

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
KENT STATE SHOOTINGS

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O.H. 1688

Chic Canfora
Interview
By
Mickey Huff
On
August 10, 1995

Chic Canfora

Roseanne "Chic" Canfora was born to Albert and Ann Canfora June 5, 1950, in Barberton, Ohio. Canfora grew up in a working class home. Her father was very active in the Democratic Party and was a city councilman. She attended Barberton High School and then went to Kent State University in 1968. She earned a B.S. in Education in 1976 and a Masters in Journalism in 1987 from Kent State, and a Ph. D in Education in 2001.

While at Kent State, she and her brother Alan Canfora were very active in politics and protested the war in Vietnam. On May 4, 1970, Canfora's brother was shot and wounded by the Ohio National Guard during the anti-war rally on campus grounds. From that time on, Chic Canfora has been an outspoken critic of that day's events. She and Alan protested the gym annex and fought hard to obtain a formal memorial to the slain and wounded students in the 1980's. While a memorial stands on the campus today, partially due to the Canfora's efforts, neither are pleased with the final scaled-down result. The Canfora's feel the university has been insensitive to the victims of the shootings and that the memorial is too little, too late.

Chic Canfora is a proud member of the Kent 25 (a group of students and faculty indicted after the shootings due to their alleged activities on campus May 4, 1970), and is president of the May Fourth Center. She resides in Aurora, Ohio, and has three young children. She is a teacher of Speech Communications and Broadcast Journalism at Hudson High School. Also, Canfora is a professional harpist.

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MH: This is an interview with Chic Canfora for the Youngstown State University, Kent State Project, by Mickey Huff, in the Student Center on Kent Campus, August 10, 1995 around 2:45 in the afternoon. Just to start the interview out, if you could give us some information about your background; where you grew up, what your parents did...

CC: I grew up in Barberton, Ohio, which is a working class city south of Kent, I was a very active typical student in American schools at the time. I grew up in the tumultuous period of the sixties, but also was a product of the fifties, and all that came along with that: growing up in fear of war, growing up revering God and country and loving America, and believing that we had rights and privileges that came along with that honor.

MH: You went to high school in the sixties. You began college when?

CC: I started college in September of 1968.

MH: Here at Kent?

CC: Here at Kent State.

MH: Just for the record what did your parents do?

CC: My father was a laborer at Good Year Aerospace, my mother was a housewife. They are both still living. My father was also city councilman for many years, involved in politics. Democratic Party.

MH: So you grew up in a politically active...

CC: Very, well politically active in that you know my father was a labor leader, and he

was always very active with the Democratic Party, and actively campaigned for Democratic candidates.

MH: A family of Democrats?

CC: Absolutely

MH: Do you remember that growing up?

CC: I remember, well Alan might have told you, that he remembered being something like seven years old, and praying in his bedside for Adlai Stevenson to win the election. I can remember him being a little boy and crying, because he lost. That's pretty young to be that politically conscious, that you really care who wins. (inaudible). I mean this kid is clueless.

MH: So you were at Kent then in '68, what do you remember, what were your initial, let's put it this way...when do you first remember being ware of what was going on in Vietnam?

CC: Well I was aware of what was going on in Vietnam when I was fourteen, and President Johnson ordered the military raids on Vietnam. I didn't know where it was in the world, I knew it was across the world somewhere, and I remember looking at my mother's face to see if it registered worry. Whether or not I should be worry about this impacting my life. I was aware that it was a war that would take away my friends ultimately, if it didn't end, and it was a war, that by the time I was in high school was taking away my friends that were registering for the draft or getting their draft notices. Although it was touching me in that way it was still distant enough from my personal life that I stayed largely unconcerned about the war.

MH: How about your father?

CC: Well my father and mother are both World War II veterans. So they were, as one would expect, very patriotic and you didn't question the war. Like millions of other college age students, after I finally came to college, it was my first opportunity to hear divergent opinions about America's involvement and American's not just in the war, but American Foreign Policy in general. I had been your typical cheerleader, you know worried about whom I was going to go to the party with on Saturday in high school, I really didn't care about politics and current events. When I came to the campus, I remember throwing the leaflets away, the anti-war leaflets away, I didn't really care about the war. It wasn't until the draft, when they had the draft lottery, they had the fishbowl on TV, and they were reaching in and pulling out numbers, and I realized that my brothers would be put in a kill or be killed situation, that it finally touched me personally. That also came at the same time that I began to hear of people closer to me, a good friend of mine, had lost her sister's fiancée' there. I remember going to that funeral, and seeing the grief of

these people. That was the first time somebody I knew was experiencing the grief that was brought on by war and the loss of a child. When the draft lottery happened, soon after that, I started to read the leaflets, suddenly I couldn't throw the anti-war leaflets away.

MH: This is '69?

