Toasts and remarks
Delivered at a dinner in honor of Irving Kristol
On his seventy-fifth birthday

American Enterprise Institute
Washington, D.C.
January 21, 1995

CHRISTOPHER DEMUTH: Bill Kristol and I would like to thank Irving's mother and father for providing the occasion for this party, Irving for having made the most of the subsequent seventy-five years, so that it is such a distinguished party, and Irving's friends and compatriots who have contributed to his festschrift — *The Neoconservative Imagination: Essays in Honor of Irving Kristol* — the evening's party favor and a splendid collection of essays.

Bill and I had great fun working on this volume, with help from Bea Kristol and from Mark Gerson, who is here tonight from the revolutionary enclave of Jersey City, New Jersey. We had collaborated several times previously. On Pat Moynihan's staff in the Nixon White House, we worked assiduously to convert Senator Moynihan to a correct view of the world, without the least success. Later we attempted to pacify the Kennedy School at Harvard — another failure.

But this past year we have been doing better. I'm sure it is okay with Bill if I mention among friends in this room that the memos on Republican political strategy that have been circulating during the past year or so under Bill's name, and that have achieved some notoriety, have in fact all been written jointly by Bill and me. My role has been to supply the bold political analysis and astringent rhetoric designed to rally the Republicans and demoralize the Democrats, while Bill operated the fax machine. I would like to thank Bill for agreeing to have these papers go out just in his name, to help protect my tax-exempt status here at AEI.

Of course, all the serious work on this volume has been done by the essayists; our pleasant assignment has been to be the essays' first readers. This has been quite an edifying experience, one that has taught me a great deal about Irving's life as well as his thought.

For one thing, having heard for years about Irving's "young Trotskyite days" at CCNY, I have now discovered that those might more appropriately be described as his "Trotskyite weekend" or perhaps his "Trotskyite afternoon." Here, for example, is a copy of the July 1943 issue of *Enquiry* magazine. Daniel Bell, who

sent it along for exhibition this evening, notes that, although the journal styles itself "A Journal of Independent Radical Thought," it spells *Inquiry* with an Anglicized *E*. It was in *Enquiry* that Irving Kristol's first published essays appeared in late 1942 and 1943, under the nom de plume William Ferry. One of the first is in this issue — a deep review of James Burnham's new book, *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom*. Here is the young radical Irving Kristol:

> Utopian political doctrines are to be deplored, and not only because of their unattainability; in practice they will have worse effects than those more conservative and cautious. . . . The socialist ideal of a "classless society" can be judged similarly defective. . . . Democracy must be defined . . . [as] a set of impersonal restrictions on those in power. . . . It emphasizes government by due process rather than by the unchecked rule of self-titled delegates of History or the Workers, and is summed up in the right of organized opposition and subversion.

We do learn, however, from Earl Raab's essay in *The Neoconservative Imagination*, that as a college student Irving took part in a demonstration at City College — and jumped upon a policeman who was in the process of subduing a fellow demonstrator. Reading of this incident brought me special pleasure.

My first encounter with Irving was at lunch with Edward C. Banfield on August 29, 1968. The previous evening the Democrats had nominated Hubert Humphrey for president, and there had been bloody riots in the streets of Chicago. Kristol and Banfield began immediately and in the strongest of terms to denounce the rioters and sympathize with Mayor Daley and the Chicago police. When I interjected a few muddled sentimentalities about the idealism of the demonstrators, they turned on me ruthlessly and relentlessly.

During the previous year, I had begun to read, under Ed's tutelage, *The Public Interest* and *Commentary* and William Buckley and Milton Friedman, and my youthful liberalism was fading fast. But it was at that moment that I realized that if I was going to continue with this intellectual adventure, I must turn my back firmly on my own generation of narcissistic, self-righteous, elite collegiate baby boomers. It was a typical Kristol moment — Irving firmly rejecting any sort of political trimming and insisting that a set of ideas must be embraced with an unflinching recognition of all its practical consequences.

