

Paul: [00:00:00](#) Go online... And we are live. Ladies and gentlemen, angry Americans around the country, and around the globe... Welcome to the Classic Car Club in New York City, for an extraordinary conversation. One I've been looking forward to from the beginning, really, from maybe my childhood.

Harry Smith: [00:00:22](#) That's good. That's good.

Paul: [00:00:23](#) We have the great and powerful, Harry Smith, has joined us here.

Harry Smith: [00:00:30](#) I don't know about the powerful. I'll take the great. I'll take the great. Great, if only because I've lasted as long as I have. Right? I got miles.

Paul: [00:00:39](#) You do?

Harry Smith: [00:00:40](#) I have miles. I got a lot of miles.

Paul: [00:00:42](#) We have a car behind you. That's a Ford from, it's got to be like a '67.

Harry Smith: [00:00:48](#) It's the Shelby, I think. Yeah.

Paul: [00:00:51](#) And what has more miles on it, that car, or you?

Harry Smith: [00:00:54](#) Me. Oh yeah, no question. Yeah. Well, however... Oh, by the way, that car much faster than I am, right?

Paul: [00:01:03](#) But you're still around.

Harry Smith: [00:01:04](#) Oh, dude.

Paul: [00:01:05](#) And Ford, I'm not so sure about. I mean, we've covered this in a previous podcast.

Harry Smith: [00:01:11](#) Right.

Paul: [00:01:12](#) But now, they're down to... They will soon be down to only producing the Mustang, it will be the only car they produce. And now, the Mustang's an SUV.

Harry Smith: [00:01:21](#) So, we're going to see Ford next month. We're going to go spend some time with their electric engineers. Talk about their electric force. Talk with Jim Hackett, who's the CEO. Yeah, we're going there... We're going there probably in January.

Paul: [00:01:39](#) He's an interesting guy. He's not a car guy. He came from Steelcase.

Harry Smith: [00:01:41](#) Steelcase, but he's an old Michigan football player, and so all roads in my house lead back to Ann Arbor, because my wife is a graduate of Michigan and we know Jim Hackett through the University of Michigan. And, my wife was well acquainted with Bo Schembechler, who is the famous Michigan coach. After he retired, we'd go to games and he'd invite us up to his, then, tiny little microscopic box. We know his widow. We're very good friends with Kathy. Yeah, so with the University of Michigan, no degrees of separation.

Paul: [00:02:24](#) This is now a time you'd want to talk about Michigan football?

Harry Smith: [00:02:24](#) Well, we were there. We were there, and there was a lot of optimism because it was the 50th anniversary of " the" game. It was Bo's first year, and against all odds, he beat Woody and he beat Ohio State, which was... Walked in there, undefeated at the time.

Harry Smith: [00:02:40](#) So, it was a huge anniversary. Dan Dierdorf and all those guys who are in that first group of Bo recruits, who won that game, had a huge gathering the night before. Big anniversary party. We were all around all these folks that we've known for years, and years, and years, and respect so much. So, I will tell you, we were in the broadcast booth with a Jimmy Brandstatter, was another good friend of ours who played for Bo. And, there was a moment during the broadcast where during a commercial break, where Jimmy just walks to the back wall, looks straight at a wall, uttered some swear words, goes back, and sits down and finishes the game.

Paul: [00:03:21](#) Is Harbaugh going to stay?

Harry Smith: [00:03:24](#) He said he's going to.

Paul: [00:03:24](#) Are they going to let him, is the question, right?

Harry Smith: [00:03:27](#) Well, you know... So, the games he had the-

Paul: [00:03:28](#) [Is the Harbaugh experiment 00:03:28] over?

Harry Smith: [00:03:29](#) So... No-

Paul: [00:03:34](#) We're [crosstalk 00:03:36]. Michigan-Ohio State, maybe one of the greatest rivalries, and the greatest rivalry in college football-

Harry Smith: [00:03:38](#) Left. Left. Greatest rivalry left, right?

Paul: [00:03:43](#) Yeah. There's of course, the magnificent magnitude of Amherst versus Williams. And Harvard-Yale,

Harry Smith: [00:03:49](#) No.

Paul: [00:03:50](#) Army-Navy.

