

# Rawls' death brings back sad memory

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When soul singer Lou Rawls died recently, many people remembered him for how much money he raised for charities such as the United Negro College Fund.

I remembered him for a different reason.

Many years ago I had a friend in college who called me Lou. Sandy Scheuer had jet-black hair, a freckled nose and a contagious laugh. We were both sophomores at Kent State University in the fall of 1968.

We were living in the Tri-Towers dormitory complex. Three high-rise dorms shared a common dining facility and recreation center nicknamed the Pit. The Pit was a great place for students to mingle and make new friends. Sandy's best friend, Sharon Swanson, was one of the best-looking girls on campus. Sharon had a model's face and a centerfold's body. Sandy was the first to admit that she used Sharon to attract men for herself.

It worked for me. One day I was fortunate enough to share the cafeteria food line with Sandy and Sharon. Sandy made some jokes about the food and we were off and running.

They asked me to sit with them for lunch. It was not long before I realized that despite Sharon's beauty, I was more attracted to Sandy's sense of humor. She sat smiling and laughing at the table, making offbeat comments about the school, the city and the other students, while saying hi to many friends as they passed by.

In a feeble attempt to uphold my half of the conversation, I told the girls jokes about my weekend visit to Bowling Green State University. The weekend had been a disaster. The girl who invited me to visit dumped me for a fraternity guy, the off-campus night life did not hold a match to Kent's, and while I was away an airplane crashed in my parent's back yard. But it did have one redeeming quality: I attended a Lou Rawls concert.

The Motown sound was king back then and Rawls was one of its princes. His mellow voice was so effective that for one brief evening, the Bowling Green girl had acted as if she really dug me.

By the end of my lunch with Sandy, we were instant friends and she was calling me Lou. Dating was a good way to destroy a friendship, and back then I had more excuses for breaking up with a girl than going out with one. So we remained cafeteria buddies.

We pretty much lost track of each other junior year until May 4, 1970, when the Ohio National Guard shot and killed four Kent students during an anti-Vietnam War protest.

Sandy was one of the students killed. She was not taking part in the protest. She'd been walking to her class at the Music and Speech Center, where she helped children with speech impediments. Her high school graduation picture made Life magazine.

I was shocked when I learned that she was gone from my life. And I was thankful that I did not see her lying on the sidewalk in a pool of blood even though I was only a football field away from her body. As I read her biography in the newspapers, I realized that despite our time together I did not really know Sandy as well as I thought.

Yet for 35 years, I have thought of her every time a Lou Rawls song came on the radio. I wished that I had taken a little more time to know her better. Now that Lou is gone, I hope they keep playing his music so I can keep her memory alive. Maybe the two of them will meet somewhere in the hereafter. I am sure that she can make him laugh. Maybe she will tell him about her other friend named Lou.

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