

# Oregon Socialist

<http://www.thesocialistparty.org/spo/index.html>

## **Hunter Gray** by Michael C. Marino

We have been printing articles by Hunter Gray (and there are more to come), but he was never really introduced. The letter here, by his son John Salter III, originally sent to a newspaper in Mississippi, tells the tale.

## **2005 Convention** by Michael C. Marino

The SPUSA will be holding its bi-annual convention in October in Newark, New Jersey. The number of well-organized caucus groups may prove to create an interesting outcome this year. Contact us if interested in being a delegate.

## **2005 Winter**

- **Mike by Anna Shockley**
- **Hunter Gray by John Salter III**
- **International Women's Day**
- **International Women's Day Chronology**

## **Mississippi, Don't Forget** by John Salter III

Mississippi, I'm sorry to report that you have been forsaking one of your champions.

You may or may not remember my father. In Jackson in the early 1960s he was known variously as John Salter, agitator, the "mustard man" at the Woolworth's sit-in, friend and colleague of Medgar Evers, Tougaloo professor, target for police clubs (successful), target for Klan bullets (unsuccessful), organizer of the Jackson boycott, race traitor, firebrand, rabble-rouser, hero. My father went on from Jackson to fight the good fight in North Carolina, Chicago, New York, Arizona, Iowa, Washington state, North Dakota, and elsewhere. Now it isn't the Klan out to get him, but Systemic Lupus. Aptly taking the Latin name for wolf, Lupus is a chronic, usually fatal disease in which the body's organs wage war against each other. My father is a warrior but this is a tough one to win. Some days his feet are planks. Some days his hands are rendered useless claws. But his soul and mind are strong and even in this state he's doing what he can to leave the world in better shape than when he arrived.

I was with my father in 1979 when he spoke at a Civil Rights retrospective at Millsaps. I was sitting in the audience next to Professor Jim Silver who, along with hundreds of others, gave my father a standing ovation. Silver needed a cane to get to his feet but that didn't stop him from paying homage to this man. Unfortunately, for a quarter of a century we haven't heard much from your neck of the woods. A few years ago, my father changed his last name to Gray, the name his father was born with but held for only a short time before being adopted by the Salters. Mississippians, perhaps more than people in other parts, will understand the importance of honoring one's ancestry. And, I hope, you will understand the importance of paying tribute to those who helped make your history. You can learn much more about my father and his role in Mississippi by visiting his extensive website, [www.hunterbear.org](http://www.hunterbear.org), or by reading his book, *Jackson, Mississippi: An American Chronicle of Struggle and Schism*.

Cordially,  
John R. Salter III  
Glyndon, Minnesota

## Mike

by Anna Shockley

(A shorter, edited version of this article originally appeared in *Socialist Women*)

To my Brother

My husband was playing a CD I'd never heard before. I asked him what it was and why he had it, and he said: "That's Warren Zevon. He died recently. I've always liked him, and I got it because I thought that when people know they are going to die, they produce art."

I think when people know they are going to die, they make sure to do that which is most important to them.

My best friend, my chosen brother, Mike Avey thought that he would not live to be old. Both of his parents had died of broken aneurysm, his father at 56 and his mother at 64. He always knew that he could die at any time, and that knowledge pervaded all of his actions. The urgency with which he attacked any task sometimes got on my nerves, because it made him appear demanding and impatient.

Often, doing political organizing, I would not want to push too hard. I'd back off when someone told me he was too busy to do what I asked. Mike would ask, in exasperation: "You can get him to do it, right now! Why won't you?" I'd tell him that I was being reasonable, making allies, that maybe in five years my patience would come in handy - and he'd give me a dirty look and say: "Well, I won't see that."

It was depressing, sometimes. But often his attitude was exhilarating and contagious: let's do it now, while we can. I was happy with him, because he was always ready for action, always ready to think and to take on a new project joyously.

His senses were sharpened. He never wasted any time; he went to the bottom of every issue, of every relationship, immediately. At first, I felt

constantly on trial. Everything I said or did was likely to be analyzed: "Anna, these, I think, are your motivations." It was disconcerting. But, never one to waste time, when we had been friends for only a little while he started saying I love you; we are a team; we can do anything, together.

I was told that's what this issue is dedicated to: love. I thought of Mike, because I have never met another person who loved as loyally or as unconditionally as he did.

But the kind of love I did not know and which I hope to have learned from him was his unquestioning, unconditional love for all those he thought of as his people - ALL working people, ALL poor people, ALL people of color and women and immigrants like myself - even those who disagreed with him, who made mistakes, who responded to their situations by becoming apathetic or dishonest. The only ones he shut out of his heart were those who would abuse us to make a profit, silence our voices, prevent us from participating in the political process. Those people - CEOs of corporations which break unions and profit from sweatshop labor, politicians who pass anti-labor, anti-choice, and anti-fusion laws, the COINTELPRO agents who tried to get him killed - he hated with a passion that frightened me. I think he was lucky to survive the 70s.

