

# **Kent State Memorial Service and March**

**May 5, 1970**

**Western Maryland College, Westminster, Maryland**

**By John H. Van Horn Jr.**

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## Foreword

Several years ago on one of my infrequent visits to the McDaniel College campus I was introduced by my librarian friend Jane Sharpe to Barbara O'Brien, the College Archivist. In my visit with Barbara, she expressed an interest in any photos relative from my college years, 1968 – 1970. I was already in the process of digitizing my old negatives and agreed that I would share any relevant images with the archives.

The negatives being scanned eventually included approximately 1000 images relating to the college, many of which I had taken when I was Editor of Photography of *The Gold Bug*, the college newspaper of that era. The additional commitment to this project, which I made, was in some way to document or caption as many of the photographs as possible. Many of the photos were of sporting events and various everyday events, but 62 images stood out as unique in my mind, they were of the Kent State Memorial Service and March held the day after the shootings on the campus of Kent State University in Ohio. One image out of the sixty-two pushed my interest to do more than just simply caption these photos. It was a picture of a meeting prior to the service and march in *The Gold Bug* office, which included students, faculty, members of the college administration, and the Westminster Police Chief. And people had their hands raised as if they were voting on something.

## Background

The 60s, the 1960s, were a time of change, social change in the form of civil rights and recognizing the plight of the poor. It was a time of an unpopular war. It was a time of demonstrations, some reaching monumental proportions. In the background of these events was a string of frightening incidents of domestic violence. There were political assassinations that touched the soul of the country, violence against civil rights protestors, and riots in many of our major cities. Into this environment entered the Baby Boomers who were starting to come of age. Most had never known the poverty that many of their parents had suffered in the Great Depression or the violence of a war sending large numbers of draftees into combat.

Western Maryland College in the 1960s was changing too, but could still be classified as relatively conservative. Racial integration had proceeded slowly, the first two African American students graduating in 1969. Women still had many restrictions on their activities on campus, including curfews and even a dress code, lasting up to the last couple years of the 60s. Men until the fall semester of 1969 had mandatory ROTC. The college was still affiliated with the Methodist Church. The first “hippies,” according to some arrived on campus in the fall of 1968. The anti-war movement, while small compared to those of many other institutions, was active. And the campus was not apathetic in regards to the problems of the time, there were student programs such as

SOS, focusing on projects in other parts of the country as well as internationally, and Hinge, which provided tutoring and mentoring to local children.

The students of the era were also changing. They were better educated, more aware of the politics of change, more questioning, more engaged. Many more children growing up in the post WWII generations were expected to go on to institutions of higher education. And the Vietnam War, with its student draft deferments, swelled the number of male students even more. Professors Del Palmer and Ray Phillips during discussions relating to this era both expressed the excitement and challenges of teaching this generation of students. Dean Wray Mowbray '58 also expressed much the same sentiments in writing about this time frame. These years, he wrote, "were an interesting, exciting and very challenging time for everyone at the College. What great opportunities we had to learn and exchange different points of view. I honestly believe that the students then were much more willing to question the status quo."

The college community of Westminster still retained its rural flavor with surrounding farms. It resisted in some quarters change, particularly social change. The college, often through its faculty and administration helped lead the community through these challenging times.

And what at the time seemed like our never-ending involvement in Southeast Asia took an unexpected turn at the end of April 1970 when some felt the war was winding down in regards to American involvement. In late April, South Vietnam military forces entered its neighbor Cambodia in an effort to destroy North Vietnamese supplies and forces which operated across the border. On the evening of April 30<sup>th</sup>, President Nixon went on national television to announce that American military units would also invade Cambodia, broadening American military involvement in the region. The reaction of many anti-war movement supporters was swift, particularly on American educational campuses.

One Ohio campus that reacted, starting on May 1, with demonstrations which often turned violent was that of Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. The National Guard was called into the town and positioned on the University campus on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. On May 4<sup>th</sup> a demonstration, which again turned violent resulted in a unit of the National Guard opening fire, killing four students and wounding nine. This action provoked further widespread unrest on campuses across the nation.

