

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
KENT STATE SHOOTINGS PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: Henry L. Halem

INTERVIEWER: Mickey S. Huff

SUBJECT: Kent State Shootings

DATE: April 10, 1995

Hu: This is an interview with Henry Halem for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project on the Kent State shootings and the aftermath by Mickey Huff at Henry's house in Kent on April 10, 1995 at 10:30 am. Henry just to start things out can you tell us a little bit about your background, where you grew up and what it was like to be a kid then.

Ha: You don't have enough tape for all of that stuff I was born in New York City, raised in the Bronx. I was a typical kid. It was a great neighborhood back in the Bronx. I lived there for eighteen years. I graduated high school and then, unlike most all of my other friends, went to art school. I went to the Rhode Island School of Design. My parents were typical hard working parents. My dad toiled six days a week working in his office. He had his own little business. I became a potter and went into the National Guard. I lived a year in New London, Connecticut then went into the National Guard for six

months to avoid being drafted for two years. I lived in New York for a while. I tried to be a musician and I managed bookstores. I got my first job as an artist in Richmond, Virginia as the first Resident Craftsman in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. I traveled around making pottery and giving lectures about the joys of being an artist and living in Virginia. From there I went back to Graduate School and got a Masters Degree from George Washington University in DC. Then I did post-graduate work at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1968. I studied glass there under Harvey Littleton. I got hired from there at Kent State teaching ceramics and glass in 1969. In May of 1970 a day before my birthday four students were murdered on the campus at Kent State University.

Hu: You mentioned your dad was a businessman?

Ha: Sort of yeah

Hu: Your mother?

Ha: My mother started life as a housewife and went back to school and got a degree. I believe when I was graduating junior high school. She got a degree in Social Work in New York from Adelphi and then went back later and got a masters in Social Work. When I started college my parents separated. Then she went back and finished her Masters degree and became a Social Worker. All on her own and she made her own living.

Hu: Your mother had more liberal politics?

Ha: No I think both of my parents were very liberal, although I recall having discussions with my father about social issues when I was young. They were life long democrats. Those were my formative years, which I think really created the kind of intellectual curiosity politically and so on that I have today. Today now that I 'm getting closer to sixty I think I'm probably more liberal than most of the young people that I run into at the university.

Hu: You mentioned in 1970 that you were on the faculty at Kent. What do you remember about that day, May 4th.

Ha: I think one remembers the preliminary times leading up to that day. I had just come from the University of Wisconsin the year before and had participated in the demonstrations there, there were a lot of racial issues involved with the war issues at that time in 68', 69'. I left there with the National Guard in the street and came here not expecting in anyway shape or form that those kind of demonstrations would be here in Ohio as well. I guess I was to some degree a little bit innocent of the depth and breadth of the demonstrations, as they existed all across the United States. When the National Guard was called out here I was a rather shocked but I recall very clearly the atmosphere on the campus was at least in my perception not a very serious problem as it existed in relationship between the student population and the National Guard that was here. I

didn't even consider the burning of the ROTC building that serious. I guess it was serious because it represented an escalation of what had been going on on the campus. It was the burning of a building. The incident that had happened a few nights before at the bar's downtown was blown way out of proportion by the media and the townspeople, at least that was my perception. So when the shooting eventually happened I was actually shocked and flabbergasted that there was such a gulf in reality between what was going on and how the leaders of the National Guard and the governor and other people within the state viewed what was happening on the campus. Also, I didn't understand why the university had not been closed in relationship to the turmoil that was going on on the campus.

Hu: Since you were in the National Guard previously did you have different take on anything?

Ha: Yes. When I was in the National Guard it was a way to get out of serving two years if you were drafted. Six months active duty then 7 years of meetings at an Armory or something like that. There was never any thought of being called out for any reason nonetheless giving a bunch of jokers like us bullets. I just thought it was ludicrous that these guys had bullets.

