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War Protest, 1972: Students Blockade the SJU Campus

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War Protest, 1972: Students Blockade the SJU Campus

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Soon, Sheriff Pete Lahr, Officer Frank Warwick, along with other campus security, arrived on the scene, and, as the officers had been requesting all morning, pleaded with the students to remove the barricade. This is unlawful, they had instructed, you are blocking a county road. Sheriff Lahr, driving up in his long, beautiful Mercury, had even come armed with an "official" map which "proved" that this road was an official county road. The students, however, did not agree to drag the obstruction away, yet watched, silently and passively, as the sheriff and his assistants did the job themselves.

Soon, cars and a school bus pro-

ceeded to roll and a large urn of hot coffee. No vehicles were allowed to pass through: buses from St. Benedict's, coal trucks, telephone company trucks, workers and faculty in their cars—all drivers and passengers were forced to either turn back or park at the blockade and walk in.

At the two other blockades, one on the main approach road to the abbey near the baseball field and the other where the county road meets this main entry road at the east end of Lake Watlab, the story was much the same. Here, however, the crowds of protesters were larger than the others, numbering about 50 in each group. A snowplow was propped before the group blocking the main road, and, throughout the morning, the cars began to line up at the entrance, as some workers and teachers decided to trek through the snow to their jobs. Inside, there was an attempt at business as usual, but attendance was markedly low, and the campus buildings were dramatically quieter than usual.



MANNING THE LINES

The Record

STUDENT PUBLICATION OF ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Vol. 85

Collegeville, MN. 56321, April 28, 1972

No. 5

ROTC: Bringing the War Home

Background Image adapted from: <https://www.legion.org/flag/255086/we-want-hear-your-us-flag-story>

1972-04-28, The Record p.1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797>

Hundreds of students protest Pat Hall allegations



2021



PAGE 5 • THE RECORD

OPINION

Students organize Line 3 day of action

Black Lives Matter

2020

Today's history lesson is about a student protest. No doubt some of you were on the scene last fall when the students here had a protest about the Pat Hall scandal. And of course we're all aware of the Black Lives Matter, Line 3 and other protests in recent years. So it seems timely to share a bit of campus protest history. Besides, I've had this opportunity on my radar for years...

Pat Hall 2021 Oct. 28 *The Record* p. 1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/44462/rec/12>

Line 3 2021 March 12 *The Record* p. 1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/44245/rec/4>

Black Lives Matter September 18, 2020 *The Record* p.5

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/44089/rec/9>

STRIKE:

Report from the Barricades

By Pat Hrigoyen

The scene was strangely surreal and incongruous. About ten students, their clothes soaking wet from standing all morning in an unseasonal and heavy snowfall, huddled around a small bonfire, their eyes watering in the smoke's pungent odor.

In the road a makeshift barricade of long benches and tree logs had been set up. The protesters had been denying entrance to any cars that had come up the road. This was on the county road entering the south end of St. John's University, near the seminary; the students had taken up their posts at 6 a.m., and it was now approaching 12 noon.

Soon, Sheriff Pete Lahr, Officer Frank Warwick, along with other campus security, arrived on the scene, and, as the officers had been requesting all morning, pleaded with the students to remove the barricade. This is unlawful, they had instructed, you are blocking a county road. Sheriff Lahr, driving up in his long, beautiful Mercury, had even come armed with an "official" map which "proved" that this road was an official county road. The students, however, did not agree to drag the obstruction away, yet watched, silently and passively, as the sheriff and his assistants did the job themselves.

Soon, cars and a school bus pro-

ceeded down the road, and at times numbered around 50. These strikers dragged logs across the road and started a fire.

Sympathizers came throughout the morning and swelled the ranks (as at the other locations) and the food service, many of whose workers voiced agreement with the protesters' views and ideas, sent out a tray of rolls and a large urn of hot coffee. No vehicles were allowed to pass through: buses from St. Benedict's, coal trucks, telephone company trucks, workers and faculty in their cars—all drivers and passengers were forced to either turn back or park at the blockade and walk in.

At the two other blockades, one on the main approach road to the abbey near the baseball field and the other where the county road meets this main entry road at the east end of Lake Watub, the story was much the same. Here, however, the crowds of protesters were larger than others, numbering about 50 in each group. A snowfence was propped before the group blocking the main road, and, throughout the morning, the cars began to line up at the entrance, as some workers and teachers decided to trek through the snow to their jobs. Inside, there was an attempt at business as usual, but attendance was markedly low, and the campus buildings were dramatically quieter than usual.



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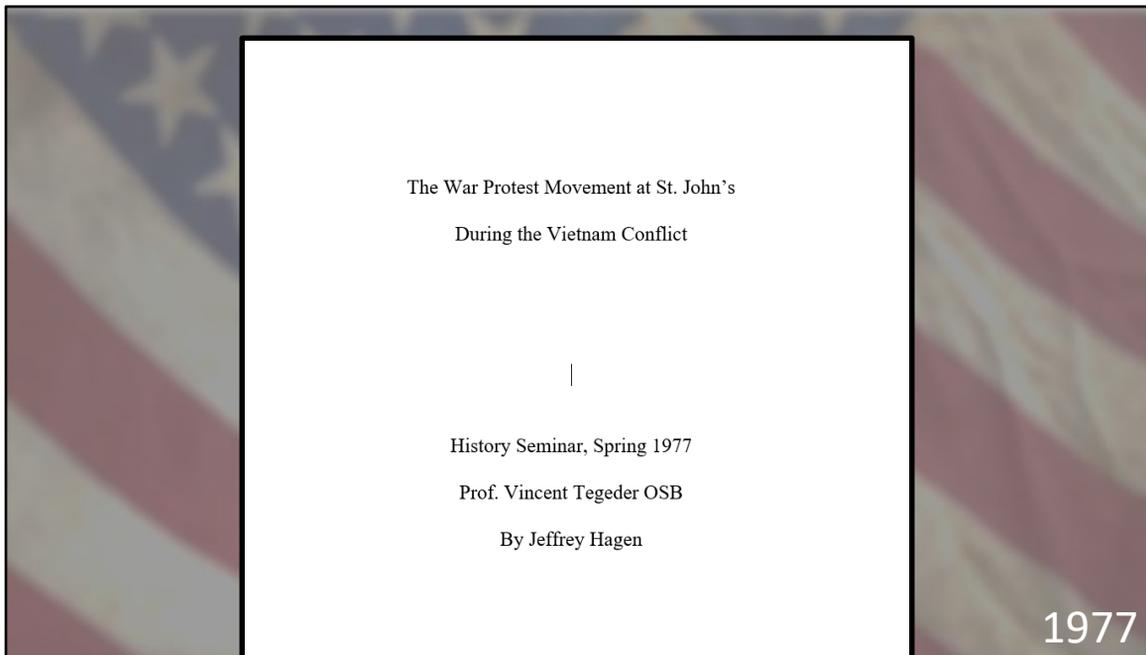
ROTC: Bringing the War Home

...because next Thursday is the 50th anniversary of a protest that affected almost everybody working or attending classes at St. John's on April 21st, 1972. (Which I guess is probably nobody in this room, unless John Taylor is here.)

