

## Feature story...

## Kent State Seven Years Later:

Gordon Turtle, 20, has a Bachelors degree in History and is presently in the first-year of a BaEd. Mr. Turtle, a former manager of CKSR, has written for the Gateway several times in the past. In this article the author recounts the events surrounding the shooting of four students at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, and explores, in retrospect, the implications of this event for students in the seventies.



On the evening of Saturday, May 2, 1970, the Ohio State National Guard sent troops onto the Kent State University Campus to try and control what many feared was an impending student revolt. During the afternoon of Sunday May 3, while the guard kept wary eyes upon the students milling about the campus, one student, Allison Krause, approached a guardsman with her boyfriend and her pet cat, Yossarian. Finding the guardsman willing to talk Allison placed a flower in the barrel of his rifle, saying to him, "Flowers are better than guns."

In the early afternoon of Monday, May 4, 1970, Allison Krause was shot and killed by the National Guard. A bullet from a guardsman's rifle had entered the side of her body just under her arm, then it had fragmented, piercing her lung, spleen, stomach, and liver, before exiting, leaving a large hole. Allison Krause had been nineteen years old for just over a week.

Three other young students were killed and nine wounded on that day at Kent State; a day that quickly ended four days of anti-Vietnam War protest at the university. None of the four killed was a revolutionary, a radical, or even directly involved in the four days of protest. Sandra Scheuer, twenty years old, was considered a conservative by those who knew her, though like most students in 1970 she was sickened by the Vietnam War. William Schroeder, nineteen, attended Kent State on a R.O.T.C. scholarship though, as he wrote in a letter to his mother, "Me and ROTC are sort of coexisting at separate levels ..." mainly because of the war. The fourth student killed that day was nineteen-year old Jeff Miller, a confused student who became radicalized that weekend by the events and actions of the Ohio State government.

## End of protest

The Kent State shootings took place over seven years ago and during these seven years the impact of the tragedy has become more and more apparent. For, symbolically, it represents the end of mass student protest in North America; a protest

movement which met its end not in success but in death under the too-strong arm of police repression.

During this summer Kent State was again in the news as a group of concerned students and outsiders formed the *May 4th Coalition* to try and stop the construction of a gymnasium on the site of the shootings. Protests led to non-violent confrontations with unarmed policemen, and eventually arrests of several of the demonstrators. The parents of Sandra Scheuer were among the first to be arrested. They were at the front of the protest.

The Kent State shootings brought to the fore many important issues facing students of the time including, of course, the Vietnam War itself. Most of these issues are still unresolved and we as students at the University of Alberta, must also face these questions. The issues have not changed but it seems students have. Rather than complain — let alone organize and protest — over problems of the university autonomy, student rights, political meddling in public education, and weak university administrators, most students seem content to ignore the issues and scorn those who try and combat these wrongs. My own look into the Kent State shootings and their aftermath have made me more aware of what it means to be a student and also how readily the public, whether in Ohio or in Alberta, can support police-state tactics and reactionary politicians.

The mayor of Kent at the time, LeRoy Satrom, who was responsible for calling in the Guard, was congratulated for this decision by the Kent City Council which expressed "deep, profound appreciation and thanks to the mayor for his faithful devotion above and beyond the call of duty during the emergency." Mayor Satrom replied to this by stating, "I wouldn't hesitate to call in the Guard again. I'd never send them onto a campus without loaded weapons."

The General of the National Guard congratulated the guardsmen responsible for the shootings in a newsletter:

*You have been spat upon, struck at, insulted, ridiculed, and threatened many times while on duty. Some of you were injured by rocks, pipes, and railroad spikes thrown by militant demonstrators. I am sure that you are all gaining considerable personal satisfaction from the widespread support of the Ohio National Guard by the general public. You men have served the State well. You can be proud of yourselves, and proud that you are members of the Ohio National Guard, just as I am proud to have served with you.*

## Letters from "concerned" Kent students

*Authority, law and order are the backbone of our society, for its protection. Would you want authority to stand by if your home were threatened? Well, Kent State is my home by virtue of taxes spent funding it. What's more, its their home by virtue of tuition paid. Playful children destroying a disenchanting toy.*

*How dare they! I stand behind the actions of the National Guard! I want my property defended. And if dissenters refuse to obey the final warning before the punishment, hurling taunts, rocks (stones, they say); sticks, brandishing clubs with razor blades embedded, then the first slap is a mighty sting.*

*Live ammunition! Well, really, what did they expect, spitballs? How much warning is needed indeed. Hurrah! IQSHOUTFOR God and country, recourse to justice under laws, fifes, drums, martial music, parades, ice cream cones — America, support it or leave it.*

