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KENT STATE

MAY 4, 1970 ~ 50 YEARS

SHOOTING TIME LINE

On May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard fired on unarmed college students protesting The Vietnam War on the Kent State University campus in Kent, Ohio. Four students were killed and nine were wounded. Here is a chronology of events leading up to and including the tragedy at Kent State:

• THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1970:

President Richard Nixon announces the invasion of Cambodia. Students believe Nixon is breaking his promise to end the Vietnam War.

• FRIDAY, MAY 1, 1970:

Kent State students organize a demonstration to protest the invasion of Cambodia. Students bury a copy of the U.S. Constitution to symbolize its "murder." Warm weather, drinking and indignation over the invasion of Cambodia result in a crowd moving toward the center of Kent, breaking some windows. Police disperse the crowd at the intersection of Main and Water streets.

The Kent city mayor views the scene, hears rumors of a radical plot, declares a state of emergency and telephones Gov. Jim Rhodes in Columbus. A National Guard officer is immediately dispatched. Bars are closed by local authorities and hundreds of people are forced into the streets toward the Kent campus with tear gas from riot-gear police. Kent is quiet by 2:30 a.m.

• SATURDAY, MAY 2, 1970:

Students help with a downtown cleanup. Rumors concerning radical activities are widespread and threats to merchants support the fears of some residents. University officials obtain an injunction prohibiting damage to buildings on campus. Notice of this injunction appears in leaflets distributed by the Office of Student Affairs.

Shortly after 8 p.m., more than 1,000 people surround the Army



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Reserve Officer Training Corps barracks on campus and set the building ablaze. Firefighters leave the scene after hoses are punctured and cut open, making it impossible for extinguishing of the blaze.

By midnight, the National Guard clears the campus, forcing students and non-students into dormitories, where many spend the night.

• SUNDAY, MAY 3, 1970:

Sightseers take photos of the 850 National Guardsmen encamped on campus and all seems calm. Meetings produce a number of conflicting perceptions, resulting in misunderstandings among state, local and university officials. Sightseers complicate the problems.

Near dusk, a crowd gathers on the Commons at the Victory Bell – ordinarily rung after athletic triumphs. The crowd fails to disperse. At 9 p.m., the Ohio Riot Act is read and tear gas is fired at the crowds.

The demonstrators reassemble a sit-in at the intersection of East Main and Lincoln streets, blocking traffic. They believe officials will speak to them, but no one shows up. The crowd becomes hostile and at 11 p.m. the Riot

Act is read again. Guardsmen dispense tear gas and a number of people – guardsmen and demonstrators – are injured in the confusion.

The confrontation of Sunday night causes antagonism and resentment among all parties. Classes resume on Monday. Demonstrators are determined to hold a rally at noon. The National Guard resolves to disperse any assembly.

• MONDAY, MAY 4, 1970:

By noon, about 2,000 people are gathered in the vicinity of the Commons. Many know the rally is banned. Others, especially commuters, do not know. Chants, curses and rocks answer guardsmen's orders to disperse. Shortly after noon, tear gas canisters are fired into the crowd. The gas, blowing in the wind, has little effect.

The guardsmen move forward with fixed bayonets, forcing demonstrators to retreat, reaching the crest of the hill by Taylor Hall. The guardsmen move the demonstrators even farther to a nearby athletic practice field. Once on the practice field, the guardsmen recognize that the crowd is not leaving and the field is fenced-in on three sides. The crowd throws rocks and give the guardsmen verbal abuse.

The guardsmen then load their weapons and retrace their line of march. Some demonstrators follow as close as 20 yards back, but most are between 60 and 75 yards behind the guard. Near the crest of Blanket Hill, the guardsmen turn, and 28 of them fire between 61 and 67 shots in 13 seconds toward the parking lot. Four people lay dying and nine others suffer gunshot wounds.

The closest casualty is 20 yards and the farthest is almost 250 yards away. All 13 are students at Kent State University.

The four students killed are Jeffrey Miller, Allison Krause, William Schroeder and Sandra Scheuer. The nine wounded students are Joseph Lewis, John Cleary, Thomas Grace, Alan Canfora, Dean Kahler, Douglas Wrentmore, James Russell, Robert Stamps and Donald MacKenzie. Dean Kahler will be permanently paralyzed from his injury.

Disbelief, fright and attempts at first aid give way quickly to anger. A group of 200 to 300 demonstrators gather on a slope nearby, sit down and refuse to move. Faculty members convince the group to disperse.

A Kent State University ambulance moves through the campus making the following announcement over a public address system: "By order of President White, the university is closed. Students should pack their things and leave the campus as quickly as possible."

Late in the afternoon, the Portage County prosecutor obtains an injunction closing the university indefinitely.