

CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

Conversations with Bill Kristol

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I. A Stepfather and the Hoffa Case 0:15 – 22:30

KRISTOL: Hi, welcome to CONVERSATIONS. I'm Bill Kristol and I'm joined by my friend Jack Goldsmith, Professor of Law at Harvard, former Senior Justice Department official in the George W. Bush Administration. Author of many books, articles, many important contributions to Constitutional Law and thinking about the Executive Branch; we have discussed some of that in our previous Conversations. And discussed cybersecurity, which you've become an expert on and are worried about. Are you still as worried as in our previous Conversations?

GOLDSMITH: More worried.

KRISTOL: Oh, great. We'd better have another Conversation about that soon.

But today I want to discuss this terrific book, or at least begin from this terrific book you've published a couple of months ago, I guess in the fall of 2019, [*In Hoffa's Shadow: A Stepfather, a Disappearance in Detroit, and My Search for the Truth*](#). I would not have associated you with Jimmy Hoffa, but I mean, so tell me, what's that about?

GOLDSMITH: So, when I was twelve years old I was living in West Memphis, Arkansas and my mom married a man who had actually been – she had been dating for six months. His name was Charles 'Chuckie' O'Brien. And this was my third father, my second step-father. And he was a wonderful step-father. And I didn't know much about him. He just kind of came from nowhere.

Six weeks after my mom married him –

KRISTOL: When is this now?

GOLDSMITH: This is June of 19 – they got married June 16th, 1975. I was twelve years old. Six weeks later, on July 30th, 1975, Jimmy Hoffa disappeared from a parking lot in suburban Detroit.

KRISTOL: And our younger viewers may not remember Jimmy Hoffa.

GOLDSMITH: So, Jimmy Hoffa is – was in the 1950s and '60s, by far the most important and well-known and consequential labor leader in the United States. This was a time when labor unions were actually

quite important to American society and American politics. He was the president from 1957 on, of the Teamsters Union, which was the largest union in the country. It ran – basically it was truckers and warehouse workers. And that meant that he controlled the national economy because he could bring the economy to a standstill with a snap of his fingers, because if the trucks stop the economy stops. So he was very, very important.

And as I explain in the book, he was really quite a brilliant labor bargainer, organizer, labor leader. Hugely successful at bringing Teamster Union members into the middle class. That was the good side of Hoffa.

The bad side of Hoffa was that he was corrupt by any definition. He didn't care about the law. From his times on picket lines in the 1930s when he was getting his head bashed in by cops and employers, he came to disrespect the law and legal institutions.

He, starting in the '40s, developed a relationship with mobsters across the country some of which were in the Teamsters. He spent a lot of time giving out money from the Teamsters pension fund to mobsters, to build Vegas among other things.

So Hoffa was this figure who was a great labor leader, but also a corrupt guy. He had gone to jail in 1967. He got out of jail in '71, and he was trying to get his union back, when he disappeared in 1975 – almost certainly at the behest of the mob who didn't want him to get his union back. So that in a nutshell is who Jimmy Hoffa is.

KRISTOL: Okay. Meanwhile, you're – as you say, have just –

GOLDSMITH: Meanwhile, I'm –

KRISTOL: Your step-father is –

GOLDSMITH: So, meanwhile I was, on July 30th, 1975, I was on a boat in Arkansas fishing with my mom and brothers. My new step-father was in Detroit, packing up his belongings because we were about to move to Florida as a family to start our new lives there and Jimmy Hoffa disappears.

And it turns out that my new step-father was Jimmy Hoffa's longtime aide. He had met Hoffa when he was nine years old. They were intensely close. Many people thought – a lot of people believed, the conventional wisdom was, that Chuckie, my step-father, was Hoffa's illegitimate son because of the way Hoffa treated him, and because of the way Chuckie adored him and did anything Hoffa asked.

For 20 or 25 years he was his right-hand man and always at his side. They had a falling out just before Hoffa disappeared, because he left Hoffa to marry my mom. And then, most amazingly, a few days after the disappearance, Chuckie became the leading suspect.

He was thought to be the person who picked up Hoffa at this restaurant and drove him to his killers. So, from – at age twelve I got, through Chuckie, caught up in the whole Hoffa disappearance maelstrom, which at the time, for people alive in the '70s, was a huge deal.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

GOLDSMITH: I mean it was front-page news for days and days, weeks and weeks, on the evening news every night, every little development. The investigation was a circus and we were really in the middle of it.

KRISTOL: That must have been pretty crazy. And you had no previous – I mean connection with any of this?

GOLDSMITH: No, I was – no. I mean this came out of nowhere in our lives. We were living this ordinary life in Tennessee and Arkansas. In Florida we also had lived for a while. My mom had a couple of failed marriages, but other than that it was a pretty sedate life. And then all of a sudden there's this other world of mobsters and labor union officials and Jimmy Hoffa's disappearance.

KRISTOL: So walk through a little bit what happens over the next several years?

GOLDSMITH: So, two things – three things happened. So I was twelve years old and basically from '75 until '80 was my high school years. And basically three important events, as I see it, happened. One is I grow very close to Chuckie. This was a guy who wasn't highly educated, but he was full of love and he gave me love and attention and support and stability. My mom was very sick.

So I became very close to him. I absorbed his worldview, including my attitude toward – I loved the Teamsters Union, I thought the Teamsters Unions were the greatest. We used to go to these conventions, and I met all the senior executive officials, all of whom eventually went to jail, all of whom were corrupt I later learned. But they seemed like great guys to me.

I became very close with several senior mobster figures: Anthony Giacalone and Anthony Provenzano, probably the two masterminds of the Hoffa disappearance were my Uncle Tonys – Uncles Tony. So one thing was I became absorbed into Chuckie's world.

The other thing was the Hoffa disappearance investigation. It was just – totally overwhelmed our family. He was aggressively harassed by the FBI, understandably. They thought he was the person who picked Hoffa up. They had good circumstantial reasons at the time for thinking that. He went to jail for a year in '79, on an unrelated charge, trying to pressure him into talking about what he knew. So those were the two forces for the next – during my teenage years basically.

KRISTOL: And what was it like having – I mean you knew these people were sort of mobsters, or not really? You just thought they were sort of – Uncle Tonys?

GOLDSMITH: I read the newspapers. And this might seem hard to believe, but I was, you know, I was a teenager, I was in love with this man and just thought he was the greatest. I knew what the papers said about them, but my experience of them was that they were these upstanding, well-dressed gentlemen. And they were respectful, they showed me love and affection; they did me favors and they were my new step-father's uncles, so to speak. Not real uncles, but that's how he referred to them. And so they were really part of my family.

