

Interviews with former NMU Students
Kent State Shooting Reactions at Northern
No Date Given

START OF INTERVIEW 1

Interviewer (I): Like I said, we're just trying to find out what was happening at Northern in, Mr. O'Farm [spelled phonetically] described it at a non-resident student he really didn't see much of anything, it wasn't a large impact. His words were that Northern stayed on path, you know people felt sorry and what not, but it really didn't change it. But he also said all through college he wasn't in the mainstream, or is in the mainstream but he wasn't part of campus. What was it like at that time, on May 4th 1970 when the Kent State Shootings and the Cambodian Invasion, what was it like being a part of the dorms and living there?

Unidentified Male Student (MS): Living in the dorms I remember great interest in watching the news every night, it seems like before that you could go into the, they had a TV room in each dorm, each house had a room with a TV. I do remember great interest in the evening news during that period of time. But as far as anything going on on-campus, I don't remember any demonstrations as there were on other campuses across the country at that time. I can't promise that there wasn't though, Northern was not as politically active as other colleges at that time.

I: Did you live in a hall where you had a lot of, I don't want to stereotype, but you know hippies? Were you affected by these people?

MS: No, not really. Not in our hall, but we were not those students that you just _____ you would call them. Our hall was very sports oriented, so you know, I kind of, which is a different crowd back in those days anyway as the protestors and so on. So you didn't see as much as maybe there was in the other dorms.

I: Did you get the feeling though that Northern was encompassed by this whole movement, this whole campus unrest like at Yale, or at Harvard, or Kent State, or Cal Berkeley. Did you feel that Northern was part of this, or moving towards this?

MS: I never felt that, personally. I never felt that movement going on on-campus like there was elsewhere.

I: Did you know about it? Like you said you watched TV but you never caught any evidence whatsoever that maybe there'd be a, I mean not a shooting, no rallies?

MS: It seems like I remember some demonstrations going on, small demonstrations. There was something in the administration building or whatever, they were small demonstrations. I remember demonstrations by the blacks on campus at that time for some rights that they felt they weren't getting more so then I remember demonstrations in regards to the Cambodian invasions and so on.

I: Did any great fear sweep over the dorms, was there like a fear that that National Guard was going to show up in a dorm room and surround you? Or anything ridiculous or rumors or?

MS: Not in regards to that, but I remember I think there was a fear in everyone that, you know what was gonna happen in the world? What was this going to mean for Asia? Was this gonna be a major war. At the time it was referred to as the age of horror, but it wasn't an age of horror. But the invasion of Cambodia, there was a fear amongst us, I know personally there was a fear that this was going to become something larger. Personally I find I hadn't as much at stake, because of the draft, the lottery, my number was so high that by the time I was gonna get drafted everyone's going to. So at that point I didn't have the fear. But I think that was part of the concern about what was happening.

I: But you didn't deal with fear about what happened at Kent State was going to happen at Northern?

MS: No. But then again, like I said there wasn't demonstrations at Northern. There wasn't that unrest at all.

I: I asked Mr. Ball (?) this question, was there one, it seemed to be one group of people or one person that you always saw, I mean there was no demonstrations, but it always seemed that maybe he would, or she, would maybe start something? Or did you know a student who was like that?

MS: I mean there probably was, I just wish I could remember.

I: But they didn't have a big following?

MS: Right, right. I wish I could remember more about the students who knew what was going on. Because those would be the people, the students names at the time. I wish I could I remember some of them.

I: How'd you perceive, we didn't have a National Guard I mean the National Guard wasn't here. Mr. Potter [spelled phonetically] gave me the impression that anybody in uniform was kind of, you were skeptical. Did you have that same feeling or? Whether it was a uniform or an administrator or a professor?

