

Kent State University  
Kent, Ohio 1970

Growing up in a relatively small Midwestern college town left significant life experiences engraved in my mind. I grew up during the 60's watching many changes happening to society. In particular, I witnessed one of the most memorable campus riots of the 60's and 70's: the tragedy at Kent State University.

The spring of 1970 brought warm, lazy afternoons. I was at the end of my junior year in a trade and industrial vocational drafting program at Kent Roosevelt High School.

On Friday night, the first weekend of May, it all started with a gathering and riot destroying most of the businesses downtown. Saturday brought calmer situations, the R.O.T.C. building on campus was burned down by someone and the Governor finally sent the National Guard to the town, which in my mind was a mistake to have them on campus with loaded weapons. After watching this all happen for three days I decided it was time to get out and catch the action.

On Monday, my friends and I had decided to have lunch on the campus commons. Upon arrival, we were immediately smothered with flyers regarding a rally to start at noon by the Victory Bell.

Little did we know that we were about to witness total mayhem. Everything happened very fast after that.

- First, we were asked to disperse by the National Guard.
- Second, the crowd was tear gassed.
- Third, we saw the intimidating fixed bayonets approaching.

All seemed very life threatening. At last, I found myself running back to my school hearing shots in the background. Fortunately we did not run up the hill to where the guard opened fire. My one friend actually threw back a tear gas container and the following year quit high school and joined the Army and did tours in VietNam, go figure. When he came back from the war he committed suicide.

Events of that afternoon are now history: four students fatally wounded, one paralyzed for life, and eight more injured from wounds ranging from minor to serious.

Despite this emotional experience I graduated from high school. At that time in my life I was not ready for college nor did I have the money for it. I was already working at a chalkboard manufacturer in Kent, and not that enthused about continuing to work for a living. I continued to work while waiting for the draft or some kind of adventure to take me away from middle America.

The following summer the lottery numbers for the draft came up (last draft). My birthday drew a low number, twenty-two to be exact. So, soon I was on my way to be inducted into the United States Army. The Army was not all that attractive to me since they were shooting real bullets in Vietnam. But, as I reflect, neither Vietnam or the Army were no more dangerous than my home town.

Therefore, I enlisted in the United States Navy thinking my chances for survival would be better.

Remembering Kent State vividly 45 Years ago .....