The Burr

Kent State University

May 4, 2000

The Human Side Of History
Letter from the editor

I wasn't born until 1977, but I feel I've known them like it was just yesterday. I've shared the same humor and made the same kinds of friends as they did. I've walked the same path to Taylor Hall when I'm in a daze to get somewhere. I've had to stand up for what I believe in when the time is right. I've worked so hard and watched my accomplishments fall to the ground, only to pick up the pieces of my life and put it all back together again.

Lately, those pieces are touched by Allison, Bill, Jeff and Sandy.

Because of their memory, I've realized the importance of living to the fullest. I don't think of them as martyrs. Protesters or not, they were fighting for their own lives with every breath uttered about Vietnam. They had such courage to be a student at that time. They were growing up in a society whose government often treated them like a burden. Still, they formed their own opinions, maybe let their hair grow long, yet it didn't make them any better or worse human beings.

In the past several months, the staff of The Burr's May 4 special edition has visited the human side of history. To experience the Vietnam era, we had to look deeply into the lives of four Kent State students, who in our consciousness will always remain students. Though old enough to be our parents, I could swear I've met them in class somewhere. It's their spirit that lingers after 30 years – whether or not other students choose to acknowledge it.

The May 4 story is not only a Kent State story. It is an American story of the search for truth and justice. It is a student's story, a parent's story, a soldier's story. On behalf of the The Burr staff, I hope you find your story.

For dates and facts are not enough to show what happened in the past when dealing with people.

Amanda Young

Amanda Young
Thirty Years of May

Two weeks after the National Guard opened fire at Kent State, police in Jackson, Miss., killed two students at an all-black college. Although the two incidents made headlines together, the issues are as different as black and white.

Then I Was Shot

Blacks student leaders at Kent State stood up to administrators when it came to equal rights. But when the National Guard settled in, black students stayed far away for fear that they would be shot at first.

The Right To Be Afraid

The likelihood of another May 4 is slim, only if we understand the past.

Kent Twenty-Five

While some students would like to preserve the memory of May 4, others are tired of making a religion out of what they consider a 30-year-old incident.

The Gibbs/Green Affair

The nine men wounded on May 4 have moved on with their lives and tried to make the world a better place. These are their stories 30 years later.

Brother and Sister, Beware

A retired Ohio National Guard officer explains the Guard’s point of view.

If History Repeated Itself

In the fall of 1970, a special grand jury indicted 25 men and women accused of wrongdoings spanning from arson to throwing rocks. The defendants describe what it was like to have the finger pointed at them.

Students Of A Different Era

For more May 4 stories www.burr.kent.edu

The May 4 Burr is a special edition added for the 1999-2000 academic year.
At the rising of the sun and its going down,

we remember them.

Thirty Years of May

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of the winter,

we remember them.
Three decades of remembrance at Kent State

By Erin Kosnac

"I think in the Akron Beacon Journal, there was an editorial on 'Enough May?' And I'm thinking what is enough? Enough of what? Enough of remembering? Enough of trying to inform people about a historical event? Is it that we don't want to remember that part of our history? If we remember, what does that mean? What is so bad about it?"

— Carole A. Barbato


The Ohio National Guard fires at an unarmed crowd at Kent State University. Four students are killed. Nine are wounded. Many lives are scarred.

It is now Sept. 8, 1999. Same university, same parking lot. After nearly 30 years, markers are dedicated in the spaces where Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer and William Schroeder fell. Four lives are remembered. Many of the scars continue to heal. For a professor. For a friend. For a parent.

Every May 4, Jerry Lewis feels guilty — guilty because he survived and four students didn't. Seeing smoke coming out of the guns, he dived for cover. And when he came up, he saw Sandy Scheuer's body.

On Sept. 8, 1999, Lewis, emeritus professor of sociology, stood once again in the parking lot where four students lost their lives.

"As I stand here this morning, it's hard to believe that three decades have passed since I started my career as a Kent State faculty member where I found myself in this very place on May 4, 1970," Lewis said at the dedication of the markers. "Like many of you, the events of this historic day had a profound impact on my life."

The markers in the Prentice Hall parking lot are the most recent attempt to preserve the memory of the events that shocked Kent State and the nation 30 years ago.

"The markers we dedicate will ensure that a meaningful tradition and an important lesson continue long after we are gone," Lewis said.

As representatives from each of the four families sat under a white canopy, Kent State President Carol Cartwright told them she was honored they could be there and hoped the markers could provide them some comfort.

"It is our hope that each of you finds solace in knowing that your precious sons, daughters, brothers, sisters have never and will never be forgotten," she said.

Thirty years ago, Carole Barbato was friends with Sandy Scheuer. She worked crossword puzzles in the Hub with William Schroeder. And now Barbato, a professor of communications studies at the East Liverpool campus, knows how important it is to keep their memory alive.

June 27, 1950 — The United States sends 35 military advisers to South Vietnam. President Harry Truman agrees to provide military and economic aid to the anti-communist government.

1945 — Ho Chi Minh, a communist, takes power in North Vietnam and declares independence. His national government is known as the Viet Minh or Viet Cong. France maintains colonial power in the South.
"Perhaps because I knew Sandy, remembering her and Bill and the others who lost their lives has always been deeply important to me," she says. "And perhaps because I was on this campus in May of 1970, I believe it is imperative that the historical integrity of this site be preserved for generations to come."

Although other memorials are scattered across the campus, Barbato says these markers will stand apart from the others. "They will become unmistakable, physical reminders to all who walk this sacred ground that history was made here," she says. "They show us and they will show all of us where four gifted young people fell so senselessly on May 4, 1970."

This was a day Jeffrey Miller's mother Elaine Holstein thought would never come. "I knew that the places in the parking lot were being used as a parking lot, and I shut that out of my mind," she says. "I didn't want to think about it. It's a pretty horrible thought."

And the students fought for this. These kids simply didn't quit, and I'll always be grateful for that."

The official closing and dedication of the spaces produced a manifold of emotions on that foggy, humid September morning. For many, it was an overwhelming feeling to see something come to fruition that had been 30 years in the making.

Wendy Semon, senior secondary education major and May 4 Task Force member, was involved in the initial Task Force petition in 1997 to have the spaces closed. She also presented Cartwright with the request in 1998.

"It was really overwhelming to think that the whole initiative just started in 1997 when we started a petition drive, just a couple of us on the Task Force."

Once they collected enough petitions, Semon and others marched to Cartwright's office with the proposal.

Kim Larson, senior biology and psychology major and Task Force member, also was glad to see the university go through with its promise.

"I was here when they marked the spaces off, and I was here the entire length of the construction," she says. "For the last year we were sitting on the edge of our seats hoping that it was really going to happen. So when they finally were closed, it was this big relief that they were actually going through with what they said."

For Lewis the dedication provided a sense of closure. "Closure doesn't mean forgetting," he says. "It means proper remembering."

It is May 3, 1999, almost 11 p.m. Those who have come to remember gather at the Victory Bell. A somber tone hangs in the air as they prepare their candles. In silence, they form lines and rows, ready to make the march around campus. The silence continues as they walk. As they walk up Main Street, cars drive by. People stare out the windows. But they continue to walk in silence, past the Music and Speech Building, past Prentice Hall, and back into the parking lot. There they begin to disperse, many placing their candles at one of the sites where Allison, Jeffrey, Sandy and William fell. From now until 12:24 p.m. on May 4 —

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,
we remember them.

At the shining of the sun
and in the warmth of the summer,
we remember them.

At the rustling of the leaves
and in the beauty of the autumn,
we remember them.

Candlelight surrounds a couple during a May 4 vigil. The Jewish poem of remembrance in this story was written by Rabbis Sylvan Kamens and Jack Riemer, and is read each May 4.

The minute shots rang out 30 years ago — people will take turns standing vigil in each of the four spaces. They stand silent, motionless, reflecting.

The physical reminders are scattered across the campus of Kent State. The May 4 Site and Memorial. The new markers in the Prentice Hall parking lot. The "Kent Four" sculpture in front of the Art Building. The May 4 Resource Center in the library. Although the lesser-known memorials tend to fade into the landscape, their presence reminds us of what shook the campus in 1970.

But for many people, the most important way of remembering May 4 is not in the form of a concrete object. It takes the shape of a candlelight walk and vigil.
Established in 1971 by Jerry Lewis and with the help of students, the walk and vigil were started as an "appropriate commemoration" and continues, though now organized by the May 4 Task Force, to be one of the most emotional parts of the annual commemoration.

"The candlelight vigil and march to me is the most appropriate and meaningful activity," says Thomas Hensley, a Kent State political science professor who also was a faculty member in 1970. "The solemn nature of it, the opportunity for widespread participation and the silence allow everyone to participate and to reflect and to do so in a very personal way and in a large-scale environment."

Larson also finds meaning at the vigil.

"It's very solemn, but you can make it whatever you want to make it. You can be there and just reflect on your own life and think of how beautiful your life is because you remember these four people were yanked from their lives. Or you can actually imagine what it was like that day, which I do sometimes.

"I will just think about what it must have been like to be on campus on that day, how scared and afraid. I think about my family and I think about other things going on in the world. You have lots of thoughts running through your head over a half hour. You kind of think about what they would have been doing now, but I also think about the people I love and what's special to me."

The vigil illustrates how many people are pursuing the memory of May 4. "The walk is pretty amazing because every year we get to a certain point like down by Franklin, and I always look back and I see all these candles," Semon says. "It's kind of like you hear all this criticism the whole year of the Task Force, and you start to feel like you're a small minority of people that are doing this. You feel like you're fighting a battle.

"But then when you are on this walk, and you look back and see all the candles and all these people with you, you feel a sense of community, that you're not alone. There are a lot more people than you thought who are willing to work for this cause."

As the night sky hovers overhead, the mass of people walk on, holding candles in their hands and memories in their hearts. Their feet are moving together upon the pavement, one step at a time, moving toward a common goal. But their thoughts are moving in their own directions.

"The walk is probably the best thing," says Paul Edgar, sophomore secondary education major. "The march is just the greatest time to reflect on the events of that weekend. It's a silent march, and it's been happening ever since the year after the shootings, and it's nice to see everyone still gathering together for it."

After everyone has reached the parking lot, four people stand still in the spots where the students fell.

"When you stand in the middle with all the candles around you, you do feel very spiritual," Barbato says. "You just really understand how seriously connected Kent State is to a very black part of our history, and you do feel the spirit of the times."

Semon stood vigil for the first time her freshman year in the spot for Jeffrey Miller. For decades, the area was used as parking space for motorcycles.

"When you're looking up at the pagoda and you're standing where this person died, it's really overwhelming," she says. "And all the work you've done the whole year really comes down to that. Everything we do is about that vigil."

"I think the speakers and everything we do for the commemoration is for the university, but the vigil is for the people who really feel close in contact or want to somehow spiritually connect to this time."

At the beginning of the year and at its end,

we remember them.

Edgar found the time he spent standing in Jeffrey Miller's space to be the most emotional — "the time when it really hits you."

"I had done a bit of reading on Jeffrey Miller," Edgar says. "So I just began to think about how he was just a normal kid like so many of us who had strong convictions and stood up for what he believed in.

"Then I began to think that because those people died, that is why I have to take action, and I can't just sit around. I need to try to help the world in whatever way I can."

Aside from the granite, books and other material objects that serve as memorials, four students at Kent State provide a different type of memorial — a living one.

In 1990 with funding from Kent State President Michael Schwartz, the Honors College was given four scholarships, one for each of the students killed on May 4. Last year the awards were raised to include in-state tuition, room and board and a book award.

"It just seemed to me that those four kids never got the chance to build a life so that people could remember them," says Schwartz, former Kent State president. "One way to give those students a life after their death was to always have a student carrying their name on a scholarship. At least one student will have to think about those students who were killed. In those students' minds, they can think someone's always thinking about you."
The scholarships are awarded to the highest-achieving incoming freshmen, and each is held by the same student for four years. When that student graduates, the scholarship will become available for another student. Since its creation in 1990, 13 students have held these four scholarships.

But the four students who now hold the May 4 Scholarships are the first to have met the families of the students for which their scholarships are named. The students were invited to breakfast with representatives of the families on Sept. 8, 1999, the day of the parking lot marker dedication.

"It didn't become that personal until we had breakfast," says Joel Rieke, sophomore music education major who holds the scholarship in Jeffrey Miller's name. "His mom gave me her address and told me to look her up in New York when I go there. It means a great deal more now to me than it did beforehand."

"You definitely get a new perspective on it. It becomes much more personal and an honor and an enlightening experience."

When we have decisions that are difficult to make, we remember them.

For Larry Andrews, dean of the Honors College at Kent State, these scholarships provide an especially fitting memorial to the four students.

"I keep thinking of it as a living memorial because people are being helped financially to attend school here and succeed here, and it's not quite like an organ donor situation, but that comparison comes to mind," Andrews says. "I can't imagine what it's like to be a parent who has lost a child. I think it's one of the worst things that can happen to you. But after watching the families meet the students, that comparison came to mind because you're looking at another young person who is in some way connected — not physically in this case — but still connected to the child you lost and is carrying on their interrupted career.

"The names are kept alive. But they're kept alive not just carved in a piece of granite or mentioned once a year at the commemoration," he says. "They're kept alive as a name attached to a real person who is picking up the same kind of challenge of getting a college education."

When we have achievements that are based on theirs, we remember them.

Although the university appears fully committed to remembering the events of May 4, 1970, this was not always the case. And even now, 30 years later, the community contends with issues that surfaced on campus and across the nation.

"Kent State has really struggled for much of the time since 1970 with May 4 and how to recognize it," Hensley says. "I think for a number of years, almost the first 20 years after the shootings, the university administration was very ambivalent about it, embarrassed by it.

"Many in the university wanted just to forget about it, pretend it didn't happen or turn our backs on it."

Andrews was one of many faculty members who were frustrated with the university's reluctance to react and remember the event properly.

"There seemed such a concern about dropping enrollment and the fear of the public of sending their children to Kent State that they found any talk about Kent and May 4 to be a liability," Andrews says. "And there was that silence by many folks. We didn't step up soon enough, even as we saw the end of the Vietnam War and the draft."

"We saw that Kent State had historical influence on the end of an era. And we saw a new generation of students come in much more concerned about getting a job and taking care of themselves. But in all of that we missed the chance to embrace May 4 and its significance to provide interpretations, to provide themes that can be constructive and we can use in continuing to talk about it."

But the faculty were not the only body dissatisfied with the university's actions. Jeffrey Miller's mother was as well.

"I could not believe that this could have happened because we knew that the kids were doing what they believed they had a right to do — that you could protest the actions of your government," Holstein says. "And this is America, this is different from other countries. No one expected this to happen."
Because Krause, Miller and Scheuer were Jewish, the B'nai B'rith Hillel Jewish Services Center at Kent State donated a plaque in the names of all four. The first plaque was placed in the Prentice Hall parking lot in 1971. After it was riddled with four bullet holes, the plaque was stolen two years later. The marker seen here was rededicated in 1975 with the help of Kent faculty. (Kent State Archives photo)

"And in the years after, it seemed that the college appeared to us certainly to be trying to make believe it never happened and sort of sweep it under the rug. There was just a constant renewal of the anger, and for a long time I wouldn't even step foot on campus."

