

# THE MAY 4 SHOOTINGS AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY: THE SEARCH FOR HISTORICAL ACCURACY

BY

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## INTRODUCTION

On May 4, 1970 members of the Ohio National Guard fired into a crowd of Kent State University demonstrators, killing four and wounding nine Kent State students. The impact of the shootings was dramatic. The event triggered a nationwide student strike that forced hundreds of colleges and universities to close. H. R. Haldeman, a top aide to President Richard Nixon, suggests the shootings had a direct impact on national politics. In *The Ends of Power*, Haldeman (1978) states that the shootings at Kent State began the slide into Watergate, eventually destroying the Nixon administration. Beyond the direct effects of the May 4th, the shootings have certainly come to symbolize the deep political and social divisions that so sharply divided the country during the Vietnam War era.

In the nearly three decades since May 4, 1970, a voluminous literature has developed analyzing the events of May 4th and their aftermath. Some books were published quickly, providing a fresh but frequently superficial or inaccurate analysis of the shootings (e.g., Eszterhas and Roberts, 1970; Warren, 1970; Casale and Paskoff, 1971; Michener, 1971; Stone, 1971; Taylor *et al.*, 1971; and Tompkins and Anderson, 1971). Numerous additional books have been published in subsequent years (e.g., Davies, 1973; Hare, 1973; Hensley and Lewis, 1978; Kelner and Munves, 1980; Hensley, 1981; Payne, 1981; Bills, 1988; and Gordon, 1997). These books have the advantage of a broader historical perspective than the earlier books, but no single book can be considered the definitive account of the events and aftermath of May 4, 1970 at Kent State University.<sup>(1)</sup>

Despite the substantial literature which exists on the Kent State shootings, misinformation and misunderstanding continue to surround the events of May 4. For example, a prominent college-level United States history book by Mary Beth Norton *et al.* (1994), which is also used in high school advanced placement courses,<sup>(2)</sup> contains a picture of the shootings of May 4 accompanied by the following summary of events: "In May 1970, at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen confronted student antiwar protestors with a tear gas barrage. Soon afterward, with no provocation, soldiers opened fire into a group of fleeing students. Four young people were killed, shot in the back, including two women who had been walking to class." (Norton *et al.*, 1994, p. 732) Unfortunately, this short description contains four factual errors: (1) some degree of

provocation did exist; (2) the students were not fleeing when the Guard initially opened fire; (3) only one of the four students who died, William Schroeder, was shot in the back; and (4) one female student, Sandy Schreuer, had been walking to class, but the other female, Allison Krause, had been part of the demonstration.

This article is an attempt to deal with the historical inaccuracies that surround the May 4th shootings at Kent State University by providing high school social studies teachers with a resource to which they can turn if they wish to teach about the subject or to involve students in research on the issue. Our approach is to raise and provide answers to twelve of the most frequently asked questions about May 4 at Kent State. We will also offer a list of the most important questions involving the shootings which have not yet been answered satisfactorily. Finally, we will conclude with a brief annotated bibliography for those wishing to explore the subject further.

### **WHY WAS THE OHIO NATIONAL GUARD CALLED TO KENT?**

The decision to bring the Ohio National Guard onto the Kent State University campus was directly related to decisions regarding American involvement in the Vietnam War. Richard Nixon was elected president of the United States in 1968 based in part on his promise to bring an end to the war in Vietnam. During the first year of Nixon's presidency, America's involvement in the war appeared to be winding down. In late April of 1970, however, the United States invaded Cambodia and widened the Vietnam War. This decision was announced on national television and radio on April 30, 1970 by President Nixon, who stated that the invasion of Cambodia was designed to attack the headquarters of the Viet Cong, which had been using Cambodian territory as a sanctuary.

Protests occurred the next day, Friday, May 1, across United States college campuses where anti-war sentiment ran high. At Kent State University, an anti-war rally was held at noon on the Commons, a large, grassy area in the middle of campus which had traditionally been the site for various types of rallies and demonstrations. Fiery speeches against the war and the Nixon administration were given, a copy of the Constitution was buried to symbolize the murder of the Constitution because Congress had never declared war, and another rally was called for noon on Monday, May 4.

