1

Life before *National Review*

In 1954, the twenty-eight-year-old Bill Buckley started lining up funding for a magazine that would "stand athwart history, yelling Stop," as he would write in the Publisher's Statement in the first issue of *National Review*. By "history" he meant the growth of centralism, collectivism, and secularism here in the United States and, abroad, the marching on of Communism through the world.

But the name of Ronald Reagan's "clipboard-bearing Galahad" was not yet a household word. Oh, he was known here and there—as the author of two highly controversial books, one criticizing his alma mater, Yale, and the other defending Joe McCarthy. He was remembered in the Ivy League as one of the most brilliant debaters it had ever produced. But in the rest of the country a lot of people, being invited to support this new venture, were asking, *Just who is this William Buckley?*

Although Buckley comes across as solidly New England, his family's immediate roots were in the South. His Buckley great-grandparents—the husband a Protestant, the wife a Catholic—had immigrated to Canada from Ireland (County Cork) in the 1840s, settling in southern Ontario. Their son John, a big, gentle, tough-minded man, married a devout Catholic girl, Mary Ann Langford, whose parents had emigrated from Ireland (County Limerick) at about the same time as

the senior Buckleys. They started their married life near Hamilton, Ontario, where they had grown up. But John was troubled by allergies in that lush farming country, and so he and Mary Ann made their way to the austere semidesert of southern Texas, where he became a sheep rancher and the sheriff of Duval County.

John and Mary Ann had two daughters and four sons, of whom William Frank, born in July 1881, was the second. John died young, age fifty-four, not as sheriff gunned down by a desperado but of a stroke, leaving his strong, determined, and loving wife to bring up the younger children. Will was in college by that time, at the University of Texas at Austin; with financial help from his older sister, Priscilla, who worked in the land office, he was able to complete his studies, including a law degree. (Their older brother, John, had been stabbed to death as a teenager.)

There were more Mexicans than Anglos in the Buckleys' hometown of San Diego, Texas, and the children had grown up fully bilingual. After practicing law for two years in Austin, Will decided, at age twenty-seven, to try his luck in Mexico. He first worked for a prominent lawyer in Mexico City ("a crook," he later called the man), then moved to Tampico, on the Gulf Coast, where he set up a law practice with his younger brother Claude, newly graduated from the University of Texas; they were soon joined by their youngest brother, Edmund.

There are two stories from that period, told by a Mexican friend of Will Buckley's named Cecilio Velasco, that say a lot about his personality and character. The first incident occurred a few weeks after Velasco started working for Buckley & Buckley. When Will Buckley hired Velasco, he gave him two pieces of advice: in a law office, there is no such word as "can't"; and no matter what he was asked to do, he should never say "no." So one day when Buckley asked Velasco if he could take down a contract in shorthand, filling in for a secretary who was out sick, Velasco said, "Of course." Buckley dictated; Velasco scribbled, and then went away to start typing. When he brought in the finished product, it was evident to Buckley that Velasco in fact could not take shorthand. It was equally evident that he had absorbed the gist of what Buckley wanted to say, and that he had expressed it well. "Not so bad," Buckley said. "Next time you can dictate it to yourself." Their friendship lasted the rest of Buckley's life.

The second had to do with a safe. A Mexican friend told Buckley that he urgently needed five thousand pesos and asked if he could make him a loan. Buckley checked with his cashier and found that he

had a total of $250 in the office safe—in those days, equal to about five hundred pesos. So he went to his bank and signed a note for five thousand pesos, payable in fifteen days, and turned the money over to his friend. Then and throughout his life, the word was out: if a friend, or the widow of a friend or former employee, needed money, Will Buckley would somehow find it.

The Buckley brothers did reasonably well representing oil companies that had interests in Mexico, and before long Will, who found the practice of law "the most trying thing in the world," was letting Claude and Edmund handle most of the law business while he himself started working in oil and in real estate. Then, in the summer of 1917, Will went to New Orleans on business and met the twenty-two-year-old Aloïse Steiner.

Aloïse's father, Aloïs Steiner, was secretary-treasurer of a company that made sugar-refining equipment. His parents had come to New Orleans from northern Switzerland not long before the Civil War. Aloïse's mother, May Wassem Steiner, was of Swiss and German descent. May's paternal grandfather, John Henry Wassem, had served in the Hessian army for six years before emigrating in the 1830s; a piquant detail: his discharge papers listed him as being six feet eight. All branches of both families were devout Catholics.

New Orleans in those days was full of Southern belles, but even in that company Aloïse and her sisters, Vivian and Inez, were notable. Aloïse was also a talented storyteller, weaving endless yarns to amuse her little brother, Jimmy ("Alla's serials," he called them). The Steiner sisters managed to retain all their lives an innocence that greatly amused the next generation. One story has Aloïse and Vivian, both in their seventies, both widowed, sitting on the porch and chatting while Vivian filled out some sort of medical form. Industriously going down the list of ailments, Vivian raised her head and said, "Darling, as girls did we have gonorrhea?"

After a courtship lasting only a few days, Will and Aloïse were engaged; as Aloïse later told the story to one of her granddaughters, "I said to him, I said, 'Mr. Buckley, I will just have to think about it—Yes!'" They married at Christmastime and settled down in Tampico, fully intending to make their home there. But the political situation in Mexico was becoming dangerous. In 1911 the long-ruling Porfirio Díaz had been overthrown by Francisco Madero, who in turn was overthrown by Victoriano Huerta. In 1914, President Wilson—against the advice of the former ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane

Wilson—decided that he knew better than the Mexicans who should be their president. Saying, "We have gone down to Mexico to serve mankind if we can find out the way," President Wilson abetted the left-wing, anti-Catholic Venustiano Carranza in his attempt to oust Huerta. Years later, an American who had been in Mexico at the time told two of Will Buckley's children, Aloïse and John, a story about their father. It was in 1916, the American said, and the U.S. Marines had landed at Vera Cruz, the next major port south of Tampico. But there was no U.S. military presence in Tampico itself, and the revolutionaries were threatening the American residents. There was a German gunboat in the river—but how to attract its attention? As Mexican riflemen waited on rooftops, "your father," the American told young Allie and John, "went out into the middle of the silent square and started hurling obscenities in Spanish such as we never thought to hear from him . . . and he deliberately provoked their fire." The German naval captain heard it and led an expedition to rescue the Americans.

By the time Buckley was asked to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1919, Wilson's protégé, Carranza, had come to power. The following year he was ousted by his former ally Alvaro Obregón, who substituted left-wing anti-Catholic tyranny for the oligopoly of the Church and the large landowners that had existed under Díaz. The mass of the people were no longer technically "peons," but they were no better off materially than they had been before, and they were not allowed to practice their religion. Obregón promptly expropriated whatever Huerta and Carranza hadn't, and he started expelling "pernicious foreigners"—including the Buckleys. This was under Article 33 of the revolutionary constitution; when, years later, Will told his children about those days, he would say it was better to be 33-ed than .30-.30-ed.

By November 1921, when the Buckleys were exiled from Mexico, Will and Aloïse had three children—Aloïse, John, and five-week-old Priscilla. Will had had over $100,000 in assets (the equivalent of somewhere near $3 million in 2006 dollars), most of it now gone. But he had an idea: Venezuelan oil. And he had enough money left to open an office in New York City and, in 1923, to buy a beautiful old house with many acres of land in Sharon, a village in the hills of northwestern Connecticut. A country boy himself and an outdoorsman, he had no desire to raise his growing family—Allie, John, and Pitts, as Priscilla was nicknamed, were soon joined by Jimmy and

Jane—in a Manhattan townhouse with a postage-stamp backyard. The house in Sharon was called Great Elm and still is, although the magnificent tree that gave it its name succumbed to Dutch elm disease in the 1940s, and the house itself has been divided into condominiums, two of which remain in the family.

