

# CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

## Conversations with Bill Kristol

**Guest:** Steven Hayward, professor, University of California, Berkeley

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**I: On Ronald Reagan (00:15 – 29:33)**

KRISTOL: Welcome to CONVERSATIONS. I'm Bill Kristol, and I'm very proud to be joined today by my friend Steve Hayward, now teaching constitutional law and political science at the University of California, Berkeley.

HAYWARD: I'm going to be an inmate for the next three years there.

KRISTOL: That's excellent. When you were a grad student at Claremont, did you expect to end up as a distinguished professor at Berkeley?

HAYWARD: Not in my wildest imagination.

KRISTOL: Congratulations on that appointment. Author of many books, articles, all of them valuable, on a wide diversity of topics. I guess, most famously, your two-volume – I would almost say definitive – study on [The Age of Reagan](#). Which came out when?

HAYWARD: Well, the first volume was 2001 – actually arrived at bookstores on September 10, 2001. The second volume took a little longer and came out in 2009. I had wanted it to be one volume; it grew to two, as these things sometimes do.

KRISTOL: How did you decide – I'll begin with that, since that's such an important – I highly recommend that book to all viewers. But tell us, how'd you come to write it?

HAYWARD: There were two inspirations for it. One was, I had a premonition in the early 90s, for a bunch of reasons, that Edmund Morris's biography would be a disappointment. I didn't think it would be crazy, as it turned out to be. I just thought it would be narrow in scope and wouldn't capture the fullness of the Reagan story, wouldn't put him in proper context.

That's why I thought there was going to be room for another major work that put Reagan on a larger canvas, in the style of Churchill's *Marlborough* or, I think – you know, my model biography for an American is Lord Charnwood's [biography of Lincoln](#), which is 100 years old and I still think the best biography of Lincoln if you want to understand the fullness of Lincoln's political impact. And I was right about Morris; Morris wasn't really interested in American politics, and I think that's the key of the defects of the book. I think Reagan is most interesting in the context of this political ideas and his political life, more than his personal life.

I think, as an actor, he is no more interesting than any other Hollywood celebrity, really. And that's a dying art of writing, what I call the "analytical narrative." Academic historians don't do it anymore.

Journalists do it, but I don't think they get the interpretation right – it's just a series of facts. My literary models are people like William Manchester, whose biographies of Churchill are the most popular with readers, even though Martin Gilbert's, maybe, is better in a lot of ways. Or John Lukacs, the Hungarian historian, writes in that same style. Paul Johnson, of course.

But that's about it, and I thought there was room for that kind of book about Reagan.

KRISTOL: And *The Age of Reagan* implies – I guess that's modeled, is that, on Arthur Schlesinger's *The Age of Jackson*? Is that –

HAYWARD: Well, *The Age of Jackson* and *The Age of Roosevelt*. This was partly payback, right? The first volume of Schlesinger's famous unfinished work, really, was *The Crisis of the Old Order*, and it was really was a partisan attack on Republicans in the 1920s.

Schlesinger was a really graceful writer and capable, at times, of some real insight, I think – especially [The Vital Center](#) book in the 50s. But you know, those books were kind of partisan. I didn't want to write a partisan book, but I wanted to write in that similar style that made the case for Reagan. I mean, I'm sympathetic but not uncritical. So I called the first volume of mine *The Crisis of the Old Liberal Order*. So payback, right? Turnabout is fair play.

KRISTOL: And *The Age of Reagan* implies that he wasn't just one interesting figure who had the presidency for X years and then...somehow he did shape an age.

HAYWARD: I think that's right. You know, I think even liberals – most interestingly, Richard Reeves, who's always disliked Reagan and then wrote a fairly complimentary biography of him around 1999 or 2000, I think, or maybe 2004. What he said there was, "Oh boy, I got Reagan wrong." And, in fact, Bill Clinton had to join the "Reagan Revolution," he said. Which is a little bit exaggerated, but not entirely, right? Bill Clinton understood that liberalism – it took him a while to figure this out – but liberalism was still on probation, so he had to go for free trade, capital gains tax cuts, certain other measures, balanced budgets.

KRISTOL: Tough on crime.

HAYWARD: Tough on crime, exactly. So that's, I think you can say that "The Age of Reagan" extended – of course, you had "the Gingrich Revolution" and so forth. I think you can say "The Age of Reagan" extended in the same way that Roosevelt and the New Deal had the long reign in American politics. Then, as our friend Michael Barone likes to point out, the high tide of the New Deal, in certain ways, was not until the late 50s when the Democrats had some of their really big election victories in the House and Senate, and that's what you saw with Republicans.

Republicans didn't finally capture the House until the mid-1990s, and then, you know, only the last decade have you had Republican control of both Houses a couple of times.

KRISTOL: That's interesting.

HAYWARD: If I add a plot, you know, one of Reagan's biggest problems that became apparent when I wrote the book is the fact that he didn't control the Senate, sorry, control the House, was a big problem for him, obviously. But even Republican control of the Senate was not a sure thing for him because, in those days, you had – I think, by my count – 16 moderate or liberal Republican senators, and he often complained in his diaries that Republicans were bigger problems to him than the Democrats.

You know, he'd say unkind things about [Sens.] Mark Hatfield, Bob Packwood, Mac Mathias – what's-his-name, from Connecticut – Lowell Weicker. In his diary, he called him a "no-good, pompous fat-head." Even that story showed that Reagan was ahead of his party and ahead of his times, in certain ways.

KRISTOL: Everyone appeals to Reagan on the conservative side, the Republican side of the aisle appeals to Reagan these days – or at least, until very recently; maybe until Trump was the Republican nominee, who doesn't talk much about Reagan, I guess. Do people have him basically right? What's your sense of that? You wouldn't expect liberals to get Reagan right, but what about the conservatives?

HAYWARD: Mixed feelings about this. On the one hand, it's nice to see Reagan vindicated. Especially if you're old enough, as I am, to remember all the Republicans, including mainstream conservatives like Bob Dole, who thought he would be a disaster for the party. Bob Dole fought him a lot, right, from the Senate. Thought he would lose, or, if he won, he would be a disaster in the White House. So now, everyone wants to be a "Reaganite Republican."

On the other hand, an awful lot of people who nowadays claim to be 'following the legacy of Reagan,' to my mind, have spent very little time studying him closely to realize why he was so successful. It wasn't just that he was optimistic about America – that's sort of the Sean Hannity talking point, unfortunately. It was a lot more than that. He was a very disciplined person, thought carefully and seriously about his political rhetoric, worked very hard – and part of his hard work and discipline was concealing how hard he worked, right? That was part of his shtick about, "They say hard work never killed anybody, but I say 'Why take chances?'" Right? That was part of the old line that people always understood, that he believed that being underestimated could be to his advantage, so he did play that very well.

KRISTOL: And that was truly self-conscious.

HAYWARD: I'm absolutely convinced that was very self-conscious. We know from the documents that have come out how much he would mark up documents, how much of his own writing he did. Things like writing his own talking points for some of the Soviet Summits, just sort of ignoring what the State Department sent him and impressing his own people who were worried about it, right?

In particular, I just want to mention one thing about his rhetoric. Most of the Republican candidates go around – except for, conspicuously, Donald Trump – saying that they are "conservatives": "We're conservative Republicans; we need conservative policies." That plays to the base, plays to you and me. Reagan almost never talked about how he was a conservative for general audiences. He would before the Conservative Political Action Conference, but he usually always talked about how he represented common sense views that everyone should agree with. He would have never made a remark like the 47 percent remark that doomed Mitt Romney; he didn't think that way, he would never have talked that way. So that shows, I think, some insight and some skill at rhetoric. He said at the very beginning – in his first race for governor in 1966, in California – he said, "Look, Democrats outnumber Republicans by at least one million voters in California; that means I can't win with just Republicans, I've got to appeal to a lot of Democrats."

