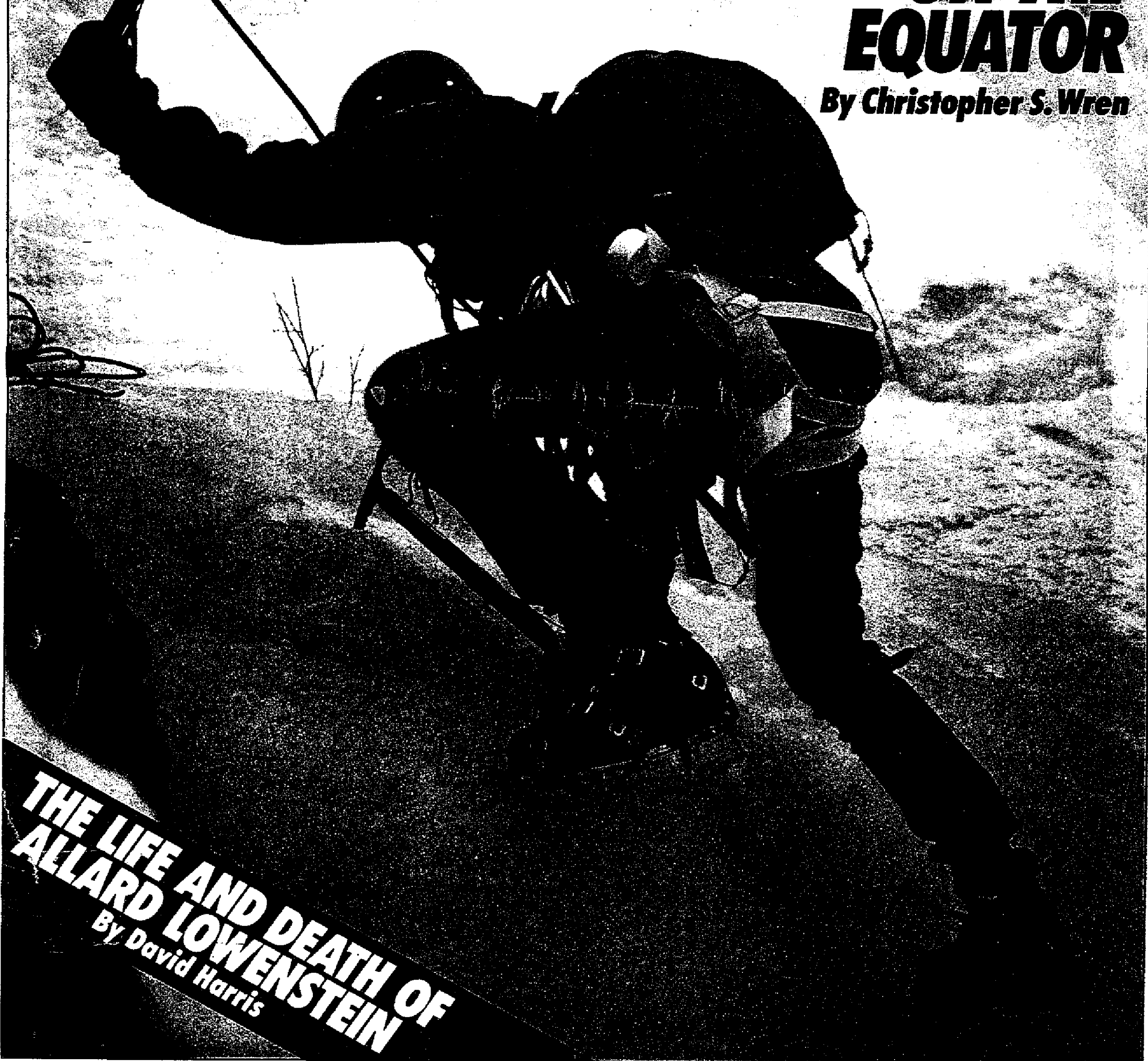
The New York Times Magazine
AUGUST 17, 1980/SECTION 6
ICE CLIMBING ON THE EQUATOR
By Christopher S. Wren
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ALLARD LOWENSTEIN
By David Harris

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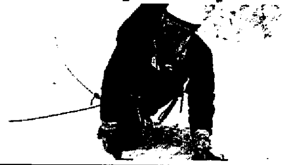

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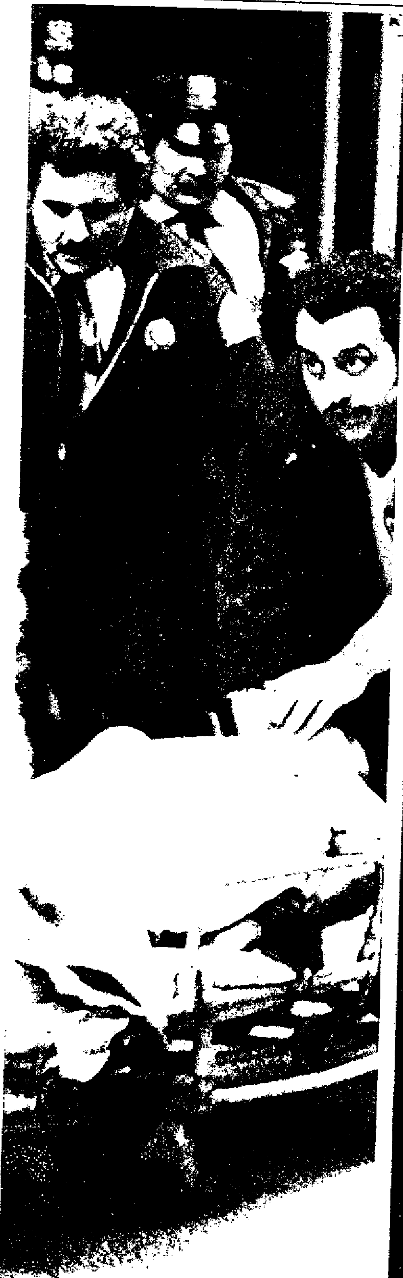
1972: Allard Lowenstein campaigns for Congress and against the Vietnam War.

