

# Suspect Was Ally of Lowenstein In Political Activism of the 60's

3-15-80  
N.Y.

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

Dennis Sweeney, the man charged with shooting former Representative Allard K. Lowenstein, had a stormy, 19-year acquaintance with the victim, according to friends of both men. It flourished in a mutual commitment to social justice years ago, they said, but foundered in leftist political disputes and, finally, in personal antagonisms.

"It's really strange," said David Harris, a onetime colleague in the antiwar movement. "The last time I saw them together was in a room in Palo Alto, hugging each other." That was in the mid-1960's.

Mr. Sweeney, a 37-year-old former activist in the civil rights and draft resistance movements who grew up in Portland, Ore., has worked as a carpenter and lived in virtual seclusion in New London, Conn., more recently. Acquaintances described him as a brooding, deeply troubled man with a history of emotional problems.

"He's an odd person," said Vienna Hamilton, his landlady. "He makes no friends with anybody. He stays by himself. He thinks somebody's after him and things like that."

## Lowenstein Was Mentor

Mr. Sweeney met and was drawn into activist roles by Mr. Lowenstein in 1961 at Stamford University, where Mr. Lowenstein was a political science lecturer and Mr. Sweeney was a bright but introspective history student.

Mr. Lowenstein, who became an idol and mentor of Mr. Sweeney, was instrumental in his decision to quit school in 1963 and go to Mississippi to join the civil rights movement. Mr. Sweeney spent two years in McComb, Miss., in 1963 and 1964, helping to register black voters.

But sharp disagreements with Mr. Lowenstein over strategy and tactics ensued. Mr. Lowenstein, for example, opposed the decision of some black leaders to exclude whites as allies and later opposed resistance to the military draft, both positions repugnant to Mr. Sweeney.

There were other disappointments for Mr. Sweeney, according to their friends. Despite his service to the civil rights — he was twice the target of bombs in Mississippi and his life was threatened repeatedly — he was rejected by his organiza-

tion, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, because he was white.

## Accepted Draft Exemption

After Mississippi, Mr. Sweeney returned to California, lived in a commune and experimented extensively with marijuana and psychedelic drugs, said Charles Hinkle, a friend and former president of the Oregon Civil Liberties Union.

Though Mr. Sweeney was one of the earliest and most active leaders of the draft resistance movement, he appeared to abandon the cause at a critical moment, friends said. Confronted with the prospect of jail in 1969, he chose to accept a draft exemption open to him because he was the only surviving son of a serviceman killed in a military plane crash in the early 1950's.

Divorce dissolved Mr. Sweeney's four-year marriage to a fellow civil-rights activist, Mary King, who is now the deputy director of a Federal volunteer service agency and the wife of Dr. Peter Bourne, a former medical adviser to President Carter.

## Out of Touch With Friends

In the early 1970's, friends said, Mr. Sweeney's personal problems multiplied. Friends were alienated and treatment by psychiatrists and mental hospitals followed. Acquaintances said he complained of various kinds of persecution. "He believed that he was being followed by the F.B.I., the police and the C.I.A.," said Mr. Hinkle.

Mr. Sweeney has not been in touch with most of his one-time friends or engaged in political activism for seven or eight years.

His family attempted to have him committed to a state hospital in Oregon in 1973. However, friends raised several thousand dollars for private care and he entered a hospital in Connecticut instead, an acquaintance said.

Officials in Oregon said Mr. Sweeney's stepfather died of a heart attack in Portland last month, and the police were looking into the possibility that Mr. Sweeney may have in some way held Mr. Lowenstein partly responsible because he had recently represented a client in a lawsuit against the stepfather.