Harry Smith: [00:03:51](#) Oh, excellent. Excellent. Good point. Very good point.

Paul: [00:03:54](#) But for most... For ratings... I mean, Auburn-Alabama happened recently too, but it doesn't have that magnitude. It feels like-

Harry Smith: [00:04:01](#) Ka-boom. Ka-boom.

Paul: [00:04:04](#) And the question is now, whether Harbaugh will be the future of Michigan, or if this experiment is over, because they lost again.

Harry Smith: [00:04:11](#) Okay. But here's the... So, they were looking at three games going in, right? Michigan State, Notre Dame, and for a lot of people at Michigan, a lot of people, Notre Dame actually is on the top of their rivalry list.

Harry Smith: [00:04:26](#) So, they beat Notre Dame. They handled Michigan State. It's two out of three. You know, I don't know any of the inner workings of any of that stuff, but the thought is Harbaugh is a Michigan man, and that makes a difference. That makes a difference. I don't know if you go out and...

Harry Smith: [00:04:47](#) Think about this whole crazy business, right? Arkansas hires the guy from SMU two years ago, a season and a half in, and his whole thing is, he's a four-year plan, has amazing success at SMU. He's there a year and a half. They can him. People are writing checks for these contracts that go forever, and ever, and ever. I have no idea how this... And on that level, I'm a D-III guy, right? I'm a D-III football player. I have no idea how any of that stuff works on that level, except there are people writing huge checks.

Paul: [00:05:21](#) Well, maybe bringing it back around, didn't Gerald Ford play at Michigan?

Harry Smith: [00:05:23](#) Heck yes.

Paul: [00:05:23](#) So, Gerald Ford played Michigan...

Harry Smith: [00:05:26](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:05:27](#) And that's probably a Ford starting up right now in the background... But, Gerald Ford is, I think, one of the only presidents to play Division I, but he played in Michigan, and this game is happening.

Paul: [00:05:40](#) We just talked about Ford Motor Company, we're talking about Michigan. I think the point I want to make here is, part of why I was excited about talking to you, is I don't know if there's anybody that I know, who knows America better than you. Like, the intersection of sports, politics, or culture, of regionalism, of media... All of that is one of the reasons why I was so excited to talk to you, man.

Paul: [00:06:02](#) And we're already deep into that. For folks who maybe don't know how far your amazing career has spanned... The thing that I was thinking about, getting ready for this interview is, "Harry's seen America inside and out, for your whole life, but it's been your profession for three decades, four decade?"

Harry Smith: [00:06:21](#) Plus. Yeah. So, the cool thing for me... Honestly, I remember hitting this mark many, many years ago already, is, I've reported... I've done stories in all 50 States, right? I've spent time, real time, not drive through, but real time, in all 50 States. And that's like, an important check in my... You know, you have your boxes that you need to check; that's a real thing for me.

Harry Smith: [00:06:53](#) And quite honestly, I have a mantra that I use, especially with the kids at work. And I say, "Every day outside of the building is a victory for the good guys." Because you know what? I cannot recommend highly enough, the Jimmy Breslin documentary that was on HBO earlier this year. Just type it in. You know, you're sitting there on Thursday night, "What are we going to watch?" Okay, look it up. Jonathan Alter and these other guys made this amazing documentary about Jimmy Breslin, slash... Give me two seconds, he was just in the paper. There was another great tabloid writer. Oh God, this is going to drive me nuts and as soon as I stop thinking about, I'll think about it.

Harry Smith: [00:07:34](#) Anyway, but one of the scenes in the documentary is all these newsrooms, where people have three screens in front of them, right? And Jimmy's whole thing was always, "The story's

outside. The story's on the street," right? The story's not... It's not from the wire service. You got to get your butt out into the world, and that's where... And a lot of times, and I always... I helped teach a writing class at NBC. Tell me to slow down or stop if you want me to, because I'll go on forever.

Paul: [00:08:03](#)

No. That's-

Harry Smith: [00:08:03](#)

Okay. And one of the things that I talk about is; you see the scrum of media around a politician, or a movie star, or a news maker, as they come out. I say, the story's not in the scrum. Stories, they're almost never in the scrum. Maybe that person's going to say one thing that's worthwhile, but most of the rest of the time, it's not in the scrum. It's usually somewhere on the periphery of the scrum. You stand back from the scrum, you're going to find a better story than the one that's in the middle of it.

