

Department of History
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

WSU-EC PEACE: IT'S WONDERFUL
Achieving University Nonviolence during Turbulent Times
The Spring and Fall Semesters of 1970

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Dr. John W.W. Mann
Cooperating Professor:
Dr. Selika Ducksworth-Lawton

Jeremiah G. Bartlett

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Abstract

This paper examines student unrest and campus culture during the spring and fall semesters of 1970 at Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire (presently the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire). Throughout the Vietnam War era, college students protested the war and the rise of U.S. militarism. Near the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s, student protest on some of the nation's campuses became increasingly violent. In the spring and fall semesters of 1970, for example, events on the campuses of Kent State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison proved fatal. In a historical context, deadly protest characterized many universities' 1970 spring and fall semesters. Conversely, the WSU-Eau Claire campus remained non-violent. This paper addresses the anti-war movement at the university level and details the main reasons WSU-Eau Claire maintained peace in a time of turmoil.

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Introduction

This paper examines student protest culture and anti-Vietnam War activism at the national level and at Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire (WSU-EC), in the year, and the years leading up to, 1970. Throughout the 1960s and into 1970 student protest on America's college campuses became increasingly violent. This violence reached its culmination in the spring and fall semesters of 1970 with the events at Kent State and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This paper discusses the potential for violence at WSU-EC on the heels of these events and identifies the reasons WSU-EC remained peaceful. By the end of this paper the reader should understand the important role of the following elements and their influence on peace at WSU-EC: location, university student body, university faculty, university presidents, and city police and local law enforcement.

Methods & Historiography

As a University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire student historian, I feel a special connection to this topic. In my time as an undergraduate on this campus I have both discovered and developed a distinct interest in United States society and the historic events of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, I chose a topic including aspects of each.

Fueling my research was a desire to fit local history into a broader national context. Relatively smaller campuses, such as WSU-EC, are often absent in the pages of scholarly literature on the topic. However, through the process of my research I came to appreciate the fact that, sometimes, in relation to the violent events in United States history, what *did not* happen is just as important as what did. Such is the case with student unrest during the Vietnam War era in America.

This paper draws upon a variety of primary sources either from, or concerning, WSU-EC during the 1960s and 1970. Although there is an abundance of literature covering protest and activism at many larger, well-known colleges, there is very little written about WSU-EC. In fact, I was only able to find one secondary source on the history of the Eau Claire college, Hilda Carter and John Jenswold's *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A History, 1916-1976*. This book provides a brief history of UWEC, and in its pages the authors suggest some of the reasons WSU-EC remained peaceful. However, due to the broad scope of the book, these "reasons for peace" do not receive a great deal of attention. Carter and Jenswold's arguments were indeed significant, as they provided the research questions for this thesis, but I believe they are broad assumptions deserving of a more thorough analysis.

Utilizing specific primary sources, my study provides a deeper, more detailed examination of WSU-EC during this time. A series of interviews conducted with Dr. Leonard Haas, university chancellor from 1959-1971 and again from 1973-1980, reveal both his thoughts on student protest and radicalism of the 1960s and his own theories on why WSU-EC remained free of student violence. Haas' ideas and beliefs helped to shape the direction of this thesis, as they provide a firsthand account of Eau Claire during this time period. Newspapers, ranging from Eau Claire's *Leader-Telegram*, to WSU-EC student publications such as *The Spectator*, *The Alternative*, and *Our Town* helped capture the emotion and views of the Eau Claire community, both on and off campus. Archival collections, such as the Chancellor's Records, Faculty and Student Senate minutes, and the Howard Lutz papers helped to bring the "inner-workings" of the university to light. The U.S. Government publication, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, was also important. The document was published in the summer following the violent events at Kent State University. In its pages, President Nixon's Commission on

Campus Unrest provide recommendations to help universities maintain nonviolence and listed reasons student dissent on some campuses, such as Kent State University, turned violent.

My secondary sources help to contextualize events that affected American society, university climate, and student culture during the 1960s and 1970. They reveal the similarities that the city of Eau Claire and WSU-EC shared with other colleges and college towns across the nation. Overall, these sources help to bring an understanding to this era in American history; specifically, they build an understanding of the history of student culture in the 1960s leading up to the violent spring and fall semesters of 1970.

The 1960s and Student Protest Culture

When the decade began, the vast majority of American students were either apolitical or dedicated to working peacefully for change within the existing system; as it ends, ever-increasing numbers of students accept a radical analysis of American society and despair of the possibilities of peaceful social change.

United States, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*

In the spring and fall semesters of 1970 violent protest occurred on the campuses of America's universities. Why? Why were students able to protest and, in turn, why did they do so? What did they protest, and why did these protests, over time, turn violent? Although there is no definitive answer to these questions, a number of significant historical events occurred in the year, and years leading up to 1970 that inspired college students across the nation to challenge authority.

War had a profound impact on many of those who called themselves college students in the 1960s and 1970. World War II transformed American society. In years following the war, birth rates increased significantly in the United States. Those born in this time period, commonly known as “baby boomers,” grew up when the U.S. was emerging as a world superpower. WWII helped to bring the nation out of the Great Depression, and brought Americans economic and technological comforts they had not seen in the first half of the 20th century. These changes had a significant impact on society, especially the baby boomers, recalled Dr Leonard Haas. He explained, “We were beginning to develop a generation which was not only going to try to avert any future wars,” and continued, “but it was also going to be a generation that was going to be able to always live with plenty, never wanting anything.”¹

Many of the post-WWII baby boomers came of age as university students in the 1960s. They enrolled at universities nationwide in record numbers, filling them to and, often times, beyond their capacity. Throughout the 1960s, college students witnessed many significant events in American history, but of all these events, the Vietnam War was the main factor that shaped the direction of the decade. Historian David Steigerwald went so far as to argue that, “Vietnam, even more than civil rights, was the defining event of the sixties, for it reflected and pronounced the wider social currents in all their ambiguity.”² Growing up, many baby boomers learned about WWII. Although quite complex, the war could simply be thought of as a battle of “good vs. evil,” in which the U.S. fought to protect human rights. The Vietnam War, to some, seemed to contradict these values. Americans began to wonder if the Vietnam War was humane. As it

¹ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A 75th Anniversary Publication* (Eau Claire, WI: Special Collections, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1991) no. 27:4.

² David Steigerwald, *The Sixties and the End of Modern America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 95.

continued, the war inspired some Americans to join movements concerned not only with the equal rights of people in Vietnam, but those at home as well.

Although the Vietnam War was not the only focus of the student movement, it was influential in determining its course into the spring and fall semesters of 1970. Historians William H. Chaffe of Duke University and Harvard Sitkoff of the University of New Hampshire explained, “The student movement of the 1960s began with requests for moderate changes. With the growing crisis over Vietnam, however, moderation changed to radicalism and protesters challenged the very structure of the university and the government.”³

In 1960, student activists at the University of Michigan formed the group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and released their manifesto, the Port Huron Statement, in 1962. In its pages the SDS called out to college students nationwide claiming, “We are the people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.”⁴ In the early stages of the Vietnam War many activists grew concerned over the unnecessary deaths of Vietnamese at the hands of the U.S. government. The SDS explained, “we ourselves are imbued with urgency, yet the message of our society is that there in no viable alternative to the present.”⁵

In 1963 folk singer Bob Dylan released “Blowin’ in the Wind.” The lyrics reflected the concerns of many anti-war activists, including those expressed by the SDS in the Port Huron Statement. Dylan asked, “how many ears must one man have/before he can hear people cry?/Yes, ‘n’ how many deaths will it take till he knows/That too many people have died?”⁶ The song captured the attention of the nation, especially its youth. On college campuses nationwide,

³ William H. Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff, *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 258.

⁴ Tom Hayden et al., Port Huron Statement, mimeographed (n.p., Students for a Democratic Society).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bob Dylan, “Blowin’ in the Wind,” *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, 1963, Columbia.

young people were particularly able to become active on issues that concerned them. When asked about student activism in the 1960s, Dr. Leonard Haas explained this concept well. Haas stated, college students “are in the best times of their lives in a physical point of view, a time when sleep doesn’t seem to have much need, at a time when there aren’t other responsibilities.” As a student, he intoned, “You aren’t taking care of families, and you aren’t having to earn a living perhaps... Why not have something now that’s going to take our interest?”⁷ In the early 1960s many students began to take interest in the war abroad, in Indochina, and the “war at home.”

