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## The May 4, 1970 Kent State University shootings: Thirty years of myths, memorials and commemorations

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THE MAY 4, 1970 KENT STATE UNIVERSITY SHOOTINGS:  
THIRTY YEARS OF MYTHS, MEMORIALS AND COMMEMORATIONS

by

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Bachelor Of Arts, Communications *Cum Laude*  
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1998

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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**Greenspun College of Urban Affairs**

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**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
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## Thesis Approval

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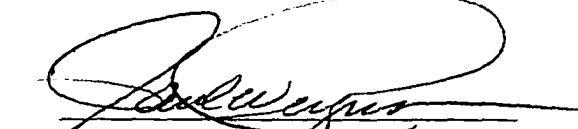
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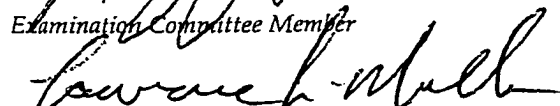
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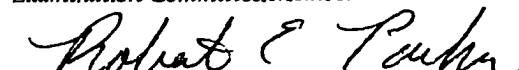
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## **ABSTRACT**

**The May 4, 1970 Kent State University Shootings:  
Thirty Years of Myths, Memorials and Commemorations**

**by**

**Mona Doreen Greenberg**

**Dr. Richard Jensen, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor, Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

On May 4, 1970, four students were killed and nine injured on the campus of Kent State University by the Ohio National Guard. This study examines and utilizes Braden's theory on myths to structure and analyze the rhetoric relevant to the myths, memorials and commemorations for the students killed and injured at Kent State University. The exploratory process focused on the events from 1970 until the present. The research was conducted through personal interviews with eyewitnesses, wounded victims, and friends of the deceased. Books, academic articles on social movements, newspaper and news magazine articles were reviewed to study the historical and cultural environment at the time of the shootings. The analysis supports the importance of myths, memorials and commemorations and suggests that a lack in communication contributed to the outcome on May 4, 1970.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
Dedication .....	vi
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION.....	1
Review of Literature .....	12
Methodology .....	26
CHAPTER TWO CHRONOLOGY .....	34
Interviews.....	46
Chapter Conclusion .....	59
CHAPTER THREE COMMEMORATIVES .....	62
Chapter Conclusion .....	94
CHAPTER FOUR MEMORIALS AND MYTHS .....	97
Chapter Conclusion .....	112
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION .....	114
Future Research .....	122
APPENDICES.....	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	138
VITA.....	148

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Finally, I would like to express a special thank you to my most devoted friend, Darrell Meyer, for his unwavering support to me during the writing of this thesis.

This thesis is dedicated to the three most important family members in my life and to the students killed and injured on May 4, 1970.

First, this thesis is dedicated to my son, Eric, the joy of my life, who brightens my world with beautiful colors.

Second, this thesis is dedicated to my mother, my very best friend in life, who has taught me the true meaning of unconditional love.

Third, this thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, who taught me to give everything I do in life *100%* and then go back and give it one more. Then win, lose or draw, I would always know that I gave it my best. This *101%* thesis honors my father's teachings and memory.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to the memories of Allison Beth Krause, Jeffrey Glen Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer, William Knox Schroeder, the four young lives lost, long before they had the chance to live them, and to the nine students injured on the campus at Kent State University.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*The fateful act of living in and with one's generation completes  
the drama of human existence.*

**Martin Heidegger**

*Only guard yourself and guard your soul carefully,  
lest you forget the things your eyes saw, and list these  
things depart your heart all the days of your life.  
And you shall make them known to your children and to  
your children's children.*

**Deuteronomy 4:9**

Thirty years have passed since four young men and women were shot and nine others wounded on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University. To forget them would be to deny that their lives were without significance to society.

When Allison Beth Krause, Jeffrey Glen Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer and William Knox Schroeder were killed, their demise made their lives forever young in the hearts and memories of not only those that knew them, but also for the generations to come who would learn about them.

Dean Kahler was one of the nine wounded. Thirty years later he still reflects, "The whole thing's over with. Nobody's going to get in trouble. I would just like somebody to come through and tell us the truth" (Of Loss and Learning, 2000, paragraph 1).

There are a myriad of myths that have grown, varied and are kept alive at Kent State University by the yearly vigils, commemorative events and programs, monuments built to honor those killed and injured on May 4, 1970, and the archives at the Kent State University Library. Braden (1975), in his study of myths, states, "Its main function is to confirm, intensify and amplify sentiments and attitudes" (p. 122). Braden (1975) continues:

For those who cannot or do not wish to face reality, it suggests rationalizations, escapes, and fantasy. In many instances the myth is like a blank check into which the listener may fill in any meaning or feeling that he abstracts from what is pleasant while he ignores or forgets what is disturbing. (p. 122)

Braden's perspective on myths provides a useful method for this study to analyze the rhetoric surrounding the myths, memorials and commemorations for the students killed and injured on May 4, 1970. This thesis examines the events that led to the shootings and the myths, memorials, and commemorations that grew as a result of the shootings.

Prior to the crisis at Kent State University in May 1970, there was a cultural revolution in the 1960s, one in which the generational cohorts rebelled against the older establishment. This generation of cohorts was questioning with skepticism societal values, political changes and expectations.

In the article, "Student Protest in the 1960s," Linda Churney (1979) points out, "This generation grew up with every advantage their parents could afford to give them, including a college education" (paragraph 10). Churney (1979) adds:

When in the mid-60s some six million students descended on the college campuses they found that the institution itself had changed and grown larger, more impersonal and bureaucratic. . . . A university campus is an especially favorable place for a youth movement or culture to develop, given the relative freedom of the students in terms of time they have to give to a cause. (paragraphs 10, 14)

Students were exploring the reality of what being different can do to one's life, family, surroundings, and questioning the significance of living rather than existing in life. Churney (1979) asserts, "Students realized that what they took for granted as 'self-evident truths,' rights such as liberty and equality, were blatantly denied some Americans" (paragraph 9).

The 1960s was a time of war; a time for protests both politically and racially. It was a coming of age for a generation that would have a defining time in history. The young men and women who were killed or wounded grew up during the turbulence of the 1960s.

Demonstrations against the war in Vietnam escalated in 1966. In 1967, there were 35,000 antiwar protesters at The Pentagon March Against the War chanting, "we're not against the soldier, we're against the war" (Gitlin, 1987, p. 10).

There was a protest rally against the Vietnam War in 1968 at Northwestern University. At Columbia University in New York City on April 23, 1969, students stormed the school and took it over. Columbia University was shut down for six days. What started out as a peaceful sit-in ended with violence between

students and the police who viciously and without provocation beat up the students who were sitting peacefully to protest the war. In 1968, campus unrest spread across the country ("The Decade in," 1970, p. 36).

Demonstrators against the war in Vietnam planned a peaceful protest at the Democratic convention in Chicago, August 1968. Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago ordered the police to intervene. Chaos and violence erupted ending in what some refer to as a "riot." The police assaulted and tear-gassed the young people resulting in 100 injuries and close to 200 arrests ("The Decade in," 1970, p. 38).

On Thursday, April 30, 1970, President Richard Nixon announced that United States troops were being deployed to Cambodia. Many demonstrators, already upset and protesting the war in Vietnam, rallied in force across college campuses in response to Nixon's speech. According to the New York Times, the next day during a speech to civilian employees at the Pentagon, President Nixon referred to the college radicals as "bums," in contrast to the American soldiers, who were the "greatest" (deOnis, 1970, pp. 1, 10). Nixon (1970) emphasized:

You see these bums, you know, blowing up the campuses. Listen, the boys that are on the college campuses today are the luckiest people in the world. Going to the greatest universities, and here they are burning up the books, storming around about this issue. (p. 1)

It was after that announcement and for the next four days that history at Kent State University was made. After the shootings, President Nixon stated, "Kent

State University should remind us all that when dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy” (Semple, Jr., 1970, p. L17). Nixon (1970) added:

It is my hope that this tragedy and unfortunate incident will strengthen the determination of the nation’s campuses, administrators, faculty and students alike to stand firmly for the right which exists in this country of peaceful dissent and just as strongly against the resort to violence as a means of expression. (p. L17)

However, in the thirteen seconds of fusillade, history was forever changed. James R. Andrews (1973), writes, “If we view history in our own unique way, we may begin to understand not only the reciprocal shaping of rhetoric and events, but the impact of events-as-perceived on the course of history” (p. 208). The shootings at Kent State University left a painful and memorable legacy for the many individuals both on and off the campus the day of the confrontation.

The students killed were unaware that the guardsmen had loaded their guns with live ammunition. The United States government, Governor James Rhodes of Ohio, and the mayor of Kent, Ohio, Leroy Satrom, did not know how to react to this rebellious younger generation.

On Sunday, May 3, 1970, Governor Rhodes, at a news conference, asserted, “These people just move from one campus to the other and terrorize a community.” Rhodes added, “They’re the worst kind of people that we harbor in America” (Tompkins and Anderson, 1971, p. 29). Rhodes stressed, “We are going to eradicate the problem—we’re not going to treat the symptoms” (Tompkins and Anderson, 1971, p. 29).



The students at Kent State University, many of them innocent bystanders, were caught up in the confusion and frustration of the National Guard troops limiting their freedom to move about their campus. Kurt W. Ritter (1977), writes, "The Kent State killings came to symbolize the 'ruthless repression by the establishment,' while for many of the 'silent majority' the killings were the unfortunate but inevitable result of 'dangerous radicals' on college campuses" (p. 115).

Over the years, numerous myths about Kent State University have evolved and become a part of the historical rhetoric and events that led up to the shootings and its aftermath. In the article, "Myths In A Rhetorical Context," Waldo W. Braden (1975), states, "The word myth is not an easy term to define or even explain because it is illusive and nebulous and depends for its force upon its loose structure" (p. 115).

Braden (1975) continues, "Leo Marx thinks that it is difficult to define or even locate because it is an expression less of thought than of feeling. It is widely diffused in our culture insinuating itself into many kinds of behavior" (p. 115).

For example, different myths have circulated with conflicting stories surrounding the Ohio National Guard shooting directly at unarmed college students. After the shootings, stories spread on campus that the Ohio National Guard soldiers felt threatened and believed their lives were in danger as the crowd was closing in on them.

Other stories have been passed on where the Ohio National Guard aimed directly at and not over the bodies of the students. There are still members of the

older generation who not only pass this story on, but also add that the students killed were radicals, troublemakers, "hippies" with long hair, dirty in their personal appearance, and they got what they deserved.

In reality, the four students killed were not the radicals as the public was led to believe. They were innocent victims of a society going through its own metamorphosis.

Jeffrey Glen Miller was shot through the head 275 feet away from the Ohio National Guard troops. Miller had just transferred to Kent State University, January 1970, from Michigan State. Two hours prior to his being killed, Miller called his mother to reassure her that he was safe and asked her if it was okay for him to attend the rally. In a cruel twist of events Elaine Holstein, Miller's mother learned of her son's death only after calling his room (MAYDAY: Kent State/The People, 1999, paragraph 20).

Allison Beth Krause was shot in the arm and chest 350 feet away from the Ohio National Guard troops. Krause was in the Honors College, an aspiring young artist. Doris Krause, Allison's mother stated, "They always point out that my daughter had gravel in her pockets . . . that this was the rationale for killing her . . . why didn't they throw gravel at her?" (MAYDAY: Kent State/The People, 1999, paragraph 1).

Sandra Lee Scheuer was shot through the throat 400 feet away from the Ohio National Guard troops. Scheuer was an honor student in speech therapy, a member of Alpha Xi Delta Sorority and non-political. Scheuer was photographed the day prior to her demise looking at the burned R.O.T.C. building. Scheuer's

mother painfully recalled, "My daughter was a special person who was not involved in any of the demonstrations, yet in the press, she was called a communist. We left Germany to guarantee that our daughters would live in a country with freedom" (MAYDAY: Kent State/The People, 1999, paragraph 1).

William Knox Schroeder was shot in the back 400 feet away from the Ohio National Guard troops. Schroeder was in the United States Army R.O.T.C., and had been awarded a four-year scholarship to college. Twenty-four minutes prior to his demise, Schroeder was photographed avoiding the Ohio National Guardsmen ("Kenfour the May 4<sup>th</sup>," 2000, p. 1). Schroeder visited his family in Lorain, Ohio, one week prior to his death. His mother Florence remembers:

He [William] had just completed his first experimental research project. . . .

After his death, Mr. Robert Fermie, Assistant Professor of Psychology, returned the report to us with the grade of A+ and this [his] notation – 'You seem to have a good feeling for the scientific style of writing.'

(MAYDAY: Kent State/The People, 1999, paragraph 32)

Both Scheuer and Schroeder were killed as they innocently walked to their next class. Neither student was involved in the noon rally.

A commemoration may surround an event, such as the yearly vigil held at Kent State University every year since 1970. The reflective vigil keeps alive the memory of what occurred on the campus and the significance it holds in society. Beginning on the evening of May 3 and ending at 12:24 p.m., on May 4, the vigil honors the memories of the four students who were killed, the nine who were wounded and the two students killed two weeks later at Jackson State.

The commemorations and memorials make it possible for individuals to gather and exchange their stories. If stories are not retold and memories are not kept alive, then those who have lived and then passed on will have lived in vain. Memories are for the living. They keep the deceased close at heart:

It provides the opportunity to mourn a loss that still haunts many people, and it shows these mourners that they are not alone.

To live in the hearts of those who are left behind is not to die. . . .

In many ways, Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer and William Schroeder possess an immortality that will stretch forever, far beyond the long lives they were never able to live. (Klosterman, 2000, p. 1)

There are dedicated memorials on the campus at Kent State University that are representative of lessons to be learned by society. On one of the memorials the rhetorical legacy is expressed in the written words, "Inquire, Learn, Reflect." Carol Cartwright, President at Kent State University offers the meaning behind the words; "To *inquire* how such a tragedy could take place, to *learn* the vital lessons wrought from the violence on that Spring day, and to *reflect* on ways to manage conflict among people, groups and nations" (Kent State University, 1999, paragraph 1).

There are individuals living in Kent, Ohio, and at the university who want to move forward, put aside the impact of the shootings and forget the events. They want to deny the actions that occurred on May 4, 1970, and its place in history.

The social protest against the war in Vietnam was growing all across the country and the students were not accepting the rhetoric that was being fed to

them. At Kent State University, the government and the establishment had the power of control, whereas the college students who were protesting the war were not in a position of control.

The terrible events at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, have their place in history and continue to be analyzed and discussed today. In the book, The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control (1993), the authors write, "The most protracted and bloody agitations occur when control is in high power, low in ideological strength, and low in rhetorical sophistication, while the agitators are low in actual membership, high in potential membership, and high in rhetorical sophistication" (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, p. 147).

It is important to remember that the problems of the 1960s, the lack of communication between not only generations, but also the lack in communication within each generation internally, fed the fuel to the violence at Kent State University on May 4, 1970. "Dissatisfied with the world they inherited and following a pattern of dissent from their parents' generation, the youth of the 1960s formed a 'counter-culture' which rejected many of the fundamental values of American society" (Churney, 1979, p. 5).

The racial, political and social environment on the culture and its events influenced the youth growing up in the 1960s. The sixties, the protests, the Vietnam War, the attitudes towards the younger generation and their contrasting views, all contributed to triggering the emotional and heated response that culminated at Kent State University. There were, "The boomers' historical hot-buttons-southern desegregation, the Vietnam war and the anti-war movement,

the misogyny of the New Left, the militancy of the Black Panthers-they are almost exclusively from the 1960s" ("Generation Gump," 1994, p. 28).

In the last half of the 1960s and early 1970s, students became more radical and the establishment grew less patient in tolerating their differences. The older generation was fearful and resentful of the youth who were protesting and speaking out about what they wanted. In the article, "Unfinished business: can we beat the special-interest state?" Tom Hayden, former radical turned politician states, "Too many of our elders in the sixties discarded their rebellious children or remained silent when the time came to take a controversial stand against their government" (p. 14).

Closely related to the loss of life at Kent State University is Arthur Krause, whose daughter Allison was one of the four victims killed on May 4, 1970. Krause believes it is important to remember, "You can't get away from the hatred being spread by national leaders during that time. That political period was one which bred hate and with Nixon and Rhodes fanning the fires you can expect killings to result" (Allison Krause, 1997, paragraph 1).

In the book, Communication Crisis at Kent State, Tompkins and Anderson (1971) conclude:

The fault? It would seem to lay neither with the young people of the Guard nor the young people they shot, but rather with the respective leaders of both groups- -because of the communication gap between Guard officials and university officials and city officials, the communication gap between

university officials and their students, the communication gap between Guard officials and their young troopers. (p. 38)

The optimism of the youth in colleges across the country was silenced with the shootings of Allison Beth Krause, Jeffrey Glen Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer and William Knox Schroeder. Their voices may have been silenced, but those who remember them cannot be silenced.

### Review of Literature

There are three areas of literature reviewed for the purpose of this study:

(1) books focusing on the shootings at Kent State University and student protest; (2) academic studies on social movements and; (3) newspaper and news magazine articles that provide a historical and cultural background of the period and how the young people confronted the establishment.

#### Books

Book length studies have provided historical background stages on dissent, riots, social movements, government cover-ups, student protests, the Vietnam War and their contribution to the shootings on May 4, 1970. An abundance of information is written in books pertaining to the events building up to and surrounding the shootings at Kent State University (see Appendix A for a listing of books contributing to the study of the shootings at Kent State University).

Over the years the interest about Kent State University has not diminished. In fact, a resurgence emerged as the thirty-year commemorative drew closer in time, resulting in extensive coverage.

Kent State University was one of the most important events of the 1970s, a memorable part of the culture in society. Two weeks after the shootings at Kent State University, two students were shot to death at Jackson State College in Mississippi. As a result of the shootings and the radical uprising of political protests on college campuses, President Richard Nixon, appointed William Scranton, former Governor of Pennsylvania, to head a Commission on Campus Unrest. In the book, The President's Commission Report on Campus Unrest, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), The Scranton Commission Report, named for William Scranton, stated that what occurred at Kent State was, "unnecessary, unwarranted and inexcusable" (p. 1).

Charles W. Lomas (1968), in The Agitator in American Society, writes, "Agitation may be defined as a persistent and uncompromising statement and restatement of grievances through all available communication channels, with the aim of creating public opinion favorable to a change in some condition" (p. 2). The administrators at Kent State University did not meet with their student body to build a cooperative atmosphere; rather the lines of communication were shut down and closed out, resulting in an "us" against "them" mentality.

The shootings at Kent State University distinguishes May 4, 1970, to be one of the most important days in history. It forever changed the youth of that generation. The 1960s brought new social movements, a coming of age for a generation that would have a defining time in history.

In Presidents and Protestors (1990), Theodore Otto Windt suggests that the Free Speech Movement that began at Berkeley, California in 1964-1965,



changed the patterns of behavior for college and university students who were becoming more volatile and aggressive in their protest movements (p. 177).

According to Windt (1990), *The Free Speech Movement*, "Served, actually and symbolically, as a transition from procedural politics to ideology, from deliberative rhetoric to radical rhetoric, from compromise to confrontation, from petitioning for change to demanding change, from theory to praxis" (p. 178).

As the students began to demand more from the establishment, the differences grew between the student protestors and the administrative powers set in motion their own "administrative rhetoric" in response to protestors (p. 182). Windt (1990) believes administrative rhetoric is imperative and states, "The last thing most administrators want is anyone asking questions or raising doubts about the veracity of a public official or the wisdom of a government policy" (p. 187).

In the book, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control* (1993), Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen look at dissent as it is today in our culture, in contrast to the national movements of the 1960s and early 1970s (p. vii). The researchers suggest the rhetoric of agitation strategies and control strategies have a combination of variables with predicted patterns of behavior. The stages of agitation and control are: (1) actual membership, potential membership and rhetorical sophistication and, (2) power, strength (logical consistency and empirical validity) of ideology and rhetorical sophistication (p. 141).

At Kent State University, by virtue of power, the establishment had the position of control, whereas the students came across as the agitators. When

discussing strategies or tactics of agitation, the researchers outline the differences in rhetorical discourse and its effect on the possible outcomes. Agitators' strategies can be grouped as: petition of the establishment, promulgation, solidification, polarization, nonviolent resistance, escalation/confrontation, and Ghandi and guerrilla (p. 19). Strategies of Control by the establishment can be: avoidance, suppression, adjustment, or capitulation (p. 49).

