

Independent-Messenger

OPINION & COLUMNS

To the Editor

A personal reflection on Sandy Hook

By Congressman Randy Forbes

There are times that news shocks us. And, then, there are times that news sends adrenaline snapping in our veins and bile churning in our gut. News that makes thoughts charge at our own brain and our hearts stiffen against the walls of our chest.



Randy Forbes

Saturday's winter sun rose over an elementary school that just hours before had held twenty-six lifeless bodies. America is reeling. Twenty coffins will be cut and fashioned to fit the tiny bodies of precious children. Children yesterday pressed off to the bus stop, milk-laden cereal abandoned in sunny kitchens, beds unmade, lunches packed but never eaten. Now ashes. Their little dreams frozen, their tiny handwritten school work crudely fashioned on straight lines savagely halted, their fingers never to drum softly on mother's arms again or tighten around papa's neck. "I want to be a ballerina, and a doctor, and a singing star, Mama." Gone.

We hunt for words that might mirror the tumult raging in the corridors of our minds. Tragic. Senseless. Unimaginable. But each word, once rendered on our tongue, is inept at carrying the confusion and horror and pain inside. For those that can, we pull our children close holding their little frames until they pull away and gaze up at us pleasant, but confused. "Daddy, why are you staring at me?"

Why? Because our minds are at work painting the faces of our own children, their sweet clear eyes, on the students of Sandy Hook. Because the hollow sounds of gunshots echo in our souls, just as they blasted through the intercom down a hallway in Newtown, CT yesterday morning. Because we feel the deep chasm between what was once a warm school filled with the high-pitched, off-key singing of grade-schoolers.... now, whose icy stillness is interrupted only by the sobs of grown men and women who have stared directly into the eyes of evil.

The shoulders of our nation are bent under the weight of such heaviness. Our raw, blistering grief is center stage for the world. There will be a day for the what-ifs, and the should-haves, and the if-onlys and the we-musts. Yes, there will be.

But today we are left seeking a

balm to cover our wounds. Each of us will search differently as we are free to do. Perhaps some hands will cease feverishly wrapping gifts and tacking up Christmas lights and might instead rest in laps, heavy with the realization that we have little power to wipe away these hot and sticky tears. Such deep horrible groans of grief we cannot silence. Such evil we cannot undo. "Help us," we might whisper. "Please."

As we teeter on the edge of such sadness, though, there is a tug in many of our hearts.

A pull that reminds us that there is good, and that this good is far surpassing in portion to the evil we now confront.

Our minds are forced back to a God often forgotten in the times of prosperity. A God swept aside even in our times of great challenge as we have stiffened our backs and trusted our hands to do work of fixing what must be fixed. But now, here, in our pain, we see our own fragility in fresh light. Here we sit, shaking and inadequate. We cry not to some moth-eaten relic, but to an all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful, all-healing God whose handprint can be traced across the pages of our national triumphs and tragedies. We'll trust you. We must. "Help us," we whisper. "Please."