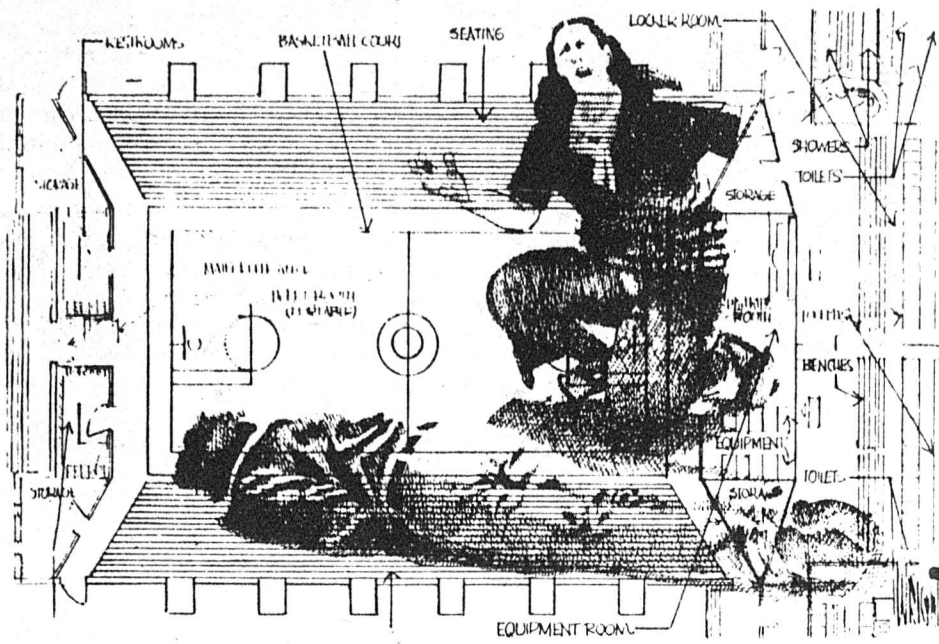
Housewife

*If those students don't like this country or our colleges, why don't they go to the country from which they are being indoctrinated?*

A Concerned Citizen

*I extend appreciation and whole-hearted support of the Guard of every state for their fine efforts in protecting citizens like me and our property.*

Mother of Guardsman



Even a casual examination of the Kent State Affair and its aftermath reveals that the entire issue is not only dramatic, but very scary.

## The events

On April 30, 1970, Richard Nixon announced on public television his intention to move U.S. troops into Cambodia. Students in their Kent State dormitories watched aghast as they saw the war they hated being escalated rather than concluded.

The following day, May 1, a noon-hour rally was held on the campus during which the American constitution was declared dead; a copy of it being buried ceremoniously by graduate student Steve Sharoff. As Friday evening came the students filled the bars and taverns of downtown Kent. As they became drunker, their opposition to the war became louder, and the night ended up with a group of a few hundred students marching down the main streets of the town breaking shop windows, overturning cars, and breaking bottles. This impromptu violence was soon squelched by the local police.

On the following evening the most radical students on campus planned to burn down the R.O.T.C. building which was barely more than a rickety shack; an eyesore to the otherwise beautiful campus. The plan for the burning had been known for several days and many students were planning to attend as spectators.

The burning of the R.O.T.C. building proceeded, with an estimated two thousand students in attendance to watch. To claim all of these students responsible for the fire would be ridiculous — many of them vainly attempted to put it out. But the mayor of Kent and the governor of Ohio felt that every student who had been there was a violent revolutionary and that the National Guard, who arrived during the fire, were sure to tangle with two thousand rioting students. Armed with tear gas, rifles, bayonets and various other pieces of riot equipment, seven hundred National Guardsmen chased the students back to student residences. With liberal use of tear gas they managed to force the students off campus and into the dormitories. Reports indicate that several students were wounded by bayonets; four guardsmen reported a superficial wound, incurred when they were hit by rocks thrown by students. The evening ended with thousands of choking students crammed into the dormitories, and the R.O.T.C. building levelled to smouldering rubble.

## The six demands

Sunday, May 3, was a pleasant, sunny day, which saw many parents up to visit their sons and daughters at Kent

State. It was a strange afternoon with parents and students wandering the campus, lounging and tanning, while 700 Guardsmen in full riot gear patrolled the area.

Sunday evening the student gathered downtown, ostensibly to hear what the mayor of Kent and the President of the university had to say to them. The rumour mill had circulated the story that these two men were going to make public statements that evening but they never showed up. Feeling betrayed, the students began to get angry and hostile. One student was granted the use of the police p.a. system over which he announced six student demands:

1. *The ROTC program be removed from campus.*
2. *Total amnesty be granted to all persons charged with burning the ROTC.*
3. *Total acceptance of all demands made by the Black United Students, whatever those demands might turn out to be.*
4. *All National Guard be removed from campus by Monday night.*
5. *The curfew be lifted immediately.*
6. *Tuition for all students be lowered.*

The curfew referred to in the fifth demand was one enacted by the City of Kent. The streets of Kent were to be empty by 8:00 p.m. until further notice and the campus area cleared by 1:00 a.m. However, after the events of Saturday night, the authorities changed the campus curfew to 8:00 p.m. without publicly informing the students. As a result, the students gathered on Sunday evening were in direct contravention of the curfew but they did not know it. The Guard once again moved in with teargas, rifles, and tanks.

Feeling bitter, betrayed, and physically and mentally sick, the students once again were forced back into their dormitories. The night ended with the division between students and establishment bigger than at any earlier point. It is important to note that the presence of the National Guard had aggravated rather than solved the problem of organized student protest.

Classes were scheduled as usual for Monday morning. Sandra Scheuer attended classes in the morning and had no intention of becoming involved in a rally scheduled for lunch time that day. Most students who had previously ignored or feared the Guard were now openly hostile to them and began calling them names, shouting obscenities, and provoking arguments with them. The students were upset and planned to express their anger and frustration vocally at the noon hour rally.

The university administration had, however, declared the rally illegal and the Guard had been ordered to disband it once it got started. Although some posters announcing the forced cancella-