So I am happy to know that Irving had his own moments of youthful rebelliousness, and I only hope that that long-ago student protest at City College was devoted to some large and dubious political point rather than the cafeteria food.

Nineteen forty-three — the year Irving Kristol, aged twenty-three, begin to publish political essays and wrote the Burnham review I have quoted from — was the year of the founding of modern conservatism. The Allies had prevailed in North Africa, and it was clear we were going to win the war eventually; many were beginning to think ahead, wondering and worrying about what peace would bring. The war had interrupted the New Deal and ended the depression — and many feared a return of the bad times with demobilization, and were urging continuation of wartime economic controls. Others (actually, probably the same people) were intrigued with the possibilities of America's postwar relationship with its wartime ally, the Soviet Union.

A few months before Irving's *Enquiry* essay, a group of businessmen and academics founded the American Enterprise Institute to promote swift economic demobilization after the war and a return to status quo ante ideals of limited government. A few months afterward, Albert J. Nock's *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man* appeared; and a few months after that, Friedrich Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*. I am sure that, in 1944, the founder of the neoconservative wing of modern conservatism would have found a thing or two to disagree with in those books by the founders of the libertarian wing. But they were all working on the same set of problems, and their answers would converge over time, and the numbers of their adherents would swell to a tidal wave. Fifty-two years after Irving's first essay, one may say at a minimum that the good old American ideals of progress, liberty, and equality have become thoroughly unhinged in the American mind from any attachment to the enterprises of central government.

And look what has happened to what Irving not too long ago called "the stupid party." The Speaker and the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives are both former professors — and the Speaker continues to moonlight as a college teacher and is intent on following Professor Moynihan's honorable precedent of writing a book a year while in the legislature. The candidates for the Republican nomination for president in 1996 will include at least one former economics professor and one former university president. If they also include a former sports idol, it will be one who is a self-taught economist with a penchant for quoting at length from obscure intellectual texts in the midst of political speeches.

Intellectuals cherish the notion of themselves as brave dissenters from a suffocating orthodoxy, but the ambitious intellectual aims to create and nurture a proper orthodoxy. In the twentieth century, first liberalism and now conservatism have been ascendent in practical affairs at precisely the time they have been ascendent in the world of ideas. Irving Kristol (and others in this room) have shown that this is not a matter of intellectuals riding the establishment tide, but of their moving the tide.

According to Dan Bell's letter, Leon Trotsky said of Dwight McDonald that his conception of revolutionary practice was to start a magazine. This of course is precisely Irving Kristol's conception of revolutionary practice, and I know how gratified he is that the other two great practitioners of that form of revolution, Bill Buckley and Norman Podhoretz, are here at his birthday dinner.

As a founder and promoter of magazines from *Enquiry* to *The Public Interest* and *The National Interest*, Irving is more than a revolutionary, something much more difficult and rare. He is what he once described the Founders to have been — the *successful* revolutionary.

GEORGE WILL: To see a room this congested with talent is to be irresistibly tempted to resort to John Kennedy's felicitous greeting to the Nobel laureates gathered in the White House. Kennedy said there had not been so much intellectual horsepower in that room since Jefferson dined there alone. However, that would be inappropriate here tonight, for two reasons.

First, this is emphatically not a Jeffersonian we are here to honor. Second, he has journeyed through life with a helpmate of considerable distinction, so it would be better to say that there is more political wisdom concentrated here than at any time since James and Dolly Madison dined alone.

I will be brief because there are so many luminaries who wish to speak, and also because I know that the men here have been seated a long time, and are eager to be out and about hunting giraffes.

Coming here in the cold tonight, I was brooding about the fact that the reason we are honoring Irving Kristol in Washington rather than in some milder climate is the famous meeting in June 1790, in a tavern in New York, when Hamilton and Jefferson sat down and did their deal. Hamilton wanted the federal government to assume the state debts incurred during the Revolutionary War and Jefferson wanted a capital somewhere to the south. Had Jefferson been a more capacious thinker, we would be in La Jolla tonight.

