

I was not a traditional student when I entered Kent State in September of 1967. I was an eight year Navy veteran who also served in Vietnam. Most of my fellow freshman were in the fourth grade when I left for basic training at Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois. To add to the non-traditional, I was married. I met my wife, Linda in Verder Hall in late February 1968 and, we married on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. With my GI Bill; a variety of odd jobs for both of us, and a 1950 8 X 38 trailer for our home we graduated on time in June 1971.

Our trailer was parked next to the Gymnastic Coach Rudy Bachna and his wife Janet. They had no children, only the gymnasts of Kent State. The trailer, I think, was only for sleeping. Linda and I would watch it and Princess their cat when they were traveling with the team or doing whatever they had dedicated their lives to do that involved gymnastics.

It was around ten o'clock in the evening of May 2<sup>nd</sup> when there was knocking on our door. It was Coach Bachna who asked me to come with him. We drove to the campus and on the edge of a hill we stood and watched the old wooden ROTC classroom burn before returning to our homes heart-broken and angry.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, I went to class the campus air filled with the smell of burned wood. I was in a music class when the tear gas seeped into our classroom. The instructor didn't know what it was, but I had been tear gassed as part of basic training. We were dismissed, and I ran next door to the home-ec building to find my wife. When I could not find her, I ran for home and my relief found her studying at the table. My relief was interrupted by the sound of M-1 fire. I knew what it was having fired one, but I would not know the heartbreak it was about to cause...not yet.

Since that day I've often wondered would the outcome of May 4th been different if the lawlessness of May 2nd had not occurred. It is easy to blame the National Guard to find a conspiracy, but have you ever stood before an angry mob and wondered: What's coming next? May 4, 1970 is a tragedy that has helped shape our nation into a growing and sorrowful tradition. You can have your opinion if it agrees with mine. If you don't, then there will be angry shouts, broken glass, fires and violence that is not what our constitution guarantees.

Since that sorrowful day and far too many other days of anguish and pain, one thing I am absolutely certain is that the only acceptable violence is in defense of self or others.