#### Kent State and Western Maryland College

On the evening of May 4<sup>th</sup>, Fred Rudman, '73 received a call in his dorm from Professor Robert Hartman, Philosophy and Religion. Hartman informed Fred of the events that had taken place at Kent State and asked what we might do about it, adding that this demands

a strong response from our college community. Fred believes that Robert Hartman's call for action contributed greatly to what happened in the next two days on the WMC campus.

Professor Del Palmer, English, also received a call from Hartman that evening regarding a meeting that was taking place at Winslow Student Center to discuss how to react to Kent State and the events taking place across the country. Palmer recalls that Hartman felt the students would appreciate some faculty support. Others among the perhaps twenty who were present at this meeting were Dean of Men Wray Mowbray '58, Mike Shultz '71, Charlie Moore '71, Dan Wiles '71 and Richard Anderson '71. Dean Mowbray recalls saying as little as possible in order to let the students decide on their course of action. A portion of the discussion centered around if there was a protest, should it be an anti-war protest or more directed as a memorial to what specifically occurred at Kent State. Charlie Moore was in favor of centering on memorializing those at Kent State vs. an anti-war statement, feeling that it would represent a broader segment of the student population. This debate would continue through the entire event and was reported on in the May 11<sup>th</sup> *The Gold Bug* (attached). The general course that was decided on was more focused as a memorial service and march.

This meeting was followed by a working meeting in the offices of the college newspaper, *The Gold Bug* attended by Fred and his brother Mike Rudman '70, Richard Anderson, John Sloan '72, Randy Murdock '73 and at least one other unidentified person in the photos by Richard Anderson (Attached). What was being composed on the typewriter is in question, although it may be assumed that it had something to do with what was displayed on Baker Chapel's columns the next day.

May 5<sup>th</sup> was to prove nearly as busy for the college's faculty and administration as for the students involved in planning and participating in the memorial service and march. Dr. James Lightner '59, Professor, Mathematics, writes in his book Fearless and Bold that, "Acting President [Allen] Mund appeared in the dining room the following morning [following the Kent State shooting] to keep things calm."

The regular meeting of the American Association of University Professors was held at noon. The meeting was chaired by the chapter president, Del Palmer. The regular agenda was amended to address the actions at Kent State. A resolution was introduced by Professor Charles Crain, Religion and Philosophy, "deploring violence which has erupted on many campuses recently, and supporting non-violent demonstration." The resolution was sent to President Nixon, Governor Mandel, Senators Tydings and Mathias and Congressman Beall. (See Attachment).

Palmer was called away from the above meeting to Acting President Mund's office to another meeting involving students, faculty and administration. According to Professor Palmer, Fred Rudman, Mike Schultz, Dan Wiles and Dean Wray Mowbray, among others, were in attendance. In reflecting on this meeting, Palmer stated, "I was impressed by the understanding and cooperation extended by Acting President Mund and Dean Mowbray. Their enlightened leadership made me proud of Western Maryland College."

This last statement seems to summarize an ongoing theme that was lacking in so many similar situations across the country. The three major components of the college - students, faculty and administration - were communicating and moving forward in parallel ways although perhaps not in total agreement. For example, there is no record of whether Acting President Mund actually approved of a demonstration, but by his actions, he affirmed support for the right of the students to demonstrate. Just as the students did not agree on specific meanings of the planned events, they agreed that a statement had to be made. And the forum for communication between the groups was encouraged and in this latter case facilitated by the college's administration.

The final meeting involved in planning the service and more specifically the march was held in *The Gold Bug* office on the afternoon of May 5<sup>th</sup>. The single photograph of this meeting prompted the writer to go back and look at this entire event more closely. It is the first event attended by and photographed by the writer during this series of events. Approximately 62 students, faculty, college administrators attended the meeting. There is an added unique twist in this story. Chief Leroy Day of the Westminster Police Department attended with Sergeant Samuel Ibes to discuss what the students were going to do and agree on how the march was to be coordinated between the college community and the local community.

*The Gold Bug* in its May 11<sup>th</sup>, issue reported this about the meeting:

At the meeting Chief Day of the Westminster police asked the group to change the plans they had made Monday night to march to the Armory and go instead to the War memorial [at Pennsylvania and Main Streets]. Day felt that it would be easier to prevent trouble if the march did not go through the downtown section. After about fifteen minutes of heavy debate the group voted 33 to 29 to go all the way to the armory.

