them to leave. Guardsmen formed a skirmish line and moved forward, up and over Blanket Hill. But tear-gas on the Commons was less effective than on cramped inner-city streets. Students retreated, then regrouped. After 25 minutes of frustrating and unsuccessful efforts to disperse the rally, back on the crest of Blanket Hill, a small group of guardsmen deliberately turned and fired into a shifting mass of students. Once again—as at Orangeburg or Berkeley—people were witness to the brutal impersonality of bullets plunging into a crowd. Four dead in Ohio. Nine wounded. "People were killed here, people who hadn't really done anything," said KSU vice-president (now president) Michael Schwartz ten years later. "They were killed by the authorities of their own government. That's an ugly phenomenon."<sup>11</sup> Students lay dying while guardsmen milled around and then trooped back to the Commons, uncertain whether more shooting would be necessary. Across the country, the student uprising flared. The vigils began. Crosses and coffins once again adorned protest marches. There was talk of renewed dedication to mainstream political involvement. A *New Republic* editorial asked: "So the question becomes: what are those of us to do who oppose the terrifying drift of American society, and who remain committed to tolerance, freedom of dissent and inquiry and personal liberty?"<sup>12</sup> In death's shadow, there were no easy answers.

Kent activist Ruth Gibson has recalled her initial sense that the antiwar movement was still building. "At the time, I didn't see Kent State as ending anything; I thought that it was raising things to a new level." At many hinterland colleges—out of touch with the dead-end, kamikaze mindset of SDS and SNCC elites—the movement did appear rejuvenated. *New York Times* correspondent Max Frankel wrote that the widespread domestic upheaval "sent tremors of fear through the White House that revolt and repression might be nearer than anyone had dared to imagine."<sup>13</sup> But there was no "new level" of mass resistance. "Kent State" became yet another symbol of the final, echoing efficacy of gunfire when the state faced political

challenges in an atmosphere of social disintegration. But what kind of efficacy? People had only acted out their school-ingrained monomyth of American freedom. They were killed, willy nilly, with their eyes on the prize. They were killed in the midst of what had become a generic spectacle—student rebels massed against oncoming police or soldiers. The spectacle had become formulaic, it seemed, and thus less daunting—except amidst the raw, visceral polarization of May 1970. As in other towns and cities, where poll after poll revealed the public hatred of student radicals, the typical reaction was to exalt the Guard and curse the young. “They should have shot more of them”—this was the common refrain. Or, better yet, a convenient sports metaphor: “Guard—4, Radicals—0.” As one woman wrote from a nearby community, “I say all of the *students* out on the commons shouting obscenities, throwing rocks and generally harassing the Guard are guilty of murder.”<sup>14</sup> Radical long-hairs deserved to die because they represented an evil menace—a dark, unknown, elemental force that prowled the land, called to life by the jungle rhythms of rock and roll, sustained by movie montages of atomic horror and mean-mouthed rebels, nurtured by ivory-tower permissiveness, twisted by the influence of psychedelic drugs, bent by the malice of hipster communists and black messiahs. It was a hard rain.

“Kent State” was the guttural puncturing of myths—a thirteen-second smoking gun that cleared away the wispy remnants of millenarian dreams. There would be no new morning, no cultural revolution on the wings of electric blue, no new world rising up from the Goodwill Stores of the old. There were instead the same, unyielding realities combined with a growing sense of despair that marshalling the forces would no longer avail the peacemakers. Despite the freshly minted martyrs, there arose little hope that their sacrifice could achieve any positive political end. The collective judgment of ex-activists, journalists, government officials, and historians has been remarkably consistent: the deaths at Kent State marked the end of the era of mass youth protest, the end of widely held aspirations for a rapid, substantive restructuring of society. Referring to the shootings as the “death knell for the Movement,” James Miller asserted, “The bullets were real. The days of revolutionary fantasy were over.” Spring 1970, he wrote, was the last season of protest. Afterward, the New Left and the antiwar movement plummeted “into cultural oblivion as if it had been some kind of political Hula-Hoop.”<sup>15</sup> The harshest version of this assessment came from Ohio guardsman Robert Gabriel in a 1982 interview: “I suppose I thought that the shootings were a good thing, because they stopped everything right there. Everything cooled down after that. That took the hot air out of the radical stuff in the nation.”<sup>16</sup>