I think the subtleties of the man – the discipline of him, the depth of his thinking, how much reading he did – I think that's missing or not appreciated by a lot of people today who look to him, rightly, as a great model to follow. As I say, haven't done their homework.

KRISTOL: It's so interesting because he was the most, I suppose, ideological, you might say, president. Maybe the most ideological nominee, really, of the Republican Party in modern times. I was about to say yet. But maybe "yet" is not the right – whatever part of speech is that, whatever that is – transition, I mean. And he was also disciplined and very conscious that you couldn't just run as an ideological conservative. Maybe he learned that from stumping for Goldwater, who got clobbered, but maybe he knew it before, I don't know. It's an interesting point that the two don't, that the two can go together. Strong convictions, you know, taking on the mainstream of your own party, in some ways, but also being quite subtle and disciplined about how to make your pitch to the electorate at large.

HAYWARD: I think it also bears mentioning that he was never a “checklist conservative.” By that I mean, he had a very independent streak to him. I think, by the way, that marks out people like him and Churchill – who was also distrusted by his party, remember? He had a very independent, idiosyncratic conservatism.

Think of one of the famous things he liked to say. He loved quoting Tom [Thomas] Paine – to say, “We have it in our power to make the world over again.” Tom Paine “the radical,” right? Reagan once explained that, back in the 60s, he said actually, “Tom Paine is today’s conservative; it’s liberals who have given up on various aspects of freedom and what not.” That statement used to drive people like Russell Kirk and George Will out of their minds. George of course, who loved Reagan, but George Will wrote “That’s the most un-conservative sentiment imaginable. Anytime, anywhere, that is nonsense.”

You know Reagan’s gravestone, at the Reagan library, says “I know in my heart that mankind is good.” Well, that’s not quite the view that Madison lays out in, I think, *Federalist 55*, about the mixed character – “venal,” but also there’s some things that make republican government possible. That was very different from your traditional, more doer, Russell Kirk-style “Burkean conservatism,” I think.

Reagan was very imaginative on policy terms. Remember that the “Kennedy tax cut,” which is now conservative orthodoxy, Barry Goldwater was against it. Most Republicans were against it. It went against fiscal orthodoxy. When Reagan ran in ’76, he ran as an old-fashioned budget cutter, and that turned out to be a problem for him. Then by 1980, he grabbed on to the “Kemp-Roth Tax Cut,” instantly understood the logic of it, explained it exceedingly well, and when the rest of the Republican establishment was still very doubtful about that idea. You could see Reagan’s imagination and facility at work.

There is one moment in the famous debate with Jimmy Carter – everyone remembers “there you go again” – but there is a moment in the middle, when Jimmy Carter says “Governor Reagan wants to have this inflationary tax cut that would be terrible for the budget and everything.” And you know, “Governor, your response?” And Reagan just asked a rhetorical question, but it showed that he understood economic logic so well. He said, “I don’t understand why it is that if I let people keep and spend their own money, it’s inflationary, but it’s not inflationary if you take it and spend it.” Boom, right? He has no answer for that. Plus, he got to say that last, and it’s a very effective answer.

KRISTOL: I think the imagination is a very good point. I hadn’t really thought about that. The degree to which he – and people say, “Well, he was a conventional, sort of ‘Bob Dole Republican’. Economics in ’76, and Kemp persuaded him in 1980, or he saw it was politically advantageous or something, and switched.” The willingness to switch, not simply for political reasons, I think, but because he persuaded himself that it was, for policy reasons, it was the right thing to do. A combination probably of policy and politics. And, I think, that’s true on a bunch of issues for Reagan.

HAYWARD: Yeah. No, that’s another point.

KRISTOL: His conservatism was fresh, really, in 1980; it wasn’t simply a Xerox of “The Conservative Movement.” It does disservice to Reagan to think about it that way.

HAYWARD: I think that’s right. He was way out ahead of people. I think, in foreign policy, there is a really good example of his prudence in the high sense of the word, but also his consistency. This is something that has made me grumpy for a while. The great liberal revisionism about Reagan is “Well, he was great on the Cold War, was terrible at home, but the Cold War was great. But it was only great because he changed his mind and became an old-fashioned devotee of détente in his second term.”

And if you look closely, I think that’s completely wrong. I think what you see is him appreciating the change in circumstances. He didn’t immediately trust or believe Gorbachev was a potential partner, but he came to believe fairly quickly, having met him, that this might work. And as late as 1988 – I note this in

the book – Reagan gave a very tough speech in Springfield, Massachusetts in, I think, March or April, about a month before he was going Moscow. Essentially, he gave the “evil empire speech” all over again in its content, and about what our strategy was, and why it was bearing fruit.

Well, it infuriated Gorbachev. George Shultz arrived in Moscow the next day, and Gorbachev was absolutely apoplectic about it. So the point is, you can see the consistency of Reagan’s thought – so we trust, “trust but verify” – and it was a complicated scene about arms control. But you know, Reagan said all along “I’m willing to make a deal if they ever get somebody in there who’s willing to make a deal,” on our terms.

KRISTOL: Well, his hostility to nuclear weapons, the devotion to the Strategic Defense Initiative – that was not conservative or hawkish. Or conservative foreign policy establishment orthodoxy. It all drove people crazy, I think. Not crazy, but they were unhappy about it.

HAYWARD: This has been known for a while, though it’s forgotten. An awful lot of people who you might otherwise think would be for the idea were very unenthusiastic. Cap [Caspar] Weinberger initially did not think this was a good idea. David Stockman hated it because he just saw budget problems. The Joint Chiefs thought this would upset the apple cart. Reagan was all by himself on that. George Shultz was trying to talk him out of making that proposal a half an hour before he went on the air to give it, he was so opposed to it.

KRISTOL: What moved Reagan in that case, do you think?

HAYWARD: The story goes back so many years. He thought there was something literally mad about the “MAD doctrine,” mutual assured destruction. He said this is no way to live. There’s got to be a defensive system for this.

When people like Edward Teller and others came to him, and also Secretary of the Navy – whose name I’m forgetting right now, which I shouldn’t because he was a friend of my dad’s – proposed this idea to him. Actually, it was the – serving flag officer. I’m forgetting names in middle age. Anyway, they persuaded him that we now had the technology available to make this happen.

It is worth noticing in the speech – again, read these things carefully – that he didn’t think this was something that could be developed right away, he had like a 20-year time-horizon in mind. That all got forgotten in attacks on it. “Star Wars,” they called it, you know, in attacks from the media and Ted Kennedy. But he always said this was a long-term project. And, guess what? It took about 20 years to finally deploy some systems. Not as fully as we could have or should do, but at least, it did sort of play out something in the way he thought it would.

KRISTOL: Israel is knocking down – not the most advanced missiles, but at least rockets that are coming. It’s actually changed the strategic calculus there. I don’t think anyone thought that was possible when he gave that speech.

I always thought that was kind of genius on his part; in the sense, there was something debilitating for conservatism about having to be “better dead than red.” You know, “The nuclear balance is what we need. We need an ever stronger nuclear deterrent.” (Which is fine with me). But there was a tough-minded posture – it was better than the alternative, I think, of appeasement or concessions to the Soviets. But there was something you just couldn’t – was that really, ultimately the vision we had for the next 20, 50 years? Just mutual assured destruction?

In that sense I think SDI – plus his belief that the Soviet Union could fall apart, that you could undermine it. A) He happened to be right when most of us thought he wasn’t; I certainly didn’t think he was when I got to Washington in ’85, ’86. I thought it was kind of wishful thinking. I think politically, and even more, in a deeper way, it was very important to have that vision, you know? And give it some concreteness.

Obviously, he couldn't be sure it would work out, but it did turn – I don't know. Somehow it was too hard for conservatives to just, you know –

HAYWARD: Absolutely right. I think most of our friends, and our fathers, and other people, they thought the Cold War was going to be here to stay. That was Henry Kissinger's view. We're just going to have to figure out how to manage this because the Soviet Union, the point is from a political science point of view, this a durable form of rule.