CC: This is, well '69 yeah. The SDS had a very viable and strong presence on the campus. They were out there working all the time to educate people about the war. Fortunately, for me, they were that persistent, because when I was ready to hear they were still there. So I started to read everything I could get my hands on about the war. The more I learned about it, the more questions I had about why. And you can imagine what the dinner table was like in our household, when my brother Alan was questioning the war, I was questioning the war, and our parents had both served in World War II. And their attitude was "Yours was not to question why". You just go. My mother wasn't as much that way as my father, I remember, she was afraid, very much afraid of my brother's going off to fight in that war. But that's when I became most politically aware, after the draft lottery.

MH: How would you describe the Kent campus up until May of '70?

CC: How would I describe it? It was very politically active, there were some, I mean James Michener made it sound like it was in his book about Kent State.

MH: Well the President's Commission Report made it sound a little bit dull as well.

CC: It was anything but dull, I mean I remember, I couldn't go to the Student Center without seeing a large crowd of people sitting in the center of the Hub, we called it, talking openly and debating issues having to do with racism and war. You know just social issues. It was a, there is no question that Kent was alive with activity, I know that there were people, Bernardine Dohrn, had visited Kent at that time. There were a lot of National SDS people that came through here, and inspired the local SDS leaders and others to continue to make the campus more and more aware. There were marches frequently. I noticed between 1968 and 1969 how much those marches grew in numbers. I mean they were picking up numbers steadily in my first two years here. So to say that this was a dull place is as far from the truth as one can imagine. It was alive with political activity.

MH: The reaction to the Invasion of Cambodia or the announcement of the invasion, wasn't a surprising reaction?

CC: Oh the reaction at Kent? Well no, you might have read in some of the other accounts of activism at Kent State, when the Oakland Police came here to recruit members of the police department, how strong the Black United Students came out against that, and so did Kent SDS. It wasn't the first eruption and spontaneous reaction on the part of students to something that they were outraged

about, and because we had such frequent political activity here, and because of the momentum that was building, it wasn't surprising at all to see the students react very strongly to the invasion.

CC: Those two incidents, with SDS and BUS, those were the only two incidents that I remember reading about.

MH: Did you get involved?

CC: Oh no, when they held the expulsion of our SDS Leaders on campus, it brought a very violent reaction. That was my very first political action as a matter of fact. That was the one that made me get most involved. In fact I attended that action at my mother's request. She was, Alan was very politically involved at that point with SCS, he had left the Young Dem's and had become involved with SDS. My mother called me that day, because she heard there was going to be an action in response to the expulsion of the SDS Leaders, so she said keep an eye on Alan. So I did. I went over to the Administration Building where the expulsion hearing was to take place. When we got there, there were two, (we didn't know that at the time, we know it now), two agent provocateurs hired by the police were standing on the front steps. They tricked us; they moved the hearing to the Music and Speech building so we all ran over to the Music and Speech Building. We were met there by a bunch of fraternity guys who engaged in fist fights with the SDS followers, and ultimately someone said "there's a door open in the back" and we all went around back and went in the building. Within thirty seconds, "BOOM", the doors were closed behind us and chained, and we were locked in the building. So here I am my very first political action where I literally am a follower. I am just looking for Alan and seeing what's going on, and kind of just following the direction of, well it's been moved here, there's a door in the back, we can get in that way, we go in, now we're in the building, and we're trapped in there. It was my first experience with the media and the distortions that resulted. When they pulled out the television cameras, pardon me the televisions into the hallway, once we were trapped in the building. We were watching news reports of: "Three hundred students seize the building at Kent State"! I was like holy shit! I didn't seize anything, I'm trapped in here, I'd like to get out. We were up there for hours, and there was a couple thousand students below us on the grass. Sending food, and they raided the dormitory cafeterias and sent, I couldn't even tell you, milk and juice and bread up to us, on towing ropes. I was thinking, God we're going to be up here forever. Eventually a professor had an elevator key. The building was angled in such a way that the service elevator came into an area that couldn't be seen by either of the steps. So Dr. Carl Moore, took us down one load after another, and eventually someone told. I think there might have been sixty people left in the building that actually did suffer arrest. It was entrapment, and I think ultimately it was proven, much much later that is was in fact entrapment. But that was an eye opening experience for me. It was my first political action. I saw that the media doesn't always paint an accurate picture of activists. I saw how some of the dirty tricks that can be played when people are hell-bent on stifling

voices of protests. In particular these leaders were expelled, the university had succeeded in placing a major dent in the political movement, at least in the organized political movement on campus with the expulsion of those leaders.

MH: So what was going on with you in May of '70, the first few days?

CC: Well prior to May of '70, you know in April and that spring, we had been attending, pretty regularly, anti-war protests. If you look at any of us that were involved in the anti-war movement at the time, just take a look at our transcripts. Look at the spring of 1970. Look at our grades compared to those of another quarter. We just stopped going to classes, essentially, we were on the road all the time. We were going to Washington and Chicago or Cleveland wherever there was an action and participating. In fact when Nixon announced his invasion of Cambodia there wasn't an action scheduled at Kent until the Monday rally, but we knew there was an action at Ohio State, and a bunch of us from Kent drove to Ohio State to support that action.

