

JOHN SHATTUCK: Good evening and welcome to this wonderfully festive occasion at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. I'm John Shattuck, CEO of the Kennedy Library Foundation. And on behalf of myself and Paul Kirk, who chairs our Board of Directors and is here with us in the front row; and Tom Putnam, the acting Director of the Library, we are honored to present what will be, I know, an extraordinary evening.

It's a very great privilege for me to welcome our special guests tonight, starting, as you've already welcomed him, with our great guest of honor, Arthur Schlesinger. Could you wave, again, Arthur, so everyone can see you? Great.

[applause]

I'd also like to welcome the members of the Schlesinger family who are here, and we're so pleased to have you all with us. Also joining us tonight is President Kennedy's sister, Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith. Could you stand up, Jean, so people can see you?

[applause]

And we're honored to have with us, tonight, many of the founding benefactors of the Kennedy Library Foundation; generous supporters, whose charitable leadership has helped build this great institution during its first two decades. It's wonderful to have all of you here tonight.

I'd like to offer special thanks to the institutions that make these forums possible. First, I'd like to acknowledge Bank of America, the lead sponsor of our Kennedy Library Forums. I'd also like to recognize Jack Manning, President of Boston Capital. I'm not sure whether Jack has arrived yet, but thank you, Jack, who chairs our Distinguished Visitor Program at the Kennedy Library.

Let me also thank our other forum sponsors: The Lowell Institute, the Corcoran Jennison Companies; and our media sponsors: *The Boston Globe*, WBUR, which broadcasts these Kennedy Library Forums on Sunday evenings, and NECN. Finally, I'd like to add our special thanks to the Raytheon Corporation for its support of the Distinguished Visitor Program.

Tonight, we're celebrating the contributions of one of our country's great intellectual leaders and citizen activists. I thought it might be appropriate to start this evening's tribute to Arthur Schlesinger with a quote about bridging the gap between intellectuals and politicians by the then Senator-- Junior Senator-- from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy.

Speaking at the 1956 Harvard Commencement, Senator Kennedy warned Harvard students that, and I quote:

“The way of the intellectual is not altogether serene in our society. In fact, so great has become the popular suspicion of American

intellectuals that a recent survey elicited from one of our foremost literary figures the guarded response, ‘I ain’t no intellectual.’ It seems, therefore,” he continued, “that the time has come for intellectuals and politicians to put aside that barbed thrust, the acid pen, and the rhetorical blast. Let us not emphasize all on which we differ, but on which we have in common.”

Now that, of course, was the vision of President Kennedy’s administration, and that’s the vision we hope to recapture in tonight’s forum. To celebrate one of the best and brightest figures of the Kennedy Era, someone who effortlessly bridged the gap between politics and the Academy throughout his entire public life, we’ve invited here tonight with us a distinguished panel of historians to reflect on the long career and many accomplishments of Arthur Schlesinger as an historian, a public intellectual, and a presidential advisor.

Before turning to the Senior Senator from Massachusetts to deliver tonight’s keynote tribute to Arthur, I want to welcome and introduce our panelists: Doris Kearns Goodwin, right next to me here. [applause] Doris is one of America’s foremost presidential historians. Her first book, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, was a *New York Times* bestseller in 1977, and it’s been the standard ever since, against which other Johnson biographies are measured.

Her second book, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, was also a *New York Times* bestseller, and was turned into an ABC television miniseries. Doris received the Pulitzer Prize in 1995 for her monumental work, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The American Home Front During World War II*.

Two years later, in 1997, she published a memoir about growing up in Brooklyn as a Dodgers fan. And I have to say that that certainly prepared her for the situation she would later face in Boston as a Red Sox fan [laughter]. Her most recent book, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, is another bestseller that has received enormous critical acclaim. Doris, as we all know, is a frequent television and radio commentator on history, politics and baseball.

Our second panelist, Sean Wilentz, is a social and political historian, Professor of History, and Director of the American Studies Program at Princeton [applause]. Sean's most recent book, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*, was published last year, and has been described by critics as a *tour de force* analysis of the build-up to the Civil War.

His first book traced the emergence of the working class in America, and won the Albert Beveridge Award of the American Historical Association, and he's now working on a biography of Andrew Jackson as part of a series on American Presidents, edited by none other than Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Our third panelist, Alan Brinkley, is Provost of Columbia University [applause], where he's also the Nevins Professor of History. Alan won the 1983 National Book Award for his fascinating study of Huey Long. He's also the author of two other widely acclaimed histories, a 1995 analysis of the New Deal: *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War*; and a 1998 book about the challenges to the liberal tradition, *Liberalism and Its Discontents*.

College students all over the country are familiar with Alan's two state-of-the-art textbooks, which I'm sure they've all had to buy [laughter]. *American History: A Survey*, now in its 11th edition-- that's a way to get rich-- [laughter] and *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*, now in its 4th edition.

Now if this weren't enough all-stars for tonight's line-up, I'm also pleased to welcome this evening's moderator, one of America's foremost journalists and defenders of the First Amendment, John Seigenthaler [applause]. A former president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, John served for many years as an award-winning reporter, editor and publisher of *The Nashville Tennessean*; and later as the founding editorial director of *USA Today*.

During the Kennedy administration, he worked as Attorney General Robert Kennedy's chief negotiator with the Governor of Alabama during the

Freedom Rides. And he was attacked by a mob of klansmen when he came to the aid of the Freedom Riders in Montgomery, Alabama. And for the past decade, he has chaired the Kennedy Library Foundation's Profile in Courage Award Committee.

Finally, I have the great privilege of introducing someone who needs no introduction, least of all, at this Presidential Library, built under his leadership as a living memorial to his brother. It is not merely what he has done for this Library that places him beyond the reach of normal introduction; nor is it only what he's done for the people of Massachusetts in his nearly four and a half decades of public service; nor what he's accomplished for Americans all over the country, as the most powerful voice for justice and fairness in the United States Senate; nor how he has stood, time and again, on the world's stage as a champion of human rights, the rule of law, and the finest values of our nation.

It's not any single one of these countless achievements over a lifetime of service, but all of them, together, that make Senator Edward Kennedy the greatest Senator of our time, and certainly one of the greatest of all times.

[applause]

SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY: Thank you. Thank you very much, John Shattuck, for your extremely kind and generous introduction, and for all you do for the Kennedy Library, and for this great institution. It's good to be with Paul and Gail, my sister Jean and Vickie. I listened to the

introduction. Everyone was an author. I'm an author too. I wrote *My Senator and Me*. It's about my dog Splash in the United States Senate, but that's for another time. [laughter]

Let me say it is a privilege to be here at Jack's Library. This magnificent Library is an enduring tribute to President Kennedy's life and achievements; and I commend all of you for what you've done to make it so. It's also a privilege to be here, to pay tribute to one of the most preeminent advisors to President Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger.

Throughout his thousand days, President Kennedy depended on Arthur's wisdom, his counsel, his eloquence, his sense of history; and most of all, his friendship. All of us in the Kennedy family inherited Arthur from Jack, and he's been a friend and a cherished advisor to all the Kennedys ever since.

Many of you know Arthur through his work. He's an extraordinary historian and received countless honors over the years, including two Pulitzer Prizes, one for the story of Jack's New Frontier, and the other, at the right age of 28, in 1946, for *The Age of Jackson*.

1946 was significant for another reason. Jack had just been elected to the House of Representatives from Massachusetts. And the next year, the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce honored them both, by naming them as two of the Outstanding Young Men of the Year.

