

A War for All Ages: Memory and Dissent in Carroll County

In 1968, Western Maryland College was a small Methodist college of about 1000 students. It was considered a haven to parents as they helped their children in the college search because it still maintained a curfew – students had to be back in their buildings on time in order to gain access to the dormitories; if a guy and girl were in the same room together the door was to be left ajar; there was required chapel time; and every male student was required to complete at least two years of ROTC training even if he then chose not to join the army.¹ The college was small and in the quiet rural town of Westminster, Maryland located in conservative Carroll County. But the Vietnam War changed the face of Western Maryland College, as it did many other colleges during this time. The perspectives of the professors, students, and the community surrounding the college began to show as the events in the war occurring from 1968 – 1970 began to unfold.

The first time that Western Maryland College saw an open protest to the war in Vietnam was on October 15, 1969, faculty members participated in the nationally planned Moratorium. The Moratorium was meant to show nationwide protest, by unifying middle class men, women, college students, and high school students. The Nixon administration documented 200 major demonstrations.² When listening to the reel-to-reel audio of the Moratorium at McDaniel, the listener will notice that the program included a news account of the President's reactions to the protest, recent events

¹ John Van Horn. Interview by author, 21 Oct. 2009.

² Melvin Small. Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988, 184.

relating to the war, and then a series of poems and statements about the war, the draft, and the hopefulness for peace. However, before the Moratorium began Richard Nixon declared, “Under no circumstances will I be effected whatsoever by the Moratorium.”³ The campus Moratorium was organized by the educators of english, Keith Richwine, Del Palmer, Robert Lawler, Ray Philips, and Leroy Panek. All of the mentioned men were veterans of the Korean War (except for Leroy Panek, a recent graduate of Kent State). The very fact that veterans made the recording had a greater impact because veterans, who understood war, and had seen death and survived, were now showing their disapproval of America’s involvement in Vietnam. In one very pointed poem by Samuel Hazo entitled, “To a Commencement of Scoundrels”, published in 1965. A composer of music, Hazo also published books of original poetry, in which he explores current events and analyzes the response of society.⁴ In this specific poem, Hazo is saying that the longer the United States stays in Vietnam, the more young men will graduate from high school and college with the ultimate responsibility of being sent to war. They have worked towards a future that has already been decided for them. Robert Lawler reads in the Moratorium,

My boys, we lied to you. The world by definition stinks of Cain, no matter
what your teachers told you...
Already you are turning into personnel,
manpower, figures on a list...
Wake up! Tonight the lions hunt in Kenya. They can eat a man.
Rockets are spearing through the sky. They can blast a man to nothing.
Rumors prowl like rebellions. They can knife a man.
No one survives for long, my boys...
Flesh is always in season, lusted after, gunned, grenaded, tabulated
through machines, incinerated, beaten to applause,
anesthetized, autopsied, mourned...

³ Keith Richwine. *Words on War. 1969 Moratorium.*

⁴ Sister Maura. *Book Review of Blood Rights. Theology Today.* Vol 25.4, Jan. 1969.

Reason yourselves to that, my buckaroos, before you rage for God,
country and siss-boom-bah! You won't, of course. Your schooling
left you trained to serve like cocksure Paul before God's lightning
smashed him from his saddle. So—

I wish you what I wish myself: hard questions
and the nights to answer them, the grace of disappointment
and the right to seem the fool for justice. That's enough.
Cowards might ask for more. Heroes have died for less.⁵

This poem depicts the world for young men leaving high school, or college, in a time of war. These boys learned that they would leave school and fulfill their dreams; that they had sat in class everyday to get a job, start a family, and live a happy life. In wartime, these promises are lies because, as the poem depicts, they became a number, a draft number, and “flesh becomes in season” for they are sent to war.

The Moratorium was a form of peaceful protest. The program was written and distributed as a way to make the point that the longer the United States stayed involved in Vietnam, the more lives would be pointlessly lost. Each person involved in the Moratorium chose different materials for their program, but the ultimate goal was the same: get U.S. soldiers out of Vietnam. The government did see the Moratorium as a threat because it was so widespread and was unified by the citizens, so Vice President Agnew launched a defensive plan of action in response to the Moratorium. The plan was put into effect on September 26. He was able to successfully coerce the media into devoting little time and attention to the protest. However, the Moratorium is still considered to be the “single most important one-day demonstration of the entire war.”⁶

⁵ Robert Lawler. *Poems*. Westminster: English and Comparative Literature Depts., 1978. This poem was read on the Words on War reel-to-reel tape; to listen to a digitalized version, see the McDaniel College Archives. It was originally written by:

Samuel Hazo. “To A Commencement of Scoundrels”. Blood Rights.
Pittsburgh University Press, 1965: 102.