MS: Oh absolutely in that period of time, the late 60s. I definitely, that was Northern like elsewhere, that was, you had the stress. I mean maybe even more so after something like the Kent State, you just don't know, you just don't trust. I'm sure people, at that age students always have a known regard of anyone in uniform and I think maybe at that time it was even more so then it is nowadays. Now students are more concerned about gaining an education but back then I knew a lot of students who were in college just to avoid the draft. That was part of the reasons why a lot of these students were going to college was to avoid the draft.

I: They went to avoid the draft yet they didn't, they weren't politically active?

MS: Right.

I: They were just? There was no undercurrent? You didn't feel and undercurrent? I mean even in your classes?

MS: You know we had discussions in classes that obviously were related to the Kent State shootings. I think maybe one of the reasons, Northern's also you've got to realize is probably a commuter school. There's a lot of students that commute from the area here. So they're obviously not going to be as involved in campus activities. I don't know, it's probably where Northern draws their students from, the reason it wasn't as politically active here.

I: That's exactly what I had Mr. _____ said that they liked to draw the students here. The students that come up here are not the students who are going to be, I don't want to _____ doctors or lawyers or what not. How do you think students, or how were you perceived by the community as a student? What I'm trying to get at, was there unrest? Did you feel you looked down upon because of what happened? Or if you went to Burger King or Shopko or whatever, that people would look at you like maybe you were like a college student at Kent State?

MS: I didn't feel that, but then again I didn't have long hair like some students on campus obviously.

I: You didn't look the part?

MS: Probably, as much as other students as they perceived students to be.

I: Do you think that's because we're so far in Marquette, Northern's so far from the mainstream that people perceive my looks instead of?

MS: I think so, at that time because the looks of the hippies in those days I think of very long hair. There was a whole range of student with short haircuts. I think there was even students, there was the groups _____.

I: Was there a lot of long haired, I don't want to say political activists because as I'm discovering you could have long hair and not be politically active, you could have long hair because you wanted long hair. But were there a lot of, a lot of them on campus? A lot of long hair?

MS: Probably not nearly as many as other campuses. But there was quite a few.

I: Do you think they were perceived differently by the community because Marquette is such a...

MS: I would not be surprised if they were.

I: Did anything ever come about this focus harassment? Rumors were going through dorms about harassment because a guy with long hair, the guys a straight A student but he's got long hair?

MS: I don't remember those, any rumors like that. I just don't remember.

I: I had something and then I just lost it. Do you think, oh I lost it. So Northern wasn't your, I don't want to say typical because universities were...but Northern wasn't like the other universities like Harvard or Yale or Ohio State? In reading in my literature, I find that there are always a demonstrations, mob style attacking the ROTC buildings. Northern didn't have any of that?

MS: I don't really remember anything. I guess, let me see ROTC. I can remember some of the ROTC students probably being harassed more so than anyone else. They were looked down upon in school probably because all of the students feelings towards anyone in uniform at the time. I do know that most students tended to look down upon ROTC students. There might have been some demonstrations.

I: But nothing major?

MS: Nothing major, there was nothing major.

I: I've got a diary of the time and I see that week, the week after Kent State. Kent State happened on May 4th, and the week after, that Friday of that week.

MS: It seems like we had school shut down.

I: Yes.

MS: There were, what was it, because we were off for a week or a few days or something. I'm trying to remember what caused it to shut down.

I: Would that be spring break?

MS: No there was something. It was like a water problem or something, but we were shut down.

I: So Kent State happened on May 4th, a Monday. On May 8th, that Friday school was shut down in memory. Do you remember the attitude that you took, or the dorm or the general attitude that the students took towards this day off? Was it a?

MS: Self day.

I: Was it "we've got the day off let's go home early" or "let's have a party" or "let's just relax?"

MS: Yeah. I'm sure there, there's probably been weeks like that knowing the students in the dorms. We definitely had parties that definitely, that was a party time for them. Like I said it was the commuter students that went home every weekend and took advantage of that. A lot of the students that were here were _____ they were going someplace. But that was also different in the dorms also because that place would just clear out on Friday.