They didn't really connect seriously, though, with each other until the 1960 campaign. At that time, Arthur was torn, because he had strong ties to Adlai Stevenson and ties to Hubert Humphrey as well. He said in 1960 that he was nostalgically for Stevenson, ideologically for Humphrey, and realistically for Kennedy. [laughter] And it was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Arthur has dedicated his life to history, and our nation is a better place because of his insights, his scholarship, and his great storytelling abilities. And on behalf of all Americans, especially those who love history, we thank you, Arthur, for all that you have accomplished.

We also thank you for sharing your high ideals and brilliant vision with us. You inspired a young President and a generation of Americans, too. It is an honor to have you and Alexandra in our lives. We love you very much. We know that Jack couldn't have had the New Frontier without you, Arthur Schlesinger.

[applause]

JOHN SEIGENTHALER: Well thank you very much. As you heard, I am John Seigenthaler. I am a journalist. I say that with some trepidation, having recently reviewed Arthur's commentaries on the War in Iraq. He blamed journalism for failing to point out the flaws of the administration early enough to stop it, but I am a journalist. And I'm proud to be here with these

three distinguished historians this night, as we honor the premiere historian of the nation, Arthur Schlesinger.

You know, this place is the perfect venue, as Senator Kennedy just pointed out, to honor Arthur Schlesinger. And no three voices could be more compelling, nor insightful in talking about his life, his legacy, his works, his wisdom, all that he has meant to the world of letters, to the world of politics, and to the world in general.

We're going to spend this evening by having our three panelists talk, first of all, about their own insights into Arthur's impact on the world of history, on the politics of this nation. And then, after a time, we'll call on you to participate in this conversation about this great and distinguished historian.

You know, Arthur has not only written history, but he has been a part of history. He has been a participant in history. If you read his life, *A Life in the 20th Century*, published in 2000, the first of the memoirs of Arthur Schlesinger, you find how ably he recites not just the history of this century, but his own involvement in so many different aspects of it, both in his literary life, and his political life.

And so we begin with Sean Wilentz. And I ask him, speak briefly, if you would, to that issue of the historian, the distinguished historian, as a distinguished participant in history.

SEAN WILENTZ: It's a scary thing, actually, to get involved in the public realm. As President Kennedy said in 1956, it's not serene. And Arthur has been an inspiration to all of us who have tried to make any kind of contribution to the political world, with the understanding we bring in as historians.

The fact that we have three historians here-- one a university provost-- and a distinguished journalist, and one of the most courageous members of the administration-- the Kennedy administration. And we're not even going to scratch the surface tonight in describing what Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has done, which will tell you something.

I've actually been going through Arthur's papers for another project. It is exhausting. It's exhausting to read the finding aid to those papers, just to read all the people that he has corresponded with over the years. Among those-- and this gets to the question that John was raising-- there's a letter in the papers I just picked out today, dated February 1st, 1957:

Dear Professor Schlesinger: I understand you have some ideas on what the Democrats should do, in terms of making issues, looking towards the election of 1958. From what I have heard, I am inclined to think that you are not too convinced that I am going about it in the right way. As Majority Leader of the Senate, I have some problems, which I do not think you are aware of. Sincerely, Lyndon Johnson

That was February 1st, 1957. Within six months, it's "Dear Arthur," "Dear Lyndon," "Dear Lyndon," "Dear Arthur," you know, two more seductive people, I can't imagine. And that's one of the ways in which politics and history can combine.

But Arthur's been doing this long before 1957, long before he was even named one of the Great Young Americans of 1947 with John F. Kennedy. He's been doing this, really, since from the Second World War on. In particular, the founding of Americans for Democratic Action in the late '40s was a turning point, I think, in the history of American liberalism, one of his proudest moments; and one in which, in fact, history and politics joined.

I want to conclude with just another letter, another little piece from the Schlesinger papers-- not written by Arthur, but by Paul Buck, Provost of Harvard University, but a provost of the time, anyway. There are some amusing things in this particular slice of the correspondence about Harvard professors doing terrible things in Widener Library late at night; how keys should be taken away from them, et cetera. But this was a much more serious, much more serious letter.

And it went as follows-- he was talking about the future of ADA, and I think in some ways, this sums it up-- he wrote:

"Political parties need ideas as much as managers, personalities and full treasuries. And if ideas are eventually to benefit parties, they must

be both an advance of rank and file opinion, and consistent to the developing wellbeing of a nation. Cracks about brain thrusters, professors in politics, eggheads, may influence some votes, which way in balance remains to be established.

“But actually, this, like other forms of anti-intellectualism, is a step towards self-destruction. No party is going to win many elections for long, if it does not possess a sound core of ideas. The shrewder party managers, like Farley-- James Farley-- understood this.

“God help the Democratic Party if it exiles its brains. Even if Republican mistakes brought it back to power, as in 1933, it would require ideas, as again was true in 1933, to convert the victory into an era of achievement.”

In writing that, Paul Buck was describing to his colleague, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., what his colleague was doing, in an extraordinary way. And for that, well, we're going to salute Arthur for a lot of things tonight, but I'll start off by saluting him for that.

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: Doris.

DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN: Well, I'll start out on a lighter note, because in looking through the various parts of what I had at home, and articles and magazines about Arthur Schlesinger, I found this fabulous article in *The Washington Post* in 2000. It was somebody who interviewed Arthur Schlesinger, and said, "There's something wonderfully retro about this man, in his dapper gray flannel suit, his wide-collar blue shirt, and his black and yellow bowtie." He's at this restaurant with him.

And Arthur glances at the very slight fish and fowl offerings on the menu and says, "This is like a ladies club. Waiter, I want some meat." [laughter] He then orders a Bombay martini, steak, and french fries. And the reporter said, "You got to love the guy," as we do. [laughter] Now one of the things that I saw that he said, he has dealt, probably the most articulately, with this whole question of the participant as historian. He said:

"Involvement should bring him to a proper humility before the welter of the past. Nothing in my own recent experience," he said, "after having worked in the White House, was more chastening than the attempt to penetrate the process of decision.

"I shudder a little when I think how confidently I have analyzed decisions in the Ages of Jackson and Roosevelt, traced influences, assigned motives, evaluated roles, allocated responsibilities, and in short, transformed the disheveled and murky evolution into a tidy and ordered transaction."

He also recognizes the dangers in such involvement, because he argues that “Participation can spin a web of commitments, which may imprison the chronicler in invisible fetters.” But not for a man of his scope who, even when writing his participant history of JFK. and RFK., was able to have that larger scope, in addition to the small details that he was able to provide.

As he says, “To take part in public affairs, to smell the dust and the sweat of the battle, is surely to stimulate and amplify the historical imagination. Participation in the actuality of history leaves the historian no doubt that mass emotions are realities with which the statesmen must deal.”

And because he was right there, there was this apt understanding, and metaphor, and analogy, and anecdote that couldn’t have been gotten otherwise. You know, he tells the story in *In A Thousand Days*, when JFK. first came into the Oval Office to meet this young Schlesinger, both new to the White House. And Schlesinger says to him, “I’m not sure what I’m supposed to be doing here,” at which point the President said, “Neither am I.” [laughter]

And then there’s this great moment when, because Kennedy was a reader, he had read Schlesinger’s books on Roosevelt. And he said to Schlesinger, “You know, I thought when I read those books, there were these towering figures who surrounded Roosevelt. Then I read Teddy White’s book about

me and my presidency, and I realized it's just Sorensen and Goodwin and you." [laughter]

All along, I think what he's been able to understand is something even more important, not just for the historian, but for the statesman. He said at one point:

"The knowledge of history should remind the statesman of the extreme difficulty of foretelling the future. If anything is evident,"-- one wishes that the Bush administration had heard this-- "If anything is evident, it is that history is full of surprises, and that the historical process is inherently inscrutable.

