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**LP**

LOWENSTEIN Acts of Courage and Belief. Edited by Gregory Stone and Douglas Lowenstein. Foreword by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Introduction by James A. Wechsler. Illustrated. 369 pp. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Cloth, \$18.95. Paper, \$9.95. By **RICHARD J.MARGOLIS**

The world could use a measured biography of Allard K. Lowenstein, that remarkable reformer remembered as the instigator of the Dump Johnson campaign that led to President Johnson's bowing out of office. Meanwhile, this collection of Lowenstein's writings, along with tributes and reminiscences from his friends, will have to do. The sampling in "Lowenstein" of his own speeches and articles is rather thin. As James A. Wechsler notes in an introduction, "Too much of what he said or did is not engraved in any official record or document."

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Lowenstein's friends, however, afford us an affecting glimpse of both the man and his times. "A rare combination of generous passion and acute intelligence," as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. characterized him, Lowenstein became "the supreme agitator of his day." He appeared to have tapped some fountain of perpetual energy and hope until that moment in March 1980 when he was shot down in his Manhattan law office by a deranged young protege.

As national chairman of Students for Stevenson in 1952 and then as an aide to Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, Lowenstein plunged into mainstream liberal politics without forswearing his maverick credentials. By 1963 he was traipsing around Mississippi, riskily registering black voters. He spoke against the war in Vietnam, Jimmy Breslin reminds us, "at a time so early that the nation thought any such stand was treasonous."

A eulogy from The New Yorker recalls that Lowenstein "shifted the boundaries of the possible so that other, more 'political' men could bring it into being." That was certainly the case in 1967, when he started the Dump Johnson movement, an idea, all the experts said, whose time would never come. Not all of Lowenstein's campaigns yielded victories. He ran for Congress in the unlikeliest of conservative districts, winning only once (in Suffolk County). Two years later the Republicans gerrymandered him out of office, but he kept right on crusading.

Lowenstein's enemies came from the left as well as the right. "Lowenstein is always ebullient," David Halberstam observed in a 1968 profile. "Probably that's one of the reasons the New Left doesn't like him, just as a lot of liberals now dislike Humphrey for the optimism of his tone, in what is to them an essentially dark time. Lowenstein is no Humphrey. He sees all the darkness ... but he is resilient, optimistic and keeps saying that the system can work." "Resilient" and "optimistic" are the words that keep recurring in this affectionate

anthology. GRUNCH OF GIANTS By R. Buckminster Fuller. 98 pp. New York: St. Martin's Press. \$8.95. By PETER ENGEL

No, the title of R. Buckminster Fuller's book, published shortly before his death, is not a misprint. "Grunch" stands for Gross Universal Cash Heist, a new addition to his many coinages. "Tensegrity," "synergetics" and "spaceship Earth" have already found their way into at least some vocabularies as part of Fuller's effort to circumvent ordinary language. In his "synergetic" approach to life, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and each object or process must be regarded as part of an enormous system. A new way of thinking requires a new way of communicating, and so biological organisms are now "locally interregenerative functions," weapons are "killingry artifacts," and dollars are "real-life support units." The last two are manipulated by an invisible army of "soulless supranational giants," a conglomerate composed of the American legal system, the multinational oil companies and the military-industrial complex - in short, Grunch.

Once one has untangled the language, the point of "Grunch of Giants" seems to be this: Throughout history divisiveness has been caused by the struggle for limited resources. In our own era, technological advances have obviated the need for such a struggle; we have "scientifically and incontrovertibly" found that there is enough to support everyone. Selfishness persists only because of the misconception that there is not enough to go around. On the contrary, Fuller argues here, only by combining our diverse strengths and working synergetically can we defeat Grunch and create a "worldover integrated techno-economic planetary society," a world state with a higher standard of living than ever before achieved by humankind.

