Our Beloved Sandy is Gone Forever

Martin Scheuer
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Martin Scheuer is the father of Sandy Scheuer, killed with Allison Krause, William Schroeder and Jeffrey Miller at Kent State on May 4, 1970.

She was the most precious jewel in our life, she was everything we lived for, and now our lives are an empty shell. Sandy represented everything good in this world. She was a gentle girl blessed with a fine sense of humor, a love for life tempered with compassionate concern for the misfortunes of others—qualities which made her warm personality so appealing to all who knew her. What greater anguish is there than the thought that Sandy's devotion to her studies, her desire to help people, and her ability to fulfill this desire in the field of speech therapy should lead her into the path of a bullet, shot through her lovely neck.

For those on this planet who enjoy American citizenship, their right to life and liberty is guaranteed by the most stirring and inspiring document ever penned by man. Sandy was an American, as were the three who perished with her. They were killed by a state militia without benefit of due process. Yet there is a reluctance to render justice, to uphold their constitutional rights, and this reluctance touches us all, because it damages our reputation as a nation of honorable people.

On May 3, 1970, Governor Rhodes of Ohio unleashed the kind of irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric we associated with Hitler and his cohorts.

“We are going to employ every weapon possible,” he said. “No one is safe in Portage County.”

He categorized student demonstrators as the “worst type of people we harbor in America,” and then, to his eternal shame, cried: “We are going to eradicate this problem in Ohio.”

This calculated attempt by Governor Rhodes to salvage his waning chances of winning the Republican primary race for the U.S. Senate no doubt left a deep impression on some of those tired and angry guardsmen. Prior to their arrival in Kent, they were subjected to injuries and abuse at the hands of tough strikers. But Kent State was somehow different. The antagonists were college kids, and Rhodes made it clear that when students get out of hand, they are to be crushed by whatever means necessary. The next day, his words still fresh in their minds, some of the guardsmen felt unsafe; some saw the students as enemies; some used their combat weapons, and one of them eradicated my daughter as she walked to class some 300 feet away. Nearby, Allison Krause lay dying; ROTC student William Schroeder lay prone, unable to comprehend what had happened to him, and why, and on a path 275 feet from the guardsmen Jeffrey Miller lay dead.
The cruel injustice in these deaths is self-evident in the actions of General Canterbury and university president Robert White. The general's pathetic inability to control his men was compounded by his contemptible effort to escape criticism by deliberately distorting the truth and arousing public animosity toward the students—particularly the four who died. The absence of White, enjoying lunch at a nearby restaurant for one and a half hours with the knowledge of the planned rally at noon, as well as Canterbury's determination to forcefully disperse any assembly, exhibited an inexcusable lack of judgement.

America's rush to judgement on Kent State shocked and embittered me. I believe in our sense of justice and the American people's pride in our ability to distinguish right from wrong—the kind of morbid conscience that is democracy and in which Sandy believed so deeply. But now, having judged in the passions of May 1970, most Americans no longer care that the reasons given by the Ohio National Guard for the shooting have been rejected by the Justice Department as unsubstantiated by the facts. Who is listening when James Michener says, "No student did anything that day for which he deserved to be shot."

Human beings were so important to Sandy, and although she believed it was senseless to send her brothers to die in Vietnam, she was not politically active. Instead she directed her energies to helping others through caring and love and making them laugh.

"She was just a happy kid," her roommate said after her death, "And we shall forever remember her beautiful laughter."

This terrible wrong cannot be ignored, if we are a nation of just and honorable people.

Our beloved Sandy is gone, but we cannot believe she has no kindred souls now willing to be her advocates in the halls of justice.