MH: This was the first of May?

CC: It was on May 1. We knew there was an action at Ohio State, and there had been bird shot or rock salt fired on students there, and a lot of leaders there had been jailed too. So we wanted to show our support and try and make sure that that momentum continued there. So we drove to Ohio State participated with them in that action. In fact I remember Alan's roommate Jimmy, who was with me, got up and made a speech on the platform, and one of the Ohio States students got up and said word is out that Kent State students are here, they're going to be coming around looking at ID's and your going to be arrested for trespassing if you don't get out of here. Somebody from the audience yelled; you're giving this high-powered speech here about what we should do at Ohio State, you guys never do any of that at Kent State. I remember Jimmy saying "you watch and see what we do at Kent State". How prophetic. We laughed and by the time we got back to Kent and went downtown there was already...

MH: There was destruction?

CC: well no, there wasn't destruction yet.

MH: Friday evening?

CC: Friday evening. When we went down it was very, it was tense. The spray painting hadn't started yet, but students were chanting anti-war slogans. The streets were filling with people who were talking about the rally on Monday. Talking about their outrage at the Invasion of Cambodia. I mean there was focused discussion. It wasn't just; oh what are you doing this weekend or where you been, or welcome back. But what are we going to do about this? You know, where are we going from here? We can't sit on this, this is the biggest slap in the

face yet. When Nixon had promised to wind the war down, and then in fact it escalated into Cambodia people were as pissed off as they could be. The apolitical people were largely just in the bars, socializing. The political people might have gone in the bars to get a drink or something, but were on the streets and talking. Soon the spray painting started, basically, "one-two-three-four we don't want your fucking war" "US out of Cambodia now" that kind of stuff was being spray-painted on the walls. Again, I was still largely new to the political scene, and I remember, oh okay, I remember..was there another place? Can we go to that little listening area over there?

MH: Ok, sorry about that we had to move.

CC: I was talking about downtown Kent. I was talking about how even though I was just becoming more and more aware of the insanity of that war, it was the first time I actually looked to vandalism or destruction of property and in my own mind felt it was righteous anger. That it was justifiable. I realized that people were willing to go to jail for destruction of property if it would bring greater attention to the destruction of that land and those people across the world. It's funny now, I mean that's part of that political awareness, that metamorphosis of awareness. To be a law-abiding citizen, and suddenly see nothing wrong with spray painting buildings, and ultimately that night, of breaking windows. I mean I was thrilled to see that the anger had reached that pitch and wasn't waning. Students had really grown tired of marching and chanting and writing letters and petitioning. When Nixon slapped the movement in the face with that escalation of the war, Kent wasn't the only place that erupted with militant actions like that. I think it was necessary and right.

MH: What do you recall about the Monday of the shootings? Where were you? What were you doing?

CC: Well I had been involved over the weekend too. Saturday the ROTC building burned down, Sunday we had a peaceful sit-in on front campus, and were tricked into believing the president of the university was going to talk to us. So I came to the campus on Monday, and ultimately to the commons, with some degree of anger, that we had been deceived by our university administration. That we had been essentially abandoned by them. Our campus had literally been turned over to a militia. The view out my fourth floor dormitory window in Lake Hall, just over the hill, was like a scene from Nazi Germany. There were like over a hundred pup tents and jeeps, and these little tanks, and armed thugs at every door with bayonets. I mean it was very frightening to be nineteen years old, and have your college campus turned into a war zone. So I, like probably thousands of others, came to the commons that day wanting some answers. The rally was two-fold in that people wanted to express their outrage at the invasion of Cambodia. Some came there to do that, and to protest the invasion of our campus by the Ohio National Guard and the repressive tactics that they had used the night before. There were certainly some people there who were gone all weekend who just wanted to find out what the heck was going on, and what all the commotion was all about. So it was a mixed bag,

and I personally was there because of my outrage at the invasion of Cambodia and the invasion of our campus.

MH: What were you doing when the shooting occurred? Where were you?

CC: I was one of the vocal and active students in the parking lot that taunted the Guard and I was standing with my brother, oh you know I should brought the Peter Davies book. I had it sitting out to bring, so I could show you approximate distances and so forth. Long story short, I was near the Guard, very close to where my brother was at the time that they assembled in the practice football field, during that brief stone throwing incident, that has been blown out of proportion for the last twenty-five years in attempt to justify the shooting which happened much, much later when nothing was being thrown. As the Guardsmen were on that football field, I was in the parking lot, the Prentice Hall parking lot, and the as they made their ascent up the hill, when all of us thought they were leaving to go back to the commons area, I was in the parking lot and I was one of hundreds who were applauding their exit. I remember people yelling, "They're going they're leaving, we've won". And we really did, at that moment, feel very victorious that they had tear gassed us, and chased us, and denied our right to hold the rally, but we had stayed together as much as possible. Even though we were eventually dispersed, and they had accomplished that mission. We, thank you did you get me sugar? Thank you. When they started to leave, we did feel in fact that we had succeeded in proving they weren't going to stop us from meeting. That it was our constitutional right to assemble and to express our outrage at the invasion of Cambodia. And as they started to leave, and we started to applaud, you know history. They surprised us when they reached the pagoda at the top of the hill, which strategically would be the wisest place from which to shoot if you had planned to engage in a slaughter, which I believe they did. When they got to the top of the hill, they just turned and started firing for thirteen seconds. I was in the parking lot as I said before, and got behind a parked car, which saved my life.