"A wise statesman learns from history that he should not base his policy on personal guesses as to what the behavior of nations is going to be 10 or 15 years from now. What a knowledge of history does is to encourage a statesman to a sense of human frailty, and to encourage a certain humility about the future.

"In a world where enemies become allies, and allies become enemies, the possibilities of history are far richer and more various than the human intellect is likely to see. This should lead statesmen not to make drastic and terrible decisions."

And then, amazingly, while he writes these pieces of history, where the reviews are unbelievable for any of us in history, there's one review of the FDR trilogy that says it was, "The most perfectly sculptured work of historical art in this country, a book distinguished for its novelistic use of time, its symphonic organization, its vivid scenes, its graphic vignettes. These volumes are a narrative history in the grand style, written from the inside, with life, color, passion, drama, and a serious scholarly purpose."

I think what makes it all work for Arthur Schlesinger is the nature of the man himself. He said, in writing his book about RFK, that he had an experiencing nature-- absorbed, curious, growing all the time. History changed him, Schlesinger said. And had time permitted, he might have changed history. Well history has changed Arthur Schlesinger, and he surely has changed history. He is a great man, as well as a great historian.

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: Alan.

ALAN BRINKLEY: Well, I don't have the benefit of any documents in front of me today, so I'm going to start with just a few personal observations about Arthur. And in fact, my very first encounter-- I won't call it, actually, a meeting-- but my very first encounter with Arthur came when I was about 12 years old. And I was in the driveway of my parents' house in Chevy Chase. And inside the house and in the backyard a party was going on. And

it was a Kennedy era party-- it was probably the summer of 1962-- with, if not Kennedys themselves, at least Kennedy people congregating around a swimming pool.

As I was standing with a friend in the driveway, the front door of our house flew open. And out stormed Arthur Schlesinger, soaking wet. This is one of the prices of being a historian in the public world. Sometimes you get pushed into a swimming pool.

Arthur has been an extraordinary and generous friend to me for probably 30 years now. We were colleagues for a while at the City University Graduate School. And there's never been a time in my adult life when Arthur hasn't been an important part of it.

I am, among other things, an historian of the New Deal. And so I thought I'd talk just for a moment about Arthur as a founder of scholarship in the New Deal; and also, how Arthur, as a historian of the New Deal, helped transform the politics of his own time.

Arthur is the son, as most of you, I'm sure, know, of one of the great historians of an earlier generation, just as Arthur is one of the great historians of his. And Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., actually during the 1930s-- during Franklin Roosevelt's own lifetime-- was one of the first historians to write historically about the New Deal. And, in fact, much of what Arthur Sr. wrote is reflected not only in Arthur's own scholarship, but in the

scholarship of almost everyone who has written about the New Deal since then, even though many people aren't aware of it.

But much more important than Arthur Schlesinger, Sr.'s short commentary on the New Deal in 1938, I think it was, was Arthur's extraordinary three volumes *The Age of Roosevelt*, which appeared in staggeringly quick succession in the last years of the 1950s; the third volume of it appearing in 1960, just before he was to enter the Kennedy administration.

And you have to think back, I think, to the political climate in which this project was begun-- the Eisenhower years, the McCarthy years-- years in which the idea of the New Deal was under attack from many sources. And the whole legitimacy of New Deal liberalism was in great doubt in the midst of the great anti-Communist frenzy of the time.

And Arthur, having written *The Age of Jackson* ten years earlier, and written other books in between, including *The Vital Center*, a very great document of liberalism in the 1940s, began this extraordinary, great narrative and analytical history of the New Deal, from the era of Herbert Hoover in *The Crisis of the Old Order* to the emergence of the New Deal in *The Coming of The New Deal*, to the apex of the New Deal in 1935, '36 in *The Politics of Upheaval*.

And through these books Arthur created a kind of scholarly model for understanding the New Deal and its enduring value, as well as its value to its

own time, and shaped, in effect, generations to come of New Deal history; some of it in disagreement with Arthur, some of it in dialogue with Arthur, some of it embroidering on ideas that Arthur had inaugurated. But no one, I think, can write about the New Deal without coming to terms with Arthur's extraordinary work.

And I believe that that work not only had an enormous influence on historians-- both present and future-- but also had an enormous impact on its own time, and helping to create an environment in which the New Frontier and the Great Society could be possible. So Arthur's life is very hard to encapsulate into any one set of books or ideas. But this is one, I think, of the many important contributions that Arthur has made, both to the historical profession, and to the political world. Thank you.

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: You know, Alan mentioned Arthur's distinguished father. And the first time I ever saw Arthur, it was in a classroom. I was a Niemen Fellow at Harvard-- that's a mid-career Journalism Fellowship-- and that year Arthur was about to go off to Britain in the middle of the semester, and he brought a substitute teacher. And I'll always remember his introduction of that teacher. He brought him on and said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you *the* Arthur Schlesinger. Accept no substitutes." And his father walked onto the stage. [laughter]

You know, my son is a television journalist. I've mentioned that story a number of times to him, in the hope that he would get it. He hasn't yet gotten it, but I'd like to pose to all three of you a thought. Perhaps you have different responses, different reflections on it. In 1960, Arthur wrote an essay. It was called "The New Mood in Politics."

1960-- President Kennedy was on the way to the White House. And "The New Mood in Politics" became a part of *The Politics of Hope*, which was a book published a couple of years later of essays. And I'll just read a couple of excerpts. He said:

"At periodic moments in our history, our country has paused on the threshold of a new epoch in our national life, unable for a moment to open the door, but aware that it must advance if it is to preserve its national vitality and identity. One feels we are approaching such a moment now that the mood which has dominated the nation for a decade is beginning to seem thin and irrelevant; that it is no longer an expression for release."

And he goes on to say, somehow the wind is beginning to change. People-- not everyone, by a long way-- but enough to disturb the prevailing mood seem to seek a renewal of conviction, a new sense of national purpose. More and more of us, I think, are looking for a feeling of dedication, for a faith that what we are doing is deeply worthwhile, the kind of inspiration and lift we had for a while in the '30s, and again during the Second World War.

That was the hope of the '60s, shattered by 1963, the tragedies of 1968, the Vietnam War. My question is, really, what is the possibility that we're approaching a new epoch of hope? Does this last election indicate anything to any of you with regard to prevailing winds?

GOODWIN: Well you know, what you're talking about is the cycles of history that Arthur has written about so compellingly. And what he seems to suggest in those cycles is that there are periods of repose, when people want to go back to private life, after one of these progressive periods where batteries are charged.

And I think the timing may be a little bit off, because I think if there was some hope-- and I believe it was your father who first propounded the cycle theory-- every 14 years, it was going to shift. And you could see it throughout the 20th century. You had the Progressive Era that lasted, really, until World War I.

And then there was that desire for repose and tranquility that brought on Harding and Coolidge and Hoover. Then the Depression comes into play, batteries get recharged again, people feel they can solve problems once again. You get the New Deal, and you get World War II. Then once again that desire for tranquility comes, and you get Eisenhower.

And then just as you described, John, at the eve of the '60s, there was that sense of attacking problems once again. Then that comes to an end at the end of the '60s, early '70s because, in part, of the war in Vietnam. And then where is the next renewal? It's been a longer period of time, it seems to me, unfortunately, since that period, until today.

