

This is a transcript of recordings of David Wirick (1950-2012), made by Katherine Wirick on May 29, 2010, in the town of Kent and on the Kent State University campus.

David Wirick came from Defiance, Ohio. He graduated from KSU in the class of '72 with a degree in Political Science. He was a member of ROTC in the same class as Bill Schroeder. After graduation he served in the US Army until 1975. On May 4, 1970 he was a 20-year-old sophomore.

Heard on the recording:

David Wirick

Katherine Wirick (David Wirick's daughter)

Ellen (David Wirick's spouse)

Gavin (Katherine Wirick's spouse)

11:26 AM

DAVID: OK. So JB's was down there. JB's was where Joe Walsh used to play. Joe Walsh and the James Gang used to play at JB's. And so these were all bars. And on Thursday night April... 30th, 30 days... That's right, 30 days in April. April 30th, Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia. So Nixon was on TV announcing basically widening the Vietnam war. So that was Thursday. Friday night was a standard bar night, nobody doing anything particular, and Kent had had no more history of antiwar stuff than any place else, in fact less than most places. And so this is, this was the cheap bar strip. This is, everybody came down here and they were just all kind of lined up, there were probably four, five, six bars here. And somebody in the middle of the evening, probably eleven o'clock at night, started a fire in the street, just grabbed some stuff and started a fire in the street, not a big deal. So the police showed up, there's a fire in the street, not a big one, kids throwing crap in the street, and, you know, kids drunk and whatever, and it's not even clear who started the fire in the street because there were a lot of, um, of bikers from Akron and stuff used to come here, and the Kent police showed up and decided that the best thing for them to do would be to close the bars. Because there's now unrest--there's fire in the street. So they put the fire out and they went into all the bars along here and they closed all the bars. Which immediately meant that you had now in the street, instead of a fire, you had: drunks. You had every student who had been in these bars got moved out of the bars into the street. Most of the people who came out were students, and what the police started to do, the Kent police, what they then started to do was herd them up towards campus. And to get to campus you go down this street couple blocks to the bank, and you turn left, and you go up Main Street. So we'll head up Main Street and drive up to campus up Main Street. So this is, again, this is Friday night, late at night, it's a nice night, early May, uh, this was May 1.

[recording ends]

11:35 AM

DAVID: Joe Walsh was a student, sort of. He wasn't a very good one, never graduated. He has established a scholarship at the School of Music. So there is the Joe Walsh Music Theory Scholarship. All right, there's JB's.

ELLEN: Is JB's upstairs?

DAVID: No, JB's is downstairs. I came down here one night, and some enterprising student--you used to go into JB's and you'd go down the stairs, and you'd pay your cover fee at the bottom of the stairs. And some student had set himself up at the top of the stairs, there at the street--and was charging a cover charge, and so he was charging a cover charge there, and he couldn't do it for a very long time because as soon as people got to the bottom of the stairs, and discovered that's where the pay was they were gonna be pissed.

DAVID: OK. So what happened here, now they're herding students up the street. As they're herding students up the street, students drunk, pissed off 'cause the bars were closed, started breaking windows. And by no means all the windows, but there were, throwing things, breaking windows, hooting at the cops, all--I don't know where I was that night, to tell you the truth. But that's what was going on.

ELLEN: These are all the fraternities.

DAVID: Yeah, these are all fraternity houses here. All dumps.

ELLEN: But, would've had crowds of students standing out on the lawns, watching the events.

DAVID: Yeah, so you got more students, you got more crap going on, and all--so you're kind of building this momentum of this mob, and it's really not--it's really hard to draw any link between that mob and any kind of antiwar activity, because it's probably likely that somebody just started a fire just... drunk students on a spring night start a fire. And then the police, arguably, probably not much argument about it, um, overreacting and deciding then let's close the bars, that'd be a good idea, well, then you've, you've quintupled or better the number of students you gotta deal with, the number of people you gotta deal with, and then to herd them back up to campus just was a, a kind of a melee. But the students went, and they herded the campus up--they got 'em right here to the front corner of campus where it's, the Kent State thing, and they let 'em go. So they basically said, OK, we got you to here, fine, so they got students right here, and then they all push 'em back to campus and that was it. So it ended there.

KATHERINE: We're on the corner of Main and Lincoln now, and we were on... the bars were on Water, right?

DAVID: Bars were on Water. Yeah. If I had a nickel for every dollar I spent at that building over on that corner we'd be driving nicer cars.

KATHERINE: The Robin Hood?

DAVID: The Robin Hood. The Robin Hood is where we used to hang out, and...

KATHERINE: Did it look like that back then?

DAVID: Yeah, it did. It looked pretty much like that, and, uh, it's gone through a number of name changes, it's interesting that it's back being the Robin Hood. OK. So now what we're gonna do is we're just gonna go back--we're gonna go find a parking place, and, uh, and figure out how to come back to the center of campus and advance a couple days.

KATHERINE: OK.

DAVID: Cause now we're at Friday night. So, OK, let me give you the rest of the story on Friday night. So, get the students back here on Friday night, Friday night's over. Saturday was a gray, ugly, kinda cold day, and all morning, the politicians were having a field day. The governor of Ohio weighed in, called students brownshirts, did the whole, you know, this is awful, civil unrest, you know, need to apply law and order, he was two days away--well, Tuesday, was a primary.

KATHERINE: And he was running against Taft, right?

DAVID: He was running against Taft for United States Senate. He was currently the governor and he was running for United States Senate. And he was term-limited, he could only be governor for two terms in a row, uh, he lost. Uh, governor, or, the mayor of Kent, guy named Leroy Satrom, um, you know, basically they all overreacted--oh, let me say, this is the Summit Mill apartments,

Joe Walsh lived in there.

KATHERINE: Oh.

DAVID: Um... they basically decided that they needed to declare curfew, and shut the campus down, or shut the town down. So Saturday night the bars were closed.

GAVIN: Oof.

DAVID: You couldn't get, you couldn't go to a bar, basically students weren't supposed to be on the street, um, on Saturday night. Uh, liquor stores were still open.

GAVIN: Of course.

DAVID: But--and in those days, um, you could drink, I think you could get hard liquor at 21. Or at 20.

[recording ends]

11:45 AM

DAVID: See that thing that looks like a hat in the center? They built in the center what they call, I think they called it a kiva. And what it was supposed to be was this area where students would get together and discuss ideas.

GAVIN: Oh, yeah.

DAVID: Well, they didn't discuss ideas. They smoked dope and hung out and did what students do. *[recording ends]*

12:16 PM

KATHERINE: Um, I was gonna ask--there were, a bunch of stuff that I've read, the, um, kind of the military-government point of view, the, the sort of anti-student point of view is that there were, um, there were outside agitators in town that, like, the Students for a Democratic Society and the Yippies and whatever, that were in town stirrin' up trouble, um, did you, were you aware of, is that, is that something that you had any idea about?

DAVID: No. I mean, there were, I read one of the, online one of the FBI investigations of that, and, um, we'll come back to this stuff in a minute. You know, they investigated, they interviewed a bunch of students who--

ELLEN: Did you--

DAVID: Yeah, we're gonna come back this way. I want to get it--I want to get things sequential. Um, and they interviewed this, somehow they were tipped off to this one living arrangement, this house that had a bunch of kids in it, and they interviewed the people who lived there, and said, "Oh yeah, so-and-so came and yeah, he'd been at the University of Illinois and then he came here, and..." but it was some kid who was just kind of, you know, you go visit some friends for a while, so it was very--to say that it was anything organized or any kind of conspiracy was really a stretch, in what I read, and there really wasn't... Kent was a docile place, mostly.

ELLEN: Kent was not known as a freethinking university.

DAVID: No. Not at all. It was a school of education. Okay, now--all right. Here's an important site right here. Now. Remember we said, I said on Saturday, there was, um, everything was shut

down, there weren't supposed to be any gatherings on campus, and it was like I said kind of a cold, dreary, drizzly day, during the day nothing happened--it was a Saturday, so nobody was, you know, no, nothing organized. On Saturday night, now, you have to recall, that's the old student union, that was there. These trees kind of obstruct--those trees weren't there 40 years ago.

KATHERINE: OK.