BLOODY END OF A 60'S DREAM

Allard Lowenstein and Dennis Sweeney had worked together in the civil-rights movement as activists and close friends. But they took divergent paths that led ultimately to disappointment, delusion and death.

1980: A mortally wounded Allard Lowenstein is rushed out of his New
shown, far right, after his arrest for the crime, told police he had shot



York City office building by police and ambulance attendants after being shot by a former protégé. Dennis Sweeney, Lowenstein, whose causes he had championed during the 60's, because he "had been controlling my life for years."

Larry C. Morris/The New York Times

By David Harris

They met as dean and student two decades ago at Stanford University. The older man was the assistant dean of men, a political-science teacher who sought out and attracted bright young men who lived in an age of American life when idealism flourished, when it was thought possible that personal commitment could make life better for the downtrodden. It surprised no one when the dean became mentor to the bright 18-year-old freshman.

Years later, after a period in American life that would indelibly change both men and their relationship, one would murder the other.

In 1961, Allard K. Lowenstein, the Stanford dean, had already developed, at the age of 32, those qualities that would make his career in public life. His intelligence was obvious, his exuberance evoked intimacy and his appetite for all-consuming endeavor was voracious. He dominated as a matter of course. Politically precocious as a child in New York, his heroes were Eleanor Roosevelt and Norman Thomas and, throughout his life, he saw himself as the modern champion of post-New Deal social democracy. Typically, both of his childhood heroes ultimately became his friends. A graduate of Yale's Law School, he spent his 20's in a political apprenticeship, first as president of the National Student Association, and later as national head of Students for Stevenson and as an aide to Hubert Humphrey. Lowenstein seemed to know everyone. That immense network of acquaintanceship, coupled with his personal charisma, would be responsible for making him a figure without whom no anthology of the decade stretching ahead of him at Stanford would be complete.

Back then, student life was marked by a preoccupation with penny loafers and beer kegs. In contrast, the assistant dean's telephone rang regularly with calls from the likes of Ralph Bunche and Adlai Stevenson. The effect on undergraduates who were looking for inspiration and for guidance was one of irresistible attraction, even though Lowenstein himself didn't have the look of an apostle. With a head that seemed too small for the body he had honed during his collegiate wrestling days, he might have appeared ugly and mouselike except for the presence he exuded. His eyes were hidden behind lenses as thick as Coke-bottle bottoms. His standard wardrobe ran to khakis, skintight T-shirts, and a "Yale" jacket. His tie was always askew. But no one paid much attention to any of this once he opened his mouth. To this day, Allard Lowenstein is remembered by many who listened to him as the most convincing human being they had ever heard.

One of those he persuaded to his thinking about the issues of the time was Dennis Sweeney, a scholarship student from Portland, Ore., a former var-

David Harris is a regular contributor to this magazine.

sity basketball player and the class-day speaker at his graduation from Clackamas High School. Six feet tall, topped with thick brown hair, he had a cherub's face in those days. An only child whose natural father had died in a military plane crash when he was just a youngster, Dennis arrived at Stanford self-conscious about his working-class origins. The assistant dean of men was one of those responsible for pulling the shy young man out of his initial state of intimidation. Throughout his life, Allard Lowenstein singled young people out of the crowd to become his protégés. Dennis was among the first. By 1963, he had become an interdisciplinary honor student and speaker of the Stanford Student Congress. His Stanford contemporaries remember him as "sweet," "endlessly sincere" and "devoted to Al."

Lowenstein left the Stanford dean's office after a year, but the distance did not affect his connection to Sweeney. As he would in hundreds of other locales throughout his life, Lowenstein returned to visit Stanford regularly, and Sweeney often drove him around, between appointments, in a borrowed car. The burning issue then was racial justice in the American South, and Lowenstein's passion on the subject was immediately shared by Sweeney. What is now remembered as "the 60's" was about to begin, and if Allard Lowenstein was not exactly a father figure, he was at least the role model that Dennis Sweeney had been looking for.

I, too, had been a Lowenstein protégé during that decade and a friend and roommate of Dennis Sweeney's for two years after that. Eventually, all of us broke away from each other over politics. It seemed inconceivable that the culmination of the Lowenstein-Sweeney relationship would occur 17 years later with a 51-year-old Allard mortally wounded and Dennis holding the murder weapon. Back in the early 60's, dreams of making the world better were still envisioned as simple things that were inevitably redemptive for both the country at large and for the individuals who exercised them. No one had yet seen visions warp under the weight of the reactions they would produce. That experience was still over the horizon, waiting at the end of a decade that would leave Allard Lowenstein a legend and Dennis Sweeney a refugee from the person he could have been.