⁶ Small, 185.

Despite its importance, Nixon held true to his word and was not affected by the words of Moratorium protesters; he continued to wage war in Southeast Asia.

In 1970, protest began to change as the American people, particularly college students, grew impatient with the Vietnam War. On April 30, 1970 Nixon appeared before the American audience with an address announcing military plans for an incursion in Cambodia. The President had promised the people he would be removing troops and ending the war, but this announcement met not only continued efforts in Indochina, but also an escalation of involvement in Cambodia; an escalation to a war people wanted to see ended. In the speech, Nixon dramatically stated;

We take this action not for the purpose of expanding the war in Cambodia but for the purpose of ending the war in Vietnam and winning the just peace we all desire. We have made and we will continue to make every possible effort to end this war through negotiation at the conference table rather than through more fighting in the battlefield...

If when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world...

I would rather be a one term president and do what I believe is right than to be a two term president and at the cost of seeing America become a second rate power and to see this Nation accept the first defeat in its proud 190-year history.⁷

Nixon's speech drew on many of the same themes that were brought up time and again during the Vietnam War, those of Communist powers taking over the world, fear of free institutions being lost, and the idea that people would lose their rights if America and South Vietnam lost the war. Nixon clearly demonstrated his knowledge of the American public's view towards the war when he says he would accept only being a one-term

⁷ John J., Fitzgerald, Tom A. Grunfeld, Marilyn B. Young. The Vietnam War: A History in Documents. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 138-139.

President, but the effects of his decision towards Cambodia led to an explosion on college campuses that he had underestimated.

In a Gallup poll of college students, completed in December 1969, 50 percent of college aged students approved of the way that President Nixon was handling the war, as compared to the 64 percent of the adult population who opposed the President's decisions.⁸ But, when students heard Nixon's announcement of United States military involvement in Cambodia, college students on campuses all across the nation began to react. Nixon had planted a spark on April 30, but it was the events of May 4, 1970 that set off the explosion on college campuses all over the nation.

Immediately after the speech, campus students held rallies to plan protests, classroom syllabi were forgotten and replaced by talk of U.S. involvement in Cambodia, and North and South Vietnam.⁹ It was clear that students were going to publicly show their disapproval of Nixon's extension of the war. At Kent State University in Ohio, students used violence to show their disapproval and were met with violence by the United States National Guard. According to a New York Times account of the event, dissent led to tragedy:

Kent, Ohio, May 4 – Four students at Kent State University, two of them women, were shot to death... by a volley of National Guard gunfire. At least 8 other students were wounded. The gunfire came about 20 minutes after the guardsmen broke up a noon rally on the Commons, a grassy campus gathering spot, by lobbing tear gas at a crowd of about 1,000 young people.¹⁰

⁸ Fitzgerald, 139-140.

⁹ Joseph Lelyveld . *Protests on Cambodia and Kent State Are Joined by Many Local Schools*. New York Times 6 May 1970: 20.

¹⁰John Kifner. *4 Kent State Students Killed by Troop*. New York Times 5 Mat 1970: 1.

The students had been protesting for three days after the decision to bomb Cambodia was made, but when a group of students set fire to the campus ROTC building the President sent in the National Guard. The guardsmen worked to break up violence by the protestors, but when the students began to throw rocks at them they fired into the crowd. Of the shootings President Nixon declared;

This should remind us all once again that when dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy. It is my hope that this tragic and unfortunate incident will strengthen the determinations of all the Nation's campuses, administrators, faculty, and students alike to stand firmly for the right which exist in this country of peaceful dissent and just as strongly against the resort to violence as a means of such expression.¹¹

The death of these four students at Kent State did strengthen the determinations of all the Nation's campuses – protest of Cambodia and the Kent State Shootings exploded nationwide.