Friday evening in downtown Kent began peacefully with the usual socializing in the bars, but events quickly escalated into a violent confrontation between protestors and local police. The exact causes of the disturbance are still the subject of debate, but bonfires were built in the streets of downtown Kent, cars were stopped, police cars were hit with bottles, and some store windows were broken. The entire Kent police force was called to duty as well as officers from the county and surrounding communities. Kent Mayor Leroy Satrom declared a state of emergency, called Governor James Rhodes' office to seek assistance, and ordered all of the bars closed. The decision to close the bars early increased the size of the angry crowd. Police eventually succeeded in using tear gas to disperse the crowd from downtown, forcing them to move several blocks back to the campus.

The next day, Saturday, May 2, Mayor Satrom met with other city officials and a representative of the Ohio National Guard who had been dispatched to Kent. Mayor Satrom then made the decision to ask Governor Rhodes to send the Ohio National Guard to Kent. The mayor feared further disturbances in Kent based upon the events of the previous evening, but more disturbing to the mayor were threats that had been made to downtown businesses and city officials as well as rumors that radical revolutionaries were in Kent to destroy the city and the university. Satrom was fearful that local forces would be inadequate to meet the potential disturbances, and thus about 5 p.m. he called the Governor's office to make an official request for assistance from the Ohio National Guard.

### **WHAT HAPPENED ON THE KENT STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ON SATURDAY MAY 2 AND SUNDAY MAY 3 AFTER THE GUARDS ARRIVED ON CAMPUS?**

Members of the Ohio National Guard were already on duty in Northeast Ohio, and thus they were able to be mobilized quickly to move to Kent. As the Guard arrived in Kent at about 10 p.m., they encountered a tumultuous scene. The wooden ROTC building adjacent to the Commons was ablaze and would eventually burn to the ground that evening, with well over 1000 demonstrators surrounding the building. Controversy continues to exist regarding who was responsible for setting fire to the ROTC building, but radical protestors were assumed to be responsible because of their actions in interfering with the efforts of firemen to extinguish the fire as well as cheering the burning of the building. Confrontations between Guardsmen and demonstrators continued into the night, with tear gas filling the campus and numerous arrests being made.

Sunday, May 3rd was a day filled with contrasts. Nearly 1000 Ohio National Guardsmen occupied the campus, making it appear like a military war zone. The day was warm and sunny, however, and students frequently talked amicably with Guardsmen. Ohio Governor James Rhodes flew to Kent on Sunday morning, and his mood was anything but calm. At a press conference, he issued a provocative statement calling campus protestors the worst type of people in America and stating that every force of law would be used to deal with them. Rhodes also indicated that he would seek a court order declaring a state of emergency. This was never done, but the widespread assumption among both Guard and University officials was that a state of martial law was being declared in which control of the campus resided with the Guard rather than University leaders and all rallies were banned. Further confrontations between protestors and guardsmen occurred Sunday evening, and once again rocks, tear gas, and arrests characterized a tense campus.

### **WHAT TYPE OF RALLY WAS HELD AT NOON ON MAY 4?**

At the conclusion of the anti-war rally on Friday, May 1, student protest leaders had called for another rally to be held on the Commons at noon on Monday, May 4. Although University officials had attempted on the morning of May 4 to inform the campus that the rally was prohibited, a crowd began to gather beginning as early as 11 a.m. By noon, the

entire Commons area contained approximately 3000 people. Although estimates are inexact, probably about 500 core demonstrators were gathered around the Victory Bell at one end of the Commons, another 1000 people were "cheerleaders" supporting the active demonstrators, and an additional 1500 people were spectators standing around the perimeter of the Commons. Across the Commons at the burned-out ROTC building stood about 100 Ohio National Guardsmen carrying lethal M-1 military rifles.

Substantial consensus exists that the active participants in the rally were primarily protesting the presence of the Guard on campus, although a strong anti-war sentiment was also present. Little evidence exists as to who were the leaders of the rally and what activities were planned, but initially the rally was peaceful.

