

For the Attorney General

JUL 6 1973

NYTimes

By Elaine Miller

Mr. Richardson:

For over three years I have tried to shut out any involvement in the attempts to achieve some sort of justice regarding the killing of my son, Jeff, and the three other students—and the wounding of the others—at Kent State on May 4, 1970. My reason for “hiding out” was a combination of cowardice and disillusionment.

Cowardice, because of the fear of my own feelings. I knew that once I got involved in a court case, or made any kind of statement that would bring me publicity, I would have the onslaught of all the memories, and my emotional state was such that I was certain I couldn't cope with it.

Disillusionment, because at first it seemed so obvious that what had happened at Kent was such a frightening crime that no human being, or court, or government, could fail to agree with my feelings and that there was simply no possibility of any other opinion.

At first, I was naive enough to see it as something so clearcut—four innocent kids had been murdered by their own Government forces, not in some backward undeveloped, uncivilized country where violence or dictatorship were commonplace, but in the United States of America, where everyone knew such a thing could never happen.

I had no doubt that immediate attempts would be made to bring all the circumstances out into the open, and that, of course, those responsible for this crime would be brought to justice.

For a long time even this hope didn't seem to matter because nothing, no punishment, no airing of the matter could accomplish the only thing that could have any meaning to me. Nothing could bring Jeff back to life, and so I justified my withdrawal by telling myself, “What's the use?”

But, as time went on, several things have happened to change my thinking. It became increasingly evident that although it was admitted that the killings were unnecessary, it was

just going to be passed off with a sort of “oops—sorry” attitude. My initial disbelief was gradually replaced by a bitter and cynical disillusionment.

Then there were more student killings—this time at Baton Rouge—and I couldn't help thinking that if the Kent State killings hadn't been ignored, this could never have happened to other young people. As murder is gotten away with, it happens more easily the next time.

I can't keep silent any longer. My decision to write this letter to you is less a decision than a bursting out of my feelings. The pain I dreaded, instead of diminishing over three years, has filled me so that it has now become immeasurably hard to hold it in.

On that day, I placed a phone call to Jeff at Kent State because I had just heard reports of violence on my car radio as I drove home from work. I wanted to tell him to come home until the trouble was over. His roommate answered, and in a numb voice I will never get out of my mind, said, “He's dead.” From that moment on, I have lived in a terrible dream. Each time my mind tried to accept that it had really happened—that not only was Jeff not going to be home until summer vacation but he was never coming home again—my brain seemed to reject the pictures of that moment on the hill at Kent.

I avoided all newspapers and magazines until now because I was terrified of seeing it mentioned. I realized this week that my own mother has been protecting me. She's afraid to tell me when she sees articles about Kent State. She, my son, Russ—my entire family, and many friends, have tried to protect me by avoiding the subject. I think now that it may have made it worse.

And that's why I'm writing to you now. You've only just become Attorney General, and I will allow myself to have hope once more, that perhaps you will be human enough to do something! Please don't let this thing just continue to be accepted.

Elaine Miller has sent this letter to Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson.