

**WHERE WERE
YOU WHEN
PROTEST BL
AT BRADLEY**



ACTIVISM

BY BOB GRIMSON '81

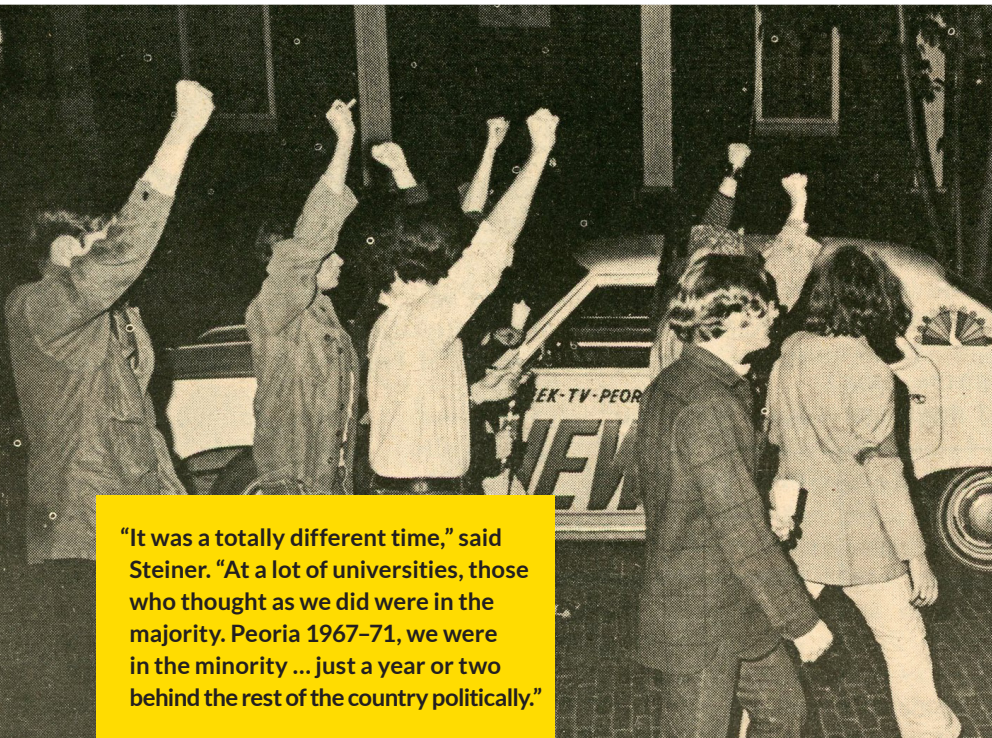
PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE SCOUT ARCHIVES

Ⓢ 10 MIN.

Fifty years ago, the deaths of four students at Kent State University galvanized opposition to the Vietnam War around the world and on the Bradley campus.

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“As long as they remained peaceful (and went back to where they came from, they weren’t going to arrest anybody,” said King. “That’s the big thing — they didn’t arrest anybody.”



"It was a totally different time," said Steiner. "At a lot of universities, those who thought as we did were in the majority. Peoria 1967-71, we were in the minority ... just a year or two behind the rest of the country politically."

While reports of the May 4, 1970 shootings by Ohio National Guardsmen that killed four students and wounded nine at Kent State University commandeered the evening news, Dan Levinson '71 met with a small group of friends around a black-and-white television at an off-campus apartment to decide what to do.

As clouds moved in that early evening and the sun went down, Levinson's group joined the others gathering on campus for an impromptu march to protest the killings.

"We were allowed to start a march. It didn't seem to be an issue, we just did it," he said. "What was fascinating to me, and what I remember most clearly, is that people who typically wouldn't participate in an anti-war march came out of their dorms, fraternities, sororities, their apartments and joined us. A lot of people who might have been on the fence or might have felt it wasn't in their DNA to demonstrate against the war, did that night."

