

## Statement of Donna Wilkerson

Re: Hearing Regarding Impeachment of Judge Samuel B. Kent  
June 3, 2009

My name is Donna Wilkerson. I am 45 years old. I live in Santa Fe, Texas. I am happily married to my husband of 25 years and we have two teenage children who attend high school in Santa Fe. I was a legal assistant and secretary in the private sector for 19 years before going to work for the federal government and have worked for Judge Kent for the last seven years as his secretary in his chambers. I began working for Sam Kent at the federal courthouse in December 2001. I left a happy and rewarding career in the legal field to take what I felt was a once-in-a-lifetime career opportunity as the secretary to a federal judge. This job provided an income, which exceeded my past salaries in the private sector with excellent benefits for my family, and me and was a 20-minute commute from my home, as opposed to the law firm jobs I had in Houston, some 40+ miles away. During my interview for this job and several times subsequent to my being hired, Sam Kent told me that he was the sole person responsible for his personal staff's hiring and firing (his personal staff consisted of me and his two law clerks). He also told me that he was the Government—"I am the Government"; "I'm the Lion King—it's good to be king", "I'm the Emperor of Galveston", and "the man wearing the horned hat, guiding the ship." He warned me of three things which he said would not be tolerated and would be grounds for my/our immediate dismissal: disloyalty to him, "talking out of school", and by engaging in behavior which would be an embarrassment to the Court. He told me and subsequently routinely told every law clerk a story of a former law clerk whom he "thought was his friend" but upon the clerk's leaving for his law firm job, the

law clerk told everyone at the law firm that the judge had a drinking problem, routinely became intoxicated on the job, performing many of his duties while intoxicated and behaved in a manner unbecoming to a federal judge. Mr. Kent advised at the end of that story how he hated that law clerk for his betrayal and had not spoken to him since.

For the last seven years, I was sexually and psychologically abused, manipulated and controlled by Sam Kent. His sexual abuse and misconduct with me began on the fifth day of my job. I had worked the first week at my job with Judge Kent's secretary of 20 years. She was retiring. On Friday of that first week, a retirement luncheon was given for her at a local restaurant. I was invited to and attended the luncheon, which lasted approximately 2-3 hours where food and alcohol were served. Mr. Kent, with others, became intoxicated, being loud and obnoxious. During the party, pictures were taken of several groups, including Sam Kent with his wife, former law clerks, attorneys and his retiring secretary. During the taking of those photos Judge Kent joked and laughed and grabbed his wife's breasts and buttocks in front of the room full of people. After the party, everyone left except the few courthouse staff and Judge Kent, who returned to the courthouse. Once there, while his retiring secretary and others were in the reception area of his chambers, he called me into his office and shut the door. He sat behind his desk and I sat in a chair in front of his desk. He told me that he was very excited to have me coming on board to take Ms. Henry's place, that he thought I would be an asset to him and the operations of the court, and that he thought I was intelligent and pretty, and other random compliments. As he got up, appearing to be showing me out of his office, I was walking in front of him to the door. He reached for the door as if to open it for me, but put one of his hands on the door and the other one on the other side, putting me between

the door and him. He leaned in and placed a kiss on my mouth. After that, he told me how beautiful he thought I was and that, again, he was glad I was there. I did not know what to do, but in my shock, I did nothing but exit the room, thinking, “what in the world was that and how am I supposed to handle this?” From that point forward, the abuse became more frequent and more severe. The number of these incidents, from minor to the most severe, can be averaged at 1-2 times per month over a year’s time, for a period of approximately 5 – 5 ½ years, from 2001-2007. However, there were periods of time during these years that the incidents did not occur as frequently as 1-2 times per month because he had periods of weeks and months of not drinking, as well as several periods of extended time that he was out of the office. These episodes were routinely followed by Judge Kent’s returning from long lunches wherein he was intoxicated. I have explained in the past that the severity of the sexual abuse can be described using a Bell Curve as an example—starting with the most minor of incidents of hugs and kisses, then escalating to worse incidents of touching me inappropriately, groping me outside my clothes, then inside my clothes (top and bottom), then attempting to and gaining penetration of my genitals with his hand, placing my hand on his crotch, and then topping the curve at the most severe episode of once, and possibly twice, pulling down my pants and performing oral sex on me. These episodes always occurred inside of his chambers—sometimes in his office, and sometimes in the reception area or wherever in chambers he could corner me. Preceding the incidents, he would always begin speaking in a vulgar and inappropriate way to me and telling me graphically what he wanted to do to me. Statements of “you have the cutest titties”, “let me see those cute titties”, “you have the cutest ass”, “I want to eat your pussy”, and “why don’t you suck me off” were common