And I kind of absorbed Chuckie's worldview. His view at the time, or not his view but what he told me was, mafia is all B.S., it doesn't exist, that's a government plot to try to harass the Italians. And to the extent I thought about it, I mean I didn't, I kind of believed him. I didn't think about it very much.

KRISTOL: Right. And it wasn't necessary for you to do so.

GOLDSMITH: No. I was just living my life, and so.

KRISTOL: And he never brought you into any of this, obviously.

GOLDSMITH: No. I mean he wasn't – so, just to be clear, he was not a member of the mafia. He's half-Irish, half-Sicilian. He was never a "made man." So he was close to these officials. He was very close to the mob because of his mother.

His mother – Chuckie's mother, Sylvia Pagano, who I think is one of the most interesting people in the book – she came from a Sicilian crime family, the Sicilian crime family in Kansas City and she went to Detroit with Chuckie at a young age. And his father was Irish but he left when Chuckie was young.

And Sylvia was this very consequential person in the mafia. She knew every one of the top guys in the country and she knew Hoffa really well. And she was actually the person – Chuckie’s mother introduced Hoffa to the mob in 1941.

So Chuckie learned and met all of these figures through his mother. And also later, because he became a messenger from Hoffa to all these mob figures, mostly about pension fund loans and the like. So he was right in the middle of it because of his association with Hoffa, and because of his mom’s friends.

KRISTOL: And his mom was around when you were –

GOLDSMITH: I actually knew his mom. The reason – this gets complicated – I knew Chuckie’s mom before I knew Chuckie because my grandmother and Chuckie’s mom accidentally met at Miami Beach and that’s how my mom met Chuckie. So I actually knew Chuckie’s mom. So that’s how that whole thing got together. But he was not a member of the mafia, but he was a close associate.

KRISTOL: And she – you just reviewed it – she was just your step-father’s mom, and?

GOLDSMITH: She was just my step-father’s mom. And she actually had died. I knew her earlier, she died before my mom married him. So I knew her already when I was really young. Anyway, she was the consequential person to bring Chuckie to the mob, and to bring Hoffa to the mob.

KRISTOL: So you go through high school with your step-father being in jail for a year, and being in the newspaper as a huge suspect.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: And you believing that wasn’t the case.

GOLDSMITH: Right. I basically believed him when he said it. And he was always very insistent. He tried to – he was the only person, of the suspects, who spoke to the FBI to try to clear his name. He was the only suspect who went on television to try to deny it.

He was terrible at it. He was just – he’s not well-spoken and he just didn’t do a good job and he made himself look worse every time he tried. But I believed him because he always spoke about Hoffa in the most reverential terms. Hoffa was like a father to him.

KRISTOL: Okay. And so then what happens?

GOLDSMITH: Next step is, I go to college and law school and I start to rethink my relationship with Chuckie. The first thing is, I get to college and I start reading some of the books that have recently come out about the Hoffa disappearance. And it turns out that the mafia does exist. It turns out that my Uncles Tony are violent men who are top mobsters. It turns out that Chuckie has an association with them and a criminal background that I didn’t know about. And it turns out that there’s a lot of circumstantial evidence that he drove Hoffa to his death. Although, as I later say in the book, it doesn’t hold up.

So I started to rethink him along those grounds. I start to think, worry about the impact of these relationships on my own life. There was one day when a really thuggish repo guy comes and took away kind of violently the car Chuckie had given me, because he didn’t make the payments on it. I wasn’t paying attention.

So I started to wonder about whether maybe this would impact my life, or whether I was in danger. And then especially since I started to think about law school, I also kind of grew – I’m embarrassed by what I’m telling you now because it wasn’t –

KRISTOL: Where were you in college?

GOLDSMITH: I was at Washington Lee University. And I started to grow embarrassed about Chuckie. I used to revel in his union identity when I was a teenager. But when he came to W&L, and we were all in coat and tie, and went to a play, and he was ill-dressed, wearing his Teamsters jacket, it was out of place. And I just grew embarrassed about him. He didn't speak very well with my professors whom I admired.

And then I started to think about my career. I got into Yale Law School, and when I got to law school I started to think, you know, whatever I might want to do in my legal career, this association is not going to be good for me.

So for a whole bunch of reasons, by the time I got to law school I basically cut him out of my life. So I'd gone from adoring this man, and he was like the solid rock in my life – to essentially cutting him out of my life six or seven years later. It's not something I'm proud of, but that's what I did.

KRISTOL: Understandable though I guess.

GOLDSMITH: Probably understandable, but not necessarily justified.

KRISTOL: And then he goes on with his life, and –

GOLDSMITH: He goes on with his life.

KRISTOL: You become a law clerk, and a lawyer and all this stuff.

GOLDSMITH: I go through my career. At every stage of my career, and actually at every stage of my career in the government, when I had to get a security clearance, it turned out to be very important that I had distanced myself from Chuckie.

This happened the year after law school. I was clerking for Jay Wilkinson and he assigned me to actually an Iran-Contra case. So I needed to get a secret security clearance. And when I filled out the forms about my aliases, the other names I had had, and my step-father's, I put down Charles O'Brien. I didn't say "Charles O'Brien, comma, the leading suspect in the Hoffa disappearance;" I just said Charles O'Brien. The FBI figured it out. I got all the documents. They kind of had this panicked reaction, oh, this guy, he's trying to get a clearance, and this guy might know stuff.

So the FBI came down to Charlottesville and spent – I spent a long, long day in which they grilled me about everything I knew, about every mobster I'd ever seen, what their apartments looked like, what my relationship with Chuckie was.

At the end of that, after I tossed Chuckie under the bus, I got my clearance. And every step of my career in government, when I needed a security clearance, this came up. So basically over the next twenty years –

KRISTOL: And it is hard to convey, I think, to young people today, how big a deal the Hoffa disappearance was. I mean it was sort of the unsolved, and it was galling to the FBI, right? That they couldn't solve it.

GOLDSMITH: Yes, exactly. That's a very important point. This was probably one of the greatest unsolved crimes in American history. Certainly the greatest unsolved crime that the FBI has ever expended this level of resources on.

But it wasn't just the Hoffa disappearance. They were also, by that point, they were really interested in getting the mob and killing the mob. So, they had access to someone who kind of knew these families. I didn't know a lot, but I grew up with them. So I was an interesting figure for them. And they were also I think worried, could I be blackmailed if I was given national security information and the like?

