



Marilyn DeFrange

May 4, 2017 · 🌐



As I get older it has become increasingly important to let monumental past experiences surface. Connection to my old home town of Kent Ohio plays a huge role in this for me, and letting myself be "seen" is part of that. It's the "story" that's important and I think it must be for you too. The many remarks received from posting my Tin Soldier video on April 17 was proof of that.

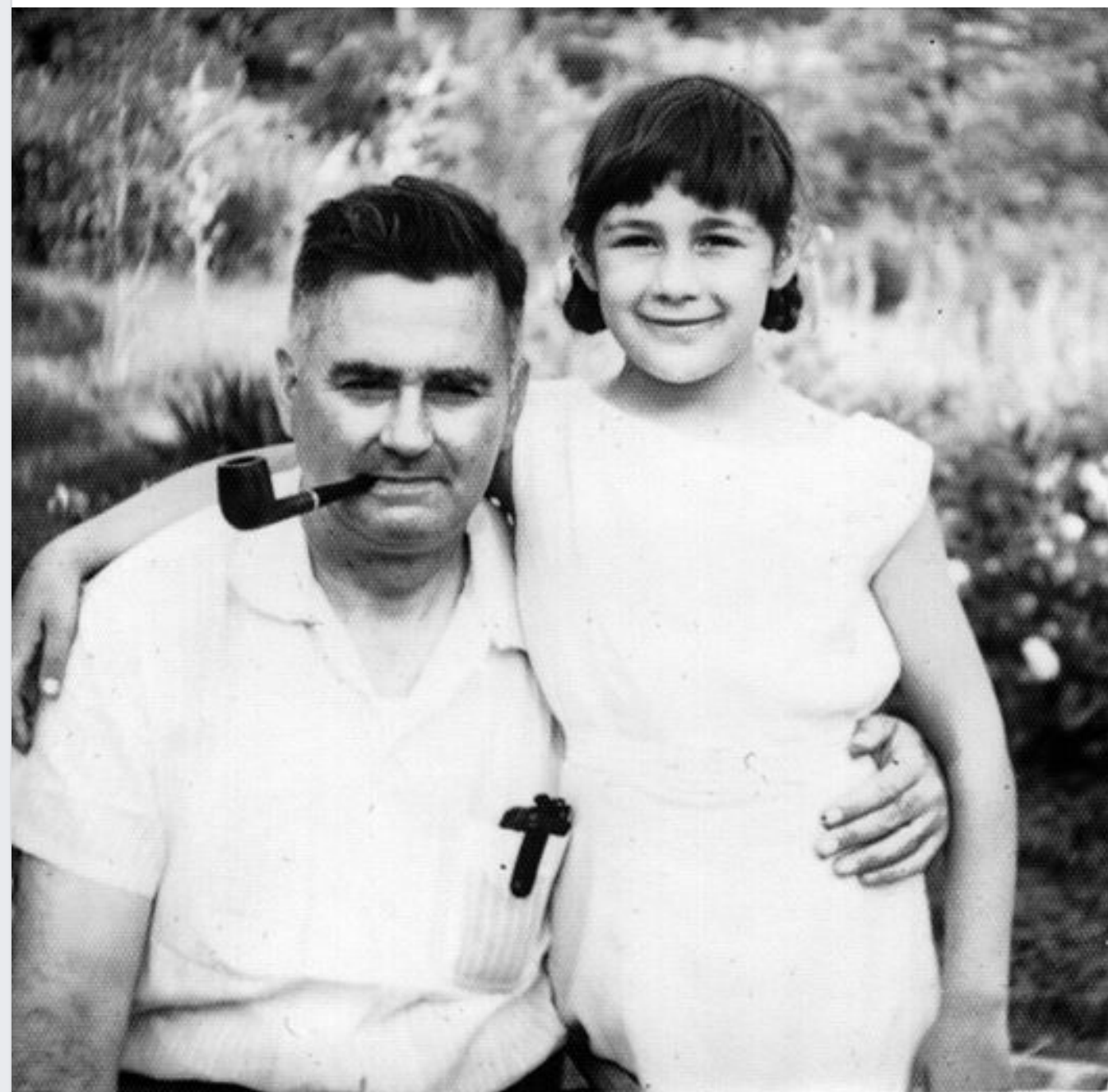
It shows me that our paths cross and come together through our experiences of that period of time. I am sharing an excerpt from a letter written by my brother Tim DeFrange to his son who was named after our dad. As a family, the war, our brother's death in Viet Nam, and the Kent State shootings were intertwined. We lost our father Nicholas DeFrange on May 4, 1970.

Tims' letter below...

"On May 4, 1970, Dad had been in intensive care at Robinson Memorial Hospital with pancreatitis for more than thirty days. Mom had been practically living there, sleeping on the couch outside the ICU unit. Dad had become nothing but skin and bones, and he was jaundiced and very yellow, very unlike the way he looked when he went in. He was dying and my poor mom was going through heartbreak again. She had buried Mark nine months ago. Now in the spring of 1970 the Kent State uprisings over the Vietnam War were going on, but for our family Vietnam just didn't matter anymore. After a month in the hospital following his surgery, Dad didn't look like he was going to make it. So on the afternoon of May 4, while I was at Field Local High School where I was completing my college student teaching assignment, the main office announced over the PA that some National Guardsmen had been shot at Kent State University. Then I got a call from the hospital where a staff person said that I should come right away. I had the family car with me at the school since mom was staying at the hospital around the clock. My first thought was how to drive straight to the hospital and check on dad. I had a critical patient pass that allowed me to pass through the various Ohio National Guard check points on Route 59 in front of the university. No-one stopped me all the way there. When I arrived at the hospital in Ravenna, my mom was already downstairs standing outside the hospital door. When I pulled up Mom got into the car, and I could see her eyes were all puffy and red from crying hard. As she sat back in the seat she wiped her eyes and said, 'He's gone.' I said, "How? What happened?" She said, "You just won't believe...I was upstairs, and all of a sudden there was all this noise and commotion. And then all these young people were being wheeled into the ICU. And the doctors and the nurses were crying. One doctor went over to a light and held an x-ray up, showing it to another doctor. He said, 'Look where this bullet is lodged in this boy's spine. He's never going to walk again. In all my years of medicine, this is the most senseless thing I've ever seen.' "So my mom, who had been there for a whole month, told me that she walked to the window, and said, "Lord, Nick has had fifty-seven good years. I've been praying that you would spare his life. But how can I ask for that when these kids haven't even had twenty years? From now on, it's whatever you want." After that she turned around and went back into the ICU, and, when she got to his bedside, she discovered that during that prayer by the window, Nick had died.

I have thought about that moment a thousand times in my life. I believe that our bodies are finite but that our souls are eternal. I imagine my father's soul leaving his body and encountering the souls of the four young Kent State students who were the same age as his sons. Just like himself these four young people were released from their bodies that very afternoon, but unlike him they were stunned and bewildered and completely unprepared for this experience. I imagine Dad consoling them

and guiding them towards the light of eternity. I picture my dad being a dad to them when their own dads couldn't be there to help them. And then as they approach the light, who should come to meet Nick but his soldier son, Mark, who died less than a year earlier in June of 1969 in Vietnam. "See," I imagine Nick telling the bewildered students, "here's my son, Mark. He's the same age as all of you. He's been doing great and so will you. Let's see where Mark leads us." And I picture my dad putting his arm on Mark's shoulder and together they all disappear into the light of eternal peace and joy."



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