As the 1960s went on, an increasing number of college students turned their attention away from fraternity and sorority life in interest of joining movements concerned with the state American society. To some students, the ideals and goals of the SDS seemed appealing. Throughout its existence, the SDS organized and mobilized college students on campuses nationwide searching for “truly democratic alternatives to the present, and a commitment to the social experimentation with them.”⁸ After the SDS released the Port Huron Statement in 1962, they became one of the main student movement groups of the decade. During its eight years of existence, the group spread across the nation, gaining confident followers in many college towns. However, by the end of the 1960s this changed. Chafe and Sitkoff explained, by 1968 “the moderate reformism of the Students for a Democratic Society in 1962 had given way to the militant and violent rhetoric of the Weathermen.”⁹

The Weathermen, a radical student group that split from the SDS in 1968, named themselves after the lyrics “don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows” from

⁷ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 27:7.

⁸ Hayden et. al., Port Huron Statement

⁹ Chafe and Sitkoff, *A History of Our Time*, 259.

Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues."¹⁰ Dylan's music, as Allen J. Matusow described, not only expressed the sixties counter culture, it shaped it. In this song, Dylan describes an individual who flirts with the idea of becoming a revolutionary. The Weathermen introduced their goal in their manifesto, calling for "the destruction of U.S. imperialism and the achievement of a classless world: world communism."¹¹ How did the Dylan's initial concern for human life expressed in "Blowin' in the Wind" give way to a concept of violent revolution over the course of these years? Matusow explained, "As his music changed, so did the message," and in the latter half of the decade Dylan "abandoned liberal politics for cultural radicalism."¹² Why did the SDS's commitment to reform, an ideal Dylan shared early in the decade, shift to the Weathermen's Dylan-inspired radicalism in 1968?

For one, in the intervening years the war in Vietnam expanded dramatically.¹³ When John F. Kennedy took office in 1961 there were 900 American soldiers in Vietnam. By the end of his term the number increased to 15,000. Lyndon Johnson succeeded JFK after his assassination in 1963, and served as president until 1969. Under Johnson, the U.S. military presence in Vietnam grew from 15,000 to 550,000.¹⁴ Over the course of these years, U.S. military involvement was not only growing in Vietnam, but also becoming increasingly violent. By the end of 1967, approximately 15,000 American soldiers died in the war, 60 percent of which were killed that year alone. Also in 1967, through the use of napalm and other defoliants, the U.S. military destroyed an estimated 1.7 million acres in South Vietnam. These measures crippled the economy, displaced, and took the lives of innocent South Vietnamese people; all in the country

¹⁰ Bob Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," *Bringing It All Back Home*, 1965, Columbia.

¹¹ Karin Ashley et al., "You Don't Need a Weatherman To Know Which Way the Wind Blows," mimeographed statement, 1969.

¹² Chafe and Sitkoff, *A History of Our Time*, 343.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 313.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 257-258.

that the U.S. government claimed it was trying to help. The figures left some Americans frustrated and angry.¹⁵

Secondly, between 1962 and 1968, while many Americans were fighting “the war at home,” assassinations rocked the nation. On November 22 1963, before he could even complete his first term as U.S. President, JFK was shot and killed. The assassination shocked the nation. Historian Todd Gitlin explained, news of Kennedy’s death especially affected the educated young who had heard his call, and in return, projected their ideals and hopes on him. “From the zeitgeist fantasy that everything was possible, it wasn’t hard to flip over and conclude that nothing was,” noted Gitlin.¹⁶ Then, in February of 1965 Malcom X, one of the prominent figures in the civil rights movement, became the second charismatic leader assassinated in the sixties. Just halfway through the decade, two iconic leaders who spoke to the hopes and dreams of the nation’s youth were dead.

In the latter half of the decade, assassins killed two more iconic leaders. On April 4, 1968 the nation lost yet another leading social activist. Almost a year earlier, on April 15, 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to a crowd of an estimated 400,000 anti-war protestors in New York. At the rally, King denounced the Vietnam War and voiced the opinions of a growing number of Americans, while congressmen and senators refused to speak at or sponsor the event.¹⁷ Throughout the 1960s King stressed nonviolence. “When he was murdered,” Gitlin explained, “it seemed that nonviolence went to the grave with him, and the movement was ‘free at last’ from restraint.”¹⁸ Two months later, it seemed the series of assassinations that plagued the 1960s came full circle. In the summer of 1968, JFK’s younger brother, Robert Kennedy was

¹⁵ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 242.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 312

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 305-306.

seeking the democratic nomination in the race to become president. Like his brother, Robert was a democrat, but he disagreed with how democratic President Johnson handled the war in Vietnam. His stance on the war won him admiration among many of the nation's youth. On June 5, 1968 Robert Kennedy won the California primary. Later that night, he was assassinated. The Kennedys, beacons of hope in the eyes of the young, "aroused feelings about destiny."¹⁹ Due to the Kennedys' untimely deaths however, the hopeful youth of America never got to see this destiny unfold. By the end of 1968, four individuals, of whom so many young people looked to for inspiration and confidence in the future, were dead. Gitlin illuminated the aftermath in his book *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. Their assassinations, he explained, "felt like stations in one protracted murder of hope." When they died, so did many American's belief in the SDS's vision to achieve change within the system. "What is assassination, after all," Gitlin asked, "if not the ultimate reminder of the citizen's helplessness?"²⁰

With the increasing violence abroad and at home, and the assassinations of the certain individuals who sought to end it, many began to abandon hope of peaceful change. By 1968 the SDS was beginning to fall apart and in turn, the Weathermen rose in response to the tragic events that had defined the decade. In their manifesto the founding members of the Weathermen wrote, "People, especially young people, more and more find themselves in the iron grip of authoritarian institutions." The group expressed what a growing number of Americans began to believe as the sixties passed by, claiming "The war against Vietnam is not 'the heroic war against the Nazis': it's the big lie, with napalm, burning through everything we had heard this country stood for."²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 311.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ashley et al., "You Don't Need a Weatherman To Know Which Way the Wind Blows."

When Richard Nixon won the presidential election in 1968, the student protest movement had reached its breaking point. Nearing the end of the decade, a large number of students abandoned protest groups altogether; a smaller, more radical, number of students shared the radical ideals listed in the Weathermen manifesto. Many radical students believed the only hope for change would be through a revolutionary movement, “a movement,” the Weathermen explained, “with a full willingness to participate in the violent and illegal struggle.”²² Although Nixon brought 65,000 troops back to America in 1969, and announced the “Vietnamization” of the war, college figures showed that student opinion against the war increased leading into 1970.

In the spring of 1969, 16 percent of college students agreed with the statement, “The war in Vietnam is pure imperialism.” In April 1970 that number rose to 41 percent. Surveys showed, even though the Nixon administration seemed to be taking steps to end the war, an increasing number of college students were taking a firm stance against American involvement in Vietnam. In the late 1960s and into 1970 an increasing number defined themselves as radicals; 4 percent in the spring of 1968, 8 percent in the spring of 1969, and 11 percent in the spring of 1970. What’s more, each survey showed a rise in student dissent *before* Nixon’s April 30 1970 announcement that the U.S. government planned to expand the war effort into Cambodia.²³

²² Ibid.

²³ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 409.

National Context: Violent Events in Campus Protest

For at least some, the primary lesson of the sixties had been the impossibility of securing change peacefully.

Chafe and Sitkoff, *A History of Our Time*

This paper utilizes the definition of violence provided in *The Report of President's Commission on Campus Unrest*. It explained, "Violent protest involves physical injury to people, ranging from bloodied noses and cracked heads to actual death. It involves the willful destruction of property by vandalism, burning, and bombing."²⁴ By this definition, student protest throughout the 1960s and into 1970 became increasingly violent. In 1970, two of the most prolific incidents of violent student protest in American history occurred on the campuses of Kent State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Each incident resulted in the death.

Kent State University Spring Semester 1970

Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin'. We're finally on our own. This summer I hear the drummin',
four dead in Ohio.

