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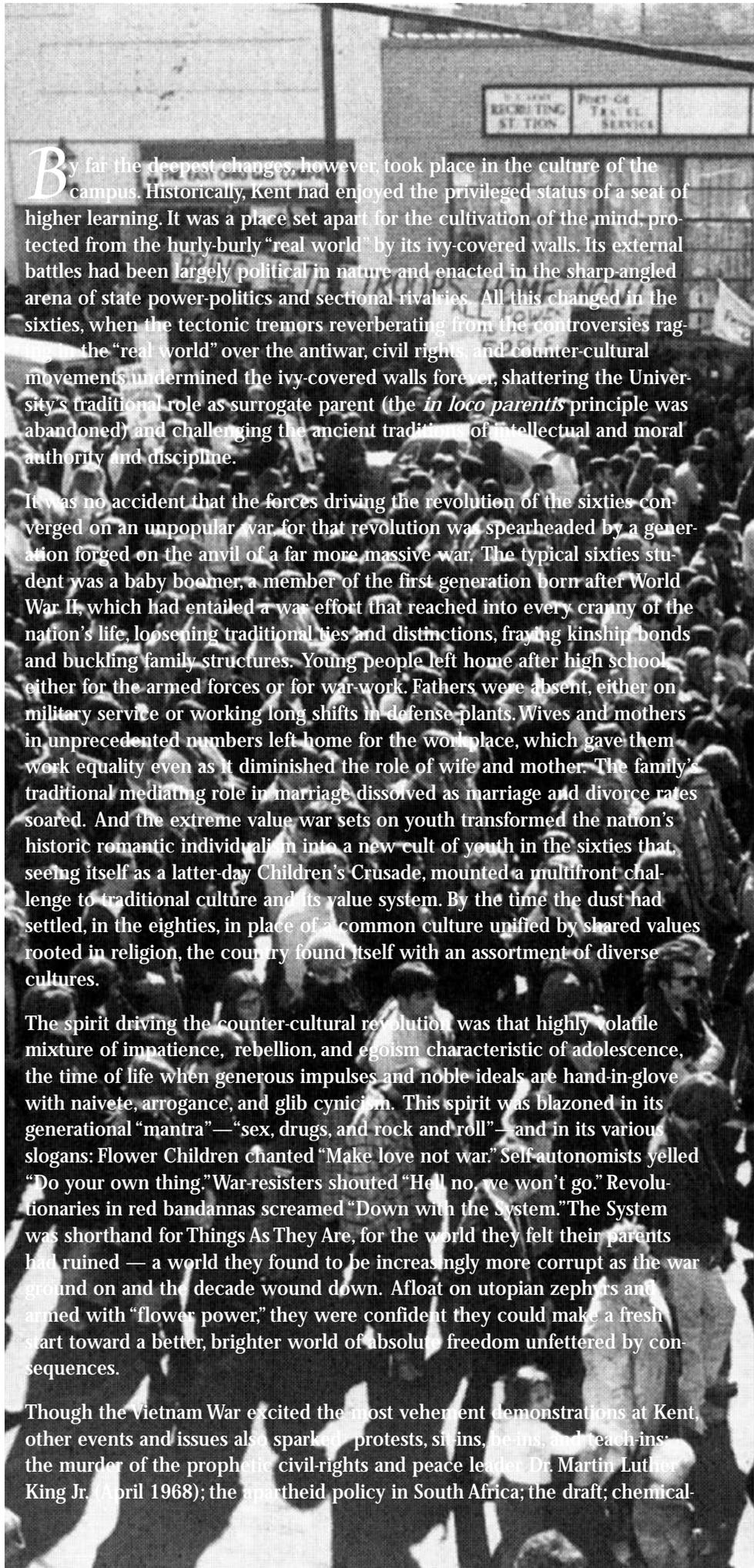
It was no accident that the forces driving the revolution of the sixties converged on an unpopular war, for that revolution was spearheaded by a generation forged on the anvil of a far more massive war.

By far the deepest changes, however, took place in the culture of the campus. Historically, Kent had enjoyed the privileged status of a seat of higher learning. It was a place set apart for the cultivation of the mind, protected from the hurly-burly “real world” by its ivy-covered walls. Its external battles had been largely political in nature and enacted in the sharp-angled arena of state power-politics and sectional rivalries. All this changed in the sixties, when the tectonic tremors reverberating from the controversies raging in the “real world” over the antiwar, civil rights, and counter-cultural movements undermined the ivy-covered walls forever, shattering the University’s traditional role as surrogate parent (the *in loco parentis* principle was abandoned) and challenging the ancient traditions of intellectual and moral authority and discipline.

