

HEALING OLD WOUNDS: PUBLIC MEMORY, COMMEMORATION,
AND CONFLICTS OVER HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS
OF THE KENT STATE SHOOTINGS, 1977-1990

by

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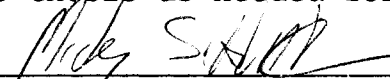
Youngstown State University

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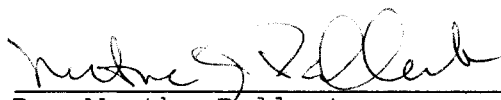
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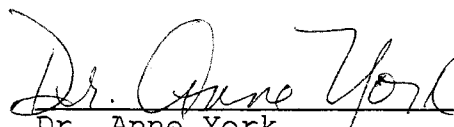
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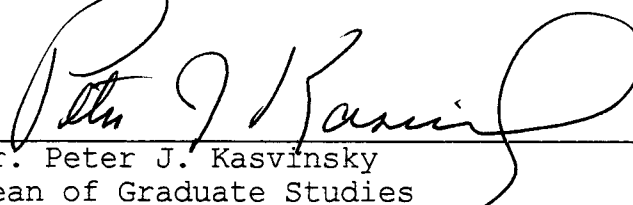
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ABSTRACT

This thesis will illustrate how two different groups interpreted the shootings that occurred on the Kent State University campus May 4, 1970, in the subsequent twenty years. The first group, comprised of the university administration, the National Guard, and Ohio state officials, represents the official view of the events which holds that neither the state nor the university or guard was culpable for the May 4 deaths. Rather, it was the students that provoked the situation during an unlawful anti-war rally. The second group, consisting of the victims of the shootings, their families, and protest groups sympathetic to them, represents the vernacular view that contends state and university officials, as well as the guard, were responsible for the deaths that took place on the Kent campus and that the rally was a legal demonstration of free speech.

Many confrontations occurred between the KSU administration and victims of the shootings and student protest groups during the late 1970's and 1980's. This thesis concerns itself with three developments related to the May 4 incident and how the events were interpreted by both aforementioned groups. By examining these events, it becomes apparent that the university and state commanded the

right of interpretation over the May 4 incident. This ideological struggle was manifest in the gymnasium annex controversy of 1977, which was about who controlled the physical site where the shootings took place; the George Segal sculpture controversy of 1978, which was about how the shootings were interpreted and commemorated by a voice outside the Kent community; and the controversial commemorative sculpture competition of 1985.

The conflicts between the two parties also shows how KSU was and extension of the Vietnam War to American soil. The conflicts over interpretation became issues about how events are remembered and how individual memories can be influenced by various special interest groups' attempts to form public memory. Finally, this thesis illustrates how time did much to heal wounds at Kent State, but not totally close them. The KSU administration attempted to work with the victims and protest groups by sponsoring a memorial competition to commemorate the shootings twenty years after they occurred. This event was not without controversy, however, and many of the victims and protest groups still feel slighted in spite of the university's latest efforts to responsibly address the shootings of May 4, 1970 in a public forum.

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Mickey. S. Huff

INTRODUCTION

On May 4, 1970, events at Kent State University changed America considerably. For the first time in American history, the governor of Ohio called national guardsmen to a university to quell a student protest. The armed guards shot and killed four students and wounded nine others in efforts to disperse anti-war demonstrators. Memories of that tragedy live on, not only for those involved, but also in minds of most Americans who were alive at the time.

But whose memory is it? What exactly is the "truth" about Kent State, as author Peter Davies attempted to show in his 1973 work, The Truth About Kent State: A Challenge to the American Conscience. Who was responsible? The National Guard? The students? Governor James Rhodes? Kent State President Robert White? Did the guards fire in self-defense or were the students murdered? Twenty-five years after the incident these questions and others still boil in the minds of many.

The entire Vietnam War era is ripe with controversy over what "really" happened in Southeast Asia, or what "really" went awry with American policy. The Kent State shootings, an extension of the Vietnam War to American soil, are not much different in regard to their varying

interpretive grounds. Like most historical events, many types of people with varying interests and different levels of involvement have differing perspectives, thus creating the notion of many possible pasts. Some individuals or groups advance one interpretation as "truth." Other individuals or groups do the same thing-- and everyone is probably telling the "truth," at least as they see it.

This thesis addresses these issues and their manifestation in three major events occurring during the twenty-five years after the shootings. These events include controversies over the 1977-78 gymnasium annex construction, the 1978-79 George Segal commemorative sculpture rejection, and the memorial design competition and memorialization efforts of 1984-90. The purpose of analyzing these three events and the controversies surrounding them is to illustrate the division that exists in interpretations of a recent historical event, as well as to note the compromises both sides had to make to heal the wounds at Kent State.

This thesis uses two main ideas to understand the different interpretations of the Kent shootings. Historian John Bodnar puts forth the first. In Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century, Bodnar discusses the issues of official versus vernacular culture and public memory of historical

events. Sociologists Stanford W. Gregory, Jr. and Jerry M. Lewis in their article, "Symbols of Collective Memory: The Social Process of Memorializing May 4, 1970, at Kent State University" offer the second idea employed in this thesis. The theories discussed by Gregory and Lewis pertain to collective memory and collective representation. These ideas are applied to the memorialization process surrounding the Kent shootings.¹

According to Bodnar, there exist two major types of interpretations of historical events concerning a commemorative effort involving public memory. Public memory is produced from a political discussion that involves a given society's organizational structure and various arguments about interpretations of reality. He suggests, "Public memory is a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future." Ultimately, public memory lends "perspective" or "authenticity" to one interpretation of events over certain other interpretations. The development of public memory becomes increasingly apparent during the process of commemoration. The commemoration process requires a mediation of conflicting viewpoints and the result is public memory; a compromise of radical and reactionary interpretations.²

Two determinants of public memory are official and vernacular culture. The official culture tends to support the status quo in orientation and represents government bureaucracies, politicians, and corporations. Official culture presents historical events as they "should" be remembered. It represents a simplified, ideal or patriotic version of an event for public memory referred by historian Warren Susman as a "cultural hegemonic bloc." The vernacular culture represents common citizens, or "everyday folks," and concentrates more on what an event was "really" like, particularly for those not in positions of cultural authority or policy making positions. Vernacular interpretations of history tend to be more complex and varied, less black and white. This interpretation often threatens the sacred nature of the official culture's hegemony.³

In this thesis, Governor Rhodes, Kent State President White, the university administration, and the Ohio National Guard act as the official culture. The vernacular culture represents the victims, their families, and much of the faculty and student body at Kent. Here, the term "vernacular" refers more to those who were powerless in issues concerning the Kent State shootings. The application of "official" and "vernacular" perhaps vary slightly in

specifics when compared to Bodnar's general definitions of these terms, however, his ideas provide a framework from which to more clearly understand and discuss conflicts of historical interpretation in the Kent State shootings. Technically, "vernacular" would apply to many members of the Kent State community, particularly the elderly, who sided with the official view of the May fourth incident. The employment of the term "vernacular" here limits membership to those in the university community, namely the student protesters and faculty.

What Bodnar illustrates more specifically is that "ordinary" people are less interested than cultural leaders in exerting control over others. They tend to be more interested in their own personal lives. Usually, the local, more specific interest is channeled and absorbed into the broad national interest. Despite local and vernacular interests, "negotiation and cultural mediation do not preclude domination and distortion." That is, the dominant message attached to a particular happening is usually proffered by the official order. The most powerful entity in the social structure, a large political group for example, is often more influential than smaller ones, such as communities or even regions, in the discussion and construction of public memory.⁴

At Kent State, the war protesters, the victims and their families, and other students and faculty members were often out-voted and cast aside by the university administration. The official culture's interpretation of the shootings was that the deaths were not the fault of the governor, the university administration, nor the Ohio National Guard. Often, the administration as well as the justice system blamed students and outside agitators for the violence at Kent State. A great portion of people holding the vernacular viewpoint, while possibly not condoning rioting by some protesters, faulted the governor, the university administration, and the Ohio National Guard for committing "murder" at Kent State.

The ongoing animosity between the official and vernacular interpretations came to a climax in early 1977 when the Kent State University (KSU) administration announced the construction of a gymnasium annex partially on the site of the shootings. Lengthy, vigorous protests concerning the gym site occurred throughout the summer of 1977. Many confrontations between protesters and the administration occurred at KSU during the gym crisis. The disputes ultimately concerned who commanded the right of interpretation of the May fourth incident via control over the physical site where the shootings took place; a place

above the Commons on campus called Blanket Hill. The gymnasium debacle led to a drawn-out court battle and more controversy for Kent State.

The purpose of using the gym annex issue is to illustrate Kent State as an American battleground, an extension of the Vietnam War. Kent State can be deemed a battleground in two ways. The first is by the shootings and bloodshed that took place there in 1970. The second, possibly less obvious reason and the one to be more concerned with here, is that Kent State is an ideological battleground where opposing groups vie for "ownership" of a physical site. These opposing groups wish to control historical interpretation of that site and the events that took place there. The battle becomes an issue of how events are remembered. For example, by altering the site of the shootings, the KSU administration may change the way people remember and interpret the events of May 1970. Hence, the official culture is propagating its interpretation of the shootings, i.e., that the guard fired in self-defense. To those less familiar with the shootings, the gym gives the historical illusion that the guard was hemmed-in by a structure that was not present at the time of the incident in 1970.

Gregory and Lewis also discuss the issue of collective memory and how it relates to commemoration of an historic occurrence. For them, "Past events are formulated to give significance and relevance to the present." This is important to keep in mind when analyzing the artistic commemorative efforts at Kent State, namely the Segal sculpture and the memorial design competition.⁵ Gregory and Lewis combine sociological ideas of George Herbert Mead and Barry Schwartz to elucidate the memorialization process. The two authors, both Kent State professors, discuss a "theory of historical analogy" and state that the creation of analogy is of most critical importance to human cognition because it gives us abstract, symbolic meanings. Gregory's and Lewis' ideas can be applied to memorial activities at Kent State.⁶ They write:

Social process of memorialization involves building an appropriate physical artifact that analogically links past community events with the present, establishing new meaning for the for the collective memory, and thus enhancing community moral unity.⁷

In order for this to occur, time must pass for memories to mature and wounds to heal. Current "truths" replace original memorial ideas and relegate them to the dustbins of history. In other words, the meaning of an event must be established before a memorial can be constructed. After a

memorial is constructed, meaning of the event usually becomes more clear.

The rejection of the Segal sculpture and the eventual adoption of a formal commemoration policy only six years later demonstrate this. The university turned down the Segal commemorative sculpture because there were too many differing interpretations of the shootings to settle on one that challenged its official view. By the mid-1980s, however, the university felt more comfortable with the idea of commemoration, particularly if they oversaw the process.

The purpose of analyzing the Segal issue is to show how the KSU administration once again exerted its power in an effort to control the interpretation of historical events. Some, especially in the Kent administration, viewed Segal's work, Abraham and Isaac, as too controversial and too violent to be a successful commemorative piece. It was a divisive rather than unifying or healing work. Segal's work presented the vernacular view of the shootings which laid blame on the state for the killings. It was on these grounds that the official culture at Kent State claimed victories in both bouts, but not without cost to its reputation.

By the early 1980's the administration at KSU decided the time was right to build a permanent memorial to the

shootings. However, even with the memorial design competition, co-sponsored by the official and vernacular interests, the official view had more control over the commemoration process. In fact, the memorial competition was a national event held by bureaucratic agencies with government backing. The original winner was disqualified on a technicality and the new winner's design was aesthetically more abstract and minimalistic, hence for some, less sympathetic to the victims of the shootings than that of the original. Also, financial backing of the entire process was in a continual state of disarray leaving the final memorial a million dollars shy of the projected amount.