## Remembering "Kent State"

It would be simpler sometimes if history were a series of well-sorted benchmarks, precise lines delimiting eras—the rise and fall of civilizations, movements, and political zones punctuated by specific, easily identifiable events. But real life is typically more complex and ambiguous than we would prefer. Still, some events push themselves to the fore as markers, milestones, and powerful symbols, redolent of causes won and lost. And themes pile upon each other—as do ironies. Richard Nixon liked to say in early 1969 that he knew young America, that college and high-school students were perhaps more assertive than his own generation had been but nonetheless good hearted and well-intentioned. Thus, he remarked to one student audience: "The important thing for a young person to remember is not whether you win or lose, but whether you play the game. Don't stand aside. Don't be up in the bleachers when you can be down on the field. Remember that the greatness of your life is determined by the extent to which you participate in the great events of your time."<sup>17</sup> Undoubtedly, the "great event" of the latter 1960s was the Vietnam War, its destructive affect upon domestic reform efforts (such as civil rights), and the youth-spearheaded movement to end it. The fields of action were the streets of America. As we look back, it is important to remember who played the game and who won and lost. Threads intersected. Idealism suffered gridlock. The civil rights movement fragmented after heroic gains. Resistance abroad and opposition at home blunted the sharp, aggressive edge of the "*Pax Americana Technocratica*."<sup>18</sup> But the guns remained locked and loaded against dissent which became too insistent upon upsetting the status quo. Even so, the "imperial way of life"<sup>19</sup> was eroding, and the unreeling of the past two decades has revealed not only the structural weaknesses of American power but also the return of multi-polarity in international affairs. The failure of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, which played a major role in reorienting American foreign policy, has yet to find an accepted or acceptable analysis among our political leadership.<sup>20</sup> As a polity, we still must confront what Michael Frisch has called "a present that seems to float in time—unencumbered, unconstrained, and uninstructed by any active sense of how it came to be."<sup>21</sup> Historical events do not come unbundled. Students killed on their campus, civil rights workers killed along byways of the rural South, Americans and Vietnamese soldiers killed on rain-soaked battlefields—all of them must be pulled together into one story that explains and describes the web of historical forces that spawned the 1960s and beyond.

Twenty years later, what have we learned from "Kent State"? The deaths of four students on May 4, 1970, were more than the loss of innocence, less than the rupture of the fabric of American society. Remembering "Kent State" breaks the spell of the seamless present and calls to mind a great effervescence of energy and hope. The Kent State shootings clearly will not

be forgotten: they comprise an obligatory referent in every textbook commentary on the Vietnam War. Yet, such events can be sanitized by their ritualistic incantation. We likely do not want to recapture in all its glittering frenzy the intense polarization of Chicago in 1968, Berkeley in 1969, or Kent in 1970. But if we forget the vitality, brutality, and volatility of the times, events and ideas lose their meaning. The present is uncoupled from the past. Remembering "Kent State" must be part of recreating an authentic history of the 1960s and linking it with broad patterns of challenge and change. From the Vietnam War we have apparently learned little. We have chosen to commemorate not the conflict itself but rather the courage of American soldiers who fought in the war. The 1980s marked a wider recognition of Vietnam veterans' heroism and struggle. Perhaps the 1990s will give us cause to remember the courage of those who led the way in turning the nation against an imperial war—those who realized the terrible cost it imposed upon the political and economic life of the country, those who saw the scars at home and the wounds inflicted overseas, and those who believed that the American system, whatever its flaws, protected them from the awful retribution of authoritarian regimes. Remembering "Kent State" is one step toward remembering a past that is complex and whole, one step toward reconstructing a present that is meaningful.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Bradley F. Smith, *The War's Long Shadow: The Second World War and Its Aftermath; China, Russia, Britain, and America* (New York: Simon and Schuster) 1986: 281.
- <sup>2</sup> *Kent-Ravenna Record-Courier*, 11 October 1969, editorial: 2.
- <sup>3</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1986: 146; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) 1981: 4, 32, 53.
- <sup>4</sup> The phrase is from Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, 1971 (New York: Warner Books) 1982: 67.
- <sup>5</sup> James Miller, "Democracy is in the Streets": *From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*, 1987 (New York: Touchstone) 1988: 17.
- <sup>6</sup> This is a question I first explored in my introductory essay, "The Past in the Present," *Kent State/May 4: Echoes Through a Decade* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press) 1982. An updated paperback edition appeared in 1988 and is the source used for subsequent references. My discussion here is influenced by Todd Gitlin's assertion that it was the decontextualization of 1960s-era events that deprived them of their historical personae; *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1980: 193, 235-36.
- <sup>7</sup> See Todd Gitlin's account in *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books) 1987: 353-61. James Rector, age 26, was the young man killed. Gitlin noted, "For those who paid attention to Berkeley, the sense of white exemption died there, a full year before Kent State" (p. 361). A similar point was made by Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s*, 1979 (New York: Touchstone) 1981: 527.
- <sup>8</sup> Quoted in Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home; Vietnam and the American People 1964-1968*, 1973 (Boston: G. K. Hall) 1984: 89.