The administration at Kent State University and the elected government officials were aggressive in their control of a potential student protest against the war. The climate of the times fed fuel to the lack of any interaction between the establishment and the students. Bowers, Ochs and Jensen (1993) contend, "Decision makers must assume that the worst will happen in a given instance of agitation. . . . Decision makers must be prepared to repel any attack on the establishment" (p. 47). Alan Barth writes in the Washington Post:

Establishments, generally speaking, are better equipped than student revolutionaries and guerrilla fighters with brass knuckles, tear gas, mace, shotguns and the like; and they are far less squeamish about employing them . . . . In the end, victory goes to the most ruthless. (Bowers, Ochs and Jensen, 1993, p. 47)

In Persuasion and Social Movements, Stewart, Smith and Denton (1994) outline that:

(1) persuasion is intrinsically practical and to be studied as a function of persuasive acts; (2) there are reasons behind irrational acts; (3) symbols are

representative of how people create, use, ignore or act upon them; (4) social movements are affected by speeches and; (5) social movements can not be classified as occurrences of perversion, orneriness or ignorance. (p. v)

In social movements, symbolism can appear as conflict, victimage and tragedy. A movement may fail if it has an inept leader. Leaders are significant in a social movement, as the leaders become the movement. Stewart, Smith and Denton (1994) bring to light that leaders, "Must strive for obedience among the membership and the people, bring an end to tensions, and establish a "perfecting myth" in which the social movement organization is believed to have reached a state of absolute perfection and morality" (p. 84). There are militant leaders who attack the system. By contrast there are moderate leaders who function within the system. Both are crucial to the success of any movement.

Kenneth Burke's "dramatistic pentad" is made up of five elements: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose providing a scrutiny to reconstruct the action or motive (Stewart, Smith and Denton, 1994, p. 168). Burke's pentad analyzes the motives behind the actions. Burke believes:

For there to be an act, there must be an agent. Similarly, there must be a scene in which the agent acts. To act in a scene, the agent must employ some means or agency. And there cannot be an act, in the full sense of the term, unless there is a purpose. (p. 168)

Burke's pentad allows for discourse and actions to be organized and analyzed. Burke outlines the five elements of the pentad as it relates to the shootings at Kent State University. According to Burke:

(1) the act was the shooting of the four students; (2) the scene was the culmination of three days of demonstrations and rioting; (3) the agents were the Ohio National Guardsmen; (4) the agency was the rifles and; (5) the purpose of the act remains debatable, but it would seem to have been either planned retaliation or spontaneous self-defense. (p. 170)

In Burke's point of view, symbolic behavior epitomizes the drama being communicated (p. 176). At Kent State University, the stage was set for a drama. All of the horrific consequences that backlashed against the students contributed to the forming of a myth.

### Articles

There are a litany of articles that focus on dissent and social movements. Social movements are difficult and complicated. A movement can either be successful or be considered a failure, be won or be lost, be studied for the winners or serve to learn from those that lost. All movements have militants and moderates who participate in its cause. Without proper leadership a movement may be unsuccessful in its attempt to reach its objective.

Leland M. Griffin (1952), was a pioneer in writing about social movements. Griffin outlines questions to discover for the student studying the rhetoric of historical movements and the survey of public address as:

(1) what should be the point of focus in the movement study; (2) what kind of movement should the student select for study, and how much of the movement should he study; (3) how should the student go about the business of isolating and analyzing the rhetorical movement; (4) what

rhetorical criteria should the student use in evaluating the public address of the movement and; (5) how should the student go about the process of synthesis involved in reporting the movement. (pp. 369-371)

As a result of the shooting at Kent State University, the yearly commemorative programs serve as a forum for the study of the movement to continue and for its message to continue.

Mary McEdwards (1968), in her article, "Agitative Rhetoric: It's Nature and Effect," contrasts the differences between militant agitators and moderates and the language each uses as a means to accomplish their goals. McEdwards notes the soft-spoken language chosen by Reverend Martin Luther King, conversely to the agitative language used by Malcolm X (p. 9).

In the past, articles have looked at cycles and stages of social movements and protests. According to the article, "Confrontation at Columbia: A Case Study in Coercive Rhetoric," James R. Andrews (1969), writes, "It may be that in the examination of the means of protests, and not necessarily in any inherent worthiness of their goals, that rhetorical critics can hope to make meaningful contributions" (p. 16).

Herbert W. Simons (1970), in his article "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," points out that social movements are for the most part, organized from the bottom-up and that there are powerless people outside the system, attempting to fight the system. Simons (1970) contends there are three rhetorical requirements for leaders to meet in a social movement:

(1) they must attract, maintain, and mold workers (i.e., followers) into an efficiently organized unit; (2) they must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure (i.e., the external system, the established order); (3) they must react to resistance generated by the larger structure. (p. 4)

To illustrate, the student leaders at Kent State University were politically active on campus, disseminating information through their followers who supported their cause. The students attempted unsuccessfully to meet with the administration and formed rallies to gain support and make their voices heard and their issues known. There were different methods exploited from the establishment, which had the power, in contrast to the students who were without any power, except in their own unity. Simons (1970) identifies, "The needs of individual members are frequently incompatible with organizational imperatives; appeals addressed to the intelligentsia of a movement incompatible with appeals addressed to the masses: the values for which the movement stands incompatible with tactical necessities" (p. 11).

Ernest G. Bormann (1972), addresses the evolution of myths in his article, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality" which notes that there are heroes, villains, emotions and attitudes designated by a group (p. 398). For example, the Kent State University scenario where the heroes for the most part were the students, in contrast to the villains, the Ohio National Guard, and the emotions and attitudes differed in each role. Moreover, over the last thirty years, the fantasy theme evolved growing in its important

significance to historical studies, growing bigger and bigger, getting more people involved each year.

Along the same lines is the fantasy type, a scenario that is repeated over and over again and "rhetorical vision," where group dynamics look at the entire drama to include, "Face-to-face interacting groups, in speaker-audience transactions, in views of television broadcasts, in listeners to radio programs, and in all the diverse settings for public and intimate communication in a given society" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398).

In a fantasy theme, there are questions to be analyzed, such as who are the *dramatis personae*, where are the dramas set and what are the typical plot lines. Bormann (1972) contends, "A speaker can characterize a hero by attributing praiseworthy motivation, or create a bad image by suggesting unsavory motives" (p. 407). Every year at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, the annual commemorative program makes possible a setting for a rhetorical vision to occur.

James R. Andrews (1973), in his article, "The Passionate Negation: The Chartist Movement in Rhetorical Perspective," proposes a rhetorical perspective on the study of historical movements. Andrews (1973) believes:

The movement leaves behind it a rhetorical legacy: the strategies it employed, the values it embodied, the heroes and villains that it created, form some part of the historical cultural heritage and may prove an important source of intervention for future spokesmen, further causes. (p. 198)

Andrews suggests that a rhetorical critic observes in a movement: (1) rhetorical imperatives and strategic indicators; (2) patterns of advocacy and

reaction and, (3) influential relationships. Andrews (1973) asserts, "Rhetorical imperatives are situations or events which compel certain people to take some kind of concrete action" (p. 196). Andrews (1973) contends the rhetorical imperatives are, "Factors in the context which suggest the rhetorical form that the movement will take are strategic indicators" (p. 197).

John F. Cragan (1975), in "Rhetorical Strategy: A Dramastistic Interpretation and Application," talks about genre studies adding that dramas lead to social reality. Cragan (1975) concludes, "As the history of American public discourse is collected in the form of rhetorical visions, we will develop categories for classifying different kinds of rhetorical dramas" (p. 11).

Kurt W. Ritter (1977), in his article, "Confrontation as Moral Drama: The Boston Massacre in Rhetorical Perspective" believes, "For a confrontation to ascent to the status of a moral drama, it must grow out of a context which helps to define the forces of good and evil" (p. 121). The antiwar protesters on the campus of Kent State University were viewed as evil, in comparison to the Ohio National Guardsmen, who were viewed as good.

Ritter (1977) adds, "to create a moral drama; there are agents of tyranny, martyrs for liberty, divine sanction and reliving the drama allows for collective memories and messages from the past" (pp. 121, 122). Ritter (1977) states, "The past, serving as a guide to the present, functions as a potent force for the rhetorician" (p. 132). Closely related to this is the comment by Carol Cartwright, Kent State President, when discussing the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration, "This year, as we enter the new century, we have a unique opportunity to emphasize the future



and the values on which our democracy is based" ("This Week at," 2000, paragraph 3).

James W. Crocker (1977), in his article, "A Rhetoric Of Encounter Following The May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1970, Disturbances At Kent State University," outlines through content analysis the rhetoric of the student newspaper, administration public relations periodicals and the proceedings of the Faculty Senate at Kent State University, the Fall Quarter immediately following the occurrence of May 1-4, 1970 (p. 47). Crocker offers nine communication themes that emerged from the studies at Kent State University: "(1) togetherness; (2) sharing; (3) immediacy; (4) growth; (5) individual self-worth; (6) mutual support; (7) creative hostility; (8) uncertainty, and; (9) risk taking" (p. 48).

The author states the themes that emerged may serve as a source of rhetorical intervention in meeting the demands of similar rhetorical situations (p. 55). The author asserts, "Both the concept of a rhetoric of encounter and the results of the content analysis of the Kent State case offer specific options for rhetors concerned with facilitating human relations in a cooling-off period following a confrontation" (p. 54).

Crocker (1977) believes there is a need for future research on the rhetoric of encounter. Crocker (1977) states, "One hopes that knowledge . . . will be expanded until we know as much about encounter and conciliation as we now do about confrontation and conflict" (p. 56).

Moreover, Ritter (1977) compares the shootings at Kent State University by the Ohio Guardsmen to the Boston Massacre and the American Revolution,

which occurred in 1770. Ritter (1977) believes that there are “villains” and “martyrs” who create a moral drama and are perceived as either good or evil, or as a struggle in the culture between “god terms” and “devil terms” (p. 115).

Ritter (1977) adds, “Like Kent State, the Boston Massacre would come to symbolize a larger conflict, but unlike Kent State, the revolutionary agitators would be far more successful in presenting their version of the moral drama” (p. 115). In the end, Ritter (1977) characterizes the impact of the Boston Massacre and Kent State University confrontations as a moral struggle defining an entire social or political movement (p. 134). On the other hand, the rhetorical critic may view specific social confrontations as being morally righteous (p. 135).

A catalytic event such as the shootings that occurred at Kent State University made the social protest movement exhibited by students on college campuses even more momentous. In the article, “History and Theory in the Study of the Rhetoric of Social Movements,” James R. Andrews (1980), contends, “Any movement must deal somehow with social perceptions of reality by using rhetoric to alter, shape, and extend the ways in which the world is seen by those living in it” (p. 279). Andrews (1980) adds, “Any set of human actions is likely to be perceived differently when experienced from the way they are perceived, recollected, or reconstructed” (p. 274).

Theoretically, it is necessary for historians and scholars to study the past history of the 1960s and the Vietnam War, which acted as a catalyst for the shootings at Kent State University. Herbert W. Simons (1991), “On the Rhetoric of Social Movements, Historical Movements,” and “Top-Down” Movements: A

Commentary," offers, "rather, we might say that movements are struggles on behalf of a cause by groups whose core organizations, modes of action, and/or guiding ideas are not fully legitimated by the larger society" (p. 100). The sixties, the antiwar protests, sit-ins on college campuses, the Vietnam War, the attitudes towards the younger generation and their contrasting views, all contributed to triggering the emotional and heated response that culminated at Kent State University.

There are two published articles in Communication Quarterly, in which the shootings at Kent State University are discussed. Louis P. Cusella (1982), in his article, "Real-Fiction Versus Historical Reality: Rhetorical Purification in "Kent State – The Docudrama" analyzes the television documentary portrayal of William (Bill) Knox Schroeder, one of the deceased victims at Kent State University. Cusella and Schroeder were roommates at Kent State University and friends since childhood.

The author examines how the NBC television docudrama, which was first aired on Sunday, February 4, 1981, purified an image of Schroeder and misconstrued facts about Schroeder's life as, "1) an All-American boy, 2) a responsible and mature student, 3) apolitical, and 4) vulnerable and emotionally distraught over his ROTC membership" (Cusella, 1982, pp. 160-161).

Cusella (1982) states, "The docudrama falsely portrayed Bill and certain occurrences and motivations appeared without factual base" (p. 159). The author believes it was unnecessary to purify Schroeder's image because

Schroeder was a good person (p. 163). Cusella concludes what the movie lacked was a realistic version of the whole Bill, a nineteen-year old college sophomore who was not either "good" or "bad," but rather a student shot and killed on the campus of Kent State, May 4, 1970 (pp. 163, 164).

Lewis and Thomas R. Hensley (1998), published the article, "The May 4 Shooting at Kent State University: The Search For Historical Accuracy," in which the researchers provide historical insight to twelve questions asked most frequently about the shootings and the circumstances surrounding the events on record.

The authors examine not only the shootings, but conclude that there are significant lessons to be learned for future generations to analyze. The researchers give three reasons why the May 4, 1970, Kent State University gunfire should never be forgotten:

(1) the shootings have come to symbolize a great American tragedy which occurred at the height of the Vietnam War era; (2) May 4 at Kent State University and the Vietnam War era remain controversial even today, and the need for healing continues to exist; (3) most importantly, May 4 at Kent State University should be remembered in order that we can learn from the mistakes of the past. (paragraph 38)

The authors write, "Insofar as this has happened, lessons have been learned, and the deaths of four young Kent State University Students have not been in vain" (Lewis and Hensley, 1998, paragraph 38).

### Popular Literature

Because the shootings at Kent State University were a significant event, magazines, newspapers and popular press covered the story extensively. Newspaper articles from the New York Times, covering events one-week prior to May 4, 1970, were reviewed to explore the emotional climate of the country at that time.

In addition, the articles in Newsweek and Time magazines covering the shootings were examined to explore the differences of opinion by the type of stories printed in each magazine. All across the country college campuses were scenes of protests by students and the stories printed about them represented the atmosphere of the 1970s.

The 30-year commemorative program at Kent State University received national media attention. Reporters from all over the country gathered to cover stories on the people, the events and the legacy of the shootings. Articles in the Akron Beacon Journal were reviewed to offer local coverage and perspective on the historical tragedy that took place in their community. International coverage by CNN was also examined.

### Methodology

Acknowledging the fact that there are diverse theories on myths by scholars in the twentieth-century such as Ernst Cassirer, Mircea Eliade, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Levi-Strauss, for the purposes of this research Waldo W. Braden's (1975) theory in the article "Myths in a Rhetorical Context" will be

applied to the May 4, 1970 event. Braden's theory was used to structure the analysis.

Myths are created, intensify with time and are then passed on for others to envision and evaluate. Braden (1975) suggests that myths evolve over time, are a part of one's memory and imagination, may simplify the events, persons or relationship, are more emotional than logical and may combine both reality and fiction (p. 116).

Braden (1975) asserts, "In the hands of a skillful writer the myth becomes subtle, refined, and even poetic when it strives to elicit the resources of memory and imagination" (p. 120). Braden adds, "But the myth in the mouth of a persuader may become bold, crass, and vulgar" (p. 120).

This thesis applies Braden's theory to the interviews that were conducted through either in-person visits, electronic communication or by telephone. Over the last thirty years, stories on the tragic events that took place at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, may have been embellished or altered to keep alive the memories of all the students' shot and especially the four students who were killed.

The interviews offer a cross section of individuals all affected by the events and the lasting impact on their lives 30 years later. Their individual stories support, challenge or dispel the myths that have been created.

Interviews were conducted with Jerry M. Lewis, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Kent State University, who was a witness to the shootings, and acted as a peacemaker after the guns erupted and havoc fell over the campus

community, Gregory Payne, Associate Professor at Emerson College, who has studied the shootings at Kent State University for over 30 years, Alan Canfora, wounded student and charter member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, and Roy Skellenger, current active member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force. Five former graduates from Kent State University, Class of 1971, were interviewed to add their personal perceptions on the tragedy of May 4, 1970.

David Frank, Janet Weiss Gamzon, and Rick Sturtevant were all on campus the day of the shootings, whereas Eric Smith had attended a morning class at a Kent State University satellite campus and was denied access to the main campus on the day of the shootings. David Przybys grew up in Ohio and was in the eighth grade when the shootings occurred. Przybys later attended Kent State University and offered his perceptions, first as a young child, and then as an adult.

A combination of printed materials and electronic sources for past history on commemorative events held at Emerson College or Kent State University was studied for historical accuracy. At the same time, attempts were made to contact former Kent State University alumni students through placing an article or advertisement in their alumni magazine. The request was denied. According to the Kent State University Alumni Association, "The magazine and web policy will not allow us to run something like this" (personal communication, Oct. 5, 1999). A notice was placed in the Guestbook for [jmc-reunion 2000.freesevers.com](http://jmc-reunion.2000.freesevers.com) in April 2000.

Only one former Kent State University student responded, and was later interviewed. All participants involved in this research were located through their names being identified in newspaper articles, in books, on the Kent State University May 4 web pages or through other sources.

In addition, the annual commemorations held at Kent State University, the 25 Year Retrospective of Kent State and Jackson State, and the memorials erected on the campus at Kent State University were studied as they support the myths that are verbally or non-verbally communicated. The annual commemorations, ceremonies and ceremonial speeches provide a function reinforcing memories and building on stories that are told.

A ceremonial speech brings an audience together to share closeness, to inspire and to identify with the speaker. Memories can be relived, conversed about and exchanged. According to Braden (1975), "The ceremonial speech provides an excellent vehicle for utilizing the myth" (p. 123). Braden (1975) adds:

Before he takes the platform, the panegyrist knows that his listeners are in harmony with his point of view, the occasion, and other audience members, that they are eager not to have their opinions and beliefs disturbed, and that they assemble for emotional excitement: to find solace, to be inspired, to gain sympathy from others, to find companionship and to strengthen a sense of belonging. (p. 123)

Although the verbal speeches allow for their messages to be heard, there are non-verbal messages communicated when visitors view the monuments built to



honor those killed and injured. The memorials are symbols to keep alive and honor the memories of the deceased, a place to visit and reflect on private thoughts. The memorials may serve as an emotional release, a cathartic experience where deep-rooted emotions may surface.

The memorials are not only to remember the four that were killed, but also the era in which they lived and the tragedy that faced an entire nation. The memorials represent a symbol where all people, despite their political views can come and bestow homage to the deceased.

The myths, memorials, and commemorations are all intertwined. The physical settings of the monuments allow for stories to be retold and remembered, and the commemorations allow for groups to gather, to be supportive and to share stories. The stories then become the myths passed on from generation to generation.

The myths are built on history and all of the research will support or deny Braden's theory. Braden (1975) identifies five persuasive rhetorical elements for evaluating the myth:

- (1) the critic in his evaluation must pull into view the complex structure of the myth which seldom remains fixed or constant; the myth draws together minor themes or sub-myths, and it often overlaps and is intertwined with related concepts; (2) the critic should be alert to the myth-user's efforts to establish or strengthen identification or consubstantiality; (3) the critic must estimate the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the speech; (4) the critic must ascertain how the myth is woven into what traditionally is called ethical and

pathetic appeals and through a myth, a persuader establishes his ethos with the faithful by appearing to be a man of common sense and goodwill and;  
 (5) the critic must evaluate the speaker's proficiency in using amplification by utilizing analogy, repetition, maxims, and commonplaces to maximize or minimize the principal means of myth development. (p. 125)

A recent study on myth at Kent State University has just been completed. The study focuses on Allison Beth Krause, one of the four students killed on May 4, 1970. Krause became an icon, a symbol of the shootings. In "The romanticization of Allison Beth Krause and the Kent State massacres,"

Georgina Dunn (2000) outlines:

And in her memory –  
 Parents named their newborn children  
 Books were written and dedicated  
 Plays were written  
 Schools were named  
 Poems were written and dedicated  
 Vigils were held  
 Songs were written and sung  
 Movies were made  
 Flowers were planted.  
 Mention her name throughout the world, and heads  
 will turn – eyes swelled with tears – for **she is remembered.**  
 Barry Levine

After the death of their daughter, the Krause's received 1,500 sympathy letters and 60 telegrams (Dunn, p. 20). At Krause's funeral on Wednesday, May 6, 1970, Rabbi Howard Graber stated, "the nation looks upon Allison as a symbol of the results of human violence" (Dunn, p. 20). Not all of the letters and telegrams received were kind. Some were cruel and even celebrated her demise. Conversely, "Many empathized with Allison because they too were

nineteen; they also felt the war in Vietnam was wrong, if they could, they would have replaced those bullets with something less dangerous" (Dunn, p. 30).