How individuals voted is not recorded, and the photo, while showing a vote taking place, simply allows the body language of Chief Day and Dean Mowbray to be individually interpreted.

The Carroll County Times reported that the march went to the Post Office at Main Street and Longwell Avenue. The photos do show that the march did go to the Armory on Longwell Avenue, although Palmer believes that there was a compromise and the marchers stayed across the street from the Armory.

At this meeting the logistics and protocol between the college students and local police were established. The students were to appoint parade marshals to be responsible for the actions of the students and to assist at intersections as the students crossed them. The police would be responsible for general traffic control and for ensuring the safety of the marchers as they went through town from any local factions, which might cause trouble or a confrontation. To minimize tension, the students and police would not interact unless absolutely necessary.

The Memorial Service took place in front of Baker Memorial Chapel with the steps and columned front entrance serving as the stage for the presenters. The best contemporary description of the service and march was published in the May 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Carroll County Times* article “WMC Marchers Protest Killings” (attached). It was reported songs were song, along with a period of meditation and many short speeches, several of which emphasized the need for non-violence. None of the speakers that were contacted recalled in detail what they had said on the occasion. Based on the photographs and first hand accounts, the following spoke, but it should not be assumed that all the speakers are listed:

Professor Del Palmer, English

Michael Rudman '70, Vice President of Student Government Association 1969–1970 school year.

Gary Scholl '71

Stephen (Steve) Sweet '72

Fredrick (Fred) Rudman '73

Professor Robert Lawler, English

Gerald (Jerry) Hopple '71, President Elect of the Student Government Association 1970-1971

Professor Keith Richwine, English, Department Chairman

Professor LeRoy Panek, English

And photos of those leading group in song...

The *Carroll County Times* estimated that about 400 attended the 90 minute service. From the pictures, we can see that the crowd was somber and represented a cross section of the campus population, including a number of the faculty and college administrators.

The march immediately followed the Memorial Service. The marchers, most wearing armbands and some carrying candles, proceeded down Main Street at approximately 8:00 pm, through town, turning around at the Armory and returning to Pennsylvania Ave. and the college campus at approx. 9:00 pm. The only contemporary written description of the march is again the article attached from the *Carroll County Times*. They estimated just over 300 participating in the march, which occurred without any serious incidents. The paper also reported some of the negative comments expressed by a number of townspeople who observed the march.

The photos reveal the tension on the march as well as how the march was managed according to the plans agreed to at the meeting held that afternoon at the *Gold Bug* office.

So ended the student activities of May 5<sup>th</sup> on the campus and in the streets of Westminster.

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, many students in unity with students across the country boycotted classes with two organized activities (no photos of either event are available). There was a service in Baker Memorial Chapel at 11:45 am and a poetry reading in Memorial (now Hill) Hall at 4:00 pm. Both events were documented in the May 11<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Gold Bug* (full article attached).

The last quiet words died out (at the poetry reading) and the people solemnly left Memorial 106. The poetry reading session, last planned activity in the two-day demonstrations that sprang from the Kent State killings, was over in form, but not in substance. The effect of the proceedings is sure to manifest itself in other forms before the crisis which is now present is resolved.

#### Comments and Related Stories

1. *The Evening Sun*, Carroll County Section (published in Hanover, PA), on May 4<sup>th</sup>, the day of the Kent State shootings ran a story regarding the Westminster Police Department and a visit by made by a local school English class the preceding Thursday, titled, "Students Find Out Police Not Really 'Pigs'." The students were favorably impressed by the local police department. (Article Attached)

2. Western Maryland's most direct link to Kent State University was through English Professor LeRoy Panek.

LeRoy Panek got his PhD from KSU and started at WMC in 1968. "I was a TA (teaching assistant) at KSU for the three years I spent there working on my degree and taught Freshman Composition. That means that a lot of the students I taught were on campus when the shooting occurred."

In our discussions relating to this paper, LeRoy Panek talked of often walking across the area where the shootings took place to classes in the English Department. His memories of those peaceful, idyllic college days were forever shattered by the events that took place in May of 1970.