The official culture succeeded in ignoring the vernacular culture's pleas to prevent the gym from being built on the site of the shootings and the administration rejected the Segal sculpture. The administration also succeeded in avoiding requests to formally commemorate the shootings for a number of years. Some, such as Kent State shooting victim Alan Canfora, feel the university even had its way with the eventual commemoration because the final memorial was significantly scaled down from its original plan, both physically and financially. Canfora felt this was an insult to the victims of the shootings. Others, such as Jerry M. Lewis, a renowned scholar of the shootings,

disagree. While initially supporting the victims and their families, Lewis gradually changed policy and tried to heal wounds at Kent State by supporting a memorial. Lewis feels issues at Kent State have been resolved and activists, a minority, stir up trouble for publicity.⁸

However, before examining the 1977 gym annex crisis and the subsequent problems with the commemorative sculpture and memorial, there needs to be an understanding of the time and place the controversy began. While this thesis does not address the actual shootings themselves, a brief recounting of the events of early May, 1970, will benefit the reader unfamiliar with specifics concerning those days. This facilitates understanding to the later related turbulent issues that are the focus of this thesis.

By 1970, the Vietnam War had only a few years of life left and the American people had seen presidents come and go with ill-defined and unfulfilled promises concerning U.S. policy in Indochina. President Richard Nixon had promised when elected to de-escalate the war through his policy of Vietnamization, however, he appeared to become more deeply entrenched, expanding the war to Laos and Cambodia. On April 29, 1970, Nixon ordered 15,000 U.S. troops joined by 5,000 ARVN to invade the "neutral" country of Cambodia. The following day Nixon brought news of these actions to the

American public and condemned hippie-radicals and anti-war protesters in a speech that spawned mass protests on America's college campuses by the anti-war movement. During the next four days, the bloodshed and the killing of the Vietnam War was, for the first time, literally brought home to American soil. The place was a university in a mid-size town in northeastern Ohio called Kent State.⁹

Kent State, until May of 1970, enjoyed an atmosphere of relative tranquillity compared to other more radical institutions of the day. Only two major exceptions marred this atmosphere in the years immediately preceding the 1970 shootings. In 1968, Black United Students (BUS) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) held a sit-in protesting what they perceived as racism in university policies and curriculum. The next year SDS demanded the university eliminate the ROTC program, close the Liquid Crystals Institute, a research facility on campus that received Department of Defense money, dismantle the state crime lab and drop the law enforcement degree at KSU. Protests and violent confrontations occurred between SDS and police. As a result, police summarily jailed the leaders of SDS, known as the Kent State Four, until April of 1970.¹⁰

The name, Kent State, became synonymous with controversy and disruption since that fateful day of May 4,

1970, well through the mid-1980's. After the shootings, lawsuits over culpability for the incident ensued for some eight years. Kent State remained divided during the time of the trials with some factions supporting the students and the victims while others vigorously denounced them as troublemakers and dissidents. These differences especially manifested themselves each spring at the May Fourth Task Force commemoration ceremonies held on the grounds of the shootings.¹¹

Other than these two disturbances, Kent State remained orderly during the years preceding the shootings even though visiting speakers, such as Mark Rudd, head of SDS at Columbia, Reenie Davis, a founding member of SDS, and Yippie Jerry Rubin came to Kent State between 1968 and 1970. Even Rubin's "join the revolution" rant fell on complacent ears at KSU. Only small fringe groups such as the Young Socialist Alliance conducted radical activities. So though some radical activity took place at KSU, little trouble resulted from it.¹²

The situation at Kent changed after Nixon's speech on the Cambodian invasion. At noon on Friday, May 1, 1970, WHORE, a group of history graduate students who called themselves World Historians Opposed to Racism and Exploitation, conducted an anti-war rally on the Commons,

traditionally the place in the middle of campus for meetings and rallies. WHORE members buried a copy of the Constitution near the Commons' Victory Bell, traditionally rung after football victories. This symbolized the belief that Nixon "murdered" the Constitution when he sent troops into Cambodia.¹³ Later that evening, disturbances broke out near the bars at Kent State. Nearly 500 people, including many local motorcycle gangs, had gathered and started smashing windows of local businesses.¹⁴ This led to university enforced curfews and "injunctions barring further property damage on campus."¹⁵

On Saturday, KSU administrators held meetings with members of City Hall concerning events of the previous day. Mayor Satrom of Kent requested that Governor Rhodes send in the Ohio National Guard to protect the area.¹⁶ By 8:00 P.M., about 1,000 students gathered on the commons for an anti-war rally chanting the slogans "one, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war" and "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh."¹⁷ As the crowd crossed the Commons, they passed the ROTC building, the tangible symbol of the military establishment on campus, and burned it to the ground. The rest of the evening was filled with chaotic protests against police and authority figures.¹⁸

Sunday, May 3, brought inflammatory remarks about the incidents at KSU by Governor Rhodes. Newspapers quoted him as saying the campus radicals were "worse than the brown shirts and the communist element...they are the worst type of people we harbor in America..." and that "...they [the protesters] are not going to take over the campus."¹⁹ Rhodes also stated that at Kent State he intended to eliminate the problem not merely treat the symptoms.²⁰

Also on Sunday, the Guard read the Ohio Riot Act, banned rallies on campus, and Governor Rhodes declared a state of emergency. Students gathered at President Robert White's house to protest the Guard's presence on campus but the Guard dispersed them with tear gas.²¹ President White was out of town raising funds for the university at the time, not thinking things would get out of control at KSU in his absence. The day ended with more confrontations between the students and the Guard. Events had taken a turn for the worse.²²

On Monday, May 4, students filled the Commons before noon and the Guard units, with only three hours sleep, began to line up adjacent to them. Many classes were canceled due to bomb threats and students called for a noon rally at the Commons to protest the presence of the Guard on campus. Discrepancies existed in later reports concerning President

White's stance on the legality of the noon rally. General Canterbury of the Guard stated that White told him that "noon rallies...would not be permitted."²³ White, however, claimed that such an accusation was absurd and cited "from past history all know that my response would have been affirmative to a rally."²⁴

Nevertheless, the rally took place, and the Guard deemed it an unlawful gathering and commenced dispersing the crowd.²⁵ Student demonstrators heckled the Guard and the two groups volleyed tear gas canisters originally thrown by Guardsmen. Some students hit Guardsmen with rocks and debris. There was speculation that a sniper sympathetic to the protesters was stationed on a nearby rooftop and fired on the Guard. However, after the incident, the FBI declared this claim to be unsubstantiated.²⁶

To accomplish their purpose of dispersing the rally, the Guard marched up Blanket Hill, just past the Victory Bell, and down onto a football practice field. They paused, then marched back up Blanket Hill toward the Commons. Photographs taken at the time indicate that students did not surround or hem in the soldiers and that the Guard appeared to be in no grave danger. At 12:25 P.M., the Guard fired indiscriminately into the air with M-1 rifles and into crowds of students gathered near the practice field and the

Prentice Hall parking lot for thirteen seconds. Twenty-eight men fired sixty-one shots killing four people, Allison B. Krause, Jeffrey Glenn Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer, and William K. Shroeder. Nine others were wounded, two critically. The victims ranged in distance from the Guard from 20 to 250 yards away. Some of the victims participated in the day's events, but others were innocent bystanders walking to class. There was not even an order to open fire.²⁷ Also, according to Dr. Jerry Lewis, who was present on the scene, some of the Guardsmen kicked dead bodies and prevented medical crews from treating the wounded for a short period of time. Lewis noted that no one reported these actions to the press at that time. Much later, however, other people that actually witnessed these or similar acts approached him with their stories, as he was very well known for his interest and scholarship concerning the shootings.²⁸

Kent State was a medium-size university with around 20,000 students, most from middle to lower-middle class, white and blue collar Ohio families. Not a center for radical activity like Berkeley or Columbia, Kent was a rather mild mannered, even apolitical college community. The fact that major protests occurred at such a place in the more politically complacent mid-west, as opposed to the

Northeast or West coast, illustrates the poignancy of the response of America's youth to Nixon's announcements that the war was expanding once again. During anti-war protests at Kent State University, the Ohio National Guard, ordered by Governor James Rhodes to maintain order, killed four students and wounded nine others. This incident at Kent State caused much controversy not only concerning the broader issue of U.S. foreign policy, but in the growing division of the American people on issues of patriotism, morality, and national direction.²⁹

The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, also called "The Scranton Report," determined that the incidents at KSU were tragic and unfortunate. The lessons of the event should be closely studied, it said, to ensure that such a heinous thing would never happen again. The Commission blamed the student radicals for the mindless violence in Kent and the burning of the ROTC structure. However, the Commission also blamed the KSU administration and the National Guard. The report stated that the Guard should not have had loaded rifles, should not have used deadly force, and would never again be issued loaded rifles to deal with student demonstrators. The Commission went on to say that according to extensive FBI investigations, the May 4 rally was predominantly a peaceful one and that many

students were in the Commons legitimately, not to mention the parking lot and practice field where students had every right to be. The Commission found that the Guard's presence caused the violent reaction of the student protesters that led to the shootings.³⁰

Between the time of the initial incident and the spring of 1977, more controversy over commemoration of May 4 disrupted the Kent State campus. KSU was involved in a lengthy series of lawsuits and appeals concerning culpability for the shootings. The trial included the conviction of five out of twenty-five students and faculty members for the disruptions at KSU. The administration attempted to pin the blame for the shootings on the student radicals and some of their faculty supporters. Later, the victims and their families sued the state of Ohio for damages. When it finally settled the case in 1979, the court awarded all thirteen of the victims and their families \$675,000 (the suit originally asked for \$46 million).³¹

Divisions in interpretations of the shootings were especially apparent in the first decade following the incident. The most significant disturbance concerning May 4 events occurred seven years after the shootings when students protested the construction of a Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Facility on the site of the

killings. Using the notions of official and vernacular culture proffered by Bodnar, let us now examine the gym annex controversy to further understand the issues of how people remember and interpret historical events.

ENDNOTES INTRODUCTION

1. John Bodnar, Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century, (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1992); and Stanford W. Gregory, Jr. and Jerry M. Lewis, "Symbols of Collective Memory: The Social Process of memorializing May 4, 1970, at Kent State University," Symbolic Interaction vol. 11/no. 2, 1988.
2. Bodnar, Remaking America..., p. 15.
3. *Ibid.*, pp.13-14. Susman's notion of the cultural hegemonic bloc is based on the writings of Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's theories on hegemony are discussed further in the conclusion of this thesis.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
5. Gregory and Lewis, "Symbols of Collective Memory...", p. 215.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
8. Interviews were conducted with both Alan Canfora and Jerry M. Lewis in the spring of 1995 by the author of this thesis. Transcripts are available for viewing at the Youngstown State University Oral History office located in the History Department or in Maag Library.
9. The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 239.
10. President's Commission, pp. 235-36.
11. Jerry M. Lewis, interview held during a personal tour of the Kent State campus concerning the May fourth incident and its aftermath. Lewis, a professor of sociology at Kent since the late 1960's, was a witness to the shootings and has published many articles about May fourth issues.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 236-37.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

14. Many in the community suspected the Kent State Four, recently released from jail, to be behind these disturbances. However, it should be noted that the FBI found no evidence linking them to any of the disturbances that took place at KSU during the first four days of May. President's Commission, p. 243.

15. President's Commission, p. 245.

16. The guardsmen sent by Rhodes were previously involved at Akron in a Teamsters' strike, which was violent at times. The Guard was on duty there for a few weeks before being sent to KSU. President's Commission, p. 247.

17. President's Commission, p. 248.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 247-53.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

21. Students were supported in their demands to have the Guard removed by a number of faculty members. A statement called "23 Concerned Faculty" was released and demanded the Guard be removed from campus. Bills, Scott L., ed. Kent State/May Fourth: Echoes through a Decade, (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1982), p. 14.