### **WHO MADE THE DECISION TO BAN THE RALLY OF MAY 4?**

Conflicting evidence exists regarding who was responsible for the decision to ban the noon rally of May 4th. At the 1975 federal civil trial, General Robert Canterbury, the highest official of the Guard, testified that widespread consensus existed that the rally should be prohibited because of the tensions that existed and the possibility that violence would again occur. Canterbury further testified that Kent State President Robert White had explicitly told Canterbury that any demonstration would be highly dangerous. In contrast, White testified that he could recall no conversation with Canterbury regarding banning the rally.

The decision to ban the rally can most accurately be traced to Governor Rhodes' statements on Sunday, May 3 when he stated that he would be seeking a state of emergency declaration from the courts. Although he never did this, all officials -- Guard, University, Kent -- assumed that the Guard was now in charge of the campus and that all rallies were illegal. Thus, University leaders printed and distributed on Monday morning 12,000 leaflets indicating that all rallies, including the May 4th rally scheduled for noon, were prohibited as long as the Guard was in control of the campus.

### **WHAT EVENTS LED DIRECTLY TO THE SHOOTINGS?**

Shortly before noon, General Canterbury made the decision to order the demonstrators to disperse. A Kent State police officer standing by the Guard made an announcement using a bullhorn. When this had no effect, the officer was placed in a jeep along with several Guardsmen and driven across the Commons to tell the protestors that the rally was banned and that they must disperse. This was met with angry shouting and rocks, and the jeep retreated. Canterbury then ordered his men to load and lock their weapons, tear gas canisters were fired into the crowd around the Victory Bell, and the Guard began to march across the Commons to disperse the rally. The protestors moved up a steep hill, known as Blanket Hill, and then down the other side of the hill onto the Prentice Hall parking lot as well as an adjoining practice football field. Most of the Guardsmen followed the students directly and soon found themselves somewhat trapped on the practice football field because it was surrounded by a fence. Yelling and rock throwing reached a peak as the Guard remained on the field for about ten minutes. Several

Guardsmen could be seen huddling together, and some Guardsmen knelt and pointed their guns, but no weapons were shot at this time. The Guard then began retracing their steps from the practice football field back up Blanket Hill. As they arrived at the top of the hill, twenty-eight of the more than seventy Guardsmen turned suddenly and fired their rifles and pistols. Many guardsmen fired into the air or the ground. However, a small portion fired directly into the crowd. Altogether between 61 and 67 shots were fired in a 13 second period.

### **HOW MANY DEATHS AND INJURIES OCCURRED?**

Four Kent State students died as a result of the firing by the Guard. The closest student was Jeffrey Miller, who was shot in the mouth while standing in an access road leading into the Prentice Hall parking lot, a distance of approximately 270 feet from the Guard. Allison Krause was in the Prentice Hall parking lot; she was 330 feet from the Guardsmen and was shot in the left side of her body. William Schroeder was 390 feet from the Guard in the Prentice Hall parking lot when he was shot in the left side of his back. Sandra Scheuer was also about 390 feet from the Guard in the Prentice Hall parking lot when a bullet pierced the left front side of her neck.

Nine Kent State students were wounded in the 13 second fusillade. Most of the students were in the Prentice Hall parking lot, but a few were on the Blanket Hill area. Joseph Lewis was the student closest to the Guard at a distance of about sixty feet; he was standing still with his middle finger extended when bullets struck him in the right abdomen and left lower leg. Thomas Grace was also approximately 60 feet from the Guardsmen and was wounded in the left ankle. John Cleary was over 100 feet from the Guardsmen when he was hit in the upper left chest. Alan Canfora was 225 feet from the Guard and was struck in the right wrist. Dean Kahler was the most seriously wounded of the nine students. He was struck in the small of his back from approximately 300 feet and was permanently paralyzed from the waist down. Douglas Wrentmore was wounded in the right knee from a distance of 330 feet. James Russell was struck in the right thigh and right forehead at a distance of 375 feet. Robert Stamps was almost 500 feet from the line of fire when he was wounded in the right buttock. Donald Mackenzie was the student the farthest from the Guardsmen at a distance of almost 750 feet when he was hit in the neck.