Hensley says Schwartz was the first university president who tried to deal with the aftermath in a positive way, which resulted in the dedication of the May 4 Memorial in 1990. Since then, the administration has taken a more positive stance.

"I think now with the 30th anniversary coming up, the university is making some important new strides by continuing the remembrance of the past but also trying to be more forward-looking," he says. In the future, society as a whole is not willing to forget the consequences of May 4 or Vietnam.

"What students don't realize is that nobody owns May 4," Lewis says. "It belongs to the community." As Dr. Cartwright said in a statement, "We have no choice but to remember May 4 because society demands it.

"The Vietnam War was one of the most turbulent periods of our life, in the history of this culture, and May 4 is one very important dimension of that."

The memory cannot be denied, but naturally we long to change the past.

"If I could wish away one day of my life, it would be May 4," Lewis says. "I could wish away 13 seconds, but I can't."

As long as we live,

they too will live, for they are now a part of us

as we remember them.

Allison Krause Freshman, Honors College
Jeffrey Glenn Miller Sophomore, Psychology
Sandra Lee Scheuer Junior, Speech & Hearing Therapy
William Knox Schroeder Sophomore, Psychology
The Gibbs/Green Affair

By Christina Hange Kukuk

Few in the world were watching in February 1971 when a young widow gave birth to a son in Jackson, Miss. The child, Demetrius Gibbs, would grow up to do something his father never had the opportunity to do: graduate from Jackson State University.

Demetrius Gibbs' father was a victim of the campus violence of May 1970. Just two weeks after four students were killed at Kent State, police and state highway patrol forces riddled the all-black Southern college with bullets that killed two and wounded 15 others.

Seventy campuses across the nation closed that spring. Students and police forces clashed at Harvard, Yale, California State University and Ohio State University among others. But Jackson State and Kent State made headlines together because at these two campuses students became casualties of war. Even President Richard Nixon put the two colleges together in the same sentence. In the Jackson State archives, a yellowed newspaper clipping from The Washington Post records Nixon's comparing Jackson State to Kent State this way: "When dissent turns to violence, it invites tragedy."

The violence on each campus was similar but different. Unarmed students died in the North and in the South. But some of the circumstances were as different as black and white.

Demetrius Gibbs wasn't there in May 1970. Born nine months later, he is the son of a collegiate revolution that shook the country in 1970. And if it had not been for the shocking death of four whites in Ohio, the country might never have remembered his father Phillip Gibbs.

"If I try to tell people about the shootings at Jackson State, they don't know about it," Gibbs says. "They don't know until I say 'Kent State.' For us to even be acknowledged, it had to happen at Kent State first."

Demetrius Gibbs graduated from Jackson State in May 1995 as the university commemorated the 25th anniversary of the campus shootings. He spoke at the commemoration along with the youngest daughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

In the early hours of May 15, 1970, just 10 days after four students lost their lives at a white school up North, a sophomore with a big head and a calming voice jumped up on a picnic table with a police bullhorn to recite one of the most famous speeches in history. That man, Gene Young, would become entangled in Mississippi history, just as Kent State University and Jackson State University will forever be entangled in the history of the campus violence of 1970. Young has been a mentor and a teacher to 29-year-old Demetrius Gibbs.
In the chaos of barely past midnight, after police riddled a women’s dormitory with bullets leaving two dead and 15 wounded, Young was seen by many to be a leader. In his book about Jackson State, To Survive and Thrive, former college president John A. Peoples describes Young as an eloquent savior that tumultuous night.

Today, Peoples says he is tired of telling the story. But in his book, he expresses his gratitude to Young. When no one would listen to the college president, they listened to “Jughead.”

“People had told me over the years that they enjoyed hearing me sing, and I knew that it had a calming effect on people,” he says. “It was a speech I had memorized verbatim. It was the speech that had inspired us for so many years.”

With a police bullhorn in hand, he began to recite the words of Martin Luther King Jr.

...go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities...

Gene Young was born in the health center of Jackson State at a time when black families were not allowed to use the white hospitals of their state’s capital. After graduating from the college, he later completed graduate work in Connecticut. Now a compliance officer in the university’s athletic department, Young says he’ll probably die at Jackson State, too.

Young grew up in the early ’60s, when the Masonic Temple just down the street from the university headquartered the civil rights movement in Mississippi. As a 12-year-old in June 1963, he was one of hundreds of non-violent marchers herded onto flat-bed garbage trucks and carted to animal holding pens at the state fairgrounds in Jackson to await trial. The people had amassed on Lynch Street to protest the assassination of civil rights leader Medgar Evers.

“We slept on concrete floors and ate food prepared in garbage cans,” he says. “It was something like a small-scale concentration camp here in the 1960s.”

In August that year, Young was lucky enough to be one of thousands of black men and women to hear King’s “I Have a Dream” speech in Washington, D.C.

“At 12, the civil rights movement was my Head Start program,” he says. “I guess I was too young to be afraid then.” At 17, Young was just beginning college at Jackson State as a speech and theater arts major.

...knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

African-American students in Jackson faced racism since the institution was established as a teachers college in the 1800s. The college was moved from its original location — too close to the white downtown — to its current home in a black neighborhood split in half by Lynch Street. Named after John Roy Lynch, Mississippi’s first black congressman during Reconstruction, Lynch Street was the unofficial capital of black Mississippi in the early half of the 20th century. In his book Lynch Street: The May 1970 Slayings at Jackson State College, Tim Spofford details a history of hardship black students in Jackson faced. Even though the Masonic lodge just one block east of the university on Lynch Street was the center of Mississippi’s civil rights movement, Jackson State students participated little in protests of that era. A state-supported institution, college officials couldn’t afford to alienate the all-white board of education that was their bread and butter.

But students attending private Tougaloo College just a few miles away were trained in nonviolent protests and civil disobedience. Tougaloo students brought the sit-in to Jackson when they refused to leave the city’s whites-only public library. They marched openly and picketed.

Few of their state-college peers joined them. Students at Jackson State took out their frustrations on Lynch Street, where white motorists speeding to the suburbs often hurled racial slurs out the windows. Black students retaliated with rocks and bottles. Spofford and others write that an annual mini riot unleashed on campus every spring forced city police to close off Lynch Street.
Although college officials begged the city to route traffic around for the safety of both students and motorists, the city refused.

Earlier in the spring of 1970, a popular female student was injured while trying to cross Lynch Street. Motorists had no regard for the black pedestrians, say student and community members of the time.

Outraged by the incident on Lynch Street and fueled by frustration over the shootings at Kent State, Jackson State students once again massed on Lynch Street on May 13. Edward Curtis, dean of student services at Jackson State, was director of housing, acting director of men and commissioner of the campus police force at the time. He says it wasn’t just one injustice that made students so restless. Blacks were being sent to Vietnam in disproportionate numbers, and a ROTC division had recently been established on campus. Add to that the shootings at Kent State and the early closing of most other universities. Students were tired. It was humid. And in Jackson, there was ever-present discrimination by white people.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair...

“If something happened in the country that had racial overtones, the students tended to take it out on Lynch Street,” Curtis says. “Both the war and civil rights were tied in together. Blacks were upset that they were being drafted to go fight a war against people who’d never done anything to them, when they had their own war at home.”

Prompted by a phone call from city police advising of trouble at Jackson State’s campus, Gov. John Bell Williams ordered the Mississippi Highway Patrol to establish law and order the evening of May 13. He also called the Mississippi National Guard to standby. Police closed off campus and secured the area as “corner-boys,” nonstudents who hung around the neighborhood, set a bonfire in the middle of the street and tried to gain support for a march downtown. The crowd threatened the ROTC building and broke the glass out of a street light. Eventually the young people dispersed.

The following day, even after President Peoples met with students twice to discuss their grievances, unrest continued. Again, police forces cut off Lynch Street. This time, State Highway patrolmen and city police formed a skirmish line and began marching through campus. Curtis was one of the non uniformed members of campus police walking behind the group that fired on a crowd of students. The white patrolmen later defended their actions on their belief that sniper fire came from one of the dormitory windows.

The situation almost turned into a slaughter. Photos taken the day after show a bullet-ridden brick building with almost every pane of glass shattered. The firepower wasn’t concentrated in one area, either. Bullet holes can be found to this day on the exterior of Ayer Hall, almost 180 degrees across the street.

“I thought they were shooting in one direction, but they must have shot in an arc,” Curtis says. “The group marched away. I don’t think they realized the damage they’d done.”

Doris Davis-Donerson was not a typical student at Jackson State College. As a 20-year-old junior in 1970, she balanced a husband, child and job in addition to her elementary education major. Despite her responsibilities, she was not removed from the issues of civil rights and the Vietnam War.

Davis-Donerson, now a teacher living with her family in Hudson, Ohio, thinks of the late ’60s and early ’70s as times when people really started to critically analyze things for themselves instead of taking the ideas handed to them. She says the civil rights movement made people more sensitive to the other movements and that white and black causes came together at the time.

Although Davis-Donerson did note tension at Jackson State, she was accustomed to demonstrations on campus and the racist climate of the city. She never could have predicted what would occur, one spring night in 1970, even after the shootings at Kent State.

Like other students, Davis-Donerson was horrified. And she agrees that the Highway Patrol would never have gone to a white college in Mississippi for the same reason. “If they didn’t go with intent to kill, why did they have weapons?” she asks.

Davis-Donerson compares the incident at Jackson to May 4. She says it was not much different from Kent State because there was discrimination in Kent, too, but not just racism.

As to why the Kent State shootings were more publicized than Jackson’s tragedy, Davis-Donerson points to the media. She feels they focused on Kent State because more people could identify with it, in a state that carried more weight than Mississippi. More people would say, “We will not allow this to happen again.”

— Lisa Hofmann

Two young black men died: Phillip Gibbs, 21, a Jackson State student, and James Earl Green, 17, a high school student from the neighborhood who was heading home from work. Gibbs left behind his young wife and 2-month-old son Phillip Jr. in Ripley, Miss. With all the firepower used by police that night, it’s a miracle only two died. Young says. He and others camped out on the lawn, mourning all night and refusing to let police clean up the evidence. Some accounts suggested that only highway patrolmen fired on the students. But other reports indicated city police fired as well.

The next day, Jackson State made headlines.
Cecil Forbes

Cecil Forbes never had a ceremony to recognize his graduation from Jackson State College. As a 1970 graduate, he was denied the "pomp and circumstance" because the campus was still recovering from the May 14 shootings.

On the evening of the shootings, Forbes, a health and physical education major, and friend Charles Miller picked up dates at Alexander Hall, the site of the shootings. Not more than a quarter mile down the street, they heard a minute's worth of gunfire.

The next morning campus was beginning to clear out, and Forbes helped by driving girls to bus stops and even funding some of their trips home. After about 10 chauffeuring trips, he and two other students finally left campus. Shaken and frightened, they drove straight to Forbes' hometown of Detroit, stopping only for gas.

Like Davis-Donerson, Forbes agrees that the shootings probably would not have occurred at a white university.

To him, the patrol "had no regard to life."

He was also dismayed by the idea that "the people sworn to protect you would do that." Now a Detroit resident working as high school administrator, Forbes has traveled around the world, casually observing how people are treated. But he says the worst treatment of people he has witnessed was in Jackson, Miss.

— Lisa Hofmann

Juanita Murray, the university archivist at Jackson State, is caretaker of the most heavily used collection in the university's archives. At first, she'll tell you Jackson State's shooting had nothing in common with Kent State. The shootings were on the all-black campus of a small college at night on the weekend. The shootings at Kent State took place in the middle of the day, in the middle of campus following an organized protest.

"At Kent State there are photographs from the beginning of the incident on," Murray says. "There are no photographs of that night at Jackson State. There are no photographs of the bodies lying on the ground... there was enough time to cover up what happened before the next newscast."

Even university photographer Newton Handy, a local photographer at the time, couldn't get a camera on campus when he heard gunfire and the screams of students. Handy did snap photos of the aftermath in the days that followed, including one of a drunk white motorist who careened into a temporary barricade on Lynch Street. Today the street is closed through campus, and a plaza covers the pavement where so many bullets fell. It is a point of congregation for many students.

Murray calls the quick cleanup at Jackson one of the best cover-ups of the century. The bodies were cleared away quickly. Local police tried to remove shattered glass from the dormitory windows, but students from Jackson and even sympathetic whites camped out on the lawn, demanding FBI attention before the evidence was removed.

The deaths at Jackson State also received poor and racist local coverage, Murray says. Several articles in the archives report findings of alcohol in Gibbs' blood — enough to make him legally drunk. More accurate media coverage came out of the New Orleans Times-Picayune. But even the Blue and White Flash student newspaper didn't publish coverage of the event until a year later in a May 1971 special edition.

"There is still so much that isn't there," she says. "You could write five more books on this one collection. There's a lot of work that could still be done out of both incidents."

In Jackson, investigations followed as they did in Kent. One was launched by a bi-racial committee formed by the city's mayor, another by the FBI. Highway patrolmen refused to cooperate either, so U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell called a federal grand jury to decide the case.
Members of that grand jury, the Hinds County Grand Jury in Jackson, and a civil trial jury in the more liberal Biloxi, Miss., all declined to indict any of the officers who opened fire at Jackson State. Hinds County jurors called for the indictment of a black nonstudent, but those charges later were dropped.

The tragedy of it all was that Kent was white, and Gibbs and Green's. Young says there are good reasons why the names of the two institutions will forever be spoken in the same breath.

"It happened in the same historical time perspective," he says. "It happened to students on a college campus. It happened to students who were using their most basic right of freedom of expression. The tragedy of it all was that Kent was white, and Jackson State was black. Had it not been for that fact, I don't think the world would have said anything about (Gibbs' and Green's) deaths."

All of this history means something to Demetrius Gibbs. When other options for a college education fell through, Gibbs' mother told him to call Gene Young at Jackson State. Young guided Gibbs to scholarship money and housing that made his education possible. Gibbs started classes at Jackson State knowing little of the events that led up to his father's death. Young gave him the book Lynch Street and a wealth of knowledge from his experiences.

Although Gibbs admits he'll never understand May 1970 — and why people get angry over accusations and emotions — he says remembering the story is important for college students today who don't take their education seriously. Now a loan officer with a household finance company in Mesa, Ariz., Gibbs says he tries to connect with students in his apartment complex who skip class. The Gibbs-Green Affair and what little he knows of Kent State have taught him about the country in which we live.

"You're not safe anywhere you go," he says. "My mother and my grandmother sent my father to Jackson State to get an education. When I got to college, all I was worried about was getting to class. My dad and the people at Kent State had other things on their minds. It hasn't always been this easy. In the '70s, blacks had to fight to get to class."

In February, Jackson State came under the leadership of a new president, Ronald Mason Jr. With the administrative changes, university officials had yet to finalize how the deaths of Gibbs and Green will be remembered in 2000. However, they were confident that May 14, 1970, would be remembered. The university has held a commemoration ceremony every five years since the event.

For Demetrius Gibbs, the 25th commemoration of the shootings on the eve of his graduation brought closure to his family's story. But, he says, "Twenty-five is not enough. My dad is still gone."

The story should be retold, again and again, because as he says, "If it saves one, that's one more."

His words, an adaptation from a school drug education program, are a modern-day version of those of his mentor, Gene Young.