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, "Ohio," 1974

On April 30 1970, Richard Nixon announced in a nationally televised broadcast that the U.S. military, along with South Vietnamese forces, planned to invade Cambodia. The

²⁴ United States, President's Commission on Campus Unrest, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest; Including Special Reports: The Killings at Jackson State, The Kent State tragedy* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), preface.

announcement came on the heels of Nixon's plan to turn the war effort over to South Vietnamese forces, a policy he termed "Vietnamization." The announcement sparked student strikes and protests on college campuses across the nation.²⁵ Such strikes and protests occurred on the campus of Kent State University, ending in one of the most tragic events in American history. After days of protest against the increased U.S. militancy, Kent State University witnessed the death of four of its own students.

Almost immediately after Nixon's April 30 announcement to invade Cambodia university students at Kent State University, and nationwide, began to protest. The following day, Friday, May 1, protestors held a rally on the Kent State University commons. That same night, a crowd rioted in the streets of downtown Kent. During the demonstration rioters broke store windows and lit a fire in the middle of the street. The incident required police response and the protest eventually came to an end shortly after bar close, around 2 a.m.

On Saturday May 2, Kent's mayor declared a state of emergency and asked Ohio mayor James Rhodes to send the National Guard to the city. Protests occurred throughout the day and that evening students set the university's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) building ablaze. The ROTC building, a campus based military research and training facility, was symbolic of U.S. militarism. A crowd of nearly 1,000 demonstrators gathered on the campus and watched as the ROTC building continued to burn. Some threw rocks at the city's firemen and police; others cut fire hoses to prevent the fire from being extinguished. By the time the Ohio National Guard came to Kent State, student protest was spiraling out of control.

The following day, Sunday, May 3, Kent mayor Leroy Stratum ordered an 11:00 p.m. curfew at the request of many of the city's citizens. However, many students were not informed. That evening, at around 8:00 p.m., students held another rally on the campus mall. Less than an

²⁵ United States, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 17.

hour later, the Ohio National Guard used tear gas to break up the rally. The protestors reassembled on an off-campus street corner and held a sit-in, demanding to speak with the city's mayor and Kent State University President, Richard White. Neither met with the students and by 11:00 p.m. the National Guard began to enforce the curfew order. Protestors did not leave without a struggle, and both guard members and students were injured.²⁶ The hostility between protestors and the guard carried over into the following day.

Time magazine reported that on Monday May 4 1970, in just thirteen seconds, the “traditionally conformist” campus of Kent State University converted “into a bloodstained symbol of the rising student rebellion against the Nixon Administration and the war in Southeast Asia.”²⁷ Earlier that morning, approximately 2,000 protestors gathered on the campus for yet another rally. The university attempted to ban the rally but failed because some protestors were not informed and others simply ignored the ban. National Guard members attempted to stop the rally, riding in an Army Jeep and ordering the crowd to either disperse or face arrest. Protestors threw rocks at the Jeep, and the National Guard tried to break up the rally again. This time, they threw tear gas into the crowd, but to no avail. Protestors taunted members of the guard and threw rocks and tear gas back at them. What followed remains debated and unclear, but according to eyewitness accounts, the guard began to retreat and the protestors followed. Once the guard reached the top of Blanket Hill, a popular place for students to gather on the campus, they turned back toward the crowd and aimed their weapons.²⁸

At approximately 12:22 p.m., according to the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, members of the Ohio National Guard “fired a volley of at least 61 shots killing four

²⁶ Joe Eszterhas and Michael D. Roberts, *Thirteen Seconds; Confrontation at Kent State* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), 121.

²⁷ “Kent State: Martyrdom That Shook the Country,” *Time* (Time Inc., 18 May 1970), 12.

²⁸ Eszterhas and Roberts, *Thirteen Seconds*, 133.

college students and wounding nine.”²⁹ The incident shocked the nation. A government investigation revealed “three ranking officials on the hill [Blanket Hill] all said no order to fire was given.” To this day, it is unclear which guardsmen fired the first shot and why. In the wake of the shooting, many blamed the actions of the protestors rather than the National Guard. The incident drew negative attention to the student movement. Others placed blame squarely on the National Guard. Regardless, at the time of the shooting, eight of the thirteen students killed or injured were more than 100 yards away from the guard.³⁰

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall Semester 1970

There's a battle outside, and it is ragin'. It'll soon shake your windows, and rattle your walls. For the times they are a-changin'

Bob Dylan, “The Times They are a-changin,’” 1964

On August 24, 1970, at approximately 3:42 a.m., a stolen 1967 Ford Deluxe Club Wagon filled with ammonium nitrate soaked in fuel oil exploded on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It shook windows and rattled walls in Wisconsin’s capital city. Members of Madison’s radical anti-war group “The New Year’s Gang” hoped to destroy the U.S. government-funded Army Math Research Center (AMRC) located inside the university’s academic building, Sterling Hall. The blast, heard up to 30 miles away from its epicenter, damaged 26 buildings, injured four, and killed one. Robert Fassnacht, a 33-year-old post-doctoral student, died while engaged in research in the building. Fassnacht sat in the university’s physics

²⁹ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 233.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 273.

department, located in Sterling Hall's basement, away from the bomb's intended target. He had no known ties to the AMRC.

"The New Years Gang" did not intend to kill or injure any individual. Rather, the group only aimed to destroy a symbol of U.S. militarism. Fred Harvey Harrington, then President of UW-Madison, described the event as a retaliatory response to increasing repression by local authorities against protestors. Although the group expressed remorse for Fassnacht's death, they reasoned that it did not compare to the thousands of deaths caused by U.S. Military forces in Vietnam.

The bombing marked the culmination of an intense period of student activism and violence in Madison. The bombing of Sterling Hall remains one of the largest scale terrorist attacks in American history. In fact, it is the second largest car bombing to have occurred on United States soil, surpassed only by the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.³¹ Universities, still coping with the Kent State tragedy, faced uncertainty as another fatal event inaugurated the 1970 fall semester.

WSU-EC: Potential for Violence

If there isn't some plan for change, sooner or later a group of people are going to assassinate those senile asses that control the power in this country and I would be for it.

WSU-EC student James P. Hebert, May 5 1970

Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, WSU-EC experienced a large influx in its student population. President Leonard Haas, recalling the university's growth, explained, by the

³¹ Tom Bates, Rads: *The 1970 Bombing of the Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin and its Aftermath*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992).

end of the 1960s “we began to take on the position of the school with the largest percentage increase of any of the universities in Wisconsin.”³² In a span of just seven years, enrollment climbed from 2,909 students in the fall of 1963 to 8,282 students in the fall 1970.³³ According to the President’s Commission, this sort of growth could cause potential problems for universities, and possible campus unrest. They explained, “The lack of appropriate organization within the university has rendered its response ineffective.”³⁴

In 1968 only two Wisconsin universities filled their available housing. WSU-EC was one of them. That year Towers North and South, Eau Claire’s two largest dormitories, opened their doors to college residents for the first time. “We had to absorb, of course, a tremendous number of new students to fill that dormitory that year,” Haas recalled.³⁵ UW-Madison, the only other university in the state to fill its on-campus housing in the 1968 school year, experienced violence. At the 1968 Democratic Convention, Madison students and police clashed. The university’s president, Fred Harvey Harrington, explained the situation created a divide between the university and the surrounding community.³⁶

The large and rapid growth of the student population created another problem for WSU-EC. President Haas explained, when “we face the deluge of students at a time when we have the least opportunity to choose the quality of faculty that we would seek.”³⁷ Kent State University President Robert White shared a similar concern. He stated, “With the tremendous growth after World War II and the results of this baby boom hitting us in the 1960s, we had to find buildings

³² Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:7.

³³ Hilda R. Carter and John R. Jenschold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A History, 1916-1976* (Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1976), 99.

³⁴ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 21.

³⁵ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 13:2.

³⁶ Bates, *Rads*, 144.

³⁷ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 27:5.

to put the students and professors to teach them. Our primary obligation was to keep the place running.”³⁸ After investigating the reasons for campus unrest the President’s Commission found, when ‘keeping the place running’ became the primary obligation of an administration, potential problems arose. They reported, “Universities have not adequately prepared themselves to respond to disruption. They have been without suitable plans, rules, or sanctions. Some administrators and faculty members have responded irresolutely.”³⁹ In light of WSU-EC’s tremendous increase in student population, the administration needed to find ways to effectively respond to student dissent and disruption.

