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The politician as a continent of compassion and conviction

Lowenstein
Acts of Courage and Belief

Edited by DOUGLAS LOWENSTEIN and GREGORY STONE
Court Brace Jovanovich, \$18.95
Reviewed by DAVID LAWRENCE

It seems the only politicians who make headlines are blithering idiots, nincompoops or oaks.

That's why *Lowenstein: Acts of Courage and Belief* is a refreshing break in the action. Here's the story of one man who demonstrated that "honest politician" is not necessarily a contradiction in terms.

All Lowenstein didn't check opinion polls before he acted. Regardless of which political side of the fence you view the world from, you have to respect someone like that.

"If no man is an island," Ted Kennedy said of him, "then Allard Lowenstein is a continent, a universe, a vast expanse of compassion, conviction and courage. These qualities drew out the best in all who knew him, but especially the young, who heard his call and joined his ceaseless quest against injustice and indifference."

People naturally responded to Lowenstein's tireless faith and naive conviction that the world could be changed, that one person can make a difference.

All Lowenstein's life is nearly Frank Capra material with Jimmy Stewart playing a *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, but for one critical flaw: Life doesn't always follow Capra's scripted upbeat and positive endings.

LOWENSTEIN was shot to death in his Manhattan law office on March 14, 1980.

This book is a very special memorial of chronologically arranged writings by Lowenstein and others, including David Halberstam, Emmy Breslin, William F. Buckley Jr., Jack Anderson, Calvin Trillin, James Wechsler and Hendrik Hertzberg.

In the foreword Arthur Schlesinger Jr., writes that Lowenstein "was a rare combination of generous passion and acute intelligence, wholly devoid of meanness and of pomposity,

he radiated candor, humor and sweetness. With his faith in reason, he believed in dialog across the barricades and commanded the respect and affection of political and intellectual adversaries."

Try to imagine Jack Kemp or James Kilpatrick endorsing Tip O'Neill or Pat Moynihan. But this is what William F. Buckley Jr. wrote for *Newsday*, the Long Island newspaper, prior to the 1978 New York Democratic primary.

"Twice in seasons gone by I have written about Lowenstein, infuriating many of my friends because, you see, Lowenstein is a liberal Democrat. Why should a conservative Republican advocate the election to Congress of a liberal Democrat? In the past, pressed on the matter, I have permitted myself, out of polemical fatigue, to reply simply: 'It is a personal indulgence.' One should try to do better . . . There is, in Lowenstein, a hectic idealism which it is impossible to fail to be moved by. . . . But most appealing is Lowenstein's ability to talk to people who disagree with him without inducing a shouting contest. . . . 'Christianity without the crucifixion,' Whittaker Chambers once meditated, 'is liberalism.' Allard Lowenstein belongs in Congress as demonstrably as Rudolph Nureyev belongs on the stage."

HE HAD an effect on everyone he met. That's what this book is about, some of this country's crack journalists capturing moments in the life of this whirling dervish of a political activist. Frozen frames of Lowenstein in perpetual motion.

Richard Cohen wrote his feelings down in the *Washington Post*. "He has three children, a former wife and several thousand friends and they will all tell you the same thing: he mattered. He mattered in Mississippi and he mattered in New York politics and he mattered in the U.S. Congress and in southern Africa and in the National Student Association but he mattered most—at least to me—when he stopped Lyndon Johnson cold in New Hampshire. It was 1968 and Allard K. Lowenstein had set out to end the war in Vietnam."

Buckley concluded the Memorial Service on



'He has three children, a former wife and several thousand friends and they will all tell you the same thing: he mattered.'

— Richard Cohen speaking of All Lowenstein

March 18, 1980, with these words: "Who was the wit who said that Nature abhors a vacuum? Let Nature then fill this vacuum. That is the challenge which, bereft, the friends of Allard Lowenstein hurl up to Nature, and to Nature's God, prayerfully, demanding, because today, Lord, our loneliness is great."

Amen.

DAVID LAWRENCE



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