When the Buckleys' sixth child was born—on November 24, 1925, in New York City—Will finally gave in to Aloïse's wish that he name a son after himself. Their plan was temporarily foiled by an officious priest who maintained that "Frank" was not a proper Christian name (since it wasn't a saint's name), and who therefore christened the baby "William Francis Buckley." At age five, Billy insisted on taking his father's full name.

Will Buckley's Venezuelan venture, Pantepec, was prospering, necessitating frequent travels on his part; Aloïse sometimes went with him, sometimes stayed home with the children and the large household staff: "Mademoiselle" (Mlle Jeanne Bouchex, the children's governess and Aloïse's deputy); the groom, Ed Turpin; several gardeners and farmhands; and a dozen indoor servants (including, by the time Billy was born, two Mexican nurses). Then in 1929 Will decided it would help in raising money for his oil exploration to spend some time in Europe, so he packed up his family and took them to France. (The family now included two-year-old Patricia; another little girl, Mary Ann, had been born apparently healthy, but died in her mother's arms when she was two days old.) They lived part of the time in Paris, near the Bois de Boulogne, and part in Saint-Firmin, near Chantilly, where nine-year-old John delighted in testing his American fishing skills on *perche* and *brochet*. It was on a later visit to Paris that Aloïse was approaching yet another *accouchement* (the term she tended to use even when not in France). Trish's birthday, April 23, was also approaching, and she was hoping the new baby would be born on that day. Aloïse walked around carrying heavy suitcases to hasten the event, but the baby, Maureen, asserted her individuality at the outset by waiting till April 24 to emerge.

Three-year-old Billy, who until then had been virtually monolingual (not in English but in Spanish), had his first formal schooling in French. Could the roots of his idiosyncratic way with language—including his frequently remarked love of unusual words—be found here? One thinks of his friend Vladimir Nabokov, with an equally

brilliant and idiosyncratic style, who could read English before he could read his native Russian.

After a couple of years Will Buckley moved the family to England. The older children (*les grands* or *los grandes,* depending on whether you were being hailed by Mademoiselle or by Nana or Filipa, the Mexican nurses) were sent to Catholic boarding schools: Allie and Priscilla to St. Mary's Convent, Ascot; John and Jim to the Oratory Preparatory School in Reading. The younger ones (*les petits* or *los pequeños*), Jane, Billy, and Trish, went to Catholic day schools in London. While at Reading, Jim was actually caned, not once but twice, leading to huge indignation on the part of his siblings and providing, forty years later, a crucial element in Blackford Oakes's formation (although Jim's were ordinary canings, not the work of an anti-American sadist like Blackford's headmaster, and Jim dismissed the incidents philosophically instead of raging at them).

In 1933, Will brought his family back to Sharon and went full-bore on implementing his pedagogical ideas. He was the sort of man who wants what he wants when he wants it (how appropriate that it's his third son, and not the easygoing John or Jim, who is his namesake). And what he wanted now was to produce offspring who shared his love for beauty and learning. So he engaged tutors to follow his curriculum, including music teachers, one of whom would become a lifelong member of the Buckley circle. When the children first saw the petite and pretty twenty-four-year-old Marjorie Otis, they promptly dubbed her "Old Lady." She was one of the three music teachers who developed in the young Buckleys a lasting love of music, and she remained a friend of theirs—a very close friend of Bill, Trish, and Priscilla—until her death as a very old lady indeed, aged ninety-four.

But even during the "school year," it was by no means all work, no play. There were stables, with enough horses for all (the year Bill took part in the Good Hands competition at the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden, the other young riders included Edward Albee and Jacqueline Bouvier); the swimming pool beckoned until autumn edged toward winter; and the hunters in the family—John, and later Bill, and later still Reid (Priscilla didn't take up hunting till she was an adult)—could go out with a dog early in the morning for pheasants, and get back in time for their studies.

In the mid-1930s Will started taking his family to Camden, South Carolina, for part of the winter. He rented houses for several years before he found the one he wanted to buy. The house was oddly named

Nine little Buckleys and their parents at Great Elm (and Carol will make ten, but not for another five years). Left to right, front row: Bill, ASB, Maureen, Priscilla, Jane, Reid, John; back row: Jim, Allie, Trish, WFB Sr.

Kamschatka, after the remote peninsula in Siberia, because when it was built, before the Civil War, it was so far out of town as to seem quite inaccessible. It was in Camden that the young Buckleys became acquainted with the Southern part of their heritage. When youngest brother Reid returned to the States after years of living in Spain, that's where he settled, and youngest sister Carol now lives nearby.

While the family was still growing, the number of children actually present in the household started diminishing. One by one, as they entered their teens, they were sent off to boarding school. The boys went to Millbrook in Millbrook, New York—not as prestigious as the St. Grottlesex schools, but (a) it was just a few miles from Sharon, (b) it permitted its pupils to go home for weekends, and (c) the founding headmaster, the formidable Mr. Pulling, met with Mr. Buckley's approval. (The way Bill tells the story, decades later Mr. Pulling asked Bill and his wife, Pat, to address him as "Edward." Bill hemmed and hawed; Pat, with her characteristic directness, said, "Are you crazy, Mr. Pulling?") The girls went to various schools—some to Nightingale-Bamford in Manhattan; some to Ethel Walker in Simsbury,

Connecticut, due east of Sharon; and Carol to the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Noroton, Connecticut, on Long Island Sound.

A person who grew up in a small family has to work at understanding the dynamics of a large family. In the Buckleys' case, eldest daughter goes from being an only child to being big sister, first of one brother, to whom she is very close, then of an assortment of younger brothers and sisters. Kid brother, alternately protected and teased by older siblings, soon becomes big brother to one, eventually four, younger siblings, to the youngest of whom he is godfather. Youngest daughter, born five years after her nearest sibling, grows up not in a house full of cacophony and movement, but in one from which most of her elders have gone off to school—or even college, or war—and when they *are* home, she's convinced that she'll never catch up to the brilliance of their dinner-table conversation.

In a large family the children form alliances and subgroups. Priscilla tells how, when teased by John or Allie or by neighbor children, she or Jim would defiantly announce that he or she had a "powerful friend" who would intercede; to this day, correspondence between Jim and Priscilla is addressed to "PF," and signed "PF." One might have expected Jane, the eldest of *les petits*, to pair off with Billy, but in fact it was Tish (as he calls her—to most people she's Trish) with whom he was "paired from infancy."

And the heads of this household? Father loving but strict, rather shy though a great teller of tales from his youth, and formal in manners even for a member of his more formal generation. Mother a fount of unconditional love. When each of the parents died, the family organized a memorial volume, with contributions by family and friends. In the case of Mrs. Buckley, who spent her last years in deepening senility, Priscilla wanted to make sure the grandchildren knew that this was only a tiny part of her story. And so Priscilla and Old Lady write of Aloïse Buckley as she was in the early 1930s, a woman irresistibly charming and seemingly scatterbrained, but who very efficiently manages the household of servants and farmhands and tutors while her husband is off managing his businesses. Then on Friday evenings, Priscilla writes, she is seen "rushing excitedly to the front door . . . as the car drives up with Father as if this is the best thing that has ever happened to her. Which it was. And she knows it. And he does."

Both parents are devout Catholics in their very different ways, he quiet and undemonstrative, she telling of her prayer life as unselfconsciously as if she were relating a conversation with a neighbor. Both are

deeply patriotic, although completely comfortable in other climes—*rooted* cosmopolitans, you might call them. And both are conservative, he more philosophically and with a libertarian bent (the crusty libertarian Albert Jay Nock was a great friend of his and a frequent visitor at Great Elm), she more intuitive and traditional. Their children all grew up as conservative, Catholic, rooted cosmopolitans, saving their rebellions for the world outside Great Elm and Kamschatka.

When Bill graduated from Millbrook in 1943, he was only seventeen, not yet eligible for the draft. But there was no point starting at Yale and then having to leave in mid-semester, and so he spent a few months at the University of Mexico improving his Spanish before he was inducted into the army.

