

# **Where I Stand: Not for the Death of a Bomber**

Scott Corey

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On Saturday, June 10, 2023, a man died in prison. He was a terrorist and a murderer, and I try to avoid using the name of such people in print. Among many other crimes, he killed Gilbert Murray. In his life, Mr. Murray was a Marine in Vietnam, a forester at Collins Pine, and President of the California Forestry Association. He and his wife were deeply respected here in Plumas County, by people on both sides of the forest controversies of the time.

I do not rejoice in anyone's death, including that of a terrorist. We will all cross that line one day. Instead of eulogizing the perpetrator, I want to take this moment to honor the wisdom of a family that suffered one of the bomber's attacks.

At the sentencing hearing, in a Sacramento courtroom, I watched as Mr. Murray's widow, Connie, resolutely marched out, rather than listen to a word from the murderer. I was not surprised. I had studied political violence for more than a decade, wrote my dissertation on it, and left my job to attend the Unabomber trial. From what (and, importantly, what was not) in the media, I already felt that the Murrays were an impressive survivor family.

The most powerful weapon against terrorism is the determination to mentally and morally separate the killers from their message. Often terrorists identify with some problem or issue that legitimately deserves attention. The moral vileness of terrorism is beyond that of murder because it kills people solely to use them as ideological symbols, defiling whatever cause they espouse. Anti-tech terrorism adds hypocrisy to the mix, since terrorism is itself a technology.

To my mind, the Murray's were exemplary in reminding us how to manage resistance to terror. They refused to be celebrity victims, giving the press only well considered statements on the crime, never joining the debate on the Unabomber Manifesto. At a Timberfest in Loyaltown, I watched as the new timber lobby President announced that, at the request of the family, it would stop using Murray's death as an organizing tool. I read some time later that Connie Murray planted a tree on the grounds of the state Capitol in honor of her husband. The family did not permit their loss to be dragged into the "timber wars."

We can all debate the issues of technology, and we should. But the job of survivor families is to underline the guilt of perpetrators apart from the issues. In this case, they have succeeded. Some pretty smart people have argued that the bomber and his violence cannot be separated from his message. Not so. Nothing the bomber wrote from prison flourished. The conversation left him behind decades ago.

This summer and fall our fire-scorched mountains will be full of activity. Up and down California, hundreds – perhaps thousands – of people will work on restoring the health of our forests and watersheds. For this, they will use technology as the land and the goals require: bulldozers and beaver dam analogs, chainsaws and cultural burns, Lidar mapping and seeds strewn by human hands. With time and good effort, fierce ideology has receded in favor of knowledge and unmistakable need.

So now is a good time to remember those who were wise and strong when it would have been so easy to be hateful and divisive. I do not know anyone in the Murray

family. Still, I cannot help but think, if I were Gilbert Murray, looking down from heaven, how proud I would be of the people I left behind.

The Ted K Archive

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