Background Image adapted from: <https://www.legion.org/flag/255086/we-want-hear-your-us-flag-story>

1972-04-28, The Record p.1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797>



There is over 50 years' worth of research and perspective available about the Vietnam war. Some of the history of opposition to the war on our campuses has been researched; a case in point is this 1977 history paper – which I've put online with the author's permission – by Fr. Vincent Tegeder's student, Jeffrey Hagen, "The War Protest Movement at St. John's During the Vietnam Conflict." (Mr. Hagen was being historically accurate with his title, probably with input from Fr. Vincent; it was never declared to be a *war*, so the correct terminology was "Vietnam Conflict". At the risk of dating myself – but who cares, we archivists get more valuable with age! – as a young librarian, I used this term as an example of the importance of having the correct subject heading when using the library's *card* catalog!)

https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/52439/rec/14.xml?_ga=2.223673051.197296829.1649506317-1229722005.1514831463



1944



1954

But first, a bit of background. The presence of the military on the SJU campus goes way back to World War II and earlier. I've done a couple of history lessons on St. John's during the World Wars – you can look them up in Digital Commons. The photo on the left, from the 1944 *Sagatagan* yearbook, and the one on the right, ten years later, show that the presence of soldiers-in-training continued after World War II ended.

Image published in the 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.65; this version is from the SJU Archives, O:\...\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Army Air Force 1940s\Box1803f5_SJ Army Air Force Unit During WWII.jpg

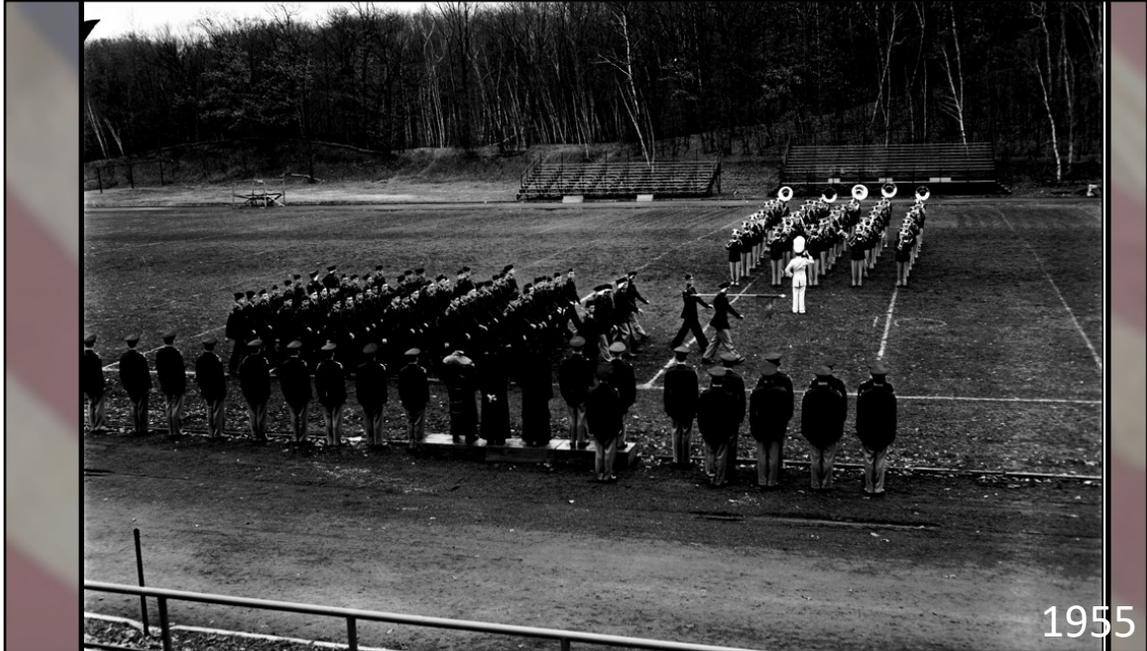
O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Drill Nov 1954 4-11 1.jpg



In fact, events like the “Military Ball” depicted here (on the left), and the “Pershing Rifles” banquet ceremony on the right...

O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Military Ball 1954 4-22
4.jpg

O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Pershing Rifles banquet 4-
18 3.TIF



...were part of the campus milieu as ROTC became a standard fixture—to the point where, beginning in 1952 and until 1965, every *Johnnie freshman and sophomore was required to take military science courses.*

O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Practice Drill 1955 4-8 3.jpg
Enrollment in ROTC was optional starting in fall 1965--shortly after the ROTC Vitalization Act 1964, but maybe tied to ROTC no longer being a deferment from the draft.



But the Vietnamese conflict was not “the Great War,” and students began to ask why they were being drafted to fight a war they saw as unjust, and why a Catholic, Benedictine institution was providing a base for an ROTC soldier-training program.
O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Depts&Programs\ROTC\1967 Protest at ROTC field day PC06.0259 103.2 v3p82 top.jpg



One of the more well-known anti-war protests was when Vice President (and Minnesotan) Hubert Humphrey came to dedicate Alcuin Library in 1966.

[Alcuin Library Dedication War Protest - SJU Archives - Vivarium \(csbsju.edu\)](https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/251)

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/251>

Students Approach ROTC Academically *

For the last two years the St. John's University ROTC Department has seen both its existence as an institution and its right to military review examined on many levels and at varying intensities. This year, being no exception, ROTC is facing another challenge, but this time the battle is to be waged on the academic front and the targets are University procedures and educational credibility within the Military Science Department.