### **WHY DID THE GUARDSMEN FIRE?**

The most important question associated with the events of May 4 is why did members of the Guard fire into a crowd of unarmed students? Two quite different answers have been advanced to this question: (1) the Guardsmen fired in self-defense, and the shootings were therefore justified and (2) the Guardsmen were not in immediate danger, and therefore the shootings were unjustified.

The answer offered by the Guardsmen is that they fired because they were in fear of their lives. Guardsmen testified before numerous investigating commissions as well as in federal court that they felt the demonstrators were advancing on them in such a way as to pose a serious and immediate threat to the safety of the Guardsmen, and they therefore

had to fire in self-defense. Some authors (e.g., Michener, 1971 and Grant and Hill, 1974) agree with this assessment. Much more importantly, federal criminal and civil trials have accepted the position of the Guardsmen. In a 1974 federal criminal trial, District Judge Frank Battisti dismissed the case against eight Guardsmen indicted by a federal grand jury, ruling at mid-trial that the government's case against the Guardsmen was so weak that the defense did not have to present its case. In the much longer and more complex federal civil trial of 1975, a jury voted 9-3 that none of the Guardsmen were legally responsible for the shootings. This decision was appealed, however, and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a new trial had to be held because of the improper handling of a threat to a jury member.

The legal aftermath of the May 4 shootings ended in January of 1979 with an out-of-court settlement involving a statement signed by 28 defendants<sup>(3)</sup> as well as a monetary settlement, and the Guardsmen and their supporters view this as a final vindication of their position. The financial settlement provided \$675,000 to the wounded students and the parents of the students who had been killed. This money was paid by the State of Ohio rather than by any Guardsmen, and the amount equaled what the State estimated it would cost to go to trial again. Perhaps most importantly, the statement signed by members of the Ohio National Guard was viewed by them to be a declaration of regret, not an apology or an admission of wrongdoing:

*In retrospect, the tragedy of May 4, 1970 should not have occurred. The students may have believed that they were right in continuing their mass protest in response to the Cambodian invasion, even though this protest followed the posting and reading by the university of an order to ban rallies and an order to disperse. These orders have since been determined by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals to have been lawful.*

*Some of the Guardsmen on Blanket Hill, fearful and anxious from prior events, may have believed in their own minds that their lives were in danger. Hindsight suggests that another method would have resolved the confrontation. Better ways must be found to deal with such a confrontation.*

*We devoutly wish that a means had been found to avoid the May 4th events culminating in the Guard shootings and the irreversible deaths and injuries. We deeply regret those events and are profoundly saddened by the deaths of four students and the wounding of nine others which resulted. We hope that the agreement to end the litigation will help to assuage the tragic memories regarding that sad day.*

A starkly different interpretation to that of the Guards' has been offered in numerous other studies of the shootings, with all of these analyses sharing the common viewpoint that primary responsibility for the shootings lies with the Guardsmen. Some authors (e.g., Stone, 1971; Davies, 1973; and Kelner and Munves, 1980) argue that the Guardsmen's lives were not in danger. Instead, these authors argue that the evidence shows that certain members of the Guard conspired on the practice football field to fire when they reached the top of Blanket Hill. Other authors (e.g., Best, 1981 and Payne, 1981) do not find sufficient evidence to accept the conspiracy theory, but they also do not find the Guard self-defense theory to be plausible. Experts who find the Guard primarily responsible find themselves in agreement with the conclusion of the Scranton Commission (Report, 1970,

p. 87): "The indiscriminate firing of rifles into a crowd of students and the deaths that followed were unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable."

### **WHAT HAPPENED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SHOOTINGS?**

While debate still remains about the extent to which the Guardsmen's lives were in danger at the moment they opened fire, little doubt can exist that their lives were indeed at stake in the immediate aftermath of the shootings. The 13 second shooting that resulted in four deaths and nine wounded could have been followed by an even more tragic and bloody confrontation. The nervous and fearful Guardsmen retreated back to the Commons, facing a large and hostile crowd which realized that the Guard had live ammunition and had used it to kill and wound a large number of people. In their intense anger, many demonstrators were willing to risk their own lives to attack the Guardsmen, and there can be little doubt that the Guard would have opened fire again, this time killing a much larger number of students.