So my career progresses for the next fifteen years. I don't talk to Chuckie. I'm just out of touch with him. I don't see him, I don't think about him. And I had this fairly successful career in the law. And I end up being, you know, in my last government job I was the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Office of Legal Counsel. Where again the security clearance issues, I mean, it came up. By that point, I had so distanced myself that it wasn't even an issue. So that's basically takes us up through my time as – in the government.

KRISTOL: As I recall from the beginning of the book, though, as, I mean you're mostly – which you've written about elsewhere, very interestingly engaged in these very, very difficult judgements about the legality of the various post-9/11 programs –

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: And you're involved in huge fights with the Bush Administration.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: Which you've written about elsewhere. But you also encounter this, your past, in a strange way, right?

GOLDSMITH: I did. So this was, I opened the book with this episode. And it was really – it was really just an amazing moment in my life. And it's the event that I'm about to describe that caused me to start rethinking my relationship with Chuckie.

So I was working on Stellarwind, the Warrantless Wiretapping Program – a warrantless surveillance program which was the big Bush counterterrorism program after 9/11, with lots of collection in the homeland.

As soon as I got there it was apparent that there were large legal problems with the program for a whole bunch of reasons. There were factual problems with the way it was described. So I'm working on this late one night. I had a day job to run OLC, and at nighttime I'm trying to figure out this program that I'm charged with signing off on the legality of which.

KRISTOL: So the Assistant Attorney General for Legal Counsel signs off?

GOLDSMITH: Every six weeks this program had to be approved by the Attorney General, and that meant that it had to be approved by OLC and then the Attorney General would accept OLC's advice.

KRISTOL: And your predecessor had approved it?

GOLDSMITH: Had approved it and had approved it every six weeks for two and a half years. But it was hugely flawed from top to bottom as is widely acknowledged now. This wasn't just my idiosyncratic view of the program.

So I'm working late one night in December of 2003 in the Justice Department. And very stressed out because the threat reports at the time were as severe as they had been since 9/11. And here I am, monkeying around with the most important counterintelligence program in the government, the one that they say is keeping us safe, that people are going to die if we cut back on this. It was enormously legally complicated.

So the whole thing was just unprecedented and stressful. And in the midst of that stress, I'm reading a Fourth Amendment case from the '60s, trying to educate myself about the history of the Fourth Amendment better than I had been educated.

And I stumble across these two citations in this opinion. It was a citation to Hoffa vs United States, and O'Brien vs United States. And both of those cases – so the O'Brien case, Chuckie had actually told me

about when I was a kid. It was my step-father's case. He had told me about all the shortcuts and illegalities that Bobby Kennedy took against him.

So just to go back for a second, Bobby Kennedy had this extraordinarily aggressive, many people described it as a vendetta against Hoffa. Pursuing him in the '50s, as the Chief Counsel for the Intelligence Committee, and then as Attorney General, very, very aggressive to put Hoffa away.

And there were always rumors. And Chuckie had always said that in pursuing Hoffa that Kennedy had broken the law and cut corners. He called it "backup." The government's ability to enforce the law against others, but when it comes to complying with the law itself, because they're in secret, they can interpret it away or whatever.

And he also talked about this famous – Chuckie did when I was a kid – about this famous Supreme Court case that he won, that showed that he was being illegally bugged by Kennedy. And, you know, I didn't think about it much as a kid, and I didn't think about it in law school. I didn't really believe it, because Chuckie tended to be a bullshit artist a lot of the time. And then –

KRISTOL: You'd never actually looked at the case?

GOLDSMITH: I'd never, because it wasn't an important – it wasn't the kind of case you would read in law school. It wasn't an important case. I wasn't a criminal procedural scholar. So I didn't know about it. So I printed it out. And it was exactly what Chuckie said.

He had been convicted in the early '60s of stealing some stuff from a bonded warehouse in Detroit, which he claimed he bought and didn't steal, but he was convicted of stealing it. And it turned out that Uncle Tony Giacalone had been bugged with this illegal bug by the Kennedy administration. It was Hoover's FBI during the Kennedy administration, in the early '60s. They had overheard a conversation with Chuckie and his lawyer.

And this was at a time in the '60s when the early round of really aggressive illegal Hoover surveillance had finally come out in the '60s. And so the Supreme Court insisted that Thurgood Marshall as Solicitor General confess error and explain what's going on. And as part of that explanation, Chuckie's case got vacated and he won the case.

So, everything he told me about that case – you know, he wasn't a lawyer, but basically the way he described it was true. But more importantly, the way he described the Justice Department in the early '60s was kind of where I was. He described the Justice Department in the early '60s as engaging in unlawful surveillance, cutting corners in secret so that they could go after the enemy within at the time. This is my words not him, but that's what he had in mind.

And here I was thinking about Chuckie for the first time in twenty years, and hearing what he used to say to me, and seeing that it kind of applied to what I was doing. I was in the middle of something very, very similar. And so, I wouldn't – it's definitely not the case that I immediately changed my mind about Chuckie. But that was the event that started me on the path to reconsidering my relationship with him and ultimately asking for his forgiveness for basically blowing him off for twenty years.

KRISTOL: So just to finish that part of the story and then we can come back to the legal side and also the sort of judgement about Hoffa and all this. And so you reconcile with your step-father and spend a lot of time with him over the next –

GOLDSMITH: I did.

KRISTOL: – years.

GOLDSMITH: Right. So we reconciled the next year. My wife helped me, encouraged me to do this. And I began to think, he wasn't doing well. He was sick. I had my own children by this point. And I came to realize in a way that I didn't before then, just how devastating what I had done to him was.

I mean we were very close. I changed my name. I was Jack O'Brien from age 13 to 21. He was very proud of that. I changed my name from O'Brien to Goldsmith, my birth name which really upset him a lot. And I never really appreciated how much I hurt him until I had my own children.

My mom had always told me how much I hurt him. He wrote me this extraordinary letter that basically made clear how hurt he was. But it wasn't until I had my own kids and started thinking about being in his situation and that happening to me, that it really hit home. So, I –

KRISTOL: And your mom's no longer –

GOLDSMITH: She's still alive.

KRISTOL: She's still alive.

GOLDSMITH: No, she's still alive. And so I was visiting them for the first time really. The second time, but the first time I'd ever been nice to him in twenty years.

And I asked for his forgiveness one night, and he was extremely sweet. And he looked me in kind of watery eyes. He was surprised. And he said, you don't have to apologize son, I understand why you did what you did. And that was it.