In *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A History*, Carter and Jenswold explained, “Once students at Eau Claire discovered the Vietnam War, they began to imitate their peers on other campuses who engaged in marches, teach-ins, and rhetoric.”⁴⁰ In the years leading up to the spring and fall semesters of 1970, Wisconsin campuses became increasingly violent. In November of 1968 at Oshkosh, students “tore apart” the president’s office. As a result, the university suspended 90 students. In December 1969, racial tension led to violence on Whitewater’s campus. Protest ensued and students set the university’s central structure, Old Main, ablaze. From 1967 to 1970, violent student unrest at UW-Madison gained national exposure.⁴¹ Nearing the end of the 1960s, the student protest movement began to disband; however, the prevailing rhetoric of the movement called for violence. As violent incidents occurred on many of the states campuses, the WSU-EC administration hoped that students would continue to engage in peaceful protest. In fact, in 1969 Eau Claire’s *Daily Telegram* featured an article entitled “WSU-EC Peace: It’s Wonderful,” commemorating the university for maintaining

³⁸ James A. Mischener, *Kent State: What Happened and Why* (New York: Random House, 1971), 115-116.

³⁹ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 21.

⁴⁰ Carter and Jenswold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 105.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

peace while so many others in the state had experienced violent incidents.⁴² Thus far, nothing had caused enough unrest on campus any WSU-EC students to resort to violent protest.

However, in the year following the *Daily Telegram*'s commemorative article, "WSU-EC peace" would be put to the test.

After the SDS fractionalized, one could liken the student protest movement at the nations' universities to a dying forest fire. The main organization and mobilizing force behind the student movement broke apart into smaller groups with different goals. However, the movement was still dangerous, as its remaining factions threatened to use violence to bring change; without a unified SDS though, the movement lost its main source of fuel. Gitlin explained, "Once the SDS imploded, there was no national organization to keep the student movement boiling from semester to semester."⁴³ It was as if the fire broke apart into smaller, more manageable hot spots. Then, when Richard Nixon was elected to office on the platform of "peace with honor," and the promise to represent "middle America," it seemed like the forecast called for rain. And in the ensuing years, with the withdrawal of American troops and Nixon's "Vietnamization" of the war, the movement steadily ran out of things to burn.

Although American opinion against the war was at its peak during the Nixon administration, many people frowned upon the rising use of violence by some student protestors. Following the fractionalization of the SDS and the election of President Nixon, the flames of student protest movement rose occasionally in violent outbursts, but the majority of Americans no longer sympathized with a movement that had turned radical. For with the transition to radicalism and violence, many Americans, students included, no longer found the prevailing sentiment of the movement appealing. Radical groups like Weathermen tried to rekindle the once

⁴² "WSU-EC Peace: It's Wonderful," *Daily Telegram* (Eau Claire), June 2, 1969.

⁴³ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 410.

lively fire, but their efforts proved to be an exercise in futility in the eyes of the “middle America.” Todd Gitlin explained, “An exhausted movement had lost its moral edge, and with it the capacity to console and rally its afflicted.”⁴⁴ By early 1970, it seemed, the fire that once consumed many campuses now lay dormant, reduced to a smoldering bed of coals. Then, something fanned the flames.

Nixon’s announcement that American and South Vietnamese forces were moving into Cambodia was like a great gust of wind. It carried the remaining sparks of the student anti-war movement to new fuel. Four days later, Kent State University students were shot and killed by members of the National Guard. News of the shootings spilled across the nation’s universities like gasoline. The flames of the student protest movement, once confined to a few universities, erupted on campuses nationwide. In the following weeks, “students at 350 universities went on strike, and protesting resulted in closing about 500 campuses, 50 of them for the remainder of the semester.”⁴⁵ The Kent State shootings affected college students nationwide, including those at WSU-EC.

Robert Carr was a WSU-EC senior in the spring of 1970. Carr and other WSU-EC students were shocked as news of the Kent State shootings unfolded on television. “I remember watching it, and we couldn’t believe it was happening,” Carr recalled. “It was frightening for us as young people – it was as if the country was turning on us.” Nationwide, many college students shared similar concerns. “It was a frustrating, confusing time,” Carr said. “Everything we were taught as kids dissolved; it was like it had no meaning. It was a strange and confusing time.”⁴⁶ In the following week, students at 350 universities, including WSU-EC, went on strike in response

⁴⁴ Ibid., 415.

⁴⁵ Terry H. Anderson, *The Sixties*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pearson/Longman: 2004), 179.

⁴⁶ “A Time of War, A time of Peace: The Class of ’70 Revisited,” *The View*, Spring 1995, 8. AS 99. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

the Kent State shootings and spread of the American military presence into Cambodia. During the weeklong strike, many WSU-EC students refused to attend class and planned an on-campus protest rally.

On Wednesday, May 6, an estimated 5,500 people, including 3,500 WSU-EC students, gathered on the south lawn of the Davies Center to protest the violent events that had occurred two days earlier at Kent State University. As the crowd grew, uncertainty filled the air. “I remember things got very tense,” Carr recalled. “I remember us gathering outside, and the tension was really high. We were waiting for something to explode.”⁴⁷ But nothing did.

WSU-EC: Reasons for Peace

WSU-EC, like many other universities, experienced student protest on campus. Of significance, however, is the fact that student protest proceeded peacefully. The WSU-EC campus, by itself, offered aesthetically pleasing sights. Often described as “Wisconsin’s most beautiful campus,” WSU-EC had an ability to put one at ease. Dr. Haas believed “the serenity of the campus” played a role in maintaining a safe environment during the late 60s and early 70s.⁴⁸ He also believed the semi-rural, Mid-western location had an effect on student action.⁴⁹ “Those campuses that were ‘closer to the soil,’ in the rural area,” Haas explained, “had a better chance of surviving.”⁵⁰ There may be some truth in Dr. Haas’s words. However, although much larger than WSU-EC, both Kent State University and UW-Madison were also located in the Midwest, surrounded by rural communities. Likewise, according to Todd Gitlin, “Kent State was a

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸ Carter and Jenswold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 110.

⁴⁹ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:1.

⁵⁰ Carter and Jenswold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 110.

heartland school, far from elite,” much like WSU-EC.⁵¹ Thus, although the serenity and location of WSU-EC may have influenced the campus climate, other factors played a more important role in maintaining the university’s non-violent nature during the spring and fall semesters of 1970. Paul Tabor, a 1970 WSU-EC graduate, recalled that Eau Claire students were active, but not radical. “At Eau Claire there was an anti-Vietnam sentiment and a rebelliousness against the establishment,” he explained, “but it wasn’t hardcore.”⁵²

Students

Today’s generation firmly believes that actions describe a person’s character more accurately than words. By that yardstick WSU-Eau Claire students and faculty stand tall in the current crisis.

Eau Claire *Leader-Telegram*, May 8, 1970

The characteristics of WSU-EC’s student population helped keep the campus safe. According to Haas, although the university’s student identity began to change in the 1960s, WSU-EC still “had a student body that came predominantly from rural and small town areas. The majority of our students were still coming from within 80 or 90 miles of Eau Claire.”⁵³ In 1970, the Wisconsin Coordinating Council for Higher Education released data on student demographics in the state’s universities for the fall semesters of 1968 and 1969. The data revealed that Eau Claire had the state’s second lowest percentage of non-resident students, behind only WSU-Stevens Point. Conversely, both years UW-Madison maintained the state’s highest percentage of non-resident students. Roughly a quarter of Madison’s students came from

⁵¹ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 410.

⁵² “A time of War, a time of Peace,” 9.

⁵³ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:1.

other states, while non-residents made up only about five percent of WSU-EC's student population.⁵⁴ However, like WSU-EC, Kent State had a low non-resident enrollment; five out of six of its students came from various cities in Ohio.⁵⁵ The attitudes and actions of the WSU-EC student body proved to be more influential than where they came from.

According to Haas, WSU-EC's student leaders, specifically those in the student government, set the university apart from the violent campuses of the time.⁵⁶ During the turbulent fall and spring semesters, Haas believed "the student government at Eau Claire had gone farther and had become far more integrated into the governance program of the university than was to be found on other campuses."⁵⁷ As the representative voice for the student body, by 1970, WSU-EC "had grown into a relatively strong organization of students operating in governance. Students had taken responsibility, and," Haas continued, "the recognition of student governance by the administration and the faculty had really put students in a good position."⁵⁸ During the spring and fall semesters of 1970, student body president Robert Jauch and vice president Randy Surbaugh were the main voices of the WSU-EC student government and student body. Throughout the turbulent year, the two worked to build a strong relationship with the WSU-EC faculty and administration.