But had the capital gone to La Jolla, we might not have been able to tempt Irving Kristol to come to the capital — he could no more be a Southern Californian than he could be a Jeffersonian — and be what he has become, which is a one-man critical mass for a political movement.

If what is called neoconservatism is by now an institution of sorts, it truly is what Emerson said institutions are — the lengthening shadow of a man. And the man is Irving Kristol. I shudder to think what would have happened if he had not broken free from the particular doctrines loose in that particular alcove at CCNY where they were chopping up the Left into ever-finer fragments, producing, in the process, some wonderful slogans. My favorite slogan from the history of the American Left is "Lovestone is a Lovestonite." What Irving's career has affirmed is not only that slogans are no substitute for ideas, and not only that ideas have consequences, but that only ideas have large and lasting consequences.

Irving brings to the dissemination of his ideas a certain, shall we say, confidence. He was recalling during dinner that one of his early essays was a criticism of Einstein.

It is his confidence that makes Irving the Clemenceau of American conservatism, the "tiger of conservatism," someone with a real fighting spirit. Clemenceau regularly got into duels. Not literary duels — the real things. Once as he went out to a duel the man who was accompanying him as his second noticed that Clemenceau had bought a one-way ticket. He said, "M. Clemenceau, isn't that pessimistic?" And Clemenceau replied, "Oh, no, I always come home on my opponent's return ticket."

At the Versailles Conference, when Pat's Moynihan's friend, Woodrow Wilson, was trying to reason with Clemenceau, Wilson said: "M. Clemenceau, don't you believe that all men are brothers?" Clemenceau said, "Yes, all men are brothers — Cain and Abel, Cain and Abel!"

Certainly Irving Kristol himself has had consequences, and if you look around this room you see many of them. It is not too much to say, as I said at one of the anniversary dinners of Bill Buckley's magazine, that in order for there to have been Ronald Reagan, there had to have been Barry Goldwater, and there could not have been Barry Goldwater without the *National Review*.

Similarly — the pedigree gets a little complicated here — no Newt without *The Public Interest*. That's something of a reach, but it's still, I think, as we say in this town, true enough for government work.

The amazing thing is that Irving has been so effective without doing television. His complaint against that device is that it doesn't make him look like Robert Redford. But it is also the case that by going his merry way without television he has demonstrated the continuing potency of the printed word in an age of graphic journalism.

That is profoundly reassuring. In the nineteenth century, when the printed word was everyth ng, when Dickens was publishing *The Old Curiosity Shop* seriatim in newspapers, people would gather on the New York docks as the ships arrived from England and shout up to the crew, "Did Little Nell die? Did Little Nell die?"

Many of us have felt that way about *The Public Interest*. We'd stand out in front of the building and shout, "What are the cultural contradictions of capitalism?"

Irving has probably brought more dignity to the craft of column-writing than it actually deserves. The only real rule for columnists is to be brief and change the subject often. If you change the subject enough, you will have a whole bunch of opinions. But a bunch of opinions doesn't add up to a point of view. Irving has a point of view that has proved to be wholesomely infectious.

It is hard to prosper in columnizing if the standards you are trying to maintain are dismissed, routinely, as old-fashioned, as Irving's were in the 1960s, when he began this movement of Madisonian sensibleness called neoconservatism.

Irving could have said, indeed may have said, what a character in an Alan Bennet play says when told that his standards are out of date: Standards are always out of date; that's why they are called standards.

Irving's insights became standards in part because of the force of Irving's personality. His intellectual comportment became a free-standing standard, a model of rigor and civility in public discourse. I can't talk for long without giving a baseball reference, and one is particularly apposite here. Roger Hornsby, baseball's greatest right-handed hitter, was at the plate, and on the mound there was a rookie pitcher who was rationally terrified. He threw three pitches, and they just missed the plate, or so the umpire said — he called: ball one, ball two, ball three. The rookie got flustered, looked at the umpire, and shouted, "Those were strikes!" The umpire took off his mask, looked out at the rookie, and said, "Young man, when you throw a strike, Mr. Hornsby will let you know."