Paul: [00:08:31](#)

I love that. I love that. I think that's right. I'm going to pause for a second because Roy is... We're going to [inaudible 00:08:42]

Harry Smith: [00:08:41](#)

Well, they're washing cars.

Paul: [00:08:42](#)

We're going to ask Jeanette if they can stop power-washing cars, for just the length of our interview. We'll see if they're able to do that.

Harry Smith: [00:08:53](#)

All right. We'll pick up.

Paul: [00:08:53](#)

Welcome to the garage.

Harry Smith: [00:08:54](#)

Yeah. No, it's good. It's cool in here. And for those of you who are actually listening to the podcast and not looking at the video, this is my second time in this building. Last time I was here, we were just BS'ing about, "Oh, you know, well I'm going to do this, and I want to do that, and I want to do that, and I want to get your advice," and I'm like, "This guy is so nuts," right?

Paul: [00:09:15](#)

Was that your reaction? When I told you I want to start a media company and do a podcast?

Harry Smith: [00:09:18](#)

Yeah, but you know what? Why not? Why not? Absolutely, why not? Because the world will never be flatter, and if what you have to present, and how you do it, actually has... There's a word I like to use. It's an old Dutch word. It's "[akta 00:09:37]".

If it's authentic, and it's real, it'll get traction. So, that's it. There you go.

Paul: [00:09:45](#) And that's been your career. You were authentic, before authentic was a thing. I mean, right now, "authenticity" is this thing you hear about. Again, I go back to where I started, or where you started. I think like many folks listening right now, I kind of grew up in an America with Harry Smith. You were like a GPS for America before there was GPS. You were a compass.

Harry Smith: [00:10:11](#) Oh, dude.

Paul: [00:10:11](#) You kind of took us on-

Harry Smith: [00:10:12](#) Easy, easy does it.

Paul: [00:10:13](#) Across America, and across ourselves, and really [crosstalk 00:10:16] powerful conversation, so when we first met... I don't know if you know this, I think it was actually a line, to go into one of the political conventions. I don't think we'd ever actually met. I was trying to figure it out.

Harry Smith: [00:10:28](#) Oh.

Paul: [00:10:28](#) It was really hot.

Harry Smith: [00:10:31](#) That sounds possible.

Paul: [00:10:33](#) One of the political conventions...

Harry Smith: [00:10:33](#) And I just started asking, talking to you. Just like, "Who are you? What are you doing? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."

Paul: [00:10:37](#) We started chatting. Like, we're both stuck on a ridiculously long line, waiting hours to go in-

Harry Smith: [00:10:42](#) Right. Yeah. Security line, or something. Yeah.

Paul: [00:10:43](#) And I think it was 2004, or 2008 when we were stuck outside. I don't know if Triumph the Insult Comic Dog was there, but it was one of these things where everybody's just waiting to get inside this relatively small venue, right?

Harry Smith: [00:10:56](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:10:56](#) And you and I just started talking shit, and we struck up a conversation and-

Harry Smith: [00:11:00](#) Well then I said, "We got to put this guy on TV."

Paul: [00:11:04](#) Well. I don't know about that.

Harry Smith: [00:11:06](#) I think it happened pretty soon thereafter.

Paul: [00:11:09](#) [crosstalk 00:11:09] happening around that time.

Harry Smith: [00:11:09](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:11:09](#) But then we came back-

Harry Smith: [00:11:10](#) Well, you had something to say, and the thing... There was so much about that war, and that... Go back to 9/11; look at the response, look at the initial response, look at the secondary response; we'll call Iraq the secondary response... And there was just so much about all of that, that was so messed up. And, we were looking for somebody who could begin to articulate what that experience was like for guys who are coming back, men and women, who are coming back.

Harry Smith: [00:11:53](#) We had this conversation standing in line. I said, "Who are you? What do you do? Why? Blah blah, blah blah blah." And I said like, you know, "Get your butt over here. We need to sit you down because..." Well anyway that's a... I still don't think we know the enormity of what all of that was, just in terms of... It's so interesting because there's all this revisionist history, "Oh that was never a good idea, and why did we do that, and blah blah blah, and blah blah blah."