- <sup>9</sup> Interview with Ruth Gibson, *Kent State/May 4*: 87.
- <sup>10</sup> Transcript, Rhodes press conference, 3 May 1970, Box 63, May 4th Collection, Kent State University Archives.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Michael Schwartz, *Kent State/May 4*: 215.
- <sup>12</sup> Editorial, *New Republic* (30 May 1970): 11.
- <sup>13</sup> Gibson interview, *Kent State/May 4*: 88; Max Frankel, "Nixon: He Faces a Divided, Anguished Nation," *New York Times*, 10 May 1970: sec. 4.
- <sup>14</sup> Olex to Robert White, KSU president, 8 May 1970, emphasis in original, Box 40, May 4th Collection, Kent State University Archives.
- <sup>15</sup> Miller, "Democracy is in the Streets": 310-11. See also Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS*, 1973 (New York: Vintage Books) 1974: 641; Viorst, *Fire in the Streets*: 543; Gitlin, *The Sixties*: 414; Bettina Aptheker, "In Memoriam," *Left Review* 4 (Spring 1980): 3-4; Bob Howard, "The Fourth of May, 1970: An Overview," *Left Review* 4 (Spring 1980): 13-14; and John Logue, "Official Violence," in *Kent State/May 4*: 143-49. Gitlin, however, rejects as too simplistic the notion that the movement was snuffed out by official violence. Also important, he believes, was the internal collapse of the New Left: "...An exhausted movement had lost its moral edge, and with it the capacity to console and rally its afflicted" (*The Sixties*: 415). Aptheker argued that it was the female "innocence" of Allison Krause and Sandra Scheuer that "triggered the mass revulsion to the killings" ("In Memoriam": 4). On the fading of 1960s from popular cultural memory, see also Michael Klein, "Scenes from the politics and culture of the Movement in the beginning and the end," in *Vietnam and the Antiwar Movement: An International Perspective*, ed. John Dumbrell (Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Company) 1989: 84.
- <sup>16</sup> Interview with Robert Gabriel, *Kent State/May 4*: 122.
- <sup>17</sup> "Remarks to Participants in the 1969 Senate Youth Program," 7 February 1969, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Richard Nixon, 1969 (Washington: Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service) 1971: 82-83.
- <sup>18</sup> The term is from James C. Thompson, Jr., "How Could Vietnam Happen? An Autopsy," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1968: 53. For assessments of the impact of the antiwar movement, see Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) 1980: xvi, 165, 174; Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home*: xii, 318. Powers, a journalist, wrote, "The war was one of those things that come along once in a generation and call entire societies into question, forcing people to choose between irreconcilables" (141).
- <sup>19</sup> The phrase is from William A. Williams, *Empire As a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament Along with a Few Thoughts About an Alternative* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1980. The author's main themes concern, first, the widespread acceptance of the imperial way as a norm in twentieth-century America, and, second, the costs paid for such a popular mindset and expansionist foreign policy—not only in terms of the dead and wounded in wars abroad and social tension at home, but also "in the loss of our vitality as citizens. We have increasingly ceased to participate in the process of self-government" (p. 13).
- <sup>20</sup> See, for instance, the discussion by David Fromkin and James Chace, "What Are the Lessons of Vietnam?" *Foreign Affairs* 63 (Spring 1985): 722-46.
- <sup>21</sup> Michael Frisch, "The Memory of History," *Radical History Review* 25 (1981): 12.