22. President's Commission, pp. 257-59.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

25. It should be noted that by this time, many of the 2000 students at the rally were not necessarily against the Vietnam War, but against the Guard. People not normally in attendance at protest rallies came to this one due to the widespread disapproval of the Guard's presence on campus. President's Commission, pp. 259,265.

26. I.F. Stone, The Killings at Kent State: How Murder Went Unpunished, (New York: The New York Review, 1971), pp. 86-9.

27. President's Commission, pp. 263-89.
28. Lewis, interview.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 234-39.
30. President's Commission, pp. 287-90.
31. For a detailed account of the trial and lawsuits concerning KSU and the victims, see Joseph Kelner and James Munves, The Kent State Cover-up, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980).

CHAPTER ONE

Since the early 1960's, Kent State University planned the construction of a gymnasium annex. The project did not reach fruition, however, until 1975 when the administration allocated the money for it. The plans for the gym site noted that the building would not cut into Blanket Hill or Prentice Hall parking lot, and half of the football practice field, all sites associated with the killing of four students on May 4, 1970. At that time no organized group expressed official opposition to the gym or its prospective new home.¹

By 1976, the university designated the Fleischman Firm of Cleveland to be architects for the project. Carl Erickson, Dean of School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER), argued convincingly to the trustees in favor of the proposed site. He noted nine points in favor of the site, including its central position on campus, its

adequate parking space, and its economical location near heating and power lines.²

However, in early November of 1976, a group of about forty students from the student caucus and May Fourth Task Force filed six complaints with the trustees concerning the gym annex. Nancy Grim, a student caucus representative, submitted the list to the trustees. These complaints included: the gym would destroy an aesthetically beautiful site; alteration of the physical site could raise legal and historical questions concerning the shootings; and the planners had not fully considered alternative sites for the gym.³

In addition to the aforementioned student protestations, legal issues concerning culpability for the shootings continued during the gym issue. A truly "official" or legal interpretation of the shootings involving monetary compensation to victims' families was not seen until the resolution of civil suit litigation appeals in 1979. This clearly indicates that in 1976, KSU administrators paid little attention to possible future ramifications of the civil trial and what results of that trial may say about President Old's administration's role in the shootings.

Despite student grievances concerning the gym site and unresolved legal issues still surrounding the shootings, the trustees sided with Erickson. The annex project would continue, especially since the administration had already incurred considerable expenses in the planning stages of the gym. Also at this time, the president of KSU, Glenn Olds, announced his resignation after he received a vote of "no confidence" from the KSU faculty. In a speech Olds delivered to the trustees announcing his resignation on November 11, the extent of the administration's ignorance about the student concerns on May fourth issues was apparent. Olds stated that "except for those permanent losses of life and disabilities never to be regained the human and public effects of 1970 have been healed."⁴ At this time, the KSU newspaper, the *Daily Kent Stater*, published remarks of a Kent City Councilman who seemed to agree with Olds. The Councilman stated that the people of Kent were now apolitical about the shootings and campus radicals should not cause trouble again.⁵

However, the Councilman's remarks were contradicted by the 1977 annual commemoration ceremony for the shootings which drew the largest turnout since 1971. This illustrated that May fourth issues were not healed, that people in Kent were not totally apolitical about the shootings, and that

people still wished to gain a better understanding of the issue. The mother of Sandra Scheuer, one of the slain students, attended the event for the first time, regretting that she had not attended earlier and expressed surprise that the shootings and victims "still mattered here [at Kent]." ⁶ May 4, 1977, was important for another reason. It also marked the foundation of the May Fourth Coalition, the principle group that would protest the gym annex.

In the afternoon on that same day, the commemoration ceremony incited a great deal of protest concerning the gym via the day's main speakers. Radical attorney William Kunstler, comedian Dick Gregory, and Vietnam veteran/author Ron Kovic repeatedly made pleas to halt the progress of gym construction. On May 5, the *Daily Kent Stater* quoted Kovic as saying, "If they try to build that gym, if they try to hide the truth, then they're going to have to bury 1,000 students in the cement that they pour." ⁷ Kunstler added that students should sit in front of bulldozers to protest the construction. ⁸

While the rousing speeches took place, the trustees met in Rockwell Hall, the administration building. Close to 1,500 students from the ceremony heard about the meeting and stormed the building shouting, "Stop the gym!" ⁹ Members of the crowd addressed trustees at the meeting about stopping

the gym construction but could not convince them to change plans. The student protesters staged a sit-in until 1:00 A.M. and formed the May Fourth Coalition. The group composed a list of eight demands concerning May fourth issues. Of these, the second, and most contemporaneous, demanded that administrators stop gym construction and permit no future alteration of the site. The May Fourth Coalition published a leaflet with all eight of its demands and distributed it freely about campus shortly after the sit-in.¹⁰

In the days that followed, the university administration addressed the eight issues and agreed to meet with the coalition. The administration tried to be understanding about the eight demands and attempted to resolve some of the differences between themselves and the coalition. The administration agreed with four of the demands, rejected two of them, and set two more aside for further study. Moving the gym site was one of the two they rejected. Bob Hart, spokesperson for the coalition at the meeting, stated that the administration did not meet his group's demands and stormed out of the room with some 300 followers. The coalition then pitched tents on Blanket Hill amidst the trees to protest the gym and "Tent City" was born. That first night, May 12, close to sixty students

stayed at "Tent City." While protesters erected the "city," the trustees voted eight-to-one to give the construction job to the lowest bidder.¹¹ The administration saw itself as reasonable in its actions because they had met with the coalition. Since leaders of the coalition left before negotiations ended, the trustees decided the gym project would continue as planned.

It was at this point that clear interpretive grounds were established by both sides. From an administrative perspective, the decision to continue plans for building the gym was not insensitive or heretical. The decision was more pragmatic in that the university, at the bottom line, was a bureaucracy and must proceed with its daily agendas. On the other hand, it was plain that the coalition viewed the administrative process as a travesty and the trustees insensitive toward May fourth issues because the trustees voted to desecrate the physical site of the 1970 shootings. It can be argued the language of the administration interestingly demonstrates in a passive aggressive fashion its desire to downplay its role in the shootings. The Coalition directly engaged the historical issues surrounding the gym annex. The gym was merely a symbol of the administration's decision to ignore certain historical and moral imperatives. The trustees did not vote to venerate or

desecrate a physical site, but rather they voted to continue a bureaucratic procedure. Thus, in a very disconnected and seemingly unintentional way, the trustees decided to deny responsibility for the deaths of four students.

By May 22, the gym annex controversy entered the national spotlight. Tent City, after ten days, had 130 inhabitants in 70 tents. University administrators said the demonstrators could remain on the spot until construction began a month later, or until trouble occurred. University officials contended they chose the site because it was the best and most central location on campus. President Olds said he could not relocate the gym site without incurring costly lawsuits from the construction contractors. Olds also stated that the gym would not actually cover the area where the four students had died.¹² Olds' statement was technically true. However, according to the coalition, the site would still be significantly altered.

One month later, the coalition issued a position paper explaining more clearly why the gym site was inappropriate. They contended that the May fourth shootings were a major turning point for the anti-Vietnam War movement and the incident was a major part of America's past. They also viewed the gym construction as a violation of free speech because the university administration was merely making

another attempt to distort the facts of the original 1970 incident. The coalition compared Kent State and the shootings to Boston and the Boston Massacre, claiming that Kent too must remain untouched for history's sake. The paper ended by stating:

The destruction of this area would be a confirmation of the bloody suppression of free expression on May 4, 1970. The preservation of this site is essential to carry the lessons of "Kent State" to further generations.¹³

Members of the coalition continued to campaign against the gym by speaking in various classes at the university. They held additional rallies with Kunstler and Gregory to bolster support for the coalition. Thomas R. Hensley, a faculty member at KSU and co-editor of Kent State: A Social Science Perspective, claimed "no leaf was left unturned in the coalition's tireless efforts" to stop the gym.¹⁴

The administration ordered the protesters to leave Blanket Hill and the "Tent City" on July 9, 1977, but the campers voted to stay. The following day the trustees urged President Olds to seek an injunction to remove the now 300 plus "Tent City" occupants. The trustees voted six-to-one to have the demonstrators removed from the premises by 8:00 A.M. on July 11.¹⁵ The group at Blanket Hill refused to leave the site. The morning of July 11, brought peaceful protests by the coalition. Police officers swarmed about,

but reported no trouble. The coalition's goal was to keep the rallies peaceful. In fact, leaders even staged mock arrests to prepare protesters for confrontations with police. The police were also not violent, even though tempers between the two groups were heated at times. The last thing either side wanted was more bloodshed at Kent State.¹⁶

Of those at Tent City, two inhabitants, Alan Canfora and Tom Grace, were among those injured at the 1970 shootings. Canfora went on record as saying, "There are certain spots of ground in this country that have to be preserved and this is one of them."¹⁷ Canfora went on to call Kent State a "battleground" with the same historical weight as Bunker Hill or Gettysburg. These sites, he observed, would never be altered by a gymnasium.

Of course the later half of that argument concerning the gym may be deemed *non sequitur*, but, the issue of Kent State being a battleground was a valid point and one emphasized by the coalition repeatedly. Another demonstrator, a KSU sophomore, echoed the coalition's perspective by saying, "when you cover [the site] up physically, it tends to make people forget about [the shootings] more."¹⁸

The same day, July 11, brought a court order to stop the protests at KSU. By midnight, the protesters voted again to stand their ground. On July 12, police peacefully arrested 193 protesters on contempt of court charges and Tent City was officially dismantled sixty-two days after it was created. All were released on \$250 bail. Among those arrested were Alan Canfora and Martin Scheuer, the father of Sandra Scheuer. President Olds attempted to refurbish the university's public image by repeatedly claiming the gym would not cover the spot where students died and that he was not trying to "'bury' the memories of the shooting."¹⁹ The coalition saw Olds' actions to the contrary. However, as of July 15, Olds would matter no more. Michael Schwartz became interim president at KSU until the first of September.

Between the end of Tent City and the end of July, protesters held more sit-ins on the gym site. Judge Joseph Kainard scheduled a hearing concerning the construction of the gym, effectively stopping construction temporarily pending the outcome of the hearing. From this point forward, the gym annex controversy became a legal issue, moving through the hierarchy of America's judicial system. By July 25, however, Kainard considered further protests criminal trespassing. He also ruled that the university

could do as it pleased with the property it owned.