Will Buckley had vigorously opposed America's entry into the war and supported Charles Lindbergh and America First; his children had enthusiastically shared his views. But once the United States was in the war, the Buckleys were Americans first, and by the time Bill was drafted, John was on active duty in the army in North Africa; their first brother-in-law, Ben Heath (Allie's husband), was in the army air corps attached to the Pentagon; and Jim was in the navy in the Pacific. Bill describes his own service as "brief and bloodless." He started out at Fort Benning, Georgia, where, like his fictional characters Sebastian Reinhard and Ed Coady in *Nuremberg: The Reckoning*, he was among the young soldiers chosen for the honor guard escorting President Roosevelt's body onto the train in Warm Springs. When the war ended, Bill was sent to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to take charge of a group of men awaiting demobilization.

"Here love had died between me and the army," says Captain Charles Ryder at the beginning of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. For Bill, there was no love to die. His recollections of army life emphasize the bullying, the petty deprivations, the forced camaraderie with men with whom he had not much in common. But he toughed it out, and, by his own account, it gave him something crucial—something that observers from our present vantage point can see as fundamental to his adult personality. As a boy he didn't have many friendships outside his own family. As a teenager at Millbrook, he did have a few close friends, especially an English boy sent as a "bundle from Britain" to escape the Blitz, the future historian Alistair Horne, who remains one of his closest friends. But in general, as Bill

wrote in a long letter to his father, "I was not very popular with the boys." He ascribed this to his youthful dogmatism: "I could not understand another point of view; it seemed to me that anyone who was not an isolationist or a Catholic was simply stupid. Instead of keeping these sentiments to myself, I blurted them out and supported them upon the slightest provocation."

What he learned in the army was "the importance of tolerance, and the importance of a sense of proportion about all matters—even in regard to religion, morality, and so on. Some friends I made whom I really prized were atheistic, and even immoral. But I learned, nevertheless, that regardless of the individual's dogmas, the most important thing as far as I was concerned was the personality: would his friendship broaden your horizon or provide you with intellectual entertainment?" In those few sentences are contained the essence of what would separate *Firing Line* from all the shouty, more-heat-than-light talk shows that came along in the 1970s and 1980s. Those sentences also answer the question asked by so many puzzled fans: How can you be friends with _____[fill in the blank]? John Kenneth Galbraith, Mike Wallace, Henry Kissinger, and dozens of other public figures who at the least are not movement conservatives, and some of whom are out-and-out leftists. Indeed, you can count on the knuckles of one finger the people (aside from Stalin, Hitler, Mao, et al.) whom Buckley truly despises: Lowell Weicker, Gore Vidal—oh yes, and Ralph Schoenman, assistant to Bertrand Russell in his notorious "war crimes" campaign against the United States, whom Buckley called a "cretin" on *Firing Line*.

This same trait has proved to be one of his great strengths as a novelist: the ability to portray with understanding and even affection the bad guys, most notably Blackford Oakes's longtime antagonist, Boris Bolgin.

In 1946 Bill was demobilized and entered Yale. John and Jim had graduated from Yale before going off to war. After being demobbed, John (like Ben Heath) had gone straight into the family oil business, but when Bill arrived as a freshman, Jim was back in New Haven, at the law school; Reid would arrive as a freshman two years later.

Yale's contribution to the war effort, as Bill has written, was to commit itself to matriculating after the war any young man it accepted who was called up to active service right after high school. Hence

Bill's class was the largest in history (this remained true even after Yale started admitting women in the late 1960s), and he and three roommates shared a suite meant for two in Davenport College. One of Bill's roommates, Richie O'Neill, would later lend Blackford Oakes his engineering expertise, along with a marvelous anecdote, given to Blacky in *Saving the Queen*. As Bill tells the nonfiction story: "[Richie] came early to the decision that he needed to do something to tame the fastidious dean of the Engineering School. . . . When Richie slept in one Monday, he found on Tuesday a summons to the office of Dean Loomis Havemeyer. . . .

" 'Why did you miss your class yesterday, Mr. O'Neill?'

" 'Diarrhea, sir.' Richie smiled.

"He was thereafter immune to summonses from that office."

Yale bristles with extracurricular activities, many of them probably as important to one's future life as what goes on in the classroom. There are singing groups and senior societies, the Political Union and the *Daily News*, organized sports and the debate team. Bill "heeled" (tried out) as a freshman for the *Daily News* (an experience he gives to Harry Bontecou in *The Redhunter*, transposing it from Yale to Columbia, and to Reuben Castle and Justin Durban in the Midwest in *The Rake*). He also was active on the debate team and in the Political Union, and he eventually joined the Elizabethan Club, the Fence Club, and the society to which both candidates in the 2004 presidential election belonged, Skull & Bones. But Bill emphatically did not follow the father of one of those candidates, George H. W. Bush (class of '48), onto the baseball team. Patriotic to the core, Bill is nonetheless un-American in his utter lack of interest in organized sports. Indeed, the only team sport that has ever appealed to him is ocean racing. He did not see a major league baseball game until 1994, and he went then only because ACLU chief Ira Glasser wouldn't drop the subject. A few years later someone else invited him to a game, and he replied, "No thanks. I've already been." Nor did he think himself qualified to join one of the singing groups, but he loved listening to them, and the Whiffenpoofs have entertained at many a *National Review* party.

And he made friends, lifelong friends—most of them fellow students, but also faculty members: economics professor Glenn Saxon, *Daily News* business manager Francis Donahue, Dante scholar Thomas Bergin. As Buckley put it in his toast at his class's forty-year reunion, "Most of my friends I met forty-odd years ago, met them

within a radius of two hundred yards of where I am now standing." One of these men, L. Brent Bozell Jr., a tall, raw-boned, redheaded Nebraskan, became his partner on the debate team. According to debate coach Rollin Osterweis, they formed a devastating one–two combination, with Bozell offering eloquent prepared statements and Buckley engaging in the cut-and-thrust that *Firing Line* viewers would come to know so well. In the fall of 1949, Oxford sent over a crack debating team, Robin Day and Anthony Wedgwood-Benn, to take on the Ivy League. (Day would become a leading print and television journalist; Wedgwood-Benn gradually metamorphosed into far-left Labour politician Tony Benn, dropping parts of his name and his official biography as he went.) The two young Englishmen were wiping the floor with their American opponents—until they came to Yale. According to Osterweis, Bozell and Buckley had an English style of debate—that is, they relied more on eloquence and wit than on the sheaves of facts and figures typical of American debaters. Taking the negative side on the topic "Resolved: the Americans should nationalize all their non-agricultural industries," Buckley and Bozell trounced the Oxford team 3–0.

Early in their friendship, Bill had introduced Brent to the sister he was closest to, Trish. The two redheads quickly fell in love, and they married in December of Brent's senior year (Trish, not having lost time to the war, had already graduated). Bill's work on the *Daily News* yielded another romance between one of his friends and one of his sisters, with less fortunate results. Bill and Tom Guinzburg heeled together for the OCD (Oldest College Daily) and, luckily for their friendship, had different agendas. Guinzburg wanted to become managing editor, because he was interested in collecting news and putting out the paper. Buckley wanted to become chairman (editor-in-chief), because he wanted to write the editorials. That is how it eventually worked out, and Guinzburg and Buckley were happy with the arrangement, even if many liberal readers of the OCD were less than happy with Buckley's editorials. Then Tom Guinzburg and Jane Buckley fell in love. Guinzburg was Jewish, and Will Buckley ordered Jane to break off the relationship. Bill agreed with his father, and his friendship with Guinzburg naturally suffered (although it was later mended, and continues to this day). Buckley's first biographer, John Judis, who is Jewish, describes Will Buckley as a "virulent" anti-Semite—although he absolves Bill of any such charge, and he records that when the Fence Club rejected Tom because he was Jewish, Bill

A banquet organized by outgoing *Daily News* editor Buckley, to which he had invited the presidents of half a dozen major East Coast universities. The head table, left to right: Dwight David Eisenhower of Columbia, Tom Guinzburg, James B. Conant of Harvard, WFB, Charles Seymour of Yale (speaking), John D. Macomber, Harold Dodds of Princeton, Gary Ellis, Harold Stassen of the University of Pennsylvania.

refused to join the club until it relented and accepted his friend. Bill himself would later write that his father did indeed partake of the country-club anti-Semitism prevalent in his day. But Will Buckley also had a rational objection to a marriage between a Catholic and a Jew, and it was this objection that Bill shared: How could they worship together? What would be their children's religious upbringing? Guinzburg later reflected that had there not been opposition, his and Jane's romance would probably have faded in a season. But as it was, the temperature was pretty chilly in the OCD office during the rest of his and Bill's tenure.