The horror of that eventual culmination has by now frozen both the accused and the victim in stereotype: Allard K. Lowenstein as the liberal champion of selfless democratic principle who deserved much better than he got, and Dennis A. Sweeney as the vindictive flotsam of a failed revolution who had become irretrievably lost along the way. In fact, both were too singular to define so pattly. To varying degrees, the realities that were both men have been obscured in the myth-making process. Allard Lowenstein lived a life that defied easy definition: He was at once both insider and outsider, selfless and yet self-obsessed, while Dennis Sweeney was both victim and executioner, a man whose madness might have derived as much from a medical tragedy — a random biological accident — as from the weight of experiential overload. The intersection of their lives, and of the history they shared, is a story of irony — of mutual respect and painful enmity, of obsessional truth and homicidal consequence. There are no neat packages here: Neither man succeeded, and neither man failed. Nothing changed, but everything was different.

□

By 1963, the focus of the politics of Lowenstein and Sweeney had become the state of Mississippi. Lowenstein had first traveled there the previous year. One of the connections he made was with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the shock troops of the freedom riders and the predominant civil-rights organization in the state. S.N.C.C. distrusted white liberals; Lowenstein epitomized them. That they came together at all was a tribute to the needs of the moment. S.N.C.C. was considering plans to bring in Northern white students and, through his campus connections, Lowenstein was in the best position to supply them. The result was the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964, a pivotal event in the civil-rights movement out of which grew the Freedom Democratic Party. Lowenstein's role in the project was to recruit and to advise. His differences with S.N.C.C. along the way eventually framed the Lowenstein-Sweeney divergence as well.

Sweeney was one of Lowenstein's first recruits. Allard arranged for Dennis to work in the S.N.C.C. office in Jackson. Dennis spent portions of the 1963-64 school year driving in and out of Mississippi with his mentor. In those days, Allard and Dennis were the closest they would ever be.

> 'Like all historical creatures who are nine parts presence and only one part position, Allard Lowenstein will probably be appraised, finally, as much by his reflection in those he touched as by his individual achievements.'

William K. Daby/Black Star

1971: Lowenstein speaking at a "dump Nixon" rally in Providence, R.I.

That closeness had totally disintegrated by the time the Summer Project was over. Even before the project had begun, Lowenstein's breach with S.N.C.C. had become so wide that he had initially decided to stay out of the state altogether. He changed his mind when the first three civil-rights workers were killed. By then, his protégé Dennis Sweeney had been designated to accompany regular S.N.C.C. staff members into McComb, Miss., to work in the heart of Klan country.

Only the bravest went anywhere near McComb, whose reputation among civil-rights workers throughout Mississippi was that of a rabid dog. The reality of McComb greeted Sweeney shortly after he arrived. He and the rest of the S.N.C.C. workers were asleep in the Freedom School, where they had been living, when a bomb was tossed into the front room. Dennis was closest to the explosion, but he was saved by a thick plywood bed board. The next issue of the local McComb Enterprise-Journal ran a front-page picture of the 21-year-old Northern invader named Sweeney. The face it showed was handsome, the expression intense. The only visible imperfections were the teeth. They had spaces between them, and one seemed damaged.

After five more years of intense civil-rights work, Dennis would look remarkably unchanged — except for those teeth. The front ones had been replaced with immaculate bridgework donated by a New York dentist who, like Sweeney, had volunteered to go South at the urging of Allard Lowenstein.

But by 1973, the bridgework, which had been anchored to dental crowns, had been torn out by Sweeney's own furious hand, leaving little more than filed-down stubs, a sight that Sweeney would try to hide by keeping his upper lip pulled down like a shade over the unsightly gap.

□

To those who experienced it, the terror of McComb was strangely reinforcing. It established a tight bond that was closer than anything Dennis Sweeney would ever experience again. One of the consequences was Dennis's increasing attachment to S.N.C.C.'s style of Jacksonian participatory democracy, to the exclusion of Allard's post-New Deal social democracy. The culmination of that distancing occurred during the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. The Mississippi Freedom Movement came North to demand that the Democrats unseat the "whites only" Mississippi delegation in favor of an integrated one. It was a move that Allard had long supported, arguing that the future of civil rights for blacks should and would be decided in the political process. In the end, the Democrats offered the integrated delegation two of Mississippi's dozen seats, which the Freedom Movement delegates refused. Dennis Sweeney, like many young white volunteers, felt that the Democratic Party's failure to seat the delegates was perceived by the black student activists as evidence that the political process was part and parcel of what was wrong in America. To Allard, it was a sign only that the task was difficult. The disagreement exemplified a fissure that ran through the entire civil-rights movement, and Dennis and Allard quickly took positions on opposite sides. The split marked the end of the specialness of their relationship.

