

May 4<sup>th</sup>, the day the innocence died.

I went to Kent in 1968 and graduated in 1972. When I read and hear about the opinions of May 4<sup>th</sup> at Kent, I am surprised and a little shocked. I was in ROTC at the time where I met many of my future friends. Bill Schroeder was a kind, patriotic, caring student who believed in the good of America and of its people. Bill was on a ROTC Scholarship, and a hard working student. He was easy to be friends with and never had an ill word to say about anything.

The Thursday before the shooting we were marching and drilling on the commons in full dressed ROTC Army uniforms. Bill approached me to inform me that I was being watch by one of the officer instructors because I was not doing anything just standing around. He said to at least look busy. A few minutes later I approached Bill with a notebook and asked him to sign it. He thought he was signing it for the class or the instructors. I said no I am just trying to look busy. He signed it, just days before he died. I still have that sheet with his signature on it.

That Friday was when the ROTC building was set on fire. I like many students rushed from my dorm, Wright

Hall to see what was going on, not to protest or to do any further damage but just to see. I stood with some other ROTC friends as the guard arrived. We were in ROTC and doing nothing, so what could be the harm. The guard was ordered to fix bayonets and to march into the crowd, as they did so they began to chanting KILL, KILL, KILL!

I just stood there not really knowing what to think or do. About five feet from my right stood a student with very long hair, a beard and a shirt with a large rabbit on it. He was just watching and said nothing. Before I knew it he was thrown to the ground and beaten with the butt of the guards rifle. I then realized that I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. I began to run back to my dorm, when the same guardsman grab me and threw me to the ground. He put the bayonet to my chest then I heard a voice stopping him. He was an older officer who told him to stop. He asked me what I was doing there and when I said I was in ROTC and was just there to see what was going on. He picked me up that told me to get back to my form as soon as a I could, and I did.

That was Friday. That Monday May 4<sup>th</sup> I saw Bill Schroeder going to class, and we talked about what happened to me on Friday. He shook his head and made

a comment about me being a fool. I went to my history class in Bowman Hall. Near the end of the class a girl comes running into the room yelling that our brother and sisters were being killed. The Professor said because we were near the end of class we could go ahead and leave. When class was over I left Bowman walking behind my professor. We had no idea what was going on, but we were tear gassed by a helicopter.

When I got back to the dorm I saw a jeep driving around the dorm informing us to leave as soon as possible and not to take anything with us. I was able to get a ride from someone who was also going to southern Ohio. We left quickly, he dropped me off at my home near Steubenville. On the way down we heard many different versions of what had happened. Everything from students shooting at the guard to guardsmen being killed. As soon as I could I turned on the TV news. This is when I first heard that Bill was killed and the first time and only time I ever used the F word in front of my mother. Like many others Bill was coming from class. He was a student just like myself. I realized that moment that it could have been me, no matter how innocent I was.

AS many others all I wanted to do was return to Kent and get back to class. Other than losing my innocence I did not personally change, just more aware of what was going on around me. However, because I went to Kent I was now looked upon by others as some political hippie anti American, which I was not. Bill Schroeder did not deserve to die. I became a teacher, husband, stepfather, grandfather and lived a good productive loving life. Just what Bill Schroeder was cheated out of.