And then we grew close over the next several years. And ultimately in growing close again, it was obviously a different kind of closeness at a different stage in our lives. We started talking about Hoffa. And he started telling me more. And I – without before I did any research, I came to think that he actually probably wasn't involved in it. And there was an interesting story there. And I knew I could write a story that would give him a fairer shake than history did.

Because I really want to emphasize – from 1975 until this day, he is, the conventional wisdom is, he's the person that picked up Hoffa and drove him to his death. The new Scorsese movie has Chuckie in the car picking Hoffa up and driving him to his death. That's the conventional wisdom.

KRISTOL: Knowingly or unknowingly some say?

GOLDSMITH: Unwittingly.

KRISTOL: Unwittingly.

GOLDSMITH: Unwittingly is the way it was told in the original FBI theory in the '70s. Probably unwittingly, and that's the way Scorsese apparently plays it.

II: On Hoffa, Unions, and the Mob 22:30 – 58:54

So, we grew close and I decided to write a book. And it took me seven years of really unbelievable, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of hours of research with him. He was a very difficult research subject. He's a famous skirter of the truth. He's committed to *omerta*, so he'd – there were things he didn't want to tell me about.

KRISTOL: Even after people are dead thirty years?

GOLDSMITH: Everybody's dead. It wasn't – it became very clear that it wasn't about his self-preservation; it was about his honor. This is one of the things I learned about. That he was committed to

this principle of not talking, because it was his kind of foundational principle that he learned from his mom and Anthony Giacalone.

So that was one large sort of tension in this relation. Not tension, but it was ever-present. And yet, he really pushed himself hard and told me a lot about what he knew, about the run-up to the disappearance. He gave me information that made it quite clear he wasn't involved. And he told me some things that he actually later regretted, that he went a little too far.

But in any event, we grew very close. And I spent seven years working on this book. I talked to every FBI agent who ever worked the case who's still alive, about a dozen of them. I actually became very good friends with all these FBI guys.

We used to – the original agents on the case and I have met probably fifteen times. They're great guys – amazing. I mean really just extraordinary agents, kind of the best representatives of the Bureau I've ever met. And I looked at all sorts of documents. I got my hands on documents that no one's ever seen. And that's what I did.

And basically, I mean, the main thing I set out to do in the book, was to see if Chuckie was guilty or innocent. And I think that I proved that he did not do it. Everyone who's read the book says I did. But most importantly I came to learn that the FBI no longer thinks he did it.

So it's unbeknownst to the public because the 1970s narrative has continued. Unbeknownst to the public, the Bureau has not believed Chuckie was involved in the Hoffa disappearance for twenty years.

KRISTOL: And what's so interesting about the book is, I mean that's in a way – that's interesting and important. It's sort of – it's one narrow conclusion about one person, it might be a special person for you, and –

GOLDSMITH: Important for me, but not for the world.

KRISTOL: No, and interesting for the rest of us once you read the book because you get to know him of course and all this.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: But more broadly, I'm just – what you even said about *omerta* is so interesting. I mean, what did you learn about that whole world that you would – that surprised you, and it's – ?

GOLDSMITH: So, Chuckie is, well, several things. So first of all again to repeat, Chuckie is not a made man.

KRISTOL: Right.

GOLDSMITH: So he did not have a blood oath to keep this. But it's as if he did. And because he's half-Irish, half-Sicilian, but he was basically Sicilian. And the two people that he admired the absolute most in the world, besides Jimmy Hoffa, were his mother and Anthony Giacalone.

And this is something that they drilled into him, from literally as a young boy. And he talked about this, he talked to me about this in the book. And he had a genuine admiration for the old guys as he put it, the senior mob figures, especially the old-timers as he put it.

So he was completely captured by the mob culture and he believed it and it was important to him and he valued it. So it just wasn't for him, *omerta* is basically not speaking about things you're not supposed to speak about – not telling tales about what you saw, as he put it. It was just a foundational principle of his identity. It really was.

And when I started on the book, I started these conversations, it was frustrating and I thought kind of to myself self-serving, opportunistic, crime-hiding. And it was all of those things. I mean that's basically what its point was.

But over time and by the end, I actually came to admire his commitment to it. Because his – in a strange way, I mean I want to qualify this carefully – in a way, his whole life was ruined, and he gave up everything to kind of preserve that principle. He could have cleared himself by talking about a whole bunch of things that he knew about, some of which he told me, some of which he could have told the government. He could have done this after all these people died. He just thought it was the wrong thing to do.

And towards the end of our conversations, I would ask him about the disappearance and he would tell me a certain amount. And then he would stop because his mother's visage would appear in his conscience in his head. And after a while I didn't want to press him anymore because I felt like I was kind of violating the one thing that he held onto that was so important.

I refer to it in the end of the book as, and during our last conversation about this, as I was in awe of his eccentric integrity. And that's what it was. It was eccentric, but it was definitely a piece of integrity. And so obviously I have mixed feelings about it. It's not my worldview, obviously. But – in fact mine is something of the opposite I think. But it was hugely important for him and he stuck to it until the end.

KRISTOL: Yeah, and not out of any self-interest at that point, or even out of – and not just to get other people.

GOLDSMITH: It was against self-interest. He could have – if he had told me everything he knew, we could have sold a lot more books, just for one thing. Another thing, he could have cleared himself unambiguously had he told everything he knew. And he just – it was the wrong thing to do. And he would talk about, in not telling me, I would say, everyone's dead, what difference does it make? And he would say, but I know their families. And he just said, Jack, I just can't do it, it's not right.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

GOLDSMITH: It's just not right. I just can't do it. We had this conversation. We had many conversations about *omerta*. It was – that was some of the most interesting conversations we had.

KRISTOL: Yeah, I can imagine. That is something that, yeah, so interesting. Kind of the – I mean it's such a cliché almost, that, you know, the mob has its own code of honor and stuff, But still, it's –

GOLDSMITH: Well the interesting thing is, is that it's actually broken down. One of the ways – and it's not very powerful any more. Chuckie is very old school. One of the reasons the mob is not nearly as powerful as it used to be is because the government has gotten people to break. And the reason they've gotten people to break is because, starting in the '70s and '80s, prison terms got very long. And when prison terms got very long, people started to talk. And once the norm broke down, there was a lot of yapping. I mean there are now dozens of mob memoirs and so it's actually kind of gone. But for Chuckie it's real – old school.

KRISTOL: What else about that era and that organization and those people?

