

SCENE & HEARD

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HOW CAN YOU RUN WHEN YOU'RE DRUNK?

Kent State erupts again, this time for less noble reasons

All I could think about was May 4. The tear gas. The rubber bullets. The police. The angry students.

The Kent State shootings happened 18 years before I was born, but as I watched the Saturday-night riot on College Avenue, May 4 was all I could think about. But Saturday's riot wasn't fueled by politics or a generation gap. It was fueled by drunk college students with an urge to light things on fire and police who refused to let students gain control.

For the past five years, College Fest has been part of the spring semester. And each year, the heat and an abundance of cheap beer leads to an out-of-control crowd, forcing the police to break up the block party. So everyone assumed this year's festival would be the same.

After a day of drinking and gorgeous weather, things started to go awry at 8:40 p.m. According to the *Daily Kent State*, police attempted to disperse the crowd, and protesters began to throw glass bottles at officers. Police responded by firing non-lethal ammunition from paintball guns. Ten minutes later, a fire was started at the end of the street. I've never seen a fire that high. Everything went in, from couches to textbook-size pieces of wood. From rooftops, porches and sidewalks, students watched the fire, cheering it on.

By 9:05 p.m., police were in full riot gear at the end of the street, arresting anyone who wouldn't leave the area. As police began to march down College Avenue, the excitement escalated to tension and fear. Suddenly, the mass of people turned and started running down the street, away from the cops. My friend Ray grabbed my hand and pulled me down the street,

warning me to watch out for the shattered beer bottles covering the ground.

Once the crowd made it to the end of the street, everyone assumed the worst was over. But the festivalgoers weren't ready to give in yet. They started three more fires. At the intersection of College Avenue and Lincoln Street, a few men pulled several street signs out of the ground, throwing them into the growing pyre. People were still running. The air smelt smoky. Finally, Ray and I decided we had to leave. I was sweaty, muddy and shaken. I wildly texted everyone in the newsroom as Ray continued to pull me by the hand away from the scene. Then I heard several popping noises.

"What's that noise?" I asked Ray, looking up mid-text.

No reply.

"Answer me!" I said, hitting him. "What is that noise?"

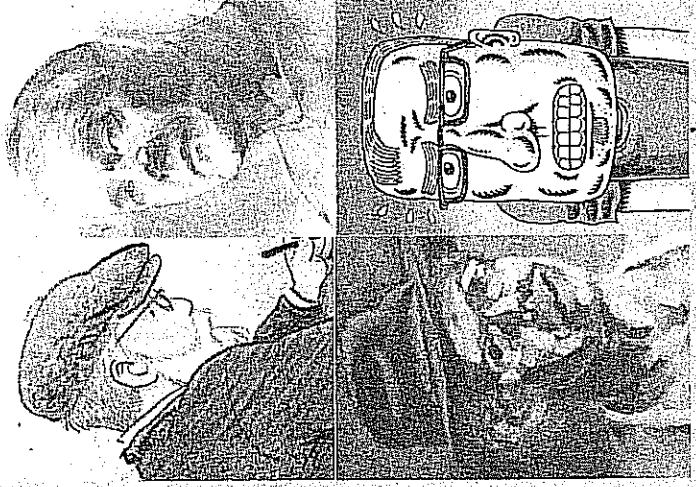
"It's the rubber bullets," he said, speeding up. It was definitely time to leave.

Sunday morning, College Avenue residents began to clean up the mess from the night before. Video, pictures and first-hand accounts flooded the converged website for Kent State's student newspaper, television and radio station. Fifty people had been arrested for failure to disperse. The university issued a statement saying it was "disappointed in the events that have occurred and finds the behavior inexcusable."