The Kent State shootings put the WSU-EC's student leaders to the test. Following their investigation of the shootings, the President's Commission on Campus Unrest recommended, "Students must face the fact that giving moral support to those who are planning violent action is

⁵⁴ L.J. Lins, Wisconsin Coordinating Council for Higher Education, "Nonresident University Undergraduate Enrollment Fall 1968 and Fall 1969 and Migration of Students to and from Wisconsin Fall 1968," page 4. Box 120, Folder 19. Chancellor's Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

⁵⁵ United States, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 221.

⁵⁶ Carter and Jenswold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 110.

⁵⁷ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 22:13.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

morally despicable.”⁵⁹ In the weeks following the shootings, the WSU-EC student government sympathized with angry and grieving students, expressed and represented their concerns, but did not provide moral support for violence. In the days following the Kent State shootings, Jauch reported to the Faculty Senate that the WSU-EC Student Senate “had passed a resolution requesting that the administration lower the flag to half mast in respect to the four students who were killed at Kent State University.”⁶⁰ At a May 6 protest rally following the Kent State shootings, student body vice president Randy Surbaugh sympathized with WSU-EC students. He explained, “This rally is sparked by emotion and regard for life, which is a rational feeling.”⁶¹ Another student spoke to the crowd. “I’m not asking for violence,” WSU-EC student Mike Simmons told the crowd, “But for you to take your responsibility...by some action on this campus.”⁶² Throughout the week of the WSU-EC student strike, students protested, but remained peaceful.

The day after the student rally, the Student Assembly passed a resolution in response to the Kent State shootings representing WSU-EC student body concerns, which stated, in part:

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Student Assembly support the current strike at Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Student Assembly denounce the public killing of four students deaths at Kent State University.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Student Assembly supports the rights of any student who disagrees with the strike, to go to class.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this shall not constitute blanket approval of actions taken by students on strike.⁶³

⁵⁹ United States, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 212.

⁶⁰ Faculty Senate Minutes. Volume VI, Number 13, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Box 106, Folder 13. Chancellor's Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

⁶¹ Carter and Jenschold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 108.

⁶² “A time of War, a time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

⁶³ WSU-EC Student Senate, “Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire Student Assembly Resolution.” 7 May 1970. Box 118, Folder 4. Chancellor's Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

In another gesture of sympathy, WSU-EC Student Senate member David Hass wrote a proposal to his fellow senate members with the concerns of the student body in mind. “The May graduates of Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire are facing a difficult time that requires great concern for this nation and the world,” Hass continued, “The members of the graduating class will be offered white armbands during commencement exercises May 30.”⁶⁴ On May 30, the 1969-70 academic year came to a close. That day, 670 students, the university’s the largest class ever at the time, became WSU-EC graduates, many of whom were wearing the white arm bands which symbolized their opposition to the Vietnam War.⁶⁵ As the representative voice of the student body, the WSU-EC student government was influential in maintaining peace during the spring and fall semesters of 1970.

Throughout the year, WSU-EC students had gained the respect of the university’s faculty and administration. Haas believed the mutual respect between the faculty, students, and administration was influential in maintaining WSU-EC’s non-violent climate. “I think that there was a certain freedom in the feelings of a student,” Haas recalled, students, “practiced self restraint because they had a kind of relationship.” This relationship, Haas explained, prevented students from becoming violent because they did not want to lose the respect of the university community.⁶⁶ Although WSU-EC students were grieving the events at Kent State, they still worked to maintain this relationship. During the turbulent time, WSU-EC’s own students patrolled the campus to ensure buildings weren’t vandalized.⁶⁷ In the week after the WSU-EC student strike, Robert Jauch and Randy Surbaugh wrote a letter to President Haas. It read, “On

⁶⁴ David Hass to WSU-EC Student Senate, 18 May 1970. Box 118, Folder 4. Chancellor’s Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

⁶⁵ “A time of War, a time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

⁶⁶ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:1.

⁶⁷ “A time of War, a time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

behalf of the student body we would like to highly commend and thank you for the cooperation you gave the student body during the strike last week. You showed a great deal of respect and sympathy toward the students which was felt and appreciated by all.” The two enclosed a resolution that passed unanimously on May 11 in the Student Senate that recognized the success of the demonstration was highly due to Dr. Haas’s support.⁶⁸

The attitudes, actions, and leadership skills of the WSU-EC student body were instrumental in ensuring non-violence during turbulent times. The university’s student government gave a voice to the student body and expressed their concerns in positive and professional manor. The student body accepted their responsibility to protest peacefully, and in turn, gained the respect of the WSU-EC faculty and administration in a time when much of the nation believed college students posed a threat to society.

Faculty

Our job is not to indoctrinate but to provide a market place of ideas.

WSU-EC English Professor Dr. Richard Marcus, August 18 1970

During the Vietnam War era, faculty members at some of the nation’s universities acted as influential catalysts for radical student protestors. These individuals had a profound effect on the campus climate. On September 1st, preceding the 1970-71 academic year, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover released a statement evaluating the state of the nation’s colleges. This evaluation, from the FBI’s monthly “Message from the Director,” later appeared in the university’s student

⁶⁸ Robert Jauch and Randy Surbaugh to Leonard Haas, 13 May 1970. Box 118, Folder 6. Chancellor’s Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

newspaper, *The Spectator*.⁶⁹ In his message, Hoover addressed the important role of university faculty. He stated, “Unruly students, of course, are not the only the bane of college and university officials. Some faculty members act like rabid anarchists and spend most of their time encouraging enthusiastic but naïve young people to overthrow established procedure.” Hoover asserted that university faculty played a vital role in either maintaining or undermining a safe and peaceful campus.

In some instances, the views of faculty members did fuel radical and violent student action. According to Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, “In a strongly non-socialist country, few campuses could emulate Madison, Wisconsin, in boasting a whole battery of left-wing professors.”⁷⁰ Members of “The New Year’s Gang,” who carried out the bombing of Sterling Hall, recalled that some of their professors led them to believe that radical revolution was sometimes necessary if they wished to change society. According to Haas, the WSU-EC faculty did not preach this type of radical rhetoric. “I was not aware that any faculty member was encouraging students to the point where they would use actions that were illegal in terms of what they were going to accomplish by it,” he recalled.⁷¹ The WSU-EC faculty conveyed positive leadership skills and encouraged non-violent protest.

In its report, the President’s Commission recommended that in order to avoid campus unrest, “Academic institutions must be free -- free from outside interference, and free from internal intimidation,” and affirmed, “The pursuit of knowledge cannot continue without the free exchange of ideas.”⁷² The efforts, ideas, and actions of WSU-EC faculty members helped to

⁶⁹ “Hoover on Education,” *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 24 September 1970, 16.

⁷⁰ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!: American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 47.

⁷¹ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:2.

⁷² United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 212.

ensure safety and peace on Eau Claire's campus during the spring and fall semesters of 1970. Haas explained, WSU-EC "took pride in the fact that faculty members were close to students, available to students, and that there were many personal relationships that existed between faculty and students." The university's faculty made it a point to be available and open to students and their concerns. "When a student wasn't getting adequate counsel and advice, it was because the student himself or herself chose not to make the effort to see the advisor," explained Haas.⁷³

The WSU-EC faculty often stood side by side with students on issues they felt strongly about. Haas explained, "There wasn't a single demonstration, there wasn't a march that was made to some part of the community where there were not faculty members along." This helped bond students to the WSU-EC community and deterred them from viewing it as part of the American establishment.⁷⁴ On Wednesday May 6, 1970, in reaction to the deaths of the "Kent Four," WSU-EC students held a rally on the campus mall. Throughout the day faculty members expressed remorse for the events at Kent State and sympathized with student concerns. Following the rally, students decided they would march to the National Guard Armory. Informed of the students' plans, one faculty member, whose name was not found through the course of research, took the podium and spoke to the large crowd of students:

We need to show by every way that we can that we are against the use of force, whether it is in Vietnam or at Kent State. We need to publish it, and the world needs to know it and there should be no misunderstanding about where we stand. But you are not going to gain anything if you use the same tactics that are used by those who are operating in places like Vietnam and Kent State. I'm going to march with you tonight and if any of you picks up a stone, if there is any desire on your part to throw it against a person or object, give me a chance to get between that person or object.