I've been talking to Karen, who was his friend and partner then. She reminded me that when Mike was very small and his view of the world was forming, his father was a student. That was central to his life: Daddy is in college; daddy is going to be a lawyer. Going to college, learning, was a good idea. But daddy had serious problems, and pretty soon, he left. So Mike grew up a poor, working class child, raised by a single mother on the wages of a supermarket cashier.

His mother moved her small family to Greenhills, an experimental community near Cincinnati, Ohio, which was built by the Federal government in the 1930s and was basically an experiment in socialism. Karen told me about visiting her there

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when they were students together. The story left me with images of garden spaces, affordable housing alternating with more expensive homes, community centers and kids playing in the street. They were images of a childhood marked by poverty and conflict, by love and egalitarianism.

He accepted what was good of that life - with all his heart and into his soul, and he rejected what was bad. He loved women, working people, poor people, learning, equality, town meetings, cats, gardens. He fell in love with the Bill of Rights when he read it at 13, and he would spend his life campaigning to keep it from being eroded.

When we discussed organizing the UCP, my approach initially was to say: "This is what is right, this is how to feel about certain issues: We want free health care and education for everyone, a living wage, reproductive freedom,..." I figured we'd test people on those issues and accept or reject them according to how they did on the test.

That is not how Mike approached recruitment. He thought that we were the guardians of a precious tool in the form of a ballot line, and it was our job to make that tool available to those who are disenfranchised. "Relax," he told me, "quit being a gatekeeper. Just be honest about what you believe in."

This February, Mike had an angioplasty done and found out his heart was in pretty good shape, that his pain was due to stress. The day we heard that verdict was one of the happiest of my life. He was radiant, elated. For the first time, he began dreaming of watching his two-year-old daughter graduate from high school.

Soon afterwards, he began calling up old friends and former colleagues, emailing old lovers, reestablishing connections. He gave me books and tapes, made sure I knew about the cats' shots, about his dreams for his daughter and for our party. He showed me where he kept his research, and he told everyone in his life what we meant to him. He gave me another copy of the book he wrote, with an inscription that still makes me cry.

He died five months ago. An aneurysm broke in his brain.

He was 56.

I was told that it gets easier, that there comes a time when the pain fades into the background, when you can remember the good times without crying and laugh about the funny ones. I am ready for that time. I wish I could be happy to have known him, instead of remembering, every minute of every day, that he won't see his daughter grow up and that I will never hear his voice again.

A big part of me is missing and can't be replaced. But I am beginning to feel an even larger part of my brother in my soul and in every fiber of my being, and I know it will be there until I die.

I think I understand the connection he felt with all people. As one of his many presents to me, along with giving me his books, his prized succulents and orchids, and now his cat, he was trying to teach me that all people deserve a voice and that if people make bad decisions it is because they don't have all of the information they need to be able to make good ones. The thought gives me hope, but it also reminds me that even if we have more than a few years to live we have no time to waste.

## International Women's Day

International Women's Day (8 March) is celebrated by progressive organizations, commemorated at the United Nations, and designated in many countries as a national holiday.

International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history; it is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing with men.

The idea of an International

Women's Day first arose at the turn of the century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies.

A brief timeline for IWD follows.

## International Women's Day: A Chronology

**1909** In accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day was observed across the United States on 28 February. Women continued to celebrate it on the last Sunday of that month through 1913.

**1910** The Socialist International, meeting in Copenhagen, established a Women's Day to honour the movement for women's rights and to assist in achieving universal suffrage for women. The proposal was greeted with unanimous approval by the conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, which included the first three women elected to the Finnish parliament. No fixed date was selected.

**1911** International Women's Day was marked for the first time (19 March) in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, where more than one million women and men attended rallies. In addition to the right to vote and to hold public office, they demanded the right to work, to vocational training and to an end to job discrimination.

**1913-1914** As part of the peace movement brewing on the eve of World War I, Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. Elsewhere in Europe, on or around 8 March of the following year, women held rallies either to protest the war or to express solidarity with their sisters.

**1917** With 2 million Russian soldiers dead in the war, Russian women again chose the last Sunday in February to strike for "bread and peace". Political leaders opposed the timing of the strike, but the women went on anyway. The rest is history: Four days later the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional Government granted women the right to vote. That historic Sunday fell on 23 February on the Julian calendar then in use in Russia, but on 8 March on the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere.

International Women's Day has grown into a global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. Increasingly, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change, and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

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