"We have to continue to be vigilant to stand up for people's right to express themselves," Young says. "Santana's refrain always gets to me: 'Those who fail to remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' Once we fail to remember, we open up the possibility that those same things can occur again."

... I still have a dream.
They were nine men at different points in their lives. In one day, everything changed.

By Erin Kosnac and Melissa Hostetler

Many Americans can tell you where they were on May 4, 1970, when they heard that four students were killed, just like they can tell you where they were when President Kennedy was shot. For most though, May 4, 1970, is only a passing memory, something to think about and reflect on every spring. But for nine men it is much more.

In May 1970, these young men were at various places in their college careers. Some were close to graduating. Others were just beginning.

Each has his own story of how he came to be at the rally and where his life has gone since the day the Ohio National Guard fired.

These are their stories and their lives 30 years later.

Joseph Lewis: Did Nothing Wrong

Two bullets entered their son, but Joseph Lewis' parents assumed the National Guard was in the right. The Massillon native was a freshman social work major and the youngest of those wounded at Kent State. One bullet entered just below his belt on his right side and exited on his left side around where his jeans pocket would be. The other bullet entered between the two bones in his lower leg about six inches above his ankle. Lewis nearly died from his injuries.

Lewis was taken to Robinson Memorial Hospital in Ravenna. While he was in intensive care, his parents were upset for two reasons: first, because he had been shot and second, because they thought he had done something to deserve it.

"My parents were very upset because of what they were reading in the paper," Lewis says, adding that it took him a while to convince his parents that he had done nothing wrong.

In general, the local reaction to the May 4 shootings lowered Lewis' opinion of people in Kent and Ohio and ended his college career without a degree. After another quarter of classes, Lewis moved to Oregon in 1972 and still lives there in Scappoose, in the northwest corner of the state.

Lewis originally went to Oregon to visit a friend's brother. Discovering he liked it there, he found a place to live and a job.

"I was impressed with the politics," he says. "The governor was Tom McCall, and he was very interested in cleaning up the environment, which is ultimately the field I got into."

Lewis now works for his community in water treatment.

"I might not have come to Oregon if I hadn't been shot," Lewis says. "I wouldn't have been the same."

His life has changed, and his politics have shifted.

"I'm a father, and my politics are involved with my children," he says. "As for my political involvement, it's them. I'm still suspicious of authority. I still look to see the truth buried in the headlines."

For about the past eight years, Lewis and Jim Russell, one of the other nine students who was wounded, have spoken to local high schools together about their experiences at Kent State. Though it's emotionally draining and upsetting for Lewis to do these talks, he feels it is a good lesson for the students, especially because he and Russell had such different backgrounds at the time of the shootings.

"I'm still suspicious of authority. I still look to see the truth buried in the headlines."

"I was more in the middle of things, and he was more observing things," Lewis says. "He was a senior, and I was a freshman. He was in a fraternity, and I was in a dorm. There were a lot of differences. But our feelings afterward weren't too different."

Though it is hard for him to comment on his life and guess how it might be different if he had not been shot at Kent State, Lewis feels his world view has not changed. In fact, he is surprised at how much it has stayed the same.

"When I was 19, I thought that when I was 50, which is fast approaching, my world view would be so much different," he says. "It's surprising how much I've stayed the same."
Activist Alan Canfora confronts guardsmen minutes before they turned at the top of Blanket Hill and fired. Photographer John Filo later told Canfora on Good Morning America that he thought this was his best picture until he captured the Pulitzer Prize-winning Mary Ann Vecchio series.
Jim Russell: Stopped Caring About Kent State

They were Jim Russell's "angels of mercy" — two female nursing students in Lake Hall. After being shot in the right thigh, Russell was able to limp over to Lake Hall, but a counselor there grabbed him and wouldn't let him go anywhere as he dripped blood all over the floor. But the two nursing students pushed the counselor out of the way, supported Russell under each arm and helped him walk to the Health Center.

His arrival put the Health Center into a state of panic again because all the other ambulances had already left. Russell had to lie there and wait for an ambulance to be sent from Akron that would take him to St. Thomas Hospital.

After his leg was sewn up and an unsuccessful attempt was made to retrieve an elusive shot gun pellet from above his eye, Russell was told he was going to be released. But then he was told to get back into bed because he was going to be questioned. With the help of an orderly, he was able to escape.

About 4 p.m., Russell was back in Kent. He recalls that the place was "crawling with federal people." He had to go back to the Health Center because he left his wallet there.

Russell still remembers what it felt like when he was shot — both physically and emotionally.

"I remember feeling like someone hit me in the head with a hammer," Russell says. "It caught me by surprise. I didn't think I was a threat. I didn't think I deserved to die."

But Russell recalls one evening after the shootings when he was having dinner at a classmate's house. The classmate's father came home drunk and said the National Guard should have shot more students — and that included his son.

Russell, who had become friends with fellow wounded student Joseph Lewis during the trials, listened to Lewis' advice to come to Oregon to visit. Originally from Mt. Lebanon, Pa., he moved to Oregon in 1975 to escape Kent's atmosphere and attitude of denial.

"I came out here and was allowed to be a part of the system," says Russell, who lives about 50 miles north of Portland in St. Helens. "I knew that wouldn't happen in Ohio."

In fact, Russell recalls being treated like a political pariah by the local community and university. He and his father were fired from their jobs after it was discovered that Russell was shot at Kent State.

"My dad lost his job because of it," he says. "Because I had a stigma. I was a political enemy of the nation. I was something bad."

Russell was in his fifth and senior year at Kent State when he was shot. He was planning to continue there at the graduate level.

Russell, who was studying art and advertising, went to the dean of his college to settle the matter of his remaining required class.

"His comment to me was that they decided to give me my diploma in spite of that one requirement and that the university wanted me out."

But Russell has moved on. He had planned a future in advertising, but since 1975 he has been an architectural engineer, designing streets and buildings for his community and speaking at high schools with Joseph Lewis each year.
"The campus can burn down for all I care," he says. "I stopped caring about Kent State."

Russell now finds pleasure in seeing people in a building or park he designed and finds justice in the life of his daughter.

"I have tried to raise my daughter, who is my ideal of fairness and justice, to do good in the community and spot bullshit in the community," he says.

As a parent, Russell can't imagine how the parents of the four students killed dealt with that loss.

"I don't know how these folks handled the loss of their children, especially when it was a safe zone," Russell says. "It was a place to send children for growth, not loss."

Being shot at Kent State has certainly altered Russell's life. He believes he might have pursued more individualistic goals instead of becoming a civil servant, and if not for the shootings, Russell might not have met his wife. Russell was introduced to his wife, also a Kent State student, by Lewis after the shootings.

But Russell says the shootings were a very small part of his campus life. He graduated shortly after and moved on with his life.

Tom Grace: Discovered the Irony

The rally on May 4, 1970, was just one that Tom Grace, a sophomore history and political science double major, took part in.

"For the first several years that I was on campus, I attended some anti-war demonstrations," says Grace, who graduated from Kent State in 1972 with degrees in history and political science.

"That's all I did. I didn't organize people to go. I didn't pass out fliers. I just attended them to help swell the numbers of people there, in effect to do my small part to end the war in Vietnam. I was a soldier, not an officer in that war."

But this protest was the one that would change his life. Grace, who was shot in the left heel and taken to Robinson Memorial Hospital in Ravenna, has become more comfortable with his place in history.

"I've come to terms," he says. "But there was a part of me that resented living in the shadow of it. It became an identity, but it wasn't an identity any of us ever sought. If that bullet happened to go one way or the other, you and I wouldn't be talking."

Even as a student Grace was very serious about his politics.

"It wasn't an identity any of us ever sought"

"I've always realized there were high stakes involved," he says. "I never saw it as being frivolous or something that is a lark."

And although he admits he might have slowed down a bit, this Democratic committee member still holds his political beliefs intact. Actually, May 4 gave him a greater feeling of resolve about his politics and forced him to be a more public person.

Today Grace lives in Buffalo, in his home state of New York, where he works as a social worker. He has also been attending graduate school part-time at SUNY-Buffalo and only has his dissertation to complete before receiving his doctorate in history. Grace is researching May 4 to give an analytical account of the incident.

He hopes to draw from and build upon some of the work done by Kent State professors Jerry M. Lewis and Thomas Hensley. But Grace is more interested in covering a longer chronological period and the origins of student activism.

"There is a myth that the shootings at Kent State silenced student activism," Grace says. "Anyone who went through The (Daily) Kent Stater or the Record-Courier or Akron Beacon Journal would not come to that conclusion. I think it reinforced the pre-existing belief system. By seeing armed terror used on civilians, it tends to focus one's attention and to arouse one's anger."

But for a long time, Grace's historical attention was not on Kent State.

"Alan Canfora would often chastise me about caring more about what happened in the 19th century than about what happened at Kent State," he says.

Only recently did his attention shift from the 19th century to the 20th century. And for Grace, this was a part of coming to terms with May 4.

"I remember telling someone once that I enrolled in Kent State to study American history and, through no intention of my own, became a part of it," he says. "I guess if you're looking for irony, there it is."

Scott MacKenzie: Was Morally Opposed

Junior Scott MacKenzie was sitting in his class in Franklin Hall on May 4, 1970. Because he lived on the other side of campus, he had to pass by the rally. A few students were by the Victory Bell at the bottom of Blanket Hill, and more were gathering. Thirty years later, the events are fuzzy in his mind.

"I was pretty much just on the outskirts," he says. "This was really the middle of campus so it was really hard to avoid, and more people started to gather."

The Guardsmen became stronger in their attempt to disperse the students and were driving their jeeps closer to the students and shouting commands through a bullhorn.

"They walked back up to the hill, and at a precise time, as if in unison, started firing," MacKenzie says.

Thinking they were not real bullets, MacKenzie began walking away with his back to the Guard. And he was shot in the back of his neck one inch from his spinal column. The bullet exited through his cheek.

"I remember thinking at that time, 'Holy shit, I got shot,'" says MacKenzie, who was taken to St. Thomas Hospital in Akron.

The lower section of MacKenzie's jaw on his left side is permanently numb. One of his taste buds also was injured, causing a sharp and stinging sensation when he eats certain foods.

Fairly middle-of-the-road in his politics at the time, MacKenzie was never a member of an anti-war group but would occasionally go to hear someone speak.

December 1966 — More than 385,000 American troops are stationed in Vietnam and more than 60,000 sailors are stationed offshore.
"I was personally opposed to the war," he says. "I was morally opposed. I was spiritually opposed. I thought it was a real bad idea for us to be there. That was my thinking and had been for quite a while."

MacKenzie, originally from Richboro, Pa., about an hour from Philadelphia, earned a degree in economics from Kent State in 1971. He earned another degree in industrial education from Millersville State University in Millersville, Pa. Today MacKenzie lives in Havre, Mont., and is a professor of design drafting at Montana State University Northern.

The most lasting effect of the shootings is his cynicism about the judicial system. He also finds himself more concerned with environmental issues.

"After the event and the trials, it made me question the justice system," he says. "To me it really wasn't that effective in this case. We just don't really get to the truth or the responsible parties weren't held as accountable as they should be."

Though not sure who is to blame, MacKenzie feels there was a coverup on the part of the university or the government to never fully disclose what happened on May 4 and why.

He says May 4 did not alter his life immensely. He tries not to relive the event every day. And he feels he would have become a professor regardless of being shot. He is also one of the less vocal of the nine wounded students.

"A lot of people don't want to hear it," he says. He is clearly hesitant to talk but will oblige those who want to hear his story. "I maybe have an obligation to talk to people who want to hear about it. It's one of those decisions you have to make about what really leads to harmony. And that's not always easy."

John Cleary: Couldn't Be Stopped

He just wanted one last picture. But the Guard turned. They fired. He was shot.

John Cleary knew he wanted to be an architect. His father's co-worker had a son who was in the architecture program at Kent State. He showed Cleary some of the work the students were doing at Kent State. Cleary liked what he saw: the campus, the department, the facilities. He left Scotia, N.Y., near the Schenectady-Albany area, for Kent.

Cleary says it was a tumultuous time to be a student. "I was pretty neutral at that time," he says. "My parents were pretty conservative. Whatever policy the government started, they thought we as citizens should follow it. I was stuck in the middle. I saw things with the war I didn't agree with. I had friends in the war, though, and I had to support them. But I didn't agree 100 percent."

As a freshman in 1970, Cleary had high goals. And after the shootings, he didn't want to lose sight of that.

"At that age, my primary goal was to get through college and get a degree and get registered as an architect," Cleary says. "After the shootings, I tried to make a concerted effort to keep on track. I didn't want that to deter me from my ultimate goals.

"Of course, it does change you. You have to look at life a little differently. When we're teen-agers, we think we're immortal, and nothing can hurt us. This was a large dose of reality that we aren't immortal."

Cleary sensed the tension on campus because of the military presence. But he says no one thought Monday's rally would be violent.

Cleary had a design class at 1 p.m. in Taylor Hall. He left a little bit early to set up for class and also because he was curious to see what was happening at the rally.

"I wanted to pick up where I left off"

With an instant camera he borrowed from his roommate, he stood next to Johnson Hall and watched the guardsmen. He watched them break up the rally with tear gas. He watched them march in formation to Taylor Hall, pushing the students over Blanket Hill, past the Pagoda and into the parking lot. He stood off to the side to let the guardsmen go by. Cleary then decided to go into Taylor Hall for his class. But something caught his eye.
Having been shot in the chest, Cleary was taken to Robinson. He was fortunate the bullet missed most of his vital organs, but a portion of his lung still had to be removed.

He was in intensive care for 10 days and in the hospital for about another week. Then he went back to New York for the summer.

Cleary says he could find no reason for the guardsmen to fire.

“I couldn’t believe the Guard had live ammunition,” he says.

“And I never felt their lives were in any danger. I don’t feel other than shouting and an occasional rock or two there was any justification for what they did.”

But Cleary wasn’t going to let this stop him from coming back to Kent State in the fall.

“I wanted to pick up where I left off and continue along with my studies,” he says. “I didn’t want it to deter my goals. I don’t think my parents were that apprehensive. They knew I wasn’t really politically involved. It was just a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. And I promised them if there were any more rallies or confrontations, I wouldn’t be anywhere near them.”

Cleary eventually accomplished the goal he had set for himself when he came to college. He graduated from Kent State in 1974 with a degree in architecture and was registered about five years later. Today he works for the architecture firm MacLachlan, Cornelious & Filoni in Pittsburgh, where he lives with his wife and two children.

While the shootings did not change Cleary’s ultimate goals, it did change his perspective.

“I think it’s made me look at life a little more day to day,” he says. “Life is precious, and we need to enjoy life a little bit and realize we’re not going to be here forever on earth. We need to set some goals and go after them. And somewhere in between, we need to enjoy life.”

Robert Stamps: Witnessed a Revolution

Forty-five minutes — that’s as far away as the doctors wanted him to go to school. So in the fall of 1968, South Euclid native Robert Stamps started at Kent State. And he had one priority in mind.

“I was so sick because I had Crohn’s disease that all I wanted to do was stay healthy enough to finish college,” Stamps says. “I wasn’t even thinking about my future. I just wanted to graduate because I was used to spending every summer in the hospital.”

