

Salon I'd extended his reach, not severed the connection. And even as we headed into the second Bush term, when I interviewed him for *Salon* about *The Long Detour*, he was calling himself "a pathological optimist" and reminding me how much things had changed in his lifetime, and how much change was still possible: "You hear people in different movements saying how bad things are. 'We haven't won anything,' but that's crazy. Look at gays—look at television, where you have shows like 'Will and Grace' or the gay guys who make over the straight guys. Come on, look, it's a different world, it's a better world." He helped make it one, and I'm grateful to him.

Joan Walsh, a former staff writer of *In These Times*, is the editor of *Salon*.

A Generous Teacher

There are many measures of the man, but one that I have come to believe in over time is "generosity." More than anyone I've known, Jim gave meaning to that word.

Early in my tenure as managing editor of *In These Times*, he'd hand me the keys to his beloved Honda Accord whenever he ventured out of Chicago. After I married, he once loaned us his family's Manhattan co-op with its grand view of Central Park and collection of Impressionist paintings. When I told him a few years ago how much I enjoyed sunsets on the Great Lakes, he insisted that my family borrow his and Beth's weekend getaway in Lakeside, Michigan. We obliged. Four times.

He was at his most generous after he'd prevailed at a poker game the previous night. I'd inquire the next day, "How did you do?" More often than not, he would respond with a sly smile, "I'm taking you to lunch today." This happened so frequently over the 12 years we worked together that I lost

count. Yet I have not lost sight of the abiding lesson that Jimmy taught by his example: Hold on tight to your ideals but share everything else, no strings attached, with those around you. I, and scores of Jimmy's other protégés, are indebted to our teacher.

Sheryl Larson was *In These Times* managing editor from 1982 to 1993.

The Man Who Came to Dinner

When I started at *In These Times* as an intern in 1989, I wasn't far removed from my Republican childhood in upstate New York. What little I knew of the left I'd learned in a Marxist Thought class in college. My grade, a D-minus, was well deserved.

I was not a natural fit for a magazine edited by James Weinstein. Yet Jimmy welcomed me into *ITT*'s editorial offices. And when I began to go broke as an unpaid intern, he and Beth Maschinot let me live in their basement for free. It was a temporary arrangement that lasted seven years. Before long, I was a squatter at their kitchen table as well.

Raised on a diet of TV dinners and Potato Buds, I initially felt as out of place at Jimmy's table as I had at his magazine. For Jimmy was a wonderful cook. Fortunately, his cooking—like his politics—was totally unpretentious. Soon, I was addicted to his ceviche, and I ate it and many other dishes in quantities that were simply scandalous.

Jimmy proved as generous with his time as he did with his food. Plate in hand, I'd follow him into his study, where he'd pull a book from the shelves; not to score a scholarly point, but to help a kid whose politics were rooted in the rocky soil of the '80s understand how rich the legacy of the American left really was—to

help me see that the socialist mayors of Milwaukee and a hundred other U.S. towns had forged a politics as fully American as Ronald Reagan's, and far more serious about the ideals of liberty and justice.

This June, when I visited Jimmy for the last time, I was once again invited to raid the family refrigerator. As in the old days, I speedily devoured a bunch of Jimmy's favorite dishes. I cannot say that I took the time to savor the meals.

I sometimes fear that Jimmy's fine food was wasted on me. The lessons I learned at his table, however, will sustain me the rest of my life.

Jim McNeill, a former managing editor of *In These Times* and former editor of *The Racine Laborer*, works for unions and writes in *Washington, D.C.*

Hope and Politics

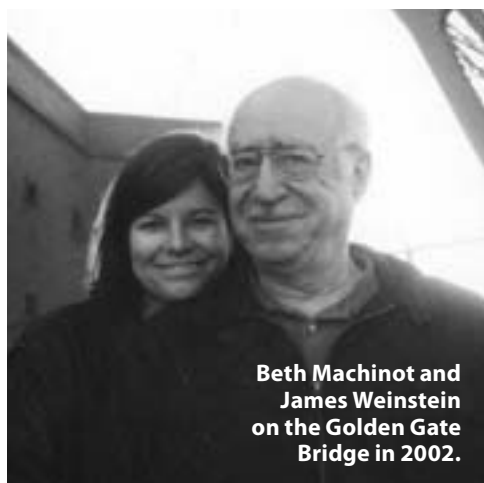
Jimmy understood people. When he decided to talk me into coming from Durham, N.C., to become the culture editor in 1997, he quickly figured out that the road to my heart was through my stomach. After years in the South, I missed the variety of people and foods of my hometown, Chicago. So when I flew up there to talk about the job, he took me for Thai, then Cuban, and for the next meal gave me a choice of seven ethnic groups. On the way to *ITT*, he pointed out how the signs suddenly changed from all Polish to all Spanish. "It's the Polish-Mexican border," he said.