Harry Smith: [00:12:26](#) When it was happening, there was a lot of... It was close to unanimous. Like, "Oh no, no, no, no. Let's go do this thing." I remember, we put Susan Sarandon on before the Iraq war started, right? And our phones melted down. Our phones melted down because people were like, "How can you put that blah blah, blah, blah, blah, on TV? That's, you know... Opposed to this is... This is like, America wanted its pound of flesh and that was what that was about, because the dots that were there were not connectable. So, don't... It's... We could... Oy.

Paul: [00:13:03](#) No, I'm glad you can... I think that's an insight into your life, and your career; and part of why I wanted to sit down with you, because we could pull out these points that... You know, you've been in everyone's living room for a generation, but they never

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really get to see you off-camera, and I've been lucky enough to see you, and have you as a mentor and friend who gave me a lot of guidance, especially in the last year. But really, throughout my career. I consider you one of the good guys, one of the honorable people, one of the people who is a throwback in all the good ways. But you've been so great in mentoring so many people over your career, but also, helping us understand the importance of conversation and insight.

Paul: [00:13:40](#) Part of your magic, Harry, is in that approach. Like, you just got me to start spilling my guts online at a convention. The same way you got Susan Sarandon to spill her guts, and the same way you got heads of state to spill their guts.

Paul: [00:13:52](#) But, before we go too far down that line... I ask everybody who joins us, what their adult beverage of choice is. Your response was...

Harry Smith: [00:14:01](#) Well, I said bourbon, rye, and gin. Not necessarily in that order.

Paul: [00:14:07](#) And Armagnac.

Harry Smith: [00:14:08](#) I love Armagnac.

Paul: [00:14:10](#) Which I love.

Harry Smith: [00:14:10](#) Oh my God.

Paul: [00:14:11](#) And I'm so glad you said that.

Harry Smith: [00:14:12](#) Stuff is so good. Right?

Paul: [00:14:14](#) Yeah. I had never had Armagnac until, I think I was in Europe, where it's much more prevalent, right?

Harry Smith: [00:14:19](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:14:20](#) And for folks who don't know, it comes from... It's a smaller distribution, a different region of cognac. They have brandy, they come from a region in France, but I had never had it until I went... Maybe Italy, or France, somewhere.

Harry Smith: [00:14:32](#) Yeah. France, probably.

Paul: [00:14:33](#) And I said, "Alright, I'm going to try this," and I loved it.

Harry Smith: [00:14:34](#) Dude.

Paul: [00:14:36](#) So, I came back, and every time I try to order it, nobody has it. They have cognac, Courvoisier, whatever Puff Daddy's drinking in the video, but they don't have Armagnacs. I actually tried to get here [crosstalk 00:14:44]

Harry Smith: [00:14:45](#) I should've-

Paul: [00:14:46](#) They didn't have it.

Harry Smith: [00:14:46](#) I could've brought it from home.

Paul: [00:14:49](#) They didn't have it. But we did... We went down the last time, I got some rye, and although it is lunchtime, I'm going to pour you some rye. It's from Fort Hamilton Whiskey. Our friends here, who are making rye in New York, like they used to back in the old days.

Harry Smith: [00:15:03](#) Way back in the day.

Paul: [00:15:04](#) Yes.

Harry Smith: [00:15:04](#) You know, one of the myths or stories about rye... I just want to take a smell... Is, go back to colonial times and everybody was... I don't know if it's a true story or not. I believe it's probably completely apocryphal, but there was the idea that... People were drinking rum, right? So it's made from sugar cane, comes from the islands. They were drinking rum like crazy. Well, there were all kinds of times when there were wars going on, and who knows what, and all these Dutch farmers up and down the Hudson river, they said, "Well, we can ferment this rye we're growing. We're growing rye grass right out here in the pasture." And so that's one of the myths or stories about how rye came to be.

Paul: [00:15:49](#) Yes.

Harry Smith: [00:15:50](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:15:50](#) And then Kentucky and other places embraced the whiskey industry.

Harry Smith: [00:15:55](#) Corn.