The week following the Kent State tragedy thousands of schools shut their doors; students were in uproar about the events that had occurred between April 30 and May 4. At City College in New York, “policemen in riot gear were called...after a small group of students looted Townsend Harris Hall, the regional head quarters of the Reserve Officers Training Corps.”¹² They stole uniforms, boots, and pamphlets, using them to start a bonfire in the street. City College is not the only place we see violent protest. At Seton Hall University of South Orange, New Jersey 500 students took up torches and marched “towards the ROTC building which had been a fire bomb target earlier in the day.”¹³ The violence on campuses in response to Cambodia and Kent State was wide spread reaching from Bowdoin College in Maine to the University of California campus in San Diego.

¹¹ Kifner, 1.

¹² Lelyveld, 20.

¹³ Lelyveld, 20.

President Nixon and Vice-President Agnew knew that they had to do something about the violence sweeping college universities, but there was little respect for the two men among students, especially after Nixon openly stated that “bums [were] blowing up campus”.¹⁴ According to chief of staff, H.R. Haldemen’s records of meetings between the President and Vice President, on May 7, 1970 “President Nixon feels very concerned about campus revolt and is basically helpless to deal with it.”¹⁵ During meetings on the following day, May 8, 1970, the discussion led to a possible solution, “Let the students tear it for a couple of weeks with no effort at pacification, then hit them hard.”¹⁶ Regardless their decision, Nixon and Agnew had lost the support of the students and violent protest was raging through the campuses.

To say that all campus protest was violent is a false statement. There were many schools where the students protested quietly and peacefully. We turn to McDaniel College, at that time: Western Maryland College (WMC) located in Carroll County, Maryland, on this campus there was a quiet and peaceful protest in response to the events of May 1970.

Carroll County was then, and still is today, a very conservative county, the people residing there gave their support to Nixon, and did everything they could to support his decisions. Even the campus, full of students from all over the United States and the world, housed a greater population of conservative students than liberal, according to Melvin D. Palmer, an educator at the college during the time.¹⁷ The reason we see this majority of conservative students is because Western Maryland College still had very

¹⁴ Small, 201.

¹⁵ Fitzgerald, 141.

¹⁶ Fitzgerald, 141.

¹⁷ Melvin Palmer. Interview by author, 25 Sept. 2009.

strict rules in place, as mentioned earlier. The school had required at least two years of ROTC training for every male student, prior to the 1969-1970 school year.¹⁸ Diane Himmler, a graduate of WMC, wrote a letter to the Gold Bug about her husband, another WMC graduate, in regards to his position as a national guardsman and in response to Kent State;

Speaking as a recent student, when I first heard the news I tended to place the blame on the National Guard troops, the killings certainly were senseless...Then I considered how I would have felt had “non-violent” protesters been assaulting my husband, a National Guardsman as a result of ROTC requirements, and my feelings of blame shifted.¹⁹

Himmler goes on to say that she feels the shootings were the fault of the National Guardsmen over reacting to a group of students who were also over reacting, creating a situation in which neither side is free of blame. Because her husband was in ROTC at WMC he had become a National Guardsmen, thus changing the viewpoint of Kent State for his wife.

With this specific example in mind, many of the students choosing to come to Western Maryland were willing to join the military and serve in Vietnam as soldiers, thus making them more likely to be supportive of the war. According to John Van Horn, a WMC student from 1968 – 1970, he has completed extensive research into the march and was the photographer on sight, said of the school, when asked in an interview in October of 2009,

Out of a class of 1000 students, about half being men, 20-25 officers were graduating a year and heading to war, even the first year ROTC was not mandatory [1969-1970] there were still more than 250 men participating

¹⁸John Van Horn. Interview by author, 21 Oct. 2009.

¹⁹Diane Himmler. “A Graduate’s View.” The Gold Bug. 7 May, 1970.

in the program. Then there were those other students who were watching their friends return home from deployment. They heard their stories and believed that the war needed to end. And then there were the students [at Western Maryland], like me, who did not want to be drafted so they chose to come to college.²⁰

Students who chose Western Maryland for other reasons became more liberal because they were forced into the ROTC program for two years. The students were divided.