I: That's a lot different than it is today.

MS: Yeah.

I: A lot of people stay.

MS: Yeah.

I: Looking at this, if I was a political activist, for giving us May 8th off you know let's take advantage of this and make ourselves heard. But I'm thinking that would be a critical date. If anything happened at Northern this would be the date. Nothing happened?

MS: Like I said I don't remember. But there might have been some type of demonstration that day, so show of support by students.

I: But you don't remember. And if there was it was minor, because if it was major you would probably remember. In looking at this time period, I thought maybe coming into this I picked this topic because I thought maybe Northern was, I got the impression all schools were in turmoil. But in finding this, I found that Northern didn't really change during the event. The day to day structure.

MS: Yeah I'd probably agree with that. There wasn't that much of a change, that whole time period was a time of turmoil on all campuses. And with the Vietnam War, but also the blacks demonstrating, it was a lot of demonstrations for the blacks. I remember the Vietnam War.

I: But this Cambodian invasion and Kent State shootings didn't really radically change your week?

MS: No.

I: That's, I'm starting to get the truth. I got a professor he says this change, and I thought maybe _____. But everyone I've talked to, it was just a real, people were startled but nothing really changed that much. Not that nobody cared

MS: There was concern, definitely concern. There was sorrow for the students and I mean that was obvious in the dorms but there was no demonstration, or big demonstrations where the whole campus made a show or anything like that.

I: No demonstrations with people walking around with signs. Living in a dorm I don't know if you would have seen this, but people who were coming back from Vietnam, soldiers. How were they, how were they looked upon? Did you know any or did you know of some of them?

MS: Obviously my brother, but he'd probably tell you better than I about how other students perceived him. Maybe that had some effect on how I perceived soldiers coming back, I really did not perceive them as being any different or being looked down upon because they didn't serve...you know.

I: But did you think that some, I mean.

MS: Of course.

I: Did you see any outright, you know what I mean? People just picking on this person because he had served there or?

MS: I do remember some class discussions where there would be a Vietnam vet in class and somebody would be, make discussion on whatever, some topic. America, the Vietnam War, when did you serve and so on. And we'd have the Vietnam vet weight in on that. Something like that and there would be some students that would be... But that's probably about all that I saw.

I: So really it was just another?

MS: There might be an isolated discussion here and there, but there was no...

I: _____ news of the day. How did your professors, like I asked this, how did this community react to you? Not to you personally, but to students. How do you like some of the professors reacted to you? You were accounting right?

MS: No, back then I was in math.

I: Alright so...

MS: Actually, back then I was probably more chemistry and math. So there was more a concern in the social sciences were the professors were more politically active also. When you're just the science aspects of chemistry and math that's a different individual that goes into those.

I: Did you have any, I don't know I hate using this word because it's generalizing, hippies in your classes that seemed to be pointed out by the professors?

MS: No, I did not remember any classes like that.

I: I say it again, I keep getting the impression over and over again that nothing changed.

MS: I'm wondering whether how much I remember of this, but I don't remember a whole lot of changes either.

I: Well you figure that if something big happened, you know.

MS: You think I'd remember it. Obviously I probably wasn't that politically active. Maybe if I was I would remember things more. But I don't remember anything big going on that everyone was talking about in the dorms. Other than just discussing the Kent State shootings, those kinds of things. Obviously those were all discussed during that time period. Everyone seems to be in agreement, the students were all in agreement.

I: I'll ask this question, did you look at things strictly from the student side or did you separate yourself from the event and look at both sides of it?

MS: I don't know, I think you probably almost have to look at it from the student side, because you are a student, you can associate with the students.

I: So in the Kent State shooting you thought the National Guard was extremely wrong?

MS: Yes.

I: Okay.

MS: There was mistrust in the government at that time, obviously. That was just another drop in the bucket basically. So yeah we definitely sided with the students. I don't think there were too many students in the dorms at all that would have thought the National Guard was right.