GOLDSMITH: So the amazing thing is I learned a lot. I didn't know much about the history of the mob. I did a lot of work figuring out that. Just a couple of things.

I never realized how extraordinarily powerful and wealthy and important to the economy the mob was, starting basically after Prohibition and especially in the '30s, '40s, '50s and '60s. We don't know the numbers, but it was in the – people speculate in the tens or maybe hundreds of billions. I mean it was a lot of money that they were making in the aggregate.

And there was this – and the country really didn't know about it until the '50s. For the first twenty years because *omerta* was serious then, there was discussion – Even Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s book in the late '60s about Bobby Kennedy, when he's talking about this, he says there are two views about the extent to which the mob really exists.

So it was this incredibly powerful, successful, wealthy, profit-generating organization throughout the country that really was this kind of subversive underworld. It really was underworld. So the first thing is just how extensive –

KRISTOL: And when does it become – I sort of vaguely remember reading about this, but when does it really become known, right?

GOLDSMITH: Several events happened. One, the Kefauver hearings in the early '50s were the first ones to really – to bring national attention to it. The second big event was, in the late '50s in Apalachin, New York. The New York cops stumbled onto a mob convention.

KRISTOL: Right.

GOLDSMITH: And that was the event that got Hoover interested. J. Edgar Hoover. The – Hoover had always either denied the mob was an important force. He didn't want to get them – he was afraid it would corrupt his agents to go there. He thought it was a local law problem, not one that concerned him.

And then Bobby Kennedy and the McClellan Committee, those are the three big events that really got it going. So it was in the '50s it became known. And then *On the Waterfront* – it became part of the culture.

KRISTOL: Right. Before that there was a pretty big argument, I think among respectable social scientists and sociologists, all that. It was kind of a myth, you know. There were these local groups, but there's not one outfit or organization.

GOLDSMITH: There was a big debate about it. Even after the '50s there was – with Schlesinger. The extent of it was still debated. It was huge and it was very powerful. And it kind of, you know, for example it insinuated itself throughout the Teamsters Union, which was the most powerful union in the country.

I mean Hoffa had, when he became president he was dealing with the reality of mob-controlled unions around the country, which he couldn't fix. He had no interest in doing it. So one interesting part of it was just how consequential they were.

The second interesting thing I learned is that Bobby Kennedy was sure that decapitating Hoffa and putting him in jail would take care of the mob problem in the Teamsters Union, and he thought in the country really, and exactly the opposite happened. When he got rid of Hoffa, the mob actually – Hoffa, he didn't understand this, kept the mob at arms' length from the Teamsters, money and stuff, Hoffa was in charge. When Hoffa went to jail the mob took over the Teamsters Union.

And then the third irony is, the mob knocked Hoffa off, and that was the event that finally spurred the FBI. When they did it – you can see this in the internal documents, the FBI, just their eyes opening. In the Hoffa investigation, they're uncovering all the labor racketeering, all the extensive control of the mob throughout the country.

And that was the event, ironically the mob trying to kill Hoffa to keep his mouth shut, that led to their downfall in the '70s and '80s. They got people like Rudy Giuliani going. So there's some interesting historical ironies there about the mob.

KRISTOL: It's just amazing though when you think of America in the '50s, '60s, and all the nostalgia for it in certain ways and stuff. That is not – people forget just how big a part that was of urban, of life, or –

GOLDSMITH: Urban life was dominated –

KRISTOL: Urban governments and the corruption of it, and –

GOLDSMITH: And the government and the cops were on the payroll. It was not in every city, and not complete corruption, but it was pervasive, especially in the big cities – New York, Chicago, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Miami. Really all over the country. I didn't know much about this until I wrote the book. And it's really one of the most amazing things. I'm now very interested in that genre of book and history.

KRISTOL: Yeah, I know. You read it when you read – I like mystery novels, and sort of all the noir novels of the '50s are very into this, of course.

GOLDSMITH: Yeah.

KRISTOL: But one sort of vaguely assumes it's just novelistic and kind of overdone: the cops on the take and you know.

GOLDSMITH: It's true.

KRISTOL: But yeah.

GOLDSMITH: And by the way, and I really got the best glimpse of this. So I got access to these illegal bugs that Hoover did in the late '50s and early '60s, of Uncle Tony Giacalone and Chuckie's mom, of their office and apartment. And these conversations are amazing for many, many reasons just because the blatant illegality of what the FBI was doing. But also just the extent of "bribing this cop, paying off this judge." It's all there. And all the machinations of the mob and how they work. It's just quite extraordinary.

KRISTOL: And Hoover's FBI just doesn't pay attention to it? I mean that's kind of amazing.

GOLDSMITH: You mean the illegality? Do you mean –

KRISTOL: Yeah, so first they're hands-off for the mob, right?

GOLDSMITH: So first they're hands-off on the mob and then he panics in the late '50s. And the first thing they decided to do was to start placing bugs in these places. And it's technical legal stuff, and I go into it in the book. But basically Hoover had been getting legal sign-off for bugs from the Justice Department going back to the '30s. All kind of problematic and not very persuasive legal arguments.

But the step from national security bugs to going after the mob was really just a terrible obviously illegal step. But he got it and it was how they got up to speed very quickly. When you place a few bugs in the right places – there's this famous quip but I'm not going to get the numbers right – but that one bug I think is worth a hundred agents, or maybe a thousand agents.

They just – they placed a bug in the headquarters in Chicago, that was the first one and they just immediately got the intelligence. Now the interesting thing is, they just used this for intelligence collection. They didn't use it for – they couldn't use it for prosecution because it wouldn't have been lawful. The whole thing was illegal. So that's how they got up to speed on the mob very quickly by using these illegal microphones.

KRISTOL: And it's just amazing that here we have that this is modern times, this is not the 19th century.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: And it's American government and it's Washington and the Washington of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy and all these people.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: And the cities of these fairly well-known mayors and so forth. And there's both rampant illegality on the part of the mob, and rampant illegality on the part of the government.

GOLDSMITH: It's true.

KRISTOL: You know, it makes you feel better about things today in a way, right?

GOLDSMITH: Well things actually on these fronts, things are much better today. The system of governmental control, is not perfect, over electronic surveillance, is just incomparably better now in part because of this event. I mean, this stuff leaked out in the '60s.

We had a huge debate that people have forgotten about in the '60s about whether we can have microphone surveillance and wiretaps. Eventually Congress enacted a law in 1968 that authorized this stuff if you get a judicial warrant. That was a big deal. And so it was in large part because of the mob bugs that some of this reform happened and that began.