Hu: And the fact that they were just called from teamsters strike in Akron

Ha: Yeah I mean if anything was going to happen it would have been with teamsters. Then again I was also fairly innocent in relationship to the depth and breadth of what SDS Weatherman and so on represented in relationship to the demonstrations in the country and how their movement was perceived by the establishment.

Hu: What did you find yourself doing after the shootings? In relation to the shootings were you at all involved in any of the activities?

Ha: Yeah. As a matter of fact that's where I got to know Prof. Jerry Lewis. He served on a small little group that tried to bridge the gap between what we called the town and gown. We served on committees and groups that sat together and tried to help the town understand what it was like working as a teacher with young people and to bridge the tremendous gulf that existed. To be honest with you I still think there is a serious gulf between the University and the town of Kent. I think more or less it represents the gulf between working class people and young people today. There is a lack of communication between what universities are, what being young within a university is about and understanding what young people do and how they act. I think there is still a lack of compassion and understanding for the type of person a student is and how they are trying out all kinds of ideas and acting out different modes of behavior.

Hu: Was this immediately after the shootings that you did this in 1970?

Ha: Yes. It was immediately after the shootings that we got together.

Hu: How about in the subsequent few years did you remember doing anything?

Ha: Yes. I participated in candle light vigils. I was very emotionally involved in it in my own way and produced a large body of artwork that came from it. I was very emotionally caught up in the shooting of the students. I couldn't believe it. To me it represented civil war. I never expected to see young people shooting young people. I have my own personal feelings about responsibility and guilt. The more I look back on it the more I feel that what I believe is true. It shaped a lot of my feelings about being a teacher. My ideas about what it is to be young and to be part of a solution for them and not part of a problem.

Hu: In the mid-seventies there were talks of the gymnasium annex service. It was found out in '76 that they were going to put the gym right next to the area where the shootings were. What were your impressions of what went on? Specifically the foundation of the May 4th coalition and the tent city that happened there in the summer of '77. What were you doing at that time?

Ha: I was a faculty here. I was deep within the throws of teaching and so on and there was a distance between my involvement and the actual event. I thought the gym annex problem was blown way out of proportion by the coalition.

Hu: Anyone in particular.

Ha: No. I'm fairly clouded as to what the names were I didn't get deeply involved in that because I thought it was a spurious issue picked up by the May 4th group. I think they were looking for something to have for their own and that was an issue they could identify with. They for whatever reason saw a conspiracy from the administration trying to cover over what they perceived as the quote "hallowed ground" and I didn't see that at all. At least in that area of the campus.

Hu: You didn't see any need for the space to be preserved?

Ha: No not in that particular area. The university does things that I question in a lot of areas and for some reason in this area I didn't feel there was a conspiracy in relationship to May 4th. I think they've done a lot of other things historically about May 4th that are very questionable.

Hu: Can I ask you to be more specific in that capacity?

Ha: Well I think the whole issue with the memorial is a very interesting issue. I think the view of administrations within the university, probably within the state is that if you neglect something long enough it will go away. I always felt in a halfhearted way they would like to see the Constitutional amendment to amend the calendar to go from May 3rd to May 5th. I think that this president that we have now, Cartwright is the first president that we've had that isn't afraid of May 4th. She has faced it and has gone right

into it without any feelings of guilt or baggage from past presidencies and I support her in direct relation to what she's trying to do and what's she's done. I think from the student body she's taken a very bad rap.

Hu: You do think then that the administration has done or has made poor decisions in terms of how it has handled May 4th?

Ha: Absolutely.

Hu: But you don't think the gymnasium was one of them?

Ha: Not at all.

Hu: Are you familiar with the notion that the gym annex created a historical illusion that the guard was hemmed in and had to shoot for subsequent generations of people that visit the site?

Ha: That's a problem for historians not me. If they had attempted to build something that was skewed in such a way to really go over the ground that was covered by the guard and the student bodies then I think that would have been questionable, but in this case I don't think it is. In relationship to the question you're asking that's a historical perspective that people, apologists and revisionists might pick up and use for whatever reason they care to but I certainly don't see it.