It is interesting that in 1970 Panek was an untenured Professor taking part in a demonstration that might have been looked at in an unfavorable light by some of the college community. When this subject was brought up, he said that his department head, Keith Richwine and the rest of his department colleagues were very supportive and he felt comfortable participating. This says a lot regarding the institution as a whole and the English Department in particular.

3. Alan Winik, '70, who is pictured in the foreground of the meeting in the Gold Bug office the day of the service and march wrote in 2007:

“I remember feeling somewhat threatened walking through Westminster – I remember that one of the Profs, probably Dr. Panek, told us that the kids at Kent State were just like us; i.e. not wild eyed radicals.

Do you find it ironic that all these years later, little has changed? Iraq sounds more like Viet Nam every day.”

4. Roger Anderson '72 commented:

“I remember the march well as a participant, especially the rumor that we were being photographed by the FBI, which, given what's come out in recent years regarding the illegal and extensive surveillance during those times, was probably true! Well what the hell, we marched anyway.”

5. Charlie Moore who participated in a number of the meetings prior to the Memorial Service and March added the following comments:

“My personal recollection of the Kent State march into town is that I was marching to memorialize those who had died expressing their feelings. While I was not strongly opposed to the war, I was very upset by the events at Kent State. I really had no fears of marching through town.

What I remember most about that time is that this was the only time I actually 'marched'.”

6. Andrew (Andy) C. Mitchell Jr. wrote a letter to the Editor of the Carroll County Times regarding his perspective of the Memorial Service and March (attached). Andy Mitchell added these comments recently relative to the times and specifically to the event:

I left for WMC from Salisbury, MD, then and now a more conservative atmosphere than much of Maryland. While WMC was not a particularly radical campus, young people of the day were still rebellious in spirit even if not so much in deed. A small, private, somewhat Methodist, overwhelmingly white school was simply not likely to turn into Columbia or Berkley. We were, however, interested in ideas and current events. Since I began reading National Review and watching William F. Buckley Jr's, *Firing Line* on a regular basis in high school, I was probably one of the more



conservative members of the campus community. I was a political science major, and was very attune to politics, government, news and ideas.

I was an unlikely candidate to participate in any protest march, but I saw this one as quite different. The march or demonstration in Westminster following the Kent State tragedy was more a showing of community mourning. We were not really being asked to protest the war, which I would not likely have done, but rather were exhibiting a general belief that what had taken place should not have and should not happen again.

I am sure that a good number of the walkers had a real distrust or even hatred for the National Guard and military before the shootings. They felt vindicated in such beliefs. Others felt that they had been on the sidelines while other students challenged the war and now saw it as their wake up call. I was neither of these.

I was very familiar with the history of the war. Calling it Nixon's war always bothered me. I was not happy with the way the war was going, but I saw a reason to deter the spread of communism in SE Asia. In many ways I saw the Kent St shootings in a similar vein. The soldiers were on campus to keep order. That they were present was not their choice. The students naively assumed that they could protest without any thought to how their actions would be perceived by the soldiers. Many such situations get out of hand when the well-meaning protesters fail to realize that their advance on the authority figures may well create fear or apprehension in those who know not the intention of the protester's act. That one or more soldiers, out of fear or confusion, misinterpreted something that happened and began to fire was a terrible tragedy. Even those like me who would be pre-disposed to hold the soldiers in high regard, recognized the horrible thing that had happened and felt very bad about it. I took the position that what had happened was a result of a lack of planning or break down of order among the troops who then did not react properly to what was going on before them, not some type of murderous mindset.

I wrote the letter to explain that position. I wanted the people in Westminster to understand that not all the marchers were there to condemn the soldiers, but neither did we see the students as evil either. It was a situation gone bad.

A week or so later I was asked to appear on a panel to discuss the Kent St shootings before a civic group in Salisbury. Oddly enough, I was then bearded with long hair presenting the conservative viewpoint and the other student member of the panel was a well, groomed Univ. of MD, MBA student presenting the liberal side. I thought that quite appropriate.