Hornsby had become the standard — if he didn't swing, it wasn't a strike. And Irving Kristol has become the standard by which our political persuasion is defined.

We look back to people like Hornsby and imagine a golden age of baseball. I suggest that we're now living in a kind of golden age of political participants and that the people in this room testify to that.

G. M. Trevelyan in his *History of England,* when he got to the reign of Queen Anne, said: My, there were five and a half million people in England at the time, and they had Wren for their architect, Newton for their scientist, Locke for their philosopher, Pope for their poet, Addison for their essayist, Swift for their pamphleteer, Bolingbroke for their orator, and Marlborough to fight their wars. He said: What a time they lived in then!

Well, I look around this room and I see that we have as our controversialists the likes of Charles Krauthammer and Meg Greenfield and Norman Podhoretz and Bill Buckley.

We have as our jurists Bob Bork, Judge Silberman, Justice Scalia. We have as our university president — because that is what I think of him as — Chris DeMuth. (I think of AEI as All Souls, the ideal kind of college — a premier faculty and no students.)

We have as our politicians Spence Abraham, Pat Moynihan, Jack Kemp, Mrs. Cheney — one Cheney is missing this evening.

We have as our scholars the likes of James Q. Wilson, Bill Bennett, and Jeane Kirkpatrick.

We have as our agitator Bill Kristol. We have as our historian Gertrude Himmelfarb. And we have the — note the definite article, "the" — public philosopher of our time, Irving Kristol.

Much has been made of Irving's youth — maybe it was just an afternoon — as a Trotskyite. I cannot resist repeating a story I have told before. It is timely because Irving has become a prophet, with honor, in his country.

I was at Oxford in 1964 when Isaac Deutscher published the third and final volume of his reverential biography of Trotsky. The third volume was called *Prophet Without Honor.* The Oxford Marxist Society held a fête for him to celebrate this event, and I went around to partake of this. In the midst of his statement about his book, and about his hero, Deutscher said this of Trotsky: Proof of Trotsky's farsightedness is that *none* of his predictions has come true yet.

An awful lot of Irving's predictions have come true, for which we're all glad. I ask you to join me in toasting *the* political philosopher, our prophet, our friend, Irving Kristol.

WALTER BERNS: The February 13, 1979, issue of *Esquire* published a couple of articles on neoconservatism, which it called the most powerful new political force in America. On the cover of that issue was printed a photograph of Irving Kristol — wearing, as you can see, the same blazer he's wearing tonight. On the cover he is described as the unknown — this was, after all, 1979 — the unknown intellectual godfather of neoconservatism.

The cover story, a sort of biography of Irving, describes him as, among other things, a master of aphorisms. And in a sidebar prints some of them. Some of them are actually pretty good. For example: "It is obscene for a woman to get pregnant at an orgy." And: "I think liberalism is going through an intellectual menopause at this moment." And, to show that not all of them refer to the sexual capacities and incapacities of women, is this one: "Economic growth is easy to achieve; stopping it is difficult and the government works very hard at it."

These examples inspired me to fashion some aphorisms of my own, this by way of saying what *Esquire* didn't say about him. In the order in which they occurred to me, here they are:

1. Irving is a hard man to beat at the poker table. Fortunately, as Leonard and Nino can attest, he can sometimes be beaten.
2. I used to think it impossible to imagine Irving living anywhere other than in New York. Fortunately, for his Washington friends, it's no longer impossible to think that.
3. I know persons who know more than Irving knows about some things, but I don't know anyone who knows so much about more things.
4. Irving is smart — he proposed to Bea; he is lucky — she accepted him.
5. The legal maxim has it: No one should fill two offices; Irving fills many.
6. Helen's face is said to have launched a thousand ships; Irving's kindness and connections have launched a thousand careers — and his foresight, a handful of journals.
7. Students and young scholars sometimes ask me for advice; I tell them to call Irving.