So maybe we've just skipped a couple cycles. But I think there is some hope that what we saw in this election was an attempt to say, "We want to have a fresh start. We want this party, the Democrats, to take a look at the problems that we're really facing, not let us be led down the byways of the kind of social issues that have been the cause, in some ways, of Democratic losses in these last elections. And we want to solve the huge problem of the war in Iraq."

And there again I think Arthur gives us guidance. I mean, I read this article that you wrote in 2003-- in March of 2003, when everybody's still saying this war is exciting, shock and awe, and he's saying what drove the rush to war? And he says:

"Hussein had a significantly smaller military force than he had in 1990. He had grown weaker as more weapons had been exposed by the U.N. inspection regime. The cause of the rush of our war was so trivial as to seem idiotic. It was the weather.

“American troops, our masters told us, would lose their edge in the Persian Gulf’s midday sun, so we had to go to war before the summer. This is a reason to rush to war? We have a professional army. And a professional army ought not to lose its edge so quickly and easily.

“There’s a base suspicion,” he wrote in March of ’03, “that we are going to war against Iraq, because that is the only war we can win. We can’t win against Al Qaeda-- it strikes from the shadows. Can’t win against North Korea, because it has nuclear weapons. Indeed, the danger from North Korea is far more clear and present and compelling. How have we gotten into this tragic fix without a searching debate?”

And then he says, “Yes Hussein is a monster. But does that mean we go abroad to slay monsters?” And then quotes JFK, and JFK said, “We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent, nor omniscient, that we are only 6% of the world’s population. We cannot impose our will upon the other 94% of mankind. We cannot right every wrong or reverse every adversity. And therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem.”

Once again, going back to that, history produces a certain humility. And yet, at the same time, always, in Arthur’s work, there’s that hope that the country will respond, that leaders will come forth, and we will have a time of one of

those good cycles once again. I think so, but I'm always an optimist. I had to believe the Red Sox would win the World Series for a century. [laughter]

[applause]

WILENTZ: I once had a cycle theory, too. There are 14-year cycle historians, there are 30-year cycle historians. I had a cycle theory where the Democrats should have won the 2000 election. [applause]

GOODWIN: And so they did. [laughter]

WILENTZ: So I don't know if I'm right or I'm wrong. But I think that what Doris says, that skipping cycles or not, that there is something abroad in the land at the moment. But you know, for that to matter historically is not a given. Historians know that nothing is fated. Nothing is going to happen because it's supposed to happen.

And one of the things that Arthur's history has done... You notice the titles of his books in his series: *The Age of Jackson*, *The Age of Roosevelt*. He didn't write *The Age of Kennedy*. He's one of the only historians I know of who dominated the scholarship of three fields in American history. It's extraordinary.

And while those were not biographies, and while he is not a Carlisle-like great man historian, he believes in leadership. He writes about leadership

compellingly. And so I think that if this mood is to be translated into something other than a good mood and a really nice party after the last 2006 election, it will require leadership, and that is what we're looking for.

Now, you know, in 1930, who would have thought that Franklin Roosevelt would become Franklin Delano Roosevelt? Few. He was the playboy from New York, the playboy Governor of New York. No one was exactly sure that John F. Kennedy would be the John F. Kennedy that he became in 1960.

So leadership isn't necessarily something that you're going to see right away, either-- another lesson that history teaches us. But I do think that it's a vital component in our politics, in any democratic politics, that winds of change without leaders to trim the sails won't get us very far.

[applause]

BRINKLEY: Well I've always had a little bit of skepticism about cycle theory, although I do think that it suggest something that is important in our politics, which is that no moment lasts forever. But as Sean has said, it's not inevitable that a moment will end at any particular time. Historical events have to precipitate a change.

The election earlier this month, which was probably heartening to most of the people in this room, is one of many off-year elections that has seemed to auger a different era in political history. And many of those off-year

elections, in fact, actually did auger a change. The 1854 election was an extraordinary moment in the re-orientation of parties, leading towards-- although not until six years later-- the election of Lincoln.

The election of 1894, which was the election that mobilized the Populist Party, set in motion the chain of events which made the Republican Party the dominant party for the next almost 30 years, beginning in 1896. The election of 1930, in which Democrats made enormous gains in both Houses, was the first sign of what would become the era of the New Deal. The election of 1958, in which Democrats similarly made enormous gains in Congress, augured the hairline victory, but nevertheless the victory of John Kennedy in 1960.

So what does the 2006 election suggest to us? Well there are dramatic off-year elections that have not had a similar impact-- the 1994 election, which was one of the most extraordinary Congressional elections in our history, in terms of the magnitude of the turnover. Nevertheless, two years later was followed by the re-election of Bill Clinton.

So there's no guarantee that what happened this year will lead to a Democratic victory in 2008. A lot depends on events. A lot depends on what the Democrats are able to do in the two years between now and then. And a lot depends, of course, on who the candidate is.

So cycle theory doesn't promise anything, I don't think. It just suggests possibilities. And there is a possibility today, I think, of a change in direction-- certainly a weariness with many aspects of the last six years is very visible in our culture. But it's in the hands of the new majority in both Houses, I think, to show us the way towards a different era; and also, towards a Democratic victory in 2008.

SEIGENTHALER: Sean.

WILENTZ: Applaud, applaud. [applause]. Just as a follow-up on the unpredictability of it, Alan mentioned the 1930 elections, which really were important. But the Republicans still held the Senate narrowly. And the Democrats, actually, came two votes shy of winning the House majority in 1930.

The problem was that the Congress, which was the 75th or the 76th, didn't actually hold its first session for 13 months. By that time, four Republican Congressmen had died, and the Depression had gotten worse. And in the following elections, Democrats swept, so they had a two-vote majority. What that tells you is the Republicans should have been, first of all, more interested in health care earlier on. [laughter] And secondly, you never know.

BRINKLEY: You never know.

[laughter]

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: Let me just press the envelope a little bit. That essay from 1960, toward the end, said something very close to what you said, Doris. Very little in history is inevitable. The cyclical rhythm we've identified offers no guarantee of national salvation. It will work only as men and women rise to a towering challenge.

Certainly, there has been no more towering challenge for two decades than the one we faced at war today. And where does one find leadership to answer the towering challenges? I've been evaluating members of Congress over this last six years, and it's very tough, I think, to see leadership emerging to answer the towering challenges.

BRINKLEY: Well I think, at least in terms of the war in Iraq, I think we're still a long way from seeing a path out of this war, or seeing any consensus building around the path out of the war. There is the Iraq group that Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton are chairing.

And, of course, we don't know what they're going to recommend. But I think the outlines of the proposal are more or less known-- a partition of Iraq into various ethnic enclaves with a federal government that will sort of oversee oil revenues and other national issues. I'm not sure that we're not too late, now, for such a solution, that the spiral downward has gone so far

that I really don't see a path out of this, without more violence than we've seen so far.

And I don't really think it's going to make any difference in the outcome, as to whether we stay in Iraq or not. This war is lost, I believe, irretrievably. It was probably lost ... (inaudible) leading me to believe that the only real option we have is just to get out honorably, or not.

[applause]

SEAN WILENTZ: You know, literally a month after the invasion, Arthur wrote this, "We're at war again, not because of enemy attack, as in World War II; nor because of incremental drift, as in the Vietnam war; but because of the deliberate and premeditated choice of our own government. Now that we are embarked on this misadventure, let us hope that our intervention will be swift and decisive. Victory will come with minimal American, British, civilian Iraqi casualties."