Dunn (2000) states, "In the book, Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women, the author Elizabeth Wurtzel believes the fascination and intrigue surrounding both the life and death of Allison Krause continued long after people had ceased to mention the Kent State shootings" (p. 30). Dunn (2000) adds, "Wurtzel points out that women are more iconic than men, something that makes women perfect for ongoing and mesmerized examination, even once they are six feet under" (p. 30).

Dunn (2000) continues, "Erica Jong writes in What Do Women Want? . . . 'The icon is stronger than the person. We needed a dead icon, we got a dead icon. The icon is stronger in death than the living individual'" (p. 26). Dunn (2000) asserts, "It is true in some ways that Allison Krause did become an unwilling representative for those who were shot, but what better way to represent a murder than with someone who is dead?" (p. 26). Dunn (2000) contends:

There are four individuals who cannot speak to tell of that day [May 4, 1970] or the role that they played, but that does not prevent their stories from being told. Today, little is still known of the lives of William Knox Schroeder and Sandra Lee Scheuer, and a photo is all that remains of the life of Jeffrey Glenn Miller as a brutal example of the protests against the Vietnam war. The fourth student, Allison Beth Krause became somewhat better known than her fellow victims. (p. 4)

Dunn (2000) concludes, "Both the media and general public were on the lookout for scapegoats and idols. Through their developing need to worship and adore someone; sometimes anyone, Allison Krause became the focus for a nation's hate and desire" (p. 35).

In the final analysis, Braden's persuasive rhetorical elements for evaluating a myth are relevant to all who were killed or injured at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, and the many stories that surround their lives and deaths. Dunn's thesis limits the study of myths to Krause and in doing so, only one story is told. The remainder of this thesis will build on Dunn's research and Braden's theories on myth.

Although the myths may vary from positive to negative, the individual critic will take from the myth what he or she needs to find their own level of solace. A deceased life is never forgotten if the stories about their lives are recalled to memory and then shared. When honoring the memories of deceased, Rabbi Sanford D. Akselrad stated:

Those we have loved cast long shadows over our lives.

We always carry them with us in our minds and in our hearts.

We remember them and the times we shared with great affection.

They are never really gone from us. (personal communication, Oct. 9, 2000)

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHRONOLOGY AND INTERVIEWS

#### The Parking Lot

*On my knees  
With my life in my arms  
The flood flows past my  
Feet  
The tears  
Slide off my trembling lips  
Falling  
Onto her pale  
Pale face*

*Like water thru my fingers  
Her life slips away.*

Barry Levine

*On a Monday morning in 1970, two men and two women put on [their] these clothes and stepped onto the campus of Kent State University. On Monday afternoon, they were cut down by the bullets of the Ohio National Guard in 13 seconds of unexplained violence.*

Of Loss and Life

In order to understand the complex structure of the myth, the context on which the myth is built should be established. According to Braden (1975), "What appears in the written text often accounts for only a small portion of the persuasion of the myth" (p. 125). Braden (1975) adds, "The critic must evaluate the influence of context or atmosphere-the setting, the time, and the staging-as

well as physical symbols . . . . The critic considers such aspects as a part of his pre-analysis of the occasion or the setting" (p. 125).

On Thursday, April 30, 1970, President Nixon made a televised address to the nation asking the American public to support an escalation of troops in the war against North Vietnam. Only ten days earlier the President had announced his plan to withdraw 150,000 Americans from Vietnam over the next year ("Transcript of President's," 1970, p. 1).

Now, despite his earlier oratory, Nixon went on to explain:

After full consultation with the National Security Council, Ambassador Bunker, General Abrams and my other advisers, I have concluded that the actions of the enemy in the last 10 days clearly endanger the lives of Americans who are in Vietnam now and would constitute an unacceptable risk to those who will be there after withdrawal of another 150,000. ("Transcript of President's," 1970, p. 1)

Nixon added, "To protect our men who are in Vietnam, and to guarantee the continued success of our withdrawal and Vietnamization program, I have concluded that the time has come for action" ("Transcript of President's," 1970, p. 1). The President outlined his choices:

First, we can do nothing. . . . Our second choice is to provide massive military assistance to Cambodia itself . . . . Our third choice is to go to the heart of the problem . . . . Now faced with these three options, this is the decision I have made. ("Transcript of President's," 1970, p. 1)

Significantly, Nixon added:

My fellow Americans, we live in an age of anarchy, both abroad and at home. We see mindless attacks on all the great institutions which have been created by free civilization in the last 500 years. Even here in the United States, great universities are being systematically destroyed. ("Transcript of President's," 1970, p. 1)

There were strong reactions to Nixon's decision to send more troops to Vietnam. Disturbances erupted on college campuses from war protestors who united in mass numbers to express their disapproval over Nixon's intentions.

The New York Times reported widespread violence and strikes, "Editors of 11 College Newspapers Urge Nationwide Walkout to Protest Move In Cambodia and New Bombings" ("Campus Unrest," 1970, p. A1). The National Student Association stated, "We plan to rally students throughout the country urging them to enlist the support of their campus and community" ("Students Protest," 1970, p. 1). In Ohio, the Akron Beacon Journal wrote, "The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, also working toward a national student strike, called for a massive rally in Washington Saturday to demand immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Southeast Asia" ("Call for National," 1970, A12).

The backlash against the President's speech included distressed students at Kent State University. A headline in the Akron Beacon Journal read, "Down With Nixon Scream 500 Rioting Kent Students" (Levenson and Sallot, 1970, p. A1) and reported, "Fourteen young people were arrested on disorderly conduct

charges as police and students clashed in the biggest off-campus disturbance ever" (p. 1).

On May 3, the Akron Beacon Journal printed, "Kent Under State of Emergency" and stated, "National Guardsmen and the Ohio State Patrol were placed on standby alert Saturday night as the city began an 8 p.m. to dawn curfew in the wake of a destructive rampage by youths" ("Kent Under State," 1970, p. A3).

Throughout the years, there have been various accounts of the events that led up to the shootings of May 4, 1970. According to the Kent State University Libraries and Media Services May 4 chronology, the events occurring between Friday, May 1, 1970 and the shootings on Monday, May 4, 1970, developed as follows:

On Friday, May 1, during the noon hour approximately 500 students gathered in an organized demonstration protesting the President's speech and buried a copy of the United States Constitution. The students planned a Monday noon anti-war rally. Meanwhile, the Kent State University President, Robert White, did not foresee any problems on his campus and left town on a planned trip (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraphs 1, 4).

Later that night, students gathered at the local bars on Main and Water Streets for an evening of fun and refreshments. Many of the students were upset over the announcement the previous evening (April 30) by President Nixon to send ground troops to Cambodia. Hostility and tempers erupted which created disturbances in the downtown area. Rumors were spreading of impending



disturbances from outside agitators and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to stir up the antiwar protestors (KSU Libraries, 1995, paragraphs 1, 2).

The young college men and women out enjoying their weekend were not aware that Kent Mayor LeRoy Satrom had ordered both a midnight closing of the local bars and a midnight curfew ordering the students back to their campus (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraph 5). After the bars were closed and the crowds descended into the streets, Time Magazine reported that students climbed on top of cars, broke car windows, set fires, yelled obscenities, and broke downtown business storefronts (1970, p. 1).

The President's Commission on Campus Unrest released a report summarizing the events of Friday, May 1:

The pattern established on Friday night was to recur throughout the weekend:

There were disorderly incidents; authorities could not or did not respond in time to apprehend those responsible or to stop the incidents in their early stages; the disorder grew; the police action, when it came, involved bystanders as well as participants; and, finally, the students drew together in the conviction that they were being arbitrarily harassed.

(MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraph 8)

On Saturday, May 2, many of the students joined the local merchants in town to clean up the damage from the previous night. Rumors continued to spread of impending antiwar protestors coming to Kent State. As a result of the rumors, Mayor Satrom declared separate curfew times: one for the city between the hours of 8:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. and a different time for the college campus from

11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., adding to the animosity building on the campus (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraph 9).

Early Saturday night, the ROTC building on campus was burned down and campus police did not intervene. To this day, it has not been determined who started the fire. Alan Canfora who was a part of the ROTC demonstration stated, "Some of the students there did try to light the building on fire. It was like the Three Stooges trying to burn the ROTC building; throwing matches through the windows" (Lojowsky, 2000, paragraph 9). Canfora added:

Then the fire trucks showed up with the Sheriffs, State Troopers, campus police and Kent police, and thoroughly doused out the few curtains that did catch fire. Then they started taking flash pictures of us and then they started using tear gas, so we left. When we left, that fire was completely out.

(Lojowsky, 2000, paragraph 9)

In 1970, Paul Tople, working part-time as a photojournalist for the Akron Beacon Journal, was sent to cover the events at Kent State. When Tople first arrived Saturday evening, May 2, he witnessed students throwing a bottle with a burning rag into a window of the ROTC building. Tople stated, "Kent firemen came to put out the fire, but protesters threw stones at them and they left" (2000, paragraph 6).

The mayor sent a message of urgency to Governor Rhodes and the Ohio National Guard was called to assist in dispersing the crowd. At this time, the administration at Kent State University was not notified that the Governor and

the Mayor made the decision to activate the Ohio National Guard (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraph 10).

The Presidents Commission on Campus Unrest referred to the events of Saturday night:

As the ROTC building burned, the pattern of the previous night repeated- authorities arrived at the scene of an incident too late to apprehend the participants, then swept up by the bystanders. . . . Many students returning to campus on Sunday after a weekend at home were first surprised by the Guard's presence, then irritated when its orders interfered with their activities. (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraph 14)

A Report by the Special Grand Jury under Portage County Commons Pleas Judge Edwin W. Jones was released on October 16, 1970. The report concluded, "It is obvious that the burning of the ROTC building could have been prevented with the manpower then available" (Lojowsky, 2000, paragraph 12).

Emotions were running strong on campus and the students were angry and frustrated, "Students who had nothing to do with burning the building-who were not even in the area at the time of the fire-resented being gassed and ordered about by armed men" (MAYDAY: Kent State/The Event, 1997, paragraph 15).

On Sunday, May 3, a news conference was held at the Kent Fire House. Governor James A. Rhodes pointed out, "We're seeing at, uh, the city of Kent, especially, probably the most vicious form of campus oriented violence yet perpetrated by dissident groups and their allies in the state of Ohio" (MAYDAY: Kent State/ Appendix, 1999, paragraph 70). Rhodes pounded his fists on the

table as he vehemently asserted, "We're going to use every force of law that we have under our authority. . . . We are going to employ every weapon possible. There is no place off limits. There is no sanctuary and we are going to disperse crowds" (Lojowsky, 2000, paragraph 14).

Lou Cusella, one of the wounded survivors of the May 4, 1970, shootings contended, "The Governor's confrontational rhetoric of May 3 escalated the tension" (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The People, 1999, paragraph 5). Cusella added, "After the Guard swept through the campus on the evening of May 3, the time was ripe for a cathartic reaction on May 4" (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The People, 1999, paragraph 5).

Despite repeated student requests to meet with figures of authority at Kent State University, no form of communication occurred and no one would meet with the students. The National Guard was occupying the campus and adding to the building tension on campus.

There was a contrast on campus in the atmosphere between the daytime and the evening. During the day, the Ohio National Guard troops mingled with the students, flirted with the young girls and joked around. In fact, Allison Krause, one of the four students killed on May 4, had a conversation with an Ohio National Guard member named Meyers, who had a lilac flower protruding from his gun barrel. Before walking away Krause remarked to Meyers, "What's the matter with peace? Flowers are better than bullets!" (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The People/ Allison, 1997, paragraph 8).

Throughout Sunday night, there were helicopters flying overhead and searchlights focused on the campus. The National Guard did not permit the students to leave their campus buildings or move about on campus. According to Larry Raines, on Sunday night, May 3, there were students who were unable to get across campus to their own apartments and used his room to sleep in (Eyewitness Account, 1999, paragraph 1).

On Sunday evening, disturbed by the Ohio National Guard conspicuously invading their campus, the students held a peaceful sit-in at Prentice Gate and requested to meet with Mayor Satrom and President White. Although the students were first told the meeting would take place, they were later informed that it would not (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraph 20). The President's Commission summarized the events of May 3 as follows:

Despite the day's promising start, the situation at Kent State had appreciably worsened by Sunday night. Students were resentful of the Guard as a result of what they considered to be broken promises at Prentice Gate. . . . The guardsmen seemed to be growing more impatient with student curses, stones, and refusals to obey. (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The Event, 1997, paragraph 22)

Regrettably, Cusella pointed out, "There was so much tension prevalent throughout the weekend. There was an ominous mood which, in retrospect, suggested things were completely out of hand" (MAYDAY: Kent State/ The People, 1997, paragraph 5).

On Monday, May 4, a scheduled noon anti-war student rally was held at the Kent State University Commons. No one had properly communicated to the

massive number of students, many who had been off campus over the weekend, that the rally was prohibited. Many students were not even aware of the rally; rather, they were just crossing the campus on their way to their next class, or to lunch.

The school's Victory Bell rang out to acknowledge the beginning of the scheduled demonstration. It was estimated that over 2,000 students were in the vicinity of the Commons (Lojowsky, 2000, paragraph 19). A confrontation occurred between the students and the National Guard, and the students were first shot with tear gas, then bullets (KSU Libraries, 1995, paragraph 8). The tragic shootings left four students dead and nine wounded.

Cusella noted, "The students were armed with words and symbols, and maybe even a few rocks. There is no reason for the guard's action" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 7). Glenn Frank, Professor of Geology at Kent State, concluded, "I felt the anguish and hopelessness of moving a group of 'students' who would not move after the shootings, and I broke down and wept when they did move" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 36).

Paul Tople, who had taken pictures earlier in the weekend for the Akron Beacon Journal, recalled painful memories of May 4. Tople has not forgotten the tear gas burning his eyes, the guardsmen forming a line of defense and his need to keep his camera focusing on the melee that he was witnessing (2000, paragraph 15). Tople described the scene:

I saw a few protesters in the Taylor Hall parking lot throwing things at the Guard on the practice field. I photographed one student carrying a black flag,

taunting some of the guardsmen. One of my photographs showed a guardsmen taking aim at that student. The guardsmen then started to move off the practice field toward the top of the hill next to Taylor Hall, where they suddenly turned and fired into the crowd. (2000, paragraphs 16, 17)

Joe Lewis, who was wounded at the shootings, believes, "they turned and fired-let me add, there was absolutely no danger – none at all– they fired because they wanted to get some of the people they thought had been bothering them" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 13). Lewis added, "I was there and I saw the 'huddle' on the practice football field. I think they decided then who they were going to get" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 13).

In the end, in a matter of thirteen seconds, twenty-eight guardsmen fired sixty-one shots. Four students were dead and nine wounded from bullets shot at a proximal range of twenty yards to two hundred and fifty yards away (KSU Libraries, paragraph 9).

On the afternoon of May 4, 1970, Judge Albert L. Caris of the Portage County Court of the Common Pleas issued an injunction "restraining the administration of Kent State University from operating the university until this court satisfied that said operation could be conducted in a safe manner" ("Keeping Kent Open," 1999, paragraph 1). The President of Kent State University immediately ordered the university closed until the beginning of summer session.

As a result of the shootings, many lives were forever changed or affected. Although the chronology outlines the history of events that led to the shootings and their consequences, to further expand on this research unstructured

interviews were conducted with participants who offered their personal perspective and reflection on the events of May 4, 1970. At first, participants were asked basic questions about that day in history. Next, the individuals shared their own stories on how they viewed the events and the impact it had on their personal life in the past and in the present.

The interviews were conducted with one Sociology professor, who was actively involved with the students at the time of the shootings and still a member of the Kent State University faculty, four students who were either directly on the hill when the shootings broke out, on the grounds of the campus at the time of the shootings, or off-campus wanting to be on campus with fellow classmates, but unable to do so and one Kent State University graduate who was eight years old at the time of the shootings.

The following interviews offer the reality and influence from the shootings on May 4, 1970. The participants were not interviewed as part of a survey to be analyzed on an individual basis. However, their direct relationship collectively reveals the full emotional impact on innocent victims or bystanders to a tragedy fueled by a society in turmoil.

The individual stories are the principles on which myth is built. Braden's (1975) suggested characteristics for evaluating a myth are evident throughout the interviews. Braden (1975) states:

The myth-user (orator or writer) seldom needs to present the myth in a full blown form; instead he suggests or insinuates it through a sign, a phrase, passing reference or gesture. . . . Sometimes the stimulus for the myth may



not even appear in the printed version because face to face the listeners and speaker felt a oneness and evoked the myth without overt expression.

(p. 121)

On May 4, 1970, the actions that took place at Kent State University not only shattered lives, but also divided a society and questioned its values. Although it has been thirty years since the shootings, any mention of their time at Kent State University evokes emotion. Their memories are vivid when asked to reminisce about the past.

The interviews provide insight into the events that occurred on May 4, 1970. In addition, the individuals presented their own version of the myths or attempted to correct other mistaken versions.

### Interviews

#### Jerry M. Lewis

Braden's (1975) theory suggests that a revered leader motivates action. Braden (1975) points out, "The speaker is likely to argue, more or less, or great and small. . . . The persuader has his arguments and themes suggest the virtues and vice" (p. 125). Braden (1975) continues, "He affirms that his motives, sentiment, and actions are more noble and on a higher plane than those of the opponent" (p. 126).

Such a leader defining and building on the myths is Jerry M. Lewis, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Kent State University. Lewis has been an active participant in researching the tragic event, memorializing its

victims and conducts lectures to discuss the shootings (Biographical Sketch, 1968, paragraph 1).

Additionally, Lewis participated in the 30<sup>th</sup> commemorative program and has published papers on the May 4, 1970 shootings. Lewis was interviewed prior to and after the 30-year commemorative program.

On May 4, 1970, Lewis was one of the faculty marshals on the field when the Ohio National Guard opened fire on the students. Lewis stated that on Saturday, May 1, 1970, a group of professors organized themselves as “resident good guys” to calm the escalating disturbances on the school campus (personal communication, March 11, 1999).

Lewis stressed, “We wanted to bring intelligent, common presence to the demonstrators.” He added, “On Saturday night, Sunday and Monday, we wore blue strips of a sheet tied around our upper arm to identify ourselves as peacemakers, faculty marshals” (personal communication, March 11, 1999).

Lewis was in his office on Monday, May 4, 1970, when one of his students convinced him to attend the rally. He went with the band around his arm to identify himself as a faculty marshal. After the shootings, Lewis was active in assisting and administering aid to meet the immediate needs of the students.

Lewis was recently honored at a breakfast ceremony saluting former professors, faculty members who maintained peace after the shootings, protected the students and made certain that the educational process for the students was uninterrupted after the university was shut down (Byard, 2000,

paragraph 4). Lewis believes that if it was not for the faculty members, the Kent State community may have been torn apart (Byard, 2000, paragraph 9).

As Lewis reflected on the changes over thirty years, one of the things that struck him the most was the high level of interest by the media at the 30<sup>th</sup> May 4 Commemoration held at Kent State University (personal communication, June 13, 2000). At the 30<sup>th</sup> commemorative, there were a great variety of programs, a total of over fifty events that ran from February to May, including an SDS reunion.

Lewis was surprised at the little attention or discussion was given to the 25-year anniversary of the ending of the Vietnam War. Lewis remarked that the press did not want to talk about the war (personal communication, June 13, 2000). Lewis recognized that at the time of the shootings at Kent State University, the people in the media now covering the 30<sup>th</sup> commemorative program were the same age as those who had experienced the Vietnam War. This same age group had been undergraduate students, graduate students or reporters just beginning their own careers (personal communication, June 13, 2000).

By contrast, Lewis pointed out that the students of today's generation, are interested in the past history, but are not emotionally involved, as it is not a natural issue. Today, there is not a draft or a Vietnam War encouraging people to get involved (personal communication, June 13, 2000).