DAVID: At least they weren't that size. So sitting down at the bottom of that hill were four military barracks buildings. One of 'em sat this way, and the other three sat this way and were lined up. The one-story one sat over here, and the three-story ones sat here. And on Saturday night, a group of people gathered down there, probably about the area where, at the edge of the grass in front of that building on this side, and--in the dark. And we had heard signs or calls or rumors or whatever that there was gonna be some kind of gathering, so we didn't join it, and a friend of mine and I, a guy named Hank Rannenberg, who's now dead, who was an interesting guy, but anyway--Rannenberg and I walked over to see what was going on. And Rannenberg was a Navy veteran, and Rannenberg and I stood right about here. Down there was a big crowd of people, very tightly packed. Not the kind of standard, mill around, kind of, let's talk about, you know, let's protest the war. A pretty densely packed bunch of people. And people, there were some people walking away from them, and people were walking away kind of complaining about, this is a nasty group. And so the rumor was, this is a nasty bunch of people who are intent on something, and they were taking away cameras, and, if you'll notice in the archives and such, very little documentation of who they were, or what went on down there, now, it was in the dark! Now, this is also, you have to--this is the only antiwar demonstration or whatever that I was ever familiar with, in the dark. Cause they usually took place in the daytime.

ELLEN: Is that a little hollow down there, did the, did the ROTC buildings sit down in there 'cause it looks like a ridge--

DAVID: No, they were right at that level. I think the ridge may be--no, the ridge I think was there--maybe not. That ridge may be, may be new. Have to see when we get down there. So anyway, so that group of people is down there. And periodically somebody would leave that group, and they had railroad flares, and they had broken a window in the ROTC building, the one-story one that sat facing lengthwise to us, and it was down there just about all the way down to that cross sidewalk. They'd broken a window, they'd go up there and they'd set the drapes on fire. And they'd set the drapes on fire and the drapes would flare up a little bit and everybody'd cheer and they'd, they'd fall apart, you know how drapes, when fabric doesn't catch on fire it just fell apart and that was it. They tried that three or four times, over, over a while. Rannenberg and I went into, I think this is Johnson Hall right here. Rannenberg--and this has got a new face on it, the brick is all new--unless it is new and they changed, they may have knocked it down, built something new. But basically right there was Johnson Hall. Rannenberg and I went into Johnson Hall and made that phone call to the fire department that said, "Hey, you know they're down here trying to burn a building down?" and a woman on the phone said "Yes we do, thank you," and hung up. So Rannenberg and I stand up here for a while, we're watching this bunch of people down there, and at one point they all left. And they all started streaming across that way out of sight. Rannenberg and I turned around and said well, OK, that's over. That bunch of people eventually set fire to a field hockey equipment shed that was down there a little ways. And Rannenberg and I went home. We turned around and we got halfway back to Eastway, kind of over the hill a little bit, and that building went up like, like a bomb had gone off. It just went WHOOSH. And before you knew it the flames were, you know, you can see--we went back down over the hill. You could see the flames from where we were. Shooting sky high. Now it was a wooden, it was an old wooden building. And if it caught on fire it would've burned fast. But our impression the whole time was, we watched the group walk away, then we walked away, then the building caught on fire. It, it, and that, if you read the conspiracy theorists, would say there was something kinda strange about that, there's talk about fire department arriving and being driven back and having hoses cut. It certainly didn't occur while we saw it. So either happened, that

either had to happen before the building caught on fire, which was unlikely, that hoses, that the fire department would arrive and unroll hoses for a building that wasn't on fire yet, or after the building was gone. Cause that building, I mean, the flames that were going up, that wasn't that big a building. And it was shootin' fireball, you know, way high.

ELLEN: And wood won't shoot a fireball. Wood burning.

DAVID: Well, you wouldn't think. You wouldn't think.

GAVIN: It doesn't explode--

DAVID: It doesn't explode, no. Now the other thing that was odd, is that within... within an hour of that happening, the National Guard was here.

ELLEN: It's as though--

DAVID: And the National Guard had assembled over towards the front of campus, which is where we were earlier? And about the time we got back to the dorm, back out that way, it's a little ways away, the National Guard was here. Friend of mine was a guy named--kid named--guy named Gaines. What was Gaines' first name... I don't remember Gaines' first name. Nice guy. He was walking across campus and got knocked flat and had a bayonet shoved in his face, for no good reason--Joe Gaines. And he told us that story afterwards, and, y'know, and Joe Gaines was, he, he wasn't rabid military but he was not protesting anything, he was out, y'know, just bein' a kid, and if you knew Joe Gaines he wasn't serious about much of anything.

ELLEN: The sequence of events almost sounds like the National Guard had--Guard needed a reason to arrive. Poof!

KATHERINE: Well, I--I read something, I forget the guy's name but it was somebody who worked for the newspaper, I believe, either the newspaper or the television station, in Kent, who had been hearing all day, "Be sure you get out there tonight, they're gonna burn the ROTC building down."

DAVID: Ah. Yeah. Yeah, now whether or not that was, you know, people intended that or what, where that, it's, it's, it's really hard to say, y'know, and, and, y'know, your memories get fuzzy over the years but the sequence I am completely clear of that Rannenberg and I didn't see a building burning. We got bored and left because we didn't think they were gonna burn the building 'cause they were going that way. So Rannenberg and I said OK, that's over, nothin' to see here anymore, let's go home.

GAVIN: Was there a fuel dump or maybe munitions or anything?

DAVID: There was--there were munitions in the building. Because the basement of the building--the one-story building actually had a basement and in the basement was a rifle range. Now the rifle range only accommodated, uh, very, very small-caliber weapons, .22, match rifle, kind of thing which are just kinda--they are really rifles but they're a little more powerful than a pellet gun. And so you could fire those in the basement. So there was some ammunition in the building.

ELLEN: But doesn't explain the--

DAVID: It doesn't explain the, the whoosh.

GAVIN: Was there maybe diesel, maybe a fuel--

DAVID: Shouldn't have been. Should not have been because it was basically, that was the headquarters building. So that was offices on the first floor of the ROTC instructors, and

basement was the rifle range.

GAVIN: Maybe... natural gas heat or... or petroleum?

DAVID: Uh... Probably would have been if it was connected into the Kent grid would've been steam heat. 'Cause we had, that's what, there are steam tunnels running all around the, all round the campus, in fact the powerhouse is right there. Uh, well, it's not there anymore. The powerhouse used to be right there, behind that building--behind those trees. So I don't know. You know, you're left at--I don't know what the explanation is. Very, very strange...

KATHERINE: I know there's--from, from reading the--'cause the university has a whole bunch of written, recorded and transcribed testimonials on their website from all sorts of people, and so I know there's other students that corroborate the sequence, your sequence of events.

DAVID: That sequence--the sequence I saw.

KATHERINE: Yeah, you're not the only person who, uh--

DAVID: The sequence that I believe that I saw, yeah.

KATHERINE: Yeah, you're not the only person who saw that.

DAVID: Yeah. Okay, so that's, that's Saturday. Okay? National Guard arrived.

ELLEN: Saturday night? Was the--

DAVID: Saturday night. This is late Saturday night. So now the National Guard is on campus, it's late Saturday night, nothin' else happens there. Sunday was, the weather was beginning to clear, and Sunday was, everybody going out to look at the National Guard. And so people wandering around, um, you know, talkin' to the National Guard, lookin' at the National Guard, they had a helicopter over on the field on the other side of the road by the student union, they had armored personnel carriers--people called 'em tanks, they weren't--they were, y'know, big metal blocks on tracks, and quite a number of National Guard around campus. And they were--at intersections they'd have a cluster of them, and they had, y'know, certain areas that they were guarding--wow! Look what they did to the honors college!

KATHERINE: I want to establish where we are for when I listen to this again--we were just on the hill--

DAVID: We were on the hill--

KATHERINE: In front of the pagoda--

DAVID: In front of the pagoda--

KATHERINE: Next to--

DAVID: Taylor Hall. Right.

KATHERINE: And now we're comin' down towards where, we're next to the, uh--

DAVID: Goin' down past the Victory Bell. Past the Victory Bell.

KATHERINE: And this, is this the Commons? What's this field called?

DAVID: This is the Commons, this green area to our right is the Commons.

KATHERINE: OK.

DAVID: When I was in the honors college--and I was in the honors college for four years--the honors college actually had its headquarters in one of the ROTC buildings. Not for any reason, but they just had some office space there and they ran some of their programs out of that.

KATHERINE: Now--did you get shit from anybody for bein' in the ROTC.