I: What I'm trying to get at is you weren't so far one sided that the government did you wrong, but you were right in the middle. That's what I'm trying to get at. The persons viewing, I didn't want to bias the comments over it. The reason I asked that question about whose side, when I posed that question to Mr. _____ he said being a student he felt sorry for the students. But he also said that the rest of the campus were attached to the whole thing. And he kind of looked at it that the point of view is, the National Guard isn't professional, how did they feel? I found that interesting which is why I posed that question. I found it interesting that he said, well be that National Guard guy, it's pretty scary.

MS: Well, he'd probably have a lot more outside influences then, obviously I lived among students and that was how I looked whereas he had his family. Where he had this kind of like a Goldberg influences at the time where he was living. So he had discussions with his parents obviously and maybe somewhere else. We had the discussions among students, so he probably didn't get that other position or whatever in discussion.

I: Just to clarify. You lived in the dorms, during this time the Cambodian time there was no big effort to organize?

MS: Not in our dorms anyway. I really don't remember.

I: Do you know how many people were living in the dorms at that time, a rough estimate?

MS: I think, I don't know. I couldn't tell you but I think enrollment at Northern was like 8000. I think obviously there was more in the dorms than are in the dorms now. At that time I think that was probably peak dorm enrollment and all the dorms were filled. They were requiring people to live on campus through your junior year back then. You can move off campus after your junior year.

I: So you were there for 3 years?

MS: Well, I started... I said I was commuting after two.

I: Not you personally but most students?

MS: Most students. If you lived in the dorms you were there for 3 or 4 years. It was hard to get off campus back then. It was like 3 to a room, it was crowded in the dorms.

I: Where you in one of the larger newer quads or where you in West or Gries?

MS: No I was in Payne Hall.

I: So you were really in the center of things?

MS: Yeah.

I: If it's anything like today, Gries and West are used primarily for, a lot of the football players live there. Was that like that then?

MS: That's the way it was then too, because you know shorter walk.

I: So really, I don't expect football players to be politically active. So you were really, if something was going to happen you were near the courtyards and the open environment, very small. And no hint of unrest. That's great, thank you!

MS: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW 1

START OF INTERVIEW 2

Interviewer (same as previous interview) (I): Whatever you want to say. Just the reaction of campus to the whole incidence, all the incidences.

Unidentified Former Male Student 2 (MS 2): We're talking that year?

I: 1970.

MS2: 1970. Well 1970, I think my reactions were a lot different than other people's because 1970, I was back on campus as a grad student after having spent 1968 in Vietnam. I was a grad student and working part time and going to school on the GI Bill. But also I was there as a veteran, veteran of the infantry and very much concerned with what was going on. Not only in Vietnam but also the protests here in the United States. I followed, I think probably a lot closer what was happening throughout the United States and with probably a lot more emotion than some of the other people.

I: Okay, what were since you were a veteran, how do you think people reacted towards you? I mean I take it you didn't wear your uniform to school? But I mean did they know that you were a veteran and did react differently to you or your professors or your students?

MS2: I don't think that many people knew I was a veteran unless they knew me personally. I did wear my fatigue jacket around, but then again so did a lot of other people. So that was not a distinguishing characteristic. Some of my instructors knew I was a veteran. In fact I remember having a class with Dr. O'Dell [spelled phoneticall] and he called me a couple of times and we just sat down and talked about my experiences and my feeling about Vietnam and the anti-war protests et cetera. But those people who knew me understood how I felt and were pretty much sympathetic to my feelings. We were also part of a veterans group that protested. I remember, I can't remember the dates et cetera but I do remember a candlelight protest one night down Third Street carrying...

I: The veterans?

MS2: The veterans did and other interested students, protesting the Vietnam War. And we carried candles and most of us had on KIA or MIA tags of some sort.