The beliefs of the educators were divided from the students as well. John Van Horn remarked that “the professors on campus were perhaps more liberal than the students.”²¹ Although, Dr. Leroy Panek assures, in an interview in 2009, “that professors kept their political thoughts to themselves, at least tried to. It was important to let the students make their own decisions.”²² Despite all the controversy, in the wake of the Kent State shootings, the students, faculty, even the acting president of the school, Dr. Mund, according to Melvin Palmer, all agreed on one thing - something had to be done on the WMC campus to show their dissent for what happened at Kent State.²³ A debate raged amongst professors and students as to whether or not the protest should be anti-war or just in respectful tribute to those shot at Kent State. The final decision, according to Leroy Panek, professor at WMC and former graduate of Kent State University, was that the protest would be strictly in respect for the slain on May 5, 1970.²⁴ According to an article in the Gold Bug,

Several students felt that is the protest was too strongly-anti-war not many students would participate. Roland Hill Pointed out that the one reason the Kent Staters were shot was because they were attending an anti-war

²⁰ John Van Horn. Interview by author, 21 Oct. 2009.

²¹ John Van Horn. Interview by author, 21 Oct. 2009.

²² Leroy Panek. Interview by author, 18 Sept. 2009.

²³ Melvin Palmer. Interview by author, 25 Sept. 2009.

²⁴ Leroy Panek. Interview by author, 18 Sept. 2009.

protest. The decisions to limit the activities to a memorial was done for a purely Machiavellian stand, according to protesters.²⁵

The students and staff participating in the implementation of the march wanted to entice the largest amount of students to become involved in this march. In order to do so they recognized two things, many of the students at Western Maryland College still supported the War, while others were scared of what may happen in a protest. Furthermore, by making the march a memorial, they could appeal to the anger and fear that the students felt in the wake of Kent State – those students were my age, standing up for what they believed, they did not have to die.

However, there were members of the faculty and students there who were still convinced that they were also protesting the war; Palmer was one of these, in an interview completed in 2009, he said:

The only reason that it was labeled as not being an anti-war protest was to encourage the participation of those students who were sensitive to the issue – more students would participate if it was in memory of fellow college students, but not if it was anti-war.²⁶

The final decision led to a crowd of 400 students and faculty members, along with their families, gathering on the steps of Baker Chapel, followed by a march down Westminster's main street to the National Guard Armory and then a return march back to campus.²⁷

²⁵ "Split Develops Over March" The Gold Bug. Vol. 47, May 1970.

²⁶ Melvin Palmer. Interview by author, 25 Sept. 2009.

²⁷ Christopher H. Bready "WMC Marchers Protest Killings". Carroll County Times 7 May 1970: 1A-2A.

The entire protest, according to Leroy Panek, “was somber and sad, there was no crazy, ingreidious demonstrations.”²⁸ While at the steps of the church 400 voices sang out the words to peace songs, such as “Peace I need with you my friend” and another with a verse that said, “Hey, people, smile on your brother, everybody get together, try to love one another right now.”²⁹ Several professors spoke on the steps of the church, the words of Leroy Panek as he described the campus of Kent State; which he knew well, having just graduated from there two years prior, is a memorial that Palmer mentioned and Panek re-recited in a 2009 interview:

The shootings happened in a parking lot right by the Commons. I mean I used to walk right where they took place. The campus was filled with students a lot like those that you would see [at Western Maryland College] almost all white, with sorority and fraternity members. I remember a lot of happy places and people, then that happened.³⁰

The very picture that Panek creates in the mind of the listener shows a happy campus, much like the one that the WMC students sitting on those steps looked around and saw themselves, on their very own campus – his words hit close to home. The rest of the memorial consisted of a prayer and an assembly of silent marchers holding candles and wearing black armbands as they marched down Westminster’s Main Street.

With the support of the Westminster police, the marchers were protected from traffic and those that opposed what the students were doing. However, there were only a few hostilities towards the students; many people did not understand what the campus was trying to do, while others did not think that the students themselves understood what

²⁸ Leroy Panek. Interview by author, 18 Sept. 2009.

²⁹ Bready, 1A-2A

³⁰ Leroy Panek. Interview by author, 18 Sept. 2009.

they were doing.³¹ Many in the community saw the march as anti-war, yet Panek, Van Horn, and Palmer all reported that the entire protest occurred without incident, the WMC students had “expressed their solidarity with fellow students of other institutions and their concern to preserve freedom of dissent for all students” through the use of peaceful protest.³² Andy Mitchell, a student at the time reveals his views of both Western Maryland College and the March down Main Street in a letter he wrote to John Van Horn in 2009. He describes the march as a memorial, not a protest. He goes on to say that had it been a protest he would have been one of the many students that would not have participated. This letter was in additional response to a piece he wrote to the Carroll County Times in the immediate days after the march. In it he states:

While WMC was not a particularly radical campus...we were 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 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

³¹ Bready, 1A-2A.