Time-consuming as the newspaper, the debate team, and the Political Union were, Buckley did manage to attend his classes, majoring (like his future friend Ronald Reagan) in economics. The classes were often wonderful experiences; he recalls especially philosophy professor Robert Calhoun, who "spoke the kind of sentences John Stuart Mill wrote," and history professor Lewis Curtis, whose "description of the Battle of Jutland could have had a long run off Broadway." But classes were often maddening, with religion frequently belittled and

collectivism exalted; many of Yale's economics professors would have regarded the free market as the devil's work, except that that would have been too close to a religious expression.

Matters came to a head on Alumni Day of Buckley's senior year—February 22, 1950. He had been chosen by the faculty to be the student speaker that day. Instead of writing, as he later put it, the usual "good old Yale" kind of speech, he decided to address head-on the "policy of educational *laissez-faire,*" which held that it was an attack on "academic freedom" to insist that freedom is better than tyranny, the free market better than socialism and central planning, Christianity better than secular humanism. The problem, he said, was not that all Yale professors, by any means, were hard-left atheists; it was that official Yale refused to say that one set of opinions was better than another.

Buckley brought a copy of his speech, as required, to the University News Bureau forty-eight hours before the Alumni Day celebration. Within two hours, he had been tracked down by a leading alumnus and urged to alter his "indictment of the administration." He was told that "the alumni simply wouldn't *understand* it . . . they'll leave the place thinking Yale is communistic." Buckley refused to alter more than a few sentences, but he did offer to withdraw as speaker. This offer was met, he says, with "hurt feelings" and urgings to rewrite his speech; finally it was President Charles Seymour himself who, when Buckley refused to write a milder speech, accepted his withdrawal.

The next act of this drama was on Class Day, part of the graduation festivities. Buckley had been elected by the Yale Class Council to be the speaker, and the administration, though apprehensive, did not try to persuade the students to change their vote. This time Buckley did not engage in open aggression against the administration, though he did call for Yale to return to espousing Western civilization and celebrating America as "an oasis of freedom and prosperity."

While Buckley was, as he put it, "getting some learning" and stirring up Yale, big things were happening in the wider world. At home, the war had decisively ended the Depression, but it had not ended the New Deal, which had been launched to counter the Depression. The war had also caused major changes in the status of women. Many of those who had done "men's work" during the war slipped gratefully back out of the labor market, but certain professions, having been opened, would never be closed again. Priscilla Buckley was one of the

first women to hold a responsible position at United Press, thus launching her sparkling journalistic career. And the unequaled prosperity and rapid suburbanization following the war were causing great shifts in the social landscape.

The end of the war also brought ferocious debate over how to handle our wartime ally, Josef Stalin, and his sympathizers in the States. In the half-decade after the war, the Soviet Union methodically enslaved, one after another, East Germany, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and, briefly, Yugoslavia (which broke free of the Soviet Empire in 1948 but did not throw off Communism). In 1949 Mao Tse-tung drove Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalists out of Mainland China. Two weeks after the class of 1950 graduated, North Korean tanks swept across the 38th parallel toward Seoul, embroiling the United States in yet another war. This one, however, was not officially a war but a "police action" under the auspices of the new United Nations, in whose founding a State Department functionary named Alger Hiss had played a substantial role. In 1948 Whittaker Chambers, an editor at *Time*, accused that same Alger Hiss of being a Communist spy, and two years later Senator Joseph McCarthy, seeking an explanation of how so many countries had fallen under Communist domination, accused dozens of State Department officials of being Communists or Communist sympathizers. By no means all of those who defended Hiss and excoriated Chambers and McCarthy were Communists, or even Communist sympathizers, strictly speaking; a new breed, the anti-anti-Communist, was born, and thus was launched one of the fiercest ideological battles in American history. Meanwhile, thanks partly to several Communists who were *not* State Department officials—the Rosenbergs, David Greenglass, Klaus Fuchs—the Soviets quickly ended our monopoly on atomic weapons. The Cold War—what James Burnham would call the Third World War—was under way.

In this war, Buckley was an enthusiastic recruit. Before his graduation, he had been approached by the CIA via his Yale mentor, the legendary political science professor Willmoore Kendall. Kendall introduced him to Burnham, who was an outside contractor with the CIA. Burnham in turn introduced him to a man whose name would later become all too well known, the dashing OSS veteran and popular novelist E. Howard Hunt. Buckley gladly signed up with the new agency. However, before he started his training, he had some unfinished business at Yale.

He also had some unfinished personal business. He and Brent Bozell had spent the summer of 1949 in Saskatchewan, working for one of the Buckley oil companies. Trish Buckley, meanwhile—by now engaged to Bozell—had gone to Vancouver to visit a Vassar classmate, Patricia Taylor. (Happy coincidence—or perhaps the Invisible Hand—had been at work in bringing the two Patricias together, since Trish was the first Buckley girl not to go to Smith.)

Pat was, and is, glamorous, beautiful, and imperious. During sophomore year at Vassar, Trish had told her family about her Canadian friend: "Pat looks like a queen, she acts like a queen, and is just the match for Billy." During her visit to Vancouver two summers later, Trish contacted Bill and Brent and extended the Taylors' invitation to spend a few days with them. As the story is told, they arrived in Vancouver on a Sunday and were due to leave the following Thursday, but Bill postponed his departure by a day. On Thursday evening, Pat—already an intense card player—was involved in a canasta game when Bill asked her sister to get Pat to join him in the library. As John Judis reconstructs the scene, Pat did come. "'Bill, what do you want?' she asked. And he said, 'Patricia, would you consider marriage with me?' She said, 'Bill, I've been asked this question many times. To the others I've said no. To you I say yes. Now may I please get back and finish my hand?'" Whether it happened just that way or not, the story is pure Pat.

Pat's father, Austin Taylor, had made a not inconsiderable fortune in gold, oil, and timber, and he had large stakes in Vancouver real estate. He and his wife, Kathleen (known as Babe), were noted philanthropists, her special focus being on the Red Cross. Austin Taylor ran what was regarded as the finest stud farm in British Columbia; he regularly took his family down to Pasadena, California, for the Santa Anita meets, at which his horses did very well. Decades later, Pat surprised a houseful of guests on Kentucky Derby day by betting on Sunday Silence against the favorite, Easy Goer, because, she explained, Sunday Silence's trainer, Charlie Whittingham, had trained for her father. Sunday Silence won by two and a half lengths.

There was one snag in the proposed marriage: the religious question again. Only this time it was Pat's parents, of Northern Irish descent, objecting to their Anglican daughter marrying a Roman Catholic. Negotiations were protracted, but finally it was worked out that the sacrament of marriage would be celebrated on July 6, 1950, at the RC cathedral in Vancouver, with the archbishop presiding; then

The reception on the Taylors' lawn; in background, to Bill's left: Babe Taylor, the mother of the bride.

at the reception, on the Taylors' vast lawn in the center of Vancouver, the Anglican bishop would bless the new couple. Austin and Babe Taylor became very fond of their son-in-law, and he devoted to them.