That comes a month after the invasion, at a time when war fever was high in this country, when support in Congress, with rare exceptions-- Senator Kennedy being one of those-- [applause] I mean, we were on fire with war. It's interesting how history informs and historians inform the present. And almost he seems prescient predicting virtually what Alan just said, three years later.

BRINKLEY: Well, Arthur's also very courageous. I mean, he is a profile in courage. I mean, he will act on what he believes, no matter what. And that's part of what intellectual leadership is about. And I come back to Arthur, not so much simply on Iraq, but on a number of issues.

But I do want to get back to something you were saying earlier, John, about where does leadership come from, and how do we see it? I don't think it's fair to judge certainly the Democratic Party, or the Democrats on Capitol Hill, on the basis of the last six years. I mean, politics in this country has been almost frozen for six years. I mean, when one party has total control, politics get shut down. It's very, very hard to get anything done.

What we will see, I think, over the next two years-- and I don't think that Iraq is going to be the place we're going to see it-- is leadership on the other side of the aisle having a chance to grow and to show itself on issues like oversight of the administration; and reduction of an imperial presidency, which is really, what I think, at the heart of the problem with the current administration, more than any one policy. [applause]

And again, something else that Arthur has offered-- not only that phrase, but a way of understanding that it's difficult to run an American life with the balance between congressional and executive power; and what the difference is between a strong presidency and an imperial presidency, and we've got an imperial presidency.

But when an imperial presidency is of the same party that controls Congress, it's very hard for it to see what leadership's going to come from it, you know. We historians don't think about it. You journalists don't think about it. Who is ever in power has the megaphone. And boy, they used it. But we'll see.

We'll see on issues like the courts, and the Judiciary Committee in the Senate, and what's going to happen. I mean, there's going to be real battles there-- health care, you know. I mean, I think there's a huge battle that looms over health care. And where the Democrats-- now that they have control of Committees, now they have something to say, now they have a position to say something-- can really show great leadership. And this is the opportunity.

But we'll see those leaders emerge, you know, in the arena, in the sawdust. When the sawdust gets kicked up, that's where leaders will emerge, I think. And I think it's just too early to tell, thank goodness for the Democrats that they won this election. Because if they hadn't, who knows what would have happened?

WILENTZ: Doris-- elsewhere in that piece, Arthur was talking about the inadvisability of a pre-emptive invasion. And I ran across a quotation from Lincoln, which I had seen only a couple of months before in your book on Lincoln, in which the Congressman from Illinois-- a one-term Congressman--

- attacks President Polk for that very point. And the question is, do we ever learn from history?

DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN: No indeed, that's exactly right. I mean, Lincoln actually was unable to run for Congress a second term, because he was considered a Benedict Arnold for questioning the rationale for the Mexican-American War, arguing with such echoes to the president that the president had invoked the war for his own purposes, rather than the stated reasons that he had given, and that we had actually had a pre-emptive war. You're absolutely right.

But you know, the one thing I'm thinking about in terms of how do we look at leadership, as we face the 2008 election, I think history really can be a guide for us, in some ways, which is that I think journalists and all of us tend to look too much at the external resumés on a superficial basis of the people that are running. And we make them say, "Are you saying the same thing you said 20 years ago, 10 years ago?" as if it's a terrible thing to change one's mind, to acknowledge errors.

I mean, Arthur, continually in his work, is willing to say, "I would do this differently if I were writing it now." When he wrote about *The Imperial Presidency*, he agreed that he was one of the people who thought the rise of the mystique or the activist Presidency was a good thing.

He talked about how he might have done differently if he thought back, about Taft; and whether Taft was right, maybe, in saying that Truman didn't have the right to send the troops over to Korea. It's that kind of emotional strength that I think we need to look for in our leaders, as to whether they can share credit when they need to. Can they acknowledge error when they've made it? Can they learn from their mistakes? If they have to change their mind, can they do so?

All of those are there for us to see, if we look back at the biographies. These people haven't come from nowhere. They've already been State Representatives; they've been Senators; they've been Congressmen; they've been Governors.

And instead of just looking at the surface, we should be penetrating down to how did they treat their staff? When they had difficulties, how did they rise from those difficulties? Are they tough on their subordinates, or are they generous to them? Did they take blame when blame is had? All of those things are visible.

I mean, even with Lincoln, who was a one-term Congressman 12 years earlier, if you looked back in his past, you would have seen the qualities-- emotionally, personally-- that eventually emerged, even though you wouldn't have seen it at the time, if you had looked back at the time.

So I think what our responsibility, as we look at this group of... We're going to have a huge group of people that are going to be running. In fact, Dick-- my husband-- once said that John Kennedy once said if you asked each Senator to vote for who should be the presidential candidate, there'd be 50 votes. [laughter] And so you're going to have a whole bunch of people.

This is a more open election than we've had in a very long period of time, which means it's going to be very important for the American public to sift through the temperament, the character, and the emotional strengths of these leaders. And I think history really can do that.

I mean, for example, if experience is the only thing you're going for, that can often be a mistake. I mean, James Buchanan had five terms in the Congress. He was the Minister to Russia, the Minister to England. He had been Secretary of War. And he's one of the worst presidents we had. Lincoln had one single term in the Congress, served, as I said, a dozen years earlier. So we've got to penetrate below.

And we have to allow our leaders, if they're going to say... Like Lincoln had this great comment. When he had to change his mind on something, he'd say, "I'd like to believe I'm smarter today than I was yesterday." And meanwhile, these guys fueled such machinations, "I really said the same thing 20 years ago as I said 10 years ago." And why the journalists hold them to that is ridiculous anyway.

So this is such an important election that I just hope that as we go through it, we have the right methods; and we just don't simply talk about somebody wearing a brown suit or a gray suit, or stuttering, or smirking. Those things manage, to some extent, to reflect character, but not the whole lifetime of that person, if we looked at it more deeply and penetratingly.

[applause]

JOHN SEIGENTHALER: In just a moment, I'll go to the audience, and we'll engage some of you in this conversation. And I hope you'll be thinking about your questions and comments. But let me ask this panel for just a final round of reaction.

It does seem to me that there is, today, a great deal of what I think of, as I read it, revisionist history. It's in television docu-dramas. It's in histories that probably should have quotations around the use of the word. All of you, and of course Arthur, understand how valuable and vital history is to the young people of this country. It was a vital part of John Kennedy's life and career. His speeches were laced with references to relevant history. What's to be done about this, this movement? And I do think it's prevalent. Alan?

BRINKLEY: Well, I don't think I would call what I believe you're referring to as revisionist history, as much as I would call it a kind of fictional history. And I mean there's always revisionist history. And some of

it's very important and very valuable to scholars. And some of it becomes the conventional history after a time.

But what I think we're seeing today is a departure from the belief that discussions of history need to be rooted in some sense of the sources, and some sense of the truth. Docu-dramas, of course, always take liberties. And we've had docu-dramas throughout our recent history on television and in film that have taken considerable liberties-- *Sunrise At Campobello*, for example-- not in any malicious or damaging way, but just things that simply weren't true. [laughter]

But, you know, now we see it as almost a routine part of the way in which history is presented in the mass media. The recent ABC docu-drama on 9/11 that simply invented events, in effect, invented events that were very damaging to the reputation of President Clinton, that had no basis, in fact, whatsoever. And we see this in many, many ways, I think, in the way in which history is presented, you know, from Wikipedia, to--

WILENTZ: Welcome to my world. [laughter]

BRINKLEY: I'm sure, as you have discovered, to even things that seem to have legitimacy, and that appear on places like The History Channel. But this is, I think, part of a larger change in our culture, which is a kind of sense that truth is whatever you decide it is. And this is, I think, the keystone of the

Bush administration, frankly, that they've just decided what their truth is, and they go with it, whether it has any basis in fact, or not.

