

Stone, Gregory &
Douglas Lowenstein—Eds.
LOWENSTEIN: *Acts of
Courage and Belief*
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
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Friends and relatives of activist Allard Lowenstein (1929-1980) have put together, from his words and others', a ringing memorial volume—perhaps in rebuttal to David Harris' tacky, denigrating *Dreams Die Hard* (1982). Countering criticism of Lowenstein's "compulsiveness" in his introduction, James Wechsler quotes-with-comment: "I just can't sit around fiftyish, fat, and bald, when everything's falling apart.' At fifty-one he was dead." Wechsler's introduction also roughs in the major themes, and salient episodes, of Lowenstein's life: student activism (U. of North Carolina, Yale Law), and presidency, National Student Association; UN activism and NY Democratic reform politics (via Eleanor Roosevelt), with trip to South-West Africa/Namibia; civil rights activism (Mississippi 1963 Freedom Vote and 1964 Freedom Summer); antiwar activism and "Dump Johnson" movement; Democratic Congressman, 5th District, Long Island, 1969-71; reelection defeat, and other losing runs for congress; Carter's first representative to the UN Commission on Human Rights. The 40-odd selections, chronologically arranged (and usefully introduced), not only reinforce Wechsler's remarks, they set up independent vibrations. What was there about this messy, restless sometime-teacher, sometime-lawyer that persuaded young and not-so-young people—"Al's people"—to do his bidding? At Stanford in 1963, he's recruiting volunteers for Mississippi "so that even if white people want to pretend that they're ultimately going to win, they'll know that they're not. . . ." In 1966, he debates Harvard's Dr. Kissinger, among others, on Vietnam: "We are going to make ourselves more and more committed to a situation from which we cannot extricate ourselves honorably." The day after McCarthy announces his candidacy for the Democratic nomination (the prelude to Johnson's withdrawal), he's on *Meet the Press* arguing: "the press does not yet understand the depth of feeling among a great many of us. . . ." He will also be known, however, by those who found it worthwhile to write about him. There is not only David Halberstam's "The Man Who Ran Against Lyndon Johnson," from *Harper's*, which the editors justly label a classic ("To Dugger, Lowenstein delivers a long lecture on the liberal possibilities of Amarillo. *Amarillo*"); there are also five pieces, over time, from *The New Yorker* (including an obit) and three by William Buckley (also including a eulogy). It's a generous volume, with much good reading in it. But this is also the best of Lowenstein: "within the quest itself much of the fulness of life exists" (after an aborted, 1966 congressional race); "if there had been no Bob Moses, there would have been nothing" (revisiting Freedom Summer, 1979). A fitting accolade to "the original activist."