DAVID: No. Oh, you would--well, if--as an individual, you could go anywhere on campus in uniform, and nobody'd give you any grief. If you had a parade, you'd get grief. And so, we used to gather all the time in formation, ROTC drill days, used to be, come out here on the Commons and march around. And--

KATHERINE: My mother's laughing.

ELLEN: It's just so--it's just so militia-ish. A bunch of young boys getting together with wooden rifles and marching around. It's the Boy Scouts.

DAVID: Well, they weren't all wooden.

ELLEN: I know--I know, it's just the way you describe it is so...

DAVID: Yeah. Now, y'know, kids in the dorm used to tease you, y'know, because, y'know, you were, my nickname for, I had, I had two nicknames, I lived with a bunch of people who were big on nicknames, talk about Dan the Mole and, um, all these crazy people, but I was the General for part of college, because of the uniform, and I was also then, well, then it changed, because the Wirick, it became the Wire, I was the Wire. Anyway. Cause I was skinny, and I was active, I guess. Okay.

KATHERINE: So there wasn't a lot--there wasn't a lot of militant hippie presence on campus that you noticed.

DAVID: No. No. Well--there was an SDS chapter, and there were the same, the usual suspects who showed up for every anti-war demonstration, and you knew that there were some kids who were more, I guess, quote, radicalized than the others, but... y'know, and y'know, all the--there used to be periodic rallies, and anti-war stuff, and all sorts of people would go to those. Cause they weren't, they weren't overtly political. Now, here, this has really changed. That building was there, and those ROTC buildings were all located in here, tucked between the power plant and here, so if you kind of imagine, you've got these buildings stacked in here, and the one building over here, which had been burned down. So, now we're talkin' about, this is now--so Sunday was basically a nothing day. There were, it was kind of a bizarre day because, from--there were helicopters patrolling the campus, so the helicopters would fly over your head, and it was, y'know, it was, there was really a sense of military takeover. You were really in a military zone all of a sudden. Now, then, Monday came.

KATHERINE: Was--can I ask, was the, was the atmosphere among the students, was it, sort of--were people scared about this, or was it kind of like, oh, cool, there's helicopters on our campus...

DAVID: It was a little of both. It was really both, and it was really a sense of, I think, um, surrealism, because all of a sudden you have your campus, that, y'know, you hang out on campus and you do the stuff and you, y'know, you go lay out on, they used to call that thing Blanket Hill. Uh, where the hill, behind the Victory Bell? And, uh, because kids from the dormitories would get their blankets and they'd come sit on the hill and make out and such.

ELLEN: Were--none of those trees were there?

DAVID: The trees were there but they weren't as thick then. So it was wooded--

ELLEN: A lot of those trees are not very old.

DAVID: Yeah. It was wooded but it wasn't as thickly wooded.

KATHERINE: Yeah. Now, this--I'm lookin' towards the bell and it looks pretty much like the photographs, basically.

DAVID: It does. Looking out here looks pretty much like the photographs. Now, these trees weren't here. You'll see on the photographs, this stuff, these trees are newer. They weren't here. So, now--OK. So we're now at Monday. So Monday started off a regular day, everybody went to class in the morning, and there had been announcements that said gatherings on campus were illegal, because we were under martial law, you could not, uh, gather. But I went to class, over in the political science building, and there were, uh, flyers going around, that said there is going to be a demonstration at twelve o'clock at the Victory Bell, which is where things always were. So the word was getting out, demonstration, twelve o'clock at the Victory Bell. I had what was probably an eleven o'clock class here in one of those buildings. And it was in that building, and I wasn't in uniform, but I had an ROTC class in one of these three buildings. And it was an infantry tactics test, I finished the test, we walked out of the building, and everybody in the room, which was my ROTC class, there were about twelve of us, said, where should we watch whatever might happen? Cause this is now getting close to 11:30, quarter of twelve, and all of us except for Bill Schroeder said, let's stay here. So...

ELLEN: Where was the Guard?

DAVID: The Guard was around me. So if you, if you stand here you can imagine a circle that kind of, if you went to, like, the first bush there, and the Guard kind of stretched a circle around, just kind of a perfect circle right around there, starting at that first bush. So I'm inside the Guard. OK? So the Guard's out there and they're in a circle. And what then started to happen was students started to gather at the Victory Bell. And there was a group of students, probably, I don't know, a couple hundred maybe, not a huge number, but there were a lot of students around. Kind of doing what I was doing.

KATHERINE: Cause shit was going on.

DAVID: Cause shit was happening, so you gotta watch. So, so we're standing down here and we're watching, and what would start to happen was the, a Guard officer in a, with a bullhorn would say, it is, martial law has been declared, it's illegal, you are subject to arrest if you don't disperse immediately. And he'd drive out in the Jeep and they'd make those announcements, and people would hoot and holler and, y'know... holler at him...

ELLEN: Which is hilarious because the students aren't, many of them are not gathering for something to happen but to watch what might happen, so they're not gathering for nefarious reasons.

DAVID: Right. Right. So they're really directing their attention at the Victory Bell rather than anything else. And then they started shooting tear gas out at the Victory Bell. And the tear gas was launched out of, well, it was a modified shell, launched it out of a grenade launcher, little short stubby thing, and it would toss it out there, and the tear gas came in a rubber tube. And so the rubber tube would hit the ground. And the wind was blowing from this direction to that direction, so the tear gas would hit and immediately disperse off that way. And what the students

would do is they'd run around behind it, upwind of it, pick it up, and throw it back. Now they weren't able to throw it all the way back because there was a pretty sizable distance between the Guard and the students then, cause the students really are clustered at the Bell, and the Guard is really back here, so there's a good hundred yards of separation out there between the Guard and the students.

ELLEN: But they knew it would aggravate the Guard that they were picking this stuff up and throwing it--

DAVID: Yeah. Oh, yeah. So they were aggravating them, and who knows what else they were throwing, I don't know, I mean, they weren't close enough at this point to really cause anybody any harm.

KATHERINE: There's not--people talk about throwing rocks--

DAVID: No.

KATHERINE: But there's not a lotta--rocks around.

DAVID: There's not a lot of rocks to throw. No. And the distance, particularly here, at this point, the distance was so great that, that there was not any real serious rock throwing damage. Now the Guard, from their perspective, they're sittin' here, it's a hot day, because of the tear gas around, many of them have their gas masks on. And it's hot, and they, y'know, they're being taunted, they're having an ugly day... We saw one Guardsman, sitting out there, kinda grabbed his chest and fell out of the Jeep. Turns out he had a heart attack. So the next thing you know, they're zippin' this guy in an ambulance up the hill--and there're ambulances, clustered around here too. We saw one guy, and there are pictures of this guy, we saw one guy brought down from over there, and they brought him down inside the Guard circle, and they took a gun away from him. And he was--

KATHERINE: His name was Terry Norman?

DAVID: Terry Norman. Took a gun away from him, and it was a very strange interaction with Terry Norman, nobody's ever figured out what Terry Norman was all about. And I have never heard a good explanation of--hi--of who he was or what he was. But, anyway, so. They were telling us periodically that we had to go hide behind the buildings, because of snipers. Which we all thought was crap, nobody believed it, so we'd all wander over and we'd stand behind a building for a couple minutes and then we'd wander back out. So this goes back and forth for, oh...

[encounter with passerby]

DAVID: OK. So. So now what's happening is you get this kind of sense of building frustration. There's this group of students out here, they're not dispersing. Guard keeps saying disperse. Now the Guard is armed. And they're--M1 rifles, .45 caliber pistols, uh, so they're armed. So, at one point then, for some reason the Guard decided that instead of just sitting here and telling them to disperse, we will disperse them. So what they did is a set of Guards assembled and took off up the hill. And they took off up the hill and they spread apart--they weren't in crowd-control mode, they were in infantry-attack mode. 5 meters apart, y'know, so one hand grenade doesn't get you all, kind of thing, so they headed up and they were spread out as they went up. Almost all the way across. They got up towards the top of the hill, and the students are moving with them. And so they're pushing the students away from the Victory Bell up the hill. As they got to the top of the hill, they moved this way, and headed up towards the pagoda where we just came from.

[recording ends]

1:18 PM

DAVID: --so now we can go up the hill. So we're gonna follow the Guard. So I've been sitting down, standing down here, gawking, watching the whole thing unfold. Guard goes up the hill, funnels at the top of the hill, then they come back together, and they funnel right up the hill, and you can see that it's a narrow slot, headed up the hill past Taylor Hall. Okay? So they had to come right back together and they headed up that hill. And then when we get to the top of the hill we'll see what happened then.

