

Remembering Rob Krentz

Generous, 'gentle giant' Arizona rancher killed by illegal alien

BY RICK OLTMAN

When it comes to victims of illegal immigration, no better metaphor exists representing the open border and the lawlessness of illegal immigration than the murder in March 2010 of Arizona rancher Rob Krentz.

All victimization results in a loss of some kind. In this case many lost something when this country's open border policy killed Rob Krentz.

The report on FOX News described the scene, speculated about the killer, spoke to neighbors about the smuggling of drugs and illegal aliens into the country, but only briefly described who and what kind of man Rob Krentz was. "What a great guy he was," says his widow, Sue Krentz.

For his family and friends, everything has changed. Holidays, birthdays, graduations, Christmas are all different. For Sue, there are reminders of Rob all around her, everywhere, every day, tragic reminders of the loss of a good man who had never done harm to anyone. In fact, Rob Krentz's life was one of giving and helping others, continuously. Sue remembers, "Rob was as methodical as the day is long. Dependable. He was a good man and deserves a good memory."

Rick Oltman has worked for immigration reform for almost twenty years. He has lobbied in Washington, D.C. and in dozens of state capitals for secure borders and immigration enforcement. He has been featured on the PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer, MSNBC Reports, CNN, including Talk Back Live, Lou Dobbs, and Anderson Cooper 360, and the FOX Business Channel and FOX News Channel. In 1994 Rick was Chairman of the YES ON 187-SAVE OUR STATE campaign supporting Proposition 187. In 2004 Rick worked with Arizona activists to qualify Proposition 200, Arizona's state initiative that required proof of citizenship when voting or applying for public benefits. Prop 200 won with 57 percent of the vote. Contact Rick at rickoltman@comcast.net.

He was a man who could, in Sue's words, "take care of kids, train a horse, and repair a computer." He was a kind soul and a gentleman's gentleman. A cowboy in the modern era.

He taught his kids, nieces, and nephews and others to love life, work hard, and do what you wanted to do, so long as you were still a respectable person doing it. He believed in "a full day's work for a full day's wages." He believed that everything you possessed had to be earned.

He loved his brother Phil and sister Susan, who were very important to him. He spoke to them every day and was very proud of everything they did and proud of their children. "Rob would always say that he was a luckiest guy because he and his brother got along and his brother was a good hand and he trusted his brother," Sue recalls. And he loved his sprawling 35,000-plus acre ranch in southeast Arizona, what Sue calls her "competition" for his attention.

Both born and raised in Douglas, Arizona, Rob and Sue Kimble met as students at Douglas High School. In his senior year in 1969, as a member of FFA (Future Farmers of America), Rob competed at the Arizona National Livestock Show in Phoenix and won Reserve Grand Champion, with the steers he raised defeating the cattle of the legendary John Wayne.

While attending the University of Arizona, Rob would come home on the weekends. It was a 300-mile round trip from Tucson to the ranch, and before Rob got home he would stop in Sierra Vista and do chores for his grandparents. Then he would continue on to the ranch and work over the weekend, returning to college on Monday morning.

In 1975 Rob graduated from the University of Arizona with Honors and a B.S. in Animal Science. He was offered a fellowship at Cornell University but declined it to return home to run the family ranch because his dad needed help.

Rob and Sue began dating in 1976 and were married in 1977. He was 26 and she was 23. They had three children.

“He was always just as steady as the rock of Gibraltar,” says Sue. “Never negative. If neighbors needed help he was there. If someone was stranded on the road he would take them to town.”

Once some illegals on the ranch were hit by lightning and he got assistance for them. Anything you can imagine. If you needed parts and equipment you came to Rob. If you called at midnight or four in the morning the response was, “Where are you, what do you need?”

Rob served on the school board for Apache School for 28 years. When they needed a tennis court, Sue and Rob worked every day with the fellow who built it.

Natural disasters in southern Arizona are pretty much limited to range fires. When a fire broke out Rob would fill the liquid seed feeder with water and turn it into a pumper truck. “He was always the first one there,” said Sue, as with the May 2009 fire on the late Rick Snur’s ranch. “Rob and Rick were really, really close.”

Fred Davis of Tombstone, another multigenerational rancher, was a friend whose grandparents were friends with Rob’s. He remembers fondly that “Rob could rope.” Fred got Rob involved with the Natural Resources Conservation District. “He was there, it didn’t matter how long the job took. He was there to help you ’till you were done.” He also added, about ranching and illegal aliens, “Rob knew the dangers and was very careful.”

Rob’s daughter Kyle describes him as a big Teddy Bear who was strict when he needed to be. She was once suspended from school for five days for misbehaving. “He told me how disappointed he was with me,” she said. “And then for those five days he had me feeding cows, every day...He thought education was the most important thing. He used to say, they can take away anything but they can’t take away your mind.”

Another incident Kyle remembers is when some hunters’ truck broke down and they walked down to the ranch house. “Dad gave them the keys to his truck so they could drive into Douglas and then called ahead to the auto parts store and asked them to stay open until the hunters arrived. When they returned they tried to pay Dad, and he wouldn’t accept it. That’s how he was. Honest and respectful, not a mean bone in his body. He taught his kids right from wrong, and would constantly tell us, “Don’t burn daylight.” He was proud of where he came from and the fact that his family had always been committed to doing what was right for the land, the environment, the cattle and wildlife.”

G.T. Bohmfalk, describes Rob Krentz as a quiet, gentle giant. A quiet man. He was raised on a ranch but also in town. “Many people think of ranchers as hicks,

but it was absolutely the opposite with the Krentzes. The family was quite sophisticated and intellectual. His parents were smart with class and culture. Members of Rob’s family have become Captains of Industry. There are authors in his family.” What Bohmfalk describes as an “impressive pedigree.” Rob’s parents, Bob and Louise, would take the boys on FFA and 4H field days. “All of our discussions were always on a higher plane,” he remembers.

