

Many have written about Larry Hansen's passion for democracy. He was the hidden life force responsible for the birth or sustenance of who knows how many organizations, of which mine was one. His contributions to our country and its civil society were substantial. But to think of Larry only in these terms does not begin to capture what made him special, why he was so able to energize the people around him. Larry's love of democracy was a private virtue for him as well as a public stance. He and I often disagreed – just as he might disagree with others whose work he supported. That was part of the fun – to encourage people to think and talk. Civil discourse for Larry was not only about process. These conversations were ends in themselves, among life's reasons for being. Some my greatest pleasures these past dozen years have involved spending a couple of hours alone with Larry, sipping a few and swapping stories – often about politics and history, but also about personal hopes and anxieties. We didn't do it often enough, and I would not pretend to have been an intimate. But he was a real friend. As another of his friends wrote to me in a private communication this week, we'll raise a glass together in Larry's memory when we meet next. And as we are sipping, we'll continue the conversation about democracy.

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