And finally, this one: Dale Carnegie wrote a book entitled *How to Win Friends and Influence People;* Irving influenced people, and in the process won a host of friends. Some of them, but only some of them, are here tonight. And it is my good fortune to be one of them.

Happy birthday, my friend.

MIDGE DECTER: Let me begin by cautioning you that, while I have on a number of occasions been profoundly flattered by the confusion, I am *not* Bea Kristol. Still, I have known Irving a long time — not long enough to have been one of his Trotskyite buddies but long enough for him, when I met him, to have been still very much a golden young man. A golden young man, may I add, with a golden pen — which was in actual fact a pencil, with which he wrote oh so neatly on a pad of yellow lined foolscap without needing to cross out hardly so much as a line. He was an associate editor on a then relatively new magazine called *Commentary*. He and Nat Glazer shared a tiny office on the top floor of a dingy loft building in the garment center, where they sat, back to back, and helped to create a new intellectual world.

Did he know then that he would spend so many of the coming years of his life being a maker of magazines? Perhaps somewhere he did. Irving was — *is* — a very jaunty character, not much given to being daunted. And in the end, he has after all made *three* of them. So far.

Now, I want to say something about magazines. For one thing, they tend to be too much taken for granted, and for another, it's hard to think of Irving without them. The good ones — by which I mean the *real* ones, the ones that matter — are families, families not only of writers but of writers and readers. Like all families they consist of people who, whatever the tensions among them, speak a language of shared experience and assumptions, who impose special expectations, and make special demands, on one another. To generate and preside over one of these things — rearing, supporting, instructing, cosseting, indulging, chiding — takes selflessness, the kind of selflessness for which writers are not, shall we say, usually noted.

Irving likes to joke about how intellectuals start magazines, and he, of course, should know. But it's no joke. Think not only of the generosity of spirit involved but of the *sheer fruitfulness*. How many boys have become men as they have passed through Irving's special school of family building? How many ideas, enterprises, projects, and new lives have sprung into bloom around one of Irving's figurative dinner tables?

People who know little of the world — and that little wrong — have dubbed Irving the Godfather. He is not a godfather — he is a grandfather.

Thus among all the wonderful moments of the forty-six years I have known him, I can think of no moment that better sums up the character of this maker of magazines than the moment a number of years ago when we talked about the impending birth of his first grandchild. By way of accepting my congratulations, Irving said, in a tone of great satisfaction, "Now there will be another person to worry about."

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER: When Chris DeMuth approached me about this evening, my first thought was the story of the Christian and the lion. The Christian is thrown into the Colosseum, and the battle doesn't last long. After a few moments, the lion is on top of him, about to eat him up. Just then, the Christian raises his head and whispers something in the ear of the lion. All of a sudden, the lion backs off, puts his tail between his legs, looks around the arena, and slinks out of the Colosseum. The crowd goes wild, lifts the Christian on its shoulders, and brings him to the emperor. The emperor says, "I give you your freedom and half of my kingdom — but tell me, what did you say to the lion?" And the Christian says, "I told him, `After dinner they expect you to speak.'"

I imagine the lion would truly have been panicked if he had been told that he would be speaking in the company of George Will, Walter Berns, Midge Decter, and Pat Moynihan. But my problem this evening is not just the audience or the speakers. It's the subject. What can one say that hasn't already been said about the intellect and the influence of Irving Kristol?

He is that rare historical figure, the founder of an intellectual movement, a feat he accomplished not just near singlehandedly but almost inadvertently. He followed his truth, the truth, with such intellectual power and conviction, that others, a whole generation of others, followed.

My subject, accordingly, is not Irving's intellect, but something different — his temperament. In *The Neoconservative Imagination,* the lovely book AEI has just issued in honor of Irving's birthday, there is a tribute from Nathan Glazer entitled "A Man without Footnotes." I should like to make mine, tonight, "A Man without Rancor."