MH: Did you see, did you have visual contact with your brother at that time?

CC: No, I didn't. I had lost contact with him. At the time when I saw them kneeling and aiming their weapons, at least three of them were aiming right at him. The last thing I said to Alan was, "what are you doing"? because he was way out and waving a black flag and taunting them. I said, "They are aiming right at you". I said, "This is shaky let's get out of here". Then they had started to make their ascent up the hill, and he said, "wait I want to see where they are going". I didn't, at that point I didn't care, I started to walk back toward the Prentice parking lot, and then I turned and saw them as they reached the crest of the hill, and then saw them turn as they started firing. Then I dove behind a car. But it was after the shooting stopped, and I came out from behind the car to find Bill Shroder, who was laying three feet behind me, already dead. Then I saw Sandy, I knew her, but I didn't recognize her, because she was so gray. She had been shot through the jugular vein, and lost a lot of blood very quickly, so she was just unrecognizable to me. I didn't know it was her until I saw

the name go up on the television screen that night. So I saw Bill three feet behind me, lying on his back, he was just staring at the sky, and he was really still, and there was blood all over his neck and his shoulders. And I knew he was dead.

MH: Immediately?

CC: I mean I just knew, he was so still, and that was when I noticed Sandy lying down. I had a wet rag in my hand, from the tear gas, and I didn't know what made me think I could help someone. I ran over to her, and then a crowd formed around her, and right when I saw Sandy, I remembered where I had last seen Alan, it would have put him directly in the line of fire. So I ran toward that area, and that's when I saw Jeff, which was an awful sight, he had been shot through the face and the bullet had blown through the back of his head. The blood was so thick and it was just streaming like...

MH: Everywhere?

CC: a little river down the asphalt. Right when I was looking at Jeff, my friend Eddie came up behind me and said Alan and Tom both got it. He meant my brother and his roommate. So the first three people I had seen were lying still were dead, and I just assumed Alan was dead and Tom too. I couldn't imagine anyone could survive military fire like that. Be hit and just wounded in close proximity. I know that I went into shock, because I knew that I got to the hospital, but I couldn't remember how. I was doing my student teaching six years later at Wadsworth High School, and some guy came up to me, he was a teacher there his name is Joe Gaines, he said I remember you, you came running in my classroom on May 4th screaming that your brother had just been killed by the National Guard, and asked how could we just sit there while they were slaughtering students. I just grabbed him, and said tell me where this happened and what I did. It was like this missing link. He told me what I wore, who I was with, and then I remembered who had taken me to the hospital. He was describing the guy saying; come on I will take you to the hospital. But six years later I found out what I did. But it was, nineteen years it's old pretty shocking. It's not surprising that after seeing Jeff and then hearing that Alan had been hit. Then once I got to the hospital, I knew that, Alan told me later he was essentially going through the same thing. He's talking to doctors asking, how many dead, and they said four- two girls, and Alan's pointing to his hospital bracelet saying, "see if one of them is named Canfora". He's wondering if I'm dead, and I'm trying to get into the hospital. The cop guarding the hospital was so just nasty. There was such anti-student sentiment in Kent and Ravenna at that time that he would not let me in. I was saying, "my brother has been shot, I'm the only one that can identify him", but he would not let me in the hospital. I had to climb through a window in the back of the hospital. Like a laundry room or something.

MH: What went on after the shootings with you?

CC: Immediately after?

MH: When did your activism begin after the shooting, when did you begin with the candlelight vigil and everything?

CC: For a lot of us that activism was somewhat stifled with the gag order. There was a gag order placed on all of us who were there, while the Grand Jury concluded their investigation. That's unfortunate, because the National Guard had already gone out and spread the rumors of sniper and self-defense theories, and rocks, bricks, and bottles thrown at them, and these poor victims who were taunted and chased and surrounded by this crazy mob. We had believed that ultimately the Grand Jury would see the evidence and that would all be disproved. How naive we were- too young and too naive at that time to realize that we should have been telling the story

MH: The gag order didn't apply to the Guard?

CC: Well the gag order was placed after their word was already out.

MH: After they were already talking.

CC: That afternoon the closest newspaper, the Kent Record Courier, said "Sniper Fires on Guard. Two guardsmen dead. Two students dead". That's the headline of the Record Courier right here in town. There are people, who still live in Kent, right now that still think guardsmen died. R.C. Dix, who was a publisher at the time, knew the headline was false. You can ask Terry Oblander, who works for the Plain Dealer right now, who worked for Dix at the time. I mean he was looking at the thing coming of the press going, "that's not true, there are no guardsmen dead". Dix didn't want to loose the money, and he ran it anyway, and he distributed it anyway. Which to me is criminal, I mean talk about violating history. That word was out, and that word made it out over the AP wire, and across the world. We've twenty-five years to defend it, the sniper theory, and the self-defense theory. One thing was a constant. The gag order. We waited patiently for our day in court...