In the final analysis, Lewis, who has been at Kent State University for over thirty-four years, is happy to see that Kent State has finally incorporated the past as a part of its culture (personal communication, June 13, 2000). Lewis is well

aware that it is not easy to keep alive such a horrific incident when the sentiment of society is to bury the past.

### John Przybys

John Przybys is a part-time instructor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and a full-time feature writer for the Living Section at the Las Vegas Review Journal. Przybys was in the eighth grade when the Kent State shootings occurred. He lived in Bedford, Ohio, a blue-collar working town, where he attended parochial school.

Przybys grew up in this working class town, where the local townspeople expressed their sentiments about the events of May 4, 1970, with statements such as, "The score is four and next time more" (personal communication, March 9, 1999). Przybys, like many other children growing up in this environment, believed that there must have been a reason for the adults to feel as they did; therefore, the college kids at Kent State University must have deserved to be shot (personal communication, March 9, 1999).

After growing up and reaching college age, Przybys attended Kent State University in the Fall of 1974. Przybys' recollections added to the discussion on how the community viewed the shootings and his perceptions as a graduate of Kent State University.

As a freshman, Przybys became aware that the incident some four years earlier was still fresh in the minds of the students and the topic would come up in history, social science and political science courses. There were those students who did not have any opinion at all, but then there were the passionate few who

were appalled by the National Guard's action and the innocent lives that had been taken by them (personal communication, March 9, 1999).

According to Przybys, many of the National Guard sent to Kent State University were the same age as the students who were then attending the college (personal communication, March 9, 1999). There was an irony to their being there. Under different circumstances, they too, could have otherwise been the college students who the National Guard randomly fired upon (personal communication, March 9, 1999).

Przybys stated, "This was the first time middle-class America killed their own kids. It got out of hand so quickly and there was no stopping the ball once it got rolling" (personal communication, March 9, 1999). Przybys suggested that James Rhodes, who was the Governor of Ohio at the time, was pandering to the people, the voters, to show them he was tough and could get rid of the brown-shirts, the "yuppies" of the sixties who were a threat to their personal values and property. Przybys concluded, "It's hard to have been a Kent State University student and not think about it. Every year there is a May 4<sup>th</sup> ceremony and every time you cross campus, whether you are political or not, it is always in the back of your mind" (personal communication, March 9, 1999).

#### David Frank

David Frank grew up in Northfield, Ohio, and graduated from Kent State University in 1971. On the day of the shootings, Frank was at the Student Union building, approximately 200 yards on the other side of the hill from where the National Guard opened fire on the students (personal communication, May 26,

2000). Frank stated that he painfully remembers the National Guard on the campus, hearing a “pop, pop, pop” noise and his contemporaries yelling, “they’re shooting people” (personal communication, May 26, 2000). At first, he thought it was a rumor, but sadly learned it was true as he ran on to the Commons.

Prior to the National Guard troops being called in, Frank was aware of the unrest on campus. Frank was aware of the spreading rumors that outside agitators were coming to Kent State University to incite the protestors. Frank contended that the burning of the ROTC building on Saturday, May 2, was a symbol of the frustration by the war protestors against the Establishment (personal communication, May 26, 2000).

Without doubt, Frank has not forgotten the past. Frank was recently at a movie when a scene of a military tank rolling down a street appeared on the screen and his memories of tanks coming over the hill at Kent State campus were still vivid in his mind. After all this time, Frank finds amazing pain when he reflects back on a time that he has avoided talking about for years (personal communication, June 21, 2000).

Frank contends the National Guard troops who were sent to Kent State University were all “tired and kind of crazy.” The same troop members had been deployed earlier in the week to Ohio State University, where antiwar students were protesting (personal communication, May 26, 2000).

After the shootings, the Ohio State Patrol Riot Troops were brought in to quell the potential for further violence. Frank stated, “They didn’t do anything, they just looked threatening” (personal communication, May 26, 2000). Frank added that

the riot troops were there to organize the students to move and were very professional in their demeanor. Frank asserted, "They should have called in the Ohio State Patrol Riot Troops first. It might have changed the outcome of events" (personal communication, May 26, 2000).

Frank believes on the day of the shootings, the Ohio National Guard lacked leadership. There was a breakdown in communication without anyone in control (personal communication, May 26, 2000). Franks believes there was not any excessive violence threatening the National Guard troops (personal communication, May 26, 2000). To illustrate, Frank asserted the images portrayed of the troops being pelted with rocks was unrealistic and an over exaggeration to cover the real facts. Franks added the parking lot was paved and there were not enough stones to put the National Guard troops in danger (personal communication, May 26, 2000).

Frank painfully recalled that no one was ever indicted for the shootings. Frank reflected, "As a bystander, I was traumatized by the shootings. I often wonder how my peers who were fired upon feel about those that did the firing" (personal communication, May 26, 2000).

#### Janet Weiss Gamzon

When asked to share her feelings on May 4, 1970, Janet Gamzon openly stated, "Thirty years later and it still haunts me. I was there and it was awful" (personal communication, May 15, 2000). Gamzon was standing on the top of the hill at the Commons when the noon rally began. At first, Gamzon remembered being gassed and her eyes burning. There were professors

attempting to calm everyone down and have the students sit in a circle (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

On a personal note, Gamzon knew Sandy Scheuer, one of the victims killed on May 4, 1970, as they had lived on the same floor at Koontz Hall at Tri-Towers. To this day, Gamzon thinks about Sandy every time she looks at her own daughter, who is now the same age as Sandy when the shootings occurred.

Gamzon emphasized:

Hey, it could have been me! They started running up the hill, my friend grabbed my hand and we ran. The guards got to the top, turned around and shot down the hill. If they had not turned around, it would have been me and not Sandy. (personal communication, June 6, 2000)

This was a weekend that Gamzon remembers well. Prior to the fatal day, Gamzon reminisced about being awakened on Saturday night, May 2, 1970, and being told the ROTC building was on fire. Gamzon joined her friends in a futile attempt to help put the fire out. Gamzon added, "We organized a line of students who passed the water buckets from person to person" (personal communication, June 6, 2000). On Sunday, May 3, Gamzon recalled that students were being chased from town by the guards and there were guards walking all around the campus. On Monday, May 4, Gamzon attended the rally and witnessed first-hand the shootings on the campus at Kent State University.

After the shootings on May 4, much is a blur to Gamzon. She recalled the telephones being shut off, packing her bags and going to the airport. The next morning Gamzon awoke to find the FBI at her home in New York wanting to



interview her, asking if she knew who organized the rally (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

At first, Gamzon was not quite certain why the FBI had chosen to visit her home, but soon discovered the local school paper, the Kent Stater, had published her name with a list of students who attended a political sleep-out (personal communication, June 6, 2000). As a result of her participation in a political function, her name had been turned over to the FBI for investigation (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

Politically, Gamzon remembered being present at some SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and Weathermen meetings. The House Internal Securities Committee conducted a study of SDS chapters at colleges, picked up Gamzon's name from the Kent Stater article and investigated her connection to the organization (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

Gamzon acknowledged that she did not have any serious political affiliations although she had participated in a hunger strike, attended an open SDS meeting, and a sleep-out on the college campus. Gamzon believes her experiences were just a part of the college culture (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

Gamzon returned to campus the summer of 1970 and was one of the first students back on campus after it reopened. Gamzon recalled the hatred from the local community for the "hippies." Gamzon pointed out that her parents were visiting with her before the summer session began when they stopped at a local merchant's store, and encountered first hand the sentiments of the community. When discussing the younger generation, the merchant pulled out a rifle to show

her parents and stated publicly, "This is what we are going to do with any one who gets in our way" (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

In the final analysis, Gamzon stated, "The whole incident is a part of me. I was and still am opposed to the Vietnam War" (personal communication, June 6, 2000). Gamzon's feelings over the last thirty years have not wavered. Gamzon believes that the Ohio National Guard did not belong on the college campus with loaded rifles and that the rally could have been broken up without any shootings, much less the death of four young college students (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

#### Rick Sturtevant

Rick Sturtevant, Class of 1971, at Kent State University, had returned to college after serving time in Vietnam. Sturtevant fought in a war that he believed was "pretty ugly," one in which the United States could not win, where soldiers built walls to protect themselves from the enemy by day and got through the night by doing drugs (personal communication, May 31, 2000).

Sturtevant thought he had served his time in the war and never wanted to experience the violence of war again, that is, until Sunday, May 3, 1970, when he was walking across campus and saw tanks coming over the hill. Sturtevant stated, "I'll never forget that. Having just returned from Nam, I didn't like seeing tanks, it was very realistic with the guys on tanks" (personal communication, May 31, 2000). He quickly added, "I just wanted to get out of there."

Moreover, Sturtevant believes the National Guard was not properly prepared for what was going on in the country at that time. After all, many of the soldiers

serving in the National Guard were themselves college students. Sturtevant recalled that the troops were being deployed to numerous college cities for campus uprisings (personal communication, May 31, 2000).

Sturtevant believes it is important to note the fact that prior to coming to Kent State University, the same Ohio National Guard troops had been at Ohio State University, where there had been confrontations with the local police. Injuries and arrests resulted from the melee. In addition to campus unrest, the Teamsters in Ohio were on strike and earlier in the week Governor Rhodes had deployed Ohio National Guard troop members to various locations throughout the state of Ohio (personal communication, May 31, 2000).

After the shootings, a "state of emergency" was declared. The city was closed, the telephones on campus were not working and everyone was being asked to leave the campus. Sturtevant was dating a young blind woman and wanted to make certain that she was not in any danger. He attempted to cross the campus, only to be confronted by a National Guard soldier who pointed his gun right at him, while commanding him to "halt" (personal communication, May 31, 2000). The guard informed Sturtevant that the campus was closed and he had to leave immediately. Despite Sturtevant's attempt to explain the extenuating circumstances concerning his girlfriend, the guard responded by stating, "take one more step and I will shoot you" (personal communication, May 31, 2000).

The four students who were killed on May 4, 1970, were recognized in the yearbook with the Class of 1971. The yearbook displays four empty white

spaces with the names of the students alphabetically arranged with their classmates. Oddly enough, the yearbook theme is entitled, "Communicate Together," an irony to the lack of communication on campus (personal communication, May 31, 2000). At the time of their death, Allison Krause and Jeffrey Miller were freshmen, William Schroeder, a junior and Sandra Scheuer, a senior.

In the end, Sturtevant asserted, "It never should have happened. Governor Rhodes was not in touch with the students who were fed up with the Establishment" (personal communication, May 31, 2000). Sturtevant added, "Bullets or not, it could have been avoided if the National Guard troops had not been sent to our campus" (personal communication, May 31, 2000).

#### Eric Smith

On the day of the shootings, Eric Smith, Class of 1971, was attending a morning class at a Kent State University satellite campus in Canton, Ohio. Smith had attended classes at both the main campus and the satellite campus (personal communication, July 6, 2000). Smith recalled how the Ohio National Guard denied him access when he attempted to join his peers at the main campus. There were helicopters flying overhead, and Ohio National Guard tanks were blocking the entrance to the City of Kent, Ohio (personal communication, July 6, 2000).

During this time of turbulence, Smith felt frustrated and helpless (personal communication, July 6, 2000). Smith sadly recollected the somber mood of an

entire campus in mourning and stated that the campus was in a “state of shock” after the shootings (personal communication, July 6, 2000).

When the students were allowed back on the main campus, they were able to look at the physical signs of the shootings. There were chalk marks outlining the spots where the four students had been killed, bullet markings both on the campus and in the Prentice Hall parking lot, and the famous Don Drumm sculpture pierced by a bullet during the barrage of the gunfire.

Smith expressed, “It was difficult to understand why kids had to be killed when they did not have any weapons” (personal communication, July 6, 2000). Smith stated there was an empty crate box placed on the campus for anyone to stand on, speak out and express their mind-set on the shootings. Smith believes the box served as an emotional release for the students (personal communication, July 6, 2000).

Smith believes there was not enough attention given to the traumatized students at the off-campus branches. No one ever thought of how they were feeling. The somber mood of an entire campus in mourning sifted down from the main campus to the satellite campuses (personal communication, July 6, 2000).

Smith pointed out:

You were a Kent State student regardless of which campus you attended.

We sometimes lose sight and focus only on what we perceive as being where the tragedy occurred. Even if students were living off campus or taking classes at a branch, they would also take course work at the main campus,

so the connection was strong with the mother campus. (personal communication, July 6, 2000)

Smith, a clinical psychologist, questions the psychological ramifications on the youth of the 1960s and 1970s. Smith concluded:

At that time, as a college student you took your chances of being drafted into the Vietnam War which stressed you out and then the tragedy at Kent State happened. That was so traumatic and unexpected, like when President John F. Kennedy was shot. You will always remember where you were when you first heard about it and how people reacted to it. (personal communication, July 6, 2000)

### Chapter Conclusion

This chapter looked at the chronology of events as recorded by a variety of resources. Myths are built on stories and the interviews were reality based and not an idealized version of what occurred on May 4, 1970. The interviews were used to support Braden's theory. Braden (1975) asserts, "The critic's problems are increased because with a fluid nature the myth shifts its implications and influence from occasion to occasion, from speaker to speaker, and from speech to speech" (p. 124).

Braden adds, "The critic must take cognizance of local customs and preferences, as well as emotional conditioning among the listeners" (p. 124). Moreover, the critic has to listen to the rhetoric, draw a conclusion as to whether

the rhetoric has been minimized or embellished out of proportion and determine what aspect of the memory to accept (p. 125).

On Thursday, April 30, 1970, President Nixon made a speech to the nation in which he announced his intentions to escalate the armed forces being sent to Cambodia. As a result of his speech, students across the nation escalated their anti-war protests. Kent State University was not immune to young college students already frustrated and angry about the war.

This tragic event could have been avoided if there had been an open channel of communication between the administration and the students on campus. There was a total breakdown in the "system" which began when Governor Rhodes, Mayor Satrom and the President of the University all failed to communicate with each other about the escalating campus unrest and the best way to handle it.

Governor Rhodes sent the Ohio National Guard troops to Kent State University in order to maintain the student anti-war protesters. The students were unaware the guns of the Ohio National Guard were loaded with live ammunition and not the rubber bullets used at Ohio State University in the days prior to coming to Kent State University.

Kent State University became the first time in American history that four white middle-class college students were shot to death and nine wounded. It also was the first time in history two women were killed.

A demonstration of dissent turned to a tragedy in a matter of thirteen seconds, a tragedy that changed the lives of 12,000 students enrolled at Kent State University in 1970, and the loss of innocence to a nation.

In spite of the plethora of books and articles written with eyewitness accounts on the events of May 4, 1970, the researcher attempted to seek out first-hand communication with former students and staff from the university that were present the day of the shootings. Now that 30 years has passed since that historical date in our history when communication was at its worst, the first-hand conversations with former students added the human element for the researcher that cannot be experienced in a book or paper.

For many of those interviewed, their conversations with the researcher were cathartic in nature and enabled them to share their own emotions and sentiments on the shootings. Additionally, the interviews further clarified or corrected a few of the myths surrounding the events of May 4, 1970. For two of the individuals interviewed, this was their first time to deeply reflect back on an experience that is sometimes too painful to remember. Their insights recaptured a day in history that is now a part of society and the culture of Kent State University.



## CHAPTER THREE

### COMMEMORATIONS

*What can we do to make the truth come forward, in a positive way, so this tragedy will never occur again?*

Ted Abel

*Well, It's too bad that our friends cannot be with us today.*

Jimi Hendrix

To keep alive the memory of the shootings at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, there is a candlelight march and vigil every year to honor the slain and wounded students. The participants gather at the victory bell on the evening of May 3 at 11:30 p.m. They march in silence around the campus and stand in a silent vigil all night at the Prentice Hall parking spaces where the four students died ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraph 24).

The next day at 12:24 p.m., the vigil ends with the ringing of the campus victory bell fifteen times, thirteen times for the students killed and injured at Kent State University and two other rings to honor the students killed at Jackson State University two weeks later. The victory bell has historical significance, as it is the same bell that was ringing when the Ohio National Guard opened fire ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraph 24).

Every year since the shootings, there are annual commemoration programs that are held to honor the students killed. At the annual commemorations, ceremonial speeches are made and stories are exchanged about the students. Braden (1975) contends, "The speaker finds that *how* he expresses his message becomes more important than *what* he says" (p. 123). Braden (1975) adds, "Language tends to be ornate, figurative, euphonious, and polished. Delivery is likewise sweeping and rotund" (p. 123).

Throughout the years, the themes, guests and magnitude of the commemorations evolved. In the past, there have been prominent guest speakers and performers. The list includes many notable individuals such as:

Jane Fonda, Jesse Jackson, Julian Bond, Daniel Ellsberg, William Kunstler, Ron Kovic, William Kunstler, Vernon Bellecourt, Bella Abzug, Rod McKuen, Dick Gregory, Stockley Carmichael, Dr. Helen Caldicott, Senator Howard Metzenbaum, Robert Pickett, Judy Collins, Joan Baez, Arlo Guthrie, Country Joe McDonald, Manhattan Transfer, Peter, Paul and Mary, and Crosby, Stills & Nash, who recorded the song "*Ohio*" to honor the four dead at Kent State University. (Commemorations, paragraph 5 and Annual Commemorations, 1971 & 1980, p. 1)

In addition to the entertainers, the commemorations each have their own theme and program. As a part of the legacy for future generations to study, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force is currently working on compiling the exact information from every commemorative program held from 1971 to 2000.

When finalized, the research material will be accessible through the Kent State University Special Collections & Archives. In the interim, only specific years with limited facts are available (See Appendix B for the listing of Yearly Commemorative Posters and Programs).

This chapter will look at the inception of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, and its three charter members, Alan Canfora, Dean Kahler and Robbie Stamps. Additionally, the 25 Year Retrospective of Kent State and Jackson State hosted at Emerson College and the 30<sup>th</sup> May 4 commemorative programs will be discussed. For the 30<sup>th</sup> May 4 commemorative program, the university and the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force combined their efforts to collectively sponsor the symposium "Boundaries of Expression and Order in a Democratic Society."

The May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force has taken the yearly vigil and added meaning by elaborating on the programs and making it a part of the culture on campus and in Kent, Ohio. Kent State President Carol Cartwright stated at the 30<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of May 4, 1970, "We cannot be content to only look to the past and mourn the dead. . . . We have a responsibility to celebrate their lives by teaching the nation the value of civility, tolerance and civic duty" ("This Week at," 2000, paragraph 3).

All of the information was obtained by extensive research on the various web site pages originating from the Kent State University Special Collections & Archives, the Emerson College web pages, and personal communication with J. Gregory Payne, from Emerson College and Alan Canfora and Roy Skellenger from Kent State University.

### May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force

The first year after the shootings and for the next five years, the administration at Kent State University was responsible for sponsoring and planning the annual commemoration events ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 2). In 1975, when Kent State University's administration stated that it had been "long enough" and attempted to "sweep the events of May 4 under the rug" a group of concerned students formed the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, pp. 2, 10).

The slogan for the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force (M4TF) is, "Long lives the spirit of Kent and Jackson State." The May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force is run entirely by students and is dedicated to educating others about all the events that occurred, donates scholarships in the names of those killed, and continues to raise money for a memorial which will read, "Truth, Justice, Freedom – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraphs 2, 4).

Over the years, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force gained national and international media attention. It became apparent that the university was concerned about its public image in the role of acknowledging the importance of the commemorative programs ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 8). "The May 4 Task Force, comprised of students and supporters has outmaneuvered the forces of the university and the state of Ohio for the hearts and minds of the public" ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 9).

In 1990, the administration at Kent State University expressed a renewed interest in the memorial programs and decided to sponsor its own program every

five years, separate from the yearly commemorative programs conducted by the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 7). The May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force had great optimism from the renewed interest by the university.

Despite the past, when it came time to plan the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration program several members of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force volunteered to work with the university's "May 4, 1970, 30<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Committee." Unfortunately, the press releases by the university altered the working relationship. The press releases did not include coverage for the programs planned by the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, "thus rendering the Task Force's efforts superfluous and invisible" ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 10). The May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force added:

To the media and the public it seemed as though it were an 'enlightened' KSU university administration and NOT the students of the May 4 Task Force and their supporters who were responsible for courageously preserving the truth about the events of May 4, 1970 and boldly commemorating them each year. ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 12)

The May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force is committed to representing the voices of the families of the killed and wounded students on the Kent State Campus, to uncover the truth about the events of May 4, 1970 and report them accordingly: "The May 4 Task Force has not forgotten why the students were on the Commons on May 4, 1970 and the historical context surrounding the murders and its commemoration programming reflects that same dedication to social justice" ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 9).

