

VIII

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To succeed White, the Trustees chose a man superbly equipped to “rap” with any group or person. Glenn A. Olds (1971-1977) arrived trailing lustrous credentials: trained philosopher, ordained minister, former college president, diplomat, U.S. representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Olds was a bright, kind, high-minded man who believed in the power of dialogue, of reasoning together, to resolve differences. He was a skilled orator but an unskilled administrator, particularly in dealing with nitty-gritty details and with faculty concerns. And he suffered from having too many ideas. He rashly encouraged the Trustees to become involved in the running of the school, dangerously tangling lines of authority. During his tenure, however, Kent experienced two delirious seasons of football glory (led by Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker Jack Lambert); the library was elected to the prestigious American Association of Research Libraries, its holdings passing the one million mark in 1974; and Phi Beta Kappa, the pre-eminent scholastic honorary, established a Kent chapter. The project closest to Olds’ heart was the Center for Peaceful Change (later the Center for Applied Conflict Management), dedicated, among other things, to studying and teaching ways of avoiding the conditions that led to May 4.

Though Olds energetically strung lines of communication with students, he was eventually done in by the debilitating Tent City controversy that started in May 1977, over plans to build the Memorial Gym Annex. Claiming the Annex would desecrate ground hallowed by the blood of the victims of May 4, dozens of protesters pitched tents and set up housekeeping behind Memorial Gym, blocking construction and turning deaf ears to Olds’ earnest efforts to reason them into leaving. Once again Kent was in the headlines and network news shows. Before the controversy finally fizzled out in November, a rabble of demonstrations had been staged, campers forcibly evicted, the air fouled by countless canisters of tear gas; fences had been assaulted, buildings spray painted; three hundred people had been arrested for trespass, aggravated riot, contempt of court; and courts on every level—city, country, state, even the Supreme Court—had been caught in its coils.

By then, however, the Trustees had replaced Olds with a seasoned, no-nonsense administrator, a former president of two universities. It was the good fortune of Brage Golding (1977-1982) that he took office in September, when the thermal passions that had kept Tent City aloft were cooling. His gifts were for management rather than for academic leadership. He had a master mechanic’s hand for the machinery of a university—the working of its pulleys and levers, the meshing of its cogs and gears—and an engineer’s respect for efficiency and economy. An aloof, restrained, methodical man of steely composure and determination, he displayed small interest in educational matters and scant concern for faculty feelings and views. He restored the traditional relationship between the Board and the administration. Putting the school on a sound financial footing, he retooled many operations, acquired valuable new land, and tried to hold down escalating administrative salaries. When required, he could be iron and flint in the face of powerful opposition: he imposed a wholesome measure of order and decency on residence halls, which had degraded into Animal Houses; and, in 1982, he closed the costly, outdated University School. He started a long-range program to renovate the physical plant and beautify campus grounds, uglified by years of neglect. And soon enrollments began to climb.



Kent's Glenn H. Brown Liquid Crystal Institute is the nation's first and largest academic center devoted to basic and applied research on liquid crystals.



One of Kent's famous black squirrels, which were introduced to the campus in 1961.



Offensive back coach Ray Dorr (left) and head coach Don James confer with spotters during a tense moment in the 1972 Mid-American Conference season.

Important institutes and centers were founded in the seventies by: Richard Varga, the Institute for Computational Mathematics; Regents Professor of Chemistry Glenn H. Brown, the Liquid Crystal Institute; Lawrence Kaplan, the Lyman L. Lemnitzer Center for NATO Studies; and Gerald Read, the Center for the Study of Socialist Education. Above all else Golding prized his part in acquiring, in 1981, the Silverman-Rodgers collection of historical artifacts and establishing the Shannon Rodgers/Jerry Silverman School of Fashion Design and Merchandising. That same year the bushy-tailed black squirrels, which had been brought from Canada, in 1961, and had proliferated over campus, town, and county, were chosen to symbolize the Black Squirrel Festival that welcomes new students to the campus community each fall.