

Monday, May 4th, 1970....a date that will forever be scorched into my memory. I was a junior undergraduate student living on campus in Koonce Hall, one of the three new residences of Tri Towers. That entire weekend was kind of surreal. I admit to being an apathetic nursing student. I was not interested in politics and wondered what the “radical” students ever thought they could accomplish by their protests. (Boy, was I naïve!!) The confusion of that weekend leading up to May 4th is unforgettable. Saturday night we stood around and watched the old ROTC building burn to the ground. On Sunday we roamed around campus flirting with the cute National Guardsmen. On Sunday night we experienced the sting of tear gas as we tried to sneak out of our dorm rooms. Also that weekend we were handed a flyer to announce a noon rally scheduled Monday on the commons. Classes were in session that Monday. A few of my close friends had left for class already, my roommate and I were in the dorm studying. We were not far from the commons area and we both heard the gunshots at the same time! Was that fireworks? What's happening? We opened our window and could hear the screams. We soon started to see students running and heard sirens begin. Panic truly struck our beautiful campus that spring day. We ran downstairs to our lobby area hearing the rumors “they’re killing students!!” I can hardly describe the rest of that day- it seems like a bad dream. We wandered around close to our dorm hoping to find our friends and see that they were ok. Helicopters were now flying overhead and announcing via bull horns “Evacuate the campus immediately by order of Governor Rhodes”. Kent State buses were lining up on the streets with homemade cardboard signs *Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo!!* Where do we go? Most of us did not own a car. Then I remembered my cousin had a car, he was a senior living off campus that year. For reasons I still don't understand, phone lines were dead. So there was no way to call him and ask for a ride home. Luckily he had the same thoughts and was waiting for me. We all hurriedly packed a “weekend bag” and left campus in waves. I don't remember how many of us crammed into that little car. But picture 5-6 of us with our luggage, it was a wild couple hour drive to Southeast Ohio. Cell phones were not heard of yet, do you think one of us thought to call our parents along the way? NO...we were typical 19-20 year olds talking non-stop about what we had just experienced! It's hard to forget the look on my parents' faces when we pulled up to the house. That's when the tears began to fall, and they've continued to this day when I think about that naïve nursing student not understanding the realities of government and control.

Debbie Davis Sturm

As a footnote to this experience, this past October 2019 my roommates and I visited Kent State again. We went to the museum in the basement of Taylor Hall, watched a documentary movie *Fire in the Heartland*. We signed the visitor book, proud to say “class of 71” and shed a few more tears.