

Town of Kent Has Few Regrets

By JOHN KIFNER

Special to The New York Times

KENT, Ohio, June 12—"One thing that's definitely come out of this is an increase in patriotism," said Jim Purcell as he filled out a sales slip in his downtown men's store. "You can spot the patriotic people showing their flags."

On Wednesday—five weeks and two days after National Guardsmen opened fire at a crowd on the campus of Kent State University, killing four students and wounding nine—the Jaycees placed a small notice in The Record-Courier that they would be selling American flag home-display kits. That evening, Mr. Purcell recalls, "the phone wouldn't stop ringing. We sold 80 or 100 kits."

"These people are saying that America isn't so bad," the merchant said. "They're saying that we have faith in our political structure and system and that whether it's hard times or not we don't want our system overthrown."

As Kent State prepares for its 57th spring commencement exercises this weekend, there are few regrets expressed by the townspeople over the deaths of the four students, and those few are usually prefaces to baffled outrage over the smashing of store windows, the burning of the Army R.O.T.C. building and the prevalence of long hair.

Resentment and Fear

There is resentment and fear among the solid middle-class citizens of this northeastern Ohio town of 30,000 persons, neatly divided into a university-business district and quiet residential section by the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad tracks and the Cuyahoga River.

Among the few young people who have come back since the university was closed following the shootings, there are constantly circulating rumors of the formation of vigilante groups and the belief, expressed in an often-repeated phrase, that they are "the new niggers."

"I am a little surprised at the intensity and depth of the feeling," Robert I. White, president of the University, said of the hostile feeling this afternoon. "That's the problem in which we've made the least progress. I think it's a reflection of the general public opinion across the nation."



The New York Times

President Robert I. White of Kent State said he was surprised by deep hostility shown in the local feeling.

Letters to the Editor

The feelings of the townspeople were vented in column after column of letters to the local newspapers in the days after the shootings, which occurred May 4.

"As a taxpayer," said one letter-writer, "I object to spending a dime of my money to 'educate' anyone who participates in a riot—they should be thrown out of school permanently. I also object to

spending my money to pay faculty members who publicly criticize the university administration. If they can't be loyal members of the team, they should find jobs elsewhere."

"This is in defense of our law enforcement officers and anyone who is sent into riot areas to quiet a riot," another letter began. "I cannot condone what students are doing to our nation. If these kids are allowed to get away with the things they are doing, it is a shame this conduct may be allowed to go on in America."

Another writer suggested that "a very simple compound with barbed wire and a minimum of conveniences" would be a solution to student unrest.

On the streets and the golf course and in the bars and offices of Kent and its neighboring communities, there is little criticism of the Guard and the belief is frequently expressed that "they should have shot more of them."

"They were dirty and they had long hair," a grandmotherly-looking woman who had been a fraternity housemother here for 20 years, said of the four dead students. "The newspapers printed their high school pictures so people would think they were nice kids, but they weren't."

Waiting for the Students

On the day of the shooting, one man bought a guard dog to protect his house and wife. Others tell of sitting through the night on porches or in darkened living rooms with shotguns to protect their homes against the pillaging hordes of students that they believed were coming.

It was the smashing of store windows and the burning of the Reserve Officers Train Corps building that shocked the citizens of Kent, but resentment toward the young had long been apparent.

The major point of irritation has been "the strip," a shabby row of bars on North Water Street, which caters not only

to the 20,000 students here but also draws young people from all over northeastern Ohio on weekends.

In addition, the social life of the bars and the campus has attracted a small but highly visible nonstudent community, looked on with disfavor by both city and university officials. Even with the school closed, the bars are crowded. On these warm nights, young people sit on the sidewalk outside their doors and lounge against parked cars.

Flags on the Sidewalks

During the day, under fluttering American and Ohio flags set on poles on the sidewalk, the townspeople, who favor gray-ing crewcuts and plastic linings to hold the pens in the pockets of their short-sleeved white shirts, narrow their eyes and purse their lips as they stare at the young people with their unkempt hair, faded bellbottoms and T-shirts.

On Monday night, Leonard Vogt, a doctoral candidate in English, was walking with two girls down the street when a half a dozen short-haired young men stopped them outside a nonstudent bar. One grabbed Mr. Vogt by his shoulder-length hair and hit him in the face. As he fell to the sidewalk, the others stamped at him.

After they left, the student was helped to a friend's house where, a little after midnight he informed the police of the incident.

"When I went to the station the next morning," Mr. Vogt said, "I read the report and it said I had been 'assaulted by four hippie-types.'"

Officials Denials

Mayor LeRoy Satrom and other city officials denied any knowledge of this or other reports by students of beatings.

The young people make other complaints against the police. On the night of the shootings, the police raided the Water Street apartment of a student—his telephone number had been listed as legal aid for demonstrators—with a warrant to search for "radio broadcasting equipment." They ordered the six young people in the apartment to stand outside and then arrested them for violation of the 8 P.M. curfew. The time was 7:45, the youths said. All were later acquitted.

Mayor Satrom, a former civil engineer, attributes the disturbances to a "subversive element." He said the university should conduct "some screening to eliminate those who cause the problems," both among the students and faculty.

He said he would again call the Guard if disturbances broke out. Asked if their guns should be loaded, he replied: "I wouldn't send them out without loaded weapons."