Three students, John Thavis, Jim Davies, and Richard Fuchs, have enrolled themselves in the ROTC based course of Military Science I. The three students, despite the fact that they have no intention of becoming members of ROTC, are seeking to test whether or not the ROTC run courses are truly academic. The students maintain that academic credit in Military Science courses should be open to all students since these classes are included in the University Course *Bulletin* along with all the other academic disciplines. One of the three, John Thavis, explains the student stance when he says, "We feel that whatever the Military Science Department has to offer should be open to all students in the University and not just to those who hope, ultimately, to receive a commission in the U.S. Army. This would seem to be at the basis of a true liberal arts University."

Col. James Brummer, chairman of the Military Science Department, has very different feelings on the subject. Brummer states that no students, other than freshmen, may enroll in the first of the four Military Science courses if he does not express the desire to fulfill the requirements of the ROTC Department as a whole. He is willing, however, to allow stu-

dents not following the prescribed conditions, to engage in the course if they enroll as auditors. He goes on to state that the University audit policy maintains that students "may not participate in class discussion unless specifically invited to do so." It is also implicit in the University audit procedures that no credits be given to students who audit a class.

Col. Brummer has told two of the students that he has "disenrolled" them from the course and that they can only participate in the class if they audit. The students seem unwilling to accept Col. Brummer's man-

date and hope for a hearing on the matter with the Educational Policies Committee in the near future. The students cite an example of how the Military Science Department was placed under the jurisdiction of the History Department at the University of Minnesota recently and look for a similar settlement of the matter here.

It appears that much investigation by all parties will have to be done before a final decision can be reached. But the outcome of this controversy is important in that it challenges the present relationship between academics and ROTC.

"In the fall of 1970, when all the students returned, the battle over ROTC entered a new phase. ... Three students who were known for their anti-war, anti-ROTC views, enrolled in Military Science I. They were Jim Davies, the *Record* editor, John Thavis, one of the most fluent speakers and leaders of the movement at SJU, and Rich Fuchs. Their purposes in enrolling in MS I were, 'first of all to learn what they were teaching and secondly, to disrupt it as much as they could.' Of course they did not advertise their intentions to the ROTC department, but Col. Brummer clearly knew of their reputations and promptly 'disenrolled' two of the three."

Jeffrey Hagen, p. 13

1970

ROTC protests – over the decades – would be a history lesson unto itself, but it does tie into today's topic. A name that will be familiar to some of you surfaces with regard to the ROTC issue in 1970, but not simply by virtue of protesting the war or ROTC. For the fall 1970 semester, three Johnnies "known for their anti-war, anti-ROTC views," enrolled in the Military Science I course "to learn what they were teaching and to disrupt it as much as they could." But the policies at that time said that only freshmen could enroll; others who might want to could only audit the courses, and those auditing could not participate in class discussion.

1970-09-18 *The Record* p. 3

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34760/rec/2>

Quote from interview with John Thavis. Hagen, Jeffrey. [The War Protest Movement at St. John's During the Vietnam Conflict](#),

https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/52439/rec/14.xml?_ga=2.63078317.32318027.1649680052-1600373423.1567691860

Kent State Meets SJU

By Al Simonett

A special USG meeting was held Oct. 22 to discuss the findings of an Ohio grand jury which investigated the Kent State affair. At the meeting a motion to have the USG obtain a parade permit for a march in St. Cloud on Friday, Oct. 23, to protest the actions of the Ohio grand jury, was defeated. The grand jury indicted 25 civilians (including some faculty and students at Kent State) in the Kent State tragedy and exonerated the National Guardsmen involved in the incident. What the USG finally did was to pass a motion calling for a steering committee to be organized which would look into the events surrounding Kent State and report back to the USG with the facts in the case.

Meanwhile, from a crowd of approximately 50 observers came shouts of "Right on! Right on!" in response to a remark by one spectator that maybe the governor of Ohio should be indicted. There seemed to be some disagreement among those present as to what the exact reason for the proposed march should be—should it be to protest the 25 indictments or to protest the exoneration of the National Guard. Sides were drawn. The issue was clouded still further when one student said that marches really don't accomplish anything; the status quo has to be attacked on the economic level where it hurts. When the meeting ended and the observers began to file out, grumblings could be heard that "nothing" had been accomplished.

John Thavis, acting as chairman of the five-man steering committee, reported that after the meeting the USG President told him of his appointment to chair the committee and then named for him four others appointed to serve on the committee.

they responded in this manner: "I'm not on a committee." "No, nobody's told me that... that really ticks me off." Asked—Are you aware of your appointment?, one responded, "No, I'm not." But, he added, don't print that. He then stated a possible reason for his selection.

John Thavis said that at least one of the reasons for the establishment of a steering committee was because, "Really, none of us are in any position to judge whether the people indicted are innocent or guilty. Before any intelligent protest can take place

Right on . . .



the students must examine the evidence that is available. And this has not been done so far."

Thavis, who donated his time passing out information on Kent State in the refectory, said that comments he heard there had sounded something like, "What a bum deal for the students."

The steering committee planned its first meeting for yesterday. Thavis has already sent an invitation to Eva Jefferson, student body president at Northwestern University and a member of the Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest, asking her to speak here on the Kent State situation. Thavis is still waiting for a reply. He hopes that his committee

What the USG finally did was to pass a motion calling for a steering committee to be organized which would look into the events surrounding Kent State and report back to the USG with the facts in the case.

1970

One of those students was John Thavis, then a sophomore. A month later, an article in *The Record* reports that John was appointed to chair a steering committee to "look into the events surrounding Kent State and report back to the USG [the Undergrad Student Government] with the facts in the case."

1970-10-30-0-002

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34651/rec/3>

Peace Action

By John Thavis

The Peace Action Committee of St. John's and St. Ben's was formed last year because people in this community needed an outlet for anti-war frustrations.

Last week the Peace Action Committee met in the Alcuin Library. Members reasoned that since the war in Indochina is still being fought with American know-how (soldiers, bombs, and dollars), they should do something to stop it.

The first idea came. Why not rent a billboard in St. Cloud to remind people that our saturation bombing of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia is ripping people's skulls apart? The billboard has been rented.

Another thought: the use of the vote to unseat war watchers. The members of the Student Government, and please to register new areas around the spring's precinct. Some at the meeting

MARCH ON THE CAPITOL NOV. 6

By John Thavis



When segments of the Pentagon Papers were published this year, the discovery of being fooled struck a nerve in many Americans and helped reduce our over-trust syndrome that has given the Indochina War its greatest support.