Hu: Ok. After the gymnasium controversies the university was willing to receive a Camarean Sculpture as a gift. Was it from the Puttman Foundation?

Ha: I think it was from the Gund Foundation. You'd have to check that historically.

Hu: Ok. There was another firm in Cleveland. Was it the Mildred-Andrews?

Ha: I think the Gund is out of Cleveland.

Hu: Ok. For some reason someone wanted to give them this Camarean Sculpture and they choose Segal.

Ha: No they didn't.

Hu: Who was chosen?

Ha: Segal was chosen but that's not the events, as I understand. The events as I recall and my recollection was that there were three names submitted as possible artists to make a memorial for Kent State. I remember two of the three names. One was Leonard Baskin, one was George Segal and there was a third name that I don't remember. I was called into the office and asked to meet with the Director of the School of Art at that time who's name was Stewart Schar. Stewart was the Director. He's now at the University

of Hartford or Hartford University something like that. He's either the president or the dean of the school. He told me the three names that were submitted and asked that I give him advice on one of the three names and he or whoever would make a final choice. I said there was no question in my mind that George Segal was the superior sculptor of the three. I had at that time and still do have great respect for George Segal as an artist. I wasn't really thinking in terms of May 4th memorial or what was fitting or not fitting I just gave my opinion of him as an artist. His name was submitted and subsequently he was chosen.

Hu: Ok. That's the process.

Ha: That was the process and then the administration made the final choice. I assume based upon the recommendation from the School of Art.

Hu: From what I gather from the research he was given pretty wide latitude on what he did. The university gave him the freedom to interpret the events and do his work as he wanted and he was to submit either plans or photographs or something along the way just to show them what was going on.

Ha: That's essentially correct. As I understood it there was a contract that he was to submit drawings of the sculpture or memorial and the second part of the contract was that those drawings would have been approved. Then, I think he was to submit a scale model

or something of that effect for another approval and after that the final approval would be given and the memorial would be created and installed on our campus.

Hu: Ok. Get into where this controversy began.

Ha: The university and the power structure that existed in the university at that time had absolutely no idea of what George Segal's work looked like previous to this. I don't even think they did any research. They never asked us to do any research for them. In no way shape or form did they have any idea in my mind of what George Segal did. George Segall did a sculpture, which at that time I believe was sort of out of style in some way with things that he's created previously to that. He was supposed to submit after the drawings a scale model. Apparently somewhere along the lines the administration said he didn't submit the scale models of what he was going to do. Then the university used this excuse to cancel the contract. To null and void the contract and refuse the sculpture that existed in full size plaster form. There was a joke circulating at the time that the reason George Segall didn't submit the scale model that he would have had to cast midgets. In any event it's my feeling that that was a spurious issue that the university created in order to cancel the sculpture. Because once they got a vision of what his work looked liked and what it was about they in no way were going to have this sculpture, which showed in very direct terms the alienation of father from son.

Hu: So you do think the administration cancelled it because they disagreed with Segall's interpretation of the events.

Ha: Yes. I think they saw it as an expression that in no way represented what they envisioned a memorial to be. I'm using that loosely. There were a lot of people, to be honest with you myself included, that didn't see it as a fitting memorial. That doesn't mean I didn't see it as an honest excellent piece of sculpture. That's a different issue. The quality of it as a sculpture is one issue, the idea of it as a memorial is another issue. Those issues need to be separated from each other. I agreed with the administration but for totally different reasons. I think they were involved in it for political issues in many ways. I saw the memorial as something that would heal our wounds over the years.

Hu: From what I read, the university was afraid to accept the sculpture. The catch twenty-two was they were afraid to accept it and afraid to reject it because either way it was going to create problems. Is it McCoy? He stated several times that maybe after twenty years, after things calmed down a bit, that they could accept some kind of commemorative sculpture and subsequently they did.