Further tragedy was prevented by the actions of a number of Kent State University faculty marshals, who had organized hastily when trouble began several days earlier. Led by Professor Glenn Frank, the faculty members pleaded with National Guard leaders to allow them to talk with the demonstrators, and then they begged the students not to risk their lives by confronting the Guardsmen. After about twenty minutes of emotional pleading, the marshals convinced the students to leave the Commons.

Back at the site of the shootings, ambulances had arrived and emergency medical attention had been given to the students who had not died immediately. The ambulances formed a screaming procession as they rushed the victims of the shootings to the local hospital.

The University was ordered closed immediately, first by President Robert White and then indefinitely by Portage County Prosecutor Ronald Kane under an injunction from Common Pleas Judge Albert Caris. Classes did not resume until the Summer of 1970, and faculty members engaged in a wide variety of activities through the mail and off-campus meetings that enabled Kent State students to finish the semester.

### **WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND THE PULITZER PRIZE WINNING PHOTO OF THE YOUNG WOMAN CRYING OUT IN HORROR OVER THE DYING BODY OF ONE OF THE STUDENTS?**

A photograph of Mary Vecchio, a fourteen year old runaway, screaming over the body of Jeffery Miller appeared on the front pages of newspapers and magazines throughout the country, and the photographer, John Filo, was to win a Pulitzer Prize for the picture. The photo has taken on a life and importance of its own. This analysis looks at the photo, the photographer, and the impact of the photo.

The Mary Vecchio picture shows her on one knee screaming over Jeffrey Miller's body. Mary told one of us that she was calling for help because she felt she could do nothing

(Personal Interview, 4/4/94). Miller is lying on the tarmac of the Prentice Hall parking lot. One student is standing near the Miller body closer than Vecchio. Four students are seen in the immediate background.

John Filo, a Kent State photography major in 1970, continues to work as a professional newspaper photographer and editor. He was near the Prentice Hall parking lot when the Guard fired. He saw bullets hitting the ground, but he did not take cover because he thought the bullets were blanks. Of course, blanks cannot hit the ground.

### **WHAT WAS THE LONG-TERM FACULTY RESPONSE TO THE SHOOTINGS?**

Three hours after the shootings Kent State closed and was not to open for six weeks as a viable university. When it resumed classes in the Summer of 1970, its faculty was charged with three new responsibilities, their residues remaining today.

First, we as a University faculty had to bring aid and comfort to our own. This began earlier on with faculty trying to finish the academic quarter with a reasonable amount of academic integrity. It had ended about at mid-term examinations. However, the faculty voted before the week was out to help students complete the quarter in any way possible. Students were advised to study independently until they were contacted by individual professors. Most of the professors organized their completion of courses around papers, but many gave lectures in churches and in homes in the community of Kent and surrounding communities. For example, Norman Duffy, an award winning teacher, gave off-campus chemistry lectures and tutorial sessions in Kent and Cleveland. His graduate students made films of laboratory sessions and mailed them to students.

Beyond helping thousands of students finish their courses, there were 1900 students as well who needed help with gradation. Talking to students about courses allowed the faculty to do some counseling about the shootings, which helped the faculty as much in healing as it did students.

Second, the University faculty was called upon to conduct research about May 4 communicating the results of this research through teaching and traditional writing about the tragedy. Many responded and created a solid body of scholarship as well as an extremely useful archive contributing to a wide range of activities in Summer of 1970 including press interviews and the Scranton Commission.

Third, many saw as one of the faculty's challenges to develop alternative forms of protest and conflict resolution to help prevent tragedies such as the May 4 shootings and the killings at Jackson State ten days after Kent State.

### **WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MAY 4 SHOOTINGS?**



Although we have attempted in this article to answer many of the most important and frequently asked questions about the May 4th shootings, our responses have sometimes been tentative because many important questions remain unanswered. It thus seems important to ask what are the most significant questions which yet remain unanswered about the May 4th events. These questions could serve as the basis for research projects by students who are interested in studying the shootings in greater detail.