And Reagan instinctively thought that was wrong. He said at one point in the 70s, he said something Churchill had said back around 1920, the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, "This is an unnatural form of government, it can't possibly last." That's what Reagan thought – it's fundamentally weak. The way he would put it, something like this, I forget exact quotes, but something like 'they have lots of missiles, but they can't make corn flakes.'

That means they have to be fundamentally brittle. There were raging debates about "all right, if we think that" – a lot of people weren't sure – "how do you make a policy for that?" That took quite a while to start to crystalize with things like SDI, but also, let's squeeze them economically and call them names.

KRISTOL: Support freedom fighters –

HAYWARD: He turned out to be right about that. He loved to collect the jokes; you can see these on YouTube. He loved telling jokes about the dysfunction of the Soviet Union, and he would tell these jokes to Gorbachev.

If you think about the famous "Westminster Speech" in 1982, where he talked about "the dimensions of the failure are staggering" – who talks about another superpower that way in the modern world? It's really an extraordinarily offensive thing to say, and contemptuous. Several times, especially their first summit, Gorbachev would say "we get the feeling that you really don't respect us that much." That was true. Reagan would always reassure him; Reagan always knew how to balance pressing hard and arguing with being conciliatory, I think. He had a sense of that, I think, from his days in negotiating in Hollywood on labor agreements, and in Sacramento when he was governor, he would negotiate directly with the legislature about welfare reform and lots of things. He was very shrewd that way. His fundamental insight turned out to be correct.

But even he didn't think, he said the day the Berlin Wall came down, he went on "Nightline" that night – a forgotten interview – and he said, "I always thought it wouldn't last, but I didn't think it would end this quickly."

KRISTOL: Is that right? I forgot he did that interview. It's great that he had the chance to do that. I think that's right. Conservatives, in a way, are too conservative with a little "c," and they sort of have internalized the, mostly correct, lesson that "you can't be wishful, things aren't going to just change because you want them to change. Life is rough, things often go downhill instead of getting better." But then, when Reagan said no – in this case it's not just wishful thinking, there really is a problem with this regime that can be exploited. He turned out to be more right than more traditional conservatives.

HAYWARD: I think the lesson for today would be, the problems we're having with radical Islam and the Islamic world, is there a parallel there? I'm not sure there is, that's not exact, but I think that's what conservatives ought to be thinking about in the current situation.

KRISTOL: I totally agree with that. People are much too fatalistic. In reaction to liberal idiocy of, you know – "religion of peace, there's no problem at all. It's like six people off to the side, but the religion has no issues." The conservative reaction is "it's a nightmare, it's horrible, it can't be fixed, and somehow it's going to magically disappear, I suppose, or be extirpated in some ghastly way." I very much agree with

that. People underestimate the chance for big changes. I suppose a secular regime is a little different from religion, so you have to think that through.

The other thing I was struck by, and you stress this in your book – I always try to do this when I give speeches, I don't know it 1/10th as well, 1/100th as well as you – He was such a risk taker in his own political career. Gives a speech for Goldwater in '64, surely people must have told him, "Is that really a prudent campaign?" To invest everything in there, in October of '64? He's about to lose by 20 points.

Then he runs for governor, you'll know the facts better than I do – runs for governor in '66 in California, against the front-runner in the primary who was –

HAYWARD: George Christopher, the mayor of San Francisco. Now stop for a minute, and contemplate a Republican mayor of San Francisco in our lifetime.

KRISTOL: Fantastic. But well respected, right? Sort of next in line, and he's going to be the guy running against the incumbent Pat Brown, and Reagan clobbers him in the primary. But I don't think that was obvious, right? I mean, if you had picked up the *LA Times* or the *San Francisco Chronicle* in early 1966, I'm not sure people were saying "Oh Reagan's going to be the nominee." He was this actor who gave a speech for a presidential candidate, who was clobbered a year and a half before. And then he defeats the incumbent governor.

HAYWARD: By a million votes. It wasn't even close.

KRISTOL: That two-year sequence is unusual. Surely there were people telling him "run for Congress, don't go right for the governor, don't take on Christopher." Is that right?

HAYWARD: That speech was such a sensation. I say it's one of the four speeches that launched a career that made someone president. "Cooper Union," or maybe the nominee, William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold," although he never won. And I think you have to reckon Barack Obama's speech in 2004, put him on the map and launched him. And it was Reagan's "Time for Choosing" speech. It is the big four in American presidential, rhetorical history.

It took a lot of risks, you know, as governor. This is one of the interesting discoveries just going through documents, is Reagan had opposed Nixon's proposal for the Family Assistance Plan that was going to be guaranteed annual income, Pat Moynihan's idea.

KRISTOL: I came to Washington, in between high school and college, as a little intern for Pat Moynihan, and it was the summer he was pushing FAP. FAP, Family's Assistance Plan. Enlightened conservatives, neoconservatives, were supposed to be for it. Total failure. Not failure, it just didn't pass.

HAYWARD: It really died at the hands of the left, which is a funny story.

KRISTOL: But some of the right that opposed.

HAYWARD: Ronald Reagan high among them. The National Governor's Association, most governors loved the idea, because it was going to offload their problem to Washington. So the National Governor's Association had a resolution on it, and the vote was 49-1 in favor and the one, of course, was Ronald Reagan. Turned out, I discovered he carried out an extensive campaign against it. He wrote every member of Congress, he testified before the Senate and House Ways and Means Committees and Finance Committees.

There was, one letter I discovered, in particular, was from a House co-sponsor of the bill saying – oh and he would send his analysis of it to every member. He gets this letter from a member of the House who is a co-sponsor of Nixon's bill, saying "We'll all respect your mistake. I think it's a good bill" – it was

Congressman George H. W. Bush, from Houston. Reagan writes him back saying, “No, I think it’s terrible. You haven’t persuaded me a bit, and here’s even more figures from my Department of Finance that show how bad it is.” And of course, a few years later, they’re running mates.

KRISTOL: It was a guaranteed income. And there were certain, conservatives liked it, in some ways, because it would break the welfare dependency; I guess that was the argument.

HAYWARD: Milton Friedman had favorable things to say about. He thought they should abolish everything else first, but he thought this was a step in the right direction. There was not a perfect left or right split on that and, of course, the most famous one was Reagan opposing the Panama Canal Treaty.

KRISTOL: Talk about that a little, because people have sort of forgotten about that.

HAYWARD: That treaty was started under Nixon and Ford, and then Carter finishes it. And Reagan thinks this is a big mistake, and he speaks out against it. Conservatives were divided, right – you had a lot of conservatives like Bill [William] Buckley, like George Will who was for it. *Wall Street Journal* –

KRISTOL: I would say the “respectable conservative establishment” thought it was – they didn’t love it, but it was reasonable, prudent.

HAYWARD: Reagan had an instinct about it; he didn’t like it. He had an instinct that it was politically powerful, and it turned out to be so. When he’d talk about it on the stump in 1976, the crowds would cheer. “It’s our canal, we built it, let’s keep it.” So, he led the opposition to it. It barely passed the Senate in 1978, I think, with a lot of Republican votes. And an awful lot of senators lost their jobs or were defeated in subsequent elections.

There have been arguments from the political scientists as to how much of that was a factor or not. It looks like it might have been some. It may have ruined Howard Baker’s chances to be Reagan’s running mate in 1980. I compare that, in a lot of ways, to Churchill’s opposition to the India Dominion Bill in the 1930s, right – it divided your own party, made you something of an outcast, but it showed you the resolution of the person, showed you something about them.

KRISTOL: Sort of the appeal of patriotism. We built the canal, “we stole it fair and square” was the famous joke.

HAYWARD: I remember in the late 1980s, early 1990s, when Panama was kind of a mess, and we invaded to take out Noriega, I had a lot of liberal friends of mine saying maybe Reagan wasn’t wrong about that after all.