Ha: What they accepted wasn't a commemorative sculpture what they accepted was a quote "memorial."

Hu: Well we're going to get into that in a little bit. I did a telephone interview with George Segal a while ago and he seemed to think the reasons he chose the subject matter for the sculpture was that when he was in Kent, the May 4th issues were pretty much still alive and everything was fairly well dichotomized. He noticed there were a lot of people

that still had bitter feelings toward students and thought more students should have been shot even.

Ha: That's accurate. On the other hand he professed sympathy's for the students and as I recall Jerry Lewis asked him to talk to one of his classes and he tacitly refused.

Hu: There's one matter about the sculpture that was interesting in regard to the administration and how they were corresponding with Segal. There's this talk about a thirteen-page letter written by McCoy explaining to Segal why they didn't want the sculpture.

Ha: I'm sure there was a thirteen-page letter he was a very verbose person and probably what could have been written in one paragraph took thirteen pages.

Hu: There is something though that I have seen in print that McCoy was instructed by someone higher than himself or did it himself, put it in the letter that the administration was looking for something like having a National Guardsman with a rifle and a semi-nude female putting a flower in the barrel of the gun. Have you heard anything like that?

Ha: Say that again?

Hu: Ok. Let me try and be more accurate. This is what I've seen. What the proposed sculpture was by the administration what they were saying to Segall. Why not have a

semi-nude woman putting flowers in the rifle barrel of the guardsman. Make a sculpture of this sort. Now Segall I believe contends that that was in the letter.

Ha: Does he have the letter to show you?

Hu: I do not know that.

Ha: I find that as insensitive as administrations can be. I would find that very difficult to believe I would have to see that in print. *(Note: There is in fact a letter in the Special Collections that does indeed show that McCoy did make that request of Segal. Addendum by Henry Halem 3/13/01).*

Hu: Is McCoy around? Is he still alive?

Ha: Sure he's still alive. He wasn't that old when he left here.

Hu: Ok. He's in San Diego. I need to talk to him. Professor Lewis told me that McCoy flatly denies that and that he never wrote any such thing in the letter.

Ha: I would believe McCoy if he said that. I wouldn't believe in a million years that an administration could be that crass. I think that was cut out of whole cloth by someone, it's a whole reconditioning of history. Blame the administration for a lot of things, stupidity included, but that type of attitude I find hard to believe.

Hu: Segall used that to say that he didn't expect the administration to collaborate with him and he thought that they were giving him freedom and here they trying to tell him what to do.

Ha: No. I met Segall in New York City accidentally in front of the Guggenheim and had a toe to toe with him. Historically artists have been commissioned to do commemorative sculptures and because most artists tend to be liberal, to question authority and usually for spurious reasons, artists' works have been rejected. For the wrong reasons, possibly for aesthetic reasons. There are many reasons why things do get rejected.

When I ran into Segall in New York he made it an issue of freedom. I recall him saying, "What's free in New York has to be free in the rest of the United States. You can't have different degrees of freedom." He couched it to me in terms of freedom that he was being censored and repressed in relationship to this sculpture. I saw the sculpture when I was on the west coast; I saw the plaster model of it in a museum when I was out there.

Hu: I was under the impression that it was similar to the Tel Aviv.

Ha: Yes. It was an Abraham and Isaac sculpture. It was something he had done historically before. This was a different interpretation. It wasn't an exact reproduction of the Tel Aviv one. Freedom is freedom but the university in my thinking could have rejected the sculpture for the right reasons.

Hu: One of the main reasons that McCoy had stated was that he was worried that the sculpture was going to upset some kind of balance that the university was trying to achieve concerning May 4th.

Ha: That may be but the university publicly used the idea that they didn't take it because he had broken one aspect of the contract. That was the common understanding that we had and it was the submission of the models. That he submitted the drawings, they had been accepted, but he didn't submit the models and they used that as an excuse to cancel the sculpture.