MH: And it never really came.

CC: We really believed the evidence would endure. It never has, for twenty-five years, we have chipped away at those old myths. So my activism continued in a rather mediocre way in the year that followed. Basically I left for Boston, right after the shootings, wanted to get away from college. I went to Boston because it was so cultural. Music, art, anything but politics. I was working at Harvard, and attending classes in the evening in the summer. Then that fall the Grand Jury returned their indictments, and my mother called and told me twenty-four students and one faculty member were indicted. No guardsmen were indicted. They were placing all the blame on the students. And then I found my brother and I were two of the twenty-five. Twenty thousand students at Kent State, and my mother calls me up and says twenty-five indicted and two of them our hers. Her kids. So ultimately I came back from Boston to stand trial as one of the Kent 25 defendants. You can notice I put that down. I'm honored. To be honest with you, I'm honored to be

among the people that who were picked out as being some of the most active and vocal that weekend at Kent. I mean to me that is a honor to be singled out as someone who was out there doing the work. An important weekend like that. There were people like that across this country that share this honor. I believe it played a large part in bringing the war to its knees, there is no question about it. That it was the action of students that weekend at Kent and at other campuses that hastened the end of the war. Unfortunately here it also sparked a pretty violent reaction on the part of the National Guard and ultimately some lives were lost. I certainly don't blame student activists for that. I know that our actions were viewed, in some part, by the National Guard as something that someone should die for. Why? I still don't know. In Boston I gave one political speech, but because of the gag order, it was on the Boston Commons, and I forget who even invited me. I attended a couple fundraisers for the Kent 25 defense, and one that the Winter Soldiers Investigations threw together. Jane Fonda and people. Mark Lane was involved. And ultimately I just returned to participate in the trials. Because I was a defendant, and because I had short hand and typing skills, I was the assistant to David Scribner, who was lead counsel for the Kent 25.

MH: Now it wasn't he that did the book, it was Kelner?

CC: Oh Kelner did the civil trial. No, the criminal trial for the Kent 25.

MH: That's before...

CC: That was headed by Bill Kunstler, who initially formed the legal defense team for the Kent 25. David Scribner was one of the partners of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. He came in, and ultimately led the year-long battle to prove the innocence of the Kent 25. Ultimately those indictments were thrown out after we had gotten into the second or third trial. There were a couple convictions over the vandalism in the weekend before. By the time we were coming to May 4th, those of us who were indicted for the day of the shootings, before any guardsmen could make it to the stand, the judge threw out the indictments for lack of evidence. Which of course, we knew there was a lack of evidence, but we wanted to prove that on the stand. We wanted to get those triggermen up there to justify why, if we did nothing wrong, they shot at us.

MH: Well obviously someone else...

CC: Even as much as my political activism in that year was just preparing for trial, and supporting the other defendants and so forth, and educating people about the truth of May 4th. We felt real victorious when those indictments were thrown out, and only David Scribner, who was pacing in the back of the courtroom, got the point. I remember looking back and he looked so depressed. When it was over, it was like of course, we just lost our chance to tell the world what happened. That's what they took from us today. They made us shut up about it for a whole year while the groundwork was laid, while the myths were out there. Then they took away our

only opportunity to have our say. Then the twenty-four years that followed, that's why the commemorations have been so crucial. Because that is our opportunity to pull people together from around the world and say let's set the record straight. We do so much in that week, and especially on that day, to educate people about the truth. Where better for that to happen than here on the campus of Kent State?

MH: What do you remember happening, or what was your involvement in the gym annex controversy in '76 and '77?

CC: Well I was already teaching in Connecticut at the time. It was my first teaching job, I had finished my degree here, and...

MH: B.S. in Ed, was it English?