KATHERINE: Okay. Now, at this point Bill Schroeder had already left--

DAVID: Bill Schroeder had already taken off--he took off immediately. And what he said was he was gonna go get his roommate. He had made a commitment to get his roommate. So he went over to, I don't know where his roommate was, he went over to meet with his roommate.

[wind noise]

DAVID: Yeah. So here you go. More students than I remember. Most of these students across here are just watching. So you can see, they're scattered all across here, and just keepin' an eye on things, and the students that are kind of causing the problem, y'know, probably this--I don't know, it's hard to say, the Victory Bell is down here from this group. Um--

KATHERINE: Were you over... here somewhere?

DAVID: Yes. Now, here--see these buildings? Right there, and there's the edge of the building that we were standing near? Here are, right here, this big thing here, that's the remains of the building that was burned down.

KATHERINE: Uh huh.

[passerby]: It burned that badly?

DAVID: Oh, it burned completely to the ground. It was an old wooden barracks building.

[passerby]: Oh. Oh. Huh.

DAVID: It went--it was completely down. So you see the National Guard had the, where they had their circle. And so, if we could blow this up and get accuracy, this is probably me back in here somewhere. Probably, you see these people here? That's where I was.

KATHERINE: OK.

DAVID: So, so that's me. Let's see.

KATHERINE: Yeah. I think I have this picture on my computer at the moment, um, cause you were tellin' me about a picture that probably had you in it, I think this might be it.

DAVID: Yeah, that's probably it. Yeah. So 11:45, troops take position, OK. So this is all happening much faster than I remember it happening. Because I remember--clearly--I think the troops were there earlier than 11:45. Because I think the troops were there when I came out, of that--of one of those buildings. Um, so, yeah, so I'm, I'm back in here somewhere. So now we got the troops movin' up the hill, and they're movin' in this way, up the hill. Now of the four students who eventually were killed, in the pictures, you only see one of 'em central to that Victory Bell contingent. And that's Jeff Miller. And, uh, which one, Allison Krause, is iffy. Allison Krause, the pictures they have of her, she was dressed like somebody who might have been, but I don't think they have any real good pictures that tie Allison Krause to active participation in the, in the

events.

KATHERINE: But they were both, um, they, they were both the kind of kids who would've been at an anti-war rally?

DAVID: Yeah, yeah. And, and, and Jeff Miller was certainly a person who was much more active than she was, she was a--yeah. She was, if you'd've seen her you'd have said, oh, hippie, y'know, that was--she, she was, she dressed that way, but still. Nobody knows, I think, for sure, what role she had--I mean, you saw all those students. I mean, it was thousands of students. And, as I said--most of 'em were there just kind of seeing what's gonna happen next.

KATHERINE: Well, almost all of the pictures are of students standing there. There's, there's hardly any pictures of students actually--there's a picture of Alan Canfora waving a flag. But there's, like--there's hardly any pictures of students throwing rocks, or yelling stuff, or...

DAVID: Yeah. It was like me, I just had a different, I had a different outlook, I had a different vantage point. So I watched from there.

KATHERINE: So the Guard moved up this hill? OK.

DAVID: Up this hill. Started wide, moved up this hill, and narrowed.

KATHERINE: OK. We're comin' back up Blanket Hill now.

DAVID: Back up Blanket Hill. Let's stop and look at this...

KATHERINE: And here's--we're in front of Taylor Hall, where there were a whole bunch of students on the balcony here, and...

DAVID: The balcony was jammed full of students.

KATHERINE: Oh, and there's Bill.

DAVID: Oh, there he is! Oh, my goodness. There's Bill Schroeder. So he was on this side.

ELLEN: He's heading up the hill.

DAVID: He's heading up the hill as the National Guard is moving out this way, and the students are basically saying OK, let's go this way. And you can see, y'know, Bill, Bill was in ROTC, Bill was not there protesting the Guard on campus. Bill's there like everybody else, kind of looking at a learning experience.

ELLEN: And he--if you look at a lot of these faces he actually seems to be taking it seriously. Studying everything. And these kids are clearly not taking it seriously.

DAVID: It's kind of--

ELLEN: Kind of a lark.

DAVID: Right, kind of a lark. Now here--I had never seen this one. Allison Krause to the right of the pagoda. So that's Allison Krause. So Allison Krause was there, involved. So she's clearly part of the, the group. So, yeah, so now you can see how the Guard start out kind of this wide, move up the hill, now they're moving up to here, and they're coming back this way, those who were over there are now moving back this way, across Taylor Hall here, and then they're all assembling and moving up here towards the pagoda. Let's see what the other [unintelligible]

KATHERINE: OK.

DAVID: OK. This is afterwards. So I'll show you this--

KATHERINE: OK. There's Glenn Frank.

DAVID: There's Glenn Frank. Yeah. OK. We'll come back to this. We'll get this back in sequence. OK. So. Let's see what this is. So, National Guard now is moving up over here, students basically fleeing out in front of 'em.

KATHERINE: OK. We're comin' past the pagoda now.

ELLEN: This is not supposed to be a walking balcony but students were out there, and you said--I thought you said this building was built afterwards.

DAVID: Oh, no. No, not this one.

KATHERINE: It's in all the pictures.

ELLEN: Yeah. Yeah. Well, clearly.

DAVID: You can see here where the controversy was about building that building, cause that clearly is [unintelligible] Now, what happened here--now the Guard is out of sight to me, cause I'm still back there. OK? So now the Guard is coming over this hill. There was a football practice field in that flat spot, and that, that road wasn't there. It's where the football team used to come practice. So it was a real football field. So what happened was, the Guard came over this hill, and when they got to the football field right down in front of us, they came together and they huddled. So there are pictures of the Guard in this little tight-knit group, talking. So they move this way, move over--over the hill.

ELLEN: Where were all the students?

DAVID: The students had in part pushed out that way, well, you--Bill Schroeder, we'll see, died right down there. So what happens is all the students, the Victory Bell students, are all being pushed ahead of them--

ELLEN: Over the hill and beyond the football field--

DAVID: So they get out there to the practice--and, and dispersed about. So they have their huddle. And they only got as far as the middle of that field, OK, which is, what, it's 50 yards in front of us. OK? So then, the National Guard turned, still pretty tight line, and headed back this way. Headed back up towards where I was. And they came--towards the pagoda. Right. So they came up this little hill, to the top of the hill, and--they got right about here. And students--I mean, you've got, you've got all those students right there, they've got another group of students who they're now, who are now retreating this way, back towards the Commons, in front of 'em, cause they're moving this way. They got students in pretty tightly packed over here on the other side as well. The only direction they don't have students tightly packed is behind them. So they're headed back up to here. They get right about to here, and they turn around, all at the same moment, and fire back down this hill. Those trees weren't there.

ELLEN: Towards the football field.

DAVID: Towards the football field, and the parking lot.

ELLEN: And that parking lot was there?

DAVID: That parking lot was there. So they turn and they fire back this, back down towards the parking lot.

GAVIN: They took the high ground.

DAVID: Yeah. And if you look at the pictures of the Guard officers, the Guard officer there, there's a guy with a .45, a pistol instead of a rifle--he is immediately in front of his Guardsmen pushing their rifles up. And that's why, when the guy asked me the question, "Do you think there was an order to fire?" I don't know. If there was an order to fire, it was, my guess is it was an order to fire warning shots in the air. Above the heads of the students. Because those set of buildings right there weren't there. So the closest building to here were the Tri-Towers, over there. But if you fired off in that direction, where those new buildings are, there's nothing there.

KATHERINE: If you fired up, towards the sky--

DAVID: If you fired up, or even if you fired flat. Y'know, if your weapon is not pointed down, you're gonna fire straight off that way. Now--not a real good idea to fire a high-caliber weapon in an urban area anyway.

ELLEN: Firing up, you could catch somebody on the descent of the--

DAVID: It's gonna come down. Bullet's gonna come down. Um, it's gonna come down at the same velocity it went up, and so--yes. Very, very--if that was the case, it's a very dangerous thing to do. Death toll would've been zero or small, had they fired off into that open area where those buildings are. Well, unfortunately, they didn't. I want to see these pictures here, see what...

KATHERINE: Now the thing that some of the Guardsmen have said, there was a--I watched a documentary where they got some Guardsmen to talk, and they were saying that the chain of command was confused--

DAVID: Yeah.