KRISTOL: The liberals cite it as an example of kind of demagoguery, it worked in his campaign, and saved him North Carolina when he had lost the first nine primaries, I think it was. Even as president, he didn’t try and get it back, so it was all just talk. But I very much agree with you, it showed something about his instincts; it did kind of prefigure the general shape of his foreign policy and his willingness to break from the establishment consensus and be for rollback, not just détente or containment. I mean, the Soviet Union is different than Panama, but you know, it’s sort of analogy there I think. People don’t appreciate how far out a position that seemed to be in ’76. The idea that it’s the one he rode back to make it a very close race against an incumbent president, is pretty striking.

Jeff Bell, who worked for Reagan in ’76, tells a story, and you discuss this in your book too, that Reagan didn’t – this is a good, I think, a very good lesson for people, especially conservatives, especially intellectual conservatives who spend a lot of time thinking, and then reading, and then think they can apply that in a formulaic way to politics. I think Reagan had a whole bunch of things he was talking about, and he had these index cards and they were sort of each one per issue, I think, that’s how he sort of gave his speeches. And apparently, he just gave these speeches and one of the points was the Panama



Canal, and he had a million other points – détente with the Soviet Union, arms defense budget, and then a million domestic policy points – and the Panama Canal thing just started to get more and more applause. So he would move it up closer to the front of the speech and spend more time on it, because he was very adaptive, I think – whatever the right word is. He wasn't one of these guys, "I've got my 20 minutes and I'm just going to say it." He changed depending on what he learned from the audience. Jeff thinks that's a very good example, he's cited this at times in stuff he's written, a good example of – You can have very strong beliefs; but you also can learn from the situation you're in, the politics of the moment, which issue to highlight. If you had predicted two months earlier that he would ride the Panama Canal to a huge surge in the late primaries – I don't know what the current analogy would be, but it was such an offbeat, third-tier issue when the Soviet Union is invading countries and it's just after Vietnam. I don't know – you discuss that at some length in your first volume, but it's an interesting case study of how politics can work sometimes.

HAYWARD: He was early on in seeing that there was great public disapproval of what was going on in the college campuses in the mid-60s. He starts talking about it in '65, when he's starting to make that run. You had the Berkeley free speech movement and some early troubles, but it hadn't spun out of control like it did in '68 in so many places yet. People said that this is not showing up in our polls, and Reagan said "my instinct says that people don't like this," and he made a big deal out of it.

KRISTOL: That's interesting. The Panama Canal thing, I just – the idea that you have a bunch of issues, but you are flexible on which ones you emphasize. They're all consistent with your views, obviously. It's amazing how much politicians, especially these days, I think they have consultants, a bunch of consultants, they take some polls, they decide in October the year before: "that's my issue."

They don't sort of react to what's happening around them. Reagan did that a lot. I don't know if that came from Hollywood, or being in movies, or something, but there was a kind of flexibility that went with his strong convictions.

HAYWARD: Churchill said, "Genius statesmanship can't be taught or acquired." There's something innate or instinctual about it. There are certain aspects of Reagan that I can't figure out, and that's one of them. How much of this was conscious thought, and how much did he just get innately? I do think there is some case to be made for his experience in the 50s touring the country speaking for GE. If you think about that in political terms –

KRISTOL: What's he doing? Tell people about that?

HAYWARD: That is probably worth mentioning for people who don't know it. He was the spokesperson for General Electric, and he went and visited the plants in 38 states, traveling from home in Los Angeles by train because he was afraid to fly.

KRISTOL: He didn't like flying.

HAYWARD: He didn't like flying, and there is a funny story about him. By the way, he's reading books on those trains. We now know he's reading things like Whittaker Chambers's *Witness*, Henry Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*, [Friedrich] [Hayek's Road to Serfdom](#).

KRISTOL: He's already kind of through with acting at this point?

HAYWARD: Part of the GE thing is he hosted GE Theater, so he would introduce their movie every Sunday night. He made a few movies including – well shoot, I forget the picture he made with Nancy Davis in 1958, I think.

KRISTOL: He's not an A-list actor at this point? He's introducing this stuff on TV –

HAYWARD: He's going around the plants just talking about whatever he wants to.

KRISTOL: This is to GE workers?

HAYWARD: GE workers. But you think about it, he's giving political speeches like a candidate would give, but not with an election deadline in front of him. He talked to these people, would have lunch with them, sit down and have lunch in the lunchroom, so he was getting feedback from them. If you think about presidential politics like baseball, he had a decade in the minor leagues. Improving his game.

An awful lot of people that get into politics, at whatever level, they haven't had that experience, right? And it really shows I think.

KRISTOL: That's interesting.

## **II: Why We Need to Study Statesmen (29:33 – 1:06:53)**

KRISTOL: We've been discussing Ronald Reagan and your terrific biography of Ronald Reagan. Let's talk about biography. I'm really struck – I mean, I like reading biographies. I guess I was told by a couple teachers it's a good way to learn about politics. They're not really in favor, doesn't seem to me, in the academy; I'm just curious what your thoughts are about that?

HAYWARD: Well, gosh, I could do 20 different approaches to this. We'll just take a couple. One is, it's been abandoned by – at least, large scale biographies of great figures – has been abandoned by academic historians. So it's now left to journalists and non-academic historians, who sometimes do a decent job.

KRISTOL: They sell very well. The public likes them, right? John Adams, Hamilton, you know.

HAYWARD: I think the reason for it among historians – and also, sometimes you'll actually have better books about political figures from political scientists than historians, which is, ought to be another approach to academic history. Part of it is the leftist fashion for social forces, social history, semi-Marxist views that material forces are more important than human forces, right? That's part of it.

Related to that is the egalitarian temper of our time – we don't like to acknowledge or celebrate – or if you're writing about great figures, it's always to knock to them down. There's often a lot to work with, like Robert Caro's biography of Lyndon Johnson, which is really a great project, extraordinary project, I think, and very rare these days.

Part of it is ideological reasons. In political science – and history has actually followed this, unfortunately – you have the long-running and not brand new problem of the quantitative fascination of the social sciences, and that undermines appreciation of biographical approaches to acquiring knowledge, right? The idea of statesmanship in political sciences is ridiculed as non-scientific, can't be studied intelligently or rigorously, so it's entirely ignored.

One of my last conversations with Walter Berns was, he said the –

KRISTOL: This is [Walter Berns](#), the great political scientist, student of constitutional law at the American Enterprise Institute.

HAYWARD: Right. The last conversation I ever had with him was, he said, "The proper method," I can't do his deep voice, "the proper method for the study of politics is biography." That great growl he could do when he wanted to emphasize a point. My other teacher, Harry Jaffa, said the same thing – something like, "The proper method for the understanding of politics would be the study of the words and deeds of statesman."

That's very much out of fashion, of course. And I think that leaves the field wide open for people like me, and people like you, and our friends who work in that field, because readers are hungry for it, like you say. It is an interesting thing to me – to pick one avenue into this – you know, you think about the White House. There's a Council of Economic Advisors, that's almost always academic economists from a university; you go on leave and then go back. There's no "Council of Political Advisors." Now, they'll have a political advisor, but it's usually a practitioner. It's Karl Rove or David Axelrod, it's never an academic. Occasionally, you'll have a political scientist as the in-house thinker – Bob Goldwin under Ford, [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan, sort of, in a certain way, but that's – Bill Galston under Clinton – but that is always kind of optional.

Isn't it interesting that the discipline that is supposed to be most about governing is thought least necessary in the practical world of Washington politics? Every few years the American Political Science Association has a hand-wringing panel about this and can't figure it out.

KRISTOL: But they don't put themselves, they don't try to put themselves in the shoes of those who are governing and try to think through what it's like to try and govern and, therefore, what challenges you face. That's not the way political scientists think of their job and how they write, right? They look at it from above, or beyond I guess.