7. As a result of the Memorial Service and March a controversy arose concerning the participation in the events by Professor Raymond Phillips, English. Phillips was a candidate for a position on the Federation School Board and a public meeting with the candidates was scheduled for the evening of May 5<sup>th</sup>, the same evening of the Memorial Service and March.

In the Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Evening Sun* (published in Hanover, PA), Carroll County Section was an article titled “World War I Barracks Opposing Statement,” in which The Veterans of World War I, Barracks 2539, Westminster disapproved of Ray Phillips negatively influencing students and leading a protest march through the streets of Westminster. Letters to the Editor by Professors Del Palmer, LeRoy Panek and William Achor stated that while present at the Memorial Service, Ray Phillips had not been an organizer or speaker at the Memorial Service and March. And Ray Phillips had not participated in the March, because at the time of the March, he was at a public meeting of the candidates for the Federation School Board. (See Attached Articles)

Ray Phillips was not selected to serve on the Federation School Board and said his fate was actually sealed by a statement that he did indeed make on May 5<sup>th</sup>. When the group of candidates was asked about how improvements to the local school system could be paid for, Ray jokingly suggested a tax on ice cream.

8. As for my personal memories and reflections of the Kent State Memorial Service and March, they were for the most part a series of general impressions until I looked at the photos closely and researched the event. I think the first impression was the loss of the perception, although probably mistakenly held, that college was a safe haven where opinions could be debated, demonstrations could occur, and physical safety was not a major concern. And add to that, the idea that the rule of law was always sacred; you did not just shoot at people. I, like most others, do not recall specifics of the Memorial Service. I use as my excuse that I was literally focused on taking photographs and not on listening to the thoughts and opinions expressed by the speakers. My impression of the march was feeling very alone and vulnerable. As can be seen from my photographs, I was usually not part of the group, but in front of or across from the marchers. It was not until I exchanged notes recently with Wray Mowbray regarding the logistics of the March that I learned, I believe for the first time, that there were plain clothes Westminster police officers in front of the march route that cleared away anyone who they felt might threaten the peaceful passage of the marchers.

As a photographer, I am always amazed at how pictures jar the memory, particularly when you are the one that clicked the shutter. I can often, but not nearly always, remember my specific thoughts of when I took a picture, years after the event. I remember very clearly my first impression when I scanned the photograph of the meeting in the Gold Bug office. I recognized Chief Day, Dean Mowbray, and many of the students, and then realized what was happening, something that was unique during this period filled with irrational violence. Everyone involved had sat down and communicated, agreed on a course of action, set up rules and actually voted on a course of action. I am sure not everyone was happy with the decision, but it was a working democracy. As I talked to those involved it only increased my interest and appreciation of what occurred here. I did not recognize Acting President Mund when I first looked at the photo, nor was I aware of his appearance earlier in the day in the dining hall or the meeting he had called involving students, faculty and administrators. Until I visited with Del Palmer, I was not aware of the communications and mentoring with students by

faculty members and the meetings the evening before. Everyone involved appears to have acted with concern and respect for others.

9. On May 4, 1990, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kent State, the American flag was at half mast over Western Maryland College, as per the request of Del Palmer, then Dean and Academic Vice President of the college.

#### Acknowledgements:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people who helped with this project. Del Palmer not only provided his own reflections of the event, but also encouragement and much appreciated editing help. LeRoy Panek suggested a number of sources that I should investigate along with his remembrances of attending Kent State and teaching at WMC. Wray Mowbrey's perspective and insight from his involvement as a college administrator was not only valuable, but also a fun discussion. I was very fortunate to be able to sit down with Ray Phillips prior to his passing and not only talk about his remembrances of the event, but also his failed candidacy and Carroll County during this era (He also provided me with some suggested readings in American Lit.). Barbara O'Brien and James Lightner both were very encouraging and helpful with background and providing resources from the college archives. I had the opportunity to visit with Dean Ira Zepp several years ago and discuss this era in the college's history (Ira was on sabbatical during the 1969-70 academic year and not on campus during the Kent State period.).

Thank you to all my student peers that took the time to share their memories. A special thank you to Richard Anderson who was taking photographs on May 4 and 5 for *The Gold Bug*, and provided me with copies of those photos from his personal archives. These photos were an immense help in putting the whole story together.