

# 'The Largest Turnout In UNC History' Thousands Joined Protest Against

"Unless we act, this country will destroy itself...We go on strike to open a new university, to create a free university...Today we begin to live the dream."

Standing before nearly 9,000 students gathered in Polk Place on May 7, 1970, Student Body President Tom Bello spoke those words and began the biggest student protest in the history of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Not only was the three-week strike against U. S. involvement in Cambodia the largest in number, it also brought into the student protest students who had never dreamed they would ever march on a picket line, boycott classes for political reasons or chant anything at all like, "On Strike. Shut It Down."

The second night of the strike, May 9, a Friday, one coed sat in the lobby of Spencer dorm, crying.

"I don't understand," she sobbed. "I just don't understand."

She had ignored the initial strike

efforts on the Tuesday before when the teaching assistants in the English Department walked off the job in protest of the four killings at Kent State.

Wednesday during the 11 a.m. student body meeting in Polk Place she had wandered by. She listened to Bello and to Chancellor J. Carlyle Sitterson as he read a telegram to the North Carolina Congressional delegation.

Signed by Consolidated University President William C. Friday and the chancellors of the six CU campuses, the telegram expressed "concern" at Richard M. Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the tension it had produced on their campuses.

The coed had talked to her friends, to people she had never seen before. And she decided to join the strike.

She slept out in Polk Place Wednesday night.

Friday she called her parents. They gave her a choice: she could put herself through school at Chapel Hill with no financial aid from them, or she could live

at home and go to school at Lenoir Rhyne.

Like many others who participated in the strike last Spring, she was doing something she had never done before.

She was against the invasion and decided to say so. Doing that brought home to her what others have felt and expressed before many times and in many more words than she used in the lobby of her dorm.

That coed was the story of the three-week strike last Spring—people who had never been political before joining in one of the protests that have given this University its reputation.

And it was those people who made the strike as big as it was.

The beginning of the strike has to be placed at the moment Nixon went before the nation on television and informed the people of the move into Cambodia—Thursday, April 30, 1970.

The Student Legislature met that night in emergency session to consider action on the move. The meeting, called by Bello, voted to call for a one-day boycott of classes to protest the move.

Bello, authorized by the legislature to call the meeting and the boycott, declared an emergency meeting of the entire student body Wednesday, May 6, at 11 a.m.

But before the student body could meet, the strike began.

Kent State happened. In the middle of Ohio on the campus of Kent State University, a school previously untroubled by disruption or by protests of any kind, students rioted.

They burned buildings in the downtown area two nights in a row, and Monday the National Guard was on campus and armed.

Monday afternoon four students were killed. The Guard still maintains that they were fired upon by snipers. Investigations by both Congressional Committees and Knight Newspapers shed strong doubt on that claim.

Nevertheless, four students were dead. None of them had actually been involved in the protest. One was a ROTC cadet. Two were coeds.

Fifteen English graduate students, all teaching assistants, met Monday night. They spent all night in their meeting, and by 8 a.m. they had decided.

They struck. They refused to meet their classes and set up picket lines around Bingham Hall. By late that day the strike had actually begun to be more than a brief protest.

At noon, approximately 2,000 students gathered around the flagpole in Polk Place to listen to the English graduate students explain why they were on strike.

The meeting became a discussion, and the mike was opened to all who wanted to speak. One of those who did want to speak was a bio-statistics professor from the University of Wisconsin.

His campus had been one of the more explosive during the year, and he told the students, "What you are doing is good. Stick with it."

On the national scene the National Student Association and the Student Mobilization Committee began nationwide coordination of what had indeed become a national student strike. The national action began as boycotts that soon became strikes. A march on



Student Body President Tom Bello Leads The Students Down Franklin Street Following Wednesday's Student Body Meeting. Behind Are Coffins In Memory Of The Four Students Killed At Kent State.

Washington was hastily organized and a National Strike Information Center was set up at Brandeis University in Massachusetts.

Tuesday night three students in Granville Towers were sitting in a room talking about Cambodia, Kent State, the demonstration earlier in the day.