After what Bill has described as a "hedonistic" honeymoon in Hawaii, the young couple set up housekeeping in Hamden, Connecticut, a suburb of New Haven. Pat worked on developing the culinary skills for which she was later renowned, and also a dramatic theme that has run throughout their marriage. As Bill later put it, his own culinary function "was to turn off the pressure cooker when the sound rang out, while Pat would hide under the staircase, assuming a fetal position, resignedly awaiting the explosion, and, as resignedly, her impending widowhood." Bill, meanwhile, taught Spanish part-time at Yale and grappled with his first book, exploring the same issues he had raised in his aborted Alumni Day speech: the promulgation in Yale classrooms of centralism, secularism, and socialism.

He was encouraged in his work by Frank Chodorov, a friend and disciple of Will Buckley's friend Albert Jay Nock, and by his own mentor at Yale, Willmoore Kendall. Kendall was a brilliant political theorist; he was also a born contrarian. Buckley has mused that if the Yale political culture had been solidly conservative, Kendall would probably have remained the quasi-Trotskyist he had been as a young

man. Now, as Buckley worked on his book, Kendall read the manuscript and made suggestions, many of which Buckley incorporated. One of these proved to be among the most controversial lines in the book. "I believe that the duel between Christianity and atheism is the most important in the world," Buckley had written. "I further believe that the struggle between individualism and collectivism is"—and then Kendall suggested, and Buckley accepted, the phrasing: "the same struggle reproduced on another level." This would lead to heated accusations that Buckley had no regard for the poor and was not Catholic but "Calvinist" in his economics.

The manuscript was finished by April 1951, and Buckley started searching for a publisher. A Chicago conservative named Henry Regnery, who had started a publishing house just a few years earlier, enthusiastically accepted the manuscript, eventually titled *God and Man at Yale*. The eminent journalist John Chamberlain (Yale '25), who had met Buckley while visiting his alma mater, agreed to write the introduction.

Publication of *God and Man* was scheduled for the fall, but meanwhile there was the commitment to the CIA. Following the protocols under which he enlisted, Buckley has written almost nothing of his own experiences in the agency, but we can safely assume that his training was much like that given to Oakes in *Saving the Queen*. Also, one imagines that Buckley's motivations were much like those he gives to Oakes: a desire to fight for freedom and against despotism. And Pat thought a CIA career in exotic places sounded "fascinating"—certainly more glamorous than cooking in Hamden, Connecticut, while her husband sweated over his Royal typewriter.

Bill and Pat spent the summer of 1951 in Washington, D.C., where Bill learned about safe houses and observation techniques and how to hand over a document unobserved. Then they were sent to Mexico City, where Bill reported to his recruiter, Howard Hunt.

The Buckleys and the Hunts became close friends, and the Buckleys enjoyed life in Mexico City. They hooked up with many old friends of Will Buckley's, and Pat found a house whose yard had space for a wonderful garden. But fascinating it wasn't. Bill was a deep-cover agent, like Blackford. But whereas Blacky's first assignment propelled him into a stay at Windsor Castle, an affair with the Queen of England, and finally a nerve-throbbing aerial battle of wills, Bill's

assignment involved pretending to work in an export–import business while infiltrating the student political movement in Mexico City. The work was achingly slow, the payoffs small, and Bill started to feel there were better ways to put his talents to use in the cause of freedom.

Then, in October 1951, *God and Man* hit the bookstores, and nothing would ever be the same.

Henry Regnery had ordered an initial print run of five thousand, a modest but respectable number. He had to order a second printing within days. *God and Man* became a best seller—but it cost its publisher dearly. Blaming Regnery for accepting so radical a book, the University of Chicago took away from him the lucrative contract he had just won to publish the Great Books series. But Regnery was steadfast. As Buckley puts it, "I still have the letter from him, advising me that he had devoted the night before—after seeing the first rash of reviews—to rereading the book. He concluded that he had been correct to publish it and, so far as I know, never gave another thought to his decision to launch the book."

Buckley himself came under withering attack—not only from official Yale, but also in publications ranging from the *New York Post* and the *St. Louis Post–Dispatch* to the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Saturday Review*, the *Yale Law Journal* and the *Northwestern Law Review*. One of the high points was the conclusion of the piece by Frank Ashburn—headmaster of Brooks School and a Yale trustee—for *Saturday Review*: "The book is one which has the glow and appeal of a fiery cross on a hillside at night. There will undoubtedly be robed figures who gather to it, but the hoods will not be academic. They will cover the face."

What Klan-like recommendations had Buckley made? They boiled down to, first, recognizing that Yale had been founded to produce patriotic, Christian leaders of America, an end that was being subverted by an extreme understanding of "academic freedom," and, second, fostering a return to that original purpose by giving alumni a say in running the institution that had formed them and that they so generously supported. In the course of the controversy over the book, the Reverend Henry Sloane Coffin said to Buckley, "Why do you want to turn Yale education over to a bunch of boobs?" Buckley comments, "Since Mr. Coffin had been chairman of the Educational Policy Committee of the [Yale] Corporation, it struck me that if indeed the alumni were boobs he bore a considerable procreative responsibility."

On the strength of *God and Man*, and of Buckley's handling of the attacks on it, two of the three existing right-wing periodicals, *The American Mercury* and *The Freeman*, offered him editorial positions. He also had speaking offers galore. And so, in March 1952, he and Pat returned to the States from Mexico, this time to New York City, and he accepted the offer from the *Mercury*.

Pat, three months pregnant, started scouting for a house. As much as Bill loved his hometown of Sharon, it was too far from New York City for a daily commute; equally important, it wasn't on the seacoast, and Bill had dreamed since age thirteen of one day owning an oceangoing sailboat. After several weeks of prowling the New York and Connecticut coastline, Pat rang Bill triumphantly one day: she had found it. It was in Stamford, Connecticut, with a broad lawn sloping down about a furlong to Long Island Sound. Bill has referred to the house as "ugly but comfortable." Some may beg to differ with the first part of that description. The house at Wallacks Point doesn't have the classical elegance of Great Elm or Kamschatka; it is an asymmetrical Mediterranean-style structure with walls of pink stucco. But to anyone who loves the Italian lakes, with their villas perched on the hillsides, it is quite beautiful. Bill and Pat were safely ensconced in their new home by the time Christopher Taylor Buckley was born, in September 1952.

That year, 1952, was of course a presidential election year, after a generation of Democratic dominance. From a right-wing point of view, the outgoing Democratic administration could have been far worse—but it could have been far better. There was prosperity, to be sure, but President Truman had done nothing—nor was it likely that the man who had been FDR's last vice president would have done anything—to roll back the previous decade's centralization and growth of government. To Buckley and his colleagues, the New Deal, and even Truman's milder Fair Deal, were the antithesis of the spirit of local control and voluntarism that, in Tocqueville's analysis, had made America great. Abroad, the administration's goal was containment (George Kennan's term), not rollback. Truman had complaisantly followed, at Potsdam, the outline drawn up at Yalta, and in subsequent years, as Stalin gobbled up one Central European country after another, the United States scarcely protested. But Truman did call a halt when Soviet-backed guerrillas started making headway in

Greece, which Roosevelt and Churchill had not conceded as being within the Soviet sphere of influence; he enunciated the Truman Doctrine, and the Republican Congress backed him up. The Marshall Plan, begun and carried out on Truman's watch, had brought Western Europe to its feet and very probably saved it from going Communist. And when the Soviets attempted to force West Berlin into Communist East Germany by starving it out, Truman did take the advice of the military governor of Germany, the bold and resourceful General Lucius D. Clay. Clay proposed a massive airlift to save the embattled city from the Soviet blockade, and Truman authorized him to go ahead. But in Korea, when General Douglas MacArthur simply raised the question of taking the war to North Korea's backers, the Red Chinese, Truman summarily called him home and dismissed him as commander of the United Nations forces.