Irving is a man of extraordinary equanimity. *Angst, bitterness, anguish* are not words you use to describe Irving Kristol. And this makes him unusual among conservatives because we conservatives are people who believe that the world is going to hell in a handbasket and also believe, somewhat paradoxically, that it has been doing so at great speed for several thousand years.

Now that makes us upset. But not Irving. Both on the field of battle and off, Irving retains a serenity and a grace that express themselves in a courtliness and a calm and a quiet humor — all of this combined with intellectual passion and conviction — that make him a unique figure in our time.

I can think of only one other conservative with such an exceptional temperament, Ronald Reagan. Reagan was truly that political oxymoron, a conservative optimist. But most people thought that he was an optimist because he just didn't know better — James Baker hadn't briefed him on just how bad things were. Irving Kristol knows how bad things are, but he never descends into despair or recrimination. When everyone else is headed for the bunkers, he keeps his head, his good will, and his humor.

Irving is not an optimist. He doesn't believe in the onward and upward ascent of the human spirit. But he does believe that there is enough good spirit in ordinary human nature to get us to where we have to go anyway, so long as the snares and delusions of the intellectuals are plainly exposed and avoided.

I sometimes think that Irving's equanimity is the disposition of a man who served with the U.S. infantry in World War II. I once asked Irving what it was like to be a foot soldier, fighting his way into Germany. He smiled and said, "We were lost all the time." My theory of Irving is that a man who tells you that he spent half the war with a map, trying to find his way through the mud and back roads of France, and who knows that in the end we made it into Germany and won — such a man develops equanimity. He may be an ideological warrior, but he has no fear. In the end, we get there. In the end, the common sense and decency of ordinary humanity prevail — but only if that good sense and natural wisdom can be given a voice. And that, Irving Kristol has done with power and with grace for fifty years.

I should really conclude with another speech about the extraordinary Gertrude Himmelfarb, but I will save that for another night. Let me just say that a hundred years from now historians will be writing about Bea and Irving Kristol as one of the great intellectual partnerships, and one of the great love stories, of our time.

And finally, let me say for Robyn and for me, that we have always felt it a high honor and a privilege to have been included in Bea and Irving's circle of friendship ever since they shifted the center of intellectual gravity in America by moving here from New York. Robbie always says that Irving is the most charming man she ever met in Washington. And she's right.

So please join me in a tribute to a man without footnotes, a man without rancor, a man without peer — Irving Kristol.

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN: Might I first make the small but not unimportant point that the decision to move the capital from its natural site to a swamp on the banks of the Potomac River was not made in a tavern. It was made over madeira in the house at which Thomas Jefferson was staying in Maiden Lane. Jefferson was then suffering from a migraine attack which sailing on the lower bay helped, but not helped quite so much as madeira evidently did.

Virginia had paid her debt incurred during the Revolutionary War. New York had not and its paper, as they evidently said then and still do in downtown Manhattan, was selling at a huge discount. Not a few of Hamilton's friends had a position in these instruments, which made him all the more convinced of the long-term importance of the federal government in assuming the debt the states had incurred during the Revolutionary War. Jefferson had thought this the worst possible idea, but now mellowed. He agreed on the one condition that the capital move to the South.

Now that might have been a fair bargain. But when, two hundred years hence, the Kristols and *The Public Interest* moved from New York to Washington, what exactly did we in New York get in return? This is a question that persists, and Irving you really have to work at that.

Yeats once wrote of a man who was blessed and who had the power to bless. In my whole experience there has been none more so than Irving. He was blessed with Bea, and I do not suppose there's a person in this room who has not, at some point, experienced the Kristol *b'racha* in return.

And therefore, and accordingly, the United States Congress has herewith decreed, and certified, that the accompanying flag was flown over the United States Capitol at the request of the Honorable Gentleman from New York, on Irving Kristol's seventy-fifth birthday, which in true fact is tomorrow, January 22nd, 1995. Note the blue thread.