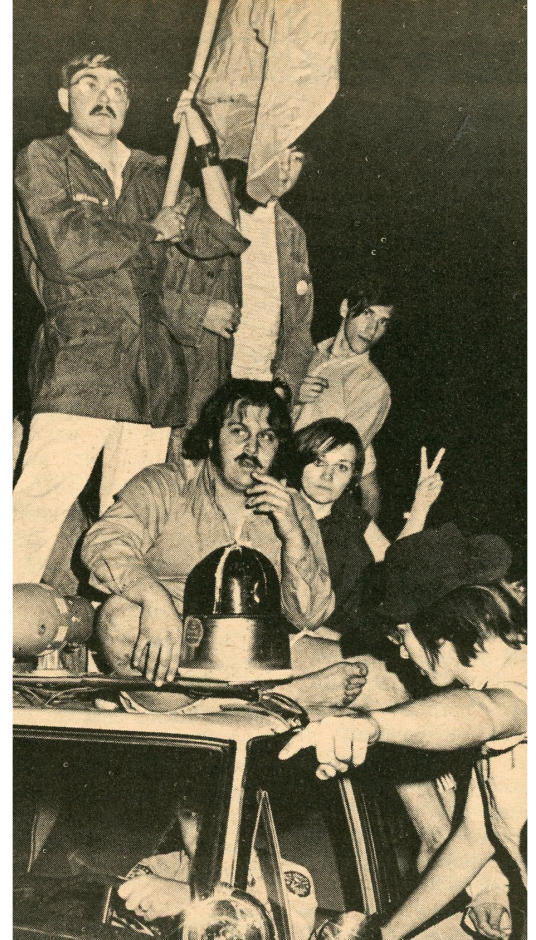
Starting about 11 p.m., those students returned to the Quad and joined others there. Another march sprang up around campus and nearby streets with students chanting and singing. Before setting off 10 abreast

from the Quad onto Main Street and around nearby neighborhoods, the crowd heard from campus leaders, including **Karl Manheim '71**, who was a student senator.

"The purpose of this march is to protest the murder of four students at Kent State University in Ohio today, and American policy in Southeast Asia," The Bradley Scout reported him saying in its May 8, 1970 edition.

About 12 hours earlier, news of the shootings first reached campus, courtesy of the UPI news ticker and midday disk jockey **Charley Steiner '71 HON '10** at campus radio station WRBU.

"I would check (the ticker) while songs were on, just to see if anything earth-shattering had happened. And something earth-shattering had just happened," he recalled, adding he broke into the song then playing to report the incident.



Students with candles and a peace banner climbed atop a police car for the final mile of the march around campus.

In a turbulent school year that had already seen a massive march to downtown Peoria and the takeover of the Student Center to protest a tuition hike and racial injustice, the students' response to the shooting wasn't surprising. The night of the shooting, with temperatures hovering in the 50s, an estimated 2,000 Bradley students eventually massed on the Quad.

On the other side was **Ed King '54 M.A.'62**, executive director of housing, residential life and student judicial system emeritus, who was then dean of men. He remembered marching alongside students trying to keep the peace.

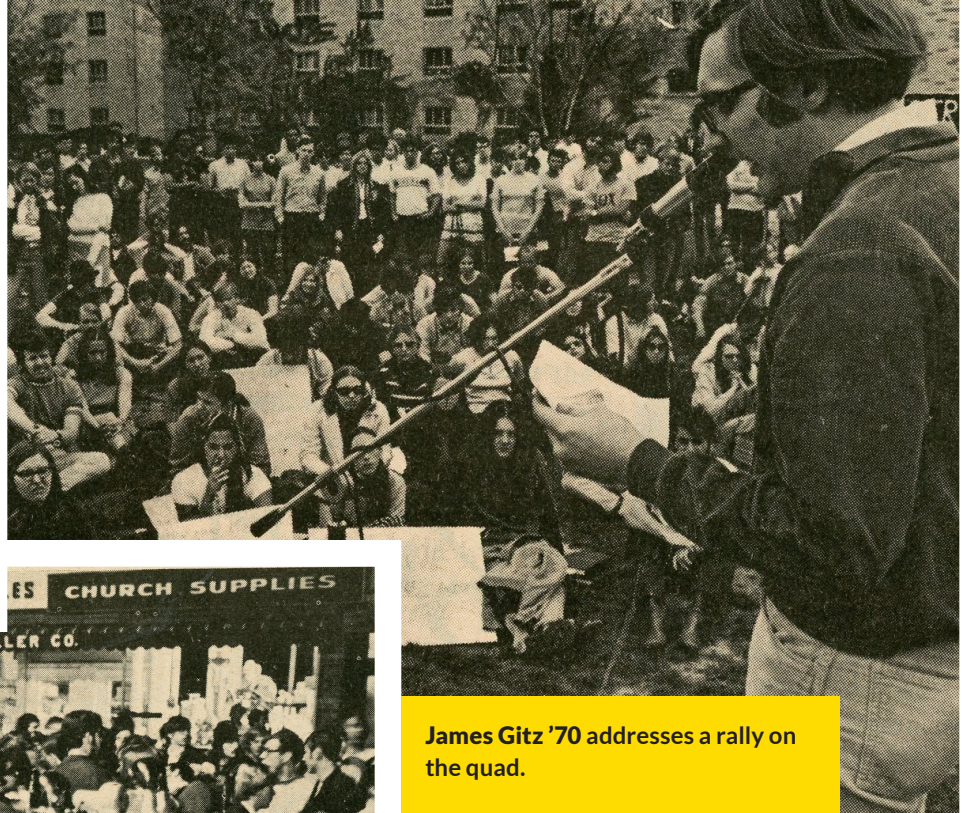
"I was literally marching with them and the police as we went down (Main Street)," he said.