Truman could have run again in 1952, being grandfathered under the 22nd Amendment. But the controversies over Communists in his administration, the battle with the Dixiecrats on the one hand and Henry Wallace on the other in 1948, and the stalemate in the Korean War had taken their toll. He lost the New Hampshire primary to Tennessee senator Estes Kefauver and soon afterward announced that he was not a candidate for reelection. At the end of the day, Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson—Truman's favored candidate—won the nomination at the Democratic convention in Chicago.

On the Republican side, the standard-bearer for many on the right was Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, who represented a small-town heartland conservatism. However, some (including Buckley) who had shared Taft's isolationism in the late 1930s worried that his isolationism now would blind him to the seriousness of the worldwide Communist threat. The more liberal wing of the party, meanwhile, was determined to stop Taft. Although two men who had come up through the political ranks were already in the race—California governor Earl Warren and former Minnesota governor Harold Stassen—the GOP liberals made the bold move of recruiting a man who had never held elective office, but who was widely and deeply popular. In January 1952 Senator Henry Cabot Lodge announced that he was placing on the New Hampshire ballot the name of Dwight David Eisenhower, the victorious Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe.

Ike did well in the primaries. At the Republican convention, which like the Democrats' was held in Chicago, he won on the first ballot,

after Stassen released his delegates. Eisenhower then handily defeated the far more liberal Stevenson in November, 55 percent to 45 percent, and 39 states to 9.

The right was not sanguine about the prospects of Ike's rolling back the New Deal/Fair Deal, but he did seem set on prosecuting the Cold War, especially when he named John Foster Dulles, hardline brother of CIA director Allen Dulles, to be his secretary of state.

Against this backdrop, what was the state of the conservative movement? Put bluntly, there wasn't one. There was—as, in their different accents, Robert Taft and Willmoore Kendall maintained—a widespread intuitive conservative sensibility in the country, despite the general acquiescence in FDR's enormous concentration of power in Washington, D.C. But in discussions of political theory, the term "conservative" was only starting to be used. Indeed, as of 1950, the few intellectuals who were describing themselves as "New Conservatives" applauded the welfare state as necessary to save capitalism. The leading light of this kinder, gentler New Conservatism, Peter Viereck, said of *God and Man* that Buckley was not conservative but reactionary. Buckley replied that if being conservative meant accepting the New Deal, then he was content to be reactionary. Not until Regnery published Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* in 1953 would the future movement start to coalesce around that term.

Meanwhile, schools of thought that would soon be part of that movement existed here and there, but they seldom worked in concert with one another. Most prominent, as of the early 1950s, were the libertarians, aka classical liberals. They believed that the best polity was one of ordered liberty—individual liberty and responsibility, with one man's safety and property protected from his neighbor's expansiveness by the rule of law. This tradition—the tradition of John Locke and Adam Smith, which played so large a role in the American founding—had taken a beating from the socialists and progressives in Britain and America from the 1890s on, and particularly during the Depression. But it had never died out, and it got a tremendous boost at the end of World War II from books published by two refugees from Hitler-controlled Austria. F. A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) and Ludwig von Mises's *Bureaucracy* (1944) and *Human Action* (1949) were hailed by such progenitors

of the American conservative movement as John Chamberlain, Henry Hazlitt, William Henry Chamberlin, and John Davenport.

This school of thought—what we might also call conservative libertarianism, or classical libertarianism—was partly intertwined with, partly at odds with, a more radical libertarianism. Whereas Hayek and Mises saw the need for enough state power to protect A's private property—the basis, in their view, of personal liberty—from B's incursions, Nock called the state "our enemy," and Chodorov—described by Buckley as of 1950 as "a gentle, elderly anarchist"— wrote that "taxation is robbery."

It was from the libertarian side of the right wing that the first organizations of premovement conservatism sprang. In 1953 the radical libertarian Chodorov founded the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (*individualism* here being contrasted to collectivism, not to community), with the conservative libertarian Buckley as its first president. Earlier, in 1946, the classical liberal Leonard Read had started the Foundation for Economic Education. Read was not content with criticizing statism—he felt the need to forward a positive "free-market, private-ownership, limited-government philosophy." He quickly won the support of Hayek, and he put Mises on FEE's payroll. The following year, Hayek himself founded a more exclusive group, the Mont Pelerin Society, which soon was exercising influence way out of proportion to its size. As the young Milton Friedman put it, "The importance of that [founding] meeting was that it showed us we were not alone." This was a step away from Nock's gloomy libertarianism, which depicted those who rejected statism and progressivism as "the Remnant." That image has emotional appeal, but it's the romantic appeal of the lost cause. It isn't going to change a country's direction. What Friedman saw in Mont Pelerin was libertarians prepared to cease being a lonely remnant.

The next major strand of right-wing thought was traditionalism. The traditionalists who would play the biggest roles in the early days of the conservative movement were Russell Kirk and the more esoteric Eric Voegelin. Kirk delineated the conservative philosophy of Edmund Burke and his intellectual descendants, a philosophy that celebrated a hierarchical, nonrationalistic social order and "affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life." Voegelin wrote in opposition to the modern "gnostics," who, in his most famous phrase, had "immanentized the Christian eschaton"—that is, promised heaven on earth if only the Communists (or the Jacobins, or the American Progressives) had their way. Working alongside Kirk

and Voegelin were such thinkers as the great Episcopal priest Bernard Iddings Bell (though he was seen more as a churchman than as a political philosopher) and Berkeley professor Robert Nisbet (though he was seen more as an academic sociologist). And coming at the Great Tradition—Athens and Jerusalem—from his own angle was the University of Chicago's Leo Strauss, the founder of one of the most influential schools of right-wing thought.

A somewhat different breed of traditionalist was the Southern Agrarian. The Agrarians' manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*, had been published in 1930. One of their younger adherents, Richard Weaver, was a respected professor of English at the University of Chicago in the early 1950s; he had published his seminal *Ideas Have Consequences* in 1948. Two others, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, were leading exponents of New Criticism in the English Department at Yale, where Reid Buckley was studying. The Agrarians believed that despite the fearful stain of slavery, the antebellum South had sustained the values of what C. S. Lewis called Old Western Man. As Weaver put it, the South had been "the last non-materialist civilization in the Western world."

The third strand of right-wing thought was anti-Communism. This category may seem redundant, since by definition libertarians are anti the ultimate embodiment of statism, and traditionalists are anti the enemy of Western civilization. But an important component of the inchoate conservative movement was people who were anti-Communists first, before they found any specific niche on the right. These were, mostly, men and women who had been Communists or Trotskyists and had turned against totalitarianism; they knew from the inside how truly evil it was. In this category were figures as disparate as Whittaker Chambers, James Burnham, Freda Utley, and Max Eastman.

Besides the handful of right-wing organizations existing in the early 1950s, there was an equally small number of explicitly right-wing publications. *The American Mercury*, where Buckley was working, had been founded by the radical libertarian H. W. Mencken in the 1920s. It was now edited by William Bradford Huie, a courageous Alabamian who opposed Jim Crow. In 1950, a group of classical libertarians—Henry Hazlitt, John Chamberlain, and Suzanne La Follette—had revived *The Freeman*, founded, also in the 1920s, by radical libertarian Albert Jay Nock. And in 1944 classical libertarians William Henry Chamberlin, Frank Hanighen, and Felix Morley had

started *Human Events*, the Washington weekly, still going strong today, focusing on national politics and policymaking.

By 1953, when Buckley left *The American Mercury* to collaborate with Brent Bozell on a book about Joe McCarthy, this small galaxy of conservative publications was in turmoil. *The Freeman*, plagued by internal dissent, was starting to wobble out of control. Forrest Davis, who had earlier persuaded McCarthy that General Marshall was a Communist, got control of *The Freeman* and alienated all his fellow editors and most of the stockholders. After a mass resignation of *Freeman* editors, Leonard Read's FEE put up the money to save the magazine—but purely as a journal of free-market economics, not as a commentator on the whole political, economic, and cultural scene.