WILLIAM KRISTOL: These are all tough acts to follow, especially the last one. And I have a tough act to precede, so I'll be brief.

I want to thank everyone who offered remarks. Chris DeMuth carefully arranged this so he would get to speak before dinner and, therefore, could enjoy his dinner, whereas all of us who had to offer toasts had to worry throughout dinner about what we were going to say.

I want to thank all of those who did offer remarks and also to say that I see, looking around, so many here who could equally appropriately have been asked to offer remarks. I don't know why Chris DeMuth didn't ask you. I think you should take it up with him.

I want to thank Chris DeMuth, on behalf of all of us, for this lovely dinner. I should thank the contributors to the book and Chris's associates at AEI who did so much to bring the book out remarkably quickly and competently.

And I want to thank all the guests who came tonight, some of them from quite far away, some of them taking time off from important endeavors: Pat Moynihan, who's trying to save the peso; Jack Kemp, who's trying to stop Pat from throwing American taxpayer money down a rat hole; and the rest. (Jack really wants to save the peso, too. After all, he's a bleeding heart conservative — unlike some of us.)

It's good to see so many comrades and friends of my father, and so many men and women I've known for a long time, and admired for a long time.

When I say comrades and friends, I am struck by how many of my father's comrades in his various endeavors, the magazines in particular, have always been and remain his friends. I think that says something about the health of the endeavors in which he and everyone in this room have been associated.

I am sometimes asked why I became a neoconservative. (I don't know if you can be a second generation neoconservative; there's something slightly oxymoronic about that, I think.) And my flip answer usually is that, well, I too rebelled — but while some people rebelled against their parents, I chose to rebel against my generation. It seemed like an easy choice at the time, in the late 1960s. But the truer reason is that I admired my parents and their friends and wanted to follow in their footsteps.

I think the magazines, associations, and movements in which my parents and so many here have been involved over the years have been unusually cheerful ones. This is a group of happy warriors, and I think the cheerfulness of this evening is emblematic of the good cheer of my parents and of so many here over the years, even though you must have often thought you were fighting in a losing cause.

My father was once asked one of those silly questions by an interviewer: Are you an optimist or a pessimist? And he said he was a cheerful pessimist, which strikes me as basically the only sane answer. It's a particularly striking answer in an age of so many dour optimists and churlish progressives — only the pessimists are cheerful anymore. And this has been a cheerful evening.

Good cheer comes, I think, from a sense of gratitude, gratitude to nature or to God that one has been blessed by fortune, probably more than one deserves.

Now my sister Liz and I feel gratitude for our good fortune in our parents. Irving Kristol is everyone's godfather, but he's Liz's and my father, which is a nice fact for Liz and me. That means that my memories of him are a little different from those of most in this room.

I remember, vaguely, visiting bus garages in London with my father — I guess I was obsessed with double-decker buses when I was four or five years old — and going with him to Mets games and to New York Titans games at the Polo Grounds, where I saw Jack Kemp play quarterback many years ago. I remember my father's telling me I should go to law school when I was graduating from college — and deciding to go to graduate school instead. That may have been a mistake, but one's commanded only to honor one's parents, not to obey them. Luckily.

In thinking about honoring one's parents, I was struck by the quotation from my father that Jim Wilson uses as the epigraph to his terrific essay in *The Neoconservative Imagination*. It is from an essay entitled "Reflections on Love and Family" (one of my father's typically modest efforts — covered the whole topic in 1,200 words). He wrote:

> Our popular culture, having spent years disassembling the family as a sociological institution, is now trying to reconstitute it as a purely voluntary association based on personal feelings. But the family in real life is based on impersonal feelings. We do not honor our father and mother because of the kinds of persons they are, but because they are our mother and father. We do not recognize their authority because they, in any sense, "deserve" it. We do so — and we are pleased to do so — out of a natural sense of piety toward the authors of our being.

