

Vietnam Generation

Volume 2

Number 2 *Kent and Jackson State: 1970-1990*

Article 7

1-1995

A Tribute to Arthur Krause: Delivered at Kent State, May 4, 1989

Kendra Lee Hicks

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/vietnamgeneration>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hicks, Kendra Lee (1995) "A Tribute to Arthur Krause: Delivered at Kent State, May 4, 1989," *Vietnam Generation*: Vol. 2 : No. 2 , Article 7.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/vietnamgeneration/vol2/iss2/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vietnam Generation by an authorized editor of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact careyc@lasalle.edu.

A Tribute to Arthur Krause: Delivered at Kent State University, May 4, 1989

Kendra Lee Hicks

I am here before you to pay tribute to a man—Arthur Krause, the father of Allison Beth Krause, a student slain in a parking lot on the Kent State University Campus on May 4, 1970.

Most of us here know him as the most prominent leader in the quest for justice for the murders that took place here in 1970, a man whose efforts enable us to gather here today.

When I questioned those who knew him well, I heard these descriptive words mentioned: “strong,” “stubborn,” “vital,” “larger than life,” “warm and generous,” “fierce.” I heard phrases like “the iron man of the Kent State family,” “he was relentless in his quest for justice,” “I felt lucky that I had the benefit of his friendship,” “we are richer for having known him.” I feel fortunate to have met him.

America first heard from Arthur the day after the shootings. When speaking with television newsmen, he expressed the sentiments of the horribly shocked citizens of this country: “Have we come to such a state in this country that a young girl has to be shot because she disagrees with the action of her government?”

We stopped and listened to him. And we heard from him again. For the next four years, Arthur continually asked for justice. He wanted someone held accountable for the death of his daughter. He called for congressional hearings and federal investigations into the shootings. He appealed for the right to a day in court. He pushed through the Ohio District Court, the United States District Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals, and finally to the U.S. Supreme Court, all the while trying to break down the wall of Ohio’s sovereign immunity law—the law that said that defendants could not be sued without first giving their consent to such an action. But he would never back down. As Martin Scheuer, the father of Sandy Scheuer, once told me, “Arthur was a man of principle.”

In the first year of the struggle, Arthur was joined by Peter Davies, an ordinary citizen from Staten Island, NY who had been appalled at the shootings and he himself had spent months researching the shootings, looking for clues to explain why the National Guard had fired:

For almost a year...we tilted at windmills alone, but without his dynamic strength I could not have stayed the course. Arthur's quest was never idealistic. He was always a realist in dealing with the Nixon administration, and despite his grief and anger, whenever we accomplished something that seemed to me a big step forward, he would laugh and say, "that and ten cents'll get us a cup of coffee." We had more cups of coffee than I care to remember.

Elaine Holstein, the mother of slain Jeff Miller, described Arthur as "totally indispensable." She writes, "Indispensable—because my life in those years after our children were killed and we struggled to find some semblance of justice—would have been far more hellish without the Rock of Gibraltar that was Art Krause.."

In 1971, Arthur and Peter were joined by the Reverend John Adams of the United Methodist Church. This addition to the team had a very positive effect. As Sanford Jay Rosen, attorney for the families in the final settlement, observes:

Two people, Arthur Krause and John Adams, are most responsible for the measure of justice the Kent State victims and their families have received. Arthur brought anger and passion to the cause. John brought hope and compassion. Without these two, all would have been for naught."

Arthur's passion was so deep due to the fact that he knew what lay at the root of the problem. As he recalled his life, he said, "I was like everyone else, and then this happened to us." In recalling other episodes of extreme violence in our country before May of 1970, he said:

I feel a great sense of guilt because I realized what was going on but didn't do a damn thing about it. Like most Americans these days, we sit on the fence and depend on the lawyer, the church, and the government to do whatever should be done, but if the government doesn't have the right people on the job, nothing will be done,...and we, the people, have to make the government good. Apathy will not be part of my make-up anymore. Apathy is what caused Kent State.