That was a disappointment to those who loved *The Freeman* as it had been, but it was nothing like what happened to *The American Mercury*. It, too, was having financial trouble, and the owners turned to a Connecticut millionaire named Russell Maguire. Maguire had a good track record of backing right-wing causes and politicians. Unfortunately, it soon transpired that his primary interest was anti-Semitism. Huie resigned as editor, and the *Mercury* headed for the fever swamps.

Even before the decline of *The Freeman* and *The American Mercury*, an Austrian expatriate named William S. Schlamm had decided that a new right-wing magazine was needed. Schlamm was one of several former leftists turned fervent anti-leftists who had been harbored by Henry Luce in his Time–Life empire (others included Whittaker Chambers and John Chamberlain). Indeed, Schlamm had for a while been Luce's personal foreign policy advisor.

Schlamm had tried to get Henry Regnery's backing, but Regnery remained unconvinced of Schlamm's ability to launch a new magazine and hold it together. In 1953 Schlamm decided to try another tack. He had noticed Buckley—as who could not, among those who followed public controversy?—and proposed that the young man spearhead the new venture. Schlamm's genuinely brilliant insight was that someone just starting out in public life would have a better chance than an established figure of getting other established figures to come into his tent. As Buckley later put it, "It was much easier for a 29-year-old to be editor in chief of a magazine with these giants than for a 39-year-old or a 49-year-old, because people are willing to do favors

and be condescending toward someone who is 25 years younger than they." But sometimes the condescension grated. Decades later, long after Schlamm had returned to Austria, mutual friend Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn said to Buckley one evening, "You know that Willi loved you like a son."

"Yes," said Buckley. "The problem is he treated me like a three-year-old son."

In any case, Buckley could do nothing with Schlamm's idea until he and Bozell had completed *McCarthy and His Enemies.* Aloïse Heath's account of that collaboration was meant to be humorous, and succeeded—but there was truth beneath the humor. "Bill," Allie wrote in the family newsletter, "spent half the summer of 1953 in Stamford, moodily writing his share of *McCarthy and His Enemies,* and the other half in Sharon, quarrelsomely rewriting Brent Bozell's. Brent, *McC. and H. E.*'s coauthor, vice-versa'd both geographically and emotionally." Among other things, the book had to be exhaustively researched if it was not to succumb to the same charges launched at the senator himself. As Buckley later put it, "Eighteen months of research and writing is a long enough time to spend seeking out an eighth allegory in Dante's *Inferno*; it is a very very long time to spend on the question whether Esther Brunauer was ever a member of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee League."

Also, although Buckley said nothing about it in public at the time, he and Pat suffered a devastating personal loss early in the course of this project. The pregnancy that had produced Christopher was actually Pat's second; the first had been ectopic. She now suffered a second ectopic pregnancy, putting an end to her and Bill's hopes of a larger family. This is not a topic Bill has often spoken or written about—though fifty years later, in *Last Call for Blackford Oakes*, he gave the circumstance of one successful pregnancy and two ectopics to the engaging Nina and Lindbergh Titov. Once Pat's social career took off, many people assumed that she had deliberately not had more children lest the pregnancies spoil her figure and interfere with the scheduling of charity balls. But that was not at all her agenda. Whether Bill and Pat would have emulated Will and Aloïse Buckley with ten children (as Ben and Allie Heath and Brent and Trish Bozell were doing), or stayed closer to the three of Austin and Babe Taylor, who knows? But life would have been very different for Bill and Pat, and for Christopher.

In any case, in the fall of 1953 the young authors completed their manuscript, all 250,000 words of it, considerably more than Henry

Eight of the Buckleys, grown up, with spouses; they are in the patio, a Mexican touch that WFB Sr. had added to Great Elm. Left to right, front row: John, Bill, Jim; second row: Brent, Trish, John's Ann, Pat, Priscilla, Jim's Ann, Allie; back row: Jane and Bill Smith, Betsey and Reid, Ben Heath.

Regnery thought marketable. They hired Schlamm to cut 75,000 words and write a prologue, and the book was published in March 1954, one month before the Army-McCarthy hearings began. It was not a book that said much about McCarthy personally. As Buckley's comment about Esther Brunauer suggests, it was a painstaking sifting of the evidence concerning people McCarthy had, in one way or another, targeted. And it by no means concluded that the senator was always right. McCarthy himself apparently understood the authors' need to distance themselves from some of his forays, but his wife, Jeanie, thought any such formulations disloyal, and she tried, unsuccessfully, to undercut the project with Regnery. Even so, after Edward R. Murrow's first major attack on McCarthy, the senator asked Buckley if he would go on Murrow's show to refute the charges. Buckley said yes, but Murrow's people refused. So McCarthy, by now drinking heavily, attempted his own refutation and was pummeled by Murrow. He never recovered.

It was not until 1998, in his novel *The Redhunter*, that Buckley wrote extensively about Joe McCarthy as a human being. The portrayal there is of a man passionately patriotic, intuitive rather than

logical, temperamentally a gambler, and the more tenacious the more he was challenged. McCarthy was also, according to Buckley and many other friends, a splendid companion, but one whose salt never lost its savor. Once at a party he was being pursued by a large woman who had some information to pass on to him. Unfortunately, she had a habit of standing very close to her interlocutor, all the while spilling cigarette ashes on her ample bosom. McCarthy sidled up to Frank and Elsie Meyer and growled, "Keep her away from me—she *breasts* me."

Like *God and Man*, *McCarthy* got good notices in the few existing right-wing publications, and fire and brimstone from the left. Even those liberals (like Dwight Macdonald) who had had good things to say about *God and Man* panned *McCarthy*. The orthodoxy within the liberal intelligentsia had hardened: of Joe McCarthy, *nothing* good could be said.

On the other hand, there were plenty of people in the country who were not liberal intellectuals and who were interested in hearing what McCarthy's young defenders had to say. Buckley had not been officially invited back to Yale since *God and Man*, but now he and Bozell were asked to debate two law school professors, Vern Countryman (who had attacked *God and Man*) and Fowler Harper. In a jam-packed Woolsey Hall, the pro-McCarthy team, according to the next day's Yale *Daily News*, won resoundingly. A few weeks later, when Buckley spoke at the National Republican Club in Manhattan, a thousand people gathered inside the hall and more than a thousand outside in Bryant Park, listening over loudspeakers. The reaction was tumultuous. As in his days on the Yale debate team and the *Daily News*, so would it be throughout Buckley's adult career: the spoken word and the personal presence would be as important in furthering his mission as the written word.

After *McCarthy and His Enemies* was published, Bozell, who had obtained his law degree from Yale, went to work on McCarthy's defense team in the Senate censure hearings, and Buckley continued to do some speechwriting for the senator. But for Bill, it was time for the next thing. He and Pat went to visit Willi and Steffi Schlamm in Vermont, and Bill and Willi started to outline their plan.

They agreed on the type of magazine they wanted to put out—something modeled on *The Freeman*, which would include running commentary on the events of the day as well as less ephemeral politi-

cal and economic analysis and cultural and social observation. They agreed that Buckley would be the editor-in-chief and—crucial point—would own all the voting stock, so that warring parties could not scuttle the new journal, as they were in the lengthy process of doing to *The Freeman*. Of course, Schlamm never assumed his own role would be truly subordinate. As he wrote with breathtaking candor to his old friend and colleague Whittaker Chambers, whom he was trying to recruit for the editorial board, the senior editors would "establish satrapies in the magazine, domains in which each of us editors is acknowledged as the supreme authority (although all of us, in technical ultimate decision, will listen to the editor-publisher who hires and fires us)." And, third point, the appealing young American Buckley rather than the sardonic, heavy-featured, Austrian-accented Schlamm would be the principal money-raiser. This was a role Buckley did not relish (and has continued not relishing for the succeeding fifty years that he has performed it). As he wrote to his father's friend and colleague Dean Reasoner, "I think I also told you that I am a rotten salesman, and that I have always conceived of Hell as the place where people of my temperament are required to spend eternity going from person to person selling something."