G.T. recalls that when Rob played football in high school the coach wanted Rob to be good. Rob was big enough, but he was not mean enough. He and Rob and Sue got involved with Project Central-Center for Rural Leadership. They all became leaders in the Cattlemen’s Association. “Rob did the dirty work when it needed to be done. When his kids were in 4H programs, Rob would be back behind the sale, pushing the cattle around and pigs and sheep, making sure the kids got good prices for their animals. He just did that kind of stuff and never wanted recognition for it. We were great friends and we all miss him greatly.” G.T. summed up Rob’s tragic death succinctly, “It’s a result of our failure to protect our border. If we had been doing our job as a country, that guy never would have been there. Rob would still be alive.”

Ed Ashurst, who contributes to *The National Observer*, is a close neighbor who lives on the ranch Sue Krentz grew up on and describes Rob as a gentle man, and there was nothing phony about him. “A very considerate guy,” Ed said. “He darn sure tried to treat people with respect and was that way with everybody. He treated people like human beings, a class act...Rob wasn’t worried if anybody liked him. He was excruciatingly independent and opinionated. But, he was gracious about it. He wasn’t worried about what other people thought about him, but he was gracious. He wasn’t rough-natured. He was opinionated without being abrasive. Rob was an American, fiercely independent.”

Roger Barnett, a ranching neighbor and no stranger to illegal aliens and threats on the border, concurs with all the descriptions of Rob. He remembers that many times when he was sitting on the side of the highway looking for illegals on his own ranch, Rob would drive up and would always stop to visit.

On the subject of illegal immigration, Sue says, “We were always told to be nice to the illegals. If we were good to the illegals, they would be good back. It was true mostly, up until the last 5 years.

“We always saw illegal aliens heading north, but it was mostly seasonal ranch workers who stayed a couple months and then went home. It was steady, but in low numbers. In 1987 (the year the IRCA Amnesty kicked

into high gear) we started seeing women for the first time, and children.” Sue remembers many times giving water to dehydrated babies. “We began seeing women 8 months pregnant. At least a half a dozen times load vans would overturn on the highway. We saw pregnant women coming out of the vans.” She once saw a woman stand up in a field near the highway and seven children stood up beside her.

In 1991 they started seeing more and more illegals in bunches of 125 to 150 people.

They started experiencing damage to the ranch: Damaged water lines, two or three water tanks drained. One of their baby calves was beaten to death with a fence post by a group of illegals who then cooked and ate it.

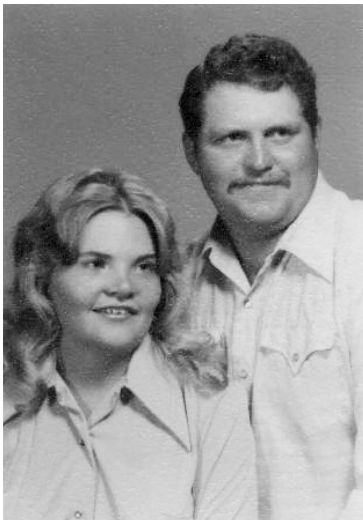
Eerily, Rob told Sue before she left for Phoenix, the weekend he was killed, that he had a feeling that something was going to go wrong.

Tearfully, Sue recalled the refrain from Brenn Hill’s Hill Family Song,

We will go on
 And we will not fall
 And we will not run
 We will be strong
 Through the darkest night
 We’ll stand and fight
 Through the deepest pain
 Our love remains
 And we will go on.

In the end, what did WE lose?

Rob Krentz touched many, many lives. Sue is thankful to everyone who sent her a condolence card; she received over 600. More than 1,200 people, between 9 and 10 percent of the entire population of Cochise



The late Rob Krentz (1951-2010) over the years — with wife Sue (left), engagement photo from 1977, sitting on ATV with his dog on his ranch (right), with wife Sue as 2008 honoree of Arizona Farming and Ranching Hall of Fame (bottom right), and with brother Phil in the saddle room on the 35,000 acre Krentz Ranch. The Krentz family has owned the ranch since 1907.



County, attended Rob's funeral service.

Rob Krentz is what we call an "unnecessary victim," a term that refers to a comment from Winston Churchill's massive memoir, *The Second World War — The Gathering Storm*. In the preface, Churchill recounts,

One day President Roosevelt told me that he was asking publicly for suggestions about what the war should be called. I said at once 'the Unnecessary War.' There was never a war more easy to stop than that which has just wrecked what was left of the world from the previous struggle.

Churchill rang the alarm bell about the fascist threat for six years before the Second World War began in Europe, and nobody did anything about it.

Likewise, activists, citizens, ranchers, and *honest elected officials* have been ringing the alarm for over twenty years in our country about the lack of border security and what it would lead to. That is what makes the

loss of Rob Krentz so unnecessary. It could have been prevented if the government was doing its job, securing the border and enforcing our immigration laws.

And the final, terrible, tragic irony is that this man, by every account a most dependable, reliable man who never, ever let anyone down, was ultimately let down by the government and the law of the country that he believed in.

We all lost something when Rob Krentz was taken from us. Not just a father, a son, a husband, and a friend, but also a citizen and a good man. And, unfortunately for us, America can't spare any good men, not at this time. We need everyone we've got.

Rob Krentz's life represents another kind of metaphor, a metaphor for America. Hard-working, tough, generous, and dependable. America is that way because of men like Rob Krentz. And those positive characteristics of our country and our culture have now become a victim of illegal immigration. ■