to the more severe episodes. During these episodes, I repeatedly told him “no”, “stop”, “stop acting like a pig”, “quit”, “cut this out”, “you/we can’t be doing this”, “I don’t want to do that/this”, “behave yourself”, and so on and so on. There were times when he would approach me from behind while I was sitting at my desk and working at my computer. He would quickly come up behind me and put his hands over my shoulders and grope me on the outside of my clothes and down my shirt and into my bra.

Sam Kent is a 6’4” man, weighing 260-300 pounds, in any given period. Once caught, cornered or pinned, there was no getting away. Each time when I was at my desk and I knew that he was coming towards me in this manner, I would scoot my chair under my desk as far as I could, crossing my legs and arms to try to close myself off from him. All the while, telling him “no”. He would keep trying to get his hands on me, but sometimes in this position, I could literally keep moving his hands off me to the point that he would stop. Most times, however, I was not successful. Many times he would come towards me, with his hands out, saying “let me see those cute titties”, and other times he would come towards me saying other vulgar things. At those times, I would attempt to move away to an area in the office where he could not corner, trap or pin me—try to get a piece of furniture between us. I tried at all costs to not go inside of his office if he were in there and calling for me—I would stand in the doorway and talk to him and try to get him off the subject. During the most severe episode, he pinned me to a chair in his office after pulling my pants and underwear down.

When invited out to the lunches wherein he became intoxicated, we, his staff, were expected to go. If one of us didn’t go, for whatever reason or excuse, he would be obviously upset with us about it, pout about it, and even tell the other staffers that did

attend that he was offended. Many times after the abuse began, I declined to go to lunch with the group, making an excuse not to go, then leaving before he came back. These lunches would sometimes not begin until 1:30 or 2:00 p.m. and he would not return to the office until 3:15 or even later. Before some of the lunches that I or we did not attend, he would say before he left that he was not intending to come back to the office and that I or we could leave whenever we were finished with what we needed to do. I took that opportunity to leave as soon as I could, before he might change his mind to return to the office. Other times, he would announce to me that he needed to come back to the office to finish “signing some orders” and/or “pay a few bills”, and that he wanted me to be there when he returned. Those were always his words and I knew what that meant—he was coming back to the office with the intent to harm me. But I also knew that I had to be there when he returned for fear of insubordination. Many times, I implored his career law clerk, one of the people to whom I had told a portion of the story to, to be in chambers with me so that he could not “misbehave” when he returned. During the time after Cathy McBroom came to the court as his case manager, I became aware of his sexual abuse of her, as well. We discussed it on several occasions, and on occasions when I would leave in order to be out of the office when he returned, I would call Cathy and tell her that I was “giving her a head’s up” because he had gone to lunch and would be coming back to the office. She knew what that meant, also, and although she was an employee of the District Clerk’s office and could not just leave, she would leave her office and go to other places or offices in the building. Sometimes she would even take her own “leave” to leave the office.

I know that it may be hard for some to understand or wonder how I could have endured this situation without doing anything about it. The reasons are many. My job was one that offered a significant amount of pay and benefits—even more than that of my husband. I could not afford nor did I want to leave the job, providing more than half of the income for my family. My husband is a man with a fairly short fuse—a man of few words—who believes that part of his job as husband and father is to protect his family. Had I told him of even the first episode, he literally would have gone to the Galveston courthouse and “taken care of” the situation. I was very afraid of how he would handle the situation. Any altercation, verbal or physical, with Sam Kent would have resulted in my being fired. My husband would face any variety of criminal actions, and Sam Kent would have blackballed me from the Galveston County legal community. After the incidents became more severe, my husband’s reaction would have also been more severe. And whom, exactly, was I supposed to tell? Sam Kent made it clear, over and over, that he was the only person who made the decisions about his employees. And he had made that evident by his “getting rid of” and transferring several employees of the court whom he did not like or whom he felt needed to be replaced because of his own reasons.