Crohn’s disease causes part of the small intestine to become inflamed and infected, which results in cramps and a fever. Even with his condition, Stamps double majored in Spanish and sociology during an “electrifying time.”

“It was such a spectacular time that it’s difficult to put into words because things were changing so fast,” he says. “Students felt as if they had the power to change the world.”

Kent State students also felt they had the right to protest as they gathered on the Commons on May 4, 1970.

On that Monday morning, Stamps went to classes as usual. Then his sociology class ended, and he walked toward the Commons.

“And when I got there,” he says, “the Guard came out and told everyone to disperse. Then a tear gas canister landed at my feet, and I got a whiff right in the face.”

Stamps went into Prentice Hall until he could breathe again and prepared to go back to Tri-Towers. Then someone stopped him.

“Somebody said something might still be going on,” he says. “And something was just about to happen.”

“The Guard started marching back up the hill,” he says. “And before I knew it, they turned around and started to fire. Instinctively, I turned around and started to run away. I took about three or four steps, and that’s when it got me in the back.”

A group of people carried Stamps into Dunbar Hall to wait for an ambulance. Inside Dunbar, several students stood gawking at him.

“I thought the second American revolution had just begun”

“I said to them, ‘What are you looking at? There are probably 15 who have been shot?’” Stamps says. “That number came out of thin air. I told them, ‘You need to get out there and get going on this.’”

After about 10 minutes when the ambulance arrived, Stamps was told he couldn’t go because the ambulance was needed to transport two people who were more seriously wounded. Those two were Allison Krause and Jeffrey Miller. With Krause’s boyfriend Barry Levine between her and Miller in the back of the ambulance, Stamps sat in the front for the ride to Robinson.

“I thought the second American revolution had just begun,” Stamps says.

And at the hospital, Stamps says he was met with abuse from the staff as well as his roommate.

“They (the staff) were as rude as they could possibly be,” he says. “I felt like I was in another country. They were automatically blaming us for everything that happened. They had no idea what the circumstances were.”

Even Stamps’ hospital roommate had an explanation for why he was shot. He asked Stamps if he was a Christian, and Stamps told him, “As a matter of fact, I’m not.” The roommate’s answer was: “you refused to take the Lord Jesus in your heart as your savior.”

The next morning, Stamps’ parents took him to University Hospitals in Cleveland. The bullet, which had entered through his back, went down into his leg and broke his femur bone, just missing the femoral artery. While he was not critically injured, Stamps spent most of the summer in the hospital.

Then it was time to return to school. Initially his family told him there was no way he was going back to Kent State. Stamps quickly applied to other schools. But then something changed.

“Over the summer, students and faculty came to the house to visit,” he says. “And my parents realized what a fantastic support system I had in Kent. They eventually encouraged me to go back and finish my degree.”

In 1972 Stamps graduated with degrees in both sociology and Spanish. He also went on to receive a master’s in sociology in 1975 and a master’s in journalism and mass communication in 1999 from Kent State.

Today Stamps lives in Lakewood, where he writes books and articles about social science. He also teaches college courses periodically.

Although 30 years have passed, some of his views have remained the same.
"What I thought about then is that we had a military industrial complex in charge of things, profiting handsomely from making war," he says. "And I think the same thing today. I think something like this could happen again easily, especially if students decide they have a bellyful of a government put up for sale to the highest bidder."

To Stamps, May 4 is one of the more important events in American history. And he sees himself as a part of this history — to a certain extent.

"Yes, I am," he says. "But there were also lots of other people there that day who just didn't happen to step in front of a bullet."

Alan Canfora: Won't Let Us Forget

After the 12.53 seconds of gunfire, Alan Canfora was one of the 13 students hit. But his own wound was not his primary concern. His friend Tom Grace's was.

Having been shot through the ankle, Grace had bones protruding from the bottom of his foot. Canfora ran to be with his friend. Once others came to help Grace, Canfora ran to get help for himself.

He ran through the parking lot. He ran by Jeffrey Miller's body. He ran by Dunbar Hall and into Nixson Hall. By the time he reached Nixson, his wrist was bleeding badly, and he asked a female student for a towel. Canfora then rinsed his wrist off in the water fountain. Knowing he needed to get to a hospital, he ran out of the building and jumped in front of the first car at the stop sign: a Ford driven by a graduate student and his wife. They took him to Robinson.

When Canfora reached the emergency room of the hospital, the back door of one of the ambulances was open. Lying flat on his back on a stretcher was Jeffrey Miller.

"I saw he had a gunshot wound to the face. A bullet had entered his cheek," Canfora says. "At that point I was hoping he was still alive. I was hoping it was just a flesh wound, and he was unconscious. That was the last time I saw my friend Jeffrey Miller."

These are the details Alan Canfora wants to make sure no one ever forgets.

Canfora, who still lives in his hometown of Barberton, came to a branch campus of Kent State in fall 1967 and transferred to the main campus his sophomore year. Canfora lived in Johnson Hall, where he first met Tom Grace.

"My first day in the dorm, within 15 minutes of my arrival in the dorm, I heard music playing through the walls," he says. "It was the group called Cream. Actually, I remember the song. It was 'Crossroads' with Eric Clapton. I went next door and knocked on the door, and I introduced myself to the guys there. One of them was Tom Grace. It turned out that we became best friends that year."

Canfora, whose father was a councilman in Barberton and an active member of his union, had always been politically active.

This was what prompted Canfora and Grace to join the Students for a Democratic Society.

"That's when we both really began a very anti-war evolution, a process of radicalization by being around these radical, militant, anti-war students in the SDS," he says.

"We got more involved with the counterculture. We let our hair grow long, started smoking pot, stopped going to church, hanging out with wild hippie women from Cleveland—things like that."

Canfora and Grace ended up being more than just roommates and friends.

"We went through our whole political metamorphosis together," he says. "And then we ended up getting shot together."

Canfora is unmistakably the most outspoken of the nine men wounded on that day. And he has used his voice to ensure that what happened on May 4, 1970, is never forgotten. Canfora, who works as the deputy director for the Summit County Board of Elections and teaches at the International Institute in Akron, is also the director of the May 4 Center and answers e-mails and letters from high school and elementary students who are curious about its history.

Canfora intended to be a lawyer or writer before being shot in the wrist on May. He graduated from the Kent State Stark branch in 1972 with a degree in general studies. Yet he's still pursuing one of his dreams. He is writing a memoir focusing on the years between 1967 and 1970, which he hopes to have available soon.

"It's an important story I am trying to tell about Vietnam and Kent State," Canfora says. "It is not just a Kent State story. It is not just about what happened here on the campus, and it doesn't just culminate with the shootings. My story tries to link the tragedy of Vietnam with the tragedy of Kent State."

Dean Kahler: Lost His Innocence

May 4 left him in a wheelchair. But he's not angry or bitter. He moved on with his life a long time ago.

"It comes up when it is brought up to me," Dean Kahler says. "I have an active life and a full head of thoughts. It doesn't really come into my head, 'Oh, woe is me! I was shot at Kent State.'"

The wheelchair is a constant reminder. But it only takes me about a nanosecond to acknowledge."

"What are they going to do now? They shot me once"

Kent State was the perfect choice for Dean Kahler. It was close to his hometown of East Canton, but it was also far enough away to be a long-distance phone call home. And it had a very good education department, which was what Kahler majored in when he started at Kent State in the spring of 1970.

On May 4, 1970, Kahler and some of his dorm mates from Wright Hall walked up to Blanket Hill.

"We hung around for a while, but not much was happening," he says. "Some people were talking about the -ism's of the day — communism, capitalism, imperialism. But I didn't know what that had to do with the invasion of Cambodia and when the National Guard was going to get off campus."

After the guardsmen drove the students into the parking lot, Kahler threw a handful of gravel at them from about 100 yards away. "Obviously, I was not going to hit anybody," he says.

Kahler watched the Guard reach the top of the hill. They turned and fired. He hit the ground behind Jeffrey Miller.

"I was lying on the ground, and then I got hit," he says. "It seemed like an eternity that I was just lying there before I got hit."

January 1969 — President Richard Nixon takes office. His Vietnam strategy includes "Vietnamization" (turning the war over to South Vietnam) and the withdrawal of American forces.
Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic, left, meets wounded student Dean Kahler in 1977 at the Victory Bell on the Commons. (Kent State Archives photo)

“The big thing I remember is looking up and seeing the look of shock and terror on the faces of the students. Innocence was being taken away from people on a college campus where students are shot.”

Having a fairly extensive first aid background from his days as a Boy Scout, Kahler knew he had suffered a spinal cord injury from the bullet, which had entered right below his left shoulder. Time passed. He worried about whether he would live or die.

As Kahler lay on the ground, a student whom he didn’t even know came up and asked for his parents’ phone number. This student then made one of the last few calls from campus before the phone lines were cut. And that is how Dean Kahler’s parents found out their son had been shot.

As Kahler was being placed in the ambulance that would take him to Robinson, he saw a guy with whom he had walked up to Blanket Hill.

“He gave me the peace sign,” Kahler says. “And I gave him the thumbs up — or maybe vice versa.”

Kahler’s wound left him a paraplegic. He spent three weeks in Robinson and more time in Highland View Hospital in Cleveland until Oct. 25, 1970.

But there was never a doubt in Kahler’s mind about returning to Kent State to finish his education.

“I wanted to come back to school, and I wanted to come back to Kent,” he says. “My teachers and my professors were all great. My friends were there. I was alive. I wanted to be a productive member of society.”

With his parents supporting his decision, Kahler returned to Kent State in January 1971.

“I told them, ‘What are they going to do now? They shot me once,’” he says.

In June 1977, Kahler graduated with a degree in secondary education with an emphasis in comprehensive social studies. And now he is teaching history and government to high school seniors at Tri-County Joint Vocational School in Nelsonville.

Douglas Wrentmore: A passerby

Those who know Doug Wrentmore describe him as quiet and reclusive. Through the years, his name has dropped out of the interviews and articles about May 4. But in 1970, Wrentmore allowed author James Michener the chance to interview him for his novel “Kent State: What happened and Why.” The Michener book was one of the first comprehensive accounts of May 4. It has also been criticized for inaccuracies in its reporting.

Michener described Wrentmore to the same effect – “the kind of student a good university hopes to enroll, well behaved, intelligent... he believed in saving nature but he wasn’t a freak about it.”

Originally from Northfield, Wrentmore was a 20-year-old sophomore in 1970. He was cutting across the parking lot to make his 1:10 p.m. English class. He heard the crack of guns, and in an instant he couldn’t walk anymore. A bullet had stuck his right knee, fracturing his tibia. He hit the ground and crawled behind a blue Chevrolet as bullets hit the other side of the car. Like the majority of students, he assumed it was just buckshot.

“It wasn’t until we were on the highway when an ambulance passed and that I knew what had happened,” Wrentmore told Knight Ridder reporters in May, 1970. “It wasn’t really birdshot.”

Then, as he watched more students coming in on stretchers at Robinson, he began to fully understand the degree of what happened.

“Most of them were a lot worse off than I was,” Wrentmore said. “It is really something when you see a girl lying on a stretcher, her face is all contorted and swollen, and then, you know, they pick up this sheet and they lay it slow over her.

That does something to you.”
Moments Before...

May 1, 1970 – Kent Mayor Leroy Satrom requests the National Guard to maintain order at Kent State.

8 p.m. – A large crowd forms in the Commons, chanting anti-war slogans and making brief speeches. The nearly 2,000 protesters march to the ROTC building, and a fire is started. After harassment from the crowd, firemen return with the police to extinguish the fire for the second time.
• 10 p.m. - The National Guard arrives on campus to see the ROTC building fully ablaze. The Guard, using tear gas and drawn bayonets, chases students and bystanders back to their dorms. The issue of who set fire to the ROTC building remains unresolved.

Sunday, May 3, 1970
• Nearly 1,000 guardsmen occupy campus.
• Gov. James A. Rhodes flies to Kent. At a press conference he calls protesters the worst type of Americans and says every force of law would be used to deal with them.
• More confrontations between protesters and guardsmen occur in the evening.
It is necessary to analyze.

She had strong feelings for people.

into the

I had two daughters. I now have one.

My heart aches at the loss of my friend.

Jeffrey Miller  Sandra Scheuer  William Schroeder  Allison Krause

Monday, May 4, 1970

- The May 4 rallies are prohibited as long as the Guard controls campus. The University passes out leaflets in the morning explaining the ban.
- Noon. - The Commons area has at least 2,000 people. The rally is mostly a protest of the Guard’s presence, but an anti-war sentiment is also expressed.
- Ordered to disperse, some members of the crowd shouts and throws rocks at the guardsmen. The Guard launches tear gas into the crowd and is met with more taunting.
- The Guard marches up Blanket Hill. At the top, 28 guardsmen shoot into the air, the ground, or the crowd. In 13 seconds 61 to 67 shots are fired.
Dates and facts are not enough to show what happened in the past when dealing with people. It is necessary to analyze and delve into the human side of history to come up with the truth. History must be made relevant to the present to make it useful.

Above is a collage of excerpts of Allison Krause’s history exam in spring quarter 1970, and letters written to and from the families. The asphalt picture behind the timeline is taken from the parking lot where the four students fell.

- Jeffrey Miller is shot in the mouth and dies
- Allison Krause dies from a shot penetrating the left side of her body
- William Schroeder is shot in the back and dies
- Sandra Scheuer dies from a shot in the neck
- Nine other Kent State students are wounded by the gunfire
- The University closes three hours after the shootings. Classes do not resume until the summer of 1970
Brother and Sister, Beware

By Amanda Young
Illustration By Susanna Harley

Only outsiders refer to Curtis Pittman by his full name. An ambitious student at Kent State and an officer of Black United Students in 1970, Pittman was called “Jeter” by his friends for reasons unexplained. He wore dark shades, dark threads and combat boots to convey messages of Black Power.

Pittman almost joined the Marines before he enrolled at Kent State. He thought it would be a good job opportunity. The Marines wouldn’t accept him because he has some fingers missing from his hands, so he majored in engineering and excelled in sports at Kent State instead. On Saturday, May 2, 1970, the sophomore returned from a track meet at Bowling Green State University. He found, beneath the surface calm, that the campus was eerily in waiting. The National Guard had already settled at the bottom of the hill behind Taylor Hall, where the Art Building now stands.

“We felt that with the National Guard on campus, the first people who would have got shot was us,” Pittman says.

Many of Kent State’s African-American students paralleled the philosophy of the Black Panther Party: Better revolt to get things accomplished. They were Black and Proud. On the list of demands to the university, vehemently expressed by BUS President Erwind Blount, was an increase in enrollment of 5,000 black students by the next fall quarter, an all-black faculty in the Afro-American Institute, (now the department of Pan-African Studies) and a new black cultural center. Two years earlier, BUS had staged a walkout to protest recruiters from the Oakland, Calif., police force, who were perceived as racist and abusive toward blacks.

During the 1960s, African-Americans witnessed police brutality at civil rights protests in almost every major city. Members of BUS were well-organized, disciplined and determined to achieve their rights. In the BUS newsletter Black Watch, black students urged that they would use “any means necessary” to improve educational opportunities for minorities at Kent State. Getting by was tough for black students in a university, especially if they were the first generation to attend college.