Construction commenced once again.²⁰

On July 26, the trustees voted to continue the \$6 million gym project. University administrators had a six-foot fence built around the gym site to keep out protesters who came to the spot every day. A judge issued warrants for the arrest of twenty-seven protesters for violation of court orders to stay off the site. Amidst all this chaos, the Department of the Interior planned to study to determine whether the site at KSU qualified as a national historical landmark. George Janik, chairman of the trustees at KSU, said the construction would not affect the Department of Interior study. Janik echoed Old's statement that the gym would not cover the actual spot where students died.²¹

Using the pending Department of Interior report on the Kent State site, the May Fourth Coalition went through a series of appeals to obtain stays of construction. Attorney Kunstler considerably aided the coalition by appealing the case all the way to the United States Supreme Court. Kunstler stated, "Anytime you hold the construction from taking place, it's a victory."²²

The coalition's case specifically dealt with whether or not the university denied protesters the right to petition for redress of grievances. The coalition argued that

beginning construction usurped their right to petition the Department of Interior for historical landmark status. The report was slated to be finished in 1978. On the other hand, the university contended that further delays cost more money that would have to come from the Ohio Legislature.²³

The coalition picked up unexpected support from the official successor to Olds as president of KSU, Brage Golding, who took office September 1. Golding wanted to work with the coalition by requesting the gym site be moved or rotated away from Blanket Hill by 100 yards. Any measure of such magnitude would cost an additional \$1.7 million.²⁴ Efforts to achieve such a goal were already underway. Earlier, Lieutenant Governor Richard Celeste had spoken with Senate majority leader Oliver Ocasek, a KSU professor, about getting an additional \$750,000 to \$1 million to rotate the gym. However, KSU needed more money than that to get the gym moved. The gym contractors could sue KSU for delaying or changing plans. State Representatives John Begala, who initially suggested rotating the gym along with KSU trustee Joyce Quirk (who originally voted to build the gym on its present site), said the administration could find money to rotate the gym and quell any lawsuits brought about by the contractors via legislation. He admitted, though, that the process would take time. These efforts were not well

received by the May Fourth Coalition. Rotating the gym was an unacceptable alternative. In hard-line fashion, the coalition adamantly contended the site be moved. The coalition and administration never met a compromise. The administration did not select an alternative site and the legal battle continued.²⁵

By the second week of August, actions of those protesting the gym annex took an interesting turn. While attending the Ohio State Fair in Columbus, Governor James Rhodes, who had not commented on the gym annex publicly (due to the continuing trial over the shootings and the coalition's appeals), was struck in the face with a pie. A disgruntled member of the crowd, along with six others, lobbed the pie and were arrested for the disturbance. All members of the arrested party were demonstrating against the gym annex. Rhodes said after the incident, "[I] will have no comment. We are in litigation and I will have no comment whatsoever on Kent State. These people have a right to express themselves."²⁶ The aloof nature of Rhodes seemed a coy political and legal maneuver, possibly in an attempt to garner more public support for the state and make the protesters appear amateurish and desperate.

By the end of August, the coalition's appeal made its way through the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth

Circuit and reached the United States Supreme Court. In early September, Associate Justice Potter Stewart denied the stay of construction the coalition wanted. Gym opponents filed another appeal with Associate Justice William Brennan. Brennan postponed construction only to overturn his own ruling two days later after reading written arguments on the case. Legally, it was the end of the line for the coalition. Lead counsel for the coalition, Tony Walsh, expressed the group's mood of defeat saying, "'We're playing for time now. All we have left are tricks.'"²⁷

The prospects for the May Fourth Coalition's success grew dim and by September 13, a faction of the group, called the Blanket Hill Council, split off to find more practical alternatives to the coalition's militant style. According to Nancy Grim, a key member of this new group, an additional reason for the split was the growing influence within the coalition of the Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB), a radical political group. The RSB used the coalition and the gym issue to gain attention and build up its national organization. In the end, the coalition itself became a pawn of left-wing politics rather than an effort to move a gym. In response, the Blanket Hill Council passed leaflets around that attempted to distance itself from the more

radical coalition, but it was already too late to begin another assault.²⁸

While the Blanket Hill Council pursued more legitimate means to halt construction, the coalition took to new tactics of civil disobedience to achieve the same goal. For example, on September 17, Julie Cochrane of Kent buried herself in a hole construction crews had dug for transplanting an uprooted tree. She was successfully removed and escaped serious injury after a backhoe "scooped up a load of dirt next to the hole."²⁹

As the protesters resorted to desperate measures and their legal leverage faltered, President Golding, who favored rotating the gym, appeared again as a moderate, even sympathetic player in the gym annex affair. In a public statement on September 20, Golding called the 1970 killings at Kent "unjustified homicide."³⁰ Within his first twenty days as president, Golding tried to reconcile the May fourth controversies by seeing both sides, which was more than his predecessor had done as president at KSU.

Construction on the gym finally began September 19, 1977, after months of legal maneuvering by the May Fourth Coalition. Some of the coalition members watched with tears in their eyes as the physical desecration of their sacred ground began. President Golding watched as well. Golding

himself was dismayed, as he exclaimed when approached by a young, disillusioned protester. "God damn it, I'll say this for the 1,000th time," responded Golding, "I can't stop it."³¹

The final blow to the May Fourth Coalition came after two national rallies. The first, and one of the largest, held on September 24, drew over 3,000 people. The crowd vandalized buildings, wrecked the fence surrounding the gym site, and pelted police with rocks. The second rally, held in October, was less well attended perhaps because President Golding set strict guidelines for rallies which the coalition failed to meet this second time. Five hundred demonstrators were on hand, but little happened due to the legal gravity of the situation. The rally leaders, many involved with "Tent City," faced stiff jail terms if arrested again for protesting the gym site illegally. No injuries were reported and few arrests occurred that day. The long struggle was over, the coalition's fight, and vernacular interpretation, was lost.³²

A clearer look at the attitudes of each side in the gym annex issue can be obtained by examining the oral testimony given by KSU's interim president Michael Schwartz, and anti-gym activist Nancy Grim. The interviews were conducted by

Scott L. Bills in 1980 and published in his book Kent State: Echoes Through a Decade.

KSU invited Schwartz to assume responsibilities as vice president of graduate studies and research. He was appointed interim president after Olds resigned, in the middle of the gym crisis. Schwartz claimed he had no anticipation of demonstrations concerning the proposed gym site. He said the coalition's cause was political, not historical or moral. To support this statement, Schwartz used the coalition's internal divisions to illustrate its political nature, pointing out the RSB control problem as cited by Grim. Schwartz claimed the coalition was comprised mainly of those "who were on the political left looking for an issue of some kind" and by that time, Kent State was a "good target for anything that came along."³³ The coalition's cause was political, he claimed, because the initial protests and KSU shootings stemmed from political events, i.e. the Vietnam War and the invasion of Cambodia. He considered the act of the government killing its own people, as manifest by the violence of the National Guard, part of an ugly phenomenon, but said the deaths and woundings were not directly political. Schwartz went on to state that most of the protesters were not even KSU students. This was discovered by examining the arrest

records which were then cross referenced with the university's student roster. This obviously does not account for protesters who were not arrested.³⁴

However, Grim, who was interviewed while studying at Akron Law School, pointed out that many who were demonstrating were not students *anymore* because of spring commencement. Although it was true that later in the summer of 1977, more and more protesters were not students from KSU, Grim said she did not mind because the numbers of people seemed to aid the cause of the coalition.³⁵

Schwartz supported the plan to rotate the gym but cited that it would cost too much money. Also, Kent was merely a third party receiver of the gym, the contracts existed between the state and the construction companies, not with the university. Therefore, Schwartz claimed he technically had no say in the matter. He went on to say no one offered to pay to move the gym anyway.³⁶ This, however, contradicts State Representative Begala's and Lieutenant Governor Celeste's comments and efforts. According to them, some money was available and they could have found the rest in time. It was the coalition's stubborn approach that ruined hopes of rotating the gym because it refused to accept any alternative to preservation of the entire site.

Schwartz, on the surface, seemed sympathetic to the coalition but in the end supported the original gym site. Unlike Golding, he did little to soothe student and administration conflicts. Most protesters, he maintained, were not students and merely wanted to occupy the political limelight, not stop a gym or show respect for the dead.

Grim gave a different perspective of the events concerning the gym. She was very active in the May Fourth Coalition and Tent City, and later the Blanket Hill Council faction. She said the coalition was a very homogeneous group that provided a sense of unity among the anti-gym forces. The Tent City was a good environment for planning since the protesters were located close together. After Tent City, Grim said it became more difficult to accomplish the coalition's goals because it was harder to find everyone. However, she continued to speak out against the gym site despite increasing communication problems and ideological divisions within the coalition.³⁷

In Grim's view, the shootings at KSU were an extension of the Vietnam War. She noted that many in the coalition felt that Blanket Hill was theirs, it belonged to the students of the past, present, and future. Grim claimed many students saw themselves as part of the family of Vietnam veterans. The establishment of the Tent City was

based primarily on the principle "this is our land" and how better to control a site than by physically occupying it. It seemed the coalition members knew something about battleground strategy that escaped many U.S. military leaders of the Vietnam War. Many in the coalition referred to the site as "sacred ground." Grim did not identify with such religious sentiments, but rather saw the site as a political battle, which was how she viewed the killings. However, as Schwartz implied while commenting on the coalition's membership, she accepted any alternative interpretations that served the same ends as the ideological one and broadened the coalition.³⁸

Grim noted the political diversity of the coalition. A socialist, Grim was afraid she might scare off liberals who were capitalists, environmentalists, or sentimentalists. However, many put aside political opinions, "[the 'liberals'] were willing to forego for a while their fear of communists."³⁹ Eventually, after Tent City, this inherent internal political tension resurfaced, as evidenced in the formation of RSB, the Blanket Hill Council, and other lesser groups. The coalition's militant style of leadership ultimately caused its demise. Ironically, Grim believed the council failed because it was too democratic and organized after construction already began.⁴⁰

Ultimately, the university completed the gymnasium annex and now stands on the very ground that the May Fourth Coalition held so dearly. It appears that the coalition lost in its efforts to stop the gym and control Blanket Hill. However, Grim stated that while the coalition was a failed exercise in participatory democracy, it was a success "in terms of external things."⁴¹ Grim said the gym struggle became a national issue and that people from all over the country sent letters of support for the coalition. Schwartz also alluded to this in his interview, stating he received many angry letters about the gym issue from around the nation. He claimed the coalition, while losing the war, won many of the battles due to media support.⁴² This created a greater awareness of May Fourth issues around the country. It was in this respect Grim remarked that the coalition was a success. The protests, along with the re-opened trial in the September of 1977 over the settlement for the victims of the shootings, made KSU put May Fourth issues into perspective by making them an increasing priority.⁴³

After recounting the events associated with the gym struggle, it becomes obvious how KSU and Blanket Hill can be considered battlegrounds for two opposing groups; each fought for physical control of a site, and hence in this instance, interpretive control over historical events. The

term "battleground" even appears in the patriotic rhetoric of the coalition, mainly spoken by Alan Canfora. The administration claimed its goal was not to cover up the truth or control historical interpretation of the shootings. Whether or not the administration meant to gain control of the Blanket Hill area and alter the site of the shootings is immaterial because it did get that control. The administration's intentions become arbitrary in this light. They altered the site of the shootings without technically covering the spot where students actually died. This altered the way people interpreted the events of May 4, 1970. The gym distorts the memory of the initial incident. This is what the coalition contended all along.

Grim rationalized the coalition's circumstances by stating they won on broader terms, but the hard fact is that they failed their foremost goal- to stop the physical disruption of the site of the 1970 shootings. The entire battle shows the importance of historical preservation and how preservation of a site preserves interpretations and memories possibly closer to the truth than those analyses made after a site is altered. According to the coalition, the administration missed this point entirely and bowed to commercial pressures (construction contracts) which it could have legally sidestepped with the assistance of the Ohio

Legislature. Those who now retrace the Guard's path to get a better understanding of the 1970 shootings will run into a brick wall that is the gym. The gym give the historical illusion that the Guard was hemmed in and had little choice but to open fire on the students in self-defense. Hence, the gym annex supports the official interpretation of the shootings. This was not the situation on May 4, 1970 as illustrated by photographs in the Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest.