Paul: [00:15:56](#) Prohibition. Post-prohibition [crosstalk 00:15:57] New York, and other places in the North did not, right? So rye was, you know, whiskey in the old days, or bourbon [crosstalk 00:00:16:02]. I'm dying to know, do you have a toast, Harry? When you drink, is there a toast-

Harry Smith: [00:16:11](#) Oh, a standard?

Paul: [00:16:11](#) Yeah.

Harry Smith: [00:16:11](#) A standard?

Paul: [00:16:11](#) You're a man of-

Harry Smith: [00:16:13](#) I... Well, no, I usually... Listen, it's usually a custom thought. There's no standard thing that I repeat, and repeat, and repeat.

Paul: [00:16:24](#) Can we have a toast now?

Harry Smith: [00:16:25](#) Yeah, sure. I'd love to. What might do it? May I offer it?

Paul: [00:16:30](#) Please.

Harry Smith: [00:16:30](#) May I offer it? Okay. So, here's to freedom. Here's to respect. Here's to opportunity, and here's to the future.

Paul: [00:16:42](#) Cheers. Thank you, sir. Beautiful. I'm so glad I asked that. Did you ever do-

Harry Smith: [00:16:52](#) Yum.

Paul: [00:16:53](#) What do you think of the whiskey?

Harry Smith: [00:16:54](#) Terrific.

Paul: [00:16:55](#) It's good, right?

Harry Smith: [00:16:55](#) Yeah, really nice.

Paul: [00:16:56](#) It's holiday time. So, I feel like, we're bundled up in a garage. Winter is here; politically, environmentally...

Harry Smith: [00:17:05](#) The metaphor is rich.

Paul: [00:17:09](#) Yes. But, I ask this of all our guests, and I want to get to it with you. Harry Smith, what makes you angry?

Harry Smith: [00:17:16](#) So, I've been thinking about when we had our chat here, some months back, and you were talking about different names for what you were going to call this, and everything. And I was like, "Eh, you know, maybe you need to touch the brakes on that a little bit." It was felt aggressive to me, right? So, I was recalling that there was a very progressive magazine, back in my day, called Ramparts. And I have this idea, and I tried to look it up on the way over today, but I remember... Was it Ramparts? Maybe it wasn't Ramparts, but there was a progressive magazine back in the day, and one of the taglines under the title of the magazine was, "It's better to be pissed off than to be pissed on." Right? And so I'm thinking, "You know, sure. Why not?"

Harry Smith: [00:18:07](#) And what I believe... What I'm going to take from your attitude about all of that, going back to your first initial response to what your experience was coming back from Afghanistan, and coming back from wars, was you need to do something, right? Because it's one thing to sit on the sidelines and ballyhoo, and complain, and say, "What about this, and how come that, and blah blah blah, blah blah. Or, you can say, "You know, we need to fix this. We need to fix this," or, "We need to at least wrestle with it, and let's deal with this." So, I'm good with what you're trying to accomplish here, right? Not that you're asking for my imprimatur or anything, but what makes me angry, is injustice. Is injustice. And it's still prevalent. Greed. Greed makes me angry. Inequality makes me angry. They make me simultaneously angry and sad at the same time. Right?

Harry Smith: [00:19:24](#) There's a great graph in the paper yesterday, it might've been the online version of The Times, and it talks about income inequality. We did a focus group... I'm sorry. We did a focus group with 11 Democratic voters in eastern Pennsylvania about two months ago, in preparation for a series of policy interviews we did with 10 of the candidates. And, we spent two hours and 40 minutes with these folks. As diverse a group as you could possibly imagine. There was an old sci-fi movie in the 60s, where these people shrank down and they got inside the human body, right? "Impossible Voyage." I don't remember what the heck it was called. And I thought, "I'm inside the body of the Democratic party," because it was so interesting and so diverse, but one of the things that really came out of this conversation was, we can't afford to live in America anymore.

Harry Smith: [00:20:33](#) This one guy says, "Okay, so I've started my own business and my wife is working too. We have two kids under five, and it cost me \$23,000 a year to send my kids to daycare." \$23,000 a year. Do you know what kind of gross/net income those two people

have to have, in order for that number to fit into a budget? Add a mortgage, add student loan debt, add two car payments, add insurance, add blank, blank, blank, blank, blank, blank, blank. "How does it pencil out," is what they used to say, and that's a tough... It's tough out there. It's really tough out there.

