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Introduction

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Allard K. Lowenstein, student leader, civil rights organizer, antiwar activist, one-term congressman, and United Nations ambassador, blazed across the American political scene at a period of continuing crisis. Often characterized as a figure of the sixties, Lowenstein came of age in the forties, part of a generation that believed in America with almost absolute certainty.

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The path of his life led from optimism to disillusionment as he committed himself to the liberal ideals of Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and the Democratic party, only to be cast aside in his effort to win election himself. Although he was a virtually forgotten figure by 1980, his tragic assassination by Dennis Sweeney, a deranged former protégé from the civil rights movement, brought Lowenstein back into the public's consciousness.

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Students followed Lowenstein in his quest for a just and peaceful world. But they did not know that his deep sense of patriotism and intense anti-Communism led him to work for the CIA in Africa and Spain and to inform on suspected Communists in the civil rights movement.

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In doing this, Lowenstein was a child of his times. In the fifties, McCarthyism had created a paranoia about Communist infiltration, and unless liberals proved their anti-Communism, they risked intense Red-baiting from the right. Lowenstein also remembered a time when liberal democracy was threatened by Stalin and Hitler. The values instilled in him by Algernon Black at the Ethical Culture School in New York City led him to detest both Communism and Fascism. He devoted his life to fighting both. By working for the CIA, he thought he was doing the right thing, but he came to understand that totalitarian currents had been unleashed by the very forces he had served in the interest of saving democracy and halting tyranny.

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Because Lowenstein led many lives at the same time, it is difficult

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8 • THE PIED PIPER: ALLARD LOWENSTEIN

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to tell his story chronologically. For this reason, I have elected to divide this book into segments, sometimes continuing one aspect of Lowenstein's career to its particular conclusion and then returning to an earlier date to resume another aspect.

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Lowenstein's call was to ideals, not to self-interest. There is no indication that he wanted to make a great deal of money. He did want a place in history and a major role on the world stage, which he achieved.

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Yet Lowenstein remains unknown to the great majority of the public, despite the enormous influence he had on his times, the course of history in southern Africa, American race relations, American foreign policy, the presidential process, and the way the Congress is run. He brought countless people into the system and changed a great many lives. Worshipped by some and condemned by others, Allard Lowenstein lived a remarkable life of passionate intensity. It was marked by controversy, significant accomplishment, and failure.

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The span of his life, 1929 to 1980, is a distinct epoch of American history. It saw conservatism and isolationism discredited following the stock market crash and Hitler's aggression, then witnessed the rise of liberalism through the genius of Roosevelt, and ultimately America's disenchantment with that too, as the country adopted neoconservative values and elected Ronald Reagan.

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I undertook this project believing Lowenstein to be one man, only to discover he was many men. He was not what he appeared to be, even to those closest to him. His idealism concealed a strong desire for personal recognition; his open criticism of the established order had at its base the objective of preserving it.

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The opportunity to examine Lowenstein's papers at the Southern Historical Collection of the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, including his diary, which he laid out like the front page of *The New York Times*, obliged me to rewrite totally a manuscript of substantial length. Having already conducted numerous interviews, I discovered other people with more of the missing pieces, some as far afield as Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Starting with the belief that I had shared many of Lowenstein's experiences and viewpoints, I discovered things about myself that had been hidden as well. Digging deep for the truth is a painful, sometimes tedious, but ultimately exhilarating process. The breaking down of denial is conceivably the most anger-provoking activity possible to engage in. I am aware that much of what I have to say about Lowenstein and people close to him will produce an outcry and charges that I have been unfair. But while I found myself growing to dislike certain aspects of Allard Lowenstein's personality and concluding that deceit was inherent in his career, I came away with a deep respect for his genius and his positions on public policy. The central issue he grap-

Introduction • 9

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115 pled with—how to achieve change without violent revolution—re-
116 mains a significant one.

117 I was also deeply moved by what I consider remarkable similarities
118 between those who have made a cult of Lowenstein and are struggling
119 to revive his memory, and the early Christians. The book of writings
120 by and about Lowenstein edited by his nephew Douglas Lowenstein
121 with Gregory Stone, a self-proclaimed "authoritative record" that
122 makes not a single reference to the heretical works of either Teresa
123 Carpenter or David Harris, has the ring of the Gospels to it. The film
124 *Citizen*, which presents taped interviews of his friends and clips of
125 Lowenstein himself, comes as close as possible to an attempt to res-
126 urrect him.

127 Was Lowenstein the model citizen this film portrays, or was he
128 Saul Bellow's "Dangling Man," who for want of any other talent tried
129 to make of citizenship an art form? Lowenstein was no ordinary person
130 doing his duty as a citizen. He had other gifts. He was an athlete, a
131 talented actor, a musician, a teacher, a writer, and a spellbinding ora-
132 tor. He was born into a wealthy and talented family and received a
133 superb education. Lowenstein had resources other people did not
134 have and access to the rich and powerful.

135 Lowenstein was called the "conscience" of the liberals for his role
136 in the famous "Dump Johnson" movement that deposed the most
137 powerful president in America's history. Curtis Gans, Lowenstein's as-
138 sociate in that movement, says, "Allard taught me the meaning of am-
139 bivalence." Americans have, in their naïveté, always wanted to see
140 things in neat, clean images: all good or all bad. Some will say the
141 disclosures about Lowenstein confirm their high or low opinion of
142 him. They do neither. They confirm that nothing is as it appears to
143 be, a lesson that goes far beyond politics.

144 Richard Cummings
145 Bridgehampton, New York
146 March, 1984

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