³² Bready, 1A-2A

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 happen 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 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.³³

Andy Mitchell was one of the many students that would only participate in the march if it was strictly a memorial. Mitchell's ideas show the conservative side of the WMC student views towards the war, while Del Palmer depicts the more liberal view.

Charlie Moore writes his own comments regarding the war in 2009. He states that while he was not in complete opposition to the war, he did feel strongly against Kent State. Moore, another WMC alumnus speaks of his involvement in the march,

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". I guess the death of college students who were protesting motivated me to want to speak out.³⁴

³³Andrew Mitchell . Letter to John Van Horn, 2009.

³⁴Charlie Moore. Comments to John Van Horn, 2009.

Charlie Moore graduated from McDaniel in 1971. He was present at the meeting where the professors and students voted in favor of the march, to keep the march a memorial statement and not a protest. He was a moderate in politics and as he states, he had never marched and perhaps he never would have marched if it were not for the shootings at Kent State.³⁵

While the students had clearly revealed their stance in regards to Kent State, what was the response of the Carroll County Community both to the march and to the incident itself? Western Maryland College was a mirror image of the larger community of Carroll County – a majority of conservatives with a mixture of liberals. There is no one area that was not affected by a difference of opinion. First the neighborhood directly surrounding the college, many people sent in responses towards the student’s march to the Carroll County Times. Many were strongly against the student’s memorial march. One Westminster man, a private in the military wrote to the Carroll County Times stating;

I would like to know what the hell the people all over the country and our city [Westminster] are trying to prove, by demonstrating and protesting the Cambodian involvement. These students protesting have nothing to say about. They should keep their noses in their books before they find themselves in the army...By marching around carrying picket signs, they’re not getting very much education. They are the ones that want to run my country, I’ll be damned if I want anyone with a [degree] in demonstrating [run the United States].³⁶

This man had a special connection to the war, as he was training in Fort Dix, New Jersey. It is easy to understand why he would question the lack of support coming from his own hometown. There were other citizens of Westminster who did not agree with the students’ memorial march. On May 7, the day after the march down Main Street the

³⁵John Van Horn. Comments on Moore Letter, 2009.

³⁶Vince Baliaglioni. “A Soldier’s Complaint” Carroll County Times, May 1970.

Carroll County Times quoted many of the bystanders who saw the students walking down the street holding their candles. One man said that “It would be much better to burn all the universities down and make [the students] work for a living. One young man said, “If others are obstructive, they ought to shoot more of them.” One lady who watched from the doorway of a local business said, “I don’t like it. I don’t care for it. I think it is silly for people to be parading around carrying candles.”³⁷ There were many comments that suggested the students were wasting their time with the march, they considered them to be unpatriotic, and one young man considered what the students were doing to be a “disgrace.”³⁸ The people of Westminster, who were against what the students were doing, also showed frustration with the police for supporting the cause – there was a lot of tension. One man sitting in his vehicle said,

They are holding up traffic. Is that right? When the light changes they (the cars) should go...what do we elect officers for? To uphold this kind of stuff?³⁹

Despite the frustrations of some Westminster people, the march went off peacefully and successfully.

On the other hand, there were many people who wrote into the newspaper, and the Gold Bug in support of the march. There were even those that were upset that the students did not take a more anti-war initiative in the planning and conducting of the march. In one letter to the editor a man shows his understanding of student frustrations with the war when he says;

³⁷ Bready, 2A.

³⁸ Bready, 2A.

³⁹ Bready, 2A.

I read and heard a lot of derogatory remarks about the peaceful march from Western Maryland College and the demonstrations in Washington by mostly young. Keep in mind the average age of the men dying in Vietnam is 20 years, they had nothing to do with making our laws or setting our country's policies.

He goes on to say;

Suppose we switch, suppose we have a 20 year old president with a loosed tongue vice-president. Just suppose they are the law of the land and make our policies, you must agree with them or you are not patriotic, accept what they say without question.⁴⁰

This writer makes an interesting point to call students un-American as they watch their friends and peers death count rise daily, then say they do not understand is what many people did during this time period. This man was in support of the students' protests and of the WMC memorial march.