KATHERINE: They didn't know who was, who they were directly supposed to report to, there was more than one general around, um, and that they were confused and disorganized, basically.

DAVID: OK. OK. See, here we go. Here is the action down here, here's the practice field, and the Guard here, and then we've got--"Huddles with officers" before moving back up, and this is the National Guard commander. Um, and so this is, y'know, aiming at students, firing tear gas, all of this stuff, um, "Troop G clustered look back towards the parking lot, troops reach the pagoda, [unintelligible] right flank, mostly from Troop G, wheeled 135 degrees in unison, 67 shots in 13 seconds." Back down--

KATHERINE: So there's--

DAVID: And who's this--

KATHERINE: There's the Guard, I guess, just before they fired--

DAVID: Yeah, they're very close, just before they fired.

KATHERINE: And here's one of the--here's Joe Lewis--

DAVID: One of the students--right. And you see where these students all are? These are, they're

all on there, they're on the porch of Taylor Hall. And this is the corner porch so that's right there.

KATHERINE: Yeah.

ELLEN: OK.

DAVID: Right there at that corner you can see the Guard here.

KATHERINE: Which is now clear of students.

DAVID: Yeah, which is now clear of students, and you look at this, and you look back in the direction they, they fired in, and look, I mean, here you got students but those are those way up there. They're on the porch. But you look down in here and there's not much and still, look at the spacing here. There's still a lot of spacing.

KATHERINE: So the argument that the Guard were surrounded and threatened...

DAVID: You know, what people have said, and this is impossible to know, people have said, justifying the shootings, that, um--yeah, look at this. "Students would've required good right arms like Mickey Mantle's to have reached the Guardsmen with even small stones." Yeah, there was spacing there. What people have said was, there was something behind them, a shot fired, or something, and they disputed for years, y'know, the shot people heard of, "We heard a shot from behind us so we turned and fired," and there's no evidence on any of the recordings of a shot fired. Uh, and what it was is one of the students, I think it was in Johnson Hall which I think is gone, because I think Johnson Hall was in closer, I don't know if you can see it here. Here it is, um--I think it was closer. But it was a student--

ELLEN: I think that's all new.

DAVID: Yeah, I think that's all new. So I think Johnson Hall was actually closer, so that building was closer.

GAVIN: And there's a tower that's no longer there.

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah. Um, a student put a, that tape recorder you're hearing now, that they're now analyzing, he put his tape recorder in the window. And just had a tape recorder and let it, let it play.

ELLEN: All right, so now where were--the parking lot where kids got shot is this parking lot over here?

DAVID: This parking lot right here.

ELLEN: Quite small.

DAVID: Right. Right. And we'll see where the students--you can see those short little bollards down there? That's Jeff Miller.

ELLEN: Ohh.

KATHERINE: The one that's closest to us?

DAVID: The one that's closest to us, this one right down here is Jeff Miller.

ELLEN: Oh my goodness.

DAVID: And he was the one, remember the girl with the Mona Lisa face? Right. Somebody shot him in the neck. So somebody standing right here, clearly--well, I wouldn't say clearly, took an aimed shot at him.

KATHERINE: I think I--I think I read that he was shot through the mouth, actually.

DAVID: Oh, was he.

KATHERINE: His mouth was open, he was shot through the mouth and out--exit wound out the back of his skull.

DAVID: Out the back of his head. OK. Yeah, you know more than I do about that, but he was clearly, um...

KATHERINE: It seems likely that somebody aimed at, at him.

ELLEN: And the direction--the direction was not high. The direction had to've been--

DAVID: Well, the direction was down, because they're up here on the hill. So they're shooting down, he, somebody who shot at him was, was not trying to fire over anybody's head because a shot fired level from there would go over people's heads.

KATHERINE: Yeah.

ELLEN: Yeah... He aimed.

GAVIN: But they're definitely low.

DAVID: Yeah. The argument here would be, y'know, we heard a shot fired from behind us so we turned around and he was the closest person, we shot him. You know, I don't know. As I said, nobody's ever heard the shot, um, that was alleged to be...

KATHERINE: And the FBI, when they investigated, in 1970 or 71, they did not find any evidence that there was, that that had happened.

DAVID: Yeah. Nobody's ever figured out, other than an order, nobody's ever figured out what the impetus was. Now this, I'll just show you this. This was here then, and... See here. Bullet hole, through the, uh, through that metal sculpture. And you, look at--look at the, look at the depth of the metal sculpture, and you can, you can see the power of an M1--

KATHERINE: It's a very clean hole.

DAVID: It's a very clean hole. Now it should've spalled on the back...

KATHERINE: Just punched right through.

GAVIN: Yeah, it's a little wider on the back.

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah. You can see, it began to open up on the way out, and create the lip on the way out, so it takes all that force--

ELLEN: Wow.

DAVID: That's the whole problem with being struck with a high-caliber weapon like that--

ELLEN: You can't--there's no way to survive it.

DAVID: Well, the exit wound is gonna be four times the size of the entry wound.

KATHERINE: It's small entrance, large exit is the forensic rule.

DAVID: Yeah. It's gonna, it's gonna cause a lot of damage. M16's are different. M16's didn't create the same kind of damage to people, they created different damage which was in a way worse because an M16 fires a very light bullet, which is unstable as soon as it hits something. So you could shoot somebody and hit 'em in the butt with an M16, it may exit anywhere.

KATHERINE: It bounces around you.

DAVID: So, yeah, this is the...

KATHERINE: There's the, there's the photograph.

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah. Uh, "farthest away, 750 feet." Donald Scott McKenzie, wounded, 750 feet away. He's probably not even on the map.

KATHERINE: Yeah, I'm not sure what these--oh, these numbers are just the, they're just the signs.

DAVID: OK. Yeah. Yeah. And then here of course is the--now, this photo--oh, no, it's not, I was gonna say this photo looks doctored, because she's actually kneeling in a puddle of blood, but you can see here--

KATHERINE: It's--the light's hitting it and it's--there it goes.

DAVID: The light's hitting it and it's not reflecting but he is basically bleeding out.

ELLEN: Oh my gosh.

DAVID: Um, yeah, he was dead immediately, there was no question about it. He was gone.

KATHERINE: The photo that ran in Life was actually doctored, they erased this, uh--

DAVID: Oh, out of her head.

KATHERINE: They erased the pole right out of her head, cause it's pretty, it's compositionally awkward.

DAVID: Yeah.

KATHERINE: But I don't know, I don't think they did anything to the blood, I think it's just light. From other angles you can really see, it's kind of a--it's a lot of blood.

DAVID: Yeah. Okay. All right, let's go down here and see... Jeffrey Miller.

ELLEN: Students put these up here?

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah. Somehow it's become a tradition to pile a rock in remembrance, and... yeah. So. He was, he was the closest killed but not, what did that last plaque say, not the closest shot?

KATHERINE: I think Canfora was the closest shot.

DAVID: Well, and you look at that, I mean look how, y'know, you think about--they were right there! I mean, that's not--that's close.

GAVIN: The other thing that bullet hole does is show you which direction they were aiming.

DAVID: Yeah. They, they clearly, out this way--

GAVIN: And at a slight down angle.

DAVID: Yeah. Now, the, uh, that dorm over there was there. You can see the old brick over there. This thing wasn't. So, but there was a clear open path there. Okay.

KATHERINE: I think Sandy, I think Sandy Scheuer was shot through the neck.

DAVID: Oh, OK. OK. Could be. I know how Bill died. So this one, here's Allison Krause. So here are the two students who were, to some extent at least, engaged, well, Jeff Miller clearly was, and Allison Krause to some extent. And then over here, this is, this I think is Bill Schroeder. Yeah, Bill Schroeder. And he was struck in the, what, the back of the, small of the back?

KATHERINE: I think so, yeah.

DAVID: And the bullet exited near his collarbone, so he was...

KATHERINE: Probably diving--do you think?

DAVID: Yeah. Probably diving for cover when he was shot. Probably recognized what was happening, dove for cover.

ELLEN: Bill?

DAVID: Yeah. And they have them, um, not necessarily, you can see they've just taken up a parking spot, yeah, rather than orienting him the way he actually fell.

GAVIN: They might've planned the parking spots out along... around the memorial.