## Notes on the Authors

**Scott Bills** is the author of a major work on Kent State, and a faculty member in the History Department of Stephen F. Austin State University.

**Chris Butler** was a close friend of Jeffrey Miller, who was killed by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University. He is a musician and a producer in New York.

**Alan Canfora** was shot by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970 at Kent State University. Since 1970 he has emerged as a leading advocate of memorializing the event. Alan is the Director of the Kent May 4 Center.

**Peter Davies** has been a leading crusader for justice in the Kent State case from the beginning. He is the author of *The Truth About Kent State*, and has published many articles on the subject. At the present time he resides in Staten Island, New York.

**Tom Dietz** is an Associate Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Human Ecology Research Group at George Mason University. He grew up in Kent and attended Kent State University from 1968-1972. He was one of the founders of the Kent Legal Defense Fund.

**Susie Erenrich** has been actively involved with the Kent State issue for the past fifteen years. At the present time she is engaged in resource development for grassroots organizations in the District of Columbia, and is working towards a second graduate degree in Conflict Studies.

**John P. Filo** was taking photographs on the Kent State University campus on May 4, 1970. His Pulitzer Prize winning photograph appears on the front cover of this anthology. At the present time, John is employed as the graphics director at the *Baltimore Sun*.

**Tom Grace** was shot by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970 at Kent State University. He began his career of political activism as a student member of SDS, and is now a union activist in upstate New York.

**Ken Hammond** was an activist with SDS at Kent State and participated in the events of May 1-4, 1970. He was also one of the persons indicted by the special State Grand Jury. He is a Ph.D. candidate in History and East Asian Languages at Harvard University.

Kendra Lee Hicks is currently serving on the board of the Kent May 4 Center. Her involvement with May 4 began in 1982, when she played the role of Allison Krause in a production of *Kent State: A Requiem*.

**Elaine Holstein's** son, Jeffrey Miller, was killed by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University. For the past two decades she has worked to preserve his memory and to memorialize his death.

**Miriam Jackson** was an active participant during the gym controversy. She received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Purdue in 1982. Miriam's article was derived from her dissertation, entitled *We Shall Not Be Moved*.

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**Joe Lewis** was sixty feet away from the guns when he was shot twice by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University. He lives in Oregon with his family.

**Holly Near** is an international folksinger who has been directly involved with the Kent State incident since 1974. Her song, "It Could Have Been Me," which was written for one of the commemorative programs at Kent, has been sung around the world.

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**John A. Peoples** was the President of Jackson State University at the time of the May 15, 1970 shootings of Jackson State students by the Jackson police and the Mississippi Highway Patrol. He is writing a book which describes the incident.

**John P. Rowe** attended Kent State University as an undergraduate and graduate student from 1970-1980. He has been an active member of the May 4 Task Force, the coalition steering committee, and the Kent May 4 Center. His photographs have captured the history of all the major May 4 events for two decades.

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**Martin Scheuer's** daughter, Sandra, was killed by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University. For the past twenty years he has been fighting to secure his daughter's place in history.

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**Vernon Steve Weakley** was shot by the Mississippi Highway Patrol on May 15, 1970, at Jackson State University. He, along with others, brought suit against the police authorities and sought to hold them responsible for their actions. He currently resides in Houston, Texas, with his family.

**Bill Whitaker** is a trial lawyer in Akron, Ohio, involved in both civil and criminal litigation. He began his career by coordinating the defense of the Kent 25, and has continued to represent those charged with crimes because of their political activity. Most recently he traveled to Nicaragua as an observer to their 1990 election.

**Gene Young** is a native of Jackson, Mississippi and was present at Jackson State during the morning of May 15, 1970. Today he is a member of the faculty at Jackson State University.