In an edition of the Gold Bug we have a letter from a student at Western Maryland College, Ron Pettinato, who did not think the march achieved its objectives – it did not directly state at the stairs of the church or on the march through town that the students were in opposition to the expansion of the war into Cambodia,

I think that the march and rally on the whole was a good thing, but I also think that many other issues could have been discussed. The four people who died at Kent were demonstrating against U.S. involvement in the Southeast Asian War. This should have been a bigger part of the rally. It's sad that it took the death of four college students to bring any kind of gathering at W.M.C. What about the hundreds of men who will be killed in Cambodia?⁴¹

⁴⁰Charles Oartrell. "Patriotism and Dissent" Carroll County Times. May 1970.

⁴¹Ron Pettinato. "What Was It All About". The Gold Bug. May, 1970.

Pettinato believed that the students were too conservative in their march and that they only proved that the students of Western Maryland College were able to quietly march, but did not show they could protest a war that many claimed to disapprove of. This student's outlook on the march was similar to that of Del Palmer, in that the march should have taken a more eminent stance in protest of the War.

The continued splits between liberal and conservative views were seen in the larger Carroll County region. For example, on Bollinger Mill Road in Finksburg, Maryland, a very small farming neighborhood at the time, we see the opinion of two men who grew up neighbors. The first, Gilbert Breeding, a veteran of WWII – he served in Germany and was out of the service when Vietnam broke out. Mr. Breeding was a forest ranger during the Vietnam War and was still considered to be in law enforcement. When I interviewed him in 2009, he tells a story about being in law enforcement, one time he went into a local school and was asked if he minded when he was called a P.I.G. He said,

Absolutely not, P.I.G stands for Pride, Integrity, Guts – if it was used in the right context it was a compliment, even though I don't think this child had heard it from her parents the right way, I was proud to be called a P.I.G.

Mr. Breeding went on to say that,

If you were to go onto the internet, you'll see that 4 students got murdered at Kent State – that's wrong, they were not murdered, the National Guard was sent there and they did their job – keeping the peace.⁴²

Mr. Breeding reflects the same opinion as Andy Mitchell, in that the National Guard was there to do their job and keep the peace, however, what we see differently is that in Mitchell's account the episode was terrible and a "situation gone bad", Mr. Breeding

⁴²Gilbert Breeding. Interview by author, Sept. 2009.

believed that the National Guard's reaction was just and those "kids had it coming to them."⁴³ The reaction of Mr. Breeding was not out of malice for the students, but out of belief in the correct and moral decision of law enforcement – a code of conduct he held close to his heart.

If you were to take a short walk, just 2 minutes down the road you would meet Mr. Breeding's neighbor, Joseph Burkhardt. Mr. Burkhardt had a different account to tell about the Vietnam War. In a questionnaire regarding the war, completed in 2009, he poignantly states, "It was the wrong war in the wrong place. The only legitimate war fought in my lifetime was World War II."⁴⁴ Mr. Burkhardt felt that the war was brought up in conversation all the time, and in Carroll County he remembers that there was a distinct generational gap between the older people, in support of the war, and the younger people, who did not support it. When reflecting upon the war, Mr. Burkhardt remembers distinctly three events that changed the memory of U.S. involvement in Vietnam for many people.

First, the My Lai Massacre, in which "Charlie Company of the American Division's 11th Infantry Brigade massacred virtually the entire population of the My Lai Hamlet."⁴⁵ Mr. Burkhardt reports that it was this massacre that convinced his parents to change their opinion towards involvement in Vietnam.⁴⁶ A depiction of what happened in the My Lai hamlet by one soldier shows the horrors of the massacre, and gives some insight into why many Americans, such as the Burkhardt family, lost faith in the government and military because of this event,

⁴³ Gilbert Breeding. Interview by author, Sept. 2009. Andrew Mitchell . Letter to John Van Horn, 2009.

⁴⁴ Joseph Burkhardt. Questionnaire created by author, 2009.

⁴⁵ Fitzgerald, 151.

⁴⁶ Joseph Burkhardt. Questionnaire created by author, 2009.