DAVID: Yeah, I don't think so. I think this is the way the parking lot was laid out. And then of course--yeah. Allison--Sandy Scheuer here, and Sandy Scheuer, y'know, you saw Bill, Bill was a bystander, like thousands of other kids, and she, Sandy Scheuer, was walkin' to class. Had an armload of books. And just happened to be walking from, I don't know which dorm to where she was headed, but just walking with an armload of books. And you can see now, you're getting to the point if you look back at the pagoda, that takes a pretty accurate aimed shot, to hit somebody at that distance. You're probably talking--

ELLEN: A sniper-quality shot?

DAVID: Yeah. I mean, and you're talkin', y'know, you're talkin' somebody in a gas mask, you're talkin', uh, smoke and haze and heat and sweat, and, you know, people in motion, um, y'know, the fact that--a very, very low probability that anyone tried to shoot her.

GAVIN: That she was targeted.

DAVID: That she was targeted. Very low probability that that happened, from that distance it would take a phenomenal amount of, of...

KATHERINE: Probably someone who if he was that good a shot wouldn't be in the National Guard, he'd be... some other form of professional.

DAVID: Yeah. And, you know, it's a big, big heavy weapon, so it's... not likely. So.

GAVIN: Was it a weapon designed for, for accuracy at long distances or was it more of--

DAVID: It was a, it was, it was both. It was a weapon that was designed for aimed infantry fire, it was the standard infantry weapon in World War II and Korea, and, uh, yeah, it was designed to be accurate at, uh, fairly decent distances, it was built as an aimed-fire weapon, uh, threw a big heavy bullet, um, over pretty significant distances, but once you get out past, uh, any distance at all it's not gonna be horribly accurate unless you've got some way to stabilize it, put a tripod on it and you can make it more accurate, but if you're just holding it--one thing, it's heavy. Weighed eight pounds. So, y'know, I mean you're holding a rifle that weighs eight pounds, that's a lotta weight, and standing on a hillside--

ELLEN: Easy to think of it kind of sagging.

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah. But, that's been the argument for years as to--why they fired, who they--what they tried to do when they fired, and no, no solid answers.

KATHERINE: Well, they've been very--they've been very unified with their, um, there's never been a Guardsman that's come out as a whistleblower--

DAVID: That's 'fessed up.

KATHERINE: And said I know who it was, and here's what happened--

DAVID: Here's why. And I think some people know, you can identify who fired the shots but identifying why is never, there's never been, the only answer that's ever been provided is the, the threat from behind answer. So, yeah, that's, that's been it. Let's walk around the other side of Taylor Hall and see what's there.

KATHERINE: OK. How well did you know Bill?

DAVID: I knew him pretty well because we didn't, we didn't hang out together but we were, my ROTC class was very small and we were at the end of our sophomore year then so we had spent--actually, he was a transfer. So I don't think he'd been around my freshman year, but that meant I'd see him, um, two to three times a week, and, y'know, and you'd bump into him on campus. He sat beside me in the, um, in the test we were taking. Uh, so, y'know, he was a, he was just a peach of a guy. He was just--all-American, all-American boy. He transferred in from the Colorado School of Mines where he'd been workin' on an engineering degree, and I don't know why he transferred, but he showed up at Kent State. Um...

ELLEN: Maybe specifically for the ROTC program, to be an army engineer.

DAVID: Yeah, maybe. Yeah.

KATHERINE: And, um...

ELLEN: What I find the saddest thing about this is that each one of those people whose deaths are marked there, died just going about the business of life. Bill Schroeder was walking away from class, Sandy Scheuer was on her way to class, they were just trying to keep being students.

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah. Well, and even the ones who were, the ones who were, y'know, taunting the Guard and involved there, clearly--and this was the original memorial, constructed probably, I don't know when they constructed it, um, but--y'know, even the ones who were protesting. Y'know, if you're taunting the National Guard. Not a good thing to do. Y'know. And, and you get back to that idea of which I was saying, is that, y'know, are you doing things that aren't wise, are you doing things that might not even be, y'know, socially acceptable in some, y'know, whatever circumstance, yeah. Do you deserve to die for it?

KATHERINE: Well, that's what a lot of, in the testimonials the people who weren't students, or student-related, people who were kind of I guess townies? Were saying, well, you know, a lot of 'em were saying, well, you know, we're sorry that they're dead, it's too bad, but they shouldn't have been there.

DAVID: They shouldn't have been doing what they were doing.

KATHERINE: And they should've dispersed when they were told to. It's like, OK, well...

DAVID: Yes, they should've.

KATHERINE: Is that the appropriate punishment for bein' 20 and curious about something.

DAVID: Right. And even, y'know, even go a little farther, is it the appropriate sanction for being 20, 21 years old, opposed to a war, feeling like you need to make some expression against that war, that you're opposed to the presence of, of a military force on campus, uh, you know, there were a lot of, there were a lotta reasons to be upset. There were a lot of reasons to speak your mind. I don't--y'know, some people regard it as a free speech issue. Y'know. People have the right to express their opinion and they shouldn't be, y'know, shouldn't be shot for expressing their opinion. I really don't see it as a free speech issue. Yeah, there were speech issues. There was also an extraordinary circumstance on campus that said maybe for a few days, we need to curtail free speech. But I didn't see it as a free speech issue, I see it as a... as incredibly unwise decision-making, and as tragic, after that.

ELLEN: A confluence of a number of bad decisions.

DAVID: Yeah. Right. Confluence of... Yeah.

KATHERINE: Well, and the, the impression that I've gotten from reading a lot of this stuff, which I--not--it's not an impression that I had gotten previously from just listening to you, was that there was a really, there was a general atmosphere of hysteria in the United States...

DAVID: Oh yeah. Yeah.

KATHERINE: About hippies and young people and college protesters.

DAVID: Without question. I've talked about that with people who, who cannot understand, and there is no way you can understand the division in the country at that time. This country was just about to fly apart. I mean, there was such, there was a such a generational divide, a divide between intellectuals who were opposed to the war and regular Americans who just said support the troops, and you gotta remember that 1970 is only 25 years in the shadow of World War II. You know, the great historical free the--save the world effort, and now we've sent our soldiers off to save the world, and we're not--what are we doing, we're rioting at home. And so there was a real disconnect, and, and I think it--it's kinda scary in that, you look at how divided the country is now, and we're at one of those points of near-apocalyptic change in the nation. You know, immigrants, y'know, the fact that the America that people knew is no longer the America--it's not going to exist anymore.

KATHERINE: President's a different color now.

DAVID: President's a different color now, manufacturing is gone, y'know, other nations are beating us in other ways, we can't argue that the US is what it used to be, and that's kind of where we were then. We had this idea, there was this generational divide that said, my country right or wrong, y'know, love it or leave it was the adage, and they, that's--

ELLEN: Really fueled by Richard Nixon.

DAVID: Fueled by Nixon--yeah. Well, and you look today, and there are people who are fueling that--I mean, it's the same thing. It's the same thing. OK, here's the last bit I'll tell you, then we'll head back. Um...

ELLEN: OK, this is the pagoda up here...

DAVID: This is the pagoda up here.

ELLEN: And so back here is, behind us are the ROTC buildings.

DAVID: Right, here's me, back in here somewhere. Right back in here. So the Guard, after the shootings, came back, and reformed the circle.

ELLEN: So this is--is this after the shootings? No.

DAVID: Right, this is after.

ELLEN: Really.

DAVID: This is after the shootings.

ELLEN: Oh my gosh, I would've imagined that everybody ran away after the shootings. The students came back with the Guard. Followed the Guard back down the hill.

DAVID: Yeah. Guard came back to where they were, when--one of the things that happened, the, um, ambulances, which were parked down behind me, all of a sudden went shooting up this hill. So the ambulances crossed over the top of the hill.

ELLEN: Just ran up through the grass?

DAVID: Just right straight up through the grass, right over the top of the hill, and down the other side, as soon as the shootings happened. And, um, Glenn Frank--where's Glenn Frank. Not here. He's here, but he's not here. Persuaded--when the students gathered here, Glenn Frank first persuaded the Guard, stay there, please, and then he went back up to this group of students and said, please, go home. And [unintelligible]

KATHERINE: There's recording of, there's, there's audio of him, sayin' that, he's crying.

DAVID: Yeah. It was the most amazing thing I've ever seen. 'Cause I'm back here, and he's now out here on this side of this group of students, just pleading with them.

ELLEN: You probably couldn't hear what he was saying?

DAVID: I could hear bits of it.

ELLEN: Did he have a bullhorn or was he just shouting?

DAVID: I don't remember. I don't remember.

KATHERINE: He's pretty clear in the audio, but I don't know...