And of course as always happens, when the government accepts these legal constraints, they're hugely empowered because now they can do it lawfully and they can use the information in court. And that's how they eventually brought down the mob.

This is a lesson that the Executive Branch never learns. That doing things unilaterally in secret can bring you some short term advantage. But if you really want to be empowered by the techniques, you need to get the sign-off of the other branches. That's a lesson the Bush administration had a hard time learning. But it was a lesson of the '60s as well. It was the same lesson.

KRISTOL: Interesting, yeah. So you learned about the mob. What about unions? That was another –

GOLDSMITH: I became more sympathetic over the course of my work for private sector unions in part because my own views are kind of shifting about inequality in the country. And I had developed a view in law school and at Chicago when I was going through my law in economics phase, that unions were just bad for a whole bunch of reasons. And also in my reaction against Chuckie, I kind of formed a view against unions even though I loved them as a kid.

In any event to make a long story short, Hoffa is this magical figure. And I became enamored by him and his – first of all I understood what the conditions were like, in a way I didn't really in the '30s and '40s and '50s. And the real serious improvements that Hoffa made in people's lives. And I saw how unions when they work well can do that.

And the paradox about Hoffa is that even though he was on the make in certain respects, he was 100 percent committed to his union. Zero doubt about that. And in fact all the money he made on the side, and there were tens of millions that he made on the side from various things – he was using to enhance his power to help his union. And he would also give it away to the guys in the union. He was just really an amazing guy.

So I came to embrace a little bit of Hoffa's worldview about the lowly worker and came to see at least the idea of the unions. I mean as they operate today it's pretty pathetic. Union leadership is not in good shape. I'm talking about the private sector. They're burdened with laws. Private sector unions in this country right now are in terrible shape. But I came to be much more sympathetic to the need for labor unions properly understood and basically studying Hoffa helped me to understand that.

KRISTOL: It's interesting. Unpredictable consequences.

GOLDSMITH: Yeah. One unpredictable consequence of writing this book.

KRISTOL: This project.

GOLDSMITH: Yeah, right.

KRISTOL: It's funny, I grew up, in New York, I was pro-union. The union heroes were these kind of heads of the garment workers, auto workers, very prominent in the Democratic Party. Hoffa was always kind of a black sheep among union leaders.

GOLDSMITH: For a lot of reasons.

KRISTOL: So talk a little more about Hoffa.

GOLDSMITH: For a lot of reasons he's a black sheep. First of all, the Teamsters were the most Republican of unions. They supported Nixon in '68, they supported Nixon in '72. I'm pretty sure that Hoffa openly supported Nixon in the '60s.

They were also the most – I mean, Hoffa was famously skeptical of the welfare state because he was afraid it would, he said this in one of his biographies, he worried that it would take away the initiative of the working man. Kind of a conservative idea.

And he was very old-fashioned in his values and had a kind of weird streak of conservatism. I wouldn't call him a full-blown political conservative by any stretch, but he was also, he believed in capitalism; he just wanted to take advantage of it for the workers.

He was really against the Left and unions. He thought that – wackie commies it what he called people like Reuther and others who were dominating the unions at the time. One interesting thing about Hoffa is that he was this, he was a black sheep also in the unions because he didn't really play by the union rules. He didn't really care about the Wagner Act and stuff like that. He had his own methods for exercising union power.

Watching Hoffa operate, seeing how much he identified with the working man, seeing how he – reading his speeches and understanding their plight vis-à-vis the government and employers and really what a terrible situation they were in.

And watching how he used these techniques to get them dental care, get them healthcare, get air conditioners in the cabs, get power steering. Getting power steering guaranteed in these trucking contracts was a huge deal that affected the health of these workers.

KRISTOL: Where was he from?

GOLDSMITH: So he was born in Indiana, southern Indiana, and he moved with his mom to Detroit in the '20s. He was looking for better work.

KRISTOL: And that was the local he headed up before going national.

GOLDSMITH: Yeah, Local 299 – well, his first union was, he was working in Kroger's in the middle of the Depression on the warehouse. This is a famous story. And he worked for this terrible boss who was a real terrible guy. As Hoffa said, "the kind of guy who makes unions." And he was abusive and they were getting paid nothing. They only got paid for the time they worked, so they had to sit around for hours. So they basically, Hoffa organized at age 18 or 19. He was basically the lead organizer of what was a strike.

When the strawberries came iced off the truck on a warm night, the workers just stopped working and the strawberries started to wilt. And Hoffa organized all of this and basically right away, the employer, the boss capitulated to save the strawberries and basically recognized a union at a time when unions were not really, they were hated. So that's how he got his start. It's more complicated than that, and that's the basic story.

And then he went to work for Local 299 in Detroit, which is where his home base was. And from there, he expanded his power basically in concentric circles from Detroit.

He was remarkably successful organizing in the South where nobody else, because of the right to work laws, could organize. Hoffa circumvented all of these laws. He didn't use the laws; he used economic pressure. He used –

Ralph and Estelle James were two famous labor economists in the '60s and they did a study of Hoffa's labor techniques and they described him as ingenious. And he really was this uneducated genius. I mean, he knew, as Chuckie described to me, he knew the trucking companies' executives better than they knew themselves. He understood trucking economics better than they knew themselves.

Chuckie told me that he brought Hoffa to a debate at Harvard once when I was 2 years old, it turned out. And I got a tape of the debate. He was debating these famous labor economists and he kind of knocked them around because they didn't know what they were talking about.

KRISTOL: Is that right?

GOLDSMITH: He was really, really smart in a kind of plain-spoken way. But anyway, he used the ability to not ship goods, essentially, and to threaten various industries. And that's how – and they would just capitulate.

And he was a genius at garnering any – but to do this, he had to centralize power in himself. So he was controversial within the Teamsters because the Teamsters Union itself was decentralized. So he centralized power in himself and then he expanded his power nationally.

Right before he went to jail, he got a national trucking contract, the first of its kind. And it was a huge event, front page in *The New York Times*, an historic labor agreement. He was just – and he was just brilliant at what he did on the labor side.

And, by the way, despite all the criminality on the side, that's where he was 99 percent of the time. And all the criminality on the side for Hoffa, for him that was just doing business in a way that he thought would ultimately help the union. So he was corrupt by any measure and a criminal by any measure, but he was also kind of a Robin Hood figure, kind of way.

KRISTOL: Was race an issue one way or another?

GOLDSMITH: Race – he was very progressive on race.

KRISTOL: I had a vague memory of that.