The dissolution of Sweeney's protégéhood was hard on both parties. For Dennis, the pain was that of abandoning a role model and setting out on his own. Instead of returning to Stanford, he stayed in the caldron of McComb for another year as a S.N.C.C. staffer, earning $10 a month; his commitment was total. He would be arrested twice and harassed repeatedly. In the process, he felt betrayed, if not by Allard the person, then certainly by Allard's politics. They were, in Dennis's view, responsible for distorting and manipulating the Mississippi Project to the ends of Northern white liberals and the Democratic Party.

That Lowenstein also felt personally betrayed is a matter of public record. By now, his split with S.N.C.C. had moved into *(Continued on Page 60)*

Courtesy The Enterprise-Journal, McComb, Miss.

1964: Dennis Sweeney (head circled) waits with fellow civil-rights activists for the start of a meeting in McComb, Miss. The experience in McComb, including near-death from a bomb explosion, established a bond among them closer than anything Sweeney would ever know again.

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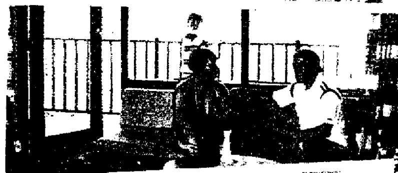

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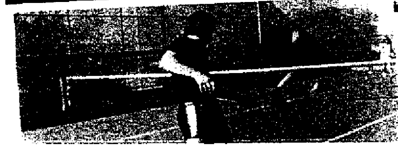

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LOWENSTEIN

Continued from Page 36

the open. He accused S.N.C.C. of undermining "the viability of American society." According to him, S.N.C.C. had become "destructive," "radical," "increasingly racist" and "insufficiently anti-Communist." One of the voices challenging him in the controversy was that of Dennis Sweeney.

The way Allard remembered it, a little less than three years before his murder, "Since Dennis and I had been quite close friends, it became a very, very personal thing. . . . During the period when I was becoming the . . . villain in their eyes, [he] became very much the spearhead of their campaign against me."

According to several of Sweeney's S.N.C.C. contemporaries, Dennis disagreed with Allard, but he never served as any kind of "spearhead." They say that Allard had a way of taking political difference as personal assault. In their eyes, his later description of events was both "paranoid" and "self-serving."

Eventually, when Dennis left the South and S.N.C.C., Allard described what had happened. Dennis, as he saw it, had been "thrown out of S.N.C.C. because he was white. . . . They ended up accusing him of all the things that they had accused *me* of. . . . It very, very badly damaged him." Without commenting on the question of damage, Sweeney's contemporaries again disagree. They say that a consensus was reached that whites ought to return to their own communities and organize there; they say that expulsions didn't begin until long after Sweeney had left Mississippi.

There is no disagreement that by the summer of 1965 the community in which Dennis Sweeney had found himself had dissolved. The civil-rights movement had turned toward black power, and young whites began focusing on the war in Vietnam. Sweeney spent that last summer in Natchez working with a film maker on a documentary, and preparing himself to return with his civil-rights-worker fiancée to life at Stanford University as a married student.

That same summer, Allard Lowenstein visited Bogalusa, La. He and another student protégé, who was driving with him, talked about Sweeney. To Allard, Dennis was a symbol of what had happened in Mississippi. Allard said he was going to write a book about his relationship with Dennis, and the two different directions they'd taken. Allard pictured it as a sad story and, for the first time, he referred to his former protégé and future assassin as a "victim."

□

In retrospect, it would seem that Lowenstein's 1965 picture of Sweeney was at least premature. The Vietnam War increasingly dominated all other issues, and Sweeney certainly involved himself in it. After the quick breakup of his marriage, Sweeney committed himself full time to the draft-resistance movement. Lowenstein was uneasy with all disobedience to conscription, but by now his positions weren't often discussed by Sweeney and his friends.

One of the few times that Lowenstein's name came up was when Ramparts magazine in 1967 exposed the connection between the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Student Association. Neither the story in Ramparts nor any subsequent published investigation ever alleged that Lowenstein was party to the deception. But he had been N.S.A. president in 1951 — the year preceding the inception of the connection — and he had been a dominant force in N.S.A. politics then, and ever after. That history was considered to be sufficient evidence to Sweeney and his friends that Lowenstein had known what was going on.

Throughout his life, Lowenstein laughed off the C.I.A. charges. "I was the one they hid it all from," he would explain. To him, the allegation was just one more piece of "distorted" flak from the left. That direction always spelled conflict for Lowenstein, and in many cases it involved former protégés.

Despite a lifetime spent trying to alter its product, Allard Lowenstein saw himself as champion of the two-party electoral process. In 1967, he set out to prove that the system could correct its mistakes. He planned to unseat an incumbent Democratic President and to seat a new one who was opposed to the war.

It is a tribute to the breadth of his influence that Lowenstein could even attempt the effort, which he called the

"Dump Johnson" movement. He moved endlessly back and forth across the country, sleeping in 15-minute intervals, subsisting on poundcake and Coca-Cola, fetching his tie out of his bag for one more rumpled appearance among his 15 of the day. His unremitting energy, and his belief in his plan, inspired a chain of other believers and engendered a movement that began multiplying into a series of front organizations and student groups by the fall of 1967. Lowenstein tried to get Robert F. Kennedy and George McGovern to run, but neither one was willing. By November, Eugene McCarthy was in the race, backed by Lowenstein's youthful shock troops, among others. Within four months, Lyndon Johnson had announced that he would not run for reelection. The toppling of Johnson, though not entirely his handiwork, would become Allard Lowenstein's landmark in American political history.

