What Did They Expect, Spitball?
James Michener

James Michener, the best-selling novelist, wrote a nonfiction account of the events at Kent. Among his interviews are several reactions from townspeople and others that clearly display the extraordinary hostility engendered by antiwar demonstrators, student activists, and hippies. This is merely a brief sampling of these reactions.

Authority, law and order are the backbone of our society, for its protection. Would you want authorities to stand by if your home were threatened? Well, Kent State is my home by virtue of taxes spent funding it. What's more, it's their home by virtue of tuition paid. Playful children destroying a disenchanted toy.

How dare they! I stand behind the action of the National Guard! I want my property defended. And if dissenters refuse to obey the final warning before the punishment, hurling taunts, rocks (stones, they say), sticks, brandishing clubs with razor blades imbedded, then the first slap is a mighty sting.

Live ammunition! Well, really, what did they expect, spitballs? How much warning is needed indeed.

Hooray! I shout for God and Country, recourse to justice under law, fifes, drums, martial music, parades, ice cream cones-America, support it or leave it.

Ravenna [Ohio] housewife

When radical students are allowed to go through a town smashing windows, terrifying the citizens, and are allowed to burn buildings belonging to the taxpayers to the ground, I think it is high time that the Guard be brought in to stop them—and stop them in any way they can.

The sooner the students of this country learn that they are not running this country, that they are going to college to learn, not teach, the better.

If those students don't like this country or our colleges, why don't they go to the country from which they are being indoctrinated?

Concerned citizen

We are paying a large percentage of our hard-earned money to support and educate these young people. For what? To let them burn and destroy property that more of our tax money has paid for? Who paid for the hose that was cut while our firemen were trying to stop a fire, set deliberately, all the while being pelted with rocks. Some innocent person's home could very well have burned while our firemen were busy fighting a fire on campus.
Concerned resident

Some have questioned the need of the National Guard on campus and throughout our city. However, I shudder to think of the condition of our city today had they had not been present to protect and preserve what so many have labored endlessly to build.

Kent citizen

Congratulations to the Guardsmen for their performance of duty on the Kent University Campus. I hope their actions serve as an example for the entire nation. The governors of our states cannot waste the taxpayers’ money playing games. These men were alerted as a last resort to control mob action.

I extend appreciation and whole-hearted support of the Guard of every state for their fine efforts in protecting citizens like me and our property.

Mother of Guardsman

I have one possible solution to the problem. Build a fence completely around KSU, put President White and his 550 faculty members inside along with all the agitators that they understand so well and let them do their thing. We could also change the name from KSU to "Idiot Hill." Then Dr. White and his faculty and students could assemble and throw rocks at each other and play with matches and burn things down, because they understand each other's reasoning and don't want to be bothered.

So be it! I have more ideas, but what's the use. In fact, who needs KSU? Not me.

Kent taxpayer

Kent has tolerated these so-called misunderstood students long enough. The city of Kent should be off-limits to students. Keep them on the university grounds, and when they have completely destroyed it, they can go home and we will be rid of them. If the National Guard is forced to face these situations without loaded guns, the silent majority has lost everything. The National Guard made only one mistake–they should have fired sooner and longer.

As for the parents of the dead students, I can appreciate their suffering, they probably don't know the truth. A dissident certainly isn’t going to write home about his demonstration activities. Parents are learning the hard way and others should take heed. The high school photos that appeared in the paper were all very nice, but how do you explain the mother who refused to identify her own son at the hospital because of his appearance. This same boy had refused to go home on holidays.

I only hope the National Guard will be there the next time we need them. I am fully prepared to protect what is mine-property, home and life–at any cost against these mobs of dissidents in the event our law enforcement is prohibited to do what is
necessary.

Ravenna citizen

It is too bad that a small minority of students feel that these damnable demonstrations must take place. If the slouchily dressed female students and the freakishly dressed, long-haired male students would properly dress and otherwise properly demean themselves as not to make show-offs of themselves, such trouble could be and would be avoided. It is difficult to understand why female students must get out and make such fools of themselves as they do, but it is understandable that male students do so largely to get their screwball mugs on television and in the press.

If the troublemaking students have no better sense than to conduct themselves as they do on our university and college campuses, such as throwing missiles, bottles and bullets at legally constituted police authority and the National Guard, they justly deserve the consequences that they bring upon themselves, even if this does unfortunately result in death.

Attorney-at-law