One element that confounds writers and historians dealing with the shootings on May 4, 1970, is why black students were actively protesting social issues but seeking a low profile when political issues resounded. The civil rights activists were succeeded by a militant generation of young black adults. Along with white students, BUS rallied against the Vietnam War, but its purpose was tailored more toward the rights of black brothers and sisters.

At the core of its argument was disgust for the U.S. government’s sending more blacks to fight on the front lines when they continued to be oppressed at home. The majority of black undergraduates at Kent State in 1970 came from inner-city Cleveland. They had witnessed their neighborhoods being burned during civil rights riots. The same violence happened in Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, N.J., and other major cities across America. The chant, “Hell, no, we won’t go,” could be taken literally by black students of Kent State when the Guard moved onto campus — a little known, mostly white, conservative university in the Midwest — because black student leaders believed for every second that the National Guard might open fire.

The peaceful demonstration that turned into taunting and screaming on May 4 was instigated by a fairly small corps of white students. Much to everyone’s surprise, BUS members did not shut the campus down with their words. They went home or stayed in their dorm rooms — away from loaded guns.
We were not naive

By his own admission, it was a blessing for Larry Simpson, vice president of BUS in 1969, that he never had to face the draft. He wasn’t a BUS officer in the spring quarter of 1970, but he remained active in the organization. Like Pittman, he urged black students to avoid confrontation with the National Guard.

“We knew the National Guard had real guns and the possibility of using them,” Simpson says. “Many white students couldn’t conceive of the National Guard using their guns on them. Some believed they had rubber bullets or blanks. That’s never been the African-American perception of police and armed services.

“It wasn’t that we supported the war. We demonstrated in our own way our disapproval. BUS had a rally that Friday before, protesting the war. When it came to Sunday, we were strongly encouraging our black students to refrain because we were not naïve.”

Simpson describes the language of BUS protests as an edict of Black Power. If the war in Vietnam weighed heavy on their minds, even more pervasive was the government’s treatment of African-Americans in their own country.

“We saw the government oppressing folks in Southeast Asia as well as African-Americans in this country,” Simpson says. “The tenor of the time among blacks was more militant than the civil rights language would lead one to believe. We saw the (social and political) issues as joined.”

Now provost of the Cuyahoga Community College eastern campus, Simpson remembers clearly the talks during BUS’ Sunday meetings. While they formed a strong position against the war, there was still some distrust toward the National Guard among BUS members. Some of the lead characters – BUS President Erwind Blount, Vice President Charles Eberhardt, members Rudy Perry and Curtis Pittman, Bob Pickett, and cohort Brother Fargo (born Dwayne White) – stayed on guard like field marshals to ensure that no black brothers or sisters were near the scene of conflict.

“Our logic proved to be true,” Simpson says. “We were not shocked.”

Simpson stayed in his Glen Morris apartment (now called Eagles Pointe apartments) at lunchtime when the shooting occurred. He was worried about his own brother, who lived in a dorm. The two caught up later that day.

Given those circumstances, Simpson says nothing could have carried him toward the hill.

“Had those issues been directly related to blacks, yes, I would have been there,” he says. “But we had our own issues with the university and the government we were dealing with.”

We had our own position

Silas Ashley heard the gunshots from outside Dunbar Hall. Most African-American students lived in College Towers, but Ashley was one of a handful who lived near front campus. He was just finishing lunch when his dorm became the command area for the National Guard. “More of you will be killed unless you disperse,” he heard a faculty marshal shout through a bullhorn.

Contrary to the accounts of other BUS members, Ashley says he wasn’t encouraged to stay away from any demonstrations.

“I considered myself an activist, and I was very aware of what was going on,” he says. “Freshmen were different in that day because we had the war hanging over our heads. We had to get so many credit hours in or we could get drafted.

“I had my position of the war,” says Ashley, who majored in history and political science. “The overwhelming perspective was that there were more blacks on the front lines than whites, so I was opposed to that. A tremendous anti-war sentiment by blacks was echoed by white students. We had an accord in terms of those who were in the anti-war vein.
On Friday, May 1, BUS held a rally in response to President Nixon's announcement that American soldiers were invading Cambodia and that thousands more would be drafted for the war. Rumors circulated among white students that BUS would pick a fight, likely because of its reputation for demonstrating and making its demands. But Ashley points to predominantly white groups, such as Students for a Democratic Society, which were more vocal in the anti-war movement on campus.

“The rally was more like a big group meeting where we stated our position,” Ashley says. “It became a media issue (after the burning of the ROTC building). We discussed mutually how we felt about the war and how it related to black students. We weren't happy with black folks' treatment at Kent.”

As for shutting the campus down, “We weren't even considering doing anything close to that,” he says. “Just in terms of May 4, we really had no direct input. You have to understand that the incident was really spontaneous. It was never, ever intended to go that far and to get those results.

The ROTC building was the first direct act of campus-invading activity. Instead of cooling their heads, the university brought in police activity. Then 500 people became 2,000 ... it escalated by bringing in the National Guard. Now you had an armed militia trying to run a campus with students changing class, and you can't distinguish between them and the protesters. After the shots, you can imagine all the students coming up the hill and assembling.”

Ashley and a friend quickly packed some clothes and drove home to Cleveland.

“Frankly, I didn't understand the importance of what was going on until that evening, when I watched it on the national news,” Ashley says. “Everyone who graduated from that day has serious political sensitivity. It made us address social issues differently because we are a part of history, whether we like it or not. Particularly the white students at Kent had a wake-up call. They experienced what blacks had been going through for years — they were abused by the armed forces.”

Two weeks later, an all-white police force killed a college student and high school student at Jackson State College in Jackson, Miss. The distinction between Kent State and Jackson State, Ashley thinks, is best understood by separating racial overtones from social issues.

“We were concerned with how blacks were treated at home.”

We focused on the homefront

Charles Eberhardt teaches ninth to 11th grade math in the Cleveland school system. When he was a math major at Kent State and the newly elected vice president of BUS in 1970, the Vietnam War was not No. 1 on his agenda. When talking about May 4, he sounds detached at first. His demeanor is a gentle reminder that 30 years feels longer ago for some witnesses than others.

“We were more concerned with black students' issues,” Eberhardt says. “We focused on what was happening at home. One of the reasons we felt that way was because blacks were fighting world wars, but when they came home conditions had not improved for them. We were concerned with how blacks were treated at home.”
Ohio State student Dwayne White, known most commonly as Brother Fargo, attends to John Cleary after he is shot in the chest. Fargo was the only black student involved in the rally. Sources close to him say he was so affected by the shootings that he eventually dropped out of society. (Photo by Howard Ruffner)

Eberhardt says the Friday, May 1 BUS rally was just one of many demonstrations. It dealt more with the campus of Ohio State University, where riots had erupted for the past week. But it was austere Charles Eberhardt who stood at attention next to Erwind Blount as BUS took turns at the microphone. He warned the crowd with this prophetic comment: "The same thing that's happening at Ohio State is going to happen here at Kent if they don't do something. The National Guard is on its way to this campus, if it isn't here already."

Three black students from Ohio State spoke at the Friday rally. An OSU student known as Brother Fargo reported that OSU's black students were marching to present 18 demands to the administration. They wanted a black education center in Columbus, an office for recruitment of black students, more scholarships, fellowships and grants, and a separate orientation program for blacks.

Fargo later changed his name to Ibrahim Al-Kafiz. He remains something of a mystery to anyone who knew him.

Kent State communications student Howard Ruffner captured him in a photograph that appeared on the May 15, 1970 cover of LIFE magazine. The picture shows him giving first aid to wounded student John Cleary.

If the pulse of Kent State skipped a beat on May 4, at the very least it made the university more responsive to students' needs afterward, Eberhardt says.

"It's painful for me to talk about," he says. "The parents (of the four students killed) still have my sympathy."

Whether the fight is in Kent or Korea, it is the same devil, blond hair, blue eyes, pale skin and a pocketbook for a heart... The beast's greedy hands extend the world over but its heart is here in America. Our fight, like our oppressor, is here. So when the time comes — let us keep on going and say, 'Hell no! We won't go!'

— By Fargo, from Black Watch newsletter, Nov. 25, 1969

Although an out-of-towner, Fargo was likely the only black person visibly entangled in the shooting.

Edward Crosby was never one to blend, either. He later became Fargo's mentor. An emeritus chairman for Pan-African Studies and retired professor of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures at Kent State, Crosby tries to understand why Fargo finally slipped out of reach more than a year ago.

"Oh, Fargo's out of commission," Crosby says. "He was out there when the shooting was going on. In fact, he was the only visible black person. He was a very bright student. He came to school as a National Merit Scholar and majored in biology. I guess he just lost his way while on campus. It might have been the general turmoil."
Crosby defends the wisdom of the black students’ safe haven. He urged his students to stay home, and he did the same.

“I said the best action was to get as far away from the campus as possible,” Crosby says. “To have shot a black student would have justified the whole event. They were wise to get out of the way. Black students were aware of the National Guard presence in Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles and elsewhere. They had better experience not to be around when there were guns on campus. Black students would have been the first to get shot at.”

Crosby defines the anti-war stance and the BUS rallies prior to May 4 as a veritable civil rights protest.

“I don’t know many students who weren’t involved in protesting the war,” Crosby says, “but to what degree? That’s a puzzling point. There was an activism of blacks against going into the war. That doesn’t mean, though, that it was enough to carry them on the commons. Where did they go? Well, they went home and watched the war on TV. That’s where I went. Some of them jammed into College Towers. Then the campus was shut down.”

We were loyal friends

Marilyn Broadus Banks by no means considered herself a strong demonstrator. An older freshman trying to finish school, she was a member of Black United Students, and she was opposed to the Vietnam War. On Monday, May 4, she and her good friends Sandra Scheuer and Sharon Swanson were walking to the Music and Speech Building for class after lunch. They stopped in the Student Union when they noticed the crowd and the commotion on Blanket Hill.

“I was afraid of crowds. I’m afraid of not being able to get out. That was just my nature,” Banks says. “Sharon and Sandy were curious, so they went on. I stayed behind. The three of us always went to class together. Sharon was standing right next to Sandy when she got shot. I heard those shots.”

Banks says her philosophies have changed radically since May 4. She became a Christian in the early ‘70s.

“My life is totally different than it was at the time,” she says. “It was when one of my closest friends died. I can’t look at those events from a racial perspective. In my heart, I believed in people.”

Banks never went up to the hill. She didn’t find out until late that evening that Sandy was shot and killed.

“Afterwards they were just herding people to get off campus. I got on the campus bus to go back to my apartment, and everyone was just crying and weeping,” she says. “They were talking about what happened, and at that point I knew some students had been shot, but I still didn’t know who they were. There was this mass exodus out of the city. I grabbed some things from my apartment and went home to Cleveland … Everyone was just weeping.

“Nobody could believe. I didn’t believe the National Guard would actually fire. Some people say it happened because the guardsmen were tired and overwrought. When I hear about the school shootings in Colorado, it brings back memories of Kent State. It brings the same shock and disbelief.”

Banks now lives in Marietta, Ga., where she teaches special education at Southwestern University. She graduated from Kent with a degree in speech therapy in 1971. She’s now working toward her doctorate. She also lives near two friends from Kent who graduated in her class. For several years after the May 4 incident, they would hold a small vigil to look at news clippings and talk about their feelings. She and her friend Sharon both embraced Christianity in 1973 to deal with the pain and anger they experienced. She admits some of the anger she felt was toward whites, but it was a matter of survival. She watched her own Cleveland neighborhood burn down during riots in 1968.

“Police brutality created a lot of anger in college students,” she says. “It was tough as a black person in college. We were in the middle of turbulent times, revolving, maybe not even fully understanding our anger. In Ohio, racism is more subtle. There’s always the fine line. People are more creative in how they hold you back. In Georgia, if someone doesn’t want you here because of your color, they let you know. In Ohio, it’s more insidious. You can cry racism if a professor isn’t treating you fairly because of your skin, but you’re hard pressed to prove it. Kent State was one of the more liberal places to be. I mean two of my good friends were Caucasian. We were pretty loyal to each other.”

Banks doesn’t think about May 4 every day, but the memories ache more toward the month of May every year.

“How can I forget? It’s something you can never get over. I haven’t been back to campus since. I don’t know if I can go back. I haven’t seen the memorial. I keep thinking I should. I know it must be wonderful and different than when I was there. Maybe someday I’ll get the courage, but right now I can’t activate it. It’s just painful… it’s something that shouldn’t have happened.”

Marilyn Broadus wrote a sympathy letter to Mr. and Mrs. Scheuer shortly after Sandy’s death. Her friend Sharon Swanson also wrote to the Scheuers, explaining how it happened: “She wasn’t talking, she wasn’t suffering, she was unconscious.”
The Right To Be Afraid

By Rachel Dissell

On April 30, 1970, President Nixon announced the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. Americans learned on national television that 150,000 soldiers would be drafted for the war — this from a president elected on his promises to stop the Vietnam conflict. Just a day later, demonstrations broke out on college campuses across the nation. In the Midwest, word spread around Kent State University about a rally to be held at noon Monday, May 4, on the Commons. After a weekend of mob-chanting and destruction in downtown Kent, Ohio, Mayor Leroy Satrom asks that the Ohio National Guard be called in to maintain order.

"People question our motives, but the Guard didn’t want to be there, either"

Former Ohio National Guard Lt. Col. Charles Fassinger stood silently an arm’s length away from soldiers in C Company at 12:24 p.m. At some point during the 61 rounds of bullets fired down Blanket Hill and into Prentice Hall parking lot, Fassinger ordered a cease-fire. Twenty-eight guardsmen have acknowledged firing.

Fassinger, who coordinated all efforts for the 107th Ohio National Guard Armored Cavalry on that day, says the Guard at that time was an extension of the Army — ready to be active at any time.

"We were only equipped for basic combat," Fassinger says. "A uniform, a metal helmet and a gun. The campus authorities made a decision there would be no rallies. Had that decision not been made, the Guard would not have been there."

Before noon, students gathered on the Commons for the anti-war rally which had been planned since Friday. A campus policeman riding in a Guard vehicle told students through a bullhorn that their assembly was illegal, that everyone was ordered to disperse. Some students in front of Taylor Hall and in the Prentice Hall parking lot charged the right flank of the Guard. They began throwing stones, some shouting, "Kill the pigs. Stick the pigs." Guardsmen reacted by firing tear gas.

They marched toward the crowd. Each guardsman carried a loaded M-1 rifle. Twenty five men fired 55 shots from rifles, two fired shots from .45 caliber pistols, and one fired a single blast from a shotgun.

Fassinger says there was no specific plan of operation outlining how to handle the events at Kent.

"There was an overall plan to aid municipalities in times of civil disturbance," he says. The state was divided into quadrants, including provisions for campuses, but operation orders contained nothing specific to Kent State.
Fassinger says all of the guardsmen have replayed that day over and over in their minds, even when they wanted to forget.

"People question our motives, but the Guard didn't want to be there, either," Fassinger says. "There weren't good guys or bad guys — it was just protecting property."

But he vehemently disagrees with the commonly held idea that the guardsmen who fired on May 4 were "green" or "a bunch of scared kids."

"Those were not young, green kids," he says. "They all had several years of experience. The average age in Vietnam was around 20. These guys averaged at least 23."