Ironically, KSU adopted as formal policy many of the demands of the May Fourth Coalition in the year following the gym protests, including the provision about preventing any further alterations to the site of the shootings. The Department of Interior's report turned out to be disappointing for the coalition as the agency denied historic landmark status. The administration's interpretation of the 1970 events, that neither they nor the National Guard were responsible for the shootings, officially prevailed.⁴⁴

ENDNOTES CHAPTER ONE

1. Thomas R. Hensley and Jerry M. Lewis, ed., Kent State and May 4th: A Social Science Perspective, (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 124-26.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 126.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 126.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 126.
6. Akron Beacon Journal, 4 May 1977, p. A1, quoted in Hensley, Kent State, p. 127.
7. Akron Beacon Journal, 5 May 1977, p. A9, quoted in Hensley, Kent State, p. 127.
8. Daily Kent Stater, 5 May 1977, p. 3, quoted in Hensley, Kent State, p. 127.
9. Hensley, Kent State, p. 128.
10. "Meet the Eight Demands," reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, p. 129.
11. Hensley, Kent State, p. 129.
12. "Kent State Students Camp at Site to Bar Construction Where 4 Died," New York Times, 23 May 1977, p. 16.
13. "Position Paper May Fourth Coalition," quoted in Hensley, Kent State, p. 131.
14. Hensley, Kent State, p. 131.
15. David Dix was the lone dissenting member in this vote as well as the 8-1 vote for the construction bids that took place previously. Dix was very sympathetic to the coalition.
16. "Trustees Tell Kent State President to Seek Injunction Against Protest," New York Times, 11 July 1977, p. 14.

17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. "194 Are Arrested Peacefully at Kent," New York Times, 13 July 1977, p. 14. Note the number in the headline "194." All other sources, including the New York Times after this date, use the figure "193."
20. "Kent State Building Ban is Lifted," New York Times, 27 July 1977, p. 16.
21. "Kent State Votes to Construct Gym," New York Times, 27 July 1977, p. 10.
22. "Judge Delays Construction for a Week at Kent," New York Times, 10 August 1977, p. 28.
23. "Head of Kent State Acts in Gym Dispute," New York Times, 14 August 1977, p. 28.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Hensley, Kent State, pp. 133-34.
26. "Governor Rhodes Is Hit in Face With a Pie by Protester," New York Times, 17 August 1977, p. 19.
27. Kent Record-Courier, 9 September 1977, p. 13, quoted in Hensley, Kent State, p. 141.
28. Nancy Grim, interview reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, pp. 46-8, 228-30. Grim was of the first to protest the gym site in November of 1976, was active in the May Fourth Coalition at Tent City, and was a key member in the Blanket Hill Council.
29. "New Tactics Threatened In Dispute Over Kent Gym," New York Times, 19 September 1977, p. 16.
30. "New Kent President Calls Killings 'Homicide'," New York Times, 21 September 1977, p. 15.
31. Kent Record-Courier, 19 September 1977, p. 1, quoted in Hensley, Kent State, p. 143.
32. Hensley, Kent State, p. 144.

33. Michael Schwartz, interview reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, pp. 212-13. Schwartz was interim president at KSU in the summer of 1977 just before Golding took over in that post.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-15.
35. Grim, interview reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, pp. 221-22
36. Schwartz interview reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, pp. 217-18
37. Grim, interview reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, pp. 222-28.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-25.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-30.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
42. Schwartz, interview reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, p. 215. Also, for an example of media support in a national perspective, see "Blanket Hill Again," by Tom Wicker, New York Times, 19 August 1977, p. 21.
43. Grim, interview reprinted in Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, p. 230.
44. Bills, ed., Kent State: Echoes, pp. 56-8.

Chapter Two

Over the years, many have gathered on the Commons of the university grounds to remember the Kent State shootings and their greater impact on American society and, more broadly, the issue of the war in Vietnam. The annual candlelight vigil perhaps is the most obvious of May fourth commemorative activities. Several smaller memorials also exist on the Kent campus, including the B'nai B'rith plaque, the memorial parking lot, scholarships and scholarly books and articles, and even various memorial trees and the pagoda hit by stray bullets. Student protesters, and those sympathetic to them, cannot claim that no commemoration efforts ever took place at Kent. However, many directly involved with the shootings, including those active in the gym annex protests, felt the need for a more sizable permanent memorial. Perhaps this was a direct result of the

May Fourth Coalition's failure in the gym struggle. Whatever the reasons or intentions of all involved parties, the administration, students, and May fourth activists alike, another controversy surrounding the shootings developed at Kent State in the fall of 1978.

This involved a gift proposal by the Mildred Andrews Fund of Cleveland to KSU. The gift was to be a commemorative sculpture concerning the shooting incident at Kent, a commissioned work by American artist George Segal. In preparation for this task, Segal read James Michener's Kent State, looked at several newspaper clippings about the initial incident, and visited the Kent campus for a tour of the site. KSU administrators gave Segal complete freedom of interpretation of the events at KSU for the sculpture.¹

After researching the shootings, Segal chose a biblical theme, Abraham and Isaac, for the commemorative May Fourth sculpture. The biblical story of Abraham and Isaac is the one where God asked Abraham, the father, to kill Isaac, his son. At the last second, God stopped Abraham's hand as a reward for his faith in God's will. This was a variation on a theme Segal used years earlier in a commemorative sculpture for Tel Aviv. Despite criticisms that Segal's Kent work was not original since he used that topic previously, the two instances and sculptures were wholly

unrelated and the choice of the same subject for different contexts coincidental. In this sculpture, Segal placed Isaac bound and kneeling on the ground innocently in front of his father. Segal placed Abraham in a stern position, looking down on his son with a knife in hand, which from a side angle gives the knife phallic overtones. There was nothing in the work, however, to suggest that the knife would not find its mark. For some, mainly those more friendly to anti-war interpretations, Abraham represented a callous, unremorseful administration and Isaac the peaceful victims.²

The KSU administration, while not openly embracing the subject matter, did not reject Segal's proposal. Segal offered to inscribe a fourteen line biblical verse from the story in Genesis to help explain the work and the university agreed. When Segal neared completion of the work, he sent photographs to the KSU administration. Segal claims that at this point the university abruptly shifted gears, offering an alternative subject matter for the work. President Golding instructed an English professor to write Segal telling him to do the work again. The thirteen page letter told Segal to create a sculpture with a soldier and a semi-nude, hippie female putting a flower into the barrel of the rifle (accounts of this actually happening prior to the

shootings exist but are disputed). Segal declined to change the work's content, stating the administration was reducing the incident to a hippie sentiment- a "make love, not war" notion.³ Stunned at such a proposal, Segal remarked, "I expected the university to either accept or reject the work, but not to work with me."⁴ He claimed they had no right to tell him how to make the work. Further, the entire notion of a semi-nude female placing a flower into the rifle of a soldier was ripe with sexism. A symbol of peace placed into a violating and violent phallic object by a passive and innocent woman is indeed an equally offensive picture as the shootings themselves and certainly not an appropriate or worthy commemorative effort. Apparently, the mostly male administrators at KSU failed to realize this and felt it was a more appropriate subject matter by which to remember the dead. Ironically, the latter subject matter for the sculpture more accurately represented the masculine, warrior-like aggression displayed by the guard the day they shot the purveyors of peace and change, protesters of the patriarchal war machine.⁵

May Fourth scholar and KSU professor Jerry M. Lewis denied such a letter was ever written and claimed Dr. Robert C. McCoy, executive assistant to President Golding, also denied it. (McCoy remains unavailable for comment). Henry

Halem, KSU Art professor since 1969, also cited problems with Segal's story. Halem stated there existed a contract that called for submission of scaled models by the artist, in addition to photographs, and it was on these grounds the administration voided the contract and rejected the work. Halem went on to point out that the Segal controversy further damaged KSU and even upset the Art Department, which was never asked for its input in the entire Segal affair, or for any commemorative works on the shootings at all. For Halem, the administration learned little from the gym annex struggle that took place only a year earlier. It was still separate from students and insensitive to victims of the shootings. Despite alleged bureaucratic difficulties with Segal, the university was not ready to talk about outside memorials. The administration had not even engaged in discourse within their own ranks and community.⁶

In September of 1978, the university officially refused to accept the gift. Robert McCoy, executive assistant to President Golding, stated the sculpture was too violent and was inappropriate to commemorate an act of violence. He was worried the sculpture might upset the delicate balance achieved at the university concerning May fourth issues. McCoy said Kent "could not afford this type of art-- even if someone was giving it to us."⁷

The Mildred Andrews Fund withdrew the gift and, fully completed, the work found a new home at Princeton University. On October 5, 1979, the In Memory of May 4, 1970 Kent commemoration sculpture was dedicated at Princeton between the library and the university chapel. Segal selected the spot himself and claimed the location was symbolic in that it expressed a "juxtaposition of historical knowledge with religious and ethical values."⁸

About 100 people attended the dedication ceremony, including six of the nine wounded students and parents of three of the four slain students. Segal's work went to Princeton as a gift of the John B. Putnam Foundation. Allen Rosenbaum, acting director of the Princeton Art Museum, said Kent's rejection of the Segal work only added to the hurt of the victims' families. Alan Canfora, one of the wounded students and a May Fourth Coalition activist, added to Rosenbaum's anti-Kent rant:

It is an insult to the families and memories of the students that Kent State refused to accept the sculpture. Kent State is being insensitive by not recognizing the significance of the events.⁹

The Kent administration was relieved when the sculpture debacle ended. McCoy stated, "We didn't want a commemorative sculpture in the first place."¹⁰ McCoy went on to state the university would have lost if it accepted or rejected the work. If KSU accepted the sculpture, it may

have provoked vandalism or protests. If KSU rejected the work, university opponents would attack the administration for being insensitive to May Fourth issues. McCoy hoped Kent might receive the sculpture someday, maybe in twenty years. "By that time," he said, "perhaps, everything will finally have quieted down [at Kent]."¹¹

George Segal, the artist who created the controversial sculpture, had much to say after the incident at Kent and dedication at Princeton. Segal, when remembering the entire affair, said that "the people in power [at Kent] seem to be extremely right-wing."¹² After visiting Kent, Segal's impression was that administrative personnel...

were still furious at the radical-hippie disregard for patriotism. Those people were behaving as if the Vietnam War hadn't ended, as if Nixon and Agnew had never been chastised for Watergate and everything else. I was apparently interfering with the real exercise of power on campus. Why I was considered a threat, I don't know...I refuse to modify my work to make it acceptable to their standards because I don't believe in them.¹³

When Segal visited Kent and spoke to members of the community, he noted how alive May Fourth issues were there. Everybody he spoke with took sides on the issue. This contradicts Olds' statement a year earlier that the May Fourth wounds were healed. Perhaps Grim was right in saying the coalition had an impact on the community and brought the May fourth incident back to life there. Segal, while

researching the shootings prior to the sculpture's construction, had an experience in a diner in Kent. He spoke with an elderly man about the shootings and the man said that more of the kids should have been shot for their radical ways. This incident was one of the inspirations for Segal's choice of Abraham and Isaac as the theme for the work. Segal found it difficult to believe the old man was indifferent to the student's moral protest. Segal was bothered by this attitude of obstinacy and unquestioned obedience to authority. To him, those who blindly followed orders without imposing any moral or ethical judgment were wrong. Segal felt the National Guard acted in this way on May 4, 1970. He wanted to capture his interpretation of the shootings in his art. Segal did just that. He claimed the KSU students and faculty supported his efforts, but the administration at KSU did not agree with his interpretation of the 1970 events so they rejected his art.¹⁴

The Segal controversy, recounted and analyzed, illuminates yet another conflict concerning historical interpretation of the May Fourth events. The administration at Kent rejected the sculpture after they discovered they would have no control on Segal's finished product. McCoy's comments about the Segal affair represented the administration's attitude on the May Fourth issues

accurately; they were not willing to commemorate the shootings, rather they were working on covering up the memories (perhaps with a gym). Despite the university's statements claiming they never intended to be insensitive, their actions spoke more loudly than their words. In the university's and state's view, the only one proper interpretation of the shootings denied the Guard's culpability and blamed the students for provoking the incident. At the very least, the administration wanted no interpretation that made them appear responsible for the deaths.