HAYWARD: The other thing is, some of the questions involved in the people we call statesman – Reagan, Churchill, Lincoln, whoever. It's not just their imagination and their intellectual capacities, but really it's the quality of their soul. Once you introduce a question like that – unless you come from the tradition of political philosophy, and [Aristotle](#), and so forth, that question is also thought to be not something that can be intelligibly discussed.

And I think this is a great mistake, and it's why I've picked some fights, lately, about – Political science ought to be one of the most vibrant departments at most universities. And at some universities it is; it's usually the ones who have more conservatives, or liberals who teach it the old-fashioned way. But you're losing enrollment in political science departments in lots and lots of colleges, the faculties are shrinking in some places – and that's because it bores students to death.

I mean, what's the old [Charles Maurice de] Talleyrand quote? About "it's worse than a blunder, it's a crime," or maybe it's the other way around – It's an incredible blunder, I think, on the part of the academic world.

KRISTOL: The other way around: "It's worse than a crime, it's a blunder." Not that anyone – Incidentally, I once read – someone recommended it to me, I don't know much about Talleyrand. But Duff Cooper, who was a friend of Churchill's and an "amateur historian" – I guess we would call it today – wrote an excellent biography of Talleyrand, which very much has this character of, sort of one political figure writing about another from a different era and a different country, but trying to understand his decisions, you know – see them as he saw them. Not coming from above and saying, "He's an example of a bourgeois foreign minister," or "an example of Kissingerian politics," or one of these theories, right? Really trying to see the decisions he faced, the choices he made, the thinking he was doing and the constraints he faced. So much richer a way, I think, of thinking about politics than the normal political science, or historians.

You think historians might have defended this, but they actually abandoned it more than the political scientists, maybe. I don't know why. I guess it's the modern world. All kinds of modern trends coming together.

HAYWARD: This is not a new problem; it goes back to some of the arguments over "the fact-value distinction" and such in the 1950s. I did somewhere stumble across a fragment of a comment from Robert F. Kennedy, of all people. And, I forget the context, but the line was, "Well, I studied government

at Harvard, but I learned nothing that was of use to me in my role today as Attorney General.” That’s amazing, right?

KRISTOL: Well, you know, I’m slightly older than you. And I’m old enough to remember – I didn’t read it at the time, I was seven years old when John Kennedy was elected – but I remember, afterwards, hearing about the fad, or you’d call it “the popularity” of *Profiles in Courage*. Which was quote “authored by John Kennedy,” I guess it was really written by Ted Sorenson, is that the consensus? That came out in ’58, ’59, as he was running for president. And, I don’t remember how many, seven or something, profiles of different American politicians or statesman. Historians have gone and debunked a lot of the work and stuff, but it was gripping. I read it then, I don’t know, in high school, I would say. So Kennedy was no longer alive, and he was sort of a figure you knew about if you were growing up when I did, of course. I was going back to read about politics a little bit. But it’s interesting that even in that era, in that John Kennedy thought – again, however much work he really did on it – he thought it appropriate that he write these biographical sketches. And I do think he even maybe thought he’d learn from them. And *Profiles in Courage*, it’s a virtue, right?

HAYWARD: I hadn’t thought of that. Today, when you’re running for president, you put out a campaign book that’s your ideas and policy proposals.

KRISTOL: Or, in President Obama’s case, you write a memoir at age 40.

HAYWARD: How refreshing that is, in some way, that Kennedy did it that way. I think, as I recall, wasn’t Kennedy’s senior thesis at Harvard called “Why England Slept”? About appeasement, and essentially disagreeing with his own father about this, right? Which is kind of interesting. I think you saw there the sort of the, another example of the older style. So it’s not necessarily a left/right thing, either.

KRISTOL: Maybe your books will bring them back. They really should. Was there anything that most influenced you, in your own education, as sort of the model of how to think about a statesman, or a political moment, or problem?

HAYWARD: Yeah, you know, people sort of ask me how I came to be – people ask me these stories of “how did you form your views?” There’s that line from Whittaker Chambers to Bill [William] Buckley, I forget who he was writing about, “This person was conservative by cell structure.” I think he was talking about Russell Kirk, maybe. My parents were big for Goldwater in ’64; I was in the first grade. And I’m from California, so I grew up watching Ronald Reagan up-close, and my father was peripherally involved in Republican politics in the state. And it was always axiomatic around my dinner table that Reagan would be president someday.

KRISTOL: Is that right? That’s interesting.

HAYWARD: My dad’s insight – but he was a businessman, he wasn’t an intellectual like your dad – but he always said, “Reagan is a great voting booth candidate: You might walk in undecided, but you’re comfortable voting for him.” That’s a very common sense approach to things; he was very wise that way. But then, it’s a funny story, one day – I forget when, but I was always interested in debate and arguing – and one day, I happened to tune in, I think in the 8th grade (which is ridiculous), I tuned in on “Firing Line.” I go, “Who is this guy?” [William Buckley] And, “I don’t understand half the words he’s saying, but gosh, he looks interesting!” So I subscribed to the *National Review* in the 8th grade.

KRISTOL: Is that right? That’s a great story! For those of us who are involved in the magazine business, it’s nice to see that a magazine, a small magazine, made a huge difference.

HAYWARD: In those days you had to read *National Review* not just with an English dictionary, but with a Latin dictionary.

KRISTOL: That Buckley was high level. There's a lesson in that, too, right? They always tell you "dumb it down to 8th grade level," but it's the opposite: It wouldn't have been as interesting for you if it hadn't been words you didn't know and, you know, quotations of Latin phrases that you had to look up, or not look up and just skip. But either way.

HAYWARD: So, I was an early *National Review* reader and then, later, *The American Spectator* and so forth. And also (a case of a statesman), before I thought about it in an adult way, my parents took me to Chartwell and Blenheim Palace when, I think I was 14 years old. My father, a World War II veteran like your father, would talk endlessly about Churchill and why it was important. So I grew up with that, right? I was inculcated in that way. Then, when I went off to graduate school to study with [Harry Jaffa](#) and the other people at Claremont –

KRISTOL: Did you go to Claremont to study with them, or was it sort of an accident that you ended up with them?

HAYWARD: Well I thought about several places, but I was from Southern California and thought – I wasn't sure I was down for the whole program of getting a PhD – I thought I'd try it out because I was curious. I thought I wanted to be a writer, and I didn't know enough to write seriously about politics. It was cheap in those days, too.

KRISTOL: Where did you go to college? I forget.

HAYWARD: I went to Lewis and Clark, in Portland, Oregon. Where, by the way–

KRISTOL: Did you have any influential teachers there?

HAYWARD: Yeah, one. It was James Holton, who wrote the chapter on Cicero in the [\[Leo\] Strauss](#), [\[Joseph\] Cropsey](#) anthology [*History of Political Philosophy*] and had been a student of [Walter Berns](#). And he was very good and encouraged me, in a lot of ways, and was very helpful. The best professor I had there, of course. So, I picked Claremont because it was close to home and wasn't sure if I was down for all of this. There were several people there, of course; it wasn't just Jaffa. There was Harold Rood in international relations, Bill Allen, and Charles Kesler came a couple years later. And it was fabulous experience. But, when I realized that they took not just Lincoln but Churchill seriously, I thought "This is the right place for me," because that's my language.

KRISTOL: Jaffa's [Crisis of the House Divided](#) – I mean Jaffa's a complicated figure, but that book had a huge influence on me in college. I remember just reading it and not being able to put it down. And, really, what a model of thinking through a historical moment. People forget how much – I mean, there's the brilliant interpretations of those two speeches of Lincoln's, the "Lyceum [Address]" speech and the "Temperance [Address]" speech. There's the whole "big-think" stuff about the Declaration. But, actually, the political narrative at the beginning of the book – "The Case for Douglas," I think he calls the first part of "The Case for Lincoln," – what the actual situation of dealing with slavery in 1850s was about was extremely, for me, was just like an eye-opening. And I had been around – you know, my parents – and I knew a little more, maybe, than an average college student and was already inclined that way; but the book was just eye-opening in how to think about politics in a serious way, while doing justice to the political reality – without escaping into, or elevating into, abstraction or political theory. That must have been exciting to be at Claremont in those days.