"If it came to the point where students wanted to take over a building now, we would probably let them, and sit around outside and wait for them to get done"

He contends that the guardsmen had plenty of adequate training and had been in crowd control situations before, yet they had a right to be in fear.

"They had every right to feel that way," he says. "If you were there, you could see the change from a crowd to a mob. They felt their lives were in danger — you just can't train that feeling out."

Fassinger, whose wife and daughter both graduated from Kent State, says he doesn't like to use the word "justified" to refer to the shootings, but he says it is wrong to take the right away from the soldiers to be afraid.

"I don't know how you can train people any better to go out and stand in front of a mob," he says. "It is not something you can translate from a classroom."

If a similar incident were to occur, the National Guard probably wouldn't be called to campus because opinions in the United States have changed so drastically.

"If it came to the point where students wanted to take over a building now, we would probably let them and sit around outside and wait for them to get done," Fassinger says.

He says he thinks the incident also helped the government reconsider the way the Guard handles riots.

"What nobody ever followed up on was the changes that we made," he says. "Now there is protective gear, such as face shields and batons, instead of guns," he says.

Fassinger says he can understand the feelings of the people involved about the occurrences of that day and afterward. "I just hope they can begin to finally understand the Guard and their feelings."

Although other National Guard members declined to comment, families of those involved and survivors of the incident say they still have hope that one day National Guard members will speak openly about the incident.
If History Repeated Itself

What it could take to cause another May 4

By Tom Robinette

"To me as an observer, it was incomprehensible. I walked around on campus, and I assumed those guns weren't loaded. I was helping move students when they were trapped in the wrong dorm back to their dorms. I confronted one of the National Guardsmen, and he got down on his knee with his gun and bayonet and aimed at us. I didn't think it would be loaded. Then, when it occurred, I assumed they were shooting blanks. Then to see bodies...it was a tremendous shock."

— Kenneth Calkins

Kent State has had 30 years to inquire, learn, and reflect. But Kenneth Calkins, May 4, 1970, faculty marshal and emeritus professor of history at Kent State, acknowledges that lessons can be forgotten as easily as they were learned, and a similar tragedy could occur.

Calkins was one of the marshals on May 4 trying to keep students safe, but his memory is burned by the images of violence he witnessed, and that is why he remains wary of another incident occurring.

"It's sort of hard to imagine today's issues leading directly to a confrontation like that," Calkins says. "It would be foolhardy to claim that it would never happen again."

Like Calkins, Jerry M. Lewis, emeritus professor of sociology, was a faculty marshal on May 4. He says at the time the faculty marshals consisted of tenure-track faculty and senior graduate students who were concerned about students at demonstrations being hurt.

The group of marshals was formed by the administration in 1968 in response to other student protests. Their purpose was to be a voice of reason, talking students down from heights of anger.

"What really drove the marshals is why the students are out there in the first place more so than the administration," Lewis says. "Initially, the administration, as we all were, was clearly trying to make sense of the demonstrations. Faculty are not trained to be marshals. We're trained to sit in libraries and read books."

Despite their lack of training and organization, the marshals did everything in their power to prevent violence.

"We were out on May 4 sort of on our own," Lewis says. "We weren't organized. There were about four of us who were out there on May 4. I think what we did on May 4 was save lives."

Lewis attributes a decline in campus activism today to the lack of a unifying issue.

"There's no natural issue," Lewis says. "First of all, it's sort of a logical thing. There's no war so people don't have to worry about being drafted."
Ineffective Leadership

Aside from the absence of war, Calkins says the current administration is less conservative than in 1970. He finds the leadership partly responsible for the breakdown on May 4.

"The conservative establishment is not nearly as fearful as they were then," Calkins says. "At that time, the administration thought of the university as being under siege for months. They had a 'war room.' There had been other demonstrations earlier, and thousands of students had been involved. There was a sort of tension that just doesn't exist now."

Calkins recalls some of the extremes that the administration went to just to gain control of student activists. In 1969, there was an on-campus trial disciplining certain members of Students for a Democratic Society. When demonstrators arrived outside the administration building where the trial was to be held, the hearings were moved to the Music and Speech building. The demonstrators followed but were met by police.

"I think of the university administrators now, and a lot of them were activists"

"The police came and trapped them in there," Calkins says. "It was probably a plan. This all suggests the kind of atmosphere that existed. The administration was plotting with the police to trap these demonstrators in Music and Speech."

Calkins was in Music and Speech at the time and helped several elevator loads of students escape before the police discovered them.

The inability to understand student activists in 1970 permeated even the highest level of the university's administration. Lewis says that the university president at the time, Robert I. White, provided ineffectual and inadequate leadership in the campus's time of need.

"I think Robert White did a terrible job as president," Lewis says. "He just was incapable of working with informal structures. So, he would work through elected faculty and elected students, but he seemed incapable of understanding emerging groups."

Gov. James Rhodes has been accused of escalating the tensions on May 4. He was in the middle of a campaign to run for the U.S. Senate and wanted to appear capable of controlling any disturbances across all Ohio campuses, his critics say.

"The added factor in May of 1970 is that there was an election going on, and the governor was running to be nominated to Senate," Calkins says. "So he wanted to give a good impression of toughness."

Lewis puts a heavy amount of the blame for May 4 on Rhodes' decision to activate the Ohio National Guard.

"I think he did it to further his political career," Lewis says.

Most people will tell you that May 4 happened because students were protesting the Vietnam War. But Jerry Lewis sees it differently.

As a witness to the demonstrations and shootings, he maintains that the real source of protest was the presence of the National Guard.

Lessons Learned

In part, the lessons of May 4 have been learned well. Shortly after May 4 the university established the Center for Peaceful Change, which has developed into the Center for Applied Conflict Management.

"It was created to be a living memorial to the students who were killed at May 4, so that there would be an institutional and educational part of Kent State that would look at questions of violence and alternatives to violence and different ways that conflict can be resolved," says Jennifer Maxwell, director of the Center.

Another change in today's environment is the presence of administrators who have grown up with activism and become activists themselves. Lewis says this allows the administration to tolerate and understand activism.

"I think of the university administrators now, and a lot of them were activists," Lewis says. "I don't think today's administrators are at all bothered by the activists. In many ways, I think they would like to see more activism."

The student body also has done its part to help learn from May 4. The May 4 Task Force, a student-run campus organization, was established to promote education about May 4, but also to preserve its memory.

"The May 4 Task Force started because the university said it didn't want to remember," says Kim Larson, former co-chair of the May 4 Task Force. "Our goal is to keep the memory alive and hopefully prevent another one."
New Issues, New Potential

Calkins points to civil rights as an issue with potential for violence.

"There are all sorts of problems with civil rights, but the problems are a little more subtle," Calkins says. "It's more economic. The civil rights movement, which won legal rights in the '60s, created a kind of momentum, but since then it's died away considerably. Things are legally better, but there are a lot of continuing problems."

Calkins says economic issues could compound this.

"All this would be strengthened by any kind of serious decline in the economy," he says. "It's unheard of, the long-term prosperity we've had. That's not going to last forever. And if we begin to lose that prosperity, that will contribute to fears and differences and a sense of division within society."

Maxwell even sees a couple of issues on campus that might not have the same effect as the Vietnam War but, nonetheless, could cause conflict.

"There certainly is a lot of discussion about free speech issues right now," Maxwell says. "Issues of respect. Issues of who says what and when. I think that is a current conflictual issue. And I think the issue of violence on an interpersonal level is an issue that is getting a lot more attention. Currently, the most common type of violence in our society is within interpersonal relationships."

A Different Future

To continue to understand, May 4 can never be forgotten. Without remembrance, the past has a dangerous tendency to repeat itself. "If you can remember what are the causes and effects of violence, then you're not repeating it," Maxwell says.

Lewis goes even further. He says that the students of Kent State should feel obligated to learn for themselves about May 4's cultural and historical impact.

"I think this kind of political clash really requires almost a kind of paranoia on the part of the people in power."

Dangerous Ingredients

Maxwell says one of the reasons people resort to violence is because they believe that all other alternatives have been exhausted.

The Center for Applied Conflict Management works to provide those people with other solutions.

"I think when people feel that they don't have other options, you get situations of violence," Maxwell says. "I also think that you get situations that become violent when one party has a great deal more power than the other party, and there's perceived inequality."

Second, it's important to monitor the behavior of authority figures. Calkins says that overreaction on the part of the establishment can agitate a conflict situation.

"I think this kind of political clash really requires almost a kind of paranoia on the part of the people in power," Calkins says.

"Political differences and demonstrations have occurred many times without any kind of violence. It's a kind of drastic overreaction that sets that stage for something like that, where the police and the National Guard really come to believe that there is a threat to society and themselves."

Calkins says the community's negative attitude toward the demonstrators contributed to an uneasy and dangerous environment.
In October 1970, a special state grand jury indicted 25 men and women accused of wrongdoings in the weekend protests. Fifteen of the defendants describe having the finger pointed at them ... 

The group known as the “Kent 25” was hit with another blow after the May 4 shootings. They were indicted five months later on charges connected with the demonstration that day or the ROTC building fire three days before. Some claim they were merely caught by mistake because they happened to show up in photographs. Others say their actions were deliberate. They include a student body president, a professor, a brother and sister, and good friends and roommates who had protested together. On the eve of the 30th anniversary, 15 of the 25 and a defense attorney agreed to be interviewed for this story.

Today, those 15 include teachers, lawyers and a college professor. Some felt their career plans were derailed by the stigma attached to May 4, but at least one says he may have benefited.

Five cases — all relating to the burning of the ROTC building — proceeded to trial. One nonstudent defendant was convicted on one charge and two other nonstudents pleaded guilty. One other defendant was acquitted, and charges were dismissed against the last. In December 1971, all charges against the remaining 20 were dismissed for lack of evidence.
Michael Erwin

About two months before May 1970, Michael Erwin and a friend were in an Army surplus store in Akron that had gas masks on sale. Erwin, who was a sophomore history major at the time, bought one without any real intent of using it. And then came May 4.

Knowing that tear gas had been used all throughout the first weekend of May 1970, Erwin took his mask along with him to the rally on Monday.

“When the National Guard started shooting tear gas, I thought it was my duty to put on the mask and start throwing the things back,” says Erwin, who graduated from Kent State in 1979 with a degree in nursing and works as a management development specialist for the Cleveland Clinic.

“And that probably helped me get indicted.”

But that wasn’t the only act that landed him in the Kent 25. Meanwhile in Hudson on the evening of May 4, he was watching the news with his mother, and he told her they weren’t showing things the way they really happened. Her advice to him: Write a letter.

“I sent a letter to Nixon and Rhodes and whoever my congressman was,” Erwin says. “I sent one to (Kent State) President White. And before I knew it, I had FBI agents and everyone under the sun coming to talk to me.”

And after Erwin testified before the special grand jury at the courthouse in Ravenna, he had a good idea the indictment was on its way.

“I knew I was in trouble when they turned the questioning over to the grand jury”

“The lawyers weren’t too bad about asking us questions,” he says. “But I knew I was in trouble when they turned the questioning over to the grand jury. Probably a half dozen of those people stood up and told me what a scum I was. I remember telling my dad as we were leaving, ‘I’m going to get indicted here. They’re trying to pin this on the students.’”

But in the end, the charge of second-degree riot against Erwin was dropped before he went to trial.

Although Erwin lives in Kent, he doesn’t participate in the commemorations.

“I don’t go near the university for any of the anniversaries,” he says. “I also try to avoid the newspapers because I always know there will be a story about it. Below the surface that nerve is still very raw.”

Joe Cullum

Joe Cullum and two other students were photographed as they knelt in the grass next to wounded student John Cleary. Cullum used his T-shirt to slow the bleeding from Cleary’s chest. The picture appeared on the May 15, 1970, cover of Life magazine.

Twenty years later, Life brought Cleary and Cullum together in a follow-up article.

“I guess you’re responsible for my still being here,” Cleary said to Cullum when they shook hands for the first time.

Cullum welcomes the opportunity to talk about May 4, 1970. It’s natural for him to value the legacy of what happened — he teaches history, government and economics to juniors and seniors at Minerva High School in Stark County. With his wife, Ruth and son, Sam, 11, Cullum lives on 15 acres in an 1850s farmhouse near Limaville. Apathy, now as it was then, is a major concern for Cullum.

“The things we learn from May 4 are that these kinds of things can happen again if people get apathetic about the power of the state — if we don’t rein it in,” Cullum says. The right to dissent, the right to disagree, is of paramount importance to Cullum, who feels that the shooting was an intentional act orchestrated from above. “Part of my role of being an eyewitness is teaching the people that it wasn’t an isolated incident,” he says.

Less bitter now over negative comments about the student protesters, Cullum still laments the attitude of many Americans that their government can do no wrong.

After working til midnight in Canton on Friday and Saturday, Cullum returned to campus Sunday night, May 3, 1970. He demonstrated with hundreds of students that night at Lincoln and Main streets, demanding an audience with Kent Mayor Leroy
Satrom and Kent State President Robert White.

Students were told their concerns would be heard if they returned to campus, but the National Guard chased them. Cullum says he and others were clubbed as they dispersed, and that another student was struck with a bayonet.

On May 4, Cullum, a junior, was standing by the metal sculpture outside Taylor Hall, about 50 feet away from guardsmen when they began firing.

"Everyone who was wounded or killed was behind me," he says. "I didn't see a need to fire. I didn't see a threat."

The next day, Tuesday, May 5, Cullum registered as a Republican in the primary election so he could vote against Gov. James A. Rhodes, who subsequently lost a tight race against U.S. Rep. Robert Taft for the Republican nomination for the U. S. Senate.

When Cullum heard that a charge of second-degree riot had been brought against him, he turned himself in. The charge was later dismissed.

Cullum has returned to campus for the May 4 commemoration almost every year. He joined a sit-in at the Kent State library two years ago to pressure the university for the Prentice Hall parking space memorials.

"It's a good thing it finally happened," Cullum says, "but it's too little, too late. The university has been dragged kicking and screaming to admission and acknowledgement of the event."

Cullum says the result is that May 4 has been kept more in the public eye. But the May 4 commemorations have been "well done enough to keep me coming back," he says.

"It's a tribute to students in the May 4 Task Force to keep involved, to keep it going."

— Cheryl Beckwith

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Roseann Canfora

Roseann Canfora was was one of four women among the Kent 25 defendants. She prefers to be called Chic, a nickname given to her by her brother Alan, also a Kent 25 defendant. She says she and many others did nothing wrong that day because they were legally speaking their mind in disagreement with their country.

"I'm not sure if it was my actions before or after the shootings that concerned the special grand jury enough to charge me with second-degree riot," Canfora says. The charge was later dismissed.

Even 30 years later, Canfora remembers May 4 as if it happened yesterday. She was a 19-year-old student at Kent State when she heard the announcement made by President Nixon on April 30, 1970, that he was sending American forces into Cambodia. It's not hard to understand that it struck the Canforas emotionally since they had just attended a funeral for their friend Bill Caldwell, who was killed in Vietnam.

"With Bill's death fresh in our minds, several of us traveled to Ohio State on Friday to attend an anti-war demonstration on their campus," she says.