By changing the sculpture's subject matter, the administration hoped to cover up what was in reality a brutally violent and unprovoked act with the sexist image of a semi-nude woman putting flowers in a rifle barrel, hence downplaying the bloodshed and attempting to distort history (even though that gender insensitive image actually seemed worse than the Segal sculpture from the official view propagated by the university bureaucrats).

Again, the administration's interpretation was challenged, this time by Segal, but not changed. The administration got its gym and chased the sculpture away, but supporters of the coalition remained and continued to lobby for their goals. It was not until 1979 that the court

settlement regarding the victims of May Fourth forced the university to publicly apologize for the shootings and admit their mistakes.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER TWO

1. "Try Again in Twenty Years," Art News, November 1978, p. 20.
2. *Ibid.*
3. George Segal, interview with the artist via telephone at the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, 16 November 1993, 1:00 P.M.
4. "Try Again....," Art News, p. 20.
5. Segal, interview.
6. Henry Halem and Jerry M. Lewis, interviews with Kent State University professors, Kent, Ohio, 4 April 1994, 10:00 A.M.
7. Sam Hunter and Don Hawthorne, George Segal, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1984), p. 99.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
9. "Princeton Ceremony Dedicates a Memorial To Kent State Victims," The New York Times, 7 October 1979, p. 32.
10. "Try Again....," Art News, p. 20.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Hunter and Hawthorne, Segal, p. 102.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Segal, interview.

Chapter Three

Efforts to commemorate the shootings occurred throughout the 1970's, but the KSU administration effectively blocked all protest efforts. Two primary examples of this were the gym annex controversy of 1977 and the George Segal commemorative sculpture debacle of 1978. In 1977, the university started construction of a gym that would partially rest on the site of the shootings. Student groups and alumni launched vigorous protests and the issue gained national attention. However, the protesters did not succeed in stopping the gym construction. Mainly, protesters complained the gym altered the site of the shootings. By changing the landscape where the shootings occurred, the administration changed the way future generations viewed and interpreted the initial events of 1970. It appeared as if the administration tried to cover up its role in the shootings. The newly constructed gym gave the historical illusion that the Guard was hemmed in and had

to fire to protect itself. Photos of the scene in 1970 showed otherwise.¹

Similarly, the Segal issue concerned a sculpture given to the university as a gift to commemorate the shootings. The administration rejected Segal's finished product because it disagreed with the artists interpretation of the shootings. The Segal work, Abraham and Issac, went to Princeton University instead. Hence, Kent was still without a substantial memorial to its dead and the administration there continued to exert its influence to quell student interpretations of the shootings. Both these issues concerned how people remembered events and how various interest groups attempted to influence the public memory of a recent historical event.²

The purpose here is to illustrate how the Kent administration and student protest groups compromised positions regarding the shootings, learned from past mistakes, and matured over twenty years following the incidents of May 4, 1970. The result was a national memorial competition held in 1985. The memorial, started in 1989, stands today at Kent in honor of those slain and wounded there by the National Guard. The opposing groups eventually overcame some of their interpretive differences concerning the various controversies surrounding the 1970 shootings, but not all of them. True,

the Kent State University community finally officially commemorated the tragic event in American history that was an extension of the Vietnam War on American soil. Though the university oversaw the memorial construction, the official commemoration process was again not without controversy. The KSU administration, headed by President Michael Schwartz, felt they did their share to reconcile past mistakes and commemorate the shootings by sponsoring a national contest for a memorial. However, problems surrounding the contest winner and fund-raising for building costs soon caused yet another controversy for Kent State.

In the years following the Segal controversy of 1978-79, efforts by the May Fourth Task Force to commemorate the shootings gained ground. On January 4, 1983, Tave Casale, Dean of Honors and Experimental, drafted a proposal to Hugh Monroe, Chairperson of the Faculty Senate, and suggested "it's time for this campus to do something significant by way of a May fourth memorial." Casale offered a plan that consisted of a monolith for a memorial and mentioned that, especially after the Segal debacle, the university needed "to do right by its dead."³

Even though Casale's idea concerning the monolith never materialized, the administration of the university took note of his sentiments. Over time, the university gradually eased

its stance on the shootings to a point where a healthy debate on the incident and its far-reaching affects on the Kent community occurred. In December of 1983, Kent State President Michael Schwartz and the Kent State Board of Trustees established the Kent State University May Fourth Memorial Committee (hereafter- Committee). Schwartz appointed the Committee in January of 1984. The Committee consisted of Dean Harry Ausprich, Chairperson; Dr. Richard A. Bredemeier, Associate Dean for Student Life; Mrs. Cheryl Croskey, Alumna; Mrs. Nancy Hansford, Mayor of Kent; Dr. Lawrence S. Kaplan, University Professor of History; Mr. James T. Kilgallen, graduate student, Dr. Jerry M. Lewis, Professor of Sociology; Mr. James P. Myers, Kent citizen; Ms. Elizabeth G. Ricksecker, student, May Fourth Task Force; and Nancy Whitehead, Alumna. The Committee studied the shootings and their surrounding events to determine the need of a memorial.⁴

The committee analyzed the meanings of the shootings and, in a written report dated December 1984, decided to "propose a suitable permanent memorial." The report stated:

The time is appropriate for a sober reevaluation of the tragic event...[as] May 4th in the nation's memory has become a visible milestone in a war that belongs to another generation. History textbooks list May 4th with general protest against the extension of war into Cambodia by executive action. In retrospect, it [May 4th] may deserve more attention than it has received so far.⁵

However, arguments against a memorial existed. The American Legion called the memorial effort a "memorial to terrorists" and "an insult to patriotic veterans who served their country honorably and well."⁶ It was possible a memorial could spark renewed controversies regarding interpretations of the shootings, stirring more controversy for Kent State. Miscellaneous memorials for the shootings did exist, including the B'nai B'rith Hillel Aluminum Plate, various survey of art work, music and poetry, plays, memorial trees, a movie, the Center for Peaceful Change, several books and a May Fourth Special Collections in the university library. None of these represented an official commemoration by the university or the State. The committee called for a more appropriate permanent memorial, "a central memorial under which the others may be gathered." According to the Committee, May 4, 1970, changed the perception of future protests so they could be understood and resolved without violence. Therefore, a permanent memorial was needed.⁷

Due to the complexity of the May 4, 1970, events, the Committee suggested the memorial site needed to reflect the diverse opinions which surrounded the shootings and the war in Vietnam. The site needed to prompt visitors to inquire about "reasons and purposes of the events that led to the killings," to learn "to broaden the perspective of these events...[and]

to reflect on how [protests] may have been resolved peacefully."⁸ Most importantly, the message of inquire, learn, and reflect would hopefully facilitate healing among all concerned parties and provide much needed community healing. The issues needed to be put to rest. The Committee recommended a location for the site "on the wooded site north east of Taylor Hall on top of the small hill facing the tennis courts." Also, the Committee felt the university needed to have research grants for those interested in studying May Fourth issues and the Vietnam War.⁹

On January 23, 1985, the trustees passed a resolution accepting the Committee's recommendations. Director of Kent's school of Architecture and Environmental Design, James E. Dalton, announced that the university had received an \$85,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for partial funding of a national competition for a permanent commemoration. Paul Spreiregen, a fellow at the American Institute of Architects and overseer of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, acted as the competition's professional advisor. Dalton professed the memorial was "to be neither accusatory nor heroic, rather it [was to] elevate the viewers' thoughts to the highest purposes of our society."¹⁰

Dalton and Spreiregen compiled a twenty page program concerning requirements, maps, site photos, and other information needed to design a memorial. They sent the programs on October 2, 1985, to all those interested in participating in the competition. The university held registration for the competition between October 1 and November 30. American designers, artists, sculptors, and architects were eligible. Individuals and teams applied. A main stipulation of the contest was that competitors must be United States citizens. Members of the Kent State faculty, staff, and families associated with the shootings were ineligible.¹¹

By March 1, 1986, due date for all design submissions, 698 applications poured into Kent for the competition-- 488 individuals and 210 teams. A jury of seven, six prominent architects and artists and one environmentalist, examined all submissions. The jury consisted of artists Richard Hunt and Alice Aycok; landscape architects William A. Behnke and Robert M. Hanna; architects William N. Morgan and William C. Munchow; and environmental author and chairperson of the jury, Grady Clay. The jury chose first, second, and third place winners with ten honorable mentions. First prize was \$20,000 and the right to construct the memorial; second prize,

\$10,000; third prize \$5,000; and the honorable mentions received \$500 each.¹²

The jury deliberated for three days and announced the winners April 3, 1986. The jury awarded first place to Ian Frederick Taberner, team leader from Ann Arbor, Michigan, with Mike Fahey of Brooklyn and credits to ten University of Michigan students. Second place went to Bruno Ast, team leader from Chicago, with Thomas J. Rasmussen. Third place went to Michael Joseph Watkinson, team leader from Chicago, with Kevin Kemp and Scott Burnhard. The jury said of the winning design:

It subtly combines architecture, landscape architecture and sculpture...it offers individuals and groups places for gathering in withdrawn and protected environments, just below the ground surface, while retaining visual contact with the larger campus scene. Those who come for shelter within comfortable outdoor 'rooms' can withdraw for reflection yet remain in touch with the larger environment.¹³

The design included, according to Taberner's design statement, areas "subtracted from the earth...four circular rooms" to represent the four killed. Also, nine gashes in opposing rooms represented the wounded students. Greenery growing around the memorial carved in the earth suggested a healing of wounds. The design mostly used natural materials.¹⁴

President Michael Schwartz announced that with the selection of a winning design, the "university formally acknowledges its own history and its place in recent American history."¹⁵ Schwartz considered the memorial a tribute to today's students. He said that the memorial reminded all that the past needed to be remembered so as to safeguard the future.

Despite all that was positive surrounding the memorial competition, problems quickly arose. As in previous instances which dealt with May Fourth issues at Kent, the contest was not without controversy. Even if it seemed the university administration had come a long way in recognizing its role in the shootings, a new debacle concerning the winner of the contest, Taberner, surfaced. Judges later discovered that Taberner was not a United States citizen. He was Canadian. This violated one of the contests primary stipulations. The university felt the shootings were an American event and should be commemorated by an American citizen. The university disqualified Taberner, but, they still intended to use his design plans without his personal input. Taberner's concern rested mainly with the fate of his design. The university tried to award the prize to Taberner's teammate, Fahey, but he declined and stated he was not the architect of record.¹⁶

The university took the position that it owned the design and did not have to pay Taberner nor consult him. Taberner continued to try to work out an agreement with the university administration so he could be an advisor to the memorial project. Those sympathetic to the slain victims of the shootings felt the university was still insensitive to May Fourth issues, as it had been in the gym and Segal controversies. Andrew Cohen, a student at Kent, scathingly editorialized in the Kent Stater about the Taberner debacle:

In trying to rectify old wrongs, the jury has created another one. Ian Taberner won. His citizenship, whatever it is, is irrelevant. Give him his prize and be gracious about it, as he was about admitting to what amounts to a trivial error. Foolish consistencies have not yet ceased to be the hobgoblin of little minds.¹⁷

However, the university contended it was merely following the rules of its contest and legally it owned the design. They wished to see the winning design realized and avoid future conflict. Clay, the competition jury chairperson, said the university was trying to pick up pieces scattered carelessly by Taberner in this affair. Clay sympathized with Taberner, but stated that not reading the competition rules was inexcusable.¹⁸

Both the administration and Taberner continually tried to reach an agreement concerning his possible input. The university retained Taberner as a hired consultant in an

attempt to quell potential protests in the end of April, 1986. However, by July 2, a few months later, Taberner saw himself again removed from the memorial construction process. The university cited reasons of Taberner's payment and his level of participation for dropping him altogether. Kent State attorney in the Taberner matter, Lowell Heinke, stated Taberner wanted more money as a consultant than if he won the contest. The two sides did not agree on any of the conditions, so Taberner was dropped. President Schwartz said he did what he could, but he wanted things to run as smoothly as possible. He felt things could not be worked out with Taberner. It was time to move on.¹⁹

The Kent State Board of Trustees scrapped Taberner's plan in a 5-0 vote on July 2. Bruno Ast and teammate Thomas J. Rasmussen moved into the first place position along with their new plan for the memorial. Ast, born in Yugoslavia, became an American citizen in 1955. Taberner, when asked about the entire affair, stated, "I feel devastated that this thing has gotten so out of hand. This is the most disgusting thing I've ever been involved in in my life."²⁰ The university considered suing Taberner for \$200,000, the cost of the competition, but those plans never reached fruition. The fact that the university claimed ownership of Taberner's design and contemplated suing the original winner of the competition

illustrated that the administration's recurring hostility to the commemorative process was still an issue, even in the act of overseeing the official commemoration.

