

As an undergrad at Kent State, in the mid 1990's, I didn't set foot on Blanket Hill; never studied on The Commons, never pressed a bare toe down in it's blades of fresh Spring green grass. I never passed the Victory Bell, crossing campus, to get to Main St. I viewed it as hallowed ground. I feared it. May 4th wasn't a part of me; not yet, not until May 3, 2000.

In early 2000, I was a junior public relations major and a beat reporter for *The Daily Kent Stater*, I spent many a day and night in Taylor Hall. I remember thinking how bittersweet it is that the building educating the future protectors and purveyors of our freedoms of speech and protest; sits just above the grounds; where four students lost their lives and nine were wounded at a peaceful demonstration where folks were practicing those rights.

That year's commemoration not only marked the 30th anniversary of The Kent State Shootings, it was also the first time the annual candlelight vigil was held at the four permanent markers in the Prentice Hall Parking Lot where the slain students laid. I remember walking from my dorm in Tri Towers to the vigil and hearing the deafening, 'whoosh whoosh', of helicopters from CNN or other media outlets flying overhead, when I joined the vigil, at the marker for fellow Youngstown native, Sandy Scheuer, I heard silence. I heard peace. I felt tears of heartbreak roll down my warm cheeks; for the first time in five years; Allison, Jeff, Sandy and Bill were real to me. Thirty years ago, they were college kids, just like me.

Twenty years have passed since that night, I returned to Kent State with my 16 year old son last year, I now revere the hallowed ground, I once feared. For me, May 4, 1970, has gone from a day I could barely refer to in an octave above a whisper; to one exclaiming tolerance, reflection, and remembrance.

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