When I saw the bodies in the ditch I came back around and saw that some of them were alive. So I sat [the helicopter] down on the ground and then talked to – I'm pretty sure it was a sergeant...and I told them that there were women and kids over there that were wounded – could he help them or could they help them? And he made some remark to the effect that the only way he could help was to kill them and I thought he was joking. I didn't take him seriously...and I took off again. And as I took off my crew chief said that the guy was shooting into the ditch...⁴⁷

There were no shots fired by the Vietnamese, only American; there were no American casualties, there were 400 Vietnamese slain – the majority women and children.⁴⁸

The next event that Mr. Burkhardt explicitly reflects upon was the protest demonstrations at Kent State and those in response to the incidents on that campus. Mr. Burkhardt said of Kent State, "I totally agree with demonstrations. It is our right under the first amendment in the Bill of Rights."⁴⁹ A distinctly different view than his neighbor, Mr. Burkhardt was in agreement with the students at Kent State. The students were against Nixon's expansion of the war into Cambodia and they had every right to demonstrate their disapproval.

Finally, Mr. Burkhardt remembers when television anchor Walter Cronkite returned home from Vietnam. He had visited the war zone and came back with a new opinion of the war, an opinion that the war needed to end and our men needed to come home. Mr. Burkhardt says that there was a distinct change in the public opinion that matched that of Walter Cronkite's.⁵⁰ This demonstrates that the media did play a role in the public support or dissent of the war. Mr. Burkhardt's views towards the war in the

⁴⁷ Fitzgerald, 132.

⁴⁸ Fitzgerald, 151.

⁴⁹ Joseph Burkhardt. Questionnaire created by author, 2009.

⁵⁰ Joseph Burkhardt. Questionnaire created by author, 2009.

late 1960's – early 1970's depicts a more liberal view, a view that matches the opinions of the professors at WMC College.

As we look at Carroll County as a whole, we must not forget the men that left from their homes in Carroll County and set out to serve our country in Vietnam. The effects the war had on their own thoughts and opinions, and how it affected their families. In a book entitled, Tours of Duty: Carroll County and the Vietnam War, Gary D. Jestes and Jay A. Graybeal, both veterans of Vietnam, compiled newspaper articles about soldiers and accounts of the war; letters of correspondence between soldiers and their families and friends in Carroll County; and biographical sketches of soldiers that were killed in action. Reading the letters sent home during the war, reveals an interesting pattern. The letters sent home by John Hull (Jay) of the 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry, 198th Brigade, U.S. Army began as soon as he arrived in Vietnam. His first letter was dated January 11, 1971, in it he talks of getting his orders and the trip to Vietnam. He then reports that, “the ocean is just 100 yards from our 12 man barracks. There are times when we can take a dip in the ocean...”⁵¹ This report of his first few days in Vietnam, although he is far from cheery and excited to be there, shows the optimism, that maybe being in Vietnam will not be so bad. Then, his letters begin to concentrate on medical situations, of men setting off booby traps and handing out medications to people with illnesses. In the last letter documented, Jay reports:

Well, I did it yesterday! I got dusted off on a medivac bird 7 days into my 4th mission with a bad sprain and a cracked ankle. I had to hump on it for

⁵¹ Graybeal, Jay and Gary Jestes. Tours of Duty: Carroll County and the Vietnam War. Historical Society of Carroll County, 2007: 122.

three days before we could get to an open area so the bird could come in to pick me up.⁵²

From the accounts of Jay and other soldiers sending letters home, the pattern of anxiousness and excitement for what the jungles of Vietnam had in store seems to be the theme in the initial letters home. However, as the letters continue soldiers began to question why they were there and what the outcome of their work in Vietnam would be in the end.

The Vietnam War was a controversial war, in that many people did not know what to support, the lines of fact and fiction were tugged upon by the United States government. When asked if his opinion of President Richard Nixon during the late years of the Vietnam War, John Van Horn did not know what to say. His answer to the question was similar to that of Dr. Leroy Panek, “If you vote a president in you want to support him and believe in what he is doing.”⁵³ It was this very belief that caused such a great divide between supporting and not supporting the war. It was also this very belief that led to harsh criticism of protesters, but for many it was this belief that left them feeling disappointed and unable to trust the government. Western Maryland College represents a small reflection of the controversy that was existent in the whole of Carroll County, Maryland – there was a majority of conservatives ready to defend the government and the military and a large pocket of people who had seen enough and believed that the United States soldiers and military personnel needed to come home.

⁵² Graybeal, 128.

⁵³ Leroy Panek. Interview by author, 18 Sept. 2009.

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