- (1) Who was responsible for the violence in downtown Kent and on the Kent State campus in the three days prior to May 4th? As an important part of this question, were "outside agitators" primarily responsible? Who was responsible for setting fire to the ROTC building?
- (2) Should the Guard have been called to Kent and Kent State University? Could local law enforcement personnel have handled any situations? Were the Guard properly trained for this type of assignment?
- (3) Did the Kent State University administration respond appropriately in their reactions to the demonstrations and with Ohio political officials and Guard officials?
- (4) Would the shootings have been avoided if the rally had not been banned? Did the banning of the rally violate First Amendment rights?
- (5) Did the Guardsmen conspire to shoot students when they huddled on the practice football field? If not, why did they fire? Were they justified in firing?
- (6) Who was ultimately responsible for the events of May 4, 1970?

### **WHY SHOULD WE STILL BE CONCERNED ABOUT MAY 4, 1970 AT KENT STATE?**

In Robert McNamara's (1995) book, "In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam" is a way to begin is an illustration of the this process. In it he says that United States policy towards Vietnam was "... terribly wrong and we owe it to future generations to explain why."

The May 4 shootings at Kent State need to be remembered for several reasons. First, the shootings have come to symbolize a great American tragedy which occurred at the height of the Vietnam War era, a period in which the nation found itself deeply divided both politically and culturally. The poignant picture of Mary Vecchio kneeling in agony over Jeffrey Miller's body, for example, will remain forever as a reminder of the day when the Vietnam War came home to America. If the Kent State shootings will continue to be such a powerful symbol, then it is certainly important that Americans have a realistic view of the facts associated with this event. Second, May 4 at Kent State and the Vietnam War era remain controversial even today, and the need for healing continues to exist. Healing will not occur if events are either forgotten or distorted, and hence it is important to continue to search for the truth behind the events of May 4th at Kent State. Third, and

most importantly, May 4th at Kent State should be remembered in order that we can learn from the mistakes of the past. The Guardsmen in their signed statement at the end of the civil trials recognized that better ways have to be found to deal with these types of confrontations. This has probably already occurred in numerous situations where law enforcement officials have issued a caution to their troops to be careful because "we don't want another Kent State." Insofar as this has happened, lessons have been learned, and the deaths of four young Kent State students have not been in vain.

## **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Bills, Scott. (1988). *Kent State/May 4: Echoes Through a Decade*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press. This book provides town and gown reactions to May 4th. It has the best annotated bibliography available on the literature on the shootings and is the basis for the annotations that follow.

Casale, Ottavio M. & Paskoff, Louis (Eds.) (1971). *The Kent Affair: Documents and Interpretations*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. This is an early, useful volume which reproduces local and national newspaper articles on the shootings as well as radio and television broadcasts.

Davies, Peter. (1973). *The Truth About Kent State: A Challenge to the American Conscience*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. This is a detailed narrative and analysis of the events of May 4 and their aftermath. He argues that the Guard conspired to fire upon the students. 74 photographs are included.

Eszterhas, Joe & Roberts, Michael D. (1970). *Thirteen Seconds: Confrontation at Kent State*. New York: Dodd, Mead. A very quick publication by two Cleveland journalists who use interviews of students, faculty, and Guardsmen to provide a background and narrative of May 1970 events.

Grant, Edward J. & Hill, Michael (1974). *I Was There: What Really Went on at Kent State*. Lima, OH: C.S.S. Publishing Co. The only book written by members of the Ohio National Guard, the authors provide a view of the hostile environment in which the Guardsmen found themselves.

Hare, A. Paul (Ed.) (1973). *Kent State: The Nonviolent Response*. Haverford, PA: Center for Nonviolent Conflict Resolution. A series of articles by noted peace activist Paul Hare as well as many Kent State faculty members. The common theme is the search for nonviolent approaches to conflictual situations.

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Hensley, Thomas R. and Lewis, Jerry M. (1978). *Kent State and May 4th: A Social Science Perspective*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. This collection brings together a number of previous articles on May 4 that were published in social science journals, but articles covering the Kent State litigation and the 1977 gymnasium controversy were written specifically for this volume. This book also contains the excellent analysis of the events of May 4 written by James Best.