Hu: Despite everything that McCoy was saying, there's a quote in fact where it says Kent could not afford this type of art even if someone was giving it to us.

Ha: That may be but I would say that that was probably publicly after the fact and that was not the reason they rejected it.

Hu: The bureaucratic reason they rejected it was the contract.

Ha: That's what my understanding is.

Hu: Do you view that as a convenient way to get around the real issue?

Ha: Absolutely. I don't think administrations feel very secure about making aesthetic or even moral judgments.

Hu: In fact weren't they making one by doing this?

Ha: Sure. They compounded their problems.

Hu: What happened in your recollection after the rejection and when the Segall Sculpture went to Princeton.

Ha: After the rejection there was a further split in the university between the students and the administration. The administration did not consult anybody or any groups on campus. I must tell you that the art department was pretty miffed at the administration for not bringing the school of art into its tent to help it in relationship to a memorial.

Hu: Was Schwartz president at the president at the time or was Golding?

Ha: No. Golding was president at the time.

Hu: The administration never asked?

Ha: Never.

Hu: They didn't ask for any kind of consulting, assistance, or design?

Ha: Nothing. We had a very fine faculty at that time and I daresay we could have designed a memorial in house that would have been much better than the one we have now.

Hu: So you were miffed about it too?

Ha: I was pissed right from the beginning. Absolutely. They could have come to our own, the Kent State Family.

Hu: Did you bring it up to them?

Ha: I tried to on and off. The administration didn't address those issues. They didn't want to for whatever reason they had. I don't know. They didn't trust us.

Hu: Is there anything between this time and the time the sculpture went to Princeton that anything else went on that you remember?

Ha: No I think it was kind of low key. I think the demands for a memorial were always there. Certainly this issue didn't help things. It helped keep the May 4th issue alive. The administration in all of its desire to make May 4th go away made decisions that kept in

on the forefront of everyone's mind. They really had no idea of how to sooth the wounds that existed.

Hu: When I was talking to Professor Lewis about the gymnasium he had told me that the administration never thought about where they building the gym annex.

Ha: Probably true.

Hu: From what you're saying it's seems that they were obviously thinking about other things and just wanted to make good to get away.

Ha: Yes. One of the things they don't think about at least at that time was that degree of sensitivity to dialogue with the sensibilities that existed on the campus. That the students' and their feelings are part of the decisions that universities make. That whole system of separation of administration from students still existed. They learned nothing from May 4th.

Hu: You said you saw the sculpture?

Ha: Yes. I saw it in an exhibit in California.

Hu: Did you see it at Princeton at all?

Ha: No. I've never seen the bronze I only saw the plaster model.

Hu: Did anything happen when it was first unveiled at Princeton?

Ha: No. From what I understand it was just a mention somewhere. I think it's unfortunate that we don't have it. I think its part of our history as well. I think the time has come for us to probably negotiate in some way to get it. I think it would be very interesting to have it.

Hu: Is there any talk like that going on?

Ha: No. This is just an idea that I've had recently. That it would be historically interesting to have it here.

Hu: In the 1980's from what I read he (President Schwartz) kind of spearheaded the commemoration committee. Or he was kind of responsible?

Ha: Yes. From within his administration he is the one that I believe started the interest to get a memorial.

Hu: Ok. Were you involved in anyway with the committee? Were you aware of what they were doing?

Ha: I was aware.

Hu: What did you think about the whole thing?

Ha: Again I think they formed all of these things for the wrong reasons. They tried to get national publicity out of it. They neglected the faculty, they didn't bring us into their decisions on how to do it, on what to do and so on. On the one hand they publicly told young people out there what a great art program we had but when it came time to use us for something that could have been a positive force on our campus they neglected us.

Hu: So again you're upset about the fact that they're looking for this memorial and they're going to do it but they decide to have this national competition.