But sell he did. Few of his papers from that period have survived—he did not yet have, after all, a permanent office and a personal secretary—and so we don't have the sort of detailed record of his movements that we have for later years. But he was on the road a lot. At *NR*'s forty-fifth anniversary party, Christopher Buckley recalled his child's-eye view of the magazine's founding. "'Founding Mother,' I would say, 'where is Founding Father *tonight*?'" Buckley sought out people with money and conservative inclinations in the Midwest, the Deep South, and Texas, as well as in the New York area. An important—and slightly surprising, even then—source of support was Hollywood. Buckley had met screenwriter Morris Ryskind—like Burnham, Schlamm, et al., a former leftist turned anti-Communist—while giving a talk in Los Angeles on the McCarthy controversy. Ryskind liked him, agreed with him, and did everything he could to help launch the new magazine. Half a world away, in Paris, where she was working for United Press, Priscilla Buckley was introduced to Adolphe Menjou. "Are you any relation of Bill Buckley?" the dapper actor asked.

"Why, yes. He's my brother."

"What a charming, talented young man," Menjou replied, and proceeded to tell Priscilla's lunch guest, Gloria Swanson, about Bill's

Where's Founding Father tonight? Home!

meetings with a group of men that included Ward Bond, Bing Crosby, and John Wayne. (Buckley did not meet Ronald Reagan until several years later, but Reagan was an early subscriber to the magazine.)

The money came in, but more slowly than Buckley and Schlamm had hoped. They reckoned they would need $550,000 to cover expenses until they had built up a subscriber base. As of September 1955 they had $290,000 from outside sources, plus $100,000 put up by the magazine's first and most enthusiastic backer, WFB Sr.

Meanwhile, there was the need to recruit some colleagues, and here, too, there were snags. Buckley and Schlamm hoped to pick up some of the former *Freeman*ites left without a home after their mass resignation. John Chamberlain was, as Buckley and Schlamm had hoped, entirely sympathetic with their plans. However, by the time they started recruiting editors, he had accepted a position with *Barron's*. With two young daughters to support, his wife, Peggy, strongly opposed his leaving *Barron's* to join the fledgling venture. Ralph de Toledano similarly declined to leave *Newsweek*. And Whittaker Chambers, besides having suffered a serious heart attack, doubted that the magazine, if it ever got off the ground, could do much to affect the great struggle then going on. "It is idle," he wrote to Buckley, "to talk about preventing the wreck of Western civilization. It is already a wreck from within."

But Suzanne La Follette was willing to come aboard. A cousin (once removed) of Fighting Bob La Follette, the old Progressive senator, she had worked for the original *Freeman* under Nock in the 1920s. She had veered left in the 1930s, but had been jolted by the Stalin purges—especially the trial of Leon Trotsky—and had come back to right-wing libertarianism. She had been the founding managing editor of the new *Freeman* in 1950. Now she was hired to be the founding managing editor (though listed on the masthead simply as one of five editors) of the *National Weekly*, as Buckley and Schlamm were planning to call their magazine. (As it turned out, that name was already copyrighted and they had to choose another—providentially, since *National Review* survived as a weekly for fewer than three years before finances obliged it to go fortnightly.)

James Burnham was also willing. Tall, courtly in manner, the son of a prosperous Chicago railroad man, he had degrees from Princeton and Oxford and had been a professor of philosophy at New York University. During his association with the American Workers Party, cofounded by his friend and NYU colleague Sidney Hook, he spent some vacation time as a union organizer (to the distaste of his elegant wife, Marcia, who did not like muddy boots in her front hall). While teaching aesthetics and Thomist philosophy at NYU (one of his courses was called "Aquinas and Dante"), he had become Leon Trotsky's leading spokesman in the United States. In later years he liked to say that his beliefs had not changed, just his perception of how best to put them into practice. Swallowing that may take a few grains of salt, but Burnham could provide surprising illustrations. For example, he once started a column with the dictum "Who says A must say B" and concluded with "Who wills the ends wills the means." He took pleasure in pointing out that the former was the Trotskyist, the latter the Thomist formulation of the same statement. (Burnham trained young colleagues at *NR* to say "Trotskyist," not "Trotskyite." In his memory, his former pupils still do.)

Buckley had first met Burnham in June 1950, when Kendall introduced them in the course of recruiting Buckley into the CIA. One month later, Buckley took Burnham's *The Coming Defeat of Communism* with him to Hawaii for beach reading during his and Pat's honeymoon.

By the time Buckley and Schlamm were recruiting colleagues for the new magazine, Burnham had cut himself off from most of his old associations. He had broken with Trotsky early in the war, over the "Old Man's" defense of Stalin's invasion of Poland and Finland.

Most of his post-Trotskyist colleagues were liberal anti- (and often ex-) Communists of one stripe or another—Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, Sidney Hook. He rattled this coterie with an essay published in *Partisan Review* titled "Lenin's Heir"—that is, Stalin. Burnham's argument was that Stalin, not Trotsky, was Lenin's true heir—his point being not that Stalin was better than Trotsky, but that Lenin was as bad as Stalin. However, his ironic ode to Stalin's Jovelike "insolence and indifference and brutality" was bizarrely misread, first by Dwight Macdonald and then by George Orwell, as signifying, in Orwell's phrase, "a sort of fascinated admiration." Fascinated, yes; admiration, never.

Still, there was no permanent split with Macdonald at that time, and Burnham remained on the advisory board of *Partisan Review.* In 1949 he was recruited by a Princeton classmate, Joseph Bryan III, to do contract work for the CIA's covert operations division, for which he took a leave of absence from NYU and moved his family to Washington, D.C. During this period, he helped found the Congress for Cultural Freedom, mobilizing anti-Stalinist leftists against the Soviets' phony "peace" initiatives. He eventually resigned from NYU to work for the Congress full-time.

Then along came Joe McCarthy. Burnham had no great love for McCarthy himself and disapproved of his methods, both on intellectual grounds and as likely to harm the anti-Communist cause. But he agreed with McCarthy that the Soviets were being abetted by Americans in high places and that these should be ferreted out. And he held in contempt those who treated McCarthy as if he were Torquemada, Savonarola, and Hitler rolled into one. In opposition to the anti-anti-Communists, Burnham became what he called an "anti-anti-McCarthyite." But this made him, to use his own word, an "anomaly" at *Partisan Review*, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and even the CIA. Howard Hunt later revealed that he had been ordered by Frank Wisner, the legendary but increasingly unstable head of covert operations, to have nothing more to do with Burnham. One by one Burnham was fired by, or preemptively resigned from, these entities; he ceased to have contact with many old friends on the left except in the public prints. When Buckley came to call on him at his farmhouse up on the hill above Kent, Connecticut, a village a few miles south of Sharon, Burnham was more than ready to join up.

There was one last snag: Marcia Burnham, surprisingly, went to Buckley and urged him not to hire her husband. He had wrecked

every organization he had ever belonged to, this formidable woman told the twenty-nine-year-old aspiring editor, and he would wreck this one. Providence was at work again. Buckley did not take her advice, and Burnham would prove to be the most loyal deputy a man could have.

Incorporation papers had been drawn up (by, as it happens, William Casey, Esq.—the same William Casey who would later be Ronald Reagan's director of central intelligence). April 1955 had been set for the launch date, even though *National Review* was still short on funds. And then WFB Sr., who had previously suffered a couple of minor strokes, had a major one, leaving him in a coma for several days and partially paralyzed thereafter. Bill rushed down to Charlotte, North Carolina, to join his mother and siblings in the hospital vigil, and the launch was postponed until November.