It is somehow typical of both Allard Lowenstein and the decade he did so much to shape that success only seemed to produce a new dilemma: Whom was he to support now that Bobby Kennedy had made a belated entrance into the Democratic primaries? The move had left Lowenstein stranded in a political no man's land. On the one hand, he was a public supporter of McCarthy. On the other, his heart belonged to Bobby. Lowenstein tried to sidestep the worst of the political crossfire by returning to New York, where he and Jennifer, his wife of two years, bought a house on Long Island, and he announced himself to be a candidate for Congress.

Lowenstein was in the midst of his Long Island campaigning when Bobby Kennedy won the California primary. Kennedy tried to reach Lowenstein before going down to his victory celebration in Los Angeles's Ambassador Hotel, but missed him. He left a message, and told an aide that they would phone Allard again as soon as the celebration was over.

But the call that came from Los Angeles was with news that Bobby had been shot. Allard caught the first plane to Los Angeles.

The events of that night pitched Lowenstein into as deep a sense of personal loss as anything in his adult life. The story was one he would tell regularly to friends throughout the next decade. He reached the hospital and passed through the Secret Service cordon into Kennedy's corridor just as the doctor announced the death. Lowenstein and several others accompanied the body down to the ground floor in an elevator. Everyone was crying. As Lowenstein would later tell it, he turned to Ted Kennedy during the ride and said all he could think to say, "You're the only hope we've got left, and you're not good enough."

Lowenstein would always feel cheated by Bobby's death. He blamed the assassination for robbing the country of Robert Kennedy's leadership.

For the rest of the year, Lowenstein mostly concentrated on running for Congress. That November, he won his first and only succesful bid for elective public office. It was the personal highlight of his political career. While in Congress, he recruited a number of young Republicans to Democratic causes; several were even persuaded to change their party affiliation.

□

Meanwhile, Dennis Sweeney's life hit bad, and headed for worse. The draft-resistance movement had spent itself by the time Allard Lowenstein was sworn into Congress, and Sweeney and several others moved into an apartment in San Francisco. At first, Sweeney drove a taxi late at night, mostly hauling tourists to houses of prostitution. The work disgusted him, so he tried for a job in the post office. Shortly after he was hired, he was visited by two F.B.I. agents. They just wanted to tell him, they said, that they knew where he was and that they wouldn't bother him as long as he kept his nose clean.

The Nixon years were beginning, and hatches were being battened down every- *(Continued on Page 74)*

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LOWENSTEIN

Continued from Page 64

where. In something of a tribute to the coming decade, the signs of Sweeney's deteriorating mental condition were at first hidden by the suspicions shared by nearly everyone participating in anti-Government protests. Until he finally talked about it, no one noticed.

Sweeney first revealed the bizarre nature of his emotional instability in San Francisco during the spring of 1970. He was planning to move to Boston and went to a park with a woman to say goodbye. They made small talk until Sweeney mentioned, in a calm and off-hand manner, that he thought someone might have planted an "electrode" in his body in order to monitor and control him. The woman shrugged his words off as a bad joke.

Later, in Sweeney's accounts to friends and acquaintances, this "electrode" would acquire transmission qualities, and would flood his head with messages for increasingly longer periods of the day.

After Lowenstein's assassination, Sweeney was typified as a casualty of the 60's who eventually broke under the weight of traumatizing experiences and bitter disappointments. The principal shortcoming of this characterization is its divergence from the uncertainties and working conclusions of modern psychiatry. All known analyses of Sweeney's disorder thus far have concluded that he is a paranoid schizophrenic of the chronic type.

The disease's symptoms are extraordinarily alike in all victims: hallucinations; the unwilling visitation of the afflicted by voices; delusions of persecution, and the development of elaborate and convoluted logic systems to explain all the symptoms. Two present theories speculate that the cause of the disorder is either a combination of genetic predisposition and/or enzyme malfunction, which may or may not be triggered by stress, or a virus of the central nervous system.

The meaning of Sweeney's progress from protégé to assassin breaks the easy stereotype. As much as being someone who finally cracked under the weight of emotional battering and 60's malaise, Sweeney was a person whose procession of bad luck was topped with a random calamity.

□

Typically, in any one random month out of Lowenstein's 30 years of adult life, he might have given speeches in 15 cities in 10 states. A thousand phone calls would be sandwiched in between, as he touched base with dozens of protégés and old friends. Allard Lowenstein managed to rush headlong through three decades without slowing down.

Such enormous energy is indicative of a driven quality. Lowenstein was generous and caring to a fault, yet found it difficult to sustain an interest in conversations he didn't dominate. He had absolute faith in the superiority of his own judgment, but always made everyone else's case better than he made his own, in failed political races and the adoption of lost causes. He cared little for titles, but spent much of his life pursuing them. Selfless server of causes, he arranged his life so that 95 percent of the situations he encountered centered on his own presence.