The Kent State University administration was considered by the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force to be in opposition and competition with their beliefs:

Whereas, the KSU administration has always and will always continue to represent the interests of a very small number of people, itself, the Board of Trustees and the Governor of Ohio. There have and always will be differences between the powerful and the governed on how to interpret history and how to commemorate it. ("Who Owns May," 2000, paragraph 4)

#### Charter Members of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force

Alan Canfora, one of the wounded victims and a charter member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, has dedicated himself to keeping alive the memory of the shootings and its victims. Canfora stated, "What happened here was unforgivable, and the facts prove this. The primary objective of Task Force's activities is to expose the Kent State cover-up" ("The Survivors," 1980, paragraph 1).

The May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force continues in their efforts to search for the truth about the shootings:

Since the killings of Jeff Miller, Allison Krause, Bill Schroeder and Sandy Scheuer, both those within the government and the university have yet to tell all that they know about the events that led to the murder of four students on May 4, 1970. ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraph 5)

Over the years, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, its supporters across the nation and the families of the students killed have all become one single family. Canfora supported the victims' families in their attempt to memorialize the students killed

by declaring May 4<sup>th</sup>, "National Student Day." Canfora expressed, "May 4 should be selected due to the significance of the murders at Kent State. It was the incident which resulted in the most students' death; and it was also the only incident when women were gunned down" ("The Survivors," 1980, paragraph 3).

As a result of the tragedies at Kent State University, all thirteen families built a bond with each other and were in full support of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force. In 1980, they released a statement to express their sentiments. It stated:

We express our continued support of the May Fourth Task Force and their observance of appropriate May 4<sup>th</sup> ceremonies planned by the Students and open to the public. Just as the task force and Kent State students have supported us through the years, we the Kent State families will continue to support those of you, in your efforts to declare May 4<sup>th</sup> "National Students Day" in order to properly recognize the significance of the sacrifices and contributions of American students. ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraph 14)

The families wanted their feelings known and added:

Such recognition of that historic day will be a living memorial to the memories of those students who sacrificed their lives at Kent State and on other American campuses. For those of us who have joined together these past ten years in an effort to bring Justice for our fallen martyrs, we will share another victory in knowing that together we have loudly raised our voices . . . and we have been heard. ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraph 16)

In addition to his dedicated efforts on behalf of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, Canfora was a volunteer Director of the Kent May 4 Center, Inc., a non-profit,

tax-exempt, educational charity which supported the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force ("About Alan - Background," 2000, paragraph 4). The Kent May 4 Center had a 10-point program stressing:

(1) education concerning the May 4 1970 tragedy; (2) education concerning other similar examples of excessive force; (3) education concerning American student activism as an important contribution to positive social changes; (4) education concerning the continued need for peaceful conflict resolution on the local, state and national levels; (5) education as a means of truly healing the wound that remain at Kent State and as a result of the war in Vietnam; (6) projects to benefit the parents and families of student martyrs at Kent State, Jackson State and elsewhere; (7) establishment of memorial educational scholarships in tribute to student martyrs at Kent State, Jackson State and other Universities; (8) establishment of educational scholarships at Kent State University; (9) construction of significant memorials in tribute to student martyrs and /or victims of the war in Vietnam and; (10) creation of a permanent, comprehensive educational center in Kent, Ohio. ("Kent May 4 Center," 2000, paragraph 4)

Canfora suggested, "Resistance to oppression is the imperative and meaning of life, I think. Meanwhile, education is our noblest goal & duty" ("About Alan," 2000, paragraph 2). Canfora added, "Like the great romantic poet, Bryan Ferry, once sang, 'truth is the seed we try to sow' . . . I have paid a dear price for my life of outspoken opposition to injustice" ("About Alan," 2000, paragraph 2).



Dean Kahler was left paralyzed as a result of the shootings. He also served as a charter member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force. Kahler reflected on the past and his attempts not to be bitter and affirmed, "I am trying to do now what I was doing in 1970; I am trying to be a peacemaker" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 9).

Kahler has traveled throughout the United States making speeches, keeping alive the memory of May 4, 1970. After Kahler received a standing ovation at the end of one of his speeches, an audience member expressed the sentiments of the crowd, "That bullet might have ripped away use of his leg but nobody can touch his positive attitude" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 11).

Robbie Stamps was the third wounded charter member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force. Stamps has been an active speaker for all of the Kent State victims, and emphasized, "You can't bury what happened. You have to live with it, not necessarily to dwell on it but go on with our lives and incorporate what we all have, or should have, learned through May 4" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 16). Even after all of these years, Stamps suggested, "The guardsmen decided while on the practice field to shoot at certain students – including Jeffrey Miller – who had been vigorously demonstrating throughout the march from the Commons" ("The Survivors," 2000, paragraph 16).

#### Roy Skellenger, Member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force

Since the inception of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force in 1975 and over the last 25 years, there have been new dedicated members and supporters to work on behalf of the group. One example is Roy Skellenger, one of the many active members today. Although Skellenger was young at the time of the shootings,

his recollections of that day were instrumental in his dedication to the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force.

When the shootings at Kent State University occurred, Skellenger was a seventh grade student who had come to the campus to visit his father, a professor at Kent State and his brother, a student at the university (personal communication, June 16, 2000). Young and impressionable, Skellenger witnessed the aftermath of the shootings, vividly remembering tear gas in the air and the Ohio National Guard standing around the body of Jeff Miller. Miller was a friend of his brother. Skellenger described what he saw as, "the beginning of the end" (personal communication, June 16, 2000).

Skellenger recalled his family arguing the evening of the shootings concerning the rumors circulating through town that there had been snipers that set off the shootings and the subsequent events. Skellenger still believes that someday as more and more guardsmen begin to come forward and discuss the events of May 4, 1970, the mystery surrounding the shootings will unravel (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

As an energetic member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, Skellenger is involved in keeping the legacy of the past history at Kent State University alive today for all to remember. Skellenger believes it is especially important to educate the new students at Kent State University to understand the significance of the shootings and the history of the memorials throughout the school campus. Skellenger oversees orientation classes at Kent State University and educational classes at

local high schools in Kent, Ohio. Skellenger stated, "You can either choose to blow it off or get involved" (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

Throughout the school calendar year, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force meets every Thursday night from September to May. The group promotes educational dormitory programs, distributes flyers and meets one-on-one with resident assistants (RA's) to teach the students more about the organization's message (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

Skellenger attempted on behalf of the organization to work with the Kent Historical Society to promote the legacy, only to discover that the group did not want to be involved. Like many of the local community, the historical society wanted to put the incident behind, to leave it in the past and not discuss it in the present (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

Despite the lack of local support, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force has initiated a one thousand dollar yearly scholarship which a recipient can receive as a May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force Activist. The scholarship requires the students to write a paper on the events of May 4, 1970. Monies are raised by concerts and donations (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

Skellenger takes pride in being an integral member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force and is unrelenting in his dedication and pursuit of the legacy to continue, and to grow from year to year. Like many others in the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, Skellenger does not want the past to be swept under the rug, but rather, to be a representative statement to society about the significance of the historical day

that changed the lives of many young people in America (personal communication, June 6, 2000).

### 25 Year Retrospective of Kent State and Jackson State Conference

J. Gregory Payne began his thirty-year study of the May 4 shootings within a few weeks after the tragic event occurred. Payne wrote the book MAYDAY: Kent State, contributed to the theatre production of "Kent State: A Requiem," has traveled all over the world speaking about the impact of the shootings at Kent State University, served as Chairman of the Kent State-Jackson State Memorial Forum, and served as Historical Consultant for the Interplanetary Productions/Osmond Communications film "Kent State," which was presented as a docudrama on NBC ("J. Gregory Payne," 2000, p. 1).

Payne stated that Emerson College has sponsored its own commemorative program every five years since the shootings occurred (personal communication, July 21, 2000). Payne believes the events of May 4, 1970, represented the "consciousness of America" (personal communication, July 21, 2000).

Twenty-five years after the shootings at Kent State University and Jackson State, a panel of guest speakers gathered at Emerson College in Boston, for the Kent State – Jackson State Conference to discuss their perspectives on the topic, *Temper of the Times – "A Failure to Communicate": Local, State, National and International Perspectives*. The guest list of speakers included:

Alan Canfora, one of the wounded victims and charter members of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, Dean Kahler, another wounded victim from the shootings at Kent State University and charter member of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, Mary Vecchio Gillum, an eyewitness to the Kent State shootings, Alan Frank, an eyewitness to the shootings at Kent State, Gene Young, an eyewitness to the shootings at Jackson State, Bill McCabe, former Commissioner and Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police, who was present at the Harvard Square Riots, Bob Hilliard, a member of the anti-war movement and an FCC official in 1970 and Paul Parks, former Secretary of Educational Affairs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraphs 2-8)

In his opening remarks delivered at the conference, Alan Canfora acknowledged that Kent State University had failed to pay proper tribute to the four slain students and their memories. Canfora suggested,

Many of us suspect it was the federal government that participated in the burning of the ROTC building at Kent. . . . We have carried on this battle down through the years, fighting against the government, against the courts, the justice system, which continues to cover up murder at Kent State. Yes, I think it was murder, I think that is the only word that can properly be used to describe the cold blooded, calculated order to fire when 67 bullets from M1 rifles were fired under the noon-day sun into a crowd of unarmed students. ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 12)

Canfora acknowledged his disappointment over Kent State University choosing not to properly recognize the historical significance twenty-five years after the shootings. To support his viewpoint, Canfora pointed out that the university was going to hold a symposium on May 2 and May 3, not to pay tribute to the fallen students, but rather a symposium on the legacies of protest, and not the tragedy of May 4, 1970 ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 14).

Canfora's friend, Jeffrey Miller, was one of the students killed. Canfora believes the legacy needs to be kept alive and stated:

In 1970, we paid a dear price. I, myself, was wounded at Kent State. I shed my blood there that day, not by my choice. I didn't choose my place in history and now I do not choose to walk away from it. I feel a sense of duty and obligation to the memory of my friend, Jeffrey Miller, the young man who was lying seriously injured and dying on the pavement when Mary Vecchio approached and expressed her sentiment over his dead body. ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 23)

The Pulitzer Prize photograph taken by John Filo of a 14 year-old runaway kneeling over the body of Jeffrey Miller appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine symbolizing the bloodshed that occurred at Kent State University. As the result of the picture on the cover of *Life* magazine, Vecchio paid a price for her unplanned notoriety. Young in age and inexperienced, Vecchio was not prepared for the media attention or the personal rejections that she would ultimately encounter:

Florida's governor implied that she was a part of a Communist conspiracy.

Neighbors told their children to shun her, her school principal publicly praised students who ostracized her and she received over 50,000 pieces of hate mail, for the most part unsigned. ("LV woman," 2000, p. 10A)

Over the years, Vecchio did not conduct any personal interviews or meet the photographer whose picture made her famous and changed her life. At the conference, Vecchio first met Filo, the former student from Kent State University whose picture made her a national icon ("LV woman," 2000, p. 10A). Their initial meeting was emotional for both, but also allowed for closure. Filo stated, "The picture had them forever trapped in amber. She, because she was in it. I, because I took it. There is no use even trying to escape it. It's part of our being" ("LV woman," 2000, p. 10A).

Vecchio recalled, "I couldn't believe that people would kill people over what they thought, just because he demonstrated against the Vietnam War – they would shoot you over it" (Retrospective Conference, 1997, paragraph 1). Vecchio added, "The failure to communicate and, I reflect, and say how come we did not communicate? Communication is the key. . . . There was no communication between the government, the people, the students, housewives, steelworkers" (Retrospective Conference, 1997, paragraph 3).

Alan Frank, now a school psychologist, and an eyewitness to his classmates being shot on the Kent State University campus spoke about his recently deceased father for being the reason he is alive today. After the shootings Frank did not care or think about his future, but rather sat down in defiance of the Ohio

National Guard and expressed, "Go ahead and shoot us! Shoot us!" ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 65). Frank recalled his father taking him away from the area, preventing an even larger tragedy. Years later, Frank's own father began to change his political views on the shootings at Kent State:

The more he got involved in Kent State, the more he started to question my side -- the law and order side. The things they were saying were not in connection with the facts of what happened. There were too many contradictions. ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 67)

Saddened by his father's death and the strong impact his father had on his life, Frank wanted to make certain that the knowledge of what occurred was not forgotten ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 68). Frank cited Albert Einstein who stated, "Great spirits have often been countered by violent opposition from mediocre minds. . . . We cannot solve the problems of today from the same knowledge-base we had when the problems were created" ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraphs 69, 75). Frank stated:

I think it is important for us to realize as a nation, some of the initial sensitizing events that happened to us. We have to learn, and we have to be able to stand up and say this is the right thing to do. This is the truth and we are going to stick to it. We are going to search out the truth. ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 73)

Dean Kahler was gravely wounded and left paralyzed for life from the shootings. At the conference, Kahler discussed the ancestry of his family, their closeness and strong religious beliefs. At age 16, Kahler remembered receiving



information from the selective service informing him of his eligibility for the draft at age 18 ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 76). "I had all the intentions in the world to complete my service to my country. When I received the draft lottery number 330, however, I breathed a big sigh of relief that year . . . knowing that I wouldn't have to go to the war in Vietnam" ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 84).

Kahler turned his attention to the current conference, "I will talk about the temper of the times . . . about the failure to communicate. There was no communication from the president of the university. . . . [lack of] Communication led, I think, to all of this . . . It was a failure" ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraphs 85, 86). Kahler pointed out that the students on Sunday evening, May 3, 1970, were told that the president of the university and possibly the mayor would meet with the students who were upset over the Ohio National Guard on the campus.

Instead of the meeting, the students soon became aware that there was an increase in the number of helicopters flying overhead, an increase in the number of Ohio National Guard troops on the campus and the sudden eruption of tear gas to disperse the peaceful sit-in of students ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 85). Kahler concluded:

We need to continue to examine the issues in front of us and not be afraid to speak out. We cannot afford not to be involved in our government. . . . When you have finished your education – take the knowledge and information

gained into your communities and use it. ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 88)

Gene Young witnessed the shootings at Jackson State and related at the conference his own feelings some 25 years after the original incident. During his speech at the conference, Young stated. "Oliver Wendell Holmes' words are appropriate this morning. . . . 'What lies behind us and what lies before us is a small matter compared to what lies within us'" ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 38). Young added, "So, irrespective of where we [sic] been and where we are going, we have got to look inside and see who we are" ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 38).

During his speech, Young expressed his appreciation to the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, the students at Kent State University and Emerson College for their sensitivity in always including the memories of the two slain students in their yearly observances. The two students that were killed at Jackson State were Philip Gibbs, a 21-year-old pre-law student at Jackson State and James Earl Green, a 17-year-old high school student who had taken a shortcut across the Jackson State campus on his way home from a part-time job. Young believes Gibbs and Green are martyrs for the Jackson State shootings on May 14, 1970, as are Allison Krause, Jeffrey Glen Miller, William Knox Schroeder and Sandra Lee Scheuer, for the shootings at Kent State University ("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraphs 50, 51).

In conclusion, Young emphasized,

The least we can do, is hold conferences like this and hold symposiums to discuss what really happened and why it happened to try not to repeat that history . . . . Those of us who care to remember the past, can never repeat it.

("Temper of the Times," 1997, paragraph 55)

Over the next two days, the 25 Year Retrospective Conference showed the E.G. Marshall documentary *Kent State* and the Richard Myers movies, *Confrontation at Kent State* and *Allison*. Payne's play, "Kent State: A Requiem," was performed. In addition, there were readings from "A Gathering of Poets," and other guest speakers addressed the audience on topics such as: "The Legacy of May 1970: What Does it Mean, Personally and to a Nation; Images and Icons of May 4, 1970 – "One of the Top 25 Photos of the Century;" "Commemoration and Communication": Current Kent State Students Response to the May 4 Incidents; Mediated Realities of May 1970: Histories and Reflections and Historical and Ethical Issues of May 1970: "The Most Divisive Time in American History Since the Civil War" ("Lobby of 21," 2000, pp. 1-4).

At the end of the conference, a commemorative candlelight vigil was held at the Boston Massacre Statue on the Boston Commons. "After the readings, the group walked to the monument and placed the burning candles at its base in memory of the students from Kent State and Jackson State" ("Leadership in Communication," 2000, paragraph 6).

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Coordinating Committee  
at Kent State University**

In 1994, a special committee at Kent State University was chosen to organize the planning of the May 4 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Commemorative Program. The committee was formed under the direction of Daniel McCombs, the Director of Alumni Relations, and co-chaired by Jerry M. Lewis, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, and consisted of 20 members from various departments and included students ("May 4 25<sup>th</sup>," 1995, paragraph 1). The committee was formed:

To coordinate, on behalf of the University community, a series of commemorative programs during Spring Semester, 1995, with particular emphasis on the week of April 30 to May 7, to mark the milestone 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events of May 4, 1970, in a manner that is healing, respectful, and inclusive and consistent with the University mission.  
("May 4 25<sup>th</sup>," 1995, paragraph 1)

Additionally, the university formed an eight-member faculty Coordinating Committee that planned an international scholarly symposium for May 4, 1995 ("May 4 25<sup>th</sup>," 1995, paragraph 1). The planned program focused on the "Legacies of Protest" which looked at political and civil unrest, and not on the victims of May 4, 1970 ("May 4<sup>th</sup> 1970," 2000, paragraph 4).

The program examined the topic in an international context. The guest list of world-renowned scholars, media personalities and eyewitnesses would offer their insights to the history of May 4, 1970, and included:

Journalist R.W. Apple, Jr., Washington bureau chief of the New York Times; and Charlayne Hunter-Gault, of the MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour; notable political figures linked to legacies for peaceful change, such as former U.S. Senators Eugene J. McCarthy and George McGovern; and current Kent faculty members, some of whom were here 25 years ago. ("Legacies of Protest," 2000, p. 1)

### 30<sup>th</sup> May 4 Commemoration

In May of 1999, President Carol A. Cartwright addressed the Faculty Senate and announced the planning of the 30<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Committee of May 4, 1970. For the 30<sup>th</sup> year commemoration, the committee would include several students from the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force. In previous years, the administration and the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force had not worked collectively on the planning of commemorative programs. The goals of the committee were to:

Exercise sensitivity to the families of the slain and wounded students in developing and coordinating programming; encourage all members of the university community to develop programs and activities that reflect the commemoration theme; and coordinate an academic symposium focusing on democratic values and democracy for a new millennium during the week of May 4, 2000. ("Committee Charge," 2000, p. 1)

After naming Dr. John Jameson, chair of the department of history and Dr. Richard Bredemeier, emeritus vice president and dean for enrollment management and student life, as co-chairs, Cartwright avowed:

As Kent State University proceeds into the new century, the 30-year commemoration will be a fitting remembrance for the four students who died in 1970. The commemoration will also be a learning experience about the social and historic legacy of the events of May 4, 1970.

("Kent State University," 1999, paragraphs 1 - 5)

Cartwright added, "In the aftermath of May 4, 1970, Kent State University has become a leader in scholarship that explores democratic values and non-violent means of conflict resolution" ("Kent State University," 1999, paragraph 6).

Now, thirty years later, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force and the Commemorative Committee from Kent State University were planning their separate programs to honor the memories of the students killed and wounded, and the historical events of May 4, 1970. The 30<sup>th</sup> Commemorative Committee's theme was "Experiencing Democracy: Inquire, Learn, Reflect" ("A Message From," 2000, paragraph 3), and a symposium was held entitled, "The Boundaries of Expression and Order in a Democratic Society" ("Kent State to Host," 2000, paragraph 4).

At the 30<sup>th</sup> commemorative symposium, Kathleen Sullivan, dean of the Stanford Law School, delivered the keynote speech on "Boundaries of Freedom of Expression and Order in a Democratic Society" and outlined how the demonstrations were viewed as a, "symbol of a loss of authority . . . a rupture of conventional hierarchy and power" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 8). Sullivan addressed the legacy of the killed and wounded students who "gave us a lesson

about not only freedom of expression, but about our freedom" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 9).