Unfortunately, fewer have recognized Vietnamization as the tragic continuation of clandestine war; some have again yielded their dollars and consciences to the powers that be. Replacing U.S. soldiers with U.S. bombs—while keeping the body count efficiently at 2,000 a week—has impersonalized our involvement to a palliative level for these remnants of the silent majority. Our discreet war effort has been matched by our bold support of clearly non-democratic regimes in Vietnam and Cambodia. But because the streets have remained clear since last May,

America's biggest football fan has continued to use the foggy mandate of silence to wage illegal war.

Nov. 6 will give a voice once more to the millions of Americans who have had enough of Nixon's lullabies. The National Peace Action Committee will coordinate demonstrations in 12 major U.S. cities, including a march on the Minnesota State Capitol. The expression of Nov. 6 will be difficult to ignore, especially on the local level. It may force our president to stop smiling for a moment; more importantly, it may force our legislators to take a good hard look at current anti-war legislation.

The Peace Action Committee of St. John's is now filling buses for the March on the Capitol. It is hoped that on our Christian campus, the response to this immoral war will be a loud, clear: Out Now!

Student T-C Evaluation Arrives

By John Thavis

Remember about a month ago when your favorite Shakespeare class was invaded by an official USG Evaluation Squad? Many wondered at that time whether any fruits of the computer-card exercise would, or could, be realized by the final tally.

After passing through the newly published *Teacher*

Though the pamphlet's production obviously rates on a par with some of the USG's recent accomplishments, faculty members have been hesitant with praise. One prof quietly objected that the surveys were completed slightly past the midpoint of the semester. Apparently he thought he had a few more ideas to offer his classes over the remaining six weeks. He has since returned to

1971

John was also a writer for *The Record*, sometimes on behalf of the Peace Action Committee. Student activism seemed to be his forte.

1971-10-14 *The Record* p. 1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34636/rec/4>

1971-11-02 *The Record* p. 1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34763/rec/5>

1971-12-13 *The Record* p. 1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34753/rec/7>

John Thavis

The position of all 11 Abolition Party candidates for USG offices is simple. If elected, we pledge to: 1) move to establish the Activities Allocations Board as an autonomous, five-man, student-elected committee. Members will not be paid. Its sole function will be the distribution of activity funds to campus organizations; 2) move to abolish the Undergraduate Student Government; 3) encourage all individual dorms to set up their own governments and to petition the AAB for funds.

Should any or all Abolition candidates be elected, this pledge will be



our *first* and *only* order of business. Should the abolition motion fail to pass the USG, all Abolition representatives will resign immediately, accepting *no pay* whatsoever. Election of all 11 Abolition Party candidates will greatly increase the chances of our motion's success.

Vol. 85

Collegeville, MN. 56321, February 29, 1972



CALM BEFORE THE STORM

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events

The Abolition Party succeeded in being elected to a majority. Then their members ultimately resigned, but the remaining members re-constituted the student government. Thus John's presidency lasted for all of one meeting (or rather, part of it). By that April, 50 years ago, John was leading the student body in another capacity.

1972-02-29 *The Record* p. 1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34710/rec/2>

NOWData - NOAA Online Weather Data			
Almanac for COLLEGEVILLE, MN April 21, 1972			
Daily Data	Observed	Normal	
Max Temperature	53	57	
Min Temperature	27	36	
Avg Temperature	40.0	46.2	
Precipitation	0.72	0.10	
Snowfall	3.8	0.1	

The students are back after Easter break. The normal high for April 21st is 57 degrees. But it's April in Minnesota. Some years I'm wearing my sandals by now; and sometimes, a warmish spring day can suddenly change to blizzard conditions. In 1972, weather forecasting wasn't nearly as reliable as it is today. Who would have expected almost four inches of snow? But I suspect the protest planners didn't give the weather much thought as they hastily put together their plan the day before.

<https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=mpx>



MANNING THE LINES

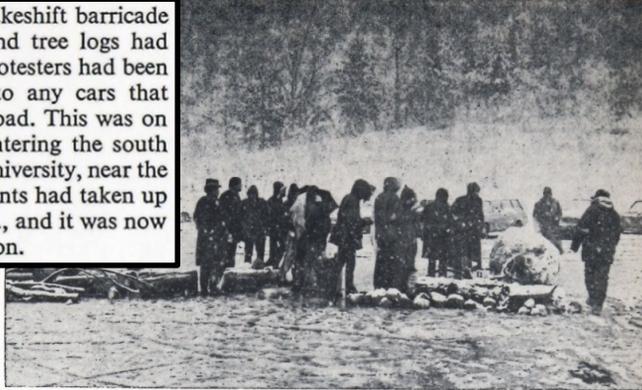
[sic]

Picture yourself driving to work on a Friday morning. It is snowing - one of those wet, heavy spring snows - and as you near campus, you see cars parked along the road and a barrier preventing anyone from driving in - tree logs, benches, and people are blocking the way. From here, you're going to have to hike to your job. Chances are you're not wearing snow boots.

1972-04-28, The Record p.1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797>

In the road a makeshift barricade of long benches and tree logs had been set up. The protesters had been denying entrance to any cars that had come up the road. This was on the county road entering the south end of St. John's University, near the seminary; the students had taken up their posts at 6 a.m., and it was now approaching 12 noon.