It was no accident that the forces driving the revolution of the sixties converged on an unpopular war for that revolution was spearheaded by a generation forged on the anvil of a far more massive war. The typical sixties student was a baby boomer, a member of the first generation born after World War II, which had entailed a war effort that reached into every cranny of the nation’s life, loosening traditional ties and distinctions, fraying kinship bonds and buckling family structures. Young people left home after high school, either for the armed forces or for war-work. Fathers were absent, either on military service or working long shifts in defense plants. Wives and mothers in unprecedented numbers left home for the workplace, which gave them work equality even as it diminished the role of wife and mother. The family’s traditional mediating role in marriage dissolved as marriage and divorce rates soared. And the extreme value war sets on youth transformed the nation’s historic romantic individualism into a new cult of youth in the sixties that, seeing itself as a latter-day Children’s Crusade, mounted a multifront challenge to traditional culture and its value system. By the time the dust had settled, in the eighties, in place of a common culture unified by shared values rooted in religion, the country found itself with an assortment of diverse cultures.

The spirit driving the counter-cultural revolution was that highly volatile mixture of impatience, rebellion, and egoism characteristic of adolescence, the time of life when generous impulses and noble ideals are hand-in-glove with naivete, arrogance, and glib cynicism. This spirit was blazoned in its generational “mantra”—“sex, drugs, and rock and roll”—and in its various slogans: Flower Children chanted “Make love not war.” Self-autonomists yelled “Do your own thing.” War-resisters shouted “Hell no, we won’t go.” Revolutionaries in red bandannas screamed “Down with the System.” The System was shorthand for Things As They Are, for the world they felt their parents had ruined — a world they found to be increasingly more corrupt as the war ground on and the decade wound down. Afloat on utopian zephyrs and armed with “flower power,” they were confident they could make a fresh start toward a better, brighter world of absolute freedom unfettered by consequences.

Though the Vietnam War excited the most vehement demonstrations at Kent, other events and issues also sparked protests, sit-ins, rallies, and teach-ins: the murder of the prophetic civil-rights and peace leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (April 1968); the apartheid policy in South Africa; the draft; chemical-





A Vietnam War protest on front campus. At Kent antiwar demonstrations increased steadily in number and size during the sixties; nearly all were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner.

biological weapons research; the Oakland Police Department recruiters; the Free-Speech movement; the Free University movement. The pedagogical tool of evaluation was often disputed. In time the College of Arts and Sciences adopted a pass/fail option, to the dismay of some faculty. When students were empowered to evaluate and grieve faculty, the old relationship between student and teacher changed radically—the legal contract, putting student and teacher on equal footing, replaced the parental model of alma mater. Another tradition ended, in 1967, when freshman wore dinks for the last time.

The great majority of classes ran smoothly in time-honored grooves. But shake a kaleidoscope of that yeasty decade and one might see: a mob of protesters stage a sit-in or a be-in during a class session; or a clutch of students suddenly seize control of a class by insisting on discussing a “relevant” topic; or a fist of radicals stand up in the midst of a lecture and berate the teacher. Self-expression and sincerity of feeling sometimes rode roughshod over decency and decorum. And as the number and vigor of political activities mounted, so too the anxieties and actions of the campus police—and of the various federal agencies that honeycombed the campus with cells of undercover agents, to monitor “radicals.” In 1969 the Students for a Democratic Society capped a series of unruly protests over the “Free Speech” issue by “occupying” the Music and Speech Building. Bent on stopping a disciplinary hearing, they walked into a trap set by the campus police chief, who had them arrested by state troopers and bused to jail.

By contrast, a spirit of expectation and good cheer animated the largest demonstration of the era. One mild spring afternoon in 1969 thousands of students, faculty, and townspeople, part of a nationwide demonstration for a war moratorium, strolled peacefully from campus to downtown Kent. Hopes were high that President Nixon, having won a close election, in 1968, on the promise of a “secret plan” to end the war, would soon bring American forces home. Years of protests and demonstrations had turned public opinion against the war. It stood to reason that peace was at hand. But a year later reason would be crushed by events.