They returned to Kent that night and continued their protest in downtown Kent. It turned into a riot once the Hell's Angels showed up on their motorcycles. The spray-painting of anti-war slogans on windows escalated to the smashing of windows and the looting of businesses. The disturbance in downtown Kent prompted the city's mayor to ask Ohio Gov. James A. Rhodes to call in the state National Guard the next day, Saturday, May 2.

Canfora recalls certain catch phrases Rhodes used during a press conference in response to the Friday night vandalism.

"We're not going to treat the symptoms," Rhodes said. "We're going to eradicate the problem." She took it as a strong message, but at 19, she may have underestimated the danger of the governor's inflammatory words.

On May 4, Canfora and her friend Jimmy Riggs, who was later indicted, went to her brother's Summit Street apartment to meet up with mutual friends who were planning to attend the noon rally. They called themselves the Kent Krazies, a name some of the students adopted when they protested an SDS demonstration in Washington, D.C., in 1969.

Chic Canfora, her brother, and some other Kent students had attended a demonstration where SDS leaders advised activists to form small affinity groups to stick together and protect each other during the protest. When they returned to Ohio, they continued to wear their red headbands and refer to themselves as the Kent Krazies.

When the Krazies showed up at the Commons, the victory bell at the bottom of Taylor Hill started ringing to alert students to a rally. Canfora says thousands of students began to gather at the Commons.

Later, in a standoff on the other side of Taylor Hall, Chic Canfora watched a troop of guardsmen go down on one knee to aim at her brother Alan, who was waving a black flag and shouting insults.

She walked up to her brother and told him that she didn't trust the guardsmen — they were aiming directly at him.

"They're going to do something," she said. "Let's get out of here."

May 4, 1974 — Almost 6,500 attend a May 4 commemoration not sanctioned by the university. Speakers include Jane Fonda and Vietnam vet Ron Kovic.
“Wait,” Alan said, “I want to see where they’re going.”

She returned to the Prentice parking lot, where Jimi Riggs was standing. Chic saw puffs of smoke coming from their weapons before she heard the first crack of rifles. Seconds later, bodies were lying on the ground. Screams and chaos followed.

Canfora first saw Bill Schroeder’s body a few feet behind her, then Sandy Scheuer. She ran down a hill and toward a crowd hovering over a man who was lying face down. She was scared to death it was her brother.

When she approached the body, she discovered it was Jeff Miller who had been shot in the head. His blood was streaming down the road toward Memorial Gym.

In shock, she ran into the classrooms screaming about what the Guard had done. She was restrained on top of Blanket Hill for screaming “Murderers!” after finding out that her own brother and several others were shot.

Chic and Alan returned to campus with their parents after he was released from Robinson Memorial Hospital to gather up their belongings because the campus was being evacuated. The top of Blanket Hill was littered with shells. When she reached to pick up a handful, her father warned her to leave them alone.

“It’s important evidence of what happened here,” he said.

She angrily dropped the shells in plain sight of the triggermen who were still assembled with the remaining guardsmen. It was then that she finally broke down and sobbed, screaming, “Murderers!” one last time.

Chic Canfora works full time as a teacher at Hudson High School. She is a single mother of three children, ages 18, 16 and 11. She plans to have finished her dissertation by May 2000 to earn a doctorate in educational administration. It will be her fourth degree at Kent State — she received a B.S. in education, an M.A. in journalism and an M.A. in educational administration.

— Mimi Hoang Kuehn

Jeffrey Hartzler

Wearing a black leather jacket and a black hat, Jeffrey Hartzler expressed his frustration and support of the anti-war protests by parading with a red flag and throwing stones at the National Guard.

Hartzler, who was a junior secondary education major at the Orrville branch, was charged with second-degree rioting. He says the student protests were about more than political ideals.

“It was an emotional thing,” Hartzler, now 51, recalls. “I know it wasn’t the right thing to do, but here we are at our university getting pushed around.”

Although the charges were ultimately dropped, the stigma changed his life forever. After being arrested, Hartzler says he was unable to receive his teaching certificate because Kent State deemed his morals “not up to snuff to be a teacher.”

But Hartzler, now self-employed as a painting contractor in Wooster, says he doesn’t regret participating in the anti-war rallies. “It wasn’t a bad thing to be a part of the Kent 25,” he says. “It was kind of scary being arrested at the time. But it was really exciting. The anti-war movement was really a big deal for us.”

— Kelli Young

April 30, 1975 — At dawn, the last Marines guarding the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam leave. Hours later, Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, falls to North Vietnam, ending the war.
Alan Canfora

Alan Canfora's image is forever etched in a photo by Pulitzer Prize winner John Filo. The 22-year-old Canfora stands at the bottom of a hill with a bandanna tied around his long hair. In his right hand, he waves a black flag at the Ohio National Guardsmen, who are kneeling at the top of the hill. The barrels of some of their guns are pointed directly at him.

"When I see that picture, it's a reminder of my anger and my despair," says Canfora, who graduated from Kent State's Stark Campus in 1972 with a degree in general studies. "I was still pretty angry and desperate due to the recent death of a friend of mine in Vietnam. I felt that if at that moment I had to risk my life to make a powerful war statement, I was willing to do that."

And Canfora was an obvious presence at the May 4 rally. Canfora was also in the "thick of the action" at the riots in downtown Kent on Friday, May 2 and the burning of the ROTC building on Saturday, May 3. Considering the extent of his involvement in that weekend's disturbances, Canfora says he was quite relieved when he found out he was only charged with second-degree riot. But for Canfora, who still lives in his hometown of Barberton, this was all just a sequence of his political journey.

"My May 4 experience really was just part of my ongoing political activism," says Canfora, who is the deputy director of the Summit County Board of Elections and the director of the May 4 Center. "I was active before, and I've been active ever since. My 1970 experiences were just one step along the way. But because of the May 4 situation, I have a great need to participate with others in helping the American people understand these very misunderstood tragic events."

— Erin Kosnac

Ron Weissenberger

Ron Weissenberger knew exactly what he was doing when he was arrested days after the May 4 shooting. Actually, he wanted to be arrested.

"The draft was hot after me," he says. "So I knew the only way to get around it was to get arrested. I had to somehow get arrested."

So when Weissenberger saw the protest march coming down Main Street on Saturday, May 2, he jumped right into the front line. "I was always in the front, kind of like a leader," Weissenberger says. "I wanted everyone to see my face, because I was hoping eventually someone would get my picture taken."

The plan worked. Weissenberger isn't sure of the exact date, "but it was quite a while after the shootings," when two policemen found him in the bar and arrested him on charges of first-degree riot and inciting a riot (both felonies), interference with a fireman and second-degree riot (misdemeanors).

"It worked," he says. "The draft board never bothered me again."

He graduated from Kent State in fall 1970, then moved to Provincetown, Mass. He has lived there in a small cottage ever since.

"I wanted to drop out of society as much as I could," he says. "I feel the same way now as I did then. Students were murdered that day. Kent State has never looked the same to me since. I had a lot of good times and lot of great friends while I was there, but it has never felt the same."

Weissenberger has worked as a restaurant manager for 30 years, but he is now planning on moving to New York soon to start a career as a playwright.

"I feel lonely and uncreative," he says. "It's time to start over."

— Jason Lloyd

Bill Arthrell

Bill Arthrell hasn't allowed his life to dwell on the events of the Vietnam War or May 4. Today he is a high school history teacher in Cleveland at John Marshall High School. The Vietnam War and political movements are part of the curriculum, but Arthrell says he is fair and presents both sides of the conflict in his classroom.

In 1998, he traveled to Vietnam.

"I had an iron will and a finger for Nixon"

"It took me 28 years to be ready to go," Arthrell says. "It was a lifelong dream to go and make a personal peace with that region. I wanted to personally go there and compensate for American wrong-doing in southeast Asia. To see the battlefields with the bomb craters still there, to meet children with defects from (the defoliant) Agent Orange. It was really moving and heartbreaking."

In his poetry, Arthrell describes what it was like at the time:

"I had an iron will and a finger for Nixon."

Arthrell says he has moved on.

"Coming out of May 4, I had a little edginess," Arthrell says. "But it's not my whole life.

"The experience imbedded itself in my psyche and I finally surrendered to it. I accepted what it taught me: oppose war and stand for peace."

— Lauren Worley

May 12, 1977 — "Tent City", a sit-in, is established on Blanket Hill to protest the building of the Gym Annex on part of the May 4 site. Participants include protesters from the May 4, 1970 rally, such as Bill Arthrell and Alan Canfora, and families of the slain students.
Tom Miller

The body of Jeffrey Miller had been removed from the area where he fell, but his blood remained. As a group of people stood around him, Tom Miller, a junior art major, jumped up and down in the blood. He dipped his black flag in it and tried to splatter the blood on the people standing around him.

“When he saw the body of Jeffrey Miller lying there, he just lost it.”

“He said the people just looked stunned,” says Alan Canfora, who was a friend of Tom Miller. “He just wanted to get blood on them to make it more real for them. When he saw the body of Jeffrey Miller lying there, he just lost it.”

A musician, singer and artist, Miller was killed in a car accident in 1972 in Kentucky.

— Erin Kosnac

Douglas Cormack

A day hasn’t gone by that Douglas Cormack doesn’t think about May 4. Cormack, who lives in Bedford, was 20 at the time of the shootings. Cormack says that the American government is still corrupt, and that the United States was in the Vietnam war for all the wrong reasons. If similar circumstances existed today, he says he would feel the same way. Cormack says he would do anything to stop injustice, but because he is older now, he wouldn’t do the same things. And he hasn’t become a conservative.

Cormack has not kept in touch with anyone else from the Kent 25. He received an associate’s degree from Lakeland Community College and a bachelor’s from Cleveland State University. In 1986, he received a law degree from the CSU John Marshall School of Law. Although he has practiced law in the past, he does not wish to comment on what he does now.

Until two years ago, Cormack had not been to Kent State since the campus closed in May 1970. When his daughter enrolled at Kent in 1998, he drove her to school and walked around campus for the first time since 1970.

“It was difficult, yet it helped me come to peace with the whole thing,” he says.

— Angela Eader

Kenneth Hammond

Kenneth Hammond, who was a 20-year-old Kent State student in May 1970, faced at least one noticeable consequence after being indicted for second-degree riot.

“Let’s just say it took me 18 years to finish my B.A.,”
Hammond says. The junior political science major left Kent immediately after the May 4 shootings but returned when he was indicted. While involved with the grand jury, he had no time for school. After an emotionally draining legal battle, he moved to Colorado for a while. He came back to Kent in 1975 and again in 1982, then moved to Boston in 1983. He finally got his degree in political science and history from Kent State in 1985.

“I wanted to go to graduate school, but I had to finish that bachelor's degree first,” Hammond says. Although he has moved around and now lives in New Mexico, Hammond says he never avoided Kent or its memories.

“I always came back and forth for a long time,” he says. “I felt close to the community. I never had a problem coming back to Kent. I love Kent. It's one of those things that I love being there despite all the nastiness that went down. Probably the intensity that was there made the strong bond.”

Hammond, who is a professor of East Asian history at New Mexico State University, plans to return to Kent for the 30th anniversary. He says he feels active about the same ideals he stood for then, and that Kent still has not fully dealt with what happened in 1970. But his memories do not rule his life.

“It certainly contributed profoundly to the person I've become,” he says. “Obviously that would shape you and always be present. It was one of those turning points. I look at things before and after — sometimes it's like two different worlds.”

— Lisa Aichlmayr

**Joseph Lewis**

Joseph Lewis, who was injured on May 4, quickly left Kent after he recovered. At 19, he moved to upstate New York to be with a woman he loved. But it only lasted two or three months.

“I got a phone call from my dad,” says Lewis, who was a freshman social work major. “He said, 'We just learned there's an indictment out for you. You need to get home.' He was not happy with me. And that ended my little homemaking experience.”

Lewis says he was most likely indicted because of his appearance before the grand jury when he was a “young idealistic freshman.”

“I told them that I had traveled and had not gone to all my classes, and that was part of my educational experience,” says Lewis, who lives in Oregon and works in water treatment. “I told them listening to SDS was part of a well-rounded college experience. They ate it up and thought I sounded like some kind of radical hippie freak.”

So Lewis went with his mother to the Summit County Courthouse where he had his mug shot and fingerprints taken. He was charged with second-degree riot.

“I guess since I tried to block the bullets, that was part of blocking official action,” he says.

— Erin Kosnac

**Thomas Lough**

Thomas Lough has his memories of Richard Nixon.

“He loved the Vietnam War,” says Lough, who was a professor at Kent State in the sociology department in May 1970. “He had his own little video game where he could order attacks on suspected Vietnam targets. And he was really, really pissed with the student movement.”

While Lough, who now teaches sociology at Sonoma State University in California, was not a student then, he was still the type of person Nixon had his eye on.

“I was on the picket lines,” says Lough, who was charged with inciting to riot. “I was against the war. I was openly against the war. And I'm exactly the kind of person Nixon wanted to get.”

And Lough soon became a target.

“I had a paid FBI informer in my class”

“After they murdered the students, they closed the campus and said, 'Gee golly, who caused this?’” he says. “’Not Nixon. Not Rhodes. Not the Guard. It must have been the radical students, the radical professors and the drugs.’ Let’s see. You have Craig Morgan, president of the senior class. And they got me as a radical professor.”

But after 15 months, it was decided there was no case against Lough despite 84-pages of FBI information that had been collected about him.

“I had a paid FBI informer in my class,” Lough says. “How do I know? He told me.”

— Erin Kosnac

**Ruth Gibson**

After hearing the news of May 4, 1970, Ruth Gibson feared for her own life.

“I felt personally in jeopardy,” says Gibson, who was a senior history major and member of Students for a Democratic Society. “I thought we would probably be rounded up and killed.”

But Gibson was not even at the rally that Monday.

She had gone to stay with some friends out of town and was coming back to Kent just before noon to attend the rally. They stopped to get some gas, and the attendant told them he had been informed by authorities not to sell any gas. But he made the sale anyway.

“As we were pulling out, across the radio station came 'Two Guard and two students killed at Kent State,'” says Gibson who graduated from Kent State with a degree in history in 1978. “I remember calling on God, saying, ‘Oh my God, help us.’”

“July 1977 — Kent State President Olds resigns in the midst of the gym controversy. Interim president Michael Schwartz is left to negotiate with the May 4 Coalition.”
John Filo's Pulitzer Prize winning photo of Mary Ann Vecchio leaning over the slain Jeffrey Miller became a national symbol of the war at home. Carol Mirman is located at the left wearing a striped shirt and a coat around her waist.

Carol Mirman

In the background of the famous photo by John Filo, Carol Mirman is eclipsed by Mary Ann Vecchio's helpless expression and the body of Jeffrey Miller. Mirman, a 21-year-old art therapy major at the time, was standing close to the Guard when they first fired.

"After the first shot," she says, "I turned around, ran down the hill and hid behind a yellow Volkswagen where I witnessed Jeff getting shot."

"May 4 was disorienting and unreal because in that one moment everything that I believed was ripped apart," Mirman says. "What happened on May 4 was an abuse of power by the government."

Mirman graduated in the spring of 1970 and moved to California to start her master's degree. She was living there when she was indicted on charges of second-degree riot. Wanting to focus on her studies, Mirman ignored the indictment and did not return to Kent for the hearings.