CC: English and Speech. I taught Theatre Arts, Oral Communications, and American Lit. I had come, I had been invited to come back and speak at the 1977 commemoration. So I came back as a guest speaker, and it was at the same time, Dean Kahler was also a speaker and so was Ron Kovic, who had just published his book and had made the best seller list, *Born on the Fourth of July*. So we all spoke, but it was also at that commemoration we learned about the university's intention to build the gym on the May 4th site. So that became a focus of many of our speeches. We had a huge march after the rally and went over to the administration building and took it over. It was the first action, the real political action, on this campus since 1970. Where there was a building takeover, (talk about old times), and we had a sit in there, and the police came out. It was nonviolent. We stayed, it was probably after midnight when we finally left. During that time we made statements to the press about our outrage that they were about to destroy the May 4th site. We also came up with a list of demands, that the university stop being insensitive to the May 4th commemorations. After five years of commemorations the university announced that they thought five years was long enough to remember May 4th. So the May 4th Task Force was formed to keep those commemorations alive. So we came up with a list of demands, which included naming four buildings after the dead students ect., you probably know all the demands. We also launched the May 4th Coalition. Which sustained the efforts to save the site. So even though after the building takeover, and after that weekend, I went back to Connecticut. I also went to, (I play the harp) and I was at a seminar at Sarah Lawrence College for the summer for music. I got another call in June from Alan telling me, (and Ron Kovic and I had become very close that spring). Ron Kovic was living at my place in Connecticut. So Alan called and said we need you and Covak here now. In other words, the momentum was building to destroy the site, and we needed to organize to bring people out to oppose that. So I left my dormitory room, at Sarah Lawrence, I left all my stuff in my dormitory room, never got any of it back, jumped in my Pinto, loaded my harp in the back, drove to Long Island to pick up Ron Kovic, threw his wheelchair in the back, and drove to K-Mart got a tent, then came out here and lived on the hill. We just moved onto the hill that day, and stayed there. We endured like three tornadoes on that hill, and it was by far the

most extraordinary political experience of my life. To see that kind of determination on the part of such a diverse group of people. From so many different places. And I don't just mean geographic locations, but just so many political places in their consciousness and in their political development. Ultra left and ultra right, and conservative too. Yippies who had this huge parachute in the middle of tent city that was their huge tepee. But it was also very organized and it was very impressive. There were laws in tent city. No weapons, no drugs, no alcohol. We had nightly meetings. We had kitchen detail, you know we had a kitchen tent, and we all took turns cooking. We all took care of people, and took people on daily tours of the site, and did a lot to educate people. For a very sustained period of time, we probably did more that year to educate people about the importance of that site, and the importance of the May 4th, and the broad scope of things in our history. You might want to see, Bill Kunstle's book he talks about one of the exciting moments, when we at least stopped the bulldozers. We protected the site with our bodies. They would come there with their bullhorns at five in the morning, and we would all be in our tents. Everybody would walk out in their pajamas, and they would be announcing on the bullhorn; "you have to leave, you are in violation of the law". We would just yawn and go start breakfast. (laughing) We would never leave. We made efforts not just to protect the site with our bodies, but also to go through the courts, and the system to save the site.

MH: Which was pretty drawn out.

CC: It was drawn out. Midge Castanza, who was one of Jimmy Carter's aides, called my parent's house and invited us to the White House and to the Capitol to meet with members of the Department of Justice and Department of the Interior, to try to compromise with the Board of Trustees on moving the site. It was just an appeasement, they were worried there was going to be another Kent State. There was going to be another tragedy here, because it was getting more volatile. I mean they would put up a fence, we would take it down. They would put up a bigger fence we would take it down. They would put up barbed wire fence, we would cut it down and take it down. Nothing kept us off that hill. It was getting pretty tense. It was the first time that tear gas had been fired. 1977 was the first time there was tear gas since 1970. So it wasn't surprising Washington was freaking out a little bit.

MH: Yeah.

CC: And wanted to get us down there to try and compromise. We had efforts to compromise taking place across the table in the federal court too. The bulldozers actually physically came on campus. I mean we were all crying, what do we do now? We were calling the media, and nobody can help us. I ran down, well right here to the Student Center, and called Kunstler, and he is never there, but he was there that day and I said, "Help us". He, just off the top is his head, dictated a brief. And because I had worked as a legal secretary, I ran downtown to Allison & Miller Law Offices, moved the secretary off her typewriter, took out legal paper, typed it

up. While we were calling Tony Walsh from Cleveland, one of our coalition lawyers, he met us in Judge Lambros's court like five minutes before the court closed with this brief that Kunlster dictated and he stopped the bulldozers. I mean it was wild here. The Student Government Chamber was just filled with coalition members and supporters from all over the country. When they got word that the bulldozers had to halt, it was a major victory. We ultimately lost, but it really provided momentum for the protest, and people came in from all over the country after that. There was national news, we stopped the bulldozers in their tracks. That's an example of the university's insensitivity commemorating the event, to recognizing the significance of May 4th here, because they knew it was going to be met with opposition, and yet they proceeded with it anyway.

MH: Some say that they just didn't even think about it? There were busy...

CC: Bullshit!

MH: They were so busy just going on with day-to-day affairs that they just didn't think...

CC: They were seven original sites for that gym annex. Not one of them was the May 4th site. They deliberately changed their minds to put it there.

MH: Is that recorded anywhere?

CC: Let me tell you, oh yeah, absolutely. We took all that to Washington with us. Absolutely. Seven original sites.

MH: I know they were planning they annex since the sixties.

CC: Yeah, it was never planned to be placed there.

MH: It wasn't an overnight thing.

CC: No, look at it. I mean look take a look at it, and tell me that would ever have made sense to someone to stick that thing in the side of Blanket Hill. Blanket Hill was a very...

MH: Well I talked to some people...

CC: very popular spot.