Ha: I wonder if they really ever had any intentions to realize a memorial on the scale that they were professing.

Hu: You're obviously well aware of the fact that the memorial was scaled down?

Ha: That's another political issue but that could be part of it. This is I think a bigger picture I'm dealing with in relationship to what they thought they wanted and their innocence in how they were going to resolve it.

Hu: Were you involved in any way with the competition?

Ha: No. I wanted to stay as far away from that as I could. I didn't want to get involved in the administrations problems and what they were creating, I thought, big problems!

Hu: Obviously you know as well that problems did come out of that with the administration.

Ha: They had no idea again how to deal with art and artists. I knew it was going to be a blunder right from the beginning.

Hu: So you think the whole notion of getting the memorial was a blunder from the start? Or just the way they handled it?

Ha: The way they went about it. Not the idea of getting a memorial. I thought they should have had a memorial in 1972 or 71'.

Hu: A more significant sized one.

Ha: No. The size of the memorial isn't the issue.

Hu: What did you think of the winners? What did you think of Tabearner as the Tavener? What did you think of his?

Ha: I didn't care for any of the choices.

Hu: You didn't think any of them were appropriate?

Ha: No it's not a matter of appropriate I think as far as my aesthetic went I thought that they were rather cold. They didn't really encompass what I saw as a memorial. Then again memorials do define themselves. That's my personal opinion. My memorial is very different having experienced the event. My memorial is internalized more and I think memorials do that. I think if look at the Vietnam Memorial, after all that was said and done, all the political shenanigans that went on; it certainly did define itself in relationship to the warmth that stone can engender in people. I don't know how other people feel and experience a memorial that's for them to define. The idea that this memorial is not a full-blown memorial is a spurious issue. That's not to me what a memorial is about. It's what the memorial in it's own way becomes and how people that address the memorial when they go there, what it means to them.

Hu: You feel the present administration is doing a little bit better at trying to bring people there?

Ha: No. I think the way they address May 4th without fear, from the students, from political groups that they're doing it in a way that's more encompassing and warmer. It doesn't bring the baggage of past administrations. All the previous administrations were connected directly with the event.

Hu: This is the first that is not.

Ha: Yes. I think she (President Cartwright) is very sensitive. I think it has to do with the fact that she's a woman. She has a very good historical point of view and has learned from the mistakes of past administrations and is not going to repeat those mistakes. There are those forces on campus that if God came down, they'd find fault because there are people that find fault regardless. They don't really examine the issue they just bring their own agenda to it. They need to be embraced as well. They're part of what May 4th has been. I certainly embrace that kind of feeling. It's part of it.

Hu: You stated that you didn't agree with any of the designs. The main three.

Ha: They didn't do it for me.

Hu: Nationally the blunders and the troubles that you predicted happened when the university had to take the first place award from Tabner and give it to Ast because Tabner wasn't an American citizen.

Ha: This poor guy became a political pawn. The administration once again had not examined the issues, blundered. It was kind of a joke. We laughed over the whole thing. They got what they deserved.

Hu: They were trying to work something out with him.

Ha: It got worse and worse. Their foot was in their mouth and it didn't taste like chocolate.

Hu: Do you remember anything specific that happened with Tabner?

Ha: No. I don't remember that. I just looked from afar like everybody else and we got a chuckle out of the whole thing.

Hu: How about the Bruno Ast design?

Ha: I think even if it's built to its full extent it's rather cold and impersonal. It's separates itself from at least my emotional feeling. I think the fitting memorial that nobody really sees as a memorial is the spot the National Guard fired their rifles from. I think that is the fitting memorial. That deteriorating pagoda. To me every time I walk there I'm standing among the guard, trying to stop what happened. These ghosts exist for me. That to me is the memorial and should be defined as such.

Hu: You haven't seen it anywhere (that same view)?

Ha: Of course not. Others don't see what I see.