There is a seductive appeal to Fuller's prophecy that technological change will constitute the world's first bloodless revolution. But in "Grunch of Giants" he amassed little new evidence to support the conclusion that we are moving inevitably toward a harmonious global state. Two of Fuller's earlier books, "Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth" and "Critical Path" (to which the present volume is a sequel), present the same case with somewhat greater cogency and lucidity, though his most original ideas are still contained in "Synergetics." There, in the simpler domain of tensegrities and geodesic domes, Buckminster Fuller's innovative language conveys innovative ideas. In the more complex world of economics and politics, it does little more than obscure thoughts already clouded. PREVIEWS & PREMISES By Alvin Toffler. 230 pp. New York: William Morrow & Co. \$11.95. By MARTHA BAYLES

Alvin Toffler has written two international best sellers, "Future Shock" and "The Third Wave," and he travels extensively, lecturing and meeting with all kinds of people involved in technological and social change. Holding that traditional political ideologies are obsolete, he carries on an argument with both the right and, as in this book, the left. "Previews & Premises" grows out of interviews between Mr. Toffler and a publishing collective in Boston, the South End Press.

The author, who has appeared on innumerable panels and talk shows, fields questions cleverly, coming off as more imaginative and flexible than his questioners, especially on such subjects as the structure of the workplace, race relations and the likelihood of high tech development under centralized socialist planning. It is refreshing to watch him cut through some of the outmoded assumptions of the left - for example, that heads of corporations are pleased to see widespread unemployment.

Sometimes Mr. Toffler seems enamored of change to the point of being cavalier about the present and the lessons of the past. He looks forward to a time when political power will be decentralized, or "demassified" into a mosaic of competing regions and interest groups. Yet he does not explain how this competition is to be arbitrated or what his future society will substitute for centralized planning.

Since his questioners share his dislike of Western political institutions, they do not press him on this matter - which is too bad, because politics is his area of greatest weakness. On one page he praises the Western democracies, particularly the United States, for being the only societies capable of adjusting to the technological revolution that they originated. On another page he sweepingly declares the obsolescence of these same political systems. The reader is left wondering how the new polity Mr. Toffler so vaguely envisions will cope with the social dislocation he so confidently predicts. SETTING THE TONE Essays and a Diary. By Ned Rorem. 383 pp. New York: Coward-McCann. \$18.95 By BARBARA SHULGASSER

Ned Rorem's "Final Diary," it turns out, was not. To add to the Paris, New York and other editions, we now have "Setting the Tone," more entries from the recidivist diarist and several fine articles on musical subjects. Mr. Rorem, a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, uses his diaries as a record of momentary observation intended for later release. "I always hesitate to speak my own name, feeling somehow that I am dropping it," he writes. But hesitation is a long way from abstention, and Ned Rorem continues to be the author's favorite subject. Whereas in the past he quoted tributes to his good looks, now he observes the inexorable damage of time: "Slim legs have turned skinny, though my shoulders remain good shaped."

"Setting the Tone" rings with opinionated descriptions of others. W.H. Auden is "the poet whose bourbon dribbled from an unshaved chin onto a maculate tie, from there into his lap, and thence down to his humid socks." He is kinder to Noel Coward, whose "chief barter" was charm, "the ability to ingratiate without cloying." But he is not kind at all to Truman Capote, who, he writes, looks like "that extraterrestrial embryo from the end of 'Close Encounters.' "

In the essays reprinted from various publications, Mr. Rorem's imagery is fresh and arresting. When he looks beyond himself to such subjects as Cosima Wagner as well as Auden and Coward, he is capable of providing canny insights, and he offers a particularly luminous essay on the music teacher extraordinaire Nadia Boulanger.

Why Mr. Rorem, with his considerable gift as an essayist, continues to publish the diaries is a puzzle. Editing a diary for publication can only sap its most intriguing aspect - the picture of a man with his guard down. Only for brief moments does the guard slip here. He is hurt by the criticism of his past diaries - pale invective next to the vituperation at which Mr. Rorem himself is so adept. "I cannot bear to have my sarcasms taken sarcastically," he writes. Well, he could keep them to himself.

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