

World of Books



Student, Faculty Report on Kent State

William Hogan

THE BOOK, admittedly, is hastily conceived and hastily executed. But those who contributed to it, eye-witnesses to the Kent State University tragedy of May 4, for the most part, are "bearing witness," Bill Warren, a 19-year-old Kent State sophomore explains. Warren edited the book, "The Middle of the Country: The Events of May 4 as Seen by Students and Faculty at Kent State."

It was produced 16 days after the affair, and is distributed now, an Avon Books paperback original (\$1.25). It contains photographs, but is printed badly, haphazardly, in some offset fashion that suggests badly typed notes. This, however, lends the project a certain drama and immediacy, like a mimeographed student manifesto nailed to some campus administration building.

These are the raw notes of history, much of it apparently written in shock and with emotion, a series of notes "hammered out in despair and frustration," as an assistant professor of literature, Lew Fried, writes in his report.

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EYE-WITNESS accounts of the events at Kent include a few flashbacks, including the destruction of an ROTC shack, which helped to bring the Ohio Guard to the campus. Finally the volley and the screams, the shock and disbelief.

Young editor Warren majors in anthropology, but due to this emotional thrust he became suddenly a writer-journalist-witness of considerable force and articulation. One is struck, reading this book, with

how strange the new fashion of education has become (instant history, instant naturalistic writing style), an education that has nothing to do with a standard curriculum.

The book is "uncensored, unfiltered, imperfect to be sure," as Warren says. But it is a passionate statement by some people who felt abandoned and betrayed after four young lives were lost, because, as another witness writes, "local, county and state officials could not stop their bickering long enough to take intelligent and decisive action."

An admirable and stirring project. But what a hell of a way to have to do one's homework.

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THE 1970 Joseph Henry Jackson Award (\$2000) has been won by Ernest Brawley, 32, of Lafayette, for his partly completed novel of revolution in a fictitious South American country, "In the Shadow of Thy Wings." Judges also awarded a special prize (\$200) to Penelope Lowenthal, a promising young Berkeley poet. The awards are administered annually by The San Francisco Foundation.

• Latest in Pantheon's Village Series — which has included, among others, "Aikenfield: Portrait of an English Village" — is "Change at Shebika," a report from North Africa. Author is the French scholar Jean Duvignaud, who over a period of years and with the help of several Tunisian students, observed this culture on the edge of the desert almost totally neglected by modernization (\$6.95).