Parents of Sandra Scheuer, one of those slain in the shootings, said of the Taberner controversy, "We were very disappointed [by the Trustees' action]...finally they got this design and now they're taking it away. It's really a letdown. We've been through a lot, and now this."²¹ Alan Canfora, one of the wounded from the shootings and head of the May Fourth Memorial Foundation, said the citizenship rule was ridiculous and wrong. The shootings had international impact. Canfora claimed Taberner was sensitive to the victims and their families and that was why the university refused to permit his participation. He felt Taberner was a victim of Kent State politics. He hoped Ast's design would not suffer a similar fate.²² The Scheuers and Canfora represent the vernacular view so prevalent in the previous controversies that the commemoration attempted to officially validate and heal. The memorial was supposed to represent progress in agreeing on a public memory of the shootings. Instead, it did what opponents of the competition initially feared- that the animosities surrounding the shootings were not resolved and participating parties were not yet prepared to reach a collective interpretation of the May 4 event.

Upon hearing the news of his first place status, Ast was quite pleased. Gunduz Dagdelen, Ast's wife and partner, did not participate in this particular project because she was not an American citizen. Both claimed they were well aware of the contest rules, which explained Dagdelen's noninvolvement. Ast liked Taberner's plan, but embraced the opportunity to realize his own design.

Ast's design also intended to be reflective rather than heroic. The design spoke to all the dead and wounded, at Kent State and throughout the world, especially in Vietnam. Even Taberner, understandably disappointed by the turn of events which concerned his design, stated the most important thing that could happen at Kent was that people needed to "learn to forgive."²³

The Ast design called for a central platform area with broken walls surrounding it. This platform area was surrounded by thirteen pylons which signified the shootings' greater affect on society. Black marble disks on the ground represented all those shot by the Guard. Ast, in his design statement, said, "The sheared wall piece transposed upon the landscape as a pylon, suggest[ed] the wider impact of these events on the social, physical, and psychological fabric of our society." Ast's work blended with its natural surroundings. It suggested both "containment and escape."²⁴

The initial Ast memorial slated at \$1.3 million was never realized. The university tried for a \$500,000 memorial, but ended by settling with a \$100,000 memorial. Consequently, Ast's design had to be scaled down. The university used no public money for the project, only private donations. Fund raising efforts netted little more than \$40,000 by 1988. The university then added \$60,000 from its general fund to start the memorial by the spring of 1989. The university blamed the lack of funds on a lack of public interest, yet they did not try to get the money. Alan Canfora pointed out that just a year earlier the university was able to conduct a private professional fundraising effort to gather \$6 million for the construction of a Fashion Museum and Fashion Design School building. The university hired "Over 170 prominent Americans from coast-to-coast" as a fundraising committee "and easily raised the six million for their fashionable cause."²⁵ The memorial did not seem to be a financial priority.²⁶

The May Fourth Task Force tried to raise additional money to fund Ast's original design. However, the fund raising efforts failed. The administration at Kent found the Task Force's actions both "inappropriate and unethical" and President Schwartz called them "unauthorized." It seemed the Task Force's plans conflicted with those of the university

leaders. The university planned a groundbreaking session for the scaled down memorial in January of 1989.²⁷

The university held the groundbreaking ceremony for the scaled down Ast memorial on January 25, 1989. Among those who spoke were President Schwartz, Dr. Harry Ausprich, chairperson of the Committee, and Dean Kahler, a student wounded in the shootings and a May Fourth activist. Kahler said at the ceremony, "There is still a stigma and that incident [the shootings] affects all the alumni...today's events mark the culmination of that stigma." Approximately thirty people stood off to the side of the ceremony in protest of a scaled down memorial. Some felt the memorial was inadequate.²⁸ Lisa Sanders, head of the May Fourth Task Force, and Canfora, May Fourth activist, found the original Ast design satisfactory, but Sanders especially thought Taberner's original plan more appropriate for the commemoration. By this point, however, any plan would have been scaled down due to budgetary reasons.²⁹

By January, 1990, the administration at Kent decided to dedicate the memorial during a Remembrance Week immediately after the 1990 annual May Fourth candlelight vigil, sponsored by the Center for Peaceful Change. The vigil ended at 12:24 P.M., May 4 and the commemoration program began at 12:25, when

the shootings occurred. Kent State's May Fourth Task Force sponsored the commemoration.

Four-thousand people attended the commemoration, many stood with candles in the rain while some protested the activities as "too little, too late." George McGovern, former U.S. Senator and 1972 Presidential candidate who opposed the Vietnam War, spoke at the dedication. He wanted to see the Kent memorial "take its place in history next to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington." President Schwartz said, "It's been a long process of healing...this is the day for us to come together, a day for all of us to remember." Governor Richard Celeste offered a formal apology concerning the events of May, 1970. Celeste delivered a more direct apology than any of his predecessors and stated, "Speaking your mind, casting a stone or hurling an obscene comment-- none of these deserves death."³⁰

The new memorial consisted of a series of "four black granite disks [which] lead from the plaza into the wooded area where four free-standing pylons aligned on the hill."³¹ A jagged edge sidewalk symbolic of the conflicts at Kent and in Vietnam surrounded the plaza. Inscribed in the stone floor of the plaza were the words of the Committee, "Inquire, Learn, and Reflect." Also, the university placed 58,175 daffodils on the hillside facing the commons near the memorial to represent

all those Americans who lost their lives in Vietnam. The Scheuer family requested a lilac bush be placed at the site, as it was their daughters' favorite flower. The Committee recommended educational pamphlets concerning the history of May Fourth issues be placed at the site to offer visitors some historical perspective.³²

Even twenty years after the shootings some individuals harbored ill feelings about May 4, 1970, and the way it was remembered. This was particularly evidenced in the 1980's by May Fourth activists. Due to the events of the 1970's which concerned the gym and Segal controversies, some were still suspicious of university intentions, especially about a memorial. Despite past conflicts, students, faculty, university administration, families of the victims, and the Kent community all cooperated to obtain a permanent memorial at the Kent campus which commemorated a tragic event in American history even though not all agreed the commemoration process was fully realized. Perhaps further distance from the event lent increased objectivity to the issues at hand. Certainly, an official memorial was not possible in the first decade after the shootings as the Segal affair proved. The administration and student protest groups came a long way in twenty years from seeking to assign blame. However, the scaled-down Ast memorial functioned merely as an appeasement

to the vernacular view, an insult in light of what could have been. The university proved they accepted some responsibility for past mistakes by agreeing to commemorate the shootings, but showed they only would go part way by letting the memorial budget fall 90 percent short of its projected goal.

The memorial did not bring back the dead, nor did it assuage pain already experienced. In fact, the commemorative process left protesters bitter and university officials frustrated that even in their noblest efforts at commemorating the May 4 deaths to date, they somehow still failed in the eyes of those who most wanted healing-- the victims, their families and the protesters themselves. The community at Kent has learned lessons from the shootings and made significant efforts to commemorate the tragedy that occurred there, but it may still be a long time before the wounds of all those involved can finally heal.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER THREE

1. President'S Commission, pp. 291-410.
2. For information concerning Segal, see Sam Hunter and Don Hawthorne's George Segal, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1984). For Segal and the Kent sculpture, see Art News, 28 November 1978, p. 20; and the New York Times, 7 October 1979, p. 32. For information concerning the gym controversy, consult Thomas R. Hensley and Jerry M. Lewis, ed., Kent State and May 4th: A Social Science Perspective, (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1978).
3. Tave Casale to Hugh Monroe, 4 January 1983, Professor Jerry M. Lewis, Papers, Kent State University Library Special Collections (KSULSC), May Fourth Collection, Box #20, Kent State University, Kent.
4. Jerry M. Lewis, Papers, "Report of the Kent State University's May Fourth memorial Committee," December 1984, KSULSC, May Fourth Collection, Box #20, appendix 1.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
6. "Legionnaires Try to Block KSU 'Terrorist' Memorial," Cleveland Plain Dealer, 11 July 1986: 1.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 6-10.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
10. Jerry M. Lewis, Papers, "News From Kent," 17 October 1985, KSULSC, May Fourth Collection, Box #20, Kent State University, Kent.
11. *Ibid.*
12. James E. Dalton, Ed. Kent State May 4 Memorial Design Competition, (n.p., n.d.), p. 11.
13. Lewis, Papers, 3 April 1986.

14. *Ibid.*
15. Lewis, Papers, 4 April 1986.
16. Ian Frederick Taberner, Papers, "Detroit News," 17 April 1986, KSULSC, Box #89, Kent State University, Kent.
17. Taberner, Papers, "Kent Stater," 24 April 1986, KSULSC, Box #89, Kent State University, Kent.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. Taberner, Papers, "Akron Beacon Journal," 2 July 1986, KSULSC, Box #89, Kent State University, Kent.
21. Taberner, Papers, "Record Courier," 2 July 1986, KSULSC, Box #89, Kent State University, Kent.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. Dalton, ed., Kent State May 4, p. 13.
25. Alan Canfora, interview at Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, 12 May 1995, 1:00 P.M.
26. "May Fourth Memorial Competition Records," 1985-90, KSULSC, Box #85, Kent State University, Kent.
27. "May Fourth Memorial Competition Records," 1985-90, "Record Courier," 9 December 1988, KSULSC, Kent State University, Kent.
28. "Ground Broken for Memorial for '70 Kent State Shootings," The New York Times, 29 January 1989, p.4.
29. Taberner, Papers, "Record Courier," 9 July 1986, KSULSC, Box #89, Kent State University, Kent.
30. "Kent State, In Memory of 4 Slain 1970," The New York Times, 5 May 1990, p. 11.
31. "May Fourth Memorial Competition Records," 1985-90, KSULSC, Box#85, Kent State University, Kent.

32. *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

In his 1940's dystopian classic novel 1984, George Orwell wrote "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past." The May Fourth Coalition and May Fourth Task Force contended this in their struggles to convince the Kent State University administration to assume responsibility for their role in the 1970 shootings. Repeated insensitivity by the KSU administration toward those propagating the vernacular view of the May 4 incident significantly delayed community healing so desired by all sides of the interpretational conflicts. The university administration fought repeatedly to control present situations which reflected somehow on the shootings. The administration, in its actions manifest in the gym and Segal issues, often seemed as if it wanted to wipe the memories of the shootings away, for better or worse. The victims and those sympathetic to them wanted

closure and resolution, which involved the administration's admission of some level of complicity or responsibility in the May 4 events.

From the gym annex confrontation over political geography and control of the actual site of the shootings, to the Segal representation of May 4, and finally the national competition and construction of a scaled-down memorial, the university administration failed in achieving any compromising discourse and acted to benefit only the ruling elite of the Kent State institution itself. Kent administrators ignored pleas to move the gym, they refused the Segal gift, and they effectively co-opted vernacular rhetoric and actions to present a memorial to the dead and wounded at Kent that, for many involved in lobbying for commemoration and healing, was an after-thought too little too late. Certainly the memorial is a fine gesture towards acknowledging sincere sympathy for the victims and condolence for prior mistakes. However, gestures can be hollow.