Kelner, Joseph and Munves, James. (1980). *The Kent State Coverup*. New York: Harper and Row. Kelner was the chief legal counsel for the students and parents in the 1975 federal civil trial. He presents a harsh analysis of the handling of the trial by Judge Donald Young. The book has a strong bias, but it provides the only detailed analysis of this long and important trial.

Michener, James. (1971). *Kent State: What Happened and Why*. New York: Random House and Reader's Digest Books. This is undoubtedly the most widely read book on May 4th because of Michener's reputation and the wide publicity it received. The book suffers from being produced so quickly, however, containing numerous factual errors.

Payne, J. Gregory (1981). *Mayday: Kent State*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. The book provides a rather sketchy overview of the May 4 events, presents excerpts from letters written by participants in the events, and discusses the made-for-TV movie on May 4 to which Payne served as a consultant.

*Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*. (1970) Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Reprint edition by Arno Press. This remains the best single source for understanding the events of May 4. The report examines not only the shootings at Kent State but also the student movement of the sixties and the shootings at Jackson State University. Excellent photographs are included.

Stone, I. F. (1971). *The Killings at Kent State: How Murder Went Unpunished*. New York: Review Book. This is a rather sketchy book written with a strongly held viewpoint that the Guardsmen committed murder.

Taylor, Stuart; Shuntlich, Richard; McGovern, Patrick; & Genther, Robert. (1971). *Violence at Kent State, May 1 to 4, 1970: The Student's Perspective*. New York: College Notes and Texts, 1971. A study of the perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and reactions of Kent State students based upon a questionnaire sent to all Kent State students shortly after the shootings. Seven thousand students responded, and although this is not a random sample, it has the best data available about the views of Kent State students about May 4.

Tompkins, Phillip K. and Anderson, Elaine Vanden Bout. (1971). *Communication Crisis at Kent State: A Case Study*. New York: Gordon & Breach. This book presents a harsh analysis of the communications problems that permeated the University during May 1970.

Warren, Bill (Ed.) (1970). *The Middle of the Country: The Events of May 4th As Seen by Students & Faculty at Kent State University* . A hastily compiled set of essays put together by a Kent State University sophomore containing various reactions to the shootings by Kent State students and faculty members.

## **ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**

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*States*. Fourth Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

## **NOTES**

1. In addition to the many books on the Kent State shootings, numerous reports, book chapters, and articles have been written. The most comprehensive and accurate commission investigation is The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest (1970) chaired by William W. Scranton. An excellent book chapter on the shootings is by James J. Best (1978). The most comprehensive bibliography on the shootings is in Bills (1988).

2. Professor Hensley, the co-author of this article, became aware of this reference to the Kent State shootings because his daughter, Sarah, was taking Advanced Placement United States History at Kent Roosevelt High School with Mr. Bruce Dzeda. We thank Mr. Dzeda for reading this article and offering his reactions, although he bears no responsibility for the ideas expressed in this article.

3. In addition to Guard officers and enlisted men, Governor James Rhodes was also a defendant in the civil trial and signed the statement.

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Four Kent State University students were killed and nine were injured on May 4, 1970, when members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on a crowd gathered to protest the Vietnam War. The tragedy was a watershed moment for a nation divided by the conflict in Southeast Asia. In its immediate aftermath, a student-led strike forced the temporary closure of colleges and universities across the country. Some political observers believe the events of that day in northeast Ohio tilted public opinion against the war and may have contributed to the downfall of President Richard Nixon.Â The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy. Kent State University. Nixon authorizes invasion of Cambodia, April 28, 1970. The Kent State shootings marked the end of the 1960s, and the beginning of our era of political polarization. Mary Ann Vecchio kneels over the body of the student Jeffrey Miller, who was killed by Ohio National Guard troops during an antiwar demonstration at Kent State University on May 4, 1970.Credit...John Paul Filo/Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.Â But with the guard in control of the campus, the university announced the rally was prohibited.Â The May 4 shootings were viewed very differently by conservatives and liberals; most conservatives endorsed the National Guardâ€™s actions and at best wrote off the shooting as a tragic accident, at worst as the protestersâ€™ just desert â€” a position that liberals and the left found unimaginable.