But they're not alone in this. You know, our whole culture, I think, is changing in ways that many of us find disturbing. Not that everything is changing, but there's so many vehicles through which information can be presented to the world and so little oversight of what they do, that I think, you know, the Bush administration, you know, for all its own flaws, and mistakes, and worse is, in a way, part of the culture that we've created inadvertently over the last decade or so.

WILENTZ: I agree with Alan that all standard orthodox history began as revisionist history at some point or another. History is argument without end. We're always revising our own history. But you know, I'm not so sure that the Bush administration is the first post-modern history. I mean, James K. Polk made stuff up. [laughter]

BRINKLEY: Arthur got me to write a book on James K. Polk, once. And--

WILENTZ: Indeed. You know, a spotty Lincoln-- I mean, where was the spot where this occurred? And that's where we come in, because we object. People are always making things up. Presidents lie, period. [laughter]
Sometimes it's necessary; sometimes it's useful; sometimes it's not.

Our job as citizens and as historians is to object. I remember Arthur and I were both having... The phone lines between his place in New York and mine in Princeton were lit up when that ABC documentary was going on. And we objected, and it made the papers. And there it was. And there was somebody out there saying this was wrong. This was false. Now that was not the greatest event in recent intellectual or political history, but it was something. It was something.

The other thing, I think, that's a problem is that history has become very poorly taught in the schools, [applause] and especially in high school, and particularly with regard to American history, where facts are sort of put on the sideline in favor of other kinds of learning. And I think that that's another place where historians can do more-- have already started doing a lot, but can do even more-- professional historians, I'm talking about-- to improve our appreciation of history.

But finally, then, there's also the question of the movies. And I didn't want to leave here without saying something about Arthur's contribution to the movies, because Arthur, as you may not know, was a judge at the Cannes Film Festival in 1964; has done more... In fact, even before he was writing about history, he was writing about the movies at Harvard.

And there was a time when movies and history were not always at such odds. In 1944, Paramount Pictures actually wrote Arthur a letter, asking if this book he had coming out, called *The Age of Jackson*, had any picture

possibilities. [laughter] I've often thought that, you know, imagine if maybe it had been Warner Brothers, if like this left-wing Democrat named Ronald Reagan had taken over, all of history might have been different.

Another example-- and I'll just close with this-- about how movies have always fictionalized history, too, but things get set right. This is a letter that Arthur received. It was dated May 15, 1946. It comes from Beverly Hills. "Dear Mr. Schlesinger: Your *The Age of Jackson* is a book that every American-- including those who think they are-- should be whipped into reading," [laughter] and it goes on and on about various things, "since I am one of those who believe the world has a chance, but I wouldn't bet on it. *Jackson* is a monumental work. Sincerely,"-- now you won't recognize this name necessarily-- "Sincerely, Harry Ruby."

Harry Ruby and Groucho Marx together produced, you know, such great, all-American classics as *Hooray for Captain Spaulding*, and *Hail, Hail, Fredonia*. [laughter] Harry Ruby knew from good history.

BRINKLEY: He knew from good history. [laughter]

WILENTZ: And he would have said it pretty much like that. [laughter] But there are people out in Hollywood who are very, very intelligent. And one of them is making a movie about Abraham Lincoln, as I speak, based on Doris's book.

So I think there are opportunities, but we must always be vigilant. And without a real basis for factual understanding, for knowing that it makes a difference whether the American Revolution was begun in 1776 or in 1865, that without that, we are lost. So we have to be vigilant about that, and then always be watchful and be ready to speak up.

GOODWIN: If I could just follow up on the movies part, because I'm not sure all of you knew. I certainly wasn't fully aware until I looked into Arthur in these last couple days that he actually wrote these movie reviews for two decades, consistently. Loved movies, wrote these movie reviews, so much so that one article on him said, "He was seen at night at discotheques. He was at movies. He is a swinging soothsayer." [laughter]

And then, I've just got to tell you this other funny thing I found. There seems to be a dating website that he appears on. And it's a personality profile, and it's keyed to his astrological chart. And it says, "He strives to excel. He is forceful, energetic, and determined. But he has a daring and rebellious side as well. He seeks out whiskey and even dangerous activities. He can be bossy at times, but he has the patience and stamina to realize his visions and bring them to earth." And then it ends on a perfect note. "He has achieved a rich balance between his professional drives and his personal life. What young woman wouldn't go after that 89 year old man?" [laughter]

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: And now we have microphones here and there. And we have a line forming.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: All right. Thank you all for a compelling evening. I read *Robert Kennedy and His Times* about 10 years ago, maybe more. One line from the book has stayed in my mind up to this time. It said, “John F. Kennedy was a realist, brilliantly disguised as a romantic. Robert Kennedy was a romantic, stubbornly disguised as a realist,” something like that. I hope I’ve come close to it.

But I was just blown away as I was reading it, by the ability to capture the essence of these personalities, distilled in such sparkling language. And that was the case with all 1000 pages of that book, or however long it is. And I salute Arthur Schlesinger for combining those talents of observation and expression. And I’m grateful that he was there, close to these people that meant so much to all of us, to capture their essence in timeless language.

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: Thank you very much.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I also thank you for your presentation this evening. It’s very enlightening. Your mention of media struck a chord, because I’ve received a lot of my information over the last 60 years from print and from television. But this particularly, around especially the mid-

term elections, seemed to have been impacted by the television medium, specifically comedy.

It appears that the comics in our world have that capability of holding up that mirror-- sometimes distorted, sometimes not-- but holding up that mirror, which I think is what journalists should be doing. But in a show like *The Daily Show*, which is fake journalism, I think I got more of the issues about what was wrong with this era that we've just come through.

And I just wondered what you think of media in general, and its impact from the movies on through something as, I think, fundamental as what shows like *The Daily Show* gave us in information and holding that mirror up.

SEIGENTHALER: Do you want to know what I or the members of the panel think?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I want to know what Mr. Schlesinger thinks about it, actually. But-- [laughter]

SEIGENTHALER: Well, Arthur is going to have an opportunity to say a few words. But--

BRINKLEY: Well none of us can speak for Arthur. But if I understand you correctly, I think you're expressing a sense of despair about the character of the media today, the news media today, which I think many people share.

I want to go back, just for a moment, to Arthur. You know, Arthur is honored a great deal for the work he did in times when people sympathetic to his ideas were in power, particularly in the early '60s. But most of Arthur's career has been spent in opposition to people in power, beginning the '40s, continuing through the '50s, and after-- even before 1968, turning against the war; and then all through the '70s and the '80s; and his ambivalent relationship with the Clinton administration in the '90s; and then, of course, the last six years.

Most of Arthur's life has been spent as a kind of conscience of liberalism, standing up against people who are either in stark opposition to it, or attempting to transform it into something unrecognizable. So I think among the many ways in which Arthur has made a contribution, and which other historians have and can make a contribution, is to speak out against distortions of both our past and present, in the way Arthur has done.

There is also, of course, as the questioner asked, the fake news industry that has emerged-- the Jon Stewart show, the Stephen Colbert show-- and I think I'm probably not alone in this room in feeling that often, we get better news from the fake news than we do from the real news today.

SEIGENTHALER: I mentioned at the offset, somewhat facetiously, that Arthur had said in a column that the failure of the nation-- people, the

country-- to come to grips with the reality of the war was largely to blame of the news media. He said that.

