

Remarks by David Halberstam

Lowenstein Testimonial Dinner

February 7, 1973

First, this is absolutely the most extraordinary political meeting that I've ever been to, because Allard Lowenstein is here on time.

I, like many others, take pleasure from the diversity of us here tonight - a sense of the resurgence, the resilience of the kinds of things we believe in - as exemplified by the fact that Andy Young is here and is going to be a congressman who will take some of the torches that Allard passed on.

I think we are drawn to Allard in many ways, among others - and perhaps in my case principally - because he has that most unique quality for a politician or for anybody, and that is the quality to evoke in other people and in the people who touch his life the capacity and the desire to be better, to act on a higher ethical plane, and to make more of themselves and of their lives. I think he did this, and he touched many of our lives.

I know he did in my life. I think, in the late sixties, that my reporting on Vietnam and what it meant became better because Al in a way challenged us - challenged us to act upon what we believed. I think we are better, and I think that all of us here are beholden to the degree that when the history of this decade is written, fifty years from now, and people will say, "Did you stand on the sidelines?" and "What did you do?" - to the degree that we did act, to the degree that we were not good Germans, to the degree that we can now, as the war comes to an end, live with ourselves, and live with our participation in the processes - for this in particular, I think, we owe a very, very special debt of gratitude to Al Lowenstein. And I know that this is why we are here tonight, because we feel an obligation to him, that he made us better, and he made us able to live with ourselves, a very important thing.

And I think a hundred years from now, when they write again the history of this time, they will have long forgotten the people who gerrymandered him out of his first district, and I don't think the name Rooney will be remembered. But I think that what Al did and what he stood for, in a democratic society, in leading an honorable democratic rebellion against a cruel and unprincipled and barbaric war, will stand, and that they will trace the peace that is beginning now to the rebellion that he led in late nineteen-sixty-seven, when everybody else was willing to stand on the sidelines.

So I am here, really, like the rest of you, to say thank you, God bless you, for making us able to live with ourselves. Thank you very much.