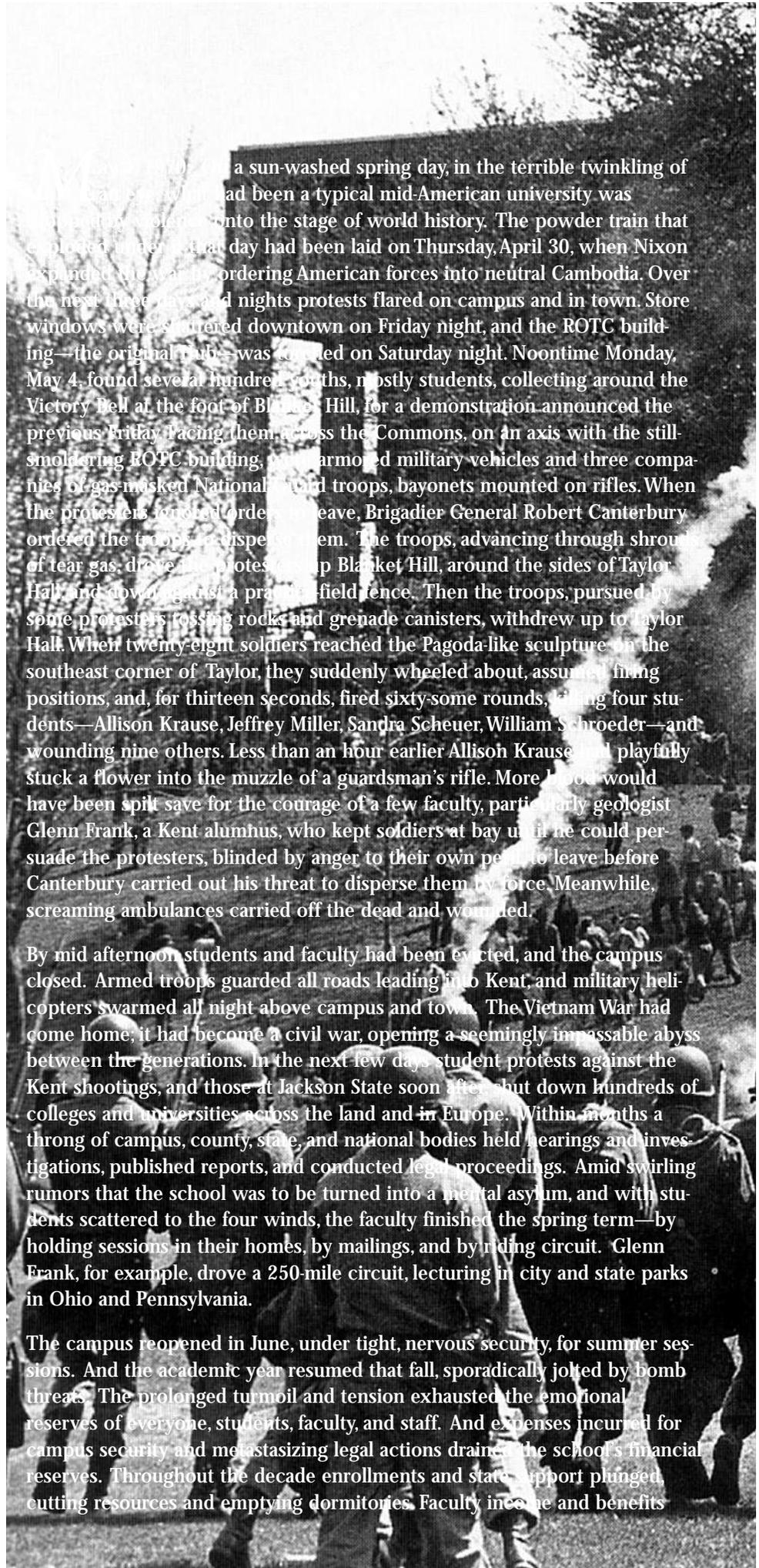
VII

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By mid afternoon, on a sun-washed spring day, in the terrible twinkling of a gun, a typical mid-American university was suddenly blown onto the stage of world history. The powder train that exploded under Kent that day had been laid on Thursday, April 30, when Nixon expanded the war, ordering American forces into neutral Cambodia. Over the next three days and nights protests flared on campus and in town. Store windows were shattered downtown on Friday night, and the ROTC building—the original hub—was torched on Saturday night. Noontime Monday, May 4, found several hundred youths, mostly students, collecting around the Victory Bell at the foot of Blaine Hill, for a demonstration announced the previous Friday facing them across the Commons, on an axis with the still-smoldering ROTC building, two armored military vehicles and three companies of gas-masked National Guard troops, bayonets mounted on rifles. When the protesters ignored orders to leave, Brigadier General Robert Canterbury ordered the troops to disperse them. The troops, advancing through shrouds of tear gas, drove the protesters up Blaine Hill, around the sides of Taylor Hall and down against a prairie field fence. Then the troops, pursued by some protesters tossing rocks and grenade canisters, withdrew up to Taylor Hall. When twenty-eight soldiers reached the Pagoda-like sculpture on the southeast corner of Taylor, they suddenly wheeled about, assumed firing positions, and, for thirteen seconds, fired sixty-some rounds, killing four students—Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, William Schroeder—and wounding nine others. Less than an hour earlier Allison Krause had playfully stuck a flower into the muzzle of a guardsman's rifle. More blood would have been spilt save for the courage of a few faculty, particularly geologist Glenn Frank, a Kent alumhus, who kept soldiers at bay until he could persuade the protesters, blinded by anger to their own peril, to leave before Canterbury carried out his threat to disperse them by force. Meanwhile, screaming ambulances carried off the dead and wounded.

By mid afternoon students and faculty had been evicted, and the campus closed. Armed troops guarded all roads leading into Kent, and military helicopters swarmed all night above campus and town. The Vietnam War had come home; it had become a civil war, opening a seemingly impassable abyss between the generations. In the next few days student protests against the Kent shootings, and those at Jackson State soon after, shut down hundreds of colleges and universities across the land and in Europe. Within months a throng of campus, county, state, and national bodies held hearings and investigations, published reports, and conducted legal proceedings. Amid swirling rumors that the school was to be turned into a mental asylum, and with students scattered to the four winds, the faculty finished the spring term—by holding sessions in their