Kent State was once again in the news. —Brittany Moseley

ADD SOME VARIETY

Buildings like the Capitol Theater on Detroit Avenue are giving neighborhoods something to brag about again. And as the Northeast Shores Development Corp. tries to turn around others, like the old LaSalle on East 185th in North Collinwood, the Westtown



FOUR GUYS AND A SHOW

The straightforwardly named gallery show *Four Guys ... Who Used to Work at the Beacon Journal* but *Don't Anymore* features work by Derf (The City cartoonist and longtime *Scene* and *Free Times* contributor) and three former colleagues, Chuck Ayers (top left), Dennis Balogh (top right) and Art Krummel (bottom left). Ayers draws the syndicated comic strip *Crankshaft* (which is written by Tom Batiuk). Balogh's watercolor illustrations have appeared in many national magazines. Krummel is a painter and the group's "beloved leader." *Four Guys* opens Friday, May 1, 7 p.m., at the Upstairs Gallery in the Musica Complex, 20 W. High St. (rear entrance, 17-19 Maiden Lane), 530.252.0988. The show runs through May 28. Free parking in the Main Library parking deck on High Street, two blocks from the gallery.

Community Development Corp. is closer to that goal. The group will soon buy the decrepit Variety Theater at 11815 Lorain Avenue for a complete makeover into a renovated theater, seven storefronts and 13 apartments upstairs.

Ward 19 councilwoman Dona Brady was successful on Monday in convincing Cleveland City Council's finance committee to pitch in \$211,000 in redevelopment funding toward the 80-year-old building's purchase. A group, Friends of the Variety Theater (varietytheatreccleveland.com), has already raised the remainder of the \$1 million asking price through loan promises, and has purchased a new marquee — currently in storage — to return the tired-looking block to an earlier, prouder time.

"They can't put the sign up without owning the building," Brady told her colleagues. "So when we do, it's going to be something. The decline of the Variety, especially the marquee going into such drastic decline, has been sort of a symbol of

decline for this neighborhood. So now we're going to be able to install this marquee, and it's going to be a beacon for the area again."

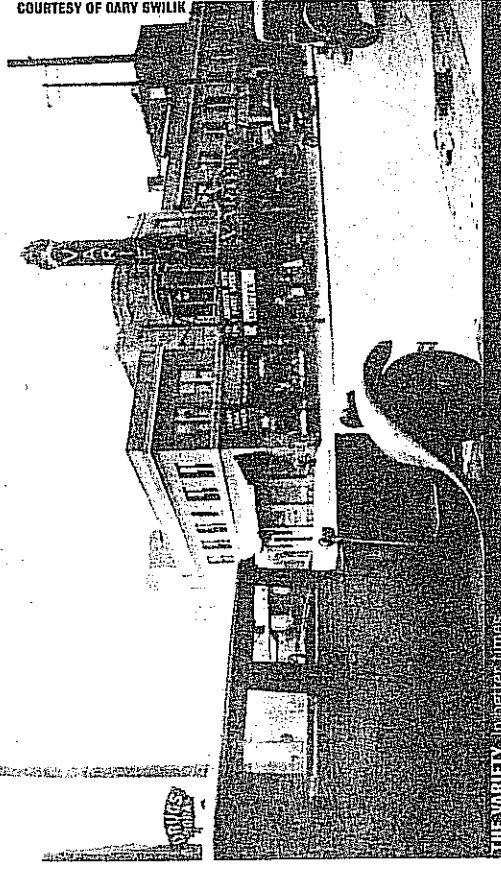
The Westown CDC has been championing the effort for nearly four years, for obvious reasons, says Brady. Last year, Brady was instrumental in having the area — from 110th to 123rd streets — declared a historic district.

"If you don't act proactively to control what's torn down or put up, you're going to lose the neighborhood's whole sense of identity," she says.

And she's happy that the godforsaken "headbanger" music — played there by a slew of big metal and punk acts until a judge shut it down in 1986 — won't be emanating from the rafters again.

Renovations, expected to last as long as a half-decade, will begin once the sign goes up and the building is firmly under the Friends' control, says Brady — and as soon as the remaining \$6 million-plus in restoration costs can be raised. —Dan Harkins

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COURTESY OF GARY SWILK

THE VARIETY, in better times