If the university administration actually felt regret as an institution for its role, not only in the shootings, but in its actions concerning May 4 over the subsequent twenty years, the entire university grounds and Kent community would be one grand monument to the May 1970

tragedy. Those in control at Kent State could have capitalized on the incidents there as a vehicle for improved communications and conflict resolution skills. Differences could have been diffused. The need for remembering and learning from the past could have been met collectively. However, actions of those in power at Kent State, as described in the body of this thesis, illustrate a tendency of unwillingness to cooperate with those of divergent opinions concerning the shootings and commemoration of them. The ensuing twenty years of the Kent tragedy was an exercise in poor communication; everyone was talking, no one was listening.

The official view of the shootings held by the Kent State institution could have been less evasive of its culpability. The university administration and/or the state of Ohio were the ruling factions concerning interpretations of the May 4 shootings, not the victims or the protesters. Victims, by definition, cannot apologize or make restitution for being victimized, otherwise, they would not be victims. The Kent State administration and/or the state of Ohio made the decision to call the National Guard to campus; to build a gym directly next to the site of the shootings; to turn down a gesture of remembrance of the shootings; and finally to build a miniaturized memorial in hopes of quelling anti-

institutional angst at Kent.

The facts dictate that the administration conceded to some vernacular views which gradually, over twenty years, affected official decisions which reflected more inclusive interpretations of the shootings. The persistence of the May Fourth Task Force and Coalition about allowing no further disruptions of the May 4 site and commemorating the shootings were positions eventually adopted by the administration at KSU. The aphorism "time heals all wounds" can be observed at Kent, however, to paraphrase composer Hector Berlioz, time is a great teacher, but it unfortunately kills all its pupils. By the time healing occurs at Kent State, the participants of the May 1970 event who need healing the most, may be long gone. That seems more like forgetting than healing, which is what the official culture at Kent wanted from the day of the shootings. However, it was an attempt at what Kent State sociologists Stanford W. Gregory and Jerry M. Lewis call "building consensus." In order for a memorial to be constructed and healing to take place, a meaning had to be agreed upon concerning the shootings to create an inclusive public memory.

Gregory and Lewis proclaim that the social healing process requires consensus building about the meaning of an

event. The two write on commemoration of the shootings in the journal Symbolic Interaction, "...the public monument is ultimately the subject of an ongoing community negotiation where advocates argue their case and thereby eventually establish community consensus."¹ Disqualifying the original winner on a technicality and failing to raise 90 percent of the necessary funds to build the Ast memorial, which sparked more protests and controversy, are not congruent to showing a willingness to commemorate and heal. These actions do not work towards a community consensus. They are, however, a distraction which was insulting to the victims and evasive to the issues at hand, namely learning from the shootings and commemorating them, which required building community moral unity.

Michael Schwartz, interim president at KSU during the gym annex controversy, university president in the mid-1980's and defender of the university's conduct regarding May 4 issues, symbolically included the university as an institution to the list of victims of the shootings. Schwartz claimed that since the university could also be deemed a victim that the time for healing and remembering was right. Schwartz contended the Kent tragedy must never be repeated, but emphasized:

The university became a victim and, just as has

so often been the case, the victim was blamed for its own victimization...[and the university administration] continued a major effort to come to terms with that...The time was right for healing...The times of playing childish games of praise and blame were over.²

Many of the incidents surrounding the memorial competition and eventual construction of the monument do not exemplify Schwartz's notion of healing or avoiding childishness. In fact, the actions of the university in the selection of the appropriate winner of the contest and fund-raising efforts for the memorial were very similar to the way they handled the gym and Segal controversies, with little thought to the vernacular view.

The tangible, more obvious victims of the Kent State shootings did not include Kent State the abstract institution. They were real people, Allison Krause, Jeff Miller, Sandy Scheuer, Bill Schroeder and the nine other wounded students. The symbolic inclusion of the university as institutional victim, while being a sociologically interesting notion for academics, was another example of insensitivity to the actual victims by Kent State's administrative voice. Indeed the institution was a victim being blamed for its own victimization as Schwartz, a sociologist by trade, put it, but the institution was only a victim of its own short-sightedness and unwillingness to effectively commemorate an incident it was partially

responsible for creating. It was not made a victim by the protesters. Protests occurred at the Kent campus because an entire interpretation, the vernacular view of the shootings, was repeatedly downplayed or ignored by the power structure there.

Further, the classification of the university as a victim significantly distracted attention from the more obvious victims and their interests and rhetorically diminished the pain of the wounded and families of the deceased. This was evidenced time and again by quotes from parents of the deceased and other victims of the shootings. Again, the official view detracted from the issue of healing and taking responsibility. Schwartz's words amounted to a notion that all involved parties were equally victimized, which he did not effectively demonstrate in a factually substantial manner. An institution is an abstract, socio-political structure, not a human life. To say the loss of four lives was equivalent to a diminished reputation for the school was insensitive indeed.

In fact, many of Schwartz's public statements revolved around the notion of university as victim. Schwartz gave scant attention to the reality that students died. In one instance when referring to The Ohio Department of the American Legion's negative remarks calling the dead, wounded

and anti-war types terrorists, Schwartz stated:

We must understand that the attempt to control ideas is not just something that happens in totalitarian countries. Book burning occurs whenever anyone, anywhere attempts to shape the quest for knowledge in his [or her] own image. We are victorious over small minds and perpetrators of discord. We are victorious in remembrance of senseless events that nonetheless have meaning. And we must go home. Home to the real purpose of a university, which is to learn from human events.³

It was ironic that Schwartz stated control of ideas occurs everywhere someone or some group tries to shape quest for knowledge. That certainly occurred at Kent State where the official view of the shootings prevailed at every turn, yet that was not something to which he made reference. The Kent administration successfully ignored protests over gym construction, refused the Segal interpretation of the shootings by rejecting his sculpture, and commemorated the shootings with a significantly reduced monument. Schwartz again focused on the university, this time calling it home. Lessons from human events the Kent administration did not learn were in real homes, not symbolic, institutional ones. Rather, the life lessons were in the homes of the dead and wounded and in the hearts of the protesters, whose interpretations the Kent State institution effectively suppressed for over twenty years.

The means by which the university exerted its influence

in May 4 matters was through hegemony. Edward Said and Warren Susman were two historians who utilized Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony to show social control at work in a democratic or non-totalitarian culture. Gramsci, co-founder of the Italian Communist Party in 1921, was imprisoned in 1928 after Mussolini banned the party. In prison, he wrote extensively on the relationships of cultural leadership and those it dominates through the idea of hegemony. Gramsci's theory of hegemony stated:

There is a polarization between the cultural territories of the dominant and the dominated. These territories are often characterized in colloquial English as "us" and "them"...[T]he way the values of the dominant become established as 'natural,' 'normal' or 'common sense' is through hegemony. Hegemony does not operate primarily by crude domination but by direction through institutions like schools and the media, and by winning consent. That is the way in which the State and everyday culture combine to fashion beliefs by which we live.⁴

Historian Edward Said remarked on Gramsci's theories, "In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others." This type of leadership is what Gramsci called hegemony. Said claimed this theory was "an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West."⁵

At Kent, the concept of hegemony applies to the relationship of the official and vernacular viewpoints, and

those who held them, concerning historical interpretations of the shootings. The policymakers at the university, a cultural institution, attempted to influence how American society interpreted the shootings. By building the gym on the physical site of the shootings, rejecting the Segal sculpture, and controlling the "official" commemoration of the shootings, the Kent State administration effectively dominated the course of forming what historian John Bodnar called the "public memory." Despite continuing protests over each of the controversies, the university was victorious in all counts, but as Schwartz noted, not without cost to its reputation of insensitivity concerning May 4th issues.

From 1970 to 1990, both sides in the conflicts over interpretation and commemoration of the shootings had to converge on a more central meaning. The existence of any official memorial at all is testimony to this eventual compromise in that the university's actions showed they did not want to remember the shootings, they would much rather forget. The coalition's insistence about the memorial led to the university sponsored memorial competition in the mid 1980's. However, neither side was satisfied with the memorial because the university bowed to coalition pressures to build it, but then underfunded the project which

significantly disturbed protesters. This sense of dissatisfaction with the finished memorial illustrates the difficulty of interpreting the shootings themselves as an extension of the Vietnam War and the ensuing conflicts over interpretation.⁶

The memorial represents the establishment of what is more a public memory of the shootings than a polemical one. However, considering the problems that surrounded the commemoration process, the memorial can be seen as something that raises more questions than it answers about the shootings and their subsequent interpretations. Instead of being a catalyst for healing, the present memorial at Kent State functioned more as an open wound, a reminder of the tragic events of May 4, 1970, and the bitter conflicts over who more shaped the public memory of them. This is something the university feared and a reason why they took so long to commemorate.

The university administration at last admitted to its insensitivity surrounding the shootings and publicly apologized, as well as made efforts to commemorate the May 4 event and put the battered past behind them. Kent State made conciliatory efforts many years after the incident but without the zeal the protesters wished. That deserves acknowledgment, although, it does not exonerate their

actions in the twenty-plus years after the shootings nor does it erase all the pain compounded by those actions.

Through interdisciplinary approaches, i.e., the discussion of politicalization of memory, construction of public memory, gender analysis in text and representational art, and hegemony in culture theory, this work attempts to further understand the issues surrounding the May 4, 1970, Kent State shootings and subsequent interpretations of them. After much dysfunctional communication by involved parties, the Kent State community (administration and victims and protesters) commemorated the event and formed an official, public history of the event that was more inclusive of divergent views. While it may not have been enough for the protesters, the situation at Kent is slowly improving after so many affiliated with the shootings have suffered for so long. Hopefully this healing trend will be expedited exponentially so that the wounds of May 4, 1970, will one day be only a scar to reflect upon and learn from in our nation's history. We can all forgive. We should never forget, lest we repeat the same foolish mistakes.

ENDNOTES CONCLUSION

1. Gregory and Lewis, "Symbols of Collective Memory...", p.218.
2. Michael Schwartz, "A Force for a Free and Dispassionate Inquiry," The Akron Beacon Journal, 12 October 1986, E-3.
3. *Ibid.* It should be noted Schwartz's use of the exclusive masculine pronoun "his" in a public document is both sexist and highly insensitive. Schwartz was not only a representative of the Kent State administration to the public, he was the university president. The university administration, comprised mostly of males, proved its sexist nature during the Segal controversy as well with their suggestions for alternative themes for a sculpture. This is discussed in chapter two of this thesis.
4. Ideological summary of Antonio Gramsci's theory on hegemony. Internet, Yahoo search engine, Ideology @ <http://www.eng.umu.se/culturec/IDE.htm>. Summary paraphrases Gramsci's Prison Notebooks. Or try general search of Antonio Gramsci. Also see Antonio Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, ed. And trans. Quinton Hoarse and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971; reprint, New York: International Publishers, 1992).
5. Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 7. Also, for a more detailed account of Said's theories applied to the Kent shootings, see Scott L. Bills "Empire, Imaginative Geography, and the May Fourth Movement" in Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 21 No. 2, April, 1996, pp. 194-207. The entire issue of that journal is dedicated to Kent State and May 4.
6. The conflicts over U.S. policy in Indochina were manifest in the "Hawks and Doves." At Kent State, the protesters of the Vietnam War, i.e. the Doves, were brutally suppressed by the Ohio National Guard, the Hawks. These divisions existed between the two sides of the conflicts at Kent State for over twenty years after the shootings occurred, even though the war was long over.

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