homes, by mailings, and by riding circuit. Glenn Frank, for example, drove a 250-mile circuit, lecturing in city and state parks in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The campus reopened in June, under tight, nervous security, for summer sessions. And the academic year resumed that fall, sporadically jolted by bomb threats. The prolonged turmoil and tension exhausted the emotional reserves of everyone, students, faculty, and staff. And expenses incurred for campus security and metastasizing legal actions drained the school's financial reserves. Throughout the decade enrollments and state support plunged, cutting resources and emptying dormitories. Faculty income and benefits





Allison Krause



Jeffrey Miller



Sandra Scheuer



William Schroeder

The University will continue to remember the four students who died in the events of May 4, 1970, through scholarships in their names and in the words inscribed on the May 4 Memorial: "Inquire, Learn, Reflect."

May 4, 1970: Troops prepare to fire as officers look on: Maj. Harry D. Jones extreme left, hands on hips; to the right of the pole, Brig. General Robert Canterbury, in civilian clothes. Lower right, three soldiers aim their rifles at student Howard Ruffner as he aims his camera at them.

suffered; sabbaticals were eliminated, though research grants were spared. And things worsened markedly when the Arab oil embargo shot the inflation rate skyward. Convinced that collegiality was a sham in the emergent managerial and corporate age, a divided faculty voted for collective bargaining. Meanwhile, each May 4 brought new demonstrations and, during the year, radicals of every stripe—from Cesar Chavez to Jane Fonda to Yippee leader Jerry Rubin (who harangued students to kill their parents)—visited campus, keeping the pot boiling. No other American institution of higher learning had ever been battered by so many powerful internal and external forces for so long a time as was Kent State University during the seventies. Its survival and triumph, without jettisoning its tradition of academic freedom and due process, speak eloquently for its resilience and fortitude.

Except for the families of the slain students, no one was harrowed more deeply or harried more relentlessly by the May 4 tragedy than President White. Though he stayed in office until 1971, his uncertain gait, increasing stoop, worn voice, and sad eyes told of a man shell shocked and bewildered at finding himself in a world for which his traditional values and code, his high academic ideals and dreams, had not prepared him. He knew as well as anyone what a great university should be and how to fashion it, but he was betrayed by history. In a day when the watchword, the intellectual solvent, was "rapping" (establishing rapport) with students, he could not "rap." He could not comprehend their vocabulary of violence or their contempt for all he held dear. Nor was he temperamentally or emotionally equipped for the vehemence of an ideological age of resentment and rebellion.