Fifty days of Carter: half the honeymoon

By William Lasser

Today is the fiftieth day of Jimmy Carter's already unique Presidency, and the mark of the milestone is not entirely unskilled in dealing with the national and international bureaucracy. He has shown an unfortunate tendency towards an intolerance in the field of foreign policy, not recognizing, for example, the inevevitability of coups de grace. It is a discerning balance that governments are not prepared to fall. Rarely did a student miss his 9:30am lecture. His son was Jeff Pressman. He always found time for the show and never reneged on a commitment. On the above, he was easily the Kansas City to cover the Republican convention a month later. These two experiences were ones which he would not forget and they were both due to Jeff Pressman. In 1975, Pressman attended law school in New York. I kept in close touch with Jeff throughout the presidential campaign and spent New Year's Eve together with his family and friends. On New Year's, the private life of Jeff Pressman revealed the same lack of reasonable activities that he exhibited in his public life. At the end of January, I asked Jeff to write me a letter of recommendation for a summer job in Washington. On February 14, I visited Boston and had lunch with him and a few colleagues of mine. He didn't seem like the jovial Jeff Pressman I knew and he told me of a constant pain that was in his back. He had seen many doctors but none of them could relieve the pain. Two days later I called Jeff to thank him for the summer job recommendation. That was the last time I was to talk with Jeff Pressman.

Jeff Pressman passed away on the evening, exactly one year after the disastrous results of the Massachusetts primary which saw Birch Bayh go down in defeat. It is also ironic that on this sad Tuesday, 50 years ago, I received a phone call from Washington; the job that Jeff recommended me for came through. Jeff Pressman had the rare ability of being able to combine scholastic and humanistic qualities and brought out the best in those people he knew. He stimulated an interest in the field of policy and his friendly attitude made him a great political scientist in the country. Jeff Pressman was a great teacher, a good friend, and a great human being. He will be missed. He will be more than any young political scientist in the country.