DAVID: I don't know. Yeah.

GAVIN: Bullhorns make a pretty clear distortion, though. An electronic one does.

DAVID: And gradually, what happened then was these students, gradually all, kind of, wandered away.

KATHERINE: So the whole time, while they were shooting up there, you were still--

DAVID: I was still down there. I was still, I was right back--

KATHERINE: Down there. Did you ever move?

DAVID: No.

KATHERINE: You didn't follow them up the hill.

DAVID: No. I never followed 'em up the hill. 'Cause the shooting happened and all of a sudden everybody's stunned, what happened. And we didn't know that anybody'd been shot, we knew weapons had been fired. Then we saw the ambulances.

ELLEN: Why didn't you follow behind the Guard up the hill?

DAVID: Because not all the Guard moved. Right, and not all the Guard moved. So most of the Guard stayed right there. And, we didn't know where they were going. So we just saw 'em come up there, so we just stayed right there and were watching, figuring that the center of action--this was still gonna be the center. Yeah. This was still gonna be the center. Um, now after these students wandered away, it took probably another 20 minutes, Guard's all back here, students start going away--the highway patrol arrived. And the highway patrol arrived with--the, the face shields, and the riot batons, and the whole thing, and they moved out. And as the highway patrol moved out, that really ended everything. And then at that point, they said, campus is closed, get out. And they had, they had helicopters, that were circling campus, saying, the Kent State campus is closed, you must leave campus now.

ELLEN: What astounds me is this is all in a space of a couple hours. Where did all of those... What's the word I want. The troops. The highway patrol. The Guard was already here, but the highway patrol. The helicopters. Ambulances. How did they all converge so quickly, in such a short time.

DAVID: Yeah. I don't know. Yeah.

ELLEN: I could get into the conspiracy theories.

DAVID: Partly--the ambulances were partly still, were, were partly here, so there were some on site already, um, yeah. And the helicopters, there were helicopters on campus too.

ELLEN: They came with the Guard?

DAVID: They came with the Guard.

ELLEN: Oh, OK.

DAVID: Yeah. Now I was--when the Guard fired across, I couldn't see 'em. 'Cause they were just over the crest of that hill. But I'm standing there beside a guy, um, another one of my ROTC colleagues, and we're standing there beside this guy who is an ROTC instructor, who is an infantry officer. His name was Klinger, was Captain Klinger. And, we heard the shots, y'know. And this kid standing beside me, turns to Captain Klinger and says, he said--he said, one word, he said, "Firecrackers?" And Captain Klinger, still looking out there just said, as sadly as I've, as could be--"Small arms." Small arms is the military euphemism for hand-held weapons.

KATHERINE: As opposed to artillery and stuff?

DAVID: As opposed to artillery or tanks or any of that. He said, "Small arms." And so at that point they knew, something had happened up there. And--

ELLEN: Had he been to Vietnam?

DAVID: Yeah. And people knew, also, that they have live, had live ammunition. There was no--there was no question, ever, as to whether or not the Guard had live ammunition or not, they all carried--most of 'em had a clip of, of, uh, live ammunition on their, on their shoulder harness. So there was no question about that.

KATHERINE: Now I read some things where some people said, like I think, um, uh, Alan Canfora's sister and um, Allison Krause's boyfriend, maybe, were saying that, either they didn't know they had live ammunition or they just kind of, they, they didn't imagine that they could have live ammunition.

DAVID: Right. So there was some--

ELLEN: I picked up this for you.

DAVID: Oh, there you go. Yeah, there's a complete map.

GAVIN: They've changed the path.

DAVID: Yeah, right. Yeah. Yeah, those basketball courts and such weren't there. And you can see--well, I don't know. You can see where the corner of that building...

GAVIN: It's pretty close.

DAVID: It's pretty close. Yeah. Yeah. Uh... When they, when they, uh, declared campus closed, I had to walk from here back to my dorm, which is probably a mile and a half out that way, and got to the dorm, and everybody in the dorm was gathered in the, uh, the common area, and the notices were coming in to clear out of campus right away, and people were trying to figure out what went on... In the immediate aftermath it took a long time to figure out what happened, the first, one of the first radio reports said that four ROTC faculty members had been killed. And the ROTC faculty members were all back here with me. But, you know, it took a long time to sort out exactly what had happened.

KATHERINE: I read that the Associated Press got, that they, the first, the word that they got was that a Guardsman had been killed, and so they reported that for a couple hours, till they found out what was actually goin' on.

DAVID: Yeah. And with that guy who fell out of the jeep, there was, that could've easily predicated

the idea that a, that a Guardsman was shot, because he, y'know, he was holding his chest and down on the ground and the next thing you know he's in an ambulance being taken away. Uh, we were allowed to come back later that quarter, on alphabetically assigned days, to clear your stuff out. I picked up your aunt Carol in my Corvair and one other student, and, we headed home. And I--I, I talked to your aunt Cathy about it, the last time I talked to her, and she was saying she remembers sitting at home, waiting for us to get home, not knowing what happened. And that she remembers--

ELLEN: Knew that school had been closed?

DAVID: And that people had been killed. And, the amazing thing about it, is that we never, Carol and I driving home--we never thought to stop and make a pay phone call. And we were talking about that the other day, it's just kind of, that was the--you just didn't do that. You didn't think about stopping and using a pay phone.

ELLEN: We didn't call--

KATHERINE: I don't know if you could've--well, maybe, 'cause--what I read was that people who were trying to call, that lines were jammed everywhere, you couldn't--

DAVID: Oh, we would've had to get halfway home to call, because you couldn't call from here. Yeah, everything was shut down immediately. Uh, phone lines were jammed--

ELLEN: Well, in those days we just didn't use the telephone that much. If you had a once-a-month call from your parents, that was a big deal.

KATHERINE: Now, what did your parents say when you got home?

DAVID: What--the really bizarre thing that I never thought about for years later that I remember about coming home, was the parish priest was at the house. And--guy named Father Lautermill, was at the house. And, I can--we came home, and Father Lautermill kinda shook our hands, said hi, whatever, and left. Uh, as soon as we got there, he left. And it never occurred to me--

ELLEN: He left because you were alive.

KATHERINE: He was waiting with your parents.

DAVID: He left because we were alive.

ELLEN: Your mother had called the church.

DAVID: My mother must have called the church. Either that, or he heard the news--

ELLEN: And knew you were at--

DAVID: And knew we were there, and thought he better make a call on the family, to see what was up.

ELLEN: And you would've saved him the trip out if you'd stopped at a pay phone.

DAVID: If we'd just stopped at a pay phone, yeah. Yeah. Uh... So, I don't know if there's anything else to be said...

KATHERINE: Some people--did your, did your, um, well, I suppose your father probably didn't say a whole lot.

DAVID: No, he didn't.

KATHERINE: He didn't--there wasn't any kind of, oh, they shoulda shot more of 'em or any of that from your parents?

DAVID: No. No. Not from my family. You know, you used to hear, you heard the stories, y'know, other people'd say that. I went off to ROTC summer camp a summer later, and we were trained by units from the 82nd Airborne. And I had, you're required to have your name on the front of your helmet, and your university on the back. So it said Kent State on the back of my helmet. And they, they were not shy about talking about it. They were uniform in what they would say about it. What they'd say about it was, "If we'd've been there," they said, they would say, "we'd've fucked some people up, but we wouldn't have killed anybody." So they had--in their minds, it was that this was a military overreaction. Even among members of the military.

ELLEN: --incompetent. Well, and you're being trained by real army people, they would consider the National Guard relatively incompetent.

DAVID: Oh yeah. They considered the National Guard incompetent, and they said, look, this is the way it shoulda happened, this is the way we woulda done it, it woulda been different if we'd been there.

ELLEN: Well, it sounds to me like, if the Highway Patrol had arrived, it would've been entirely different, because they came in with just billy clubs.

DAVID: They came in trained for crowd control.

ELLEN: Riots.

DAVID: For crowd control. And--yeah. I think that's exactly right.

ELLEN: Well, I think you have to throw that back to Governor Rhodes.

DAVID: Well, and you get back to, as I said, bad decision-making. Why was the Guard here at all? Um, why was, why was the Guard armed the way they were?

KATHERINE: Somebody--somebody on the documentary that I watched said that Rhodes, when it came to the National Guard, calling 'em out, Rhodes was the most trigger-happy governor that Ohio had ever had--

DAVID: Oh, really.