But Mirman views herself as completely changed by May 4. She says because May 4 was a traumatic experience, she wanted to help others in stressful situations. Now a Cleveland Heights resident, she works as an art therapist for a hospice in Cleveland. "I wouldn't be doing what I am doing now had I not been a part of May 4," she says.

— Erin Kosnac

Gibson, who had attended all the other rallies that weekend, was charged with malicious destruction of property and second-degree riot. Her trial would have been the next.

"But then the state attorney stood up and said they had no evidence against these people and said from the beginning they knew they had no evidence against these people," she says.

While 30 years have passed, the event is not something this Akron attorney can forgive or forget.

"I have no sympathy for people who shot students and later received sharp-shooter medals," she says. "I don't have any sympathy whatsoever for those people. They never said they were sorry to the families whose children they killed in the flower of their lives—they never said they were sorry. If they did, then I would have to forgive."

— Mimi Hoang Kuehn
Jimmy Riggs

Jimmy Riggs won't give a detailed description of his participation in the disturbances surrounding May 4, but he sums it up in one phrase: "central and integral."

"I'd say if you have a wheel and there's a hub of the wheel, a handful of individuals would be the core part of the wheel," says Riggs, who was a sophomore radio and TV production major in 1970. "I was part of the handful who got the wheel rolling."

But Riggs was politically active long before the Kent State shootings. He was attracted to the cultural aspects of the time: the music, the literature and the art. He also became politically active because he wanted to help end the war.

"College was just a catalyst for me at that specific time," says Riggs, a Cleveland native who now lives in Mesa, Ariz. "But college was not a requirement for political activism. Some people were just fortunate enough to go to college."

But Kent State was not the university where Riggs would finish his education.

Identified through photographs and accounts of other people, Riggs was charged with first- and second-degree riot, conspiracy to riot and arson. All of the charges were dropped because of a lack of sufficient evidence.

"In essence, the trials became so publicity-oriented and costly for the county that they just bailed on the prosecution," he says.

Even with his name cleared, Riggs says the university didn't want him as a student. In fall 1971, he was "bounced out of Kent because of the riot situation and political climate."

"I wasn't real pleased, to say the least," he says. "I kind of figured I was going to jail. And I figured the best revolutionaries are born in jail, which might have been a quote from Che Guevara. I was certainly willing to go to jail for the cause I believed in."

But Riggs didn't go to jail. In 1973, he graduated from Ohio University with the same degree he started at Kent.

Even if Kent no longer accepted him, Riggs felt his actions were in the best interest of the nation.

"I felt very patriotic," he says. "I thought I was doing my duty for the country by protesting against the war, by putting my life on the line much as a Vietnam vet was doing. We were bringing the war home to put an end to it."

After 30 years, Riggs says his philosophy has barely changed.

"I have never sold out," he says. "I've never had a credit card or a bank. And though one can do things within the system, I've just always considered myself an outlaw, somewhat of a social outcast by today's standards. I still have long hair, a beard, a moustache."

His career illustrates a never-sell-out attitude. Riggs has worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor at hospitals and done rehab work for the state of Arizona. Today Riggs earns a living painting houses.

— Erin Kosmac

James E. Hogle, attorney

James E. Hogle hoped for the best but expected the worst. Hogle, 64, a Ravenna attorney who has been in practice for the past 36 years, represented two of the protesters who were indicted following May 4, 1970: Jerry H. Rupe of Ravenna, who was charged with aiding and abetting the burning of a campus building, arson, assault on a fireman, interfering with a fireman, and first degree riot; and Mary Helen Nicholas of Akron, who was charged with interfering with a fireman.

"After the evidence was presented, I thought they'd be guilty," says Hogle, a 1959 Kent State graduate in business management and 1965 University of Akron law graduate.

"The fire department said they instigated in cutting the fire hose to prevent them from putting out the fire of the ROTC building."

"After the evidence was presented, I thought they'd be guilty"

Fortunately for the defendants, a member of SDS, an organization sympathetic to student protests, managed to slip past the jury selection, made his way onto the jury itself and voted against conviction during deliberation.

"There was no way for the prosecutor to know, or for me to know," Hogle says, "that one of the SDS members was on the jury — and that's what tripped them up."

— Shawn Turner

Trials of the Kent 25 began Nov. 22 with Jerry Rupe, a 23-year-old Ravenna man. Rupe was convicted of interfering with a fireman.

Charges against Peter Bliek were dropped, while Thomas FogleSong and Larry Shub pleaded guilty to first-degree riot. Mary Helen Nicholas was acquitted.

On Dec. 7, 1971, charges against the remaining 20 were dropped. Journal entries finalizing dismissal of the remaining charges read: "The state having represented the evidence is insufficient to proceed to trial and good cause having been shown, it is ordered, adjudged, and decreed the indictments in the above cause be dismissed."

Two of those indicted, Thomas Fogglesong, who lives in Florida, and John Gerbetz, who lives in northeast Ohio, declined to be interviewed or did not respond to requests for an interview.

Read more interviews as they become available on The Burr's Web site, www.burr.kent.edu

Jan. 4, 1980 — Survivors and families of those killed on May 4 settle out-of-court with the State of Ohio. The state gives financial compensation to the families. Members of the Ohio National Guard sign a declaration of regret.
Adams, David O. – 21, of Pittsburgh, a student, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.


Biek, Peter C. – 23, of Rochester, N.Y., a junior, charged with arson and first-degree riot. Case went to trial and charges were dismissed.

Canfora, Alan – 22, of Barberton, former student, injured in the May 4 shooting, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Canfora, Roseann – 21, of Barberton, former student, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Cormack, Douglas – 21, from Willoughby, non-student, charged with first-degree riot, interfering with a fireman and throwing rocks. Charges dismissed.

Cullum, Joe – 22, of Canton, a student, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Erwin, Michael – Nursing major, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.


Foglesong, Thomas G. – 21, of Akron, charged with first-degree riot and interfering with a fireman. Plead guilty to first-degree riot. Charges were dismissed.

Gerbetz, John – 20, of Barberton, a student, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Gibson, Ruth – 21, of Kent, a senior, charged with malicious destruction of property and second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Hammond, Kenneth – 22, of Mayfield Heights, junior political science major, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Hartler, Jeff – 22, of Smithville, student at the Kent State Orville branch, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Lewis, Joe – 20, of Massillon, a freshman psychology major, injured in the May 4 shooting, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.


Miller, Thomas – 22, of Smithville, student, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Mirman, Carol – 21, of Akron, senior art therapy major, name withheld under secret indictment for second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.


Nicholas, Mary Helen – 23, of Akron, a former student, charged with interfering with a fireman. Acquitted.

Riggs, James – 21, of Westlake, student, charged with second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Rupe, Jerry H – 23, of Ravenna, never attended Kent State; charged with first-degree riot in connection with the fire at the ROTC building. Rupe testified on his own behalf and admitted joining the crowd on May 2, 1970, and dragging a firehose from the ROTC building. He was found guilty on only one count of interfering with a fireman.

Shub, Larry – 20, of Cleveland Heights, student, charged with first-and second-degree riot and attempting to burn property. Plead guilty to first-degree riot. Charges were dismissed.

Tate, Allen – 21, of Massillon, name withheld under secret indictment for arson, first-and second-degree riot. Charges dismissed.

Weissenberger, Ron – 26, of Kent, a junior, charged with four counts of first-degree riot. Charges dismissed.
Students of a Different Era

By Michelle Cioci

Students get two hours off from classes. People from all over the country travel to the Kent State campus. One main memorial has already been built on the hill by Taylor Hall. Other memorials, including the new Prentice Hall parking lot spaces, are spread nearby. It has been almost 30 years. How much is enough?

"We cannot grieve forever," says Andrea Skatulski, a fourth-year international relations major. "Why are we concentrating on the past?"

While some continue to struggle with and honor May 4, 1970, many students just want to move on and erase the images of the past.

"People back home always ask me, 'Don't you go to the school where those students were shot?'" says Skatulski, who is from Buffalo, N.Y. "We are not known for our educational programs or our sports teams. Instead, we are known for murders that happened almost 30 years ago. It's time for that to change."

Many students believe that the university should try to change the image of Kent State as the "school where those kids got shot." Although the logo of the school has been switched back and forth throughout the years, alternating between Kent and Kent State, Ron Kirksey, director of University Relations and Marketing at Kent, says it has nothing to do with trying to erase the image of the May 4 shootings.

"The logo is constantly changing, but it is because of marketing," Kirksey says. "My understanding is that media consultants are brought in to see what would be the most popular way to attract more students. For a while, just "Kent" was being used because it was supposed to remind people of other one-word schools, like Yale. Now they are finding that students are liking Kent State again."

The shootings that occurred on May 4 will never be forgotten, no matter how much the students and the administration try to ignore it, says Drew Tiene, professor of instructional technology at Kent State. Tiene has interviewed other Kent State professors and witnesses of May 4 for a documentary he made.

Before their time

The majority of today's undergraduates were not even born in 1970, so it just doesn't interest them, says history major John Fultz.

"I understand the people who attended school back then should come back, but it isn't as important to us today," Fultz says. "It isn't genuine for most students now. They just see it as a day off school. It's not that I don't care – don't get me wrong. It was an important event in 1970. But this is not 1970.

Many today are tired of making a religion out what they consider a 30-year-old incident

"I think that we should learn about it in history and stuff, but why are we still spending money? How many memorials do we need?"

Even if today's students weren't born in 1970, their parents lived through the period, and that may be the part of the reason that students want to forget about May 4 and Vietnam, Tiene suggests. Many of their parents have strong opinions of disapproval that could have been passed on to their children.

"Parents and members of this community and others are offended because the shootings are memorialized," Tiene says. "They want to suppress it. It reminds them of a really unfortunate incident in U.S. history – one of the worst kinds. There are a lot of people whose orientation is right-wing and pro-Army. Their feelings may be passed on to their children."

Another memorial

In September 1999, the Prentice Hall parking spaces where four students were killed in 1970 were closed and dedicated in their memory. The project was paid for by funds from private donors, including Kent State President Carol Cartwright. Some students thought that this was a good idea. Some were resentful.

"I understand that it might be looked at as disrespectful to have cars parked on the site where people died," Skatulski says. "It's not that the new memorial isn't a good idea, but it should have been done before. Why do it now? The site on the hill (for the May 4 Memorial) was chosen. When are we going to stop spending money on this?

"We also cannot afford to lose parking spaces when parking on this campus is already crazy. This isn't a cemetery. It's a school."

Honoring the spots where the students died is an important step, Tiene says.

"It's much more powerful to have memorials where the students fell."

Because the granite May 4 Memorial is often disrespected or ignored by students, Skatulski asks why a new memorial was built.

"There were repair projects that had to be done to the memorial on the hill because of the damage caused by the skateboarding on it," Skatulski says. "I don't think that those people really cared about the memorial. That seems to be the general attitude of how much students care about May 4."

Seek the whole truth

Holly Divella, junior elementary education major, offers another reason why the university should move on from the past. She says all of the students are being honored as if they did nothing wrong, when actually, some of them provoked guardsmen during the May 4 rally.

1985 – Kent State President Michael Schwartz initiates a national design competition to memorialize the shootings.
"I don't think that means that the students deserved to be shot at, but for the past 30 years we have been making these students into saints and condemning everyone else.

"I have seen videotape from the riot that day, and students were taunting the guards," Divella says.

"I don't think that means that the students deserved to be shot at, but for the past 30 years we have been making these students into saints and condemning everyone else. The whole truth isn't there. I don't think we should be honoring and remembering something, especially for 30 years, when the complete story isn't being told."

While evidence shows that Allison Krause and Jeffer Miller were involved in the May 4 rally, Sandra Scheuer and William Schroeder were passersby.

Campus violence erupted across the nation in 1970 because of the Vietnam War. Tiene attended the University of Michigan, where he was active in anti-war protests. Rock throwing was common, but he never saw a threat from police forces.

"These incidents were happening at campuses everywhere, but police on other campuses did not overreact and fire shots like they did at Kent State," Tiene says. "That's the embarrassment of the incident, and that's why people want to forget it. Conservatives want to show that because stones were thrown, that is why this incident happened."

Even the parking lot memorial shows that the students weren't necessarily endangering the guard, Tiene says.

"The memorial shows where the students fell, and they were so far away from the guardsmen," he says. "How could they be threatening the Guard from there?"

Entrepreneurship

There are other issues students should focus their attention to, Szkatulski says.

"We have all of these tragedies now, like the Oklahoma City bombings, Kosovo, and the school shootings," Szkatulski says, "and those are a lot closer than the Kent shootings. Why concentrate on the past?"

And it's hard to predict whether or not the next generation will remember the wave of school shootings.

"Thirty years from now, our kids are not going to still be mourning the kids at Columbine High School because it was before their time," says Robert Marek, a junior accounting major. "May 4 was before our time."

Kent State could benefit from an image change, says Stephanie Self, fourth-year communications major.

"I think that it is time to find something else to remember Kent by, like our programs," she says. "It's a shame the kids got killed, and it's nice that we remember it, but it's time to move on and get over it."

Kent State student Tiffany Petrosky notices too many students using May 4 as a popular day off from classes - not an opportunity to inquire, learn, and reflect.

"No one cares anymore, and it is kind of making a joke out of the situation to keep hearing about it," says Petrosky, a junior middle-childhood education major. "Students aren't paying their respects in the proper manner. It is having a reverse effect. Instead of bringing awareness, people are saying, 'We get the day off of school because those kids got shot.'"

"I don't think that constantly hearing about May 4 raises anyone's awareness," she says. "We already know all about it."

Tiene disagrees. He thinks that the students today are not learning enough about May 4.

"I see what happened as an exercise of democratic rights," Tiene says. "One of the reasons that this event has not been forgotten and won't be forgotten, especially in history books, is because it represents an exercise of free speech and the right to assemble. These are the heart of what democracy is about."

"The university should educate people about the history of that era, but it has been neglected because of the defensiveness of the event," Tiene says. "The mission of the university should be to get the facts out. Some people who have carried the banner, like Jerry Lewis, are retiring. They aren't going to be involved in commemorating."

Time away from classes, not time to remember

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Closer to home

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Future of May 4?

Tiene wants Kent State to be known for both.

"All universities want to have a positive image, and that's great," he says. "Why can't they work together? This could be a school known for the shootings and for being a fine institution."

"Fifty years from now, when no one is around and the sensitivity toward the issue is gone, you wonder if Kent can accept it. This is the reason Kent State is known around the world."
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(330) 673-7070

The May 4 Memorial, dedicated in 1990, was designed by Bruno Ast. The daffodils covering Taylor Hill rise in early spring and symbolize the number of Americans who died serving in Vietnam.

Copies of this publication and the May 4 CD-ROM are available for sale. Contact the Office of Student Media, Room 101, Taylor Hall, Kent State University (330) 672-2586, www.burr.kent.edu

May 1990 — The memorial is surrounded by 58,175 daffodil bulbs to represent U.S. losses in Vietnam. Kent artist Brinsley Tyrell contributed to the concept of planting daffodils.
“Dates and facts are not enough to show what happened in the past when dealing with people. It is necessary to analyze and delve into the human side of history to come up with the truth. History must be made relevant to the present to make it useful.”

—Allison Krause