In most cases, a résumé might provide additional perspective in the comprehension of a public figure's life, but in Allard Lowenstein's, it proves to be woefully limited. Son of a doctor-turned-restaurateur, Lowenstein eschewed the Ivy League after the Horace Mann School and attended the University of North Carolina in order, among other reasons, to compete on the wrestling team. After his N.S.A. presidency, he enlisted in the United States Army. Later, he was an assistant dean of men at Stanford and a lecturer at several universities, served one term in Congress from Long Island, and did brief duty as an ambassador for special political affairs at the United Nations.

A more complete understanding of Lowenstein's importance on the American political scene relies on information that is apocryphal and told in anecdotes: He introduced John Kennedy to Eleanor Roosevelt at the 1960 Democratic National Convention. Adlai Stevenson broke away from a crowd of admirers to greet a strolling Allard on the Atlantic City boardwalk in 1964. Allard would have been Bobby's right-hand man, some claimed. Allard smuggled himself into Biafra in a last-ditch personal attempt to negotiate an end to the civil war. Allard bragged he was No. 7 on Richard Nixon's "enemies list." On one occasion, Allard apologized for being late, saying he'd been in Northern Ireland and it had taken him longer to find a "solution" than he'd expected. Allard was the only Democrat William F. Buckley ever supported for Congress, or anything else. At the age of 46, Allard was still going down to Chapel Hill to work out with the University of North Carolina wrestling squad. The variety of the tales told by him and about him is endless.

Just exactly who and what Allard Lowenstein really wanted to be is an unanswerable question. The record suggests an ambivalence not uncommon among extraordinarily talented people. Like all historical creatures who are nine parts presence and only one part position, Lowenstein will probably be appraised, finally, as much by his reflection in those he touched as by his individual achievements. In that accounting, Lowenstein shows signs of faring quite well. Already, more than 50 young people who were introduced to politics by him sit in state legislatures.

Lowenstein, like Dennis Sweeney, suffered when the 60's ended. After being redistricted in his first bid for re-election, he lost. After that, he ran for

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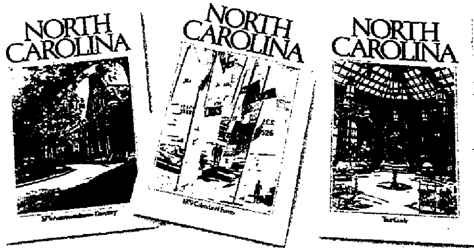

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Congress twice within four months in Brooklyn, and lost both times. Then he returned to Long Island, and lost again. After that came a divorce, and then he entered two Congressional races in Manhattan within a year, both of them defeats.

For the first time in almost a decade, Allard Lowenstein saw the man who eventually killed him, during one of his campaigns in 1974. Dennis Sweeney came to Lowenstein's house. There was a noticeable gap in Dennis's mouth, where the bridgework had been torn away. He told Allard that someone had wired his false teeth so that they picked up messages from outer space. It was an encounter, not a confrontation.

□

By then, Dennis Sweeney had clearly slipped his tether. Since the onset of his illness, the voices in his head were speaking with increasing frequency; it was difficult for him to concentrate. When the voices didn't stop, Sweeney shared his dilemma with his mother and his stepfather. They attempted to have him committed to an Oregon state mental hospital in 1973. He was held there for part of a week, but the diagnosis was insufficient to warrant confinement.

Afterward, it was obvious to Dennis that the forces trying to prevent him from removing his transmitter were greater and more sinister than he had first thought. Certainly the C.I.A. had some kind of hand in it, he told friends. In Portland, he concluded that he would have to leave the United States to find a doctor who was willing to buck these powerful enemies. Before leaving, he wrote letters to a number of old movement friends.

"I am at the lowest ebb of my life now because of the psychological warfare that is being made on me," he wrote one of them. "... I am simultaneously attuned to and programmed electronically ... [unable] to sort out my own thoughts from the impulses running through my skull. I am fairly certain that I have software I wasn't born with."

Sweeney made it as far as Paris but, when he couldn't find work, quickly returned to Boston. There he ran the grill at a hamburger stand, and then worked in a mattress factory. Sweeney's social contacts were limited, but he got in touch with a few old friends living in Massachusetts. Among them was the film maker with whom he had worked in Mississippi during the summer of 1965. When the voices in Dennis Sweeney's head began to be identifiable as those of real people, the film maker's would be the first he would set out to track down.

That he had been unsuccessful at eluding his demons was obvious in a 1975 phone call he placed to Allard Lowenstein in New York. His tone was much more hateful than it had been the last time. There were people watching him, Dennis said, and Allard was responsible. He told Allard to call his dogs off.

"Dennis," Allard pleaded. "Let me help you. I know people who can help you. I want to put you in their hands."

"So — you too," Sweeney growled in response.

It was the last conversation between them before they kept an appointment in Manhattan late on the afternoon of March 14, 1980.

In between, Dennis Sweeney became obsessed with the Natchez film maker, then in Boston. There now seemed to be a lethal edge to his actions. The film maker noticed it as soon as Dennis arrived for his next visit. That 1975 meeting remains the fullest available picture of the former civil-rights worker's rapidly escalating paranoia.

Sweeney entered the film maker's office like a snarling dog. For the next four hours, the film maker would be too frightened of provoking Sweeney to ask him to leave. Sweeney said he had had it. The film maker, the film maker's wife, even the film maker's 5-year-old son, had been broadcasting to him 24 hours a day. He "knew" the film maker was part of the "killer elite, on the run since Watergate." It was an "international Jewish conspiracy." The film maker, Dennis hallucinated, was trying to force him to "marry a Jewess."