I: What was, since I'm dealing specifically with the week of May 4th, which is right after Nixon announced the Cambodian invasion, right after. Which is a total, he said he wanted to withdraw 150 troops and then 10 days later he announces that we're going into Cambodia. And then the Kent State incident. What was your reaction towards first the Cambodian invasion and then the Kent State incident?

MS2: I guess what I can recall quite vividly, and I've done a lot of reading on that year also because it's a main interest of mine. I recall when he made that announcement about us invading Cambodia, to me, I didn't react that much at all to it at all. Because we were invading Cambodia continually when I was there.

I: Because you knew that, you had that info?

MS2: Yeah. We set up and were support groups while other people went into Cambodia. We were on the Mekong River, which separates Cambodia and Vietnam, a lot. On the Cambodian borders, its common knowledge that we were sending troops across. Not full scale invasion like Nixon had talked about. So when he said there's going to be an invasion in Cambodia, my first reaction was that well we're finally acknowledging it.

I: Okay. And what about the Kent State happenings? The four deaths? And really from all the reading I've done on the four deaths is that students that seemed to just be, they're watching and not really people that were actively involved?

MS2: I guess when I think of my reactions to Kent State were fairly similar to the '68, I believe it was '68 when Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King were killed. I was in Vietnam at the time and I remember wondering what was going on back here in the United States. What makes these things happen? I mean we're over here fighting, supposedly for democracy, and yet we can't

continue a democratic system of government in the United States? When I came home to the typical homecoming that Vietnam veterans got, I was in sympathy with all the protestors. The war to me was useless, I saw no benefit to it, it should have been stopped. The Kent State occurrence was just one more step in the protesting countrywide. Then when the National Guard fired on the Kent State students, for whatever reason who fired the first shot who gave the order, I'm still not sure to this day we do know what happened there. But to me my reaction was its just one more tragedy in the whole Vietnam involvement.

I: Okay, that's perfect. I'd like to have your opinion on how you think Northern reacted to the situation. Now, I've read and I've read and I've read about Ohio State, Yale, Harvard, schools, you know the violent demonstrations, the protests of 300 people, rallies. Not that Northern was like that, but did they have anything like that or was there a movement to have something like that?

MS2: There was a movement here in town, but it was not nearly as full scale as it was at some of the larger universities. I think the fact that we are where we are geographically and the type of students that were at Northern, they just weren't politically involved. Their sympathies might have been one way or another but I don't like they exhibited them. They didn't show them, they didn't protest. There were protesters up here, there were a small group of people who were actively involved in the anti-war demonstrations. But overall the people up here were just kind of ambivalent to it.

I: So there was no happenings?

MS2: No, like I said the biggest happening I saw was probably that one demonstration, that candlelight protest the KIAs and MIAs...

I: Was that in that week?

MS2: I can't remember the exact date but I do recall individual situations and individual concerns coming back from Vietnam and being involved in it. There was our group of not just Vietnam veterans, but army veterans and people a little bit older than the average student, who spent a lot of at that point in the bars and were very vocal about our involvement and we felt as though we should get out of there as quickly as possible. But in terms of organizing something I never got that much involved with it, nor did any of the people that I associated with. I think the general student here who was going to Northern, first of all, a lot of them were here probably to get out of the draft, and then also during that year we also had the lottery drawing. And I think knowing where they were on that lottery number had a lot to do with the ambivalence of some of the people. I'm 247 why worry about it? It doesn't bother me, it doesn't concern me I'm not going to get involved.

I: Number 1, then number 2 and it went that way?

MS2: The first name drawn was the first, the first birthday, drawn was the first ones to be drafted. There was no more draft deferment for college.

I: Oh alright I see. People I've interviewed say the same thing. The reason Northern didn't get politically overly active, I mean they were politically knowledgeable, but the reason they didn't get active was because the situation of the students here. Would you agree that maybe because of Northern's curriculum and their position in the United States, I mean we're up above everything else and kind of out of the mainstream, do you think those are the reasons towards the ambivalence?