MANNING THE LINES

Friday, April 21, 1972

The Record

STUDENT PUBLICATION OF ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Vol. 85

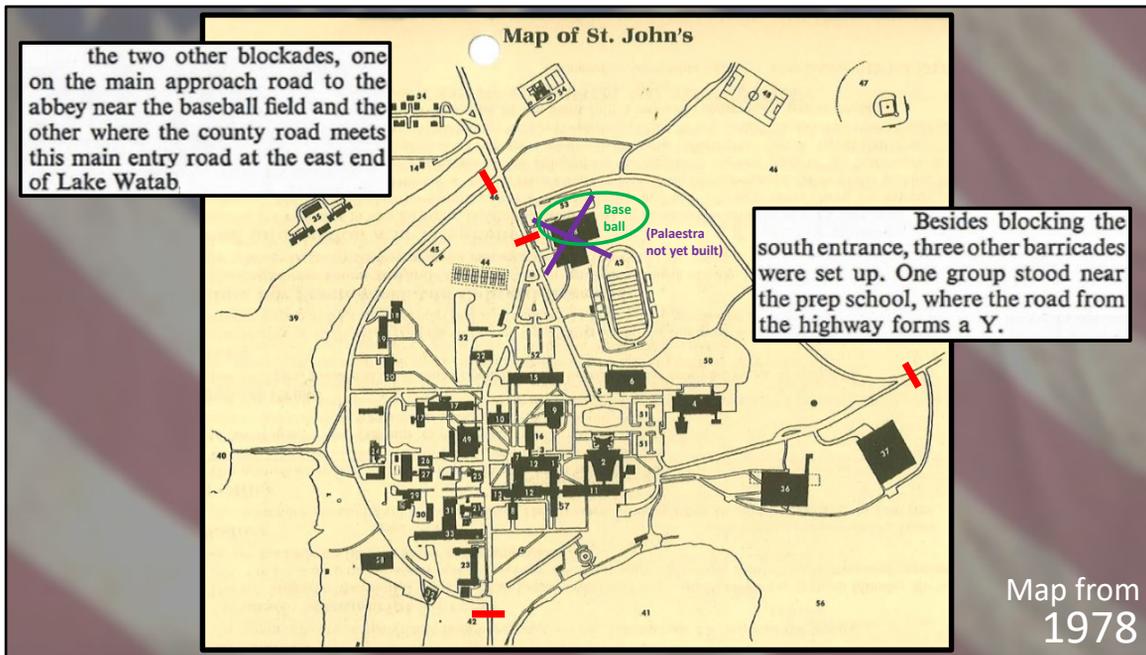
Collegeville, MN. 56321, April 28, 1972

No. 5

A great article in The Record the following week documented the details well.

1972-04-28, The Record p.1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797>



Besides blocking the south entrance by the cemetery, they also blockaded the road from Flyntown, near Stumpf Lake, and by the Prep School – which, in those days before I-94, was the main entrance into campus.

SJU Map, circa 1978, <https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/92>
 Text from <https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797> *The Record* April 28, 1972, p. 1



**(Though taken several years earlier, this aerial photo shows what things looked like before the Palaestra was built and the road re-aligned by the four-way stop.
1966 <https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/14295>**

"The blockades stood because a significant number of individuals recognized some sort of guilt that this community bears in its contributions to the war."

ROTC: Bringing the War Home

By John Thavis

"Because this University supports the war in Indochina, it should be shut down. It is time that this institution's direct sanction of a clearly immoral conflict be confronted."

It might be expected that at St. John's this statement could easily be ignored as so much political rhetoric. But it was not just a handful standing at the four campus entrances last Friday. The blockades stood because a significant number of individuals recognized some sort of guilt that this community bears in its contributions to the war. That afternoon, when 15 students hunted to stop troop trucks leaving for Camp Ripley, the issue was more clear: that the sponsorship of the ROTC program by St. John's University directly affects the national war effort, and that this complicity should cease.

The week before the strike I visited some typical on-campus ROTC functions. The first of these operations was a map-and-compass drill held in the woods around Lake Sagatagan. There were many moments of kidding and joking through-

out the drill; there was a strong temptation to treat the whole affair with a type of camp humor attitude. These students didn't really seem like soldiers. They operated out of a '57 Chevy. They joked about going AWOL in the woods. And there seemed something laughable about a military landing on the monastery beach.

But it didn't really matter how many laughs the drill got along the way. When it was over, each cadet had at least partially acquired a skill that is essential to any military operation. "If they make mistakes, it's better that they make them now, before they go on active duty." So spoke Captain Hagaman, and as far as the Army is concerned, he is absolutely correct. The soldiers that maintain the ROTC program realize, more than anyone else in this community, the importance that daily activities like drills have in the long-run effectiveness of the entire Army.

The ROTC classroom training, despite the friendly atmosphere, is no less serious in its aim. In one class I attended, students learned how a rifle squad and a weapons squad operate

in combat. They learned the range and uses of the M79 grenade launcher. They learned how "the defense lures the enemy into a trap, then comes down on his head." They learned that the mission of infantry is to destroy the enemy, and reviewed tactics for that destruction. They learned how "assault fire is meant to kill the enemy and beat him down in his hole." They learned how 2nd lieutenants lead a squad into battle.

Without this kind of training in ROTC programs, the Army could not function. No one knows this more than Colonel Brummer, the head of the St. John's program. He pointed out to me that ROTC has the major officer-producing role in the Army. Over 50 percent of the active duty officer requirements come from ROTC.

Many times ROTC is laughed away at St. John's, with predictions that it will simply curl up and die soon. Other times ROTC is looked at merely as a symbol of the military, with claims that St. John's ROTC certainly isn't contributing to the U.S. Army. Colonel Brummer refuted both of these points well. He told me that underclass ROTC en-

John's page-one piece explained it to the community, and counted it as a victory: "The blockades stood because a significant number of individuals recognized some sort of guilt that this community bears in its contributions to the war."

1972-04-28, The Record p.1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797>

“ROTC materially contributes to a policy of murder in Indochina...”

“...it is clear that any organization aiding the implementation of a genocidal war policy has forfeited its right to exist on a Christian campus.”

“...what can you do about the war in your own backyard?”

—Editorial—

Shut It Down

ROTC materially contributes to a policy of murder in Indochina. Once that reality is brought home the bromides about ROTC producing “liberal officers” and “academic freedom” seem pallid.

“Liberal” 2nd Lieutenants, even assuming their existence, are bound by civilian and military policy, not quirks of conscience picked up in Theo 111. And any cadet will tell you that Generals are made at professional academies like West Point. If professionals reign in the field, our home front leaders come from nice liberal places like Harvard, but that hasn’t stopped them from throwing everything short of nukes at Indochina’s population.

As for the rights of “academic freedom,” it is clear that any organization aiding the implementation of a genocidal war policy has forfeited its right to exist on a Christian campus. Rights are not abstractions handed out unconditionally. (Certainly, few would grant me the right to teach a one credit course in applied bomb throwing.)

The point is that any right is dependent upon the consequences flowing from its implementation. And one consequence of ROTC includes providing the lower echelon officer pool necessary to implement the kill orders of a succession of civilian war criminals parading as presidents.