He hadn't had a woman in years, Sweeney said, because the voices were "exhausting" him. He couldn't understand why they were doing all this. Sometimes, he told the film maker, he became "radioactive," other times, "transparent." His thoughts were being "communicated to other people" and the voices in his head

> 'In the early 60's, no one had yet seen visions of a better world warp under the reactions they would produce. That experience waited at the end of a decade that would leave Lowenstein a legend and Sweeney a refugee from the person he could have been.'

kept telling him to do "terrible things."

As soon as Dennis Sweeney left, the film maker, who had been a gun-control advocate, bought a pistol. He briefly left Massachusetts; on his return, he kept his address a secret and got an unlisted telephone number. All the while, Sweeney kept making regular telephone calls to the film maker's office. The film maker finally decided that the only way to get Sweeney off his back was to meet him face to face. They arranged to do so on a street corner in Cambridge; the film maker brought two friends along as protection.

Sweeney approached directly and, when he was within arm's length, ordered the film maker to take his glasses off. Then Sweeney began pummeling him. When the film maker's friends pulled Sweeney off, the former civil-rights worker made no move to resume. Instead, he issued a warning.

"The next time you've got a message for me," he screamed, referring to the imaginary transmissions inside his head, "deliver it to my face."

With that, he turned and headed for the subway.

Thoroughly terrorized, the film maker attempted to send a warning message through intermediaries to Allard Lowenstein to avoid Dennis Sweeney.

The effort, apparently, came to naught.

□

Sweeney's explosion on the Cambridge street corner evidently redirected his obsession from its focus on the film maker and sent it reeling even more deeply into his past to single out Allard Lowenstein. Sweeney moved to Mystic, Conn., and lived there for the next two years, earning his way doing carpentry jobs. He kept to himself, but once told a fellow boarder that he picked up signals "from Mars."

In July 1979, he moved to a rented room in nearby New London. His stepfather died of a heart attack at the end of February 1980, and by the time Sweeney returned from the funeral in Portland, he seemed to be under the impression that he could detect Lowenstein's hand in the death.

On March 11, Sweeney walked into Raub's Sporting Goods in downtown New London and made application to purchase a seven-shot Llama .380 semiautomatic pistol costing $120. He signed forms attesting that he had never been convicted of a felony and had never been committed to a mental institution. Five days later, he picked up the weapon and a box of ammunition. By then, he had told his landlady he would be leaving Connecticut soon. He also made an appointment to see Allard Lowenstein at his office in the law firm of Layton & Sherman in New York City at 4 P.M., Friday, March 14.

That Lowenstein made room on his schedule to see Sweeney is both tragic and typical. Lowenstein felt uncomfortable in abandoning anyone. When he was with people he'd known as a Stanford dean, he made it a point to mention Dennis Sweeney and the madness that had descended upon him.

Certainly Lowenstein could have easily told Sweeney he was too busy to meet with him. In 1980, he had not slowed down. For the first days of his last week, he was in New Hampshire campaigning for Ted Kennedy. He returned to New York on Wednesday with the usual circles under his eyes. His assistant met him at La Guardia Airport, and during the drive to Manhattan, Lowenstein looked over his mail. One of the enclosures was a picture from a kaffeeklatsch which he had attended several days earlier.

"I look like Frank Graham [United States Senator from North Carolina] did a month before he died," Lowenstein said. "Do you think I've only got a month left?"

The assistant filed the remark away with a lot of similar speculations about his own death that Lowenstein had made in the past few years. It was a trait that was shared by many men fresh to their 50's.

Lowenstein showed no signs of unease about his scheduled appointment with Sweeney. Afterward, he expected to meet with a man running in the upcoming Congressional race on Manhattan's East Side; he planned to tell him he would be in the race as well.

By noon in New London that Friday, Dennis Sweeney had finished packing all his possessions. Later, when police searched his room, everything was neatly stored in boxes for transporting, and there was a fresh change of clothes laid out on his bed. Sweeney drove his pickup truck onto the lawn of his rooming house to load it more easily. But when he came back outside, wearing Levi's, boots, a plaid shirt and a blue nylon windbreaker, he got in without loading a thing and drove off. Later that same day, police would find the truck abandoned in midtown Manhattan.

As he sat in Lowenstein's Rockefeller Center waiting room, Dennis was remembered as being expressionless and seemingly calm. He had, apparently, hidden the Llama .380 in his jacket. He and Lowenstein shook hands before disappearing into the office behind a closed door.

There is no record of the two men's final conversation. Some of those in the waiting room think it lasted more than 10 minutes. What is known from the fragments pieced together by the police after questioning Sweeney is that, after their talk, Dennis stood up and shook his former mentor's hand again. Allard, no doubt, thought that Dennis was about to leave. Instead, according to police sources, Dennis announced:

"Al, we've got to put an end to this obsession."

Then he pulled his $120 pistol.

Allard shouted, "No!" and threw his left arm up in an effort to protect himself.