MS2: Yeah, I think so. But also we're not a, yeah. Geographically we're not noted as a political stronghold. We're not super conservative or super liberal, we're just kind of in the mainstream and the typical student at that time was kind of riding the waves. You get your hot beds in Berkeley out in California.

I: I was trying to get into the curriculum. Northern's basically, at that time, it was a teachers college and I feel like you're getting more open minded people? We're you get something at Michigan State or Berkeley we're they're more, they do one thing and they're more of a breeding ground.

MS2: Plus the numbers. Here there might have been X amount of political students. You know political or government majors, political science majors. But their numbers were so small whereas at a major university, there might have been 20 times as many people that had that particular same attitude. It was a lot easier to organize, and once you had an organization and leaders I'm sure there was a lot of followers here who would have taken.

I: I posed this question to everybody else. So you didn't, I'm not saying you knew them, but you didn't seem to know all of one person that was the leader?

MS2: No. There wasn't, to me there wasn't a particular stand out leader. There were a lot of people who felt as though we shouldn't be there, but they didn't actively take part in organizing something to demonstrate.

I: So the general theme I've been getting is that really although everybody was affected it was just another transgression in the Vietnam War and people just took it in stride.

MS2: Yeah.

I: And nothing really changed at campus.

MS2: No. By taking it in stride, it doesn't mean we weren't affected by it. But it was just one more step, one more thing that has occurred, and when the hell are we going to end this thing? I think the invasion of Cambodia and this particular situation just heightened the whole attitude countrywide. We might have made a few more people here more positive in how they felt and were more vocal. But still we were not that much of a protest university.

I: That's about it. I've been asking this question. How do you perceive how people...Alright you had that Friday off. They cancelled school, they cancelled school at over 800 universities. How do you think people perceived that at the university? Did they perceive it as a day off? As an

extra day to go home? As a day to work? Or as it was a day to say 'hey let's take a look and see what's up?' How do you think Northern perceived that?

MS2: Well, as I recall, having been here in 1963 and been in class when JFK was killed, and I can still remember exactly what happened. Where I was et cetera, and still being a student 7 years later when this particular situation happened and having the university shut down in both situations, the reactions to Kennedy's death I thought were a lot more personal to everyone than the reactions to the Kent State Massacre. A lot of feelings, a lot of people looking back in their conscience with Kent State also. But I don't think people perceived it as tragic. Maybe it's because they were overwhelmed with the TV, with the media coverage of Vietnam and seeing tragedy after tragedy. That was you know, that was something that we accepted at that time. Alright, here's 4 people killed at Kent State but that same day how many people were killed in Vietnam? Okay, they're both tragedies. Do you understand what I'm saying? We were faced with a tragedy on a day to day basis in '70. In '63 we weren't.

I: It just kind of got lost in the shuffle kind of a deal.

MS2: Yeah. Not that we didn't care, not that we didn't feel bad. But it was something that we'd become more calloused to and I think that we dealt with it that way and everyone dealt with it more on a personal basis than they did with a protest.

I: One final question then. How do you think the people in Marquette perceived the university and the students? Or how did the relationship continue.

MS2: Well that's a hard question. I don't think I was in tune with the community itself back in '70. I was a Vietnam veteran who was struggling with some of my own problems. Dealing with my own little group of people who were kind of a self-help group, which included sitting down, drinking a lot of beer and doing and doing a lot of self-analyzing and discussions. I didn't deal that much with the community. They were someone who 2 years prior when I came home in '68 from Vietnam, or a year and a half prior, shut me out. And my reaction to them was I'll do my own thing at that time. So I really don't know how they dealt with us that much. I guess I just can't answer, I guess a feeling would be they didn't want to see anything disrupt their normal life. If I can summarize it in one sentence. They didn't want any disruptions and if we the students were gonna cause disruptions they didn't want anything to do with us.

I: Alright, thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW 2.