Anthony Lewis, a New York Times columnist, was the keynote luncheon speaker at the symposium. Lewis memorialized Kent State as, "a powerful tragic symbol of the trust that was lost in this country after Nixon decided to invade Cambodia" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 20). Lewis pointed out to the audience, "Fortunately over time, judges have expanded interpretations of the First Amendment. Now, we are as free to say and print what we want in this country than we ever have been" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 21).

Moreover, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force designed its own commemoration and symposium in addition to its annual candlelight march on the evening of May 3, and an all night vigil. National television coverage was planned beginning April 23, to include:

A VH-I Special "Rock Story," focusing on the song *OHIO*; a "Behind the Music" special featuring the music of 1970s, Kent State and May, 1970; an NBC-TV miniseries, "The Seventies," commencing with the Kent State shootings; a CNN.com Webcast, "Full Circle: Kent State 30 Years Later;" a Mike Wallace History channel special on "The Legacy of Kent State;" a Learning Channel one-hour special to recognize the most outstanding documentary about Kent State's 1970 tragedy; and a REAL-TV feature focused on Kent State, 1970. ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, p. 1)

The events planned from the 30<sup>th</sup> May 4 Commemoration Committee began on April 18, 2000 and ran until July 1, 2000, with the final tribute being the

Cleveland Orchestra Premiere of *Song in Sorrow*, a work commissioned for the 30<sup>th</sup> Commemoration (Event Calendar, 2000, p. 1). The May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force and the Kent May 4 Center planned an SDS reunion for May 5 and May 6, which also included Country Joe McDonald concert, films, programs and more music ("Kent SDS reunion," 2000, p. 1).

The Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC) organized "Reunion 2000" for alumni who attended Kent State University from 1965 -1975. The program called *Four Days in May* ran scheduled events from May 3 to May 6 (Fruit, 2000, paragraphs 1, 7).

Inspired by the past, students currently enrolled in the JMC program wanted to contribute to future generations and collaborated on a project titled, "The Day The War Came Home: Kent State 1970." The students also worked on additional projects such as, an interactive CD-ROM, combining text, audio and visual elements documentary-style to detail the story, events and background of May 4, 1970, a Web site named the "Portal," which would serve as a resource guide for the archives and May 4<sup>th</sup> related web sites, and various other audio and video projects (Fruit, 2000, paragraphs 7, 11).

The journalism educational student magazine *The BURR*, featured an issue called, "The Human Side of History," searching for the truth about the past and featured previously unpublished pictures donated by the mothers of the students killed, numerous historical photographs and documents by the Kent May 4 Center ("The BURR, KSU," 2000, p. 1). Also included in the magazine were articles by the nine wounded students, Kent 25, Jackson State, Lt. Col. Charles



Fassinger, highest-ranking uniformed officer from the Ohio National Guard and quotations by Allison Krause ("The BURR, KSU," 2000, p. 1).

Now, three decades later, at the 30<sup>th</sup> commemorative, all nine of the wounded students were reunited by the horror and tragedy of May 4, 1970. In 1970, Robby Stamps was a 19-year-old sophomore at Kent State University who had attended the demonstration. As Stamps was walking away, gunfire erupted and he began to run through the parking lot when he was shot in the back. Stamps spent a month recuperating in the hospital. Now, thirty years later, the physical wounds are healed, "but he – and many others in the nation – are still dealing with the psychological impact of the shots fired that day" (Tuchman, 2000, paragraph 5).

Stamps stated:

I have mixed emotions, when we get together on . . . (May) 4<sup>th</sup> like this. . . .

I have a chance to see friends whom I haven't seen in many years, the other wounded students, the families of the dead students, so there's something very special about that. But it also can be painful at the same time. ("Kent State shooting," 2000, paragraph 6)

Dean Kahler recalled, "I just jumped on the ground and covered my head and prayed that I would not get shot" ("Kent State shooting," 2000, paragraph 4). Kahler added, "After the shootings there was the screams and the tormented voices of the students that I heard. And last but not least, lying on the ground looking up and seeing the students' faces. The shock, the disbelief, was just unbelievable" ("Kent State shooting," 2000, paragraphs 4, 5).

James Russell another wounded student from the shootings pointed out, "I lived through some of the worst abuses of civil rights those few weeks in the spring of 1970 – and few seemed to want to acknowledge it" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 10). Russell reflected, "We were all observing, doing different things around on the hill. Kids shouldn't have to die for going to school" (Byard, 2000, paragraphs 15, 16). Russell concluded, "I remember hearing so often they should have shot more" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 12).

Joseph Lewis, another wounded victim offered, "We don't know why this happened to us. We don't know who said, 'Shoot.' We don't know when they said it or why" (Graves, 2000, paragraph 5). Lewis added, "I didn't do anything wrong. People who did something wrong were individuals of the Ohio National Guard who shot and killed them and shot and wounded us deliberately" (Graves, 2000, paragraph 10).

Alan Canfora painfully revealed how he ran behind an oak tree, felt pain and instinctively knew, "I've been shot! It seems like a nightmare, but this is real. I've really been shot!" (Canfora, 2000, p. 1). Canfora recalled, "As I kneeled behind the only tree in the direct line of fire, I was fortunate to survive a quite surreal, tragic experience" ("About Alan," 2000, p. 1). Now, thirty years later, Canfora stated, "As a direct result of my lifetime of persistent, patriotic political activism, I have been shot by the National Guard at Kent State University in 1970, falsely arrested on several occasions and subjected to occasional attempts at character assassination" ("About Alan," 2000, p. 1).

All of the wounded students still hold Governor James Rhodes responsible for the shootings. Dean Kahler reiterated the rhetoric expressed by Governor Rhodes in May of 1970. Kahler pointed out, "You have to remember Rhodes virtually beat on the table, saying he was going to keep this university open and all the universities in Ohio" (Graves, 2000, paragraph 12). When contacted by the Columbus Dispatch, Rhodes, now 90 years old expressed, "It was a terrible thing but no one plans a train wreck, either. It just happened. And life goes on" (Graves, 2000, paragraph 13).

In addition to the wounded victims who expressed their feelings and reflections on the shootings, there were the guests in attendance at the commemorative who made known their emotional reactions on the historical legacy of the shootings. Among the approximate 1,000 attendees who were at Kent State University to honor the students killed and wounded, many of their beliefs were shared with the media and journalist.

John Darnell, a student at the time of the shootings stated, "I like to call it murder. I see no justification and no justice" ("Kent State shooting," 2000, paragraph 24). Paul Tople, another student at the time of the shootings concluded, "When I saw the students in their pools of blood, I said this is it, it's got to stop – the protests, the war. It's gone too far" ("Kent State shooting," 2000, paragraph 23).

Ellis Berns, was a friend of Sandra Scheuer's, and was with her in the parking lot when she was killed. Berns stated:

I always ask myself why. Why her, not me? . . . . After it stopped I called her name. And called her name. And called her name. And waited for Sandra to say, I'm ok. I'm fine. It's late. I've got to go to class. I ask. Why when she way lying in my arms I couldn't find the strength to breathe life back into her?  
(Dyer, 2000, paragraph 9)

Barry Levine was Allison Krause's boyfriend when she was killed on May 4, 1970. In the past, Levine had chosen not to discuss his horrific experience. At the commemoration, Levine regrettably stated, "Allison Krause was planning on being here today. Unfortunately because of a prior engagement she was unable to make it and sent me instead" (Dyer, 2000, paragraphs 7, 8). Levine wrote a poem honoring the memory of Krause and read it aloud to the crowd. The lengthy poem expressed the deep emotional pain that Levine experienced.

Some of Levine's poetic lines are:

*You can say what you want, and say what you must  
Just don't point your fingers at us  
We're not the ones who made her fall  
No, You can't blame us at all.*

*WHO KILLED ALLISON, WHY, WHAT HAD SHE DONE*

*Sure she was an honor student, but she should have known better  
Than to stand up and speak out in public, where did that get her?*

*There is a time and a place for freedom of speech  
She should have known that because that's what we teach  
But please, don't point your fingers at us  
We are not the ones that made her fall,  
No, you can't blame us at all.*

May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, 2000

Ken Hammond was on the campus at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, standing on top of the hill when the shootings broke out. Now, thirty years later,

Hammond pointed out the area and described, "The Guard was right over there. They were shooting tear gas and things just started to go to hell" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 8). Hammond would like the legacy of the shootings to be more than "hand wringing and teariness." Hammond added, "I'd rather see people get fired up about changing the world" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 14).

Jim Mueller, a 1970 graduate from the University of Akron, had attended 22 commemorations at Kent State University and expressed, "It means something to me. It could have happened to any of us" (Higgins, 2000, paragraph 21).

Bob Carpenter was a news director at the student radio station at Kent State University. Carpenter reported on air that the Ohio National Guard had opened fire on the students and that their lives were in danger. Carpenter reflected, "It was like – oh my God, I can't believe it. So everybody came out and there were kids lying on the ground, running all over the place" ("Kent State shooting," 2000, paragraph 18). Carpenter added:

There isn't a day in my life that goes by that I don't wake up without some conscious thought of this. I was in Vietnam twice before. I didn't have the fear that I had on this campus – helicopters swooping down, tear gas, bullets. It was a scary thing. I get goosebumps talking about it right at this moment. ("Kent State shooting," 2000, paragraph 19)

Jeff Zenz has been coming to the Kent State University commemoratives for the past 11 years. Zenz noted, "To me, this is like coming to Valhalla; I come here to die, and I walk away reborn. It's great to see that the kids are still

keeping this going, because that's what it's all about" (Klosterman, 2000, paragraph 5). When the shootings occurred on May 4, 1970, Zenz, a high school student in Toledo, Ohio, vividly recalled going to class after lunch where his English teacher announced, "We just shot four of you at Kent. Now sit down before we shoot four more" (Klosterman, 2000, paragraph 8). Zenz reiterated, "That's actually what she said, like it was a joke or something" (Klosterman, 2000, paragraph 9).

Doug Tanner graduated from Kent State in 1969 where he had been an active member of the Students for a Democratic Society. All things considered, Tanner was not shocked when he heard of the shootings at Kent State University. Tanner stated, "In '69, people thought we were crazy and maybe they were right" (Klosterman, 2000, paragraph 16). Tanner asserted, "The anti-war sentiment had become so populist by 1970 that the outrage was as much a part of working-class universities as it was in the elite universities on the coasts" (Klosterman, 2000, paragraph 17). When asked why coming to the May 4 commemoratives are important to the people, Tanner suggested, "It's history. It's life. None of this has ended" (Klosterman, 2000, paragraph 18).

By contrast to the students of the past, there are those students today at Kent State University affected by the historical legacy that belongs to their university campus. At the 30 year commemorative, several students were interviewed for their comments and they openly shared their sentiments.

Gary Tuchman is a CNN National Correspondent, sent to cover the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration at Kent State University. During his visit, Tuchman had the

opportunity to meet and talk with numerous students who are currently enrolled at Kent State University, acknowledging the majority were born at least one decade after the shootings: "Most of the students I talked with during my visit to the campus said they were horrified about what happened there in 1970, but many also said it was hard for them to relate to the virulent anti-war passion of those times" (Tuchman, 2000, CNN Interactive).

To illustrate, Wendy Semon, currently a senior at Kent State University, believes, "The living legacy of those four students is activism. The only appropriate way students of today can keep that legacy alive is to promote activism and educate others" (Lojowsky, 2000, paragraph 2).

Lenny Volk is a 19 year-old student currently attending Kent State University and an ROTC cadet. There are days when he must wear his uniform to campus, but he chose not to wear it during the commemoration activities to avoid any confrontations. When interviewed, Volk stated, "Sometimes I walk by (Blanket Hill) and I think to myself about what was going on at the time and how it could have happened" (Higgins, 2000, paragraph 14). Volk added, "If someone burned down the ROTC building today, I wouldn't go out there with weapons to try to calm the crowd. I'd get as far away from there as possible. I'd go home" (Higgins, 2000, paragraphs 12, 15).

In conclusion, there are the final thoughts surrounding the 30<sup>th</sup> annual commemoration program at Kent State University. Alan Canfora stated, "All in all, 2000 will long be remembered by those of us who joined together at Kent State and announced to the world that we remember and will never forget

Vietnam, Kent State and the epic tragedies of a generation" ("Announcements," 2000, p. 1).

Chic Canfora, a survivor herself of the May 4 shootings, suggested:

Today we assemble and pay tribute to four friends who fell here thirty years ago, but let us also pay tribute today to the countless students who have since then, in the past thirty years, followed in their steps. May 4<sup>th</sup> is not just about tragedy. We assemble here each year not only to remember our fallen friends, but to resurrect the issues and ideals for which they died. The most important of which, for all of us, for every American citizen, is freedom of speech. (Lojowsky, 2000, paragraph 6).

Gary Tuchman, CNN National Correspondent, reported:

Some people, from today's students to yesterday's protesters to historians, believe the Kent State shootings helped turn the tide against the Vietnam War more than any other single event, and that the shift in attitude helped save lives. Many of the Kent State victims and their family members see that as an important legacy. (2000, paragraphs 17, 18)

Professor Jerry M. Lewis believes, "Kent State belongs to the world. We're comfortable, but not proud, of the event and what it did to our country. One of our memorial plaques says Inquire, Learn, Reflect, and that's what we hope happens on May 4, 2000" (Heeger, 2000, p. 1). Lewis added:

In educational terms, this is a teachable moment and we hope that people learn two things: what really happened instead of the gossip about Kent



State, and what awesome power and weaponry the state carries. For government to use such force against its own people is something we should discuss and debate. (Heeger, 2000, p. 1)

Over the years, the interest in the shootings at Kent State University has not diminished, but recently a resurgence of interest has occurred. According to Nancy Birk, Kent State University Archivist, "There is a continuing interest from people all over the world to study the archives. There are new in-depth works in the collection" (personal communication, March 11, 1999). Birk added, "Kent State is more than facts, its perception."

### Chapter Conclusion

This chapter looked at the significance of the commemorations and focused on the emotional responses expressed from young and old alike. The commemorations recognize and reinforce stories about the events of May 4, 1970. Braden (1975) states, "Drawing upon imagination, it strives to elicit what is pleasant, romantic, soothing, satisfying; it gains acceptance and strength through repetition" (p. 121).

The chapter reviewed student perspectives, the administration at Kent State University, the perspectives of the wounded, their families, and the families of the slain students, friends and strangers all reacting to the conflict that erupted 30 years ago. Braden (1975) writes:

The speaker . . . attempts what Aristotle called investing facts and premises with grandeur and dignity. . . . The persuader has his arguments and themes

suggest the virtues and vices. He affirms that his motives, sentiments, and actions are more noble and on a higher plane than those of the opponent. (pp. 125, 126)

The generations have changed, but the interest of the past has not diminished. It has just taken on new meaning. As four lay dead and nine wounded on the grounds of Kent State University, the legacy of the university was forever changed.

The large influx of youth who entered the university system believed they could make a difference in the world. That all changed with the shootings at Kent State University. It was the beginning of a generation that questioned the values of society, its myths, and values. Braden (1975) writes, "When persons find their immediate situations unpleasant and unsatisfying they seek escape to a simpler existence" (p. 119).

Although there are the annual vigils and commemorations, the inception of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, the building of memorials, pins and posters dedicated to the events of May 4, 1970, retrospective conferences, symposiums, televised movies and dramatic plays all devoted to keeping alive the memories of four slain students and nine wounded at Kent State University, nothing can change what happened in 1970. It was an era when students challenged authority and demonstrated for their values and beliefs, even if it meant being arrested and sent to jail.

The shootings of May 4, 1970, serve as an epiphany to a time in history that can never be forgotten. It epitomizes a time in history when the unpopular war in

Vietnam, aggressive political groups formed by the youth on college campuses, and turbulent times in society all contributed to the attitudes that challenged the youth against the establishment.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MEMORIALS and MYTHS

*The dead are always with us.*  
James Joyce

*A generation is fashion: but there is more to history than costume  
and jargon. The people of an era must either carry the burden of  
change assigned to their time or die under its weight in the wilderness.*  
Harold Rosenberg

In the article, "Myths in a Rhetorical Context" (1975), Waldo W. Braden, writes, "It [the myth] must be pieced together out of an assortment of essays, orations, poems, stories, histories, and sermons" (p. 115). Over time, the stories surrounding the myths can take on superhuman qualities, become bigger than life and when retold over and over again, become a reality.

One of the myths surrounding the events at Kent State University was the story that on Sunday, May 3, 1970, a female student placed a yellow flower in the muzzle of one of the Guardsmen's gun and stated, "Flowers are better than bullets" (p. 12). After the shootings, the myth began to circulate that this student was Krause.

However, Krause's boyfriend at the time of her demise, Barry Levine, disputes the myth. Levine provides a different version, "Allison did not place a flower in a guardsman's rifle" (Dunn, p. 13).

Dunn (2000) writes:

The actual event saw Barry and Allison walking around the campus, and in Barry's own terms 'fraternizing with some guardsmen.' Upon reaching front campus, Allison spotted a guardsman with a lilac protruding from his gun and pulled Barry over to talk to him. . . . The result of this [the conversation] was Allison's retort, 'What's the matter with peace? Flowers are better than bullets.' (p. 12)

Writers such as James A. Michener (1971), who wrote the book, Kent State: What Happened & Why and Erich Segal (1970), who wrote the article "Death Story," for Ladies Home Journal, had Krause placing the flower in the Guardsman's rifle. Michener later retracted the inaccuracy, but Segal elaborated on the myth that Krause was the female who placed the flower in the Guardsman's rifle (Dunn, pp. 12, 13). Segal later changed his position and stated, "The now legendary flower incident has been exploited and blown terribly out of proportion in order to make Allison something of a saint or martyr, which she was not. She was just a victim" (Dunn, p. 26).

Dunn (2000) states, "Ironically, had Allison survived the shootings, had for example, Barry Levine taken the bullet instead of Allison, what she had said on that Sunday afternoon may never have been quoted or misquoted to the extent in which it was" (p. 26). Braden (1975) believes, "What a myth never contains is the critical power to separate its truth from its error" (p. 115).

Braden (1975) suggests, "The myth provides an effective means of establishing identification or consubstantiality. When the speaker activates the

myth, listeners develop feelings of kinship or oneness with him. Setting imaginations in motion, he [the myth-maker] stirs up many connotative implications" (p. 121).

Braden (1975) adds, "Henry Nash Smith labels the myth as an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image. . . . collective representations rather than the work of a single mind" (p.115). In discussing the importance of repetition in continuing a myth, Braden (1975) points out, "A single sign may stimulate a variety of emotional responses, drawn from the unexpressed longings" (p. 121).

This chapter will look at the personal memories, dedicated memorials, and building of myths and images of the four students killed at Kent State University on May 4, 1970. There are various signs, symbols and rituals replicated to honor the tragic legacy of the four lives. In addition, there are numerous memorial sites on the campus at Kent State University observing the events of May 4, 1970. However, not all were built or dedicated without controversy.

On the first anniversary after the shootings, the Kent State University B'nai B'rith Hillel group dedicated a plaque in memory of Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, and William Schroeder. Every year there are annual commemoration celebrations that begin at the Victory Bell on the evening of May 3. At that time, students conduct a candlelight procession ending at the Hillel Marker where students leave their lit candles in memory of the four shot on campus ("B'nai B'rith Hillel," 2000, p. 1).

On May 3, 1974, the marker was stolen and the faculty committee collected contributions for a new marker. One year later to the day, a new granite stone was dedicated: "For 15 years this granite stone served as a focal point of May 4 memorial observances on the Kent campus" ("B'nai B'rith Hillel," 2000, p. 1).

At the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration, a bucket containing dozens of small rocks was provided by the Hillel Jewish Student Center at Kent State University. Three of the four students killed on May 4, 1970 were Jewish (Byard, 2000, p. 1). Moreover, the Hillel marker symbolized the gravesites to honor all of the dead students.

For the visitors who attended the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration, the Hillel group placed a written sign explaining that the Jewish custom is to place rocks at the headstone of a deceased loved one and not flowers. Participants in the vigil placed rocks at the exact spots located in the Prentice parking lot where the four students were killed (Byard, 2000, p. 1).

