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Ruth Wall's memories of John Lewis after his death

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I first met John Lewis in 1980 and that meeting led to deep friendship with John, his wife, Lillian, and their son, John Miles. I fell in love with John Lewis and all he stood for and he would become an important part of my life, an important friend of Inman Park, intown neighborhoods, the City, the State, and the country.

When John ran for a city-wide seat on the Atlanta City Council in 1981, we hosted several campaign parties at our Hurt Street house to help John's campaign and introduce him to neighbors. We were thrilled that John won and would represent Inman Park.

As our city councilperson, John supported the neighborhoods during the 10-year battle against construction of the parkway that would have destroyed intown historic neighborhoods. John was not swayed by pressure from former president Jimmy Carter or Mayor Andy Young. John always supported his friends and constituents and fought for what was right.

In 1986, John was elected to the US House of Representatives and we all took the train to Washington DC to witness John's swearing in. Forty people took over the train and the club car, ate homemade Jambalaya (made by my husband, Wayne Wall), and had an all-night party. After being sworn into Congress, John was appointed to the Appropriations Committee. John asked Inman Park to host a brunch for the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee to be held at our house on Hurt Street. John invited the Commissioner of GA DOT and top officials in GA and Atlanta to attend. Bloody Mary's accompanied the discussion of one topic - stopping the road through our intown neighborhoods. John taught us how to "get in good trouble".

John was so thrilled at the parties that Inman Park threw for him that he asked us to fly to Washington DC and throw a party at the Democratic headquarters. We jumped on a plane, along with Deacon Burton, his well-seasoned cast iron skillets, pot & pans, and the ingredients for a "Southern Fried Chicken and Mint Julep Party" for all the Congressional Democrats. This was so successful, we returned for parties over the next 3 years.

During the 1988 Democratic Convention in Atlanta, John asked me to organize and host an event in Inman Park. We called it "Victorian Nights - Victorious Days". Forty members of Congress and a multitude of friends attended. We closed Elizabeth Street, had homes on tour, served Mint Juleps and hors d'oeuvres, held a Victorian Parade with 2 bands as neighbors and children were adorned in Victorian attire. Our famous chef, Deacon Burton, drove a horse & carriage with Honorable John and Lillian Lewis smiling and waving to all. Press attending were CBS Dan Rather, NBC Harry Smith, 60 Minutes Ed Bradley, AJC, Washington Post and USA Today. There was also a brunch for all the dignitaries at our house on Hurt Street with my husband, Wayne Wall, once again serving his famous Jambalaya and Bloody Mary's.

Every year at the Inman Park Festival, John, Lillian, and their son, John Miles parked at our Hurt Street house to attend the annual festival parade party where they would meet with elected officials, old friends, neighbors, and many of his constituents. Often, John would be in the parade laughing, waving, shaking hands, and hugging everyone along the parade route.

We all have favorite memories of John, the gentle warrior, the extraordinary human

and again at the taping of his story at the Atlanta History Center, "I love Inman Park and Inman Park loves me".

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When John died, part of Inman Park died. Certainly, a huge part of me died. I will miss my early morning phone conversations with John, just like I miss my friendship with Lillian Lewis since her death in 2012. They are both gone but live on in the hearts of Inman Park.

Ruth Wall and Cathy Bradshaw
Inman Park neighbors for a combined 80 years

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