KATHERINE: He called the governor--he called the National Guard out more times than any governor had ever done, in the history of Ohio.

DAVID: Huh. Well--

ELLEN: The Guard was out on the trucker's strike, why would you put the Guard on a trucker's strike?

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah, he had--yeah.

KATHERINE: And a lot of people do seem--when asked, sort of, whose fault is this, a lot of people do seem to come back to Governor Rhodes--

DAVID: Yeah. Focus on the governor.

[talk about Gavin taking pictures]

DAVID: The mayor of Kent wasn't any help either. Leroy Satrom. And you, y'know, Leroy, Leroy basically said, y'know, here we've got an instance of these, these hippies on campus, who are wrecking our town, and antiwar demonstrations. So here, you know, one day, they break windows, the next day they burn a building down, what's gonna happen next, good thing law and order, y'know, let's clamp down on these, on these people, and... So he wasn't, he wasn't a help either. I, uh, I was telling Kent stories to, uh, one of my classes at the Glenn School a couple years ago. I don't know how we got started, but I was telling stories, and I, one of the students worked at the state library. And she said, they have an archive of the Kent papers, and she said the most amazing thing about the archive papers are the letters received, even by the parents of the dead students.

KATHERINE: Yeah!

DAVID: That said, they got what they deserved, y'know, they said, she said, it is just incredible.

KATHERINE: I think the letter that they print in the books and stuff, I think the Schroeders got that one, that said that your, your son was a dirty Commie faggot and he, you know.

DAVID: Yeah. It was--well, and part of that was the times, I mean, as I said, this country, I mean--a lot of the country, with regard to--anti-Communism, campus unrest, really had, kinda Tea Party, y'know, simple answer, my country's goin' to hell and we gotta take it back, kind of, kind of vibe. And it was, it was awful. The historical implications, y'know, people claim that what this did was force the war at home, because before, the war was over there, now all of a sudden you got people dying here, um, y'know, it--so it may have, may have had somethin' to do with bringin' the war to a close. I don't know.

ELLEN: Although it took five more years.

DAVID: Well, that was '70, by '70--when was, it was '74, was it '75?

ELLEN: '75.

DAVID: When we--

ELLEN: Finally, the last lifts, airlifts out of Saigon were in '75.

DAVID: Well, I remember that--when I went into, went on active duty in '72, they, uh--by the end of September I graduated from Field Artillery Officer Basic Class and 7--in the, in September, my class didn't send anybody to Vietnam. So they were not sending field artillery troops to Vietnam that early.

ELLEN: It was all an aerial--

DAVID: Well, no, it was--we were not sending combat troops. We were just, basically, we had already by that time, by 1972, had really gotten to the point where we had said, no, we're not fightin' this war anymore, and we stopped sending combat troops, period.

KATHERINE: So you're just gradually removing people.

DAVID: Right. Just pullin' people out, let people finish up their tour and get out, and turn it back over to the South Vietnamese. Let's look at the map here a minute, I don't wanna, we don't need

to drive out past my dorm, but I'll show you where it was.

KATHERINE: Now, the, something that Alan Canfora said, and you can tell me how accurate you think this is, he said, uh, he basically said that Kent was a working-class school, there were demonstrations at Berkeley, there were demonstrations at Columbia, the government said we're gonna put a stop to this, but they didn't do it at Berkeley where rich kids go, they didn't do it at Columbia, they did it at a working-class school.

DAVID: Yeah.

KATHERINE: Does that make any sense?

DAVID: You know... The, it's--

KATHERINE: It doesn't sound plausible that that was kind of the deliberate--

DAVID: Right. Yeah.

KATHERINE: Train of thought.

DAVID: You can go all the way up to Nixon and Nixon deciding Kent State's gonna be the example--you know, things unfolded here so fast. And, and there's always the adage that said, if faced between--the, if, if faced with a choice between, uh, implying conspiracy or stupidity, go with stupidity every time. And I think that's what we're looking at here. Is this, was this--y'know, how much of this was conspiracy versus stupidity and bad luck. Now--

[construction sounds, talk about the noise]

DAVID: Let me answer that on the way, when we get past this stuff.
[recording ends]

1:22 PM

DAVID: --were probably correct. Although he lost the, I don't know why he lost to Taft. I don't, I don't know why that was.

ELLEN: Well, Taft, the Taft name, it's like the Brown name, the Taft name is a golden name in Ohio.

DAVID: Yeah, that's true. That's true. And what Jim Rhodes did, of course, after that, he lost that Senate race, had to stop being governor cause he'd been governor for eight years in a row, sat out for four years of the John Gilligan governorship, and was elected governor again. So he was, he ended up being the longest-serving governor in the history of the United States, the only one who competes with him is, um, George Wallace.

KATHERINE: Huh. In Alabama?

DAVID: In Alabama. Yeah.

ELLEN: Yeah. Sixteen, sixteen years, and we went to work for Rhodes then in that second, second service.

DAVID: Now, that building up there with the stone, half-stone, half-brick? That is the, uh, political science department. So I spent hours and hours and hours in there. During the antiwar stuff, you'd periodically hear that there was a bomb threat. And so they'd make you leave the building.

And, so you'd leave the building, and you'd go lean on the building. Nobody ever really took it too seriously that there was any kind of a real threat. Now, what I was saying about the conspiracy.

KATHERINE: Yeah.

DAVID: There certainly were some things--

ELLEN: Can you not talk now? I think we'd be better off to cool the car--
[recording ends]

2:47 PM

KATHERINE: Yeah, what were you gonna say about conspiracy theories?

DAVID: Oh, yeah, what I was gonna say is that, I've always found it hard to believe that there was a kind of master conspiracy, y'know, kind of all the way up to Nixon, that--I really, that, things happened so fast, and for decision-making to happen that quickly, I, I really don't--that's hard to imagine. Now, on the other hand--there, the, the timing of the fire that I described is really hard to square--

KATHERINE: The ROTC--

DAVID: The ROTC building, is really hard to square with kind of the official version of the events where the mob burned the building down. And, also, the fact that it was a nighttime mob, the composition was really not clear. So that--and it was such a different group of people, it seemed, not that I was in it, but from all, from accounts it seemed to be different than your standard on-campus get-together. So, I have a hard--number one, I have a hard time believing the conspiracy went all the way to the top, on the other hand, there are anomalies in the account and anomalies in the event that don't make sense to me. The other piece is, I find it plausible, and I can't prove this and never will, but I find it plausible that there was a, that there could've been an intention by the National Guard to fire their weapons. I've always thought, if that was the case, that the intention was to fire warning shots, prior to firing into a crowd. And, so to some extent, I kinda think--I've always imagined, I--to put it this way, with no proof--that there was an agreement among Guard members to fire their weapons, and that the communication as to where they were supposed to fire their weapons is the, is what got lost in translation, and turned into, into what it turned into. So that's, y'know--I think it's very plausible to say there was a conspiracy among the Guard members to fire their weapons. Um, conspiracy to kill people and shoot into the crowd, or, y'know, I don't--I find that hard to believe. Harder to believe. So that's, that's basically, yeah.

KATHERINE: OK. Was it true, is, to describe Kent as a working-class school, is that accurate?

DAVID: Uh, it certainly was not an elite school, either economically or academically. Uh, it was largely a teacher's college. Or had been. It had been a teacher's college, had a big department of education, um, there were some academic disciplines that were regarded as very, um, very solid, but, y'know, yeah, academically not a great place, it was a state school, uh, tuition was cheap at a state school, uh, there were people I certainly had in my cohort of acquaintances, students, etcetera, that you would certainly describe as, as working-class. People who, y'know, for whom it was a stretch to go to college. So it was a, y'know, kind of a little of all of that. There was a sizable population at Kent of East Coast students. Um, and I think that's because places like New Jersey don't have that many colleges relative to the number of college-age kids, so you used to get a lot of 'em in Ohio.

ELLEN: And I don't know why they didn't stop over in Pennsylvania, but they didn't. There was a lot of East Coasters that came to all the Ohio schools.

DAVID: So, so I don't think, working-class I think is not quite right, but certainly a, a cross-section, um, of, of people and students and backgrounds--

ELLEN: It was, as state schools go it was more of a commuter school than Miami, or, or, uh, Ohio State.

DAVID: Yeah, but--

ELLEN: And that suggests it's a little more blue-collar than some of the others.

DAVID: But it was less of a commuter school than Toledo or Akron.

ELLEN: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

[recording ends]