MH: I didn't get to talk to anybody on the committee. I talked to a professor who was friends with people who were in charge of making that decision, and through that source the person said that it was just a huge gaff, it was a blunder. Then by the time they realized it was a mistake it was too late to pull out because of construction contracts.

CC: It was a blunder that they chose that site?

MH: Yes.

CC: It was like a mistake?

MH: Yes.

CC: Not deliberate? Well talk to George Janik who was President of the Board of Trustees. My adversary in 1977, and a friend now, who admits it. It was a deliberate attempt to alter that site. Deliberate.

MH: Well that's what it appears to be.

CC: Oh it is. Ask George Janik. You know he's probably a good person for you to interview. He was our enemy in 1977, he was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. We went down to IBM, where he works, and disrupted his offices. They had no choice but to think about that gym on a daily basis. We went to where they worked and harassed them.

MH: It seems as though, I don't see how they could possibly accidentally put it there.

CC: No, look at it.

MH: Yeah I know.

CC: It doesn't even make sense.

MH: Well that's like the focus of the one chapter in my thesis is the fact that it creates the historical illusion that the guard was surrounded and it changes future interpretations of the site.

CC: And it covers the spot where Jim Russell was shot. It alters the terrain. It obstructs the actual accent of the guard. When we used to take people on tours, prior to 1977,

MH: Well you run into the gym.

CC: We would walk them through the guard's movement.

MH: And now you can't do that.

CC: And you can't do that anymore.

MH: That's what I argued in my thesis.

CC: It destroyed our tour. It destroyed our chance to actually show people...

MH: You are aware that some disagree? I mean you're painfully aware that there are people that argue the other side, and say...

CC: I know, and they are lying.

MH: Perhaps.

CC: They're lying.

MH: Or they're telling it the way they see it.

CC: Or else they don't know the truth.

MH: I think that more...

CC: They don't know what they are defending.

MH: I think that's more the case.

CC: If they know...

MH: Now obviously the gym is there, but I mean ironically it's kind of paved the way for increased sensitivity towards the...

CC: For increased sensitivity or insensitivity?

MH: No, the very act insensitive act of putting the gym there, ironically kind if made people think about the issues a bit more than before.

CC: Oh yeah, I think there is no question about it that it backfired in the university's face.

MH: Yes, then in the subsequent year you have the Segal debacle, which sort of compounds everything.

CC: I think an interesting thesis for someone would be just the public relations blunders of this university from the time that they didn't even send letters of regret to the parent's instead sent tuition refunds. Did you know that? They sent tuition refunds in the names of the kids.

MH: Oh my.

CC: In the names of the dead students. From day one they have shown such insensitivity to the victims, and to the event itself. That you would think that, the one place that would recognize the importance of it, the one place that would see that as a sacred thing, as a very important historical thing, and support those

efforts of ours to bring out the truth. We've never wanted anything else. We're beyond the bitterness, at least those of us who have been with this for twenty-five years. There were many angry years. We came here, and we talked about vengeance, and we talked about justice. We don't talk about that as much anymore. We talk about truth. We talk about the fact that we are oral historians, we come back and tell what we know, but we're not going to be here forever telling that. We want to know that I'm not going to look, (like I did this year), in my son's seventh grade history book and want to cry because of how distorted it is. The little paragraph about Kent State. They had a picture of the National Guard advancing on students at Kent State, and it said something about; during the 1960's the Vietnam War, brought protest by students across the country. And it said "here at Kent State the protest got out of hand, students threw rocks at the National Guard. The National Guard fearing for their lives fired into the crowd".

MH: I speak with people, even, usually elderly people, not even old people, but people that are older. One gentlemen was trying to say that the guard had to keep those people in line. I mean I have heard the stereotypically comments about there are people. I mean, not that I believed it, but I have actually encountered people who said more people should have been shot.

CC: That's frightening to me. But see, you know what? That's because of what they have heard. They have heard we threw rocks, bricks, and bottles, and by the time.

MH: That's routine misinformation. Like the people who usually say that try to defend the notion that more people should have been shot, and then they fall with a barrage of nonfactual information.

CC: Well it's things that even the guardsmen admitted that they fabricated or that were not true. That's when people talk about the stone throwing incident, I don't deny that there was one stone throwing incident, but I say, why didn't they shoot then? There was one little stone throwing incident, where the stones fell short, didn't even hit the guard, but why, if they were going to respond to stones with gunfire, didn't they shoot then? Why did they wait fifteen minutes later when nothing was being thrown? It just angers me.

MH: What was your involvement in the memorial design competition?

CC: My involvement was minimal in that. I was involved only to the extent that I included mention of it, and have in any letters and speeches and so forth, on the campus here. But I was very supportive, personally, with my presence here of the Ian Tabner design. That was beautiful.

MH: You liked that better than the chosen memorial?

CC: I loved it. There is no question in my mind, that they disqualified him...

MH: because of his interpretation?