HAYWARD: It was, yeah. Jaffa was still in his prime, really. His prime cantankerous phase too, unfortunately, that was problematic, of course. But even in that you could learn from him. He was one of those unusual persons who, he was nastier in print than he was in person. In person he was very genial, for most part. In print, and in his letters to people, in particular, he'd have these barbs that – well, his students always thought were ungenerous, unfair, or taking things too far. He just wouldn't retreat on it, though.

KRISTOL: So Reagan was president when you were studying? At the time, I've always – it's hard to put oneself back at the time. Did you know, were you fascinated by Reagan? Did you have the sense that this was really an impressive achievement? Or were you more just, you know – of course, you were on his side – but not that engaged?

HAYWARD: I think I was. And I was always trying to defend him, as much as you can at 25, or whatever I was. It may be worth mentioning, I didn't go straight to graduate school. I graduated in 1980, and then I came back here for a year in Washington as an intern – back when it was safe to do that, I guess. I was an intern for M. Stanton Evans at his [National] Journalism Center project.

KRISTOL: How fantastic.

HAYWARD: So I actually attended the first inaugural address out on the West Front of the Capitol, which was a great thrill. I was around for a lot of those early days when some of the early battle lines were set, and watching it very closely in the paper. But also, even as an intern, you get exposed to a lot of people in town.

Early on, I had a glimpse of the first year of the “Reagan Revolution” up close. So, that sort of made the full immersion experience, you might say.

KRISTOL: Yeah, sure. It was Stan Evans, who was a wonderful polemicist, too.

HAYWARD: I learned a ton from him; one of my mentors, I consider him.

KRISTOL: That's great. Churchill, I didn't realize your interest in Churchill went back to teenage years. But you wrote a terrific book, [Churchill on Leadership](#). I was just looking at it the other day, though. I don't think, I maybe hadn't read it already. Books on leadership I sort of tend not to read, even on Churchill.

HAYWARD: Exactly right.

KRISTOL: How did you come to do that?

HAYWARD: I actually didn't care for the title; I didn't really want it to be “Churchill on Leadership,” but trade publishers are right about what sells. I think one of the problems of “leadership” is it's detached from the serious questions of statesmanship. Too many of these books that are really cheesy – like “The Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun,” you know, “The Machiavellian Manager” – these have really trivialized things that are more important.

I laugh about what I call my Churchill self-help book. The origin of it is kind of amusing. I got stuck one day with one of those management, leadership gurus, who tells you how to manage your time and set priorities – and they only really have two or three things to tell you, but you have to pay them for all day long.

KRISTOL: “Stuck” in the sense that you were paying him, or you were just...?

HAYWARD: I wasn't. I was just part of a group and the group was going to do this; I thought this was a waste of time. These people always pad out what Charlie Peters, people like that, they always pad out what they have to tell you with stories. And this fellow liked to tell Churchill stories from World War II. And I thought, “Ah, he's just given me an opening to fight back.” So every time he would tell a story about Churchill and World War II, I'd raise my hand and say, “You know, there's really a better story about Churchill from when he was Minister of Munitions in 1918, on that point, right?” “You know, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1926,” I knew his story pretty thoroughly. He took it all in good humor.



KRISTOL: I'm sure the guy was thrilled to have you there.

HAYWARD: He took it in very good humor.

KRISTOL: Is that right? That's unusual.

HAYWARD: Exactly. I thought, "This was a big test for him," but it made the day amusing for me. And at the end of the day he said, "Gosh, you know a lot about Churchill and seem to have some instinct on the subject, you ought to write a book on Churchill's management style." And I thought this was the dumbest idea I had ever heard – until, a week later, I walked into the book store and saw *Lincoln on Leadership*, by some fellow in Texas whose name I forget. So I picked it up, and bought it, and read it. And it was okay; it wasn't bad. Not what you would recommend to someone to learn seriously about Lincoln, but aspects about how people conduct themselves have some interest.

I thought, somebody really ought to do that book, a book like this, on Churchill – and before someone screws it up. And there had been some bad books about Churchill and this and that, right? So, actually, I do sometimes admit the book is something of a deception – although it does, it is written in a style – I have had many CEOs send me notes saying, "I really liked your book and learned useful things from it." Because Churchill did have serious thoughts on organizational behavior and organizational structure that surprised me, especially when I went through the Martin Gilbert document volumes and saw his managerial memos, for example.

KRISTOL: Our political theory-type, in quotes "statesmanship friends" probably do undervalue – I mean, there is actual stuff to be learned about running a huge department, and management and delegation, and accountability and stuff.

HAYWARD: Although at the end of the day, I think I identified four or five keys to Churchill, but one of them was he liked to make decisions and make them, not quickly as in hastily, but he liked to make them firmly and without delaying for a long time. Again, his imagination and unconventional ways of approaching problems. And then, always driving things forward – don't let meetings just drag on forever. Always put something in writing so you have something to go back to, so people don't have differing recollections of what was decided. So, very practical things in that way that seemed to be lost sight of in a lot of in management theories and so forth. It was fun to do; it made the *New York Times's* Best Seller List.

The second book also had a title I didn't like, it was the one called [\*Greatness: Reagan, Churchill, and the Making of Extraordinary Leaders\*](#). I wanted to do like the [John] Meacham book, *Franklin and Winston*; I wanted to do "Ronnie and Winston," or something like that.

In the course of my work on the large Reagan books, I discovered that, for example, Reagan quoted Churchill more often than every other president combined. Because you can do word searches, right? And it wasn't just the jokes, it was often in serious and substantive ways, and often at paragraph length. He quotes Churchill, once directly and then once indirectly, in the "Time for Choosing" speech, for example, if you go back to that. And I started writing what I thought would be four to five paragraphs about Reagan's use of Churchill and how their views overlapped, and it ended up being 5,000 words as I kept working through it. And the book was already too long, so I spun it off as a whole separate book. I didn't really pad it up much, I didn't have to, but the most important comparison is on the Cold War.

I think the best two witnesses are really Churchill and [Margaret] Thatcher. Remember, Churchill says in the "Iron Curtain" speech, "World War II could have been prevented without the firing of a single shot if we would have armed ourselves instead of the dictators." "Peace through strength," you might say. Churchill did use that phrase in other times. Then you remember what Margaret Thatcher said in the 90s about Reagan, "Reagan won the Cold War without the firing of a single shot." I never thought to try and

get in contact to ask her whether she self-consciously had the “Iron Curtain” speech in mind, but it seems like the kind of thing “the Iron Lady” might have done.

KRISTOL: She would have remembered that speech; I think that she was old enough. Or known of it, certainly, as the British Prime Minister, British conservative politician. Reagan, I suppose, was old enough to have really remembered very well. He would have been what, 30 years old, or something? 29 years old when Churchill became Prime Minister? When was Reagan was born, 1909?

HAYWARD: 1911.

KRISTOL: So, would have been almost 30 when Churchill becomes Prime Minister. Imagine being a young, intellectually curious American at that time, it would be a huge thing to watch Churchill for the next five years. You know?

HAYWARD: Reagan, of course, did talk about listening to Roosevelt’s radio addresses, which is one reason Reagan wanted to do radio addresses later on. I have a hunch that he was in the radio businesses for most of the 30s. I bet he heard some Churchill addresses because Churchill was broadcast over here in the 30s, and then, of course, when he was Prime Minister.

KRISTOL: Those addresses are the ones that he – am I right about this? He gives a speech in the House of Commons, which did not then have recording, and then he goes over the BBC and redoes it for the British people. I think a lot of those, at least in the war, we certainly broadcast here, if I’m not mistaken, live or a few hours later.