And I would have to say, I think many people in the country, including many people in journalism, felt that way. I think there was a fear in the country. And, for a time, I think that mirror you mentioned was cracked. And I think the media was slow to respond. Sean?

WILENTZ: Well, look. It's very possible to scare the American people. And the events of September 11, 2001 had a profound impact on our collective psyche, and on our politics, and on the media. And it's one of the reasons, I think, why people were not speaking up, because that event loomed so large in people's minds and hearts and souls.

Having said that, one of Arthur's books is entitled *The Politics of Hope*, as opposed to the politics of fear. And I mean, I've sometimes thought that the current administration and Osama bin Laden are joined at the hip. [laughter] Not because they want the same things or they believe the same religion, but because what benefits one benefits the other, because of the politics of fear.

It does come as a shock to me to find out that *The Daily Show* is fake news, though, because-- [laughter]-- because I started watching him a long time ago, and I thought that's what was happening.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I hate to break it to you--

WILENTZ: I know. It's terrible. But I do think that-- and it gets back to what John said at the very beginning-- I do think that there are periods of hope and there are periods of fear. And we have lived through a period where fear has been used politically in a very self-conscious way, in order to divide Americans against each other, and to eliminate the middle ground, and to win elections.

And I think the country is... If I'm angry at the administration for anything, it's for that. Because it's very hard to make the American people, you know, into not their better selves, put it that way. And now it's time, I think, for the American people to start thinking about the hopeful side of their heritage, and of their future. And that's the opportunity that lies ahead of us.

[applause]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I want to thank you all for a wonderful forum. This is directed more toward Doris Kearns Goodwin. *The Imperial Presidency*, of course, is one of Dr. Schlesinger's classics. And in yesterday's *Globe*, there was an editorial about the vice president, and how he, throughout most of his professional career, has tried to expand executive power. In terms of Mrs. Goodwin, your work on Lyndon Johnson, how do you view *The Imperial Presidency* today, compared to what it was back in the 1960s?

GOODWIN: That's a wonderful question. I would argue that it's more imperial now, even than it was in the 1960s. I mean, it seemed like at least in the 1960s, when Lyndon Johnson was making decisions that should have been countered more by the Congress-- and part of the talk of imperial president usually means that the Congress hasn't been exercising its own balancing role against the presidency.

And obviously, each war increases the power of the president. We've seen that over history. It's inevitable, because war allows decisions to be made; requires decisions to be made. The question is, what does the president do to limit those decisions that are violations of civil liberties? What tone does he adopt?

And when Lincoln had to suspend habeas corpus, it was with a sadness. It was limited as much as it could be when he had to do it; whereas there seems to be, in this administration-- I think even more than in the 1960s under Lyndon Johnson-- just a feeling that they are doing the right thing by expanding the president's role.

Not that they're doing it out of necessity, but because of the world's situation in the long run, they think they have to make the presidency stronger. They have to fight against the Congressional will. And there's a boldness to it, an aggressiveness to it, and a lack of sadness about it, a lack of any kind of tone that suggests, "We're sorry we're doing this. We have to do it," but rather, "We need to do this."

And you're absolutely right. I mean, it seems to have come back from the time when Cheney and those people were in power, when they thought the president was too weak, and that they are somehow balancing away from that earlier time, to bring it back to a strength that they think needs to be there. But that's why it's so critical that the Congress resume itself.

I mean, during the ramp-up to the Iraqi war, Senator Kennedy and Senator Byrd argued, "Where is the debate? What is going on?" And I think both Republicans and Democrats are equally to blame, because the Democrats didn't want to get into it, just as Sean said that 2001 was so strong, the mid-term elections were coming up. They didn't want to look weak on this issue, and so they didn't push the debate even more; and the Republicans certainly didn't push the debate.

And that was a critical moment as, I think, Senator Byrd said, "The halls of Congress are silenter"-- and I'm sure he didn't say "silenter"-- "are more silent now than at any time in our history, at one of the most consequential wars that it may turn out, for our history." So I think now you're going to see Congress reasserting its will-- in part, because the Democrats have its control-- but in part, just as a balance to that presidential imperialness-- and hopefully so. I mean, I think that balance has to be restored right now, and right quickly.

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: Sean.

WILENTZ: This is a footnote to that. I mean, I do think that in imperial presidents, you just require a supine Congress and a supine Congressional majority. And the two go together. I mean, in 1967, J. William Fulbright held hearings about the Vietnam War. A member of the president's own party was raising questions about the policy. Can you imagine Bill Frist having held hearings over anything? [laughter] Or any member of the Republican majority doing that? It's inconceivable.

So I do think that, again, the way that the politics have shifted, what I think the American people did do in the last election was to repudiate that not that they were voting for a divided Government, but for voting against a supine Congress, to at least provide a check and balance as the framers intended.

GOODWIN: Right, absolutely.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I would like to ask any member of the panel this question. I noticed that Mr. Schlesinger was in the army and had been--

SEIGENTHALER: Would you stand a little closer to the mike, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I noticed that, from the biography, that Mr. Schlesinger had been in the army, and was in Paris when the Marshall Plan

was started. And has he written, or could any of you comment on his writings, with regard to how the president or the leadership in Congress in the past has gone about adjusting our military strategy when it's proved inadequate? And what are the mechanisms that have had to occur in the past when we needed to change our strategic thinking?

SEIGENTHALER: Alan. [laughter]

GOODWIN: To the Senator from New York. [laughter]

BRINKLEY: Well Arthur's written a great deal about American military policy over the years, not only in *The Imperial Presidency* and its commentary on the road to the Vietnam War, but just a few years ago on the Iraq-- or over the last few years-- on the Iraq war. And I think there's been a consistency in his writing, which is also reflected in his memoir, which describes what you were talking about, his own service in the war.

His sense of the importance of civic participation in times of crisis, but also the importance of using good judgment in the way in which crises are defined-- and it's hard to think of any of our military adventures of the last 30 or 40 years, that Arthur hasn't looked at skeptically, in one form or another. So I think we owe him a great debt of gratitude for that, even if much of his skepticism has gone unnoticed by those in power.

SEIGENTHALER: We have two other people at the microphone, and I'd like to get both of you in. And if you're brief, we have time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Cameron Beck from Canton. I just wanted to thank Arthur Schlesinger for writing a small volume back in the late '60s entitled *The Bitter Heritage*. And that book I read as a teenager at that school up in New Hampshire that he knows so well. And the scales fell from my eyes, and it punched holes in nonsense like the domino theory, and so forth. And I packed that book off with me to college and used it sort of like Chairman Mao's little red book. [laughter]

And it changed a lot of minds about that little book. I was just curious to know-- and I guess I direct this to you, Doris-- do you happen to know if Lyndon Johnson ever read that book? [laughter]

GOODWIN: Well if so, he never talked to me about it. [laughter] Would that he had, how much better off we would have been. No, but just to follow up in terms of what Arthur has said in some of his own writings, is that he thought he gained more insight into history from his experience in the war and his experience in government, than all of his academic training. And I think that's one of the richnesses of his life that has been put into all of his writings, which is this broad experience that he had.

One of the funny stories he tells is that when he was on his way over to the OSS in the 1940s, and he's on the converted *Queen Elizabeth*, which was

being used as a troop ship. And he's so excited about history, he's asking everybody, "Tell me everything about what it must have been like for the *Titanic*," you know, as they're on this ship. And one of the Officers said, "That's not exactly what we wanted to hear at that point in time." [laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Firstly, thank you to you four for sharing your insights tonight, and Senator Kennedy for speaking here as well. I'm a teacher of American history at Weymouth High School, about 15 miles south here, as is my colleague I'm sitting with.