CC: Not just his interpretation, but he was pretty adamant that there should be a sort of statement on there about what happened. Not this little piece of paper brochure that can be distorted on a whim after we are all long gone to set the record straight, but some kind of permanent marker saying here's what happened; on such and such a date this happened. He thought the names of the students, the victims, should be on there too. The university administration wanted to put the names of financial donors on the memorial, not the names of the victims. Even now the names of the victims do not appear. They have three words: inquire, learn, reflect, which says nothing. A hundred years from now people will go something important happened here but what the heck was it. If you look at the little brochure, which I have a lot of problems with, it already, it mentions the word violence so much that it does seem like the National Guard responded to violence. Yet every investigation, including the President's investigation, The FBI, Scranton, they all say...

MH: They all condemn the guards.

CC: say it was a very peaceful rally. You know what, I will be honest with you, it was one of the most peaceful demonstrations I had been to all spring. I object to the university's mention of violence, and it's like they are echoing Nixon's summation of May 4th, when he said dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy. In other words this tragedy only happened because things got out of hand, which is what my son's history book says now. This protest got out of hand. Bullshit! It never got out of hand. There is no question about it, the construction of the gym on the May 4th site was the biggest slap in the face of all, and brought the strongest protest. After that, even though they knew, that we were going to continue to be out there and forcing the issue of commemorations and putting May 4th in it's proper significance place here, they still continued to insult May 4th activists and the families, and the victims, with such slaps in the face, such as the rejection of the Segal sculpture. The sculpture was beautiful, they said it was too violent. But it wasn't too violent for Princeton University who accepted it. I think that's an embarrassment to this university and a testament to their insensitivity. The fact that in 1990, when we planned the 20th commemoration, all of the sudden they launch this memorial idea. Now some are going to disagree with me, but there is no question in my mind, that that abortion of that effort and their deliberate failed attempt to raise the money for that memorial, without hiring a professional fundraiser, without doing a national fundraising campaign, and all the things that are necessary to raise the kind of money you need to finish that, that deliberate attempt to fail, or lack on an attempt, intentionally, shows their insensitivity. I think they bended to pressure from the right, in particular from the American Legion, who said this was going to be a "memorial to terrorists". I think the university bended to that pressure, and I think they wanted to send a message that nobody cares about May 4th. The other thing they did in the 1990 commemoration, which I wish I had known better, was they planned the dedication of the memorial. There is no question in my mind, they did that because they knew it was going to be a large media event. The 20th anniversary

was going to draw more media and more people than any other commemoration. So they very carefully planned that dedication just before our noon rally and when they had Governor Celest there and George McGovern they make their little schpeel and they have Mrs. Schroder there and Dean Kahler and then they go thank you for coming in the rain. The media leaves before the noon rally where we always educate people about the facts and always make the political connection. The university wants May 4th to be apolitical. The university didn't care about the 21st anniversary, the 22nd, the 23rd, the 17th anniversary. We were out there in the rain when there were fifty people out there. The university doesn't care about commemorations, but they cared this year for the 25th. They knew we were going to have national media attention again, because the 25th was going to be a very big deal. So what did they do? They launched their own committee this year. I wrote a letter to the Daily Kent Stater the day I heard that Carol Cartwright had formed a committee. Well what the hell is the May 4th Task Force? The committee had been planning the commemorations for the last seventeen years. What was wrong with that committee? Suddenly the university had their own separate committee this year. That was to draw attention away. And what did they plan? All kind, it was like a circus there. I mean the only thing they didn't have was the jugglers and the belly dancers. It was watered down, it had all kinds of arts and even though it was kind of a celebration of life and whatever, they want to make it artsy. They want to make it more commercial. They want to take the politics out of it. They want us not to talk about the harsh realities. That is there is some unexplained things here. That's what the commemoration is about. It's not just about remembering our friends who died here. It's about memorializing all of those things for which they died. That includes the voices of righteous protest, which brought that war to an end. The power of student movement in this country that had grown so strong, that murder was committed to silence us. Those are the things we talk about that make the university real uncomfortable every year, and why they would like to take attention away from us, and why they don't want a lot of media attention here unless it's just about healing. They want to throw out these buzzwords every year. We're talking about healing. Look at their brochures. Kent State the safest campus. They worry people are going to go, oh no you're going to get shot when you go there. The best thing they can do, as a university, is to tell people this is a good place is to acknowledge the historical significance and the political significance of that event here, and to say we will make sure that there is open dialogue here. That, that kind of thing will never happen again, instead of still branding us like we're crazies who were violent then, and prone to violence now. So those of us who have been here for twenty-five years see that as a continued slap in the face. We'll keep coming back and keep educating people about those issues, even though they try to subvert us at every turn. This year was no different.

MH: Do you have anything to add in closing?

CC: No, I'm really happy to see your doing a thesis on this. I mean any contribution to the efforts to let people know what has happened here, I think is vital. I personally, as an eyewitness and victim and family member of someone who was shot, am

really grateful to people like you, who take the time to learn about it, and to tell others about it.

MH: Well thanks for your time. I appreciate it.