One year after the shootings, the Akron Beacon Journal won the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the events at Kent State University. Although this was a great honor for the newspaper, the editorial page printed the following:

Today, with all the reminders, many of us wish that we could, instead, have won the prize for some other thing, some other year, without four young people dead and nine others wounded, and all those other wounds to the minds of the community, leaving scars that will take generations to fade.  
(Giles, 2000, paragraph 34)

In 1977, controversy surfaced when Kent State University announced its plan to construct a gym annex on Blanket Hill, the site where some of the events of May 4, 1970 had occurred ("Remember Kent State," 2000, p. 1). Protestors occupied the area after talks with the administration at Kent State University broke off: "On May 12, 1977, members from the May 4 Coalition and supporters occupied the proposed construction site and set up a Tent City" ("Remember Kent State," 2000, p. 1).

Sixty-two days later, on July 29, 1977, 193 protestors were forcibly removed from Tent City. Bill Arthrell, a member of the May 4 Coalition, contended, "Instead of letting them build a gym on that site, we simply occupied the land for two months with our tents and our bodies" (Arthrell, 1977, p. 1). Arthrell added, "The State had issued a Restraining order making our encampment illegal" (p. 1).

After two years of fighting legal battles that ended up at the Supreme Court, the battle was lost: "Although the gym annex was eventually constructed, the gym struggle proved an invaluable tool in preserving the truth about May 1970" ("Remember Kent State," 2000, p. 1).

In the final analysis, despite the obstacles Arthrell (1977) asserted:

I was going to jail for the right to remember – the drive to preserve my own history, the Gettysburg of the student movement, the white man's Wounded Knee. There was a note of finality as the police disentangled us to drag us off to jail. The courts had acted against us-ironically making the land we had



fought so hard for, illegal for us to occupy. This seemed our finest hour, the climax of our resistance. (p. 1)

Throughout the campus at Kent State University there are physical symbols representing not only the events of the melee on May 4, 1970, but also the memories of a time in history when the war in Vietnam divided the country. At the May 4 Memorial site, there are 58,175 daffodils representing the number of lives lost in the Vietnam War ("May 4 Memorial," 2000, p. 1).

The May 4 Memorial was built on a two and a half acre wooded site overlooking the Kent State University's commons ("May 4 Memorial," 2000, p. 1). More to the point, the memorial site is intended to create a mood:

Engraved in the plaza's stone threshold are the words, 'Inquire, Learn, Reflect.' The inscription, agreed upon by the designer and Kent State University, affirms the intent the memorial site provide visitors an opportunity to inquire into the many reasons and purposes of the events, to encourage a learning process, and to reflect on how differences may be resolved peacefully. ("May 4 Memorial," 2000, p. 1)

Each piece designed and built inside the memorial reinforces and enshrines the lives of those killed:

The plaza ends in a jagged, abstract border symbolic of disruptions and the conflict of ideas. Its fractured edge suggests the tearing of the fabric of society. The granite wall built along the entry is representative of both shelter and conflict. The four polished black granite disks embedded in the earth were built to reflect our own image as we stand on them; the pylons stand as

mute sentinels to the force of violence and the memory of the four students killed. There is a fifth disk built to acknowledge the many victims of the event, implying a wider impact, one that stretched far beyond the Kent State campus. In addition, there is a 48-foot bench that provides a place for visitors to rest and view the memorial. ("May 4 Memorial," 2000, pp. 1, 2)

The sculptor, Alastair Granville-Jackson designed "The Kent Four." Jackson stated, "After considering the manner of death, four rifle barrels, I took these symbols of destruction and turned them into four new emblems for the viewer to ponder" ("The Kent Four," 2000, p. 1). Jackson described the significance of the sculpture:

A trumpet of deliverance, judgment, and freedom . . . the ancient Hebrew Ram's Horn, Schofar. The central unit of the memorial is the symbol I. It faces directly upwards, stating the unity of God, also our submission to His Will. There are signs of personal grief, four small flame elements enclosed by two large arms of steel and signs of public grief, four outward flame elements. The individual, but grouped memorial flame containers, indicate that man dies alone; however, in this instance, death was identical and communal.

("The Kent Four," 2000, p. 1)

George Segal designed the Abraham and Isaac sculpture for Kent State University. Segal pointed out, "There is a strong connection in my mind between the image of Abraham and Issac and the killings at Kent State. It's an attempt to introduce difficult moral and ethical questions as to how older people should

behave toward their children" ("Abraham and Issac," 2000, p. 1). Cleveland's Mildred Andres Foundation originally commissioned the sculpture; however, "The university refused it, saying it was too controversial. It 's now at Princeton where it is on display" ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraph 6).

On the campus at Kent State University stood a 14-foot Don Drumm sculpture that had a bullet pierced through it the day of the shootings. Drumm made the decision not to repair the damaged sculpture ("Bridge Over Troubled," 2000, p. 1).

It took a split second for an M-1 shell to pierce the thick brownish steel of Don Drumm's sculpture on Blanket Hill. It didn't take much longer for that hole to become an informal memorial to what happened there on May 4, 1970. ("Memorial a place," 2000, p. 1)

Significantly, the memorials are strategically placed throughout the campus as a part of the emotional healing process. Along the same lines, the memorials keep alive the memories and stories of May 4, 1970. "History, sorrow, and healing remain a part of Kent State University" ("May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1970," paragraph 4).

Besides the dedicated memorials visible on the outside campus of Kent State University, there are symbols and powerful visual messages throughout the university. The University Library has dedicated a Memorial Room containing books, papers, studies and other materials relating to the events.

Theodore L. Abel, an artist and former graduate from Kent State University donated four Memorial Windows to his alma mater. Abel's work titled, *A Living Memorial*, is featured in the library's May 4 Memorial Room. In

addition, the University has established an academic program designed to help students and others employ peaceful conflict resolution to resolve disputes. ("May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1970," 2000, paragraph 4)

In 1985, the Kent State University administration announced its plans to conduct a search for the appropriate memorial to be designed paying tribute to the four students killed. In addition, the National Endowments for the Arts pledged \$200,000 for the building of the memorial. In 1986, the May 4 Memorial design by Bruno Ast was chosen at a cost of \$1.3 million dollars.

Obstacles arose standing in the way of the planned memorial when, "The American Legion was quick to denounce the planned May 4 memorial as a memorial to terrorists" ("Summary: The May 4," 2000, paragraph 2). Officials succumbed to the pressure and despite all efforts the total funds needed were never raised.

In 1988, the university reduced the May 4 Memorial from the proposed \$1.3 million dollars to \$100,000, a reduction of 93% ("Summary: The May 4," 2000, paragraph 3). The differences did not end with the money allotted for the memorial. In the final analysis, it was determined that the May 4 Memorial would not be dedicated to the four students who lost their lives at Kent State University. Instead, the university chose the words, *Inquire, Learn, Reflect*, "a message for those who pass the memorial 50 years from now, and wonder what happened on May 4, 1970" ("Summary: The May 4," 2000, paragraph 4).

During this time, Kent State University President Michael Schwartz was criticized for the planned mini-memorial. Nevertheless, "Many, including nearly

all of the families of the May 4 shooting victims condemned the university's attempt to purposely fail to raise memorial funds and reduce the memorial so significantly" ("Summary: The May 4," 2000, paragraph 4).

As the 20-year commemoration approached, awareness by the media brought to the public's attention the controversy surrounding the May 4 Memorial. Kent State University President Michael Schwartz conceded to making several changes ("Summary: The May 4," 2000, paragraph 5).

On April 1, 1990, the Akron Beacon Journal invited readers to contribute their personal memories of May 4, 1970. Over 90 responses were received and 12 were published on April 29, 1990. The Akron Beacon Journal reported:

Letters include responses from people in all walks of life. Filtered through the memory of 20 years, eyewitnesses recount the trauma of their experience.

Students, faculty, National Guardsmen, Vietnam veterans and townspeople all responded. Some respondents expressed their anger and others their tears.

(2000, p. 1)

All of the letters were donated to the Kent State University May 4<sup>th</sup> Collection. Robert H. Giles, senior vice president of The Freedom Forum in New York City and former executive editor for the Akron Beacon Journal stated:

Kent State would cut the community in the deepest of ways. Our memories are so vivid because it was a moment in which our world changed forever, a moment in which the freedom of campus assembly to speak against the Vietnam War was shattered by the awful reality of the government shooting students. (p. 1)

In 1990, Sandra Perlman Halem, a playwright from Kent, Ohio, initiated the May 4<sup>th</sup> Oral History Project. The idea was conceived as Halem and her husband, a former professor from Kent State University, discovered during their travels that individuals always wanted to talk about the shootings. Halem coordinated her Oral History program with the assistance of Nancy Birk, Kent State University archivist and Shirley Teresa Wajda, assistant history professor at Kent State University.

The Oral History Projects is a collection of writings from individuals all over the world stating their remembrances, impressions and personal opinions on the shootings of May 4, 1970 (Byard, 2000, p. 1). "Their collection is meant to illuminate the impact that this extraordinary event played in the lives of ordinary people of all ages, whether they were directly involved in the demonstrations or simply responding to the news locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally" ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Oral," 2000, paragraph 2).

Prior to the year 2000, Halem gathered her information for the Oral History Project by interviewing individuals who were attending May 4 commemorations or by telephone. With the advent of technology and the Internet, in the year 2000, the stories were also sent through e-mail by logging on to the Kent State Web site (Byard, 2000, p. 1). Halem believes, "People are more comfortable talking about tragedies at a distance. They've been in shock for years" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 3).

Conversely, each individual has his or her own perspective on the past and how the events occurred. Wajda noted, "Most Americans believe the history that

is told to them by their families and their neighbors" (Byard, 2000, paragraph 10). The stories are then passed on from generation to generation, keeping alive the memories and the forming of new myths for the four students killed.

The four students killed have become icons for a time in history when there was political dissent on a college campus in Kent, Ohio. Dunn (2000) writes, "Nonetheless, the whole equation of the Vietnam War, and what it has epitomized for American society, before, during and after the 1970s has to be taken into context with the Kent State shootings and both the media, and general public reactions" (p. 36). Dunn (2000) adds, "The media loves a victim, this is how the icon can become less artificial and more real, more like ourselves" (p. 28).

Memorabilia such as photographs taken of happier times in the lives of the four students killed at Kent State University maintains their youthful image. Dunn (2000) asserts, "Youth, and in particular, dying young are concept that find themselves inextricably linked to the iconography that attaches itself to individuals in American Society" (p. 29).

When the Ohio National Guard opened fire on the students at Kent State University, Jeffrey Miller, Sandy Scheuer, Allison Krause, and Bill Schroeder were all killed in the Prentice Hall parking lot. For years, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force attempted to have the parking spots memorialized and closed to traffic.

After 28 years, a two-hour sit-in and ongoing discussions with Kent State University President Cartwright, the decision was made to honor the students with markers to be erected in each parking space ("History of Prentice," 2000,

p. 1). According to the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force, it took, "300 people marching to the university president's office, 2,000 signatures, letters from all the families and 28 years to win the president's July 1 approval to close the four sacred sites" ("After 28 years," 2000, p. 13A).

Kent State President Carol Cartwright stated, "The installation of the markers is another meaningful way for the university community to honor the memory of the four, young people who lost their lives on our campus" ("May 4 Markers," 2000, paragraph 4). Cartwright added:

The markers will preserve the site of a pivotal moment in the history of the university and the nation, standing as a physical reminder of what can happen when the democratic principles of civil discourse and the non-violent expression of opposing views are taken for granted. ("May 4 Markers," 2000, p. 1)

Furthermore, Cartwright noted:

As we prepare for the 30-Year Commemoration, we need to explore the ideas of civil discourse, civic engagement and conflict resolution and how these contribute to a dialogue about the rights, responsibilities and challenges of living in a democratic society. ("May 4 Markers," 2000, p. 1)

Braden (1975) asserts, "Membership in the group often depends upon continued overt demonstration of faithful acceptance of various facets of the imaginary picture. . . . To be suspected of being a non-believer may result in being ostracized or banished" (p. 122). Braden (1975) adds, "The possessors



and believers jealously guard the integrity of the myth and will permit no challenge of it" (p. 122).

By contrast to the positive accolades that surround the memorials and myths pertaining to the shootings and the lives of the students killed and wounded, there are opposing views. Muata Niamke, a graduate student at Kent State University asserted, "I don't have anything against the students who died, of course, but if for every death in a social movement anywhere in the U.S. we put up a memorial, we'd have them all over the place. Enough" ("After 28 years," 1998, p. 13A).

Even after 28 years, there are local townspeople whose emotional loyalties are with the Ohio National Guard. One local worker near the college campus stated, "Remember, it was just some hippie college students who didn't know the meaning of law and order. I think we should have stopped talkin' about them a long, long time ago" ("After 28 years," 1998, p. 13A).

On the contrary, Claudette Mejean, Class of 1969, believes there has not been enough rhetoric discussed about how the events occurred or why they took place. Mejean noted, "I come here every year for the May 4 anniversary vigil at the parking spaces just so people will remember. For nearly three decades, that's been the only day of the year the university will shut down the parking lot" ("After 28 years," 1998, p. 13A).

Today's college students were not born when the shootings occurred. Tim Smith talked about the need to know the history of the past. Jim Llewellyn, age 24, stated, "The way I feel about it is, I need to know what happened May 4, the

same way I need to know about what happened in the Revolutionary War”  
(Harris, 1995, p. 3).

Alan Canfora, one of the wounded victims on May 4, 1970, stated, “I think it’s true that because most students weren’t born in 1970 that they look at the war and the Kent State incident as strictly historical information” (Harris, 1995, p. 3). Canfora added, “But, at the same time, I found that many of today’s students remain concerned about the war and the Kent State murders” (Harris, 1995, p. 3). Braden (1975) writes, “And there is no denial that certain myths have demonstrated their continued attractiveness for over a hundred years” (p. 120).

Linda Walker, an associate professor of music at Kent State expressed:

Phillip Gibbs and James Green at Jackson State and Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer and William Schroeder at Kent State have not died in vain if their deaths have caused us to think more deeply about issues that matter to the living. Their memories, and the memories of events surrounding their deaths, will live on. (Walker, 2000, p. 1)

Thirty years later the headline “Of Loss and Learning” stated that May 4, 1970 was, “A day like no other” (p. 1). It continued:

We look back to find what time has  
buried, and, remembering, we draw it  
forward. Sharp as cut crystal, it hangs  
now before us – sights and smells and  
sound of days in May.

As it was.

But not quite. For memory is blended  
With perspective as it's sifted through the  
march of years. And as we turn  
memories to words, we begin to  
understand.

### Chapter Conclusion

On May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed college students at Kent State University protesting the Vietnam War. The school would never be the same. On that day at 12:24 p.m., its history was forever changed when four students were killed and nine wounded. As a result of the shootings, the university's image was changed. After a few years, the university wanted to move past the horrific incident and work on changing its image to the public.

Notwithstanding the university's attempts, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force was formed and rather than forgotten, the myth of the incident took on a life of its own. Annual commemorations, memorial sites were built and dedicated, scholarships were dedicated in memory of the four students killed, plays, music, poetry, movies and an array of books and articles written about the shootings keeps alive the stories surrounding the shootings.

At the 25 Year Retrospective Conference held at Emerson College, Mary Joyce, a panel member reflected on the aftermath of May 1970:

And I think we do have to look at how other age cohorts relate to these events, because their cohort influences are different and because they're different, then the self-definitions are different, and the way they relate to us

is different, and the way they relate to these stories is different.

("Retrospective Conference," 2000, paragraph 18)

Over 30 years have now passed since that historical date in history when there was dissent on college campuses and communication was at its worst. The four students killed have become martyrs representative of the political events occurring historically at the time of their deaths. Dunn (2000) states, "The American media is attracted to, however, it can be argued that no matter what scandals are attached to certain individuals, we still admire and adore them" (p. 28).

Although there are various memorials throughout the Kent State University campus acknowledging the lives lost on May 4, 1970, they are a little too late for the families of Allison Krause, Jeffrey Glen Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer and William Knox Schroeder.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

*People try to put us down  
Just because we get around  
Things they do look awful cold  
Hope I die before I get old.  
The Who*

*The beginning of the end of war lies in remembrance.  
Herman Wouk*

More than 30 years has passed since that historical date in our history when communication was at its worst. In the article, "History of the U.S. War in Vietnam," the authors state, "More than any U.S. war since the Civil War, Vietnam divided America and made us reevaluate our society" (Romo, Zastrow & Miller, 2000, p. 1).

The Vietnam War was unpopular and students opposing the war held rallies to have their voices heard. Frustrated and believing their verbal messages were not being heard, the younger generation empowered themselves by banding together in protest. Gary A. Allgeyer (1996) writes:

Social protest – sometimes honorable, sometime inglorious – has a long history in the United States. The role of law enforcement is not to impede legitimate acts of social demonstration but to enforce court-mandated restrictions and to ensure individual and community safety. By following

a methodical plan and anticipating problems before they occur, law enforcement can meet the challenges of contemporary protests successfully. (p. 7)

After four students were killed and nine wounded on the college campus at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, a nation was left in shock. The catastrophic events raised significant concerns about a society in conflict and how human lives were placed at risk.

The shootings at Kent State University are pivotal to study as an example of what can happen when communication fails. There was a breakdown in communication, a lack of any verbal interaction between the students and the administration. The inflammatory and derogatory rhetoric used by the establishment added to the polarization between the generations. This study reaffirms the importance to examine and establish effective ways to communicate.

This thesis focused on the historical relevance of the shootings at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, and examined the symbolism of myths, memorials, and commemorations over the time span of 30 years. Throughout this thesis, Braden's (1975) theory for evaluating myths was applied in analyzing the rhetoric surrounding the legacy from the shootings.

An examination of the rhetoric established that myths are at times blown out of proportion, are not always substantiated, and are recalled to memory in a way that makes the speaker or listener more comfortable with the stories being told.

Braden (1975) states, "Myth implies an idea . . . that so effectively embodies men's values that it profoundly influences their ways of perceiving reality and hence their behavior" (p. 117).

Braden (1975) adds:

The myth or a cluster of myths is likely to permeate the whole structure and development of a composition. They subtly influence and reinforce the entire presentation. Instead of being an isolated or exclusive device, the myth is more a strategy, a mood, or a *modus operandi*. (p. 126)

Additionally, Dunn's (2000) research contributed to this study on the building of myths. Dunn (2000) focused on Allison Krause, one of the four victims killed at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, and writes, "It is fair to note, that American society itself, was responsible for what I have termed the 'romanticization' of Allison Krause" (p. 35). Dunn (2000) concludes:

What these sources and others not found at Kent do reveal is the way in which the people of America need some sort of role model; someone to live up to; to worship; to base their actions upon. All in all, to justify their being. (p. 36)

This study indicates how Braden's (1975) theory about myths, memorials, and commemorations are useful and relevant to today's rhetoric. The three main elements discussed in this study built on Braden's (1975) structure and provides additional information about the legacy of myths, memorials and commemorations.

Immediately following their deaths and for years thereafter, there were stories about the radicals with long hair, the anti-government protestors, who deserved what they got. This study dispels that particular myth by providing insight into the lives of the four victims killed; victims who were innocent college students shot down on their own college campus.

Over the years, the stories and the images of the students killed have changed. They have been transformed from radicals to victims. The discourse about the victims has softened. The commemorations, myths, and memorials have taken on a life of their own.

There are disparate myths surrounding the four victims killed and all of the events of May 4, 1970, that led to such a catastrophic end. For example, there were assumptions made and stories told on the part of the establishment, that longhaired hippies, who believed in peace and not war took a position that was outside the expectations of the system. A great number of the local Kent, Ohio, townspeople alleged, "And the troublemakers have long hair, use bad language, go barefoot and even destroy property. . . . The teachers fill the students full of wrong ideas, and they come home rejecting the adults and their values" (Flint, 1970, p. A1).

Many of the older generation prejudged the younger generation by their physical appearances and concluded they were rebellious troublemakers. Rather than building a cooperative atmosphere, the interaction between the generations grew further apart as did the stories about the radicals on the campus who fit the image of a troublemaker.



In the article, "Student Protest in the 1960s," Churney (1979) contends: Visible signs of their opposition to traditional society were hard to ignore. Highly distinctive dress marked the first obvious difference in the young's appearance: blue jean (not the designer type of today' rather the faded, sometimes dirty, patched and bell-bottomed type) brightly-colored and often embroidered shirts, love beads, head bands, arm bands, fringed vests, American Indian designs on leather clothing, hand-made sandals were some of the characteristics of the new generation's style. (paragraph 12)

The commemorations offer a time and a place where individuals can come together to fulfill their own expectations. For some individuals, the need to belong or believe in something is instrumental in their involvement in the group. At the commemorations, the speaker's messages are reinforced through their use of discourse. The rhetoric may inspire the audience and serve as a platform to strengthen the commitment and value of the group.