GOLDSMITH: Hoffa was deeply pragmatic. He, as Chuckie said, he would do business with Hitler if he thought he would help his members. That was a quote from Hoffa that Chuckie told me. He didn't like the Socialist Left, but he would work with the Left when he thought it would help his union.

He was very progressive on race and gender equality in the union. He had a lengthy correspondence with Martin Luther King because they kind of identified with one another because of surveillance by the government, oppression by the government. But also Hoffa thought, he wrote this letter which I quote in the book, he just was very pragmatic. We need to sign up everyone. And what he cared about was the worker.

Now he had to deal with racism within his union and that was tricky in the South. But he was very insistent, and he would send out directives all the time about equality within the union, racial and gender equality. So he was actually something of – again, a strange guy. Something of a progressive on those matters, much more progressive than the other law-abiding unions on those issues.

KRISTOL: Amazing.

GOLDSMITH: He's an amazing guy.

KRISTOL: Yeah, and there are biographies of him, obviously. Are they interesting or is it –

GOLDSMITH: There's only one, I would say. Almost all the books on Hoffa are terrible. There's one good biography, pretty good biography, called *Hoffa*, by – what's his name, I can't remember his name now. It's pretty good. I mean, it's a sympathetic biography and it's more technical about how he did this and how he did that. But it's a pretty good – Al Sloane is his name. It's a pretty good biography. I mean, I learned from it in writing my book.

KRISTOL: Yeah, such a major figure. But I mean, I remember, I guess it was in my early 20s when he disappeared. Somehow that was the most famous thing about him. Once he disappeared, that became the story. And then it was so, of course, mob-related that he and the mob got inextricably linked, at least in my mind.

GOLDSMITH: In everybody's mind.

KRISTOL: And you lose sight of all the labor stuff.

GOLDSMITH: Even in labor – even labor historians and – he never got credit for his accomplishments.

KRISTOL: Now he wasn't part of the AFL-CIO, is that right?

GOLDSMITH: They kicked him out. They kicked out the Teamsters in the '50s because of their corruption.

KRISTOL: So Meany was at odds with –

GOLDSMITH: Hoffa was on the outs of almost everybody else in labor. For labor, it was kind of a tragedy. Because if – the Teamsters had economic power that they could leverage. If you had any strike in any union, you wanted the Teamsters on your side because if they stopped delivering goods or if they refused to cross a picket line, then the company in question just couldn't continue.

So it was kind of a tragedy for labor that Hoffa was on the outs with the rest of labor. If they could have found a way to work together, which was practically impossible, labor would have been much more powerful.

And by the way, when labor was declining, started declining in the late '50s, early '60s, that's when the decline began, the Teamsters were still growing in power. And so – he was, I go into this a bit in the book because history has not given him enough credit for his extraordinary accomplishments; they have been overshadowed by his flaws.

KRISTOL: Yeah, right? What about the government? I mean, so you both encountered the government in research, people from the government in research in the book, but also then of course, learned about what the government had been doing in that whole period.

GOLDSMITH: So I'm pretty cynical – I mean, I don't have any illusions about the virtues and vices of the US government or the Executive branch or the Justice Department or the FBI. I feel like I'm pretty well aware from my own experiences and my own studies before this book about the strengths and weaknesses.

But I learned, so I learned a mixed story about the government in this story. A lot of it, a lot of the story I tell is a story about government malfeasance. Government malfeasance in the way they went after Chuckie and Hoffa, Hoffa especially.

Again, Hoffa was a serial criminal, but the way the government went after him actually broke laws and certainly broke ethical rules. The surveillance stuff was all completely illegal, as was acknowledged when it came out in the '60s. And then moving forward to the '70s, the Hoffa investigation, there were many reasons to go after – to suspect Chuckie.

And so on the virtue side, the original agents on the case – two in Detroit, one in New Jersey, one in New York – I got to know very well. And these are men of absolute integrity and they've been kind of on the case still today. We spent so much time together trying to help each other figure it out. So these are like the best representatives of the Bureau, who acted by the book, and were just great, intelligent and faithful government servants.

Then in another time a lot of the story I tell is about how the government lied a lot about Chuckie's involvement. They would leak things about him, trying to frame him or pressure him into talking. That I show in the documents that were in the side of the government at the same time were exactly the opposite of what they were thinking. There was a whole bunch of that.

And then after they basically let the world think that Chuckie was the guy, and to this day the people think this because the FBI accused him of this in the '70s, that Chuckie was the guy who drove Hoffa to his death, they never did anything to correct the record. Even though they knew it was false.

And the final kind of indignity I think was about five or six years ago they invited – they told Chuckie, the FBI did in Detroit and the US Attorney, the Assistant US Attorney, that they believed he wasn't involved. They said they would give him a letter of exoneration saying he's not a target or subject of the investigation.

They invited him to Detroit. All you have to do, they said, is to tell us the truth about what you know and if you tell the truth we'll give you this letter. I've got this all in writing. A lot of people advised me not to do this, advised Chuckie not to do this because it was a legally-fraught thing. If he had told a lie he could have gone to jail. There's all sorts of legally problematic things. And the government – people said they might not give you the letter even though they promised it.

We decided to go forward. He told the truth. They acknowledged that he told the truth. They said after the interview that he told the truth, the letter is to be forthcoming. And then the letter didn't come, and it didn't come, and it stretched out for eight or nine months. And they finally decided they weren't going to do it.

And they didn't do it because basically the people at the top in Detroit didn't want to take the heat, after some other embarrassments about the Hoffa case, for admitting that publicly. Why should they admit that they had the wrong guy? So that was really, really disappointing for him especially, but also for me. So, I learned a lot about government malfeasance. But also, you know, good government. It's a mixed story as usual.

KRISTOL: And how reassured should we be today that things are better?

GOLDSMITH: In the FBI, the Justice Department?

KRISTOL: Generally?

GOLDSMITH: Look, the FBI, like any organization, has its strengths and weaknesses. It's taken a beating from this president that it doesn't deserve. It made mistakes along the way, as the Inspector General reports have shown.

I think the remarkable untold story – untold is not the right word, but underappreciated story – I said this to you before, about the FBI and the Justice Department in the Trump era, is how much they have maintained their norms of independence, including political appointees, despite the president's truly unprecedented attacks.

I mean, whatever you think of Sessions and Rosenstein and Wray and Mueller, these were people that Trump attacked and people thought they would cave. You know, a year ago or a year and a half ago, people thought we're never going to see the Mueller Report. Trump's going to fire Mueller, he's going to clamp down on the report.