⁷³ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:1.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

The march proceeded peacefully.⁷⁵

Nationwide, many students' anger translated into violence after the Kent State shootings. According to Haas, however, WSU-EC faculty helped to provide an environment for students where "there are people who are going to sympathize with you, people who are going to understand your feelings."⁷⁶ The courageous actions displayed by the WSU-EC faculty member during the Kent State rally helped build the sense of shared sympathy with students.

In a continued expression of support and sympathy following the Kent State tragedy, the WSU-EC Faculty Senate extended an offer of praise to university students. On May 12, 1970, members of the university's Faculty Senate passed a resolution, without dissenting vote, commending students for their actions during the student strike:

WHEREAS, during the troubled week of May 4-May 11, 1970, the students of Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire demonstrated a mature and responsible attitude toward issues which divide many Americans today, in that:

- (1) Their respect for both majority and minority opinions preserved the democratic spirit and the academic freedom of the University Community, and
- (2) Their public actions tended to encourage a desirable exchange of views within the entire local community;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate express to the students of Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire its deep appreciation of the ideals represented by these attitudes, and its gratitude for the individual efforts which translated the ideals into cooperative action.⁷⁷

By expressing gratitude toward students, WSU-EC faculty thus encouraged their continued positive, responsible, non-violent conduct. Likewise, faculty members' expressions of appreciation assisted in building faculty -student relations. The faculty of WSU-EC, in this way, helped keep the campus a peaceful place.

⁷⁵ Carter and Jenschold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 109.

⁷⁶ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:1.

⁷⁷ Faculty Senate Minutes. Volume VI, Number 113, p.2. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Box 106, Folder 13. Chancellor's Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Dr. Paulis Lazda began teaching in the history department at WSU-EC in the fall of 1967.⁷⁸ A graduate of UW-Madison, Dr. Lazda discouraged all forms of violent student action. Exactly one month after “The New Year’s Gang” bombed the AMRC at UW-Madison, *The Spectator* featured an editorial letter by Lazda. “The murder and bombing at Madison and other university campuses are not simply a lapse in the tactics of radicals,” Lazda argued, “These are not wrong tactics for the right cause, but rather right tactics (i.e. most effective) for the wrong cause.” “There is no longer a time or place for equivocation,” Lazda continued, “for ‘yes, but...’ attitudes, especially toward unconscionable attacks on the universities.”⁷⁹ Following the AMRC bombing and death of physics researcher Robert Fassnacht, Madison radicals used the same ‘yes, but...’ rhetoric Lazda alluded to in his letter. “The New Years Gang,” along with other radical sympathizers, expressed remorse for Fassnacht’s death. However, the death of one individual, “New Year’s Gang” members believed, did not compare to the death of thousands in Vietnam. This type of justification influenced campus unrest. “Increasingly,” the President’s Commission explained, “the argument was heard that the use of violence is justified, whether to promote social change or to suppress campus unrest.”⁸⁰ Lazda’s words, and willingness to share his thoughts with the student newspaper, served as an example of positive faculty leadership at WSU-EC during a year characterized by violence on the nation’s campuses.

While certain WSU-EC faculty members were important in promoting nonviolence, others worked to keep popular targets of violent student protest off campus. Historian Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones explained, “The development of military research facilities was among students’ leading grievances in the 1960s.”⁸¹ Near the end of the 1960s and into 1970, U.S. government

⁷⁸ Paulis Lazda, Interview with author, 26 November 2007, Notes with Author.

⁷⁹ Paulis Lazda, “‘Right’ Tactics, Wrong Cause,” *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 24 September 1970, 16.

⁸⁰ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 44.

⁸¹ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, 50.

funded military research facilities at the nation's universities were often the target of violent student protest. On May 2, 1970, student protestors burned Kent State University's ROTC building to the ground, "symbolic in their minds," author James Michener explained, "both of American involvement in Asia and growing United States Militarism."⁸² On August 24 1970, the radical student anti-war group "The New Years Gang" bombed the AMRC at UW-Madison. These events serve as just two among many examples of violent student protest against university based military research facilities. During the volatile times of student unrest, the WSU-EC campus was free of these popular targets of violent protest.

Following the Kent State shootings, ROTC buildings became one of the most popular targets of violent student protest. Historian Tom Wells explained, "Although the May protests were overwhelmingly peaceful, violent demonstrations erupted on many campuses. During the month's first week, ROTC buildings were exploding or igniting at a rate of more than four a day."⁸³ Although the WSU-EC administration expressed interest in developing a ROTC program, the efforts of certain university faculty members kept the military research facility off of the campus. "We had some very strong opposition to the ROTC unit," Haas recalled. "The opposition came from some very much highly respected members of the faculty, highly respected by me and the faculty generally."⁸⁴

On Friday, May 8, 1970, the last day of the WSU-EC student strike following the Kent State shootings, professor Einer Boberg wrote a letter to President Haas expressing concern about the establishment of an ROTC unit on campus. In part, he wrote:

I can see arguments for and against such a move, but the "spirit of the times" appears to suggest that this would be a highly inappropriate time to make such a

⁸² Michener, *Kent State*, 191.

⁸³ Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 426.

⁸⁴ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 19:15.

step. The prevailing anti-militarism on college campuses makes it highly probable that many students would view such a move as a deliberate provocation and seize on this as a concrete cause for agitation. Disruption and polarization are almost certain to follow. In the jargon of the youth, I believe it would be wise to “cool it” until the current student unrest subsides.⁸⁵

Boberg’s letter was one of many influential expressions of faculty opinion against ROTC establishment directed toward President Haas and the WSU-EC administration. Throughout the late 1960s and into 1970, faculty members debated over the ROTC issue at WSU-EC.

Among the opposed, history professor Dr. Howard Lutz was instrumental in informing members of the WSU-EC community about the negative aspects of ROTC units on university campuses. Having taught on a campus with an ROTC unit before coming to teach at Eau Claire, Lutz was thankful there wasn’t a program at WSU-EC.⁸⁶ Throughout the 1960s Lutz led the WSU-EC faculty members opposed to the ROTC unit, expressing the concern that it would hurt the spirit of academic tradition.⁸⁷ In a letter to Haas, Lutz asked, “What can ROTC really do to improve Eau Claire, to help us come closer to our professional goal of ‘excellence?’” He affirmed, “Very little.” Among only three of the Wisconsin State University systems without a ROTC unit, Lutz argued that WSU-EC should continue to offer students an opportunity to attend a state-supported university free of military presence. Even more, without an ROTC unit, WSU-EC could resist the drift toward the militarization of America.⁸⁸ “I feel that Howard [Lutz],” Haas recalled, “was probably the single most important individual in the preventing of an ROTC

⁸⁵ Einer Boberg to Leonard Haas, 8 May 1970. Box 118, Folder 6. Chancellor’s Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

⁸⁶ Howard Lutz Papers, circa 1951-1985. UHC 278. Special Collections & Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, WI.

⁸⁷ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 19:15.

⁸⁸ Howard Lutz Papers, circa 1951-1985. UHC 278. Special Collections & Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, WI.

chapter on this campus.”⁸⁹ Throughout his time at WSU-EC, Lutz saved published information and statistical data on the ROTC and compiled it an extensive personal collection. Today, the collection consists of hundreds of documents and indicates that, at the very least, Lutz was passionate about the topic. But, as one studies the collection, it becomes evident that Lutz’s effort to keep a ROTC chapter off the WSU-EC campus came from a well-informed and fact-driven base. His and many other faculty members’ efforts helped to keep the ROTC, a military research facility inspiring violent student unrest across the nation, out of WSU-EC.

Chancellor Leonard Haas

He guided the institution through an era of explosive growth and student turmoil. As the campus grew, he strived to maintain the openness of a small institution and never lost sight of the university as a place for free exchange of ideas.

Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*

A graduate of Eau Claire Teacher’s College in 1935, and member of faculty and administrative staff since 1941, Dr. Leonard Haas succeeded W.R. Davies, and became the university’s third president in 1959.⁹⁰ The violent events that characterized the spring and fall semesters of 1970 required the full attention of WSU-EC President Dr. Leonard Haas. Many WSU-EC students and faculty members believed Dr. Haas’ conduct was the main reason the university remained a peaceful place during the Vietnam War era.

Leonard Haas’ approach to university presidency was quite different than Harvey Harrington, of UW-Madison, and Robert White, of Kent State University. The presidents at both

⁸⁹ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vi.