Hu: What happened with the 1.3 million dollar design and they ended up with only 40 thousand dollars and the university had to kick in the rest so they could have a hundred thousand dollar memorial. Do you know about what went on there?

Ha: No. I don't know what went on. Just because your paranoid about administrations and what they do doesn't mean you're wrong. I don't really think the administration ever intended to raise sufficient funds to build the memorial. I think possibly if the May 4th people were right about anything then they're possibly right about that. I have no way of knowing.

Hu: It's been echoed by other people.

Ha: I think the Schwartz administration built it for the wrong reasons. I think they built it to make May 4th go away and not because it was the right thing to do.

In his heart of hearts only Michael Schwartz can answer that.

Hu: I would like to talk to him. I have his phone number. So did you go to the 1990 dedication of the memorial?

Ha: I was one of the only faculty members that participated in talking at that commemoration.

Hu: Will you tell me about that?

Ha: I served on that committee with Jerry Lewis.

Hu: Which was?

Ha: It was the 20th Anniversary Committee. It was the dedication committee. There were only two faculty members that spoke at that and that was Jerry Lewis and myself I had always wanted a memorial and for better or for worse we had one. I was going to try to help define it for the right reasons regardless of what I felt the administration was about. I felt it was important that as faculty that I help try and heal this big open wound that existed. Jerry Lewis knew my feelings and asked that I be on the committee and I willingly served. I gave a speech that lasted a few minutes in a driving rainstorm which I thought was fitting that it wasn't a glorious sunny day. I was very emotionally moved at that time and I did it for myself more or less.

Hu: Do you remember the people protesting at that time?

Ha: Sure and I thought that was fitting. I felt that it was in a sense a re-creation of the time. I feel strongly that it's very important historically that we become time travelers and go back and re-experience that time and place. Right now I'm looking at the wall in my study and I see my armband, faculty marshal from that time. It's been there since that day.

Hu: So you sympathize with the people that thought the memorial was inappropriate or not up to par or could have been better or different?

Ha: No. I think they're protesting for the wrong reasons. I think the protest needs to be for a greater political reason. They're defining themselves with the wrong issue. That's my issue with the May 4th people.

Hu: Reiterate that for me what you think the issue is?

Ha: The issue isn't whether the memorial is originally this or that. They're defining themselves with old issues. The issue isn't May 4th 1970 the issue is the political climate that exists today. May 4th is the defining issue in relationship to what it tells us in relationship to what happened, what can happen and what is going to happen unless we stop our headlong rush into what the political issues are right now. They are similar. I don't know if they see it or not. If they are going to constantly use this and get immersed in what was and not see what is and how to avoid this in the future then I think they are missing the issue.

Hu: So you're saying they're operating in a political climate of the past. They're not learning from the past and...

Ha: They're letting the past issues define the issues of now and future issues. That's what the role of the student is in today's political climate and what their duty is. To

change what they perceive needs changing, which is what the students at that time were doing. The issue is NOT the memorial and the issue is NOT Kent State the issue is basically one world.

Hu: Over the past twenty-five years do you see the gap being bridged at all? Do you see things getting better at Kent? Did you see the efforts to memorialize heal any wounds at all?

Ha: Time has a way of healing wounds. I don't think administrations have helped put any salve on those wounds. I think Kent State is just a microcosm of what's going on nationally. I think students today are less political. I think issues students are dealing with today are economic issues. What's in it for me? That disturbs me that students don't have that fire in their belly any more.

Hu: What do you think happened to it?

Ha: That's the big question, what's happened to it. I don't know we've become very conservative. Our memorials are memorials to money. Wall Street, the stock market have become the icons. We are more interested in the value of the dollar versus other currencies. That to me is unfortunate. I find politics a very interesting area.

Conservatism has reared its ugly head. We are avoiding the issues. We are fighting the issues of gender; we're fighting the issues of the poor and underclass. The class separation is greater than ever before, the issues are there but no one is picking them up.