Despite all that pressure, his own appointees and the people in the Department stood up to it and that went through. The most remarkable thing, and this is not really about the Justice Department it's about the norms of the Executive Branch. The most remarkable, and again I think underappreciated element of the Mueller Report was in Volume II, when episode after episode of Trump trying to get all of his people –

KRISTOL: Right.

GOLDSMITH: – political appointees, close associates, even lackeys – to try to help him obstruct justice. And none of them will do it. It's really – I mean there's a story to be told. And again, this is a story that I tell that people don't appreciate, but there's a story to be told about the remarkable resilience of norms, in the face of Trump's just truly outlandish and unprecedented abusive actions.

KRISTOL: Yeah. We're having this conversation around Thanksgiving, and obviously the impeachment investigation focused on Ukraine is in the news. And there too it's interesting. He has to go around the Foreign Service.

GOLDSMITH: Yeah.

KRISTOL: He has to go around his own Ambassador, the Ambassador, Mike Pompeo, asked to come back to be Ambassador or Chargé, Bill Taylor.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: He has to go around his own National Security Council, to try to pull off this deal, basically.

GOLDSMITH: Right. But and in fact, the Giuliani –

KRISTOL: And with Sondland who's out of you know – using a political appointee out of his lane and so forth.

GOLDSMITH: Right. But Giuliani is the one person. I mean, this was true of – he tried to use his cronies to shut down the Mueller investigation, to get Sessions to un-recuse and no one listened to him. Giuliani is really the only kind of – which is amazing.

I mean, you know, Giuliani's in my book because he was the one that brought down the Teamsters, put them in receivership, back in the day in the '80s when he was the great man, the great law enforcement guy. And how he has fallen. He's the *one* guy who basically blew off the norms and was completely a lackey for the President as far as I can tell.

KRISTOL: He probably had financial interests too though maybe.

GOLDSMITH: Probably. But the Giuliani that Chuckie experienced in the '80s, and that I talk about in this book in the '80s, and the Giuliani after 9/11, the transformation – I don't know if it's a transformation but the difference now is – it's extraordinary.

KRISTOL: Anyway, that's another conversation when you've finished your next book on how to put the government back together after Trump. Is that what you're going to be working on after this?

GOLDSMITH: Yes, it's called *After Trump – An Agenda for Reform*.

KRISTOL: But this must have – so just say a word more about the book, and just the whole experience of doing it. It was so different from what you've been doing. And I mean – satisfying, frustrating, gratifying?

GOLDSMITH: It's a good question. I'm still deliberating on that. It took me seven years to write the book. In my old age taking on a dozen new topics and trying to master the history of the mob, the history of Labor, all these wiretap things, the Kennedy Administration, hundreds of interviews with my step-father. It took a lot of mental and intellectual effort.

So, I'm glad it's over. The main thing I set out to do, this book was in large part atonement to Chuckie for basically being terrible to him for twenty years. That's what I told him, that's how I viewed it. So I've gotten some satisfaction out of the fact that the FBI has acknowledged, even though not officially, that he wasn't involved. That everyone who reads the book thinks that the evidence that I brought to bear shows that he wasn't involved. That's been gratifying to me.

Another thing that's been gratifying –

KRISTOL: He was pleased that you did it?

GOLDSMITH: He went through all sorts of stages of grief about it. But yes, he is now very, very pleased. And for me that's – it was worth the seven years. He's deeply grateful for what I did, very appreciative and very proud of the book. And, you know, for people to see. So, Chuckie's a guy who's been given a bad shake at every turn. He's just got terrible luck. And he's – nice things have never been said about him.

And for people in the reviews and others to say what and how honorable he comes across on so many dimensions, what a great father he was, and what an interesting character he was – is very gratifying for him.

The other thing I didn't expect – so, a big theme in the book is about fathers and sons, forgiveness, loyalty. And this was kind of an incidental theme for me. I kind of open the book with that because of my relationship with Chuckie and it kind of comes up throughout the book. But I wasn't really self-aware too much.

I've gotten so many emails from people saying, talking about Chuckie forgiving me, and me seeking his forgiveness. Emails and letters, really more than a hundred people saying, thank you so much; I don't have a great relationship with my dad or my mom and you've really helped me to try to take this step. That was very gratifying, not something I expected.

On the whole, I'm pleased with the reception. I'm glad Chuckie likes it and I'm also glad it's over with.

KRISTOL: Well I'm glad you wrote it. I'll say one thing, I'll also just note, I was struck by – you handle all the learning very lightly I'd say, and so it doesn't look as if it was much effort as I'm sure it was.

GOLDSMITH: Well it takes a lot of effort to learn something well enough –

KRISTOL: Yeah, but one has the impression, well of course Jack also knows all about Fourth Amendment law. You're a bigshot Harvard Law Professor, why wouldn't you know? But as you say, that's of course not how the world works.

GOLDSMITH: Especially the history of the mafia. That's a complicated story.

KRISTOL: Yeah, the history of the mafia, and also when you're being contrarian and not simply buying the established line on Hoffa or something.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: For me what was very deftly done, which I think I know a little bit enough to appreciate this, is the weaving together. I mean you're telling a story about things that happened decades ago. How you discovered your small role at the time in those things that happened, of seeing them as a kid in effect.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: How you then just went back and discovered what had happened, and rediscovered in a sense, and educated yourself about it.

GOLDSMITH: Right.

KRISTOL: And so it's a hard thing I think as a kind of literary matter, not to sound too fancy or something, in how to do that narration. And you do it very well. You don't do it in sort of – you weave it together in a way that's not confusing at all. It's always clear what – whether you're talking about yourself in 1975, or 2015. But you weave it together in a way that's also skillful, I thought.

GOLDSMITH: You're very kind for saying so, and I'm very gratified by that because it was an extremely complicated story. I'm telling a story about my relationship with Chuckie, Chuckie's relationship with Hoffa, going through history, through time. But also, Chuckie and I are in a dialogue.

It was very hard to do. I spent a lot of time thinking about organization and structure. And I think it all ended up working pretty well in the end. but that took a lot of work, to get to that point. I'm glad you had that reaction. Thank you.

KRISTOL: No, no, I really did. Well, thank you for reliving it.

GOLDSMITH: Thank you so much.

KRISTOL: Reliving it with me, and with us today. And we look forward to your next book and our next conversation.

GOLDSMITH: Next summer.

KRISTOL: Jack Goldsmith, thank you, and thank you for joining us on *Conversations*.

GOLDSMITH: Thank you, Bill.

[END]