Practically speaking there isn’t much we, as members of the St. John’s community, can do about civilian leaders once elected. It comes down to a question of what can you do about the war in your own backyard? The least we can do for the people of Indochina is to shut down the St. John’s ROTC program for good. If the administration won’t, St. John’s workers, students and faculty should. Now!

David Peterson

told me that unrollment is higher than the Army number of ROT year. There is n students have joi stall for time or their service tim Brummer was c plain that 35 pe ROTC graduate Army as a care performed on t token, any more ber of B52s d Indochina is tok at the eventual to life—in Indoc

When we spe the war effort, v the most peace campus as well Everyone in this ity is affected by organization wh and eases our burden. If indivi a value for life than the kind Army brings to should be demost est possible ter Christianity can

...and the editors said: “ROTC materially contributes to a policy of murder in Indochina...” “...it is clear that any organization aiding the implementation of a genocidal war policy has forfeited its right to exist on a Christian campus.” and “...what can you do about the war in your own backyard?”

1972-04-28, The Record p.1

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797>

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1. 4

28 April 1972

I have some happy news to report. On the recommendation of the Regents and Executive Governing Board, the Corporation has authorized construction of Phase I and II of the physical education building. Construction should begin in May, and I hope this new facility will be completed in time for the fall semester, 1973. Phases I and II will include an arena (four basketball courts and a track), two classrooms, five offices, training room, wrestling room, six handball courts, weight and exercise room, press box, sauna room and men's and women's and faculty locker rooms. The building will cost \$1,439,084 to be financed by federal grant and loan subsidy, a fund drive and by moneys already given for the physical education building.

The Corporation also approved the construction of a 32 man apartment building. The exact site and plans must still be approved. The main dining room will also be renovated, completing the job begun last year when the so-called "third line" and "third dining room" were added. The Mary Hall Snack Bar will also be renovated this summer and the games room transferred there from Tommy. Laundromat facilities will be provided there as well. The buses which run between Saint Benedict's and Saint John's will be rerouted to stop on the north side of Mary Hall. We hope that this renovation of the basement of Mary Hall will provide a focus for student social life on campus.

The rationale behind these several programs is simple. Saint John's intends to provide students with a social environment and recreational program that will contribute to the quality of life here while only minimally raising costs.

At the heart of our educational program is the curriculum and faculty. I had hoped that we would be further along in the process of reviewing our present curriculum and modifying it and adding to it where necessary. However, some of the curriculum recommendations of the ad hoc committees have been approved. Consideration of a pilot freshman program seems tabled until next fall. Action by the faculty on a proposed change in our grading system, similar to one proposed at the University of Minnesota, is not yet scheduled. The ad hoc committees working on the proposed new Master of Arts degrees have not yet reported any recommendations.

There are good reasons for this slow pace. haste in curriculum revision can make for waste. A new academic vice-president will have to help implement any changes. It seems appropriate that he have some part in determining what they should be. The year has been a very hectic one and is fast coming to a conclusion. In summary, it appears that little curriculum revision will be initiated this year. The one item which was reported out of the Educational Policies Committee, the "individualized major," which some criticized as being ill-timed, was sent back to committee. I echo the concern, however, of a faculty member as he expressed it to his colleagues, that we do not put the burden for curriculum revision and innovation on someone else.

One of the most important accomplishments of the year will be the choice of an academic vice-president. A good choice will benefit us for years to come. I have already assured Mr. John Redmond, the Search Committee chairman, that I hope his committee will recommend a man or woman of no mean qualities. The academic vice-president must be able to gain the confidence and trust of the faculty. He will bear full responsibility for the academic budget, faculty recruitment and development, and curriculum revision and innovation. These are challenging tasks. He will have my wholehearted support in carrying out his responsibilities. Because this person will exercise important responsibilities, I am sure the students and faculty will carefully consider whom they wish to recommend. Incidentally, Mr. John Kennedy and Mr. Charles Coromako are the student representatives. Students who

SAINT JOHN'S

LEWISTOWN, PA. 15116
FUNDING: 1972



President Michael Blecker's next regular weekly report to students, faculty and staff made no mention of the protest. <ENTER> And the spring alumni magazine had the long-awaited Palaestra groundbreaking as its cover story.

1972 0428 Pres's Rep to students fac staff Box251f1.pdf



But inside, there was an article about the protest, with a photo that conveyed the nastiness of the weather, the gathering of students around their leader <ENTER> and an angry employee taking issue with the blockade.

"A Question of How to Be Heard," St. John's Alumni Magazine Spring 1972, p. 8-14.
<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/5484/rec/41>



Entitled "A Question of How to Be Heard," the article was a transcript of a discussion that included the leader, John; the chair of the government department; the former mayor of St. Cloud; a professor who had joined the protest; a student whose brother-in-law had just died in Vietnam; a professor who drove his truck through the protesters; and an English professor who later became SJU's president. *St. John's Alumni Magazine* Spring 1972, p. 8-14.

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/5484/rec/41>



"We're criticizing it for being what it was -- a spontaneous action. . . . How do students learn to act effectively in the political realm?"

". . . the purpose . . . could have been achieved with equal dramatic effect . . . without obliging the secretaries to walk from the flagpole to their offices."

"I would say . . . you probably ended the day with less support on this campus than you had at the beginning of the day. It seems to me that's counterproductive."

Among the comments at the discussion: Joe Farry, future Dean, asked how best for students to learn effectively; Ed Henry thought the protest was counterproductive, and Fr. Hilary thought there could have been a better way of making the point without the secretaries having to walk all the way across campus to their offices.

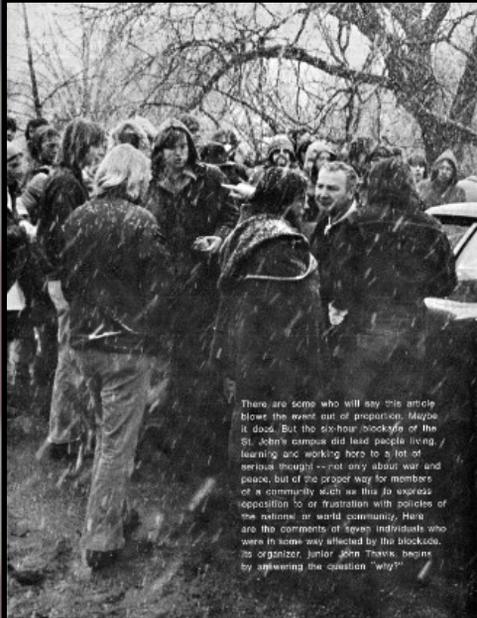
St. John's Alumni Magazine Spring 1972, p. 8-14.