Paul: [00:21:21](#) That's so much the embodiment of what this show is intended to be. You were representing angry Americans, Harry, a long time ago. And people who felt like they weren't being heard, or felt like there was injustice, there was greed, there was corruption. And, I think you were able to open up those voices for many Americans for decades.

Paul: [00:21:43](#) And that's the spirit of this show. The idea that angry Americans are our founders. Angry Americans are parents who are sick of seeing their kids get shot in schools. Angry Americans are people who can't make ends meet, or are fighting opioids. There's a lot, that if you're paying attention, you should be angry about.

Paul: [00:21:58](#) And the question is, what do we do with it? How do we turn that into positivity, and not negativity? How do we turn that into something constructive? And that's where I've always loved your work, because you have done that. You've channeled that pain, and anguish, and energy; and there's always a positive energy to every piece that you do.

Paul: [00:22:16](#) I'm glad you mentioned the exploration of the candidates and the people, because I saw that piece and I thought it was really important. Who better to understand; not just like, a quick soundbite, but really understanding America in all its diversity, in all its complexity; than Harry Smith.

Paul: [00:22:32](#) So when you did that, I thought it was very important. But, building on that question, if you're that little person moving through the body of the Democratic party... Actually, that person moving through the body of the great American experiment...

Harry Smith: [00:22:44](#) Right.

Paul: [00:22:44](#) So, when you think about the state of America, the body politic, how do you evaluate the health and wellness of our country? As someone who is an expert.

Harry Smith: [00:22:58](#) Okay. What is... I heard Nancy Pelosi talking about how she tells everybody-

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:23:04]

Harry Smith: [00:23:00](#) Well, I heard Nancy Pelosi talking about how she tells everyone in her family what disease they have. She says, "I'm a doctor without diploma." So that's me, but there are certain things that I know for sure, and yesterday I was in Portsmouth, Ohio. Portsmouth, Ohio, once had 11 pain clinics, pill mills. Discredited doctors doing cash prescriptions for people for opioids, 11, 11 at one time. So, this is one of the hardest hit places in the country, and it was just yesterday and I thought this is so perfect for your show. We're doing this piece for nightly news, probably do a longer version on a different broadcast at some point, but there are two veterans I met there. The one guy comes back, goes into the Navy, goes to college, goes back into the Army as an officer and comes, comes back to his hometown and says, "I don't know what happened to my hometown. It was the opioid crisis."

Harry Smith: [00:24:12](#) So, he opens a gym, a Crossfit place because he learned about CrossFit, and he found that that was helping him cope post duty abroad. He opens this gym and he decides at some point it's really starting to take off, and he's starting to sell some products, some, eco-friendly products. Guy ends up on Shark Tank for God's sake, gets an investor, right? So, things are going pretty good in his life, but he's home and he says, "I'm so mad at these people. These drug addicts are walking up and down the streets in my town. Don't they get it? What's wrong with these people?" And he couldn't reconcile his post duty abroad with these people who he felt like were wasting their lives.

Harry Smith: [00:25:03](#) So, for some unknown reason, three years ago, he decides to buy a building downtown and put his gym downtown, right? It's a wasteland. I promise you, it is a wasteland. Starts a gym up there, some of the business guys are coming in, da da da da da, and said, "Maybe this CrossFit stuff could work for the people in recovery." So, they go over and knock on the recovery guy door and he says, "Yeah, bring that in there, see what we got."

Harry Smith: [00:25:28](#) Amazing results. Amazing results, right? You've got this guy, former military guy, you know in your face, "Take the next step, take the next step," and it's such a metaphor for their own lives. Like, "If I can get through this frigging CrossFit class, maybe I can get a little more self worth. If I can build up my self worth, maybe I've got what I need to fight this disease."

Harry Smith: [00:25:57](#) Unbeknownst to this guy, three blocks away another veteran is opening up a restaurant, a brew pub in this wasteland. These

guys get together and now they're this unstoppable force in Portsmouth, Ohio, where all of a sudden there's life in a place where there was nothing but despair. Both of them said almost exactly the same thing, "This is what we learned in the military. Sometimes the Calvary isn't going to come, sometimes you just got to do what you got to do."