There are very few people who are getting into the fight. I don't long for the past I long and rush head long into the future but I'm fearful with what's going on with our youth. If they're indicative of what our future will be I'm alarmed. The bells and whistles are going off but we have eyes and we don't see.

Hu: Looking back at the last twenty-five years is there anything that you dreaded regarding May 4th. Personally is there any way you would have wanted to have been involved more or is there anything you did do that you regret doing?

Ha: No I don't. Life had to go on. I'm an artist, a teacher. Other people have to fight those battles. You can't go through life angry. You can't let anger define your life if you do you end up like Allen Canfora. My life went on. I made my stand. I'm a lover. My responsibility is to my students. To help them define their lives in a healthy way. You have to let things go and go on with your life.

Hu: What do you see yourself doing in the future regarding May 4th?

Ha: Speaking to the issue when time arises in a gentle way. Like to you as a young man and to other young people when they ask me in my classes. Ask them questions. How they see their world and so on. You're here at Kent State find out what the issue is find your own truth. I'll tell you what I'm about and what I feel but you have to seek your own truth.

Hu: You do think things are better at Kent State now solely because time has past but you do still see a lot of trouble? Problems?

Ha: No. I think there is some import to there being a degree of agitation because it helps us address an issue that may define a future not a past at some point. This is the place that the event happened. You can't avoid the issue.

Hu: You still think the issue is dichotomized.

Ha: Not to the degree that some do. I'm not going to be dragged into that as a dichotomy. It's a historical issue pure and simple. For many of us a healthy issue to address.

Hu: You think the memorial ceremonies and all that helped?

Ha: Sure. Because we let them. People have to let things be healthy. If they inside feel themselves as healthy they'll let the issues that define themselves in the present be healthy ways of addressing the future. If they go through life angry as I said nothing that anybody will do will help.

Hu: Last question. What do you think or what are your thoughts on the twenty-fifth anniversary coming up and everything the university has going on?

Ha: There are some heavy people coming here. I find it real interesting. For the first time in twenty-five years I'll probably attend some of the events. I sure as hell won't be attending Peter, Paul and Mary. I think Puff the Magic Dragon had its day. There are some other events and other people coming...

Hu: Bruno Ast is coming?

Ha: Yes. He's not one of them. He's a nice guy and so on but the memorial is not the issue. I think there are some people that may speak to issues that exist. I think the administration had been part and parcel of bringing some of these people here. I find them interesting and yes I'll attend some of them.

Hu: So do you think the fact the university put this on....Do you think it follows in the direction that they're trying to heal old wounds?

Ha: No it's not a matter of healing old wounds. I think it's a matter of going on and using it as a forum for defining future and present situations that exist.

Hu: So you don't think the administration is interested in healing what you called a scab that keeps getting bigger.

Ha: No I think that's been healed. I think that 's been done. I think there are others that have their own scabs. No let me be clear. I may not like that memorial from aesthetic

grounds but nonetheless it is a memorial. It may not have been built for the right reasons. It's not for me to judge in relationship to how other people view it. That's internal politics. The memorial is here. It defines itself as a memorial. Get on with life. I think that's the point of demarcation. That we learn and reflect and there is a focus. I think this administration is getting on with that and is using May 4th as a university learning experience for the present and future. I think this is the first time we're doing that. I think the May 4th task force is going to be left in the dust of history.

Hu: You think they've outlived their present use?

Ha: No they haven't outlived their present usefulness. I don't think they really see the real issues.

Hu: You think they need to redefine what the issues are?

Ha: Absolutely.

Hu: And if they don't?

Ha: They'll be left in the dust then of history. They'll have outlived what I consider a political usefulness.

Hu: Is there anything else you want to add? Anything I missed?

Ha: No I think you've covered it pretty well. A lot of my feelings about all of this are obviously from an emotional point of view and my observation and interpretation of history. It has to be balanced with what others see and how they define it.

Hu: Great. Thanks a lot for your time.