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/5484/rec/41>

Friday, April 21, 1972



About the article, John said later that – quote - “Lee Hanley having organized the discussion...was a really good result. [Lee] knew a good story when he saw one...”
“A Question of How to Be Heard,” *St. John’s Alumni Magazine* Spring 1972, p. 8-14.
<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/5484/rec/41>



There are some who will say this article blows the event out of proportion. Maybe it does. But the six-hour blockade of the St. John's campus did lead people living, learning and working here to a lot of serious thought — not only about war and peace, but of the proper way for members of a community such as this to express opposition to or frustration with policies of the nation or world community. Here are the comments of seven individuals who were in some way affected by this blockade. Its organizer, junior John Thavis, begins by answering the question "why?"

A QUESTION OF HOW TO BE HEARD

THAVIS: The support for the action was to make a statement that we as individuals can no longer in conscience ignore our nation's inhuman war policy. Secondly, it was intended to challenge the leaders and necessary to give the campus a reason for a day to examine our role in the war effort, and to encourage more of direct action to be taken against the War.

FINNEY: In your view, who constituted the audience? The University community or the larger community?

THAVIS: Well, I think our first responsibility was to the University community. The fact that it would carry over into central Massachusetts was good, I think, but our aim was the wider audience.

FINNEY: Was the two week of some very short prep or organization?

THAVIS: No. It was more the week of individuals on the campus who got together, talked over the idea and planned the action. Some people from the Duke Action Committee took part in it, some didn't.

FINNEY: You have mentioned it was organized in an ad hoc manner?

THAVIS: At first the Student Union had some meetings, doing nothing really wrong. The word for such was out and many talks. Later that evening we had some meetings a decision was made. He said one of the blockades were on campus and would that they be removed. The students that were there did not stop.

FINNEY: Did you have any strategy in mind in case the University had gotten an injunction on the blocking of the private roads?

THAVIS: Well, if an injunction was issued I would have left. I would not have been a crowd, I don't know about the others. There may have been some who would have stayed.

FINNEY: Although I got a little organized message, or through the news, I observed that one study on the plan that was made concerning.

FINNEY: Maybe it's backward and the next of thing that would occur only in an English teacher, but I can't help thinking of Japanese whose intention it is to be heard and yet not to be

offense caused, and vice versa, the action between the two are the two sides.

FINNEY: Although I may have understood its purpose, I just the blockade was merely a protest against the War. I would have been happy to have seen the blockade three weeks earlier when the North Vietnamese were close to South Vietnam. My own feeling is that you ought to have recognized the if people applied to the world and protest against any aggression. And if the blockade was directed at war, why not against the invasion by Vietnam into the South?

THAVIS: Most of us believe the United States has a heavy responsibility in the fact that the North Vietnamese invasion could not take place. Most of us believe the United States has not had a chance at negotiating something especially with the seven year war plan in Ind.

KOFF: I think President Nixon's bombing of the North was the protest against the North Vietnamese blockade.

John Thavis, junior from Marlboro, had organized the blockade.

"Many came out and questioned our tactics. We asked them to come up with a better way. We asked them if they would help... a lot of them said yes."

express opinion. It seems to me there is adequate representation for opinion with respect to North Vietnam if you accept that theme.

The important thing was to let the Administration know that some things have been done non-political basis. There is significant opposition to involvement in the War. I don't think it's right to expect to effect the North Vietnamese in any way but it is within our control to affect the decision of the United States Administration.

FINNEY: From your point of view, what would have been the optimum attack of the University?

KOFF: As a faculty member, I was disappointed that as few faculty members chose to participate in the strike.

FINNEY: Participation in what way?

Stoker John's 9

"...The fact that [he] wanted to do this showed that the issue had reached a point where you couldn't ignore it, the institution had to react. And on the one hand, [while] one effort was to assure alums and donors that SJU wasn't a radical institution...it also brought the war question into the mainstream." End quote. "A Question of How to Be Heard," *St. John's Alumni Magazine* Spring 1972, p. 8-14. <https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/5484/rec/41>

President Michael Blecker weighed in as well, juxtaposing the violence of the war with the use of force to shut down the campus, and encouraging, rather, on a university campus, "inquiry and persuasion, which alone produce a moral commitment worthy of a Christian college."



SJU President's message on the blockade

The renewed bombing of North Vietnam disturbs me. I believe this war burdens the American conscience and breeds violence. Others believe this, too. Since war is an act of society, those who are against it must stand up for their convictions otherwise their silence will appear to give consent to it. And that's the rub. How is this war to be protested here? Saint John's like any other social institution functions as a part of American society. If tactics of protest and disruption are appropriate generally, why not here? The University is indeed a social institution but with a recognizably special purpose. It is a place where understanding is sought, where what is to be known is found and the critical capacities of mind and judgment enlarged. These are the activities which a University fosters. Should these be disrupted? Rather, should we not seek to intensify and focus these activities on the issues at hand?

I am concerned, too, about the role of force in such protest. If the violence of war is bad, I am not sure the use of force—a kind of violence—to "persuade" or awaken people to the issues is any better. I think the use of force is least acceptable on the campus of a Benedictine college. Benedictine tradition and the activities of a university suggest that our contribution toward changing society, toward protesting the futility of its sins, is not in the resort to force. We must contribute a searching inquiry into what is morally right and live out our commitment with integrity. This may not be the most effective way of social protest. Yet every generation in crisis has found such men of firm commitment and keen insight into the values of life a powerful force

I have spoken so far to the underlying issues or principles. Perhaps I should go no further. I would not be honest with you, though, if I did not say that I was concerned about the

meaning and implication of last Friday's strike or "blockade." The point of concern to me here is whether force, was introduced. Perhaps, the "blockade," the insistence that one walk onto campus, should be judged as analogous to the polite cornering or arm twisting we so often practice with each other. I am not sure, though, that all perceived it as such. I believe some felt that their rights, their integrity had not been respected. I am sure this was not intended. But communication is a gentle art and persuasion often a matter of patience.