In 1975, Arthur's four years of persistence paid off. The victims' families were given their day in court. Vindication should have been forthcoming. It was not. Elaine Holstein recounts:

It turned out to be many, many days—some of the most painful days of my life. As we sat in the courtroom and heard our lovely children vilified by the defendants and their lawyers...I found myself increasingly seeking out Art, to become healed by his unshakeable determination and common sense and—most importantly—his humor. Even under the horrendous circumstances that brought us together...Art's brilliant and sometimes bitter wit would break the tension and lift the oppressive burden we all carried and we would feel the blessed relief of laughter that enabled...all of us to survive those terrible months.

When the verdict was announced in favor of the National Guardsmen, it was Arthur that announced that the trial proved that the constitution had been destroyed.

While the families waited during the appeal process, the Kent State Administration once again showed its insensitivity to the history of May 4, 1970. After the construction of the gymnasium annex on Blanket Hill, which destroyed part of the site of the shootings, Arthur Krause vowed never to step foot on the Kent State campus again.

In 1979, when the other families and victims decided on an out-of-court settlement for the murder of their children, it was Arthur who held out on giving in to that decision the longest. While some may have attributed this to his usual stubbornness, others attributed it to the devoted love he had for his daughter Allison. As one of the lawyers put it, "He doesn't want to give in to a settlement because it means he'll have to give up Allison."

Dean Kahler, shot on May 4, 1970, spoke truthfully when he told me "the sense of loss Arthur felt for his daughter was very prevalent when you were around him. He never really fully recuperated from her death. It was the focal point of his life and he was determined to get justice." Tom Grace, also wounded in 1970, observes:

Without Arthur's drive, his fortitude, his unmovable presence, the drive for justice may well have stalled. Our quest is not finished. Yet, Arthur's efforts have allowed us, in some small measure, to answer yes to the question that Doris Krause asked nineteen years ago: "Do we say that there is justice, Allison?"

While Arthur's years in the battlefield of the United States' court system came to an end, the pain of the loss of his daughter did not. And his bitterness toward the Kent State administration did not fade either. Arthur told me this past summer that he was still waiting for an official notification of Allison's death. I am sure that he was conscious of this when he told the *Ravenna Record Courier* in 1986 that the Kent State administration was "a worthless organization."

Arthur's last years were spent enduring the emotional rollercoaster of the May 4 Memorial building process. And he did not keep his emotions to himself. Alan Canfora, another student wounded in 1970, told me of some of his last conversations with Arthur:

As Arthur suffered the pain of his terminal illness, he poignantly described his continued frustrations as a result of the cover-up of his daughter's murder and the continued failure of Kent State University to create a lasting memorial tribute in memory of his daughter Allison.

It's a shame that Arthur could not have observed the final vindication of his daughter's death. But, as pointed out earlier, he was very pragmatic. Arthur

told me last July, “Anybody that would believe that Kent State University would make any attempt to meet the desires of the Kent State families must also believe in the tooth fairy.”

What does Arthur Krause’s death mean? It’s too soon to know the broader ramifications in the struggle to remember May 4, 1970. On a more personal level, Sandy Rosen says it best: “He marked our lives, so that we are richer for having known him and much poorer now that he is gone.” Speaking for myself and all of the others who have fought against the white-washing of the facts of May 4, I feel like I’ve lost my father.

So how do we really pay tribute to such a man as Arthur Krause? Words are not enough.

We could start by emulating his passion for justice. We can remove the apathy from our own lives. We can build a proper memorial to the memory of Allison, Bill, Jeff, and Sandy—one that is fitting to the magnitude of the event. We can head Arthur’s own advice, “If you don’t stand up for your own rights they will be taken away from you just like they were from Allison.” You can love your own children as Arthur loved his.



Benson Wolman, from the Ohio ACLU and Sanford J. Rosen, attorney, at Kent State, May 4, 1976. Photo © by John P. Rowe.