

A Tragic End Of a Long March

When America began marching in the 1960s, Allard Lowenstein always seemed to be somewhere up front. He organized civil-rights summers in Mississippi in 1963. He spoke out early against the Vietnam War, put together the "Dump Johnson" movement in 1967 and recruited Eugene McCarthy to carry its flag against an incumbent President. He went to Southwest Africa and wrote a book championing its liberation from South African rule. He ran for Congress in New York seven times and was elected once, in 1968. He named his children after his heroes—Eleanor Roosevelt, Norman Thomas, Robert F. Kennedy and North Carolina's liberal Sen. Frank Graham. Brilliantly articulate and feverishly warmhearted, he swept up a host of friends and also a few enemies. Last week, as he sat in his Manhattan law office, Lowenstein was shot to death, apparently by a man who was both.

Dennis Sweeney, 37, had marched with Lowenstein in Mississippi, then fallen out with him over tactics: Sweeney turning more militant, Lowenstein trying to build bridges between liberal causes and the electoral system. Sweeney became an early and passionate leader in the antidraft movement. But when it came down to a personal choice between claiming exemption on a technicality or going to jail, he took the exemption—and after that, friends said, he seemed to change. He developed what some thought was a severe paranoid streak, blaming his problems on the FBI, CIA—and his former hero, Al Lowenstein.

'I'm Shot': Last Friday Sweeney phoned Lowenstein's office for an appointment and was told to come over that afternoon. The two talked for about ten minutes, then a telephone installer in the anteroom heard three or four pops and a cry of "I'm shot, I'm shot." Sweeney walked calmly back into the anteroom, placed a 9-mm pistol in an in-tray on the secretary's desk, sat down and lit a cigarette. In his office, the 51-year-old Lowenstein lay on the floor bleeding profusely from five bullet wounds—two of them in the heart. He died in a nearby hospital seven hours later.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, for whom Lowenstein had been campaigning, rushed from Chicago when he heard of the shooting. The circumstances of Lowenstein's death affected him deeply. Twelve years ago, after he won the California primary, Robert Kennedy had asked an aide to put in a call to Al Lowenstein, just before he was shot to death by Sirhan Sirhan.

Lowenstein

Christopher Little