Sam Kent has spent his life manipulating people and abusing his relationships with people, abusing people not just sexually and not just women. Certainly, this has been my experience the time I have known him. He has also spent this time lying to everyone. He is a compulsive liar and he will never acknowledge what he has done to the people around him. He continues to try to manipulate the system and make excuses for his abhorrent behavior. In the criminal case against him, although some of his lies were uncovered, by his own admission, because of his narcissism and inability to admit fault

and accept fault, he turned to even more lies by publishing ridiculous statements in the newspaper and blaming everyone and everything but himself. Although his plea bargain required his claiming responsibility for his actions, as soon as he was out of the courtroom he made statements to the press through his lawyer which were lies and made ludicrous excuses for his past lies.

I did not fully realize how Judge Kent manipulated me until I was able to get out his “web”, as he commonly referred to his position with the people involved in his career and life. I now realize how he maliciously manipulated and controlled everyone and everything around him. Through the entire time I was in this situation with Judge Kent, he attempted to buy me, as well as others, silence. He even went so far as to make me (as well as his former secretary) a beneficiary in his will—leaving us each a sum of money. He continued to manipulate and control what I and others would say after the action began by threatening to take his own life. Before my first grand jury appearance after he returned from administrative leave—20 minutes before my scheduled appearance—he came to my desk and told me, “If anyone from Dr. Hirschfield’s office calls [his psychiatrist], please put them through right away—you know they have me on suicide watch again, right?” He even instructed his law clerk, Carey Worrell, in my presence, to research his life insurance policy to make sure that it did not contain “suicide exclusion” so that if he killed himself, his wife would still be paid the benefits. On another occasion before my last grand jury appearance, he told Ms. Worrell that if I “rolled” on him, it would be all he could take and he would kill himself. Of course, she notified me immediately, as she was worried that he might carry through with this plan, which was

exactly what he wanted her to do. Ms. Worrell was also, sadly, in his web of manipulation and control.

He abused those around him and misused the power that his position brought him. He said that he “hated bullies.” How sad is it that he, himself, is the biggest bully of them all. He continued his manipulative behavior in seeking a mental disability, when just two years ago he fought hard to make his accusers and the investigators know that he was fully capable of keeping his bench.

Judge Kent liked to say that he had to treat the lawyers who appeared before him harshly because if he was nice to them that they would take advantage of him. He said that people “misunderstand kindness as weakness.” Now I know that this is what he truly believes. He saw my kindness to him as weakness and he took complete advantage of me. He abused his power continuously and believed that no rules truly applied to him. I witnessed this over and over and can give so many examples of this behavior. He mocked, made racist comments and abused criminal defendants who came before him, litigants, lawyers, his colleagues, and people in his everyday life.

My life has truly been affected in ways that I can never describe. No one can fully understand what it was like for me to have this happen to me. My family and I are in counseling to deal with the pain he has caused. Our lives have been turned upside down. I have teenage children who had to hear the ugly details of sexual abuse perpetrated by someone they once loved and trusted. On a daily basis I struggle with the past and the pain that this situation has caused me. I am mentally exhausted and every day is a struggle to heal, move forward and literally function. My marriage has suffered significantly from the stress of this situation and I pray that it will survive. I am angry at

the toll this has taken on me and my family, and the precious time I have been pushed, pulled and taken away from my children and my husband—time I can never regain. I worry constantly about what my future will be like both personally and professionally. Until this matter is completely concluded, the reality is that I am reminded of the situation daily and it is a source of constant angst and a complete drain of my emotional and physical energy. Ironically, until Sam Kent is off the bench, even the Administrative Office will not release me from his grips. I am still tied to him as a personal employee, tied to his budget, and any attempt to reassign me has not been successful. But yet he continues to earn his yearly salary as not only a convicted felon, but also a man who possesses all of the horrific characteristics of everything a federal judge is not ever supposed to be, but who still holds on to his position and seems to still have protection from the real world.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to explain my situation and for your assistance in this matter.