I am personally and as president willing and ready to mobilize what institutional resources I can to illumine, clarify and resolve, when that is possible, issues which confront our academic community and society. I cannot, however, condone the substitution of force for inquiry and persuasion which alone produce a moral commitment worthy of a Christian college

Fr. Michael Blecker

President Michael Blecker commented in the Alumni Magazine as well, juxtaposing the violence of the war with the use of force to shut down the campus, and encouraging, rather, on a university campus, "inquiry and persuasion, which alone produce a moral commitment worthy of a Christian college."

"A Question of How to Be Heard," *St. John's Alumni Magazine* Spring 1972, p. 8-14.

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/5484/rec/41>

The President's message is on p. 14.



In 1984 Fr. Hilary, then SJU President, refused to cancel the ROTC program when the same arguments were made.



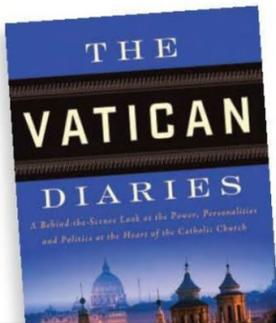
A little over ten years later, when protests over ROTC again arose, now-President Hilary Thimmesh appointed a committee which spent the 1983-84 academic year studying the issue. The “Values Committee on ROTC” concluded that reliance on military force is contrary to Benedictine and Christian values. But surveys of students, alumni, faculty, monks and parents favored keeping ROTC. Hilary kept the program, - quote - "affirming the positive influence that St. John's can exert for peace," with "intensified emphasis on the ethical and moral responsibilities of military leadership" ... “dedicated... not only to the common defense, but to justice and liberty.” End quote.

See discussion in the Sept. 23, 1983 *Record* – and many other issues in 1983-84.
<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/36027/rec/19>
 ROTC Report: from the May 17, 1984 issue of *Community*, p. 3 (of that pdf)
<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/23599/rec/381>



Thavis '73 Receives 2007 St. Francis de Sales Award

John Thavis '73, Catholic News Service Rome bureau chief, received the Catholic Press Association's highest honor, the St. Francis de Sales Award, during a luncheon at the Catholic Media Convention in Brooklyn, NY on May 25. Thavis won the award "for his in-depth knowledge of the workings of the Vatican and his ability to share that with fellow journalists and Catholic press readers." Thavis was in Minnesota recently presenting "A Johnnie's Inside View of the Vatican" to alumni and friends gathered in Central



Thavis '73 Gives Inside Look at the Vatican in New Book

John Thavis '73, recently retired Rome Bureau Chief of the Catholic News Service, writes on the inner workings of the Holy See in *The Vatican Diaries, A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Power, Personalities and Politics at the Heart of the Catholic Church*, released Feb. 21.

The book draws on Thavis's close to 30 years of experience covering Vatican City from an insider's perspective. It is described by Viking, the publisher, as a "detailed, perceptive and often humorous insider's view based on thirty years of first-hand reporting." The book's release is particularly timely due to Pope Benedict's retirement and the election of a new pontiff.

Thomas J. Reese, S.J., widely recognized expert on the U.S. Catholic Church and former editor of *American* calls *The Vatican Diaries* a "must-



And what of John? He went to Italy, found a job as a journalist, and eventually became the bureau chief for the Catholic News Service in Rome, travelled with the popes, and wrote two books about the Vatican. Some of you no doubt recall his appearances on campus sponsored by the Koch chair, the Benedictine Institute, and the chair in Critical Thinking.

St. Francis de Sales Award: 2007 Autumn Saint John's Alumni Magazine p. 37,

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/5408/rec/4>

Vatican Diaries blurb: 2013-01 SJU Alumni Magazine Winter / Spring p. 36

<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/23564/rec/6>

Lower right photo: from a 2013 email.



Compiled in March 2022
from resources in the Archives
of Saint John's University
by Peggy Landwehr Roske,
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And those of us lucky enough to have gone on the Benedictine Heritage Tours were also fortunate to have John give us an orientation to the Vatican and Rome, something he did for several of the Benedictine Heritage groups.

Background Image: <https://www.legion.org/flag/255086/we-want-hear-your-us-flag-story>

STRIKE:

Report from the Barricades

By Pat Hrigoyen

The scene was strangely surreal and incongruous. About ten students, their clothes soaking wet from standing all morning in an unseasonal and heavy snowfall, huddled around a small bonfire, their eyes watering in the smoke's pungent odor.

In the road a makeshift barricade of long benches and tree logs had been set up. The protesters had been denying entrance to any cars that had come up the road. This was on the county road entering the south end of St. John's University, near the seminary; the students had taken up their posts at 6 a.m., and it was now approaching 12 noon.

Soon, Sheriff Pete Lahr, Officer Frank Warwick, along with other campus security, arrived on the scene, and, as the officers had been requesting all morning, pleaded with the students to remove the barricade. This is unlawful, they had instructed, you are blocking a county road. Sheriff Lahr, driving up in his long, beautiful Mercury, had even come armed with an "official" map which "proved" that this road was an official county road. The students, however, did not agree to drag the obstruction away, yet watched, silently and passively, as the sheriff and his assistants did the job themselves.

Soon, cars and a school bus pro-

ceeded down the road, and at times numbered around 50. These strikers dragged logs across the road and started a fire.

Sympathizers came throughout the morning and swelled the ranks (as at the other locations) and the food service, many of whose workers voiced agreement with the protesters' views and ideas, sent out a tray of rolls and a large urn of hot coffee. No vehicles were allowed to pass through: buses from St. Benedict's, coal trucks, telephone company trucks, workers and families in their cars—all drivers and passengers were forced to either turn back or wait for the blockade and walk.

At the two other blockades on the main approach to the abbey near the baseball field, other where the count down of this main entry road at the end of Lake Watub, the situation was the same. Here, however, the protesters were larger groups, numbering about 200. A snowplow was sent to clear the road, and, throughout the day, the cars began to line up for entrance, as some workers and teachers decided to trek through the snow to their jobs. Inside, there was an attempt at business as usual, but attendance was markedly low, and the campus buildings were dramatically quieter than usual.



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BRING THE LINES

Record

OF SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Vol. 85

Collegeville, MN. 56321, April 28, 1972

No. 5

ROTc: Bringing the War Home

Background Image adapted from: <https://www.legion.org/flag/255086/we-want-hear-your-us-flag-story>
1972-04-28, The Record p.1
<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34797>