HAYWARD: I think a lot of them are not very good. Actually read better than they sound, and that is because, Churchill himself later said to somebody, it’s hard to have the same level of energy sitting in a studio than it is in front of the House of Commons.

KRISTOL: When you’ve given the same speech four hours before.

HAYWARD: I find they are kind of, a little bit “low energy,” as somebody might say today.

KRISTOL: I hadn’t quite realized that Reagan was, himself, such a Churchill fan and student. Did he read much about Churchill?

HAYWARD: Reagan never wrote down what his reading habits were in any detail. He would quote some obscure things from Churchill – and I do know in his library, he still has his library at the ranch and there’s several volumes there of his Churchill speeches, there’s *The Gathering Storm* on the shelves; I think he must have been acquainted with it.

You know, he would quote Churchill, and he would also have the same logic. Now, Reagan often would have the same logic as Thomas Jefferson on certain things. But, you know, there’s – Churchill in 1949, or ‘48 said something along the lines of, “Thank goodness it’s free enterprise America that has the nuclear bomb. If Russia or red China had it, surely it would be used for the subjugation of the world.” Reagan says exactly the same thing, in almost the same words, in 1967 in his televised debate with Robert F. Kennedy that was lost in the memory hole for a long time. Exactly the same understanding of the importance of “the moral character of the regimes,” as we academics would say, right? The boldness to speak out and say it that way – not the hand wringing about how awful this is, even though he personally was very dismayed by nuclear weapons.

KRISTOL: That [debate with Kennedy](#), let’s just digress on that for a second. It’s funny, we were just talking about it in the office the other day – I can’t even remember why it came up – but Fred Barnes was talking about it because he remembered watching it at the time, because he is a little older than I am, so he was in college, maybe, or something. That’s an amazing, that’s available on [YouTube](#), right?



HAYWARD: It is now. For a long time, you couldn't find it.

KRISTOL: Tell people about it a little bit.

HAYWARD: Backing up, right. So it was a show in 1967 called "The Town Hall of the World." Right? It really was.

KRISTOL: Well it was though, right? On network television.

HAYWARD: Logistically it's kind of interesting these days with satellites and everything, but Reagan was in a studio – I think in Sacramento, or maybe Los Angeles – Robert Kennedy was in New York.

KRISTOL: Reagan is Governor of California, and Kennedy is Senator of New York and planning to run, thinking to run for president.

HAYWARD: Then they had a student audience in London. And it's mostly British left-wingers, who behaved very badly. There was one American in the audience, and it was the Rhodes Scholar, Bill Bradley. Isn't this funny? Who is the only one who was not –

KRISTOL: They debate by?

HAYWARD: TV hookup. The problem for Robert F. Kennedy –

KRISTOL: And just like a town hall, they take questions from students?

HAYWARD: Yes, and they were all just, you know, "Why is America on a genocidal rampage in Vietnam?" And of course, Reagan is rebutting all their premises. Kennedy made the fatal mistake of trying to play to the students in the audience and sympathize, and agree, and mollify them, and they weren't going to have any of that, and that's why he lost the debate so badly. He knew it instantly that Reagan had clobbered him.

KRISTOL: There's a story, I think I'm right about this, Kennedy comes off the set and one of his advisors is there, and he says, "I'm never debating that man again." Something like that.

HAYWARD: There are several different words. There's, some accounts have him use a couple of four-letter words that we can't use even on the internet, or shouldn't.

Reagan's people wanted to get a hold of a tape of it and use it, maybe, for TV commercials when he thought about running, and CBS refused to let it out. For a long time you could only get a transcript of it, and that was hard to get. Now it's all on YouTube, and it's fun to watch.

KRISTOL: While we're on debates for a minute, let's talk about debates because I think debates are interesting, they show a lot about candidates. The debate with Bill Buckley on the Panama Canal, that was – I guess that was '77, '78, must be? When the canal was a big issue before Congress. Bill Buckley defends the Panama Canal Treaty, and he is arguably the best debater in our day, or conservative movement, certainly. And Reagan wins that debate, I think.

HAYWARD: Yes, that's right. I don't know if they put a vote to the audience, but everyone I know said Buckley was his usual witty and clever and, you know, flowery self. And Reagan – you can see that one on YouTube also – Reagan was very confident, gave a few jabs back at Buckley with a smile and what was, utterly overpowered him in my thought.

KRISTOL: There were depths to Reagan. I think, just to get back to Reagan for a minute, because I'm thinking more about what you said. What would it would take to disguise your learning or having thought about things or, in a way, seeming simpler than you are, that's not an easy thing. It cuts against one's vanity, for one thing. Plus, it's just not that easy to do, really. It's impressive that Reagan – and that was very disciplined and self-conscious on his part, don't you think?

HAYWARD: Absolutely.

KRISTOL: The desire to be underestimated.

HAYWARD: I think, maybe, the key there is his complete self-confidence. The famous sign on his desk, "There is no limit to what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit." Except, he knew that he'd get the credit. You always get the credit, or the blame. That translated into his rhetoric. Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama are very similar in being very self-regarding. It's always "I," "we," and "me." You can count the personal references, sometimes they go in the hundreds. Reagan always liked to say "we."

He would often say – he would actually say this almost word for word, "I say the word 'we' because I had a lot of help from a lot of good people who work with me and for me." Again, when you know that as a historical matter you're going to get the credit, you can be more generous and magnanimous about it. That also sets him apart from a lot of politicians who are, let's face it, insecure people in a lot of ways. Right? That's one of the problems of political life. He is a departure from the common run that way. The other part of the discipline of that is discipline comes from self-confidence.

The other one, we mentioned earlier, is his dislike of nuclear weapons. There were people around him who doubt that if it actually – if the word came in that the missiles from the Soviet Union had been launched – that Reagan might not order retaliation. A lot of people think that now. He would say, "I want to abolish nuclear weapons," and people realized he really meant it. He didn't care for the argument that it kept the peace for 40 years.

But, you know, it's true. But, he would never openly sort of utter a pacifist sentiment. Maybe a better example is, you know, he really didn't like ordering troops into battle. He was very risk – not just risk averse, but force adverse. You know, in his last year they were making the case that we have to get rid of [Manuel] Noriega in Panama, and he said, "No, I don't want to do it. Let George [H. W. Bush] do it if he wants to, I'm not going to do it."

A lot of people thought, you may remember some of this from the time, a lot of people thought, "Why are we pussyfooting around Nicaragua? Let's just send in the Marines and get rid of the Sandinistas." He always said, we're never doing – he said from the earliest time, "I'm not sending American troops to Nicaragua. I'll back the Contras to put pressure on them." But he would never say that publicly, because one of his rules was "never say never."

And after the invasion of Grenada, the Nicaraguans, they said, "By the way, if you ever want to get some Americans out of Nicaragua, just call us and we'll help," right? And Castro was nervous, and Reagan said, "Good, let him be nervous." He understood the utility of, you know, the Machiavellian reputation – "better to be feared." He understood the utility of that even while privately believing the opposite or, as a policy matter, not wanting to intervene. But he had the discipline to not blurt that out, you might say.

KRISTOL: I want to take advantage of having you here to talk a little bit about American conservatism, since you've been a student of it – a part of it, really. Young people, I think, coming up, think, "These are names from the past," you know – Reagan, Buckley, Chambers. But, I guess, what would you recommend people read? What would, if people wanted to get a sense of – A) Do you think that tradition remains a viable and important tradition? Are we somehow in some post-conservative movement moment, or does that still remain a kind of body of work and a body of effort worth building on and continuing? And, if so, who in particular would you recommend?

HAYWARD: That's a really hard question.