- Paul: [00:26:29](#) Yep. That's the future for America's fight on opioids and so many other issues.
- Harry Smith: [00:26:36](#) And think about all the different ... Listen, there was no IAVA, there was no IAVI. There was, there was bureaucracy and there were people from Congress who were, yaba yaba yaba yaba, but there was no one saying, "Who are we and what are we about and what do we need most? We need some other kinds of services than whatever is coming down the pipe right now."
- Paul: [00:27:01](#) And if they don't exist [inaudible 00:27:02] and that's the American spirit. That's the innovation, the pioneerism, the picking your own self up by your bootstraps, and sometimes it's that angry outrage that drives it. That's why this topic in particular is such an interwoven part of your career, and I'm grateful that you're here. I'm going to pause for a second because I'm [inaudible 00:27:23].
- Speaker 1: [00:27:23](#) Go for it, go for it.
- Paul: [00:27:23](#) Hold on one second.
- Speaker 1: [00:27:41](#) Thank you very much for waiting.
- Harry Smith: [00:27:42](#) Oh, okay, they're moving something.
- Paul: [00:27:42](#) They're going to close a gate, they got a little more work to do inside there. [inaudible 00:27:42] Work in progress. [inaudible 00:27:42].
- Speaker 1: [00:27:42](#) Thank you very much.
- Harry Smith: [00:27:42](#) I saw it floating around. It's okay, I'll be fine.
- Paul: [00:27:44](#) Perfect. Great. We're good?
- Speaker 1: [00:27:46](#) Yes.
- Paul: [00:27:47](#) All right, we'll pick up there. [inaudible 00:27:50]

Harry Smith: [00:27:47](#) Ah, beautiful. Wow.

Paul: [00:27:58](#) So that beachhead is the spirit of this country, and maybe what I think is the untold part of the story that's happening in America. I don't want to simplify it, but you're a guy who also, in a time like this in politics, knows, I don't want to say the middle of America geographically, but more the beating heart of America because I think that gets oversimplified. This idea that there like a jump ball voter in rural Iowa, or in-

Harry Smith: [00:28:30](#) Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan, yeah yeah yeah.

Paul: [00:28:34](#) ... working class white guy or it's a lower middle class white woman who's a jump ball voter, and I think that's a ridiculous over-simplification of the complexity of this country-

Harry Smith: [00:28:46](#) Without question.

Paul: [00:28:48](#) ... many different countries in and of itself. So in particular, when you look at the candidates, what's your analysis? What do you see? What do you think is important? [crosstalk 00:28:58] we're at a point now where Pete Buttigieg is leading in Iowa. He and Biden and Warren and Sanders to some extent are emerging. Now the candidates are really starting to drop out. Kamala's out there, Kamala Harris is out. People like Deval Patrick are jumping in, it's kind of chaotic. But-

Harry Smith: [00:29:16](#) Mike Bloomberg.

Paul: [00:29:17](#) Mike Bloomberg is now jumping in. But what do you see, Harry?

Harry Smith: [00:29:22](#) You know, somebody asked me, because we've been out with these folks. We started in the springtime and did a whole series with I think 14 or 15 of them, then came back and just finished another series where we did nine or 10. Beto dropped out, so we didn't run him. He dropped out like three days after we did the interview, it was pretty funny.

Harry Smith: [00:29:45](#) You know, you see certain people who, like for instance, the person early on, I had seen Elizabeth Warren in Northwest Iowa when there was still snow on the ground and the lakes were frozen, and I thought, "I'm not reading this, I'm not, whatever." We used to interview her with some frequency when I was still doing morning TV, about the financial crisis, so I'm well acquainted with her and she was always a very valuable guest.

Harry Smith: [00:30:14](#) But I just, I couldn't read whatever, I'm not sure this is going to translate. By the time we saw her then, when there were leaves on the trees in New Hampshire, she was just, she was growing. And as it turns out, she has this amazing narrative about, "If there wasn't \$50 tuition at my local school I don't get my degree." There was a great moment with her on the stump where she's exchanging stories with this young 14 or 15 year old girl and there's tears and there's ... She was perceived as this almost automaton and brilliant person, but was she real?