I think it is true that we honor our parents not because they deserve to be honored in the sense of merit but out of a sense of natural piety. It's particularly nice, however, and it's extraordinary good fortune, when those whom one is obliged, in any case, to honor, out of simple piety or biology, are also deserving of respect and honor. And my sister and I have had that good fortune.

I've had a lot of good fortune in my life: my wife, my children, my bosses and colleagues here in Washington and elsewhere, the failure of the Clinton health care plan. But the best fortune I've had, and I suppose the best fortune anyone can have, is in the kind of parents one has, and in my sister's and my case, in our parents.

So on behalf of Liz and me, and I think I can say on behalf of everyone here, it is a pleasure to present the book, *The Neoconservative Imagination,* as a token of admiration and respect, and of love and gratitude, to my father, Irving Kristol.

IRVING KRISTOL: I am grateful to all of you who have contributed to this impressive looking book. I want to say a special word of thanks to young Mark Gerson, who has compiled what seems to be a complete bibliography of every little thing I have ever written. It was a labor of love, a Herculean labor, and it will save scholars an enormous amount of time in the future, should they be interested.

I shall treasure this book. I shall read it. I shall edit it. And I shall deposit the edited version in the Library of Congress, so that future scholars will not be misled.

I cannot, however, find fault with anything that has been said tonight. I am quite astonished to discover that I'm seventy-five years old. One of the results of being of a cheerful disposition is that you don't pay too much attention to the passage of the years. I knew I had a lot of birthdays, but I figured they were my birthdays' birthdays, and my birthdays were getting older but not me.

Well, my birthdays and I seem to have converged, and suddenly here I am. I believe this is my first real birthday party. My wife will either confirm or deny it, but since I said it, she will confirm it. She's a good wife.

I have been thinking that, at the age of seventy-five, perhaps I should do something drastic — something bold, imaginative, innovative, a change of direction — and I've been wracking my brains to try to figure out what it is I could possibly do that would represent such a radical change. And the only conclusion I could come to is that I think I'm going to go out and try to get a driver's license. Not a car. Just a license. As we say, I want to participate in the experience of my generation. A little belatedly.

This has been an extraordinary week for us. Mention has been made of the fact that I have a wife whose name is Gertrude Himmelfarb. We have been married a very long time. When we first met, I was twenty-one and she was eighteen, and we met courtesy of a dating service with the high-sounding name of the Young People's Socialist League—Fourth International.

The ostensible purpose of this organization was to establish world socialism. It turned out not to be very good at that, but it was very good at what the sociologists call "assortive mating."

Anyhow, I noticed her at one of our meetings in Brooklyn. We both lived in Brooklyn, though at opposite ends, and after I'd seen her for a few nights I asked her out, and she said yes. And so we started going out.

You must understand, in those innocent days going out meant going to the Saturday night movies. So we went to Saturday night movies, but in Manhattan only, because we were upwardly mobile and outward bound and we did not go to movies in Brooklyn.

Also, we went only to foreign movies because we were cultural snobs. And only to foreign movies that weren't dubbed, because we had read in *Partisan Review* that you miss the authenticity of the foreign movie unless you listen to it in a language you don't understand, and rely only on subtitles.

After four or five such Saturday nights at the movies, I asked her to marry me, and she, probably disoriented by all those subtitles, said yes, and there we were, and here we are.

And one of the things that may have influenced her decision was that there were other young men around, and I was aware of that, and so I said, "Marry me and I'll arrange for you to write ten books."

And she believed me and — she did. Yesterday morning, her tenth book arrived in the mail. It will be published in just a few weeks. And this past week, Wednesday to be precise, we celebrated our fifty-third wedding anniversary. So this is a double party.

I'm not going to say anything about neoconservatism. I'm not going to say anything about any such high topics, which have been thoroughly discussed already tonight.

I just want to thank everyone who has been involved in this party, everyone who has bothered to come, everyone who has applauded, everyone who has listened, everyone who has stayed. It has been a wonderful and memorable evening for both Bea and me. God bless you all.