"We had never seen anything like this before on campus. I appreciated their (students) concern and why they were so frustrated."

According to a front-page story in the student newspaper, the march started as a silent gathering of nearly 2,000 students on the Quad, then changed into a solemn funeral procession. The ranks swelled by a continu-



An improvised flag on the quad called for a student strike of classes.



James Gitz '70 addresses a rally on the quad.



"Many, many students joined their first protest ever," said Levinson. "The reaction to the Kent State killings had a profound effect on (those) who might have been ambivalent about the war in Vietnam."

ous stream of new arrivals and the group transformed itself step-by-step from a crowd to a sit-in to a battle line.

"There wasn't one unifying body of people," said Ed Hyson '71. "There were different groups that were demonstrating. There were people singing, there were people sitting-in." Now a Boston-area radio and music personality known professionally as Oedipus, Hyson was then president of Bradley's chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

Some students broke off from the main group and held a sit-in, blocking the intersection of Main and University streets. About 10 minutes in, Peoria police arrived and cordoned off Main Street from Glenwood to Bourland (about three blocks).

Students requested permission to march downtown but were denied and a compromise was struck.

At about 1 a.m., when the crowd had shrunk to about 400, the police gave students permission to march around nearby streets (Underhill, Moss, Western and Fredonia) before returning to campus. The group split

with about 300 marching and the remainder staying on Main Street.

Officers then formed a line in front of the Varsity Theatre on Main and started herding students toward campus.

After reaching the university, students gathered on the steps of Harper Hall and refused to disperse, prompting a police charge that pushed them into Harper's lobby. Minor injuries occurred when an officer stumbled on the bottom steps and a student tripped at the top.

Meanwhile, those following the police-prescribed march route neared the intersection of Western and Moss, with about a dozen students riding on the outside of the lead police vehicle, according to The Bradley Scout.

The paper reported by 2 a.m. marchers had reached campus and dispersed. There were no injuries and no arrests. "It was a surprisingly well-behaved march. There wasn't any damage done or anything like that," King said.

Steiner, one of the founders of the Bradley University Peace Congress, feels the effects of those events, even after half a century.

"We were angry about a lot of stuff," he said. "Now, all of a sudden, this anger hits home and hits hard. How do you put that into some kind of perspective? To this point, 50 years later, I still don't know. The sadness of that moment, that day, is as deep now, I suppose, as it was then, only memory has sandpapered the edges off."

In the following days leading up to the end of that semester, additional protests included rallies, marches and a collection drive for students at Jackson State University, where two students were killed and 12 wounded by police less than two weeks after Kent State. Bradley also experienced the firebombings of Holmes Hall (then home of the school's Air Force ROTC unit) with minor damage and the Swords Hall office of Dean of Admissions Orville Nothdurft '35, which sustained \$2,500 damage.

"There was a real feeling that we could effect change, that we really could make a difference," said Manheim, now a law professor in California whose father, Jerome, was Bradley's dean of liberal arts and sciences at that time. "I felt we were doing something that would have impact. We thought that was possible. In the end, it wasn't."

Hyson offers a different assessment. "We ended the (Vietnam) war," he said. "Campus protests helped to end the war, establish the civil rights movement. Protests were on campuses all around the country, across the world." **B**