Dennis Sweeney fired all seven rounds. Five shots hit Allard Lowenstein. Sweeney then walked back into the waiting room, laid the empty weapon in the receptionist's letter tray, took a seat, and lit a cigarette. He said not a sin-

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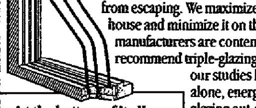

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gle word, just sat there.

By the time the ambulance arrived, Lowenstein was unconscious, bleeding profusely, but still alive.

"He's been controlling my life for years," Sweeney finally told the police. "Now I've put an end to it."

□

Allard Lowenstein was never one to give up early in any battle, and the one he waged with death was no different. As usual, the odds were long. Lowenstein arrived at St. Clare's Hospital with his left arm broken and his entire left lung shot away. Two slugs had pierced his heart, one leaving a hole an inch and a half across. It took five and a half hours to sew him back together. He survived all of that. There was hope in the waiting room, and among those in the crowd on the street, when hours passed and people remembered Lowenstein's indomitable will and his wrestler's body. But this time, these would not be enough. After half an hour in the recovery room, Lowenstein's heart stopped pumping. When news of his death reached the sidewalk outside the hospital, sobbing was heard on all sides. It was said that Allard Lowenstein had died a hero's death, fighting every inch of the way.

That stature seems confirmed by his final resting place. On March 19, Allard Lowenstein, a former Congressman, was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery, about as close to John Kennedy's grave as is Kennedy's own brother Robert's grave.

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Dennis Sweeney is currently imprisoned at the Rikers Island detention center in New York's East River, charged with second-degree murder. The corridors at Rikers are lonely and mean, but they pale in comparison with the madness into which Dennis Sweeney first stumbled 10 years ago. He has pleaded not guilty, by reason of insanity, and is being kept under medication in the mental observation unit at Rikers, awaiting the judgment of a psychiatrist as to when, or whether, he will stand trial. His hair is still thick and luxuriant, his body trim. Only the teeth give him away. They sit in his face like relics from an age of trench warfare.

Despite the charges against him, Sweeney still doesn't think his victim is dead and claims Allard's voice continues to echo in his head. ■

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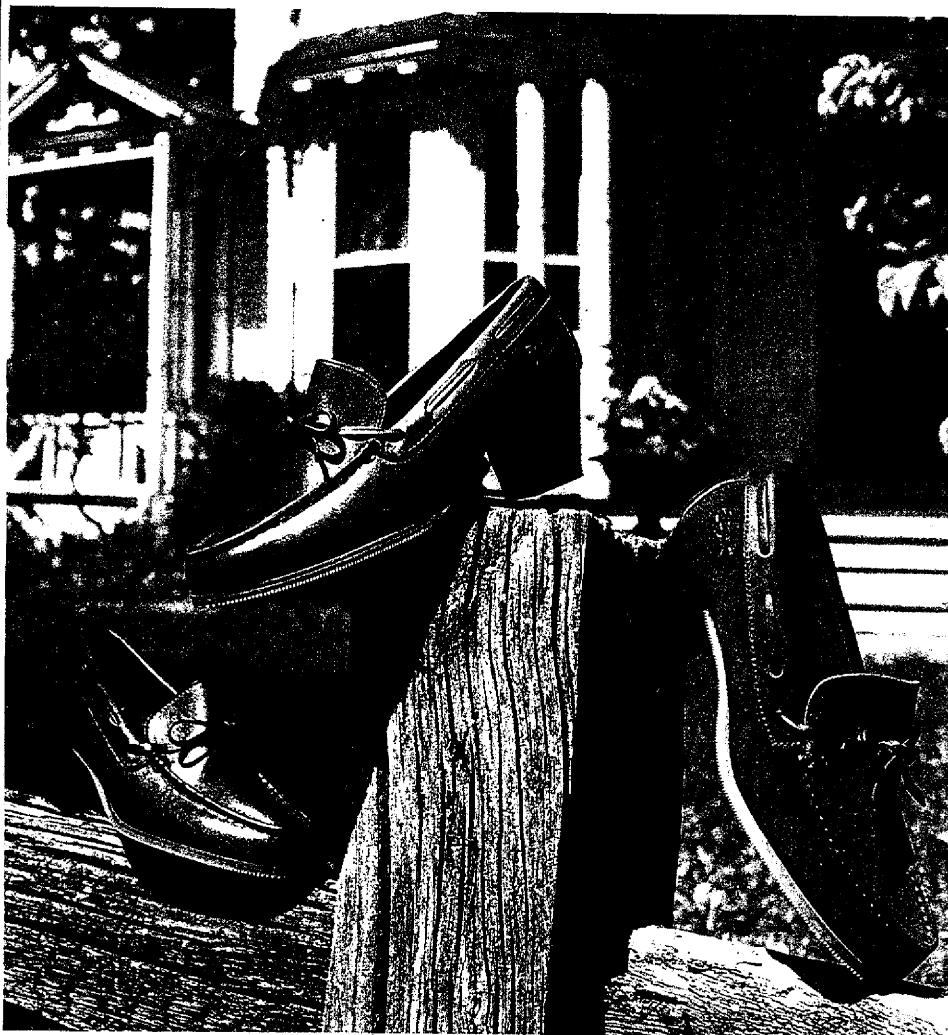

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