For almost a year, I commuted from North Carolina, spending a week a month in Chicago, staying with Jimmy and Beth. They were good to me, generous. They fed me, made me feel at home, and we told each other our stories. Jimmy told of working in factories, joining the Communist Party, driving Julius Rosenberg, of his poker games, of starting *ITT*. He had more



Poker was an early and abiding love.

COURTESY OF BETH MASCHINOT



Beth Machinot and James Weinstein on the Golden Gate Bridge in 2002.

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and better adventures than most people or he told about them better or both.

The story of mine he liked best was about my father who had been a Chicago policeman. He thought it was pretty funny that Dad had worked undercover on the Red Squad in the '50s, keeping an eye on Communists.

Jimmy appreciated how everyone's story was full of twists. Paradoxes. That understanding must have been how he could rail about politics and maintain hope. And why his politics and his company were always so lively.

Pat Arnow, a former culture editor of *In These Times*, is a writer and photographer in New York.

A Socialist in the Age of Triangulation

I had my first glimmering that Jimmy Weinstein was special the first time I met him in the flesh. It was in the mid-'90s, in New York, a time before the fad for the Atkins Diets made what he was about to do seem unusual and even wondrous. He ordered a hamburger—I was used to people his age ordering salad with dressing on the side or “egg beaters” or dry toast or whatever—and he poured half a shaker of salt upon it. He did things his own way: a socialist in the Age of Triangulation.

I really knew Jimmy was special after I moved to Chicago. He had a book coming out and *In These Times* asked me to review it. I said I wasn't interested because I disagreed with it. He thought the Soviet experiment had some nobility in it and I thought it was shit from start to finish. Something extraordinary happened after that: Jimmy Weinstein sought me out as a

friend. This, it seemed, was the requirement: I was someone he knew he could argue with. Thinking about his life, that makes perfect sense. Setting up new staging grounds for arguments—*Studies on the Left*, *Socialist Review*. In *These Times*, the Modern Times bookstore in San Francisco or even a dinner in a Caribbean restaurant where he spun out scenarios for an America without a military-industrial complex in three easy steps while I sat across the table from him and made my case for why that would make the economy collapse—was his life's work from the beginning to the end. I can't think of a calling more noble.

Rick Perlstein is the author most recently of *The Stock Ticker* and *The Superjumbo*.

Farewell Songs

A couple of years ago, Jimmy enrolled in a Spanish language program in Oaxaca, Mexico. He proudly told me that he packed so lightly he didn't need to check his bag at the airport. He could have stayed at a fancy hotel; instead, he chose to board with a family roommate and all. He had a great time and true to himself he only complained about his landlady's cooking skills. “Not a cook,” he said in his blunt way. Jimmy's frugality, his unpretentious personal style, was consistent with his ideology. I found his Old Left politics comfortingly familiar, a connection to the European left I came from. Yes, he could be dogmatic, but his no-non-sense clarity, his uncompromising commitment to placing class at the center of the social change agenda was refreshing in the too-often unfocused climate of the American left.

A few weeks before he died, while I sat with him so Beth could take a break, he and I spent the afternoon singing songs of the Spanish Civil War to each other. A fitting farewell.

Teresa Prados Torreira teaches American history at Columbia College, Chicago.

Jimmeth

The name James always seemed like a misnomer; he was Jimmy Weinstein to those who knew him. His spirit was a little too playful for James. I called him “Jimmeth”. For me, that nickname captured his unique style: humor and rigor. Or was it rigorous humor? Whatever it was, Jimmy could bend you over in a

belly laugh with a humorous aside and then straighten you up with a devastating critique of foreign policy—all in the same sentence.

Jimmy was an avid anti-dogmatist. In fact, I think it was our mutual aversion to dogma that first attracted me to my writing. I was an ideological oddity: a former Black Panther, a former editor of *Muhammad Speaks* and a former news writer for the Associated Press—juxtaposed between black nationalism, the secular left and the journalistic mainstream. By the early '80s, I had reached the conclusion it was my duty to debunk dogma in all of its guises. Jimmy, who had long been weary of dogma, read one of my debunking articles, realized we shared sensibilities and offered me a job. Obviously, he was comfortable with odd juxtapositions. Although a man of the universalist left, Jimmy understood the lure and limited value of black nationalism for African Americans. Almost alone among progressive publications, *In These Times* has continuously examined the race-class dialectic of left politics. Jimmy's contribution to the progressive movement is a large one. For me, he was a sagacious mentor and a kindred spirit—where he remains.

Salim Muwakkil is a senior editor of *In These Times*.

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Jimmy pets a burro in San Martin, Mexico, 2002.