UW-Madison and Kent State University failed to become engaged with their students. Dr. Haas believed one of the main reasons the university remained non-violent was due to an overall “openness with people on campus.” He explained, ““If I were building an administration building, I’d have my office located right on a visible corner, all glass, and let people know that I was in there and the door would be open. You might as well be free and open with people, that is the attitude we took.””⁹¹ Haas, whose office was located on the main floor of Schofield Hall, sought to provide a free and open environment at WSU-EC as often as possible:

Probably when there was no one in my office, my door would be open as a suggestion of invitation, because I think there was growing in that period of the 60s and 70s a very anti-administration attitude generally across the country. Part of it was because they didn’t know their administrators. They never had any contact with them. Nobody had any idea that they were real human beings. They were some kind of people that occupied something less than a human character. If you’re out there, and with them, you can sometimes take care of that.⁹²

Other administrations and presidents were not as accessible. In particular, Kent State’s Robert White preferred to keep to himself. Upon meeting White, author James Michener found the president was extremely shy, a quality that, as he explained, “prevents him from mingling with his students, who consider him so aloof that knowing him personally is impossible.”⁹³

Although the WSU-EC Student Senate expressed majority support for the group, in March of 1967 President Haas denied SDS organizers a university charter. A charter granted university recognized organizations access to campus facilities where they could hold meetings and recruit new members. In explaining his decision, President Haas claimed “national affiliation of SDS was not compatible with ‘university standards.’ The national organization ‘subverts the meaning of the free university.’”⁹⁴ Although the SDS remained an influential group in Eau Claire, they could not reach students with the same efficiency they might have if they had been

⁹¹ Carter and Jenswold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 110.

⁹² Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 6:11.

⁹³ Michener, *Kent State: What Happened and Why*, 117.

⁹⁴ Carter and Jenswold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 105.

granted university charter. Both Kent State University and UW-Madison granted the SDS university charter, allowing the SDS to more readily recruit and organize students on their respective campuses. In the year before the Kent State shootings and the bombing of Sterling Hall, the SDS campaign centered around, “finding issues that attract mass support, demanding that action be taken, and then attempting to organize a confrontation to push for the demands.”⁹⁵ By the late 1960s the SDS began to consider radical revolution a sometimes necessary component in bringing social change. Haas’ effort in keeping the group from gaining university charter helped to maintain a non-violent atmosphere on campus.

Haas was in Minneapolis on the day of the Kent State shootings. “I didn’t get much sleep that night,” he recalled. The night before the WSU-EC student rally Haas stayed up for most of the night planning his speech.⁹⁶ The next day, on May 6, 1970 President Haas addressed nearly 5,000 people gathered on the WSU-EC campus mall. “Though I couldn’t be positive that I wouldn’t be hung after the convocation,” Haas recalled, “I had enough confidence in the students so I didn’t think that would happen.”⁹⁷ As explained in *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A History*, “President Haas showed that he cared deeply for the feelings of the students and that he personally deplored the actions of the nation that lead to unnecessary loss of life.” During his speech Haas empathized, “young people have physical involvement and idealistic visions,” and advised “only through political processes can there be hope for solutions, and that polarization on campuses should be avoided.” Haas allowed the strike, but advised that the university should operate as usual and explained, “All students had a right to attend classes if they so wished.”⁹⁸ WSU-EC student Paul Tabor believed that Haas’ actions helped to keep the peace on campus. “I

⁹⁵ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 236.

⁹⁶ “A Time of War, A Time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

⁹⁷ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 6:9.

⁹⁸ Carter and Jenswold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, 108.

think the administration's attitude diffused was could have been something much more serious," noted Tabor.⁹⁹

It is important to recognize that Haas approached the WSU-EC rally following the Kent State shooting with recommendations rather than demands. The President's Commission noted that at Kent State University, "The feeling had spread among students that they were being harassed as a group, that state and civic officials had united against them, and that the university had either cooperated or acquiesced in their suppression."¹⁰⁰ WSU-EC's president acted differently. Haas recalled, "If I would have met on a completely critical basis and if I would have issued any threats or if it would seem that the administration was taking this over, we would have had a very difficult time."¹⁰¹ Kent State student Tom Grace, who suffered a bullet wound to the left foot during the Kent State shootings, recalled, "A very adversarial atmosphere existed, and we felt that this was our campus, that we were doing nothing wrong, and that they had no right to order us to disperse. If anyone ought to leave, it's them, not us. That's how I felt."¹⁰² WSU-EC students appreciated Haas' conduct. "He said his heart went out to us but that we had to respect what he had to do and we had to appreciate the position he was in. The tension disappeared; it just melted away," noted WSU-EC student Robert Carr. "At that moment that campus could have just exploded because the tension was there." He continued, "Had anyone else tried it, I don't think it would have worked. I've always said it was Dr. Haas who kept things from escalating. I'm still in awe of the man."¹⁰³ Haas' actions at the Kent State rally also drew acclaim from WSU-EC faculty.

⁹⁹ "A time of War, a time of Peace," *The View*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ United States, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 266.

¹⁰¹ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 6:9.

¹⁰² Joan and Robert K. Morrison, *From Camelot to Kent State: The Sixties Experience in the Words of those who Lived it* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 331.

¹⁰³ "A time of War, a time of Peace," *The View*, 9.

In a letter written on May 8, 1970, two days after the rally, Professor Einer Boberg praised Haas. Boberg wrote, “I want to personally express my thanks for the admirable manner in which you handled the recent situation on campus. Your attitudes, expressed through your speech, were, I believe, instrumental in defusing a troubled campus.”¹⁰⁴ Kent State University President Richard White did not possess the same tact as Haas, and was commonly described as a shy individual who lacked public speaking skills. Moreover, James Michener explained, “...in a massive institution where verbal leadership was needed, he has been incapable of providing it.”¹⁰⁵ When Kent students held a sit-in on the evening of Sunday, May 3, they demanded a meeting with White. He never came and ultimately failed to seize an opportunity to defuse the increasing problems on the troubled campus. The following day the Ohio National Guard opened fire on Kent State protesters. On the last day of the WSU-EC student strike, Haas praised students for their conduct during the trying week and in return, students gave Haas a standing ovation. “It was touching to see those weary people – many of whom had gotten little sleep that week – get off the grass and give President Haas a standing ovation for his leadership,” noted WSU-EC student Johannes Dahle. “Not many college presidents were getting standing ovations that week – most were calling in the National Guard because the lines of communication had broken down.”¹⁰⁶

Dr. Leonard Haas actively strived to promote non-violence at WSU-EC during turbulent times. Under Haas, the WSU-EC administration tried to show its students that there were more effective outlets, as Haas explained, “than to use violence which immediately turns many people against them, and puts them in a position where they have to defend the stand that they are

¹⁰⁴ Einer Boberg to Leonard Haas, 8 May 1970. Box 118, Folder 6. Chancellor’s Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

¹⁰⁵ Michener, *Kent State*, 117.

¹⁰⁶ “A time of War, a time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

taking.”¹⁰⁷ As one studies Haas, it becomes clear that he followed this philosophy throughout his presidency. For example, James Hebert’s letter supporting efforts to “assassinate those senile asses that control the power in the country,” Haas replied:

I think I can appreciate and sympathize with your frustration. However, I am convinced that our form of government is not at fault. Basically the problems are due to people and the failure of people to participate in their democracy. I know of no government in the history of the world that has been so able to change with rapid changing condition. The history of the last twenty years supports this position with evidence.

Haas went on to write that he would be willing to meet with the student concerning his “challenging statement” because he believed it was significant. Haas encouraged the student to believe he could reach some of the desired governmental and institutional changes “within the framework of our existing government.”¹⁰⁸ Throughout his time as president, Haas made it a point to invite open discussion over matters of student concern rather than dismissing them.

The Presidents Commission explained, “All of us must act to prevent violence, to create understanding, and to reduce the bitterness and hostility that divide both the campus and the country. We must establish respect for the processes of law and tolerance for the exercise of dissent on our campuses and in the nation.”¹⁰⁹ Haas and his wife Dorellen consistently made an effort to tolerate student dissent. For example, Haas recalled, when WSU-EC students picketed his home during a demonstration they made it difficult for he and his wife to leave the house. Instead of getting upset, the two made cookies and other treats for protestors.¹¹⁰ Haas’ conduct helped to prevent campus unrest. Haas recalled, “Of all of the critical times when we might have expected an explosion of some type, there were opportunities for even the top administrators to

¹⁰⁷ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:1.