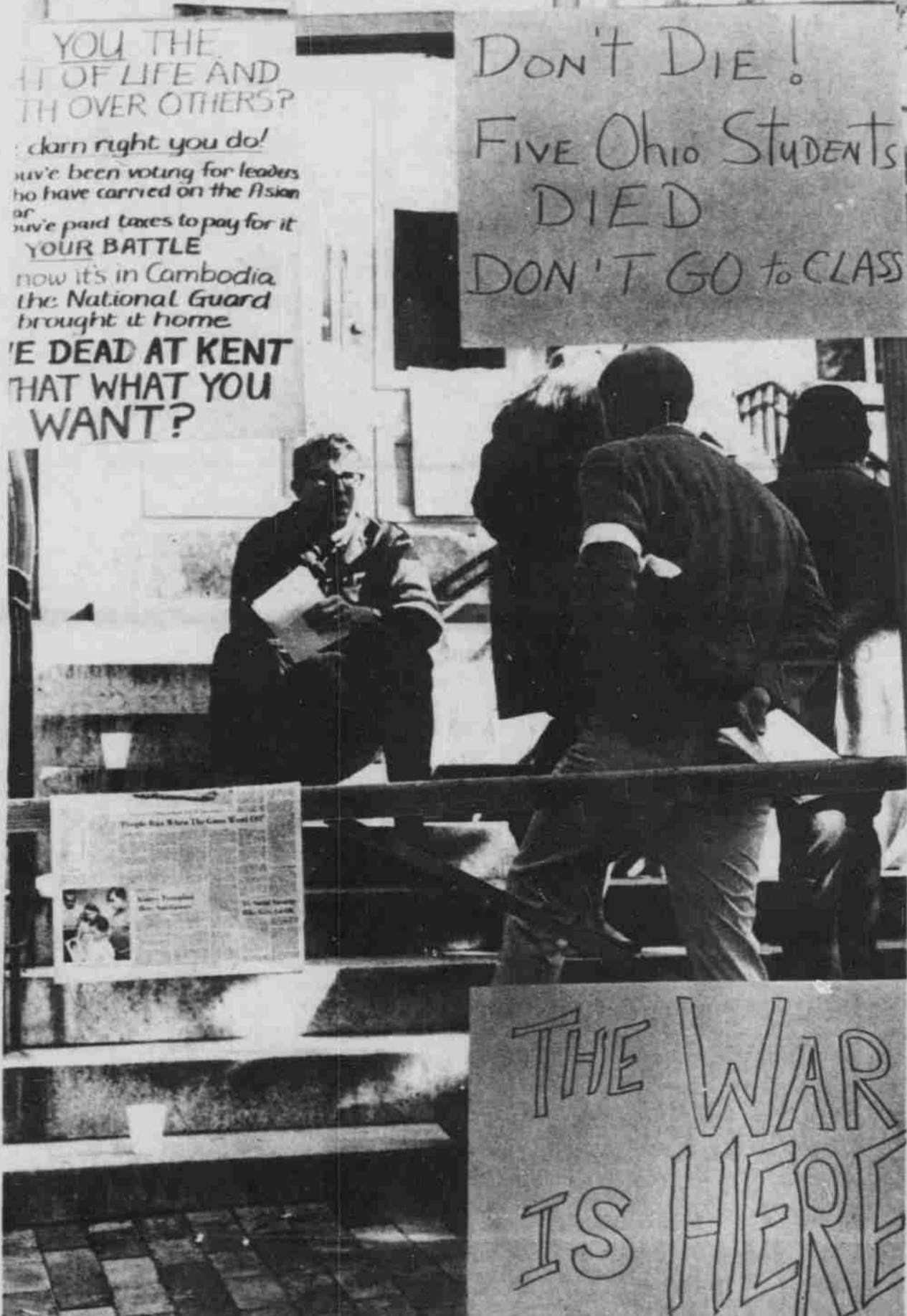
They began going through the halls of the high rise dorms asking students to join them in a memorial march for the Kent students. By the time they left Granville, there were forty students in the line carrying candles.

They walked from Granville through the fraternity courts, chanting "On

Strike. Join Us. Join Us."

They worked their way across the campus, past Old East and West, picking up students as they marched.

When they reached the back of the library, there were 200 people in the line. They marched by Teague, Parker and Avery chanting, "Join Us," and those in



Posters and new clippings displayed outside of Bingham Hall informed students of the events that catalyzed the strike.



English Instructor John Rosenthal Speaks At Polk Place On The First Day Of The Strike.



Students March To South Campus To Gain Support