KRISTOL: It doesn't have to be comprehensive, but two or three. Some bright AEI intern comes into your office, or bright University of California, Berkeley – one of the seven conservative kids there. Or not – or a liberal kid there comes in and says, "Hey, I want to learn something about conservatism, American conservatism." Not Aristotle, that's fine, Burke, you know, it's all deep stuff, but who's lived in the 20th or 21st century. What would you recommend, or what influenced you the most?

HAYWARD: I mean, the difficulty here is I'm feeling very old now, and I've never been more confused, and baffled, and worried than I am right now from the obvious present circumstances of the presidential race. But beyond all that, right, we've seen this consistent slippage to – I mean, who would have thought, you might say, the sexual revolution would now descend to bathrooms and how we call people, and so forth. This is really beyond absurd. But it barrels along with barely any speed bumps to it. I found a lot of the contemporary authors – like Buckley, Milton Friedman, Hayek – they were all still alive when I was growing up and reading, right, so I met all of them at some point. And I think there are a lot of people; I mean, our friends – like Jonah Goldberg, I think, writes some terrific work. I recommend his books to people. He struggles with the fact that he's so funny – he wants to be taken seriously, right?

KRISTOL: But that's okay, you can read people who are from an earlier generation. I just think it's useful as we despair a little bit today, but look at what Buckley faced in '55, nothing. No conservative movements, no conservative institutions, no magazines, a few vague kind of oddballs. Very impressive, incidentally, oddballs, but libertarians, Albert Jay Nock, Hayek, this Austrian economist. When you see what Buckley overcame, I think one can be more hopeful, perhaps.

HAYWARD: I guess, I do still recommend that people read things. If you want to do the history of it, George Nash's book on *The Conservative Intellectual Movement [in America Since 1945]* is still good. It ought to be updated, I think, because it breaks off in '75; that's a long time ago now. I still do think people ought to read some of the really serious books – like I think Hayek's best book is [The Constitution of Liberty](#), more than [The Road to Serfdom](#) by quite a lot. It's a big book, big commitment to read it. But, I think, holds up extremely well. Published in 1961, and I've been saying now for the last seven plus years, it reads like "a Thomistic commentary" of the Obama administration's political strategy. That's one way of thinking of it. You mentioned Jaffa's book, *Crisis of the House Divided*, I think is more than just a study of Lincoln in a lot of ways. Books like that, I think, with serious people who really want to get into it.

KRISTOL: Did [Whittaker] Chambers have a big effect on you, or no?

HAYWARD: Yes. I've tried to teach Chambers to students these days and with mixed success, because the Cold War is so remote and that's a long time ago. This Joe McCarthy guy is out there somewhere. Some students get it and find it interesting, but I haven't figured out how to make that work really well. Yes, I read Chambers as an undergraduate. First, that story was still very current in a lot of ways. The Allen Weinstein book really nailed down the case, came out in '78 I think. And then his writing style was so extraordinary, right? And deeply moving. I still go back and re-read him now and then. I've been thinking for a while about writing an article about "What would Chambers think now?" Because he had been such a pessimist, right?

KRISTOL: Yes. But, willing to join the losing side. What he thought was the losing side. Then we all thought for a while after 1989, "Hey, it was the winning side." But maybe not, I don't know.

HAYWARD: There was a line of Jaffa's I found from a lecture he gave in 1991, or early 1992, and I don't remember the exact words – I have a quote in my forthcoming book – but he says, "Things are about to get worse." He really nailed it. He said, "Now that the foreign enemy is gone," that's sort of this rough association with ideological pole, "the ideological left is now going to be reborn in different and more threatening ways to Western civilization." At the time, we all thought with Francis Fukuyama, you know,

liberalism in the old-fashioned sense has triumphed and democracy is on the march. And it looks like he was right to be pessimistic about that.

Jaffa and Chambers, that was one of the things that struck me, one of the first things Jaffa said my first class with him, the first minute, was, “The West is in profound crisis.” I thought, “That sounds like Whitaker Chambers.” Now, Jaffa thought he had more answers to it, long story. And Chambers remained pessimistic, right, thought he was on the losing side.

KRISTOL: And died in 1960. Chambers-Buckley letters are really fantastic. I don’t even know if that’s in print or available. I have some old copy, but it’s really some moving stuff, wonderful stuff in there. Anything else you’ve learned from teaching students that you want to share here, in terms of what works, in terms of – what you’re interested in? Also, you want to reassure me about the current generation of students? Or not.

HAYWARD: I sound like an old fogey, grumpy person, here. Kids are always kids: They’re always hopeful and idealistic and naïve; there’s the whole mixed bag of what youth is like in all generations, overpowered by the culture around them.

I was smiling because I find that, great opening for those of us who are fortunate enough to be in academia with good students is – and sometimes I like to tweak the liberal professors, not by complaining about their ideology, but say the real problem – I don’t make it personalized – the real problem with, especially the narrowly specialized way we do the social sciences and the sort of narrow fads in the humanities, is that we’re boring students to death. I think that is why, one of the reasons why, the number of people majoring in social sciences and humanities has been plummeting for 25 years. It wasn’t since the economic crisis of 2008 – it’s been going on since 1980 or earlier. We’re boring students to death. So my experience so far, you know my year at Colorado where, you know – “I was an inmate” as I say, “there for a year.”

KRISTOL: [University of Colorado at] Boulder, Berkeley – you’re swimming in complicated ponds there.

HAYWARD: Boulder wasn’t weird enough, I had to go for Berkeley, right – the Death Star.

The students like our style of engaging subject. I’ve had so many liberal students say to me, “I don’t think I agree with your viewpoint, but gosh, this was interesting and fun and engaging and I really liked it.” And they give me high evaluations. Because we teach the old-fashioned way about serious ideas and, you know, will actually say, “If you really want to understand the Constitution, there’s a lot of parts to it beyond the legal language and ultimately it does involve the character of your soul.” Who talks like this anymore, except for Harvey Mansfield and people like us? Students like that; they respond to that. A lot of students want a certain element of seriousness they don’t get from higher education these days.

KRISTOL: I found just in my guest teaching, occasionally, that teaching a text, I think, which seems dry and sort of difficult, actually students like and appreciate that you’re together with them reading something. You’re not just lecturing to them about things that you presumably know much more about than they do, and they can’t really challenge you about, because if you’re an expert on something and they’re just a 19-year-old, how are they going to tell you you’re wrong about the lecture on the following 20-year period?

Whereas a text, you can actually both look at it and they can say, “What about this?” Often they do have real insights, I don’t know. I think in that respect the sort of “Straussian focus” on text – I don’t know if it’s the main reason for it, I maybe wouldn’t quite say, but maybe it is one of the main reasons for it. But, as a teaching matter, and I’m including here “The Gettysburg Address” or [The Federalist Papers](#), not just works of political philosophy, is so much better, so much more egalitarian in a funny way – puts the student more on par with the teacher, than lecturing to the student about things the student couldn’t–

HAYWARD: Well, it's a genuine openness. Or, you know I mean, the other being – what was a textbook? A textbook is just a lecture put in print. Textbooks say, "This is how you should think about John Stuart Mill," or something. Why not just read Mill and see what he said, and think about it for yourself?

KRISTOL: Texts, not textbooks. I think that's a good – I was shocked, textbooks, it was not permissible to assign textbooks, I'd say, in most of the courses in the government department – of course, this is when I was at Harvard. And I went back five or 10 years ago, and they were using textbooks – it's easier, it's more convenient. Some of them are good, you know, good textbooks. Still, something about reading the textbook rather than the text itself that doesn't seem to be what liberal education or higher education should be about, but that's just my crotchety view I suppose.

HAYWARD: I'm a happy warrior and often optimistic against all odds. So I like the students I meet. Even the ones I don't agree with I find are pleasant people. I suppose the nasty ones avoid me, but I'm having a good time.

KRISTOL: Well, that's a very good note on which to conclude – surprisingly cheerful and even maybe honest, in your case. You're such a good-natured person. Steve, thanks so much for joining me here, and thank you for joining us on CONVERSATIONS.

[END]