¹⁰⁸ Leonard Haas to James P. Hebert, 7 May 1970. Box 118, Folder 6. Chancellor’s Records. AS1. Special Collections and Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

¹⁰⁹ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 21.

¹¹⁰ A time of War, a time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

be in direct contact with students.”¹¹¹ This, however, was not the case with President White. “In the rough days of May, 1970, Kent University needed his guidance as never before, and,” Michener maintained, “it was a tragedy that at every crucial moment this grave and tested administrator was missing from the campus.”¹¹²

Police

They may be pigs to some students but a vast majority of WSU-Eau Claire students have respect for Eau Claire city policemen.

Eau Claire *Leader-Telegram*, August 18 1970

The President’s Commission stated, “Too many law enforcement officers, have responded with unwarranted harshness and force in seeking to control disorder. Actions --and inactions --of government at all levels have contributed to campus unrest. Law enforcement officers have too often reacted ineptly or overreacted,” it continued, “At times their response has degenerated into uncontrolled violence.”¹¹³ WSU-EC students and the Eau Claire police department shared a unique relationship in the decade leading up to, and during, the spring and fall semesters of 1970. Across the nation, on many campuses, young people despised their community and campus police officers.

In the years leading up to 1970 the Eau Claire police department patrolled various demonstrations in the community. The President’s Commission report explained, “We commend

¹¹¹ Leonard C. Haas, interview by Richard L. Pifer, *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*, no. 28:2.

¹¹² Michener, *Kent State*, 119.

¹¹³ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 22.

those thousands of law enforcement officers who have endured taunts and assaults without reacting violently, and whose careful conduct has prevented violence and saved lives.”¹¹⁴

Officers respected the views of protesters in the community, including many university students. Throughout the 1960s and into 1970, the police recognized the rights of individuals to participate in the protest march despite the wishes of many Eau Claire residents. This type of conduct helped to build a relationship based on mutual respect between the Eau Claire police and students. This continued into the spring and fall semesters of 1970.

In an interview printed in the *Leader-Telegram*, Eau Claire chief of police Arvin Ziehlsdorff shared his views on the relationship with WSU-EC. “Over the years we have always enjoyed an excellent relationship with our university,” he explained. “This should not be interpreted to mean that the campus does not present the police with problems.” These problems, however, lacked the severity to strain the existing relationship between police and students. He believed the relationship existed because, “a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect exists among the police department, the administration and the student body.”

The President’s Commission found that police conduct sometimes led to violence. Their report explained, “Too frequently, local police forces have been undermanned, improperly equipped, poorly trained, and unprepared for campus disturbances. We therefore urge police forces, especially those in smaller communities, to improve their capacity to respond to civil disorders.”¹¹⁵ In 1967 the Eau Claire Police Department initiated a program that aimed to make its officers better educated about the nature of student protests. Ziehldorff explained, “In order for the individual police officer to better understand his role in the social change (a difficult requirement) and to better understand the complex problems that exist, the police department is

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 22.

taking full advantage of our university as an institute of higher learning.” Police officers attended classes at WSU-EC and, in Ziehlsdorff’s view, this benefitted both institutions. He stated, “The police officer’s presence on campus as a student has perhaps accomplished more to develop mutual respect than any other single effort put forth.”¹¹⁶ Again, the sense of mutual respect with students helped to ensure peace. At a time when many student protestors called law officials pigs, WSU-EC students proved they felt otherwise.

Conclusion

Following the Kent State shootings the President’s Commission recommended that in order to avoid campus unrest, “The administration must accept the primary responsibility for the management of the campus in times of crisis,” and intoned, “But the best of administrators cannot operate without the support of the university’s other major constituencies – the students, faculty, and trustees.”¹¹⁷ In retrospect, it is evident that the WSU-EC administration did not need to reform their policies to fit into the President’s Commission’s recommended model. Long before the tragic acts of violence in 1970, members of the WSU-EC community built and valued the campus’ atmosphere rooted in principles of support and respect. Throughout his time as university president, Leonard Haas ensured that the WSU-EC campus remained peaceful during times of crisis. When students expressed interest in establishing an SDS charter on campus, Haas recognized that the group could jeopardize the non-violent atmosphere at the university. This was one of the only times Haas interceded with the popular opinion conveyed by the student body or faculty.

¹¹⁶ “Local Chief of Police Emphasizes Relationship with University,” *Leader-Telegram* (Eau Claire), August 18 1970, B11.

¹¹⁷ United States, *The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest*, 123.

Throughout his time as WSU-EC President, Haas valued the opinions and concerns of both the university's student body and faculty members and trusted that they would also strive to maintain peace. Each played an important role in representing what WSU-EC stood for. An August 18 1970 article in the Eau Claire *Leader-Telegram* explained, "The concept of shared responsibility between the administration, faculty, and students has been a major force in determining policy and programs at Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire."¹¹⁸ At a time when many college students began to question the American government's dedication to the democratic process, WSU-EC was its exemplar. The views, concerns, and opinions of the WSU-EC student body and faculty were taken into consideration and represented by the administration. The WSU-EC environment reflected what the President's Commission recommended in order to avoid campus unrest; "Universities must become true communities whose members share a sense of respect, tolerance, and responsibility for one another."¹¹⁹ WSU-EC did not need to *become* this type of community, however, because *it already was*, and the sense of respect, tolerance, and responsibility was not just confined to the campus environment. It extended into the city of Eau Claire. When WSU-EC students protested off campus, the Eau Claire Police Department played an important role in maintaining peace. Across the nation when college student protests required police presence, the friction between the two sometimes led to violence. This was not the case in Eau Claire.

An article in Eau Claire's *Leader-Telegram* explained, "a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect exists among the police department, the administration and the student body."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ "Local Chief of Police Emphasizes Relationship with University," *Leader-Telegram* (Eau Claire), August 18 1970, 11.

¹¹⁹ United States, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 123.

¹²⁰ "Local Chief of Police Emphasizes Relationship with University," *Leader-Telegram* (Eau Claire), August 18 1970, 11.

As could be seen on the campuses and in the surrounding communities of some universities, a lack of cooperation and mutual respect among law enforcement, student body, faculty and administration jeopardized peace. Although the school was, as UWEC alumni newsletter journalist Judy Berthiaume described, one of the most socially and politically active in Wisconsin in 1970, the efforts of the student body, faculty, law enforcement, and administration helped to ensure that WSU-EC remained peaceful.¹²¹

Decades later, many consider 1970 to be among the most exciting years in UW-Eau Claire history. The historic violent events at universities that year left their footprints on the memories of many American citizens, especially those on university campuses. The violent unrest experienced at Kent State University and UW-Madison directly impacted the atmosphere on college campuses nationwide, including WSU-EC. Throughout the turbulent times however, WSU-EC remained peaceful. Looking back, some credit their time at WSU-EC in 1970 with their success later in life. Former student body president Robert Jauch recalled, “Many of those experiences 25 years ago were valuable contributors to some of the things I claim success for today.” After graduating from WSU-EC, Jauch eventually went on to become the minority leader of the Wisconsin Senate.¹²² Following his term as WSU-EC President, Leonard Haas went on to represent the nine Wisconsin State Universities when they merged to become the University of Wisconsin system. “I’m convinced they chose me because of what they saw at Eau Claire during that year,” Haas explained.¹²³

The *Daily Telegram*’s 1969 headline “WSU-EC Peace: It’s Wonderful” gave testimony to the non-violent atmosphere of the campus at the time. Following the 1969 headline the number of violent events related to college student protest continued to increase. Until the spring

¹²¹ “A time of War, a time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ “A time of War, a time of Peace,” *The View*, 9.

and fall semesters of 1970, however, these violent incidents were confined to a relatively small number of university campuses. Then, on May 4 1970 the Kent State shootings touched off violent protest on campuses nationwide, including many that were also peaceful when the *Daily Telegram* published its 1969 headline about WSU-EC. In the intervening years, WSU-EC's administration, faculty and students were put to the test. Due to their efforts, peace continued to prevail at WSU-EC. Although violence occurred on campuses nationwide, by the end of the turbulent spring and fall semesters of 1970 the *Daily Telegram's* testimony rang true. Indeed, WSU-EC peace was wonderful.

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