And one of you mentioned earlier that one of the big issues today in the United States is the teaching of American history in our public schools. Being an American history school teacher, I'm just curious what advice, what insight can you three give to improve the understanding of young people in American history?

BRINKLEY: That's a great question.

[applause]

WILENTZ: Well it sounds to me like we need more people like you and your colleague, for one thing. [laughter] I mean, I'm not saying that to flatter you, but that you would, you know, come out to an event like this to honor a great American historian. It already puts you in a different league than most history teachers around the country.

But the fact is that history comes in around the country-- I don't know about the Commonwealth of Massachusetts-- but in other parts of the country, history really is an afterthought. I mean, history is right up there with music and art, in terms of... There are more high school football coaches-- and I'm a football fan, don't get me wrong-- more high school football coaches that are also social studies teachers than any other subject.

Now I don't think that, necessarily, that those teachers are being hired because of their excellence as history teachers. And I do believe that qualities off the gridiron can be brought to bear in the classroom, but let's get serious. What it means is that history is not being taken seriously nationwide, as it ought to be. That's number one.

Number two, the way that history is taught-- now it's improved, because there's been some criticism from the sidelines-- but 10, 15 years ago, the ways in which history was being taught-- you know, there was a presumption that, you know, memorizing facts was a bad thing.

I'm sure this is true for Doris, too-- it may be true for Alan. When I was 11 years old, I knew every single batting average in the American League, and how it changed day by day. [laughter] Children love to memorize things. It's a way to... And by the way, why is it so bad to memorize history, but it's not bad to memorize math formulas? So there was a presumption against that, that that fact-based is not any good.

I think that there's a debate to be had about that, as well, how we can best engage both the interests of young people and to do so in a way that will teach them something. And I certainly don't have the answers to that. But I have seen interesting answers come out from organizations like the National Council of History Education and others that have encouraged this kind of dialogue between academic historians, professional historians and high school teachers-- not that you're not professional historians, but you know what I'm saying-- a dialogue how to actually improve how we go about our business, and I think more of that is really necessary. But the main thing is to get the boards of regents around the country, or the state organizations, to start taking history more seriously than they do.

[applause]

BRINKLEY: I don't want to underestimate the problems of history teaching in the United States, which are profound, and which Sean has described very accurately. But I've spent a lot of time with a lot of high school history teachers and high school students studying history, partly through being a textbook author, partly through teaching a Gilder Lehrman Seminar for many years, which is a seminar for high school teachers in the summer.

You know, at the same time that I despair about the way in which many students learn or don't learn history, I'm really astonished at the

extraordinary quality of high school history teaching in many high schools-- much better than the teaching that I got in a very elite school, and much better, I think, than most previous generations have gotten.

So there is a part of the history teaching in the United States today that I think is extraordinarily good. [applause] And we should be very grateful to those teachers. And also an enormous number of students who are very excited about history. There's an institution called "History Day" all over the country, and it's just remarkable how many students turn out with great enthusiasm for this event. So we shouldn't despair entirely; although, obviously, there are a great many problems to be addressed.

SEIGENTHALER: I want to thank you all for your questions. [applause] Each time I moderate a program here, I'm impressed with how your questions from the audience are better than mine, and I thank you for that. And now it is my great pleasure to present to you *the* Arthur Schlesinger. Accept no substitutes.

[applause]

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.: As Richard Nixon rediscovered, if you live long enough, everything is forgiven. [laughter] It reminds me of Mark Twain's Tom and Huck as they crept over the rail into the aisle of the church, and heard the lamentations about the death of Tom and Huck. And through a preview, I felt that I had a preview of the eloquence of my own...

Many signs point to a growing historical consciousness among the American people. I trust that this is so. It is useful to remember that history is to the nation as memory is to the individual. As persons deprived of memory become disoriented and lost, not knowing where they have been and where they are going, so a nation denied a conception of the past will be disabled in dealing with its present and its future. “The longer you look back,” said Winston Churchill, “the further you can look forward.”

But all historians are prisoners of their own experience. We bring to history the preconceptions of our personality and the preoccupations of our age. We cannot seize on ultimate and absolute truths. So the historian is committed to a doomed enterprise – the quest for an unattainable objectivity. Yet it is an enterprise we happily pursue because of the thrill of the hunt, because exploring the past is such fun, because of the intellectual challenges involved, because a nation needs to know its own history (or so we historians like to think).

But conceptions of the past are far from stable. They are perennially revised by the urgencies of the present. When new urgencies arise in our own times and lives, the historian’s spotlight shifts, probing at last into the darkness, throwing into sharp relief things that were always there but that earlier historians had carelessly excised from the collective memory. New voices ring out of the historical dark and demand to be heard.

One has only to note how in the last half century the women's rights movement and the civil rights movement have reformulated and renewed American history. Thus the present incessantly recreates, reinvents the past. In this sense, all history, as Benedetto Croce said, is contemporary history. It is these permutations of consciousness that make history so endlessly fascinating an intellectual adventure. "The one duty we owe to history," said Oscar Wilde, "is to rewrite it."

We are the world's dominant military power, and I believe history is a moral necessity for a nation possessed of overweening power. History verifies John F. Kennedy's proposition when he said in the first year of his thousand days: "We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent or omniscient – that we are only six percent of the world's population – that we cannot impose our will upon the other 94 percent of mankind – that we cannot right every wrong or reverse each adversity – and therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem."

History is the best antidote to delusions of omnipotence and omniscience. Self-knowledge is the indispensable prelude to self-control, for the nation as well as the individual, and history should forever remind us of the limits of our passing perspectives. It should strengthen us to resist the pressure to convert momentary impulses into moral absolutes. It should lead us to acknowledge our profound and chastening frailty as human beings – to a recognition of the fact, so often and so sadly displayed, that the future

outwits all our certitudes and that the possibilities of history are far more various than the human intellect is designed to conceive.

Sometimes, when I am particularly depressed, I ascribe our behavior to stupidity – the stupidity of our leadership, the stupidity of our culture. Thirty years ago, we suffered a military defeat – fighting an unwinnable war against nationalism, against a country about which we knew nothing and in which we had no vital interests. Vietnam was hopeless enough, but to repeat the same arrogant folly thirty years later in Iraq is a gross instance of national stupidity. Axel Oxenstiern: “Behold, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed.”

A nation informed by a vivid understanding of the ironies of history, is, I believe, best equipped to live with the temptations and tragedy of military power. Let us not bully our way through life but let a growing sense of history temper and civilize our use of that power. In the meantime, let a thousand historical flowers bloom. History is never a closed book or a final verdict. It is forever in the making. Let historians never forsake the quest for knowledge in the interest of an ideology, a religion, a race, a nation.

The great strength of history in a free society is its capacity for self-correction. This is the endless excitement of historical writing – the search to reconstruct what went before, a quest illuminated by those ever-changing prisms that continually place old questions in a new light.

As the great Dutch historian Pieter Geyl was fond of saying, “History is indeed an argument without end.” That, I believe, is why we love it so.

[applause]

SEIGENTHALER: Thank you all. As you know, on December 17th, 1965, *One Thousand Days* was not just a bestseller, it was a Pulitzer Prize winner on its way to a National Book Award. In *Time*, in that cover story on Arthur, it concluded, already speaking of his legacy in *Time* said, “Few will leave a legacy or a mark more durable or more valuable.” I know everyone in this room echoes these sentiments, all these years later.

Thanks to Arthur Schlesinger. If you would keep your seat while Arthur and the distinguished guests leave, it would be greatly appreciated.

[applause]