

In our Civics class, we have been studying the history of the government in the United States. While discussing that, we touched upon the Vietnam war protests at Kent State University, in May of 1970. I became extremely interested in those protests for many reasons, one of which was that my mother, then Barbara Crosby, had attended Kent State at the time.

After talking to my mother and my Civics teacher, Mr. Walt Weaver, I read extensively about what happened that weekend, and decided to write about one of the students attending Kent State in May of 1970, for my History Day project. I considered doing my mother, but I wanted someone who was really affected by the incident, and who better than a student that was shot by the National Guardsmen?!

Since my mother had attended KSU, we were able to obtain the addresses of five of the students injured, through the Kent State Alumni Association, and I sent them each a letter requesting permission to interview them for my project. Within a week, I received a phone call from Mr. Alan Canfora, a KSU student who was actively involved in the protesting and was shot, and I interviewed him. He is still actively involved in the aftermath of the shootings, as he has devoted his life to educating people about what happened and how to prevent it from happening again. He is also in charge of a massive effort to raise money to build a proper memorial for the four students that were killed when the National Guards open fired.

I also received a phone call from Mr. James Dennis Russell, an art student that was shot, and I interviewed him. He is the exact opposite of Mr. Canfora, because he was just an innocent bystander that was shot, and he has just picked up his life and put everything that happened that horrible Monday afternoon behind him. He is now married, with a daughter, and living in Oregon. I asked both of them to please loan me pictures of them as children, around 1970, and in the present, which they did.

Since Mr. Canfora lives just a few miles away from KSU, and we were going to be in the Cleveland area over Christmas, I made plans for my mother and I to meet Mr. Canfora at Kent State, and he gave us a tour of the campus and the town of Kent. It was interesting to go to the place that I read so much about, and walk around and take pictures, and actually stand where nine students were wounded, and four students died. It made it all seem more realistic and not just something you read about in a book.

The tragic shootings on May 4, 1970, played a very important role in the history of the United States. It might not have ended the Vietnam War, but it made people aware of exactly how poorly the government was treating America's young people. It wasn't the first time college students had nonviolently protested against something they strongly felt was wrong, and it won't be the last. The students felt safe at college. Safe from the draft, war, and fighting. No one, least of all the students, expected that the war would be

carried back to our own country, and straight into America's schools. Each person at KSU, that day, contributed to the tragedy and played an important part in the outcome of the weekend. On that warm May afternoon, when four innocent students died at the hands of brutal gunmen, a part of all us Americans died, too. We were rudely awakened from our naive nests of security, to the bleak truth that no longer could we send our children to school safely. And if our children are being killed unmercifully, where would it end? The Constitution gives us the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, all of which our government tried to take away. Was the Kent shootings just a small example of the monopoly Nixon hoped to achieve? A country filled with terror of being shot just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, as thirteen students were on May 4th, 1970. (~~We will never know, because,~~ thankfully, the survivors and a few friends were willing to put their careers, and even their lives on the line to fight for justice towards the thirteen victims. But the fight isn't over yet. All of us are victims, having been raped of our liberties and securities, permanently.) The KSU shootings and their aftermath changed America's feelings toward the government greatly. Never again will the American people trust their government so unquestionably and wholeheartedly. We must fight to be sure that something like this never happens again, which is all too likely. Please, don't let the precious young lives of beautiful Allison Krause, brilliant Sandra Scheuer, dynamic Jeffrey Miller, and talented William Schroeder, have been in vain. And don't let the Kent State University massacre occur again.

Note: I also received a letter from Mr. Thomas Grace, Mr. Canfora's KSU roommate and an injured student, but it was too late to use his story in this project.