The structural memorials located at Kent State University serve as a reference to a horrific event that occurred in history. The monuments are there as proof to keep the memories alive of the students who were killed. They are reference points to the past.

The physical structures are markers representative of lives lost, but it is the emotional marker of one's life that is best expressed in the 1995 play, "Nightwalking: Voices from Kent State." The author, Sandra Perlman, writes:

In our life there are markers to help us see how far we have come. Birthdays, anniversaries, awards – to help us look at how well we have passed our time

here and how much there is still to do. Sometimes the markers are there for all of us to see. . . . If we are not vigilant, this life will come and go and we will miss it and leave it behind without a trace. If we are not vigilant, we can become bitter or lost or worse. If we are not vigilant, we will mistake the markers for the meaning, and fail the test completely. (p. 1)

Throughout the years, there have remained unanswered questions in the search for the truth on the accountability for the shootings. To date, no one has ever come forward and taken the responsibility for giving the order to shoot. Five hours after the shootings, General Robert Canterbury announced at a news conference that his men were not ordered to fire on the students, but added, "A military man always has the right to fire if he feels his life is in danger. . . . Conditions on the hill were extremely violent. I feel they were in danger" (Batz, 1970, p. A2).

Governor Rhodes, responsible for sending in the Ohio National Guard to the campus of Kent State University expressed, "It is my prayer tonight that those who have counseled our young people into the violent action that sparked today's incident will give second thought to what they are doing-to the youth of America and to the nation" ("Leaders Shocked By," 1970, p. A8). By contrast, Senator Stephen Young pointed out, "It would appear to me that the governor made a grave mistake in sending in an inexperienced and untried National Guard unit when right in Portage County we have a sheriff's department" ("Leaders Shocked By," 1970, p. A8).

Vice-President Spiro Agnew publicly asserted, "I have called attention to the grave dangers which accompany the new politics of violence and confrontation and which have found so much favor on our college campuses" (Kifner, 1970, p. A2). Agnew added, "The events at Kent State make the truth of these remarks self-evident and underscore the need that they be said" (Kifner, 1970, p. A2).

Walter J. Hickel, Secretary of the Interior, wrote to President Nixon, "The administration is turning its back on the great mass of American youth and thereby contributing to anarchy and revolt" (Frankel, 1970, p. A1).

When Major General Winston P. Wilson appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee, he stated, "The Ohio Guardsmen were authorized to 'load and lock' their weapons when committed to action" ("Ohio Guard Was," 1970, p. A18). Wilson added, "The students who were fired upon were lawbreakers in violation of the Governor's ban, in violation of the Riot Act and the lawful order to disperse" ("Ohio Guard Was," 1970, p. A18).

At the same hearing, General Robert Canterbury, the National Guard officer in charge at Kent State University, was asked why his officers did not fire warning shots in the air. Canterbury responded, "There is some question about the advisability of warning shots in most of the police departments" (Kifner, 1970, p. A2). Canterbury added, "A number of his men had shot to wound" (Kifner, 1970, p. A2).

In 1972, Mr. and Mrs. Schroeder, parents of Bill Schroeder who was killed on May 4, 1970, wrote a letter to The White House inquiring if a Federal Grand Jury planned to investigate the shootings by the Ohio National Guard. Leonard

Garment, Special Consultant to the President of the United States, responded, "Willfulness or specific criminal intent or planned or purposeful conspiracy must be proved in order to support a federal indictment; there is still no evidence available to prove such a violation of the Federal criminal statutes" (personal communication, July 6, 1972). Garment added, "We can hope, however, that the nation will pay attention to the lessons of this tragedy and that nothing like it will ever happen again" (personal communication, July 6, 1972).

Even though 30 years has passed, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Task Force believes:

Since the killings of Jeff Miller, Allison Krause, Bill Schroeder and Sandy Scheuer, both those within the government and the university have yet to tell all that they know about the events that led to the murder of four students on May 4, 1970. ("May 4<sup>th</sup> Task," 2000, paragraph 5)

At a 30 year Journalism School Reunion Dinner, alumni students who were enrolled at Kent State University at the time of the shootings signed a statement that asserted:

Even after 30 years, an FBI investigation, a Presidential Commission, criminal prosecutions and civil suits, we feel that the truth about the events leading up to the killings and responsibility for the killings has not been assigned. The healing can not be completed until the truth is known. The trauma was too great to be ignored or buried. ("Still Searching," 2000, p. 1)

This is in contrast to Kent State University, who wants to bury the past and change the focus from looking back on the past, to looking forward to the future.

At the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration, Carol A. Cartwright, President, Kent State University stated the shootings and the memories of the four students killed should “serve as a catalyst for learning” (“Experiencing Democracy,” 2000, p. 22). The 30<sup>th</sup> commemorative program added a scholarly symposium and theme entitled, “Experiencing Democracy: Inquire, Learn, Reflect” (See Appendix C for The 30<sup>th</sup> May 4 Commemoration Event Calendar Experiencing Democracy: Inquire, Learn, Reflect).

#### Future research

An examination of the historical events surrounding the shootings and its aftermath confirms that to this day, there remain questions yet unanswered. There are contested points being raised with reference to the accuracy of the known minutiae made available to the public. This ongoing concern justifies additional investigative studies. Future research should analyze the discourse that circumvents the search for the truth.

The events at Kent State University strongly suggest the need for future research to learn about issues that divide us and to find ways to bring us together. Whereas a breakdown in communication tears society and individuals apart, myths and commemorations are a way of bringing people together.

The analysis suggests that myths are passed on from generation to generation and are modified from their original adaptation. Future research should continue to concentrate on the power of myths to communicate and transcend a message while examining the growing disparities between the

reality of the myth and its fictionalized version.

Future studies should focus on the rhetoric at the commemorative programs and examine if the discourse has any significant changes in participation or attendance. The yearly vigils are a part of the culture, a tradition that is carried on by the students. Future studies should monitor if time diminishes the interest as the generations change.

Finally, future studies should look at the importance of the material and the physical aspects of communication. The memorial structures are tangible; they are real and not nebulous. Their physicality offers a lasting personal familiarity. The memorial structures are non-verbal in communication; however, their physical presence brings people together for a visual and emotional experience. The permanencies of the memorials are a lasting legacy to the four students killed and nine injured on the campus at Kent State University.

## APPENDIX

### BOOKS

- 1970 Thirteen Seconds: Confrontation at Kent State by Eszterhas & Roberts.
- 1970 The Middle of the Country: The Events of May 4<sup>th</sup> as seen by students and faculty at Kent State University by Warren.
- 1971 Communication Crisis at Kent State by Tompkins and Anderson.
- 1971 Kent State: what happened and why by Michener.
- 1971 The Kent Affair: Documents and Interpretations edited by Casale & Paskoff.
- 1973 The truth about Kent State: a challenge to the American conscience by Davies and the Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church.
- 1973 Kent State: The Nonviolent Response by Hare.
- 1974 I Was There: What Really Went on at Kent State by Grant & Hill.
- 1980 Kent State University shootings by Beck.
- 1980 The Kent State Coverup by Kelner & Munves.
- 1981 The Kent State incident: impact of judicial process on public attitudes by Hensley.
- 1981 Mayday: Kent State by Payne.
- 1988 Kent State/May 4: echoes through a decade edited by Bills.

- 1989 Kent State Shootings by Hughes.
- 1990 The Fourth of May: killings and cover-ups at Kent State by Gordon.
- 1991 The shootings at Kent State: a dramaturgical analysis by Sullivan.
- 1992 Dorothy Fuldheim's activist journalism and the Kent State shootings by Russell.
- 1992 A Gathering of Poets edited by Anderson.
- 1993 A comparative study of the national press coverage of the Kent State and Jackson State shootings in May 1970 by Panchak.
- 1995 Four Dead in Ohio: was there a conspiracy at Kent State by Gordon.
- 1995 Kent State Shootings by Friedman.
- 1995 YSU Kent State shootings project by Litty.
- 1995 Art and meaning in the aftermath of the shootings at Kent State, May 4, 1970 by Lee.
- 1998 Kent State Cornerstones of Freedom by Erlbach.
- 1998 The Kent State trials: the legal battle that arose out of the shootings that occurred on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University illustrate the long, complicated and emotionally charged legacy of that fateful day by Day.
- 1999 Kent State May 4, 1970: who really was responsible for the shootings? by McMillen.
- 2000 Kent State and May Fourth: a Social Science Perspective, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Hensley and Lewis.

Additional notable books published, but now out-of-print include: Kent State Cover-up by Kelner and Nunues, The killings at Kent State; how murder went



unpublished by Stone, and Thirteen seconds: confrontation at Kent State by Eszterhas.

## APPENDIX B

### YEARLY COMMEMORATIVE POSTERS AND PROGRAMS

1971 – 2000

Annual Commemoration: 1971 - In the year 1971, there were two separate written posters, one displaying the listing of concerts to be held on Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>. In addition, there was a poster naming the May Memorial Speakers and the announcement of a theatre production of *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* "dedicated to the ideals of civil disobedience displayed at Kent State University, May 4, 1970."

Annual Commemoration: 1972 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1973 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1974 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1975 - In 1975, there was a photograph of the candlelight vigil.

Annual Commemoration: 1976 - This year's poster theme was titled "The Truth Demands Justice" and the program ran on both May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup>, where several of the "Kent 25" members spoke. There was the showing of the film "Kent State, May 1970."

Annual Commemoration: 1977 - The poster title remained "The Truth Demands Justice."

Annual Commemoration: 1978 - The poster retained the title, "The Truth Demands Justice." On May 4<sup>th</sup>, there was an impressive list of speakers. Workshops were held following a march on the Commons. In addition to this poster, was another that read, "No classes May 4" on the top of the poster and in large print the word "STRIKE" on the bottom. In between, there was a picture depicting a tear gas scene from the May 4<sup>th</sup> melee and read, "Name 4 Buildings After Slain Students- Stop Construction of the New Gym."

Annual Commemoration: 1979 - The poster theme remained "The Truth Demands Justice."

Annual Commemoration: 1980 - The ten-year anniversary march and rally would be celebrated on Sunday, May 4, 1980. The poster read, "Remember Kent State, The New Wave of Resistance."

Annual Commemoration: 1981 - The 11<sup>th</sup> annual commemoration program was titled, "The Day the War Came Home" and included guest speakers and performers from the NBC-TV movie "Kent State." There was a panel discussion held later in the evening. There was also a poster showing a T-shirt for the 1981 Commemorative with the words "Remember Kent State, May 4, 1970-1981."

Annual Commemoration: 1982 - This year's poster read, "Reflect . . . Learn . . . Remember."

Annual Commemoration: 1983 - This 13<sup>th</sup> year included two separate programs to be held, one on the evening of May 3<sup>rd</sup> featuring a panel discussion and

speakers on May 4 at noon. The poster read, "A Kent State Memorial for Allison, Sandra, Jeffrey and William."

Annual Commemoration: 1984 - The 14<sup>th</sup> year poster read, "Flowers are better than bullets."

Annual Commemoration: 1985 - The 15<sup>th</sup> year poster read, "Kent State Remember May 4, 1970" showing the pictures of the four slain students.

Annual Commemoration: 1986 - The 16<sup>th</sup> year poster read, "Kent State Remembers May 4, 1970 - What Have We Learned?"

Annual Commemoration: 1987 - The 17<sup>th</sup> year poster "Remember Kent State."

Annual Commemoration: 1988 - The 18<sup>th</sup> year poster read, "The Evening After – Looking To The Future." There was also the announcement of a "World Film Premiere – *Letter to the Next Generation* – A Look at Kent State Today."

Annual Commemoration: 1989 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1990 - The 20<sup>th</sup> year poster and theme was "Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow." There were also four individually designed buttons to represent each of the slain students produced by the May 4 Task Force for the 1990 commemoration. In addition, Professor of Art, Henry Halen, displayed his sculptured designs entitled "Never Forget" at the student center. Each sculpture represented the full life size of the four victims in the positions they were after being shot.

Annual Commemoration: 1991 - The 21<sup>st</sup> poster read, "Kent State Remembers – The War Is At Home – Kent State May 4<sup>th</sup>." The poignant words are written circling a globe in the center of the poster.

Annual Commemoration: 1992 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1993 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1994 - The 24<sup>th</sup> year poster read, "Justice? How Can Peace Stand Up Against Guns?" The May 4th Task Force produced a button duplicating the same statement.

Annual Commemoration: 1995 - For the 25<sup>th</sup> year, a T-shirt was designed by the May 4 Task Force and read "In The Footsteps Of History ... We March With Them." The School of Art Gallery included the theme Seeds of Change, "Simple Gestures: A Commemorative Installation." From April 5 to May 10, 1995, viewers received a packet of flower seeds in exchange for recording their personal thoughts on the events of May 4. The event was intended to be a reminder for continued reflection. The Alloy Dance Company under the direction of Mark Taylor performed a new work created for this special commemoration.

Annual Commemoration: 1996 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1997 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 1998 - No poster information available.

This year the theme was, "Unification of the Generations." There was an "Arts Tribute" and the showing of the film "Born on the Fourth of July."

Annual Commemoration: 1999 - No poster information available.

Annual Commemoration: 2000 - No poster information available.

Significantly, the annual commemorations are a time for the stories behind the legacy of the shootings and its victims to be told. They also allow the consciousness of a new generation to be raised to the issues of the past and how the actions of a nation affected the lives of a society.

## APPENDIX C

### THE 30<sup>TH</sup> MAY 4 COMMEMORATION EVENT CALENDAR EXPERIENCING DEMOCRACY: INQUIRE, LEARN, REFLECT

Thursday, Jan. 20	Lecture, "Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong" by James W. Loewen
Thursday, Feb. 24-27	Play, <i>The 7<sup>th</sup> Example</i>
Monday, Feb. 28	Book signing for the second edition of <i>Kent State and May 4<sup>th</sup>: A Social Science Perspective</i> by Kent State faculty Thomas R. Hensley and Jerry M. Lewis
Tuesday, Feb. 29	"Freedom on My Mind: The Civil Rights Movement"
Wednesday, March 8	Lemnitzer Center Speaker Series, "Cambodia 1970: The Implementation of the Nixon Doctrine"
Friday – Sunday, March 10 – 12 and Friday – Sunday March 17 – 19	Play, <i>The Gods Are Not to Blame</i>
Monday and Tuesday March 13 – 14	Fifth Annual Violence Symposium, <i>From Roots to Recovery</i>
Monday, March 27	Guest of Honor Lecture, "Vietnam: The War Abroad and the War at Home" by Pulitzer Prize winner David Halberstam

Monday, April 3	Exhibit Opening, "A Moment in Time, 1967-1977: Kent State's Print and Broadcast Journalism Students Capture the Decade"
Wednesday, April 5	Lecture, "New Perspectives on Holocaust Perpetrators"
Thursday, April 6	Performance by Lakota Sioux Indian Dance Theatre Company
Friday, April 7	Fellowship of Reconciliation "Stop the Hate" Speaking Tour
Friday – Sunday April 7 – 9 and Friday – Sunday April 14 – 16	Play, <i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i>
Saturday, April 8	Pontanima Interfaith Choir Concert
Wednesday, April 12	Exhibit Opening, " <i>Revolutionizing Fashion: The Politics of Style</i> "
Wednesday, April 12	Panel Discussion, "Freedom of Speech and May 4, 1970: Reflections Now and Then"
Saturday, April 15	"Justification, Communication and Force" Annual Philosophy Graduate Student Conference
Tuesday, April 18	"Voices of the Holocaust"
Monday, April 24	"A Small, Thirsty Song: Voices of Children From Northeast Ohio Schools: A Poetry Reading and Talk"
Monday and Tuesday April 24 and 25	Poetry Reading, "A Gathering of Readers"



Wednesday, April 26	Panel Discussion, "May 4 and Jackson State"
Thursday, April 27	Documentary Film, <i>What's Happening! The Beatles in the USA</i>
Saturday, April 29	"An Afternoon with Alfred Maysles"
Sunday, April 30	"Coffeehouse of the 1960s"
Monday - Friday May 1 – 5	<i>The Story of the Kent State Shootings</i>
Monday – Tuesday May 1 and 2	Academic Symposium, "The Boundaries of Freedom of Expression and Order in a Democratic Society"
Monday, Tuesday and Sunday May 1, 2 and 7	Three-part series on the Healing of Memories
Monday, May 1	Opening Keynote Address, "Freedom of Expression in the United States: Past and Present" by Kathleen M. Sullivan
Tuesday, May 2	Session One  Panel A: "Free Speech on Campus: Academic Freedom and the Corporations"
Tuesday, May 2	Panel B: "The Sorrow and the Pity: Kent State, Political Dissent and the Misguided Worship of the First Amendment"  Panel C: "Violent Expressions of Freedom: Negotiating Narratives of Social Order and Disorder in Contemporary U.S. Media"

Tuesday, May 2	<p>Session Two</p> <p>Panel A: "Deliberation Down and Dirty: Must Political Expression Be Civil?"</p>
Tuesday, May 2	<p>Session Two</p> <p>Panel B: "Challenging Boundaries for a Boundless Medium: Information Access, Libraries and Freedom of Expression in a Democratic Society"</p> <p>Panel C: "Academic Freedom for University Students: An Oxymoron?"</p>
Tuesday, May 2	Luncheon Featuring Anthony Lewis
Tuesday, May 2	<p>Session Three</p> <p>Panel A: "A Right to Kill Bears or a Right to Bear Quills?: A Critical Commentary on the Linkage of the First and Second Amendments in Recent Constitutional Theory"</p> <p>Panel B: "Unspoken Dangers: The Curtailment of Free Expression and the Endangerment of Youth"</p> <p>Panel C: "Hate Speech, Viewpoint Neutrality and the American Concept of Democracy"</p>
Tuesday, May 2	Closing Keynote address, "Freedom of Expression in the United States: The Future" by Cass Sunstein
Tuesday, May 2	Panel Discussion, "Other Victims, Other Voices"

Tuesday, May 2	Lecture, "The Holocaust and May 4," by Susannah Heschel
Wednesday, May 3	"Finishing the Spring 1970 Quarter: A Tribute to Kent State Faculty"
Wednesday, May 3	Film, "The Story of the Kent State Shootings"
Wednesday, May 3	"Interpretations and Expressions"
Wednesday, May 3 Thursday, May 4	May 4 Oral History Project
Wednesday, May 3	Panel, "Media and Democracy"
Wednesday, May 3	Lecture, "Lessons My Grandfather Taught Me" by Arun Gandhi
Wednesday, May 3	Dance Alloy/ May 4 Performance
Wednesday, May 3	May 4 Task Force Arts Tribute
Wednesday, May 3	30 <sup>th</sup> Annual Candlelight Walk
Wednesday, May 3	"Nonviolence or Nonexistence: Options for the New Millennium" by Arun Gandhi
Wednesday, May 3	"Reflecting in Faith"
Thursday, May 4	Annual Candlelight Vigil
Thursday, May 4	Kent State Alumni Reunion
Thursday, May 4	Workshop With Arun Gandhi
Thursday, May 4	Remembrance Day Observance
Thursday, May 4	Ringling of the Victory Bell
Thursday, May 4	May 4 Task Force 30 <sup>th</sup> Annual May 4 Commemoration, "Peace: Learn It, Live It, Teach It"

Thursday, May 4	Workshops
Thursday, May 4 Saturday, May 6 Sunday, May 7	Play, <i>East 79<sup>th</sup> Street</i>
Thursday, May 4	School of Music May 4 Concert
Thursday, May 4	Alpha Xi Delta Tribute to Sandra Scheuer
Friday, May 5 Saturday, May 6	Reunion of 1968-1969 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) Members
Friday, May 5	Panel Discussion, "Reflections on War Resistance"
Friday, May 5	Dialogue, "Student Unrest at Kent State, 1969-70, the Light and the Dark"
Friday, May 5	Journalism and Mass Communication Alumni Reunion Dinner
Friday, May 5	Commemorative Gospel Concert
Friday, May 5	Concert by Country Joe McDonald and Alice DiMichele
Saturday, July 1 Sunday, July 2	Cleveland Orchestra World Premiere of <i>Song in Sorrow</i>

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