Harry Smith: [00:30:55](#) So, she brings this real life narrative to the stump and all of a sudden it skyrockets, and people sitting in the studios don't get it. But if the people are out, leave the building, thank you, Jimmy Breslin, then you can see it. You can actually see how she resonates with a crowd. We did an interview with her a month ago in North Carolina. They were lined up around the building, right? So, you see when there's whatever that traction is, whatever that attraction is, you can see when it happens.

Harry Smith: [00:31:29](#) Others, Cory Booker, you probably know and we did several interviews with him. So passionate, so amazing. I have no idea why he can't get mileage out of that. I mean it's fascinating to me. I've been watching this stuff for a long time and I don't know what the formula is. I do not know what the formula is that says this one is actually to go up and this one is going to go down. I was surprised that Kamala didn't get more traction.

Paul: [00:32:02](#) I wasn't. I wasn't. I think there was a part of her that checked a lot of boxes, but I really think there was an element of her campaign that was in some ways a little bit too much like Trump, in that there was a lot of fighting. There was a lot of aggression, there was a lot of coming at people, and that's her nature as a prosecutor, it's part of her brilliance. Every one of these candidates has like a superpower, and if Kamala Harris ends up being an attorney general she could be extraordinary. Maybe she'll be a Supreme Court justice, maybe she'll be the vice presidential candidate. I think in the short term she scored some points, but in the long term it started to come apart, take enough shots at your own side [crosstalk 00:32:46] what happened on her campaign is the New York Times piece came out over the weekend talking about internal strife and then a couple of days later, she drops out.

Paul: [00:32:55](#) But I also think you touched on something important about Elizabeth Warren. One of her superpowers in my view, Harry, is she's a learner. She's like a computer. She's learning so quickly and she absorbs and digests information at a level that's really

extraordinary. You can see her, if there's a candidate that's like improving, getting smarter [crosstalk 00:33:14] computer system, right? There's a level of awakening where it comes alive, and that's kind of what I saw in her. She became this new level of alive, and a lot of it has to do just how smart she is and how quickly she can learn. I saw that working with her when she was in the Senate on the Consumer Protection Board, she really learned quickly. They all kind of have their own superpower. But when I want to get into-

Harry Smith: [00:33:37](#) Well, it ends up, it ends up ... What does it take? It ends up a matter of not just IQ but EQ. Right? It takes a certain degree of emotional intelligence to be able to make it work too.

Paul: [00:33:48](#) But to that point, right? You've got Biden, Buttegieg, and maybe Sanders, that are kind of still in the mix here. It seems like Biden and Sanders, I'm sorry, Biden and Buttegieg-

Harry Smith: [00:34:02](#) We don't know anything. This is, hang on, hang on, hang on, hang on. This is like if you go back and look at past election cycles and where certain people were in the election cycle, they were like almost, who is that?

Paul: [00:34:14](#) I get that, but I want ... I'm going to go back and ask you, because [crosstalk 00:34:18] analysis of the candidates, interesting to me, but I'm really curious if you're comfortable sharing what you think. What do you see if Buttegieg and Biden were quarterbacks, how would you evaluate them? If they were cars, how would you evaluate them? Something about the two of them that is continuing to resonate with the independent part of the country, the middle part of the country, the moderate part of the country, and I think that's going to determine the election. A lot of people who listen to the show that don't align with Republicans or Democrats are going to determine this election, maybe all elections, but I also think the country is more moderate than people have been seeing on Fox and MSNBC. That's also a part of what I want to explore on this show. So, really, I'm going to push you on this, Harry. Biden and Buttegieg.

Harry Smith: [00:35:04](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:35:06](#) What do you think?

Harry Smith: [00:35:08](#) So, there's a friend of mine who, Eric Salzman is the guy's name. He's a producer at NBC. I worked with him doing politics at CBS as well. We finished that first interview with Mayor Pete

months and months and months ago, and he just turns to me afterwards. He said, "More people live in my neighborhood on the upper west side than live in South Bend, Indiana," and one of the things that I hear often as just I'm out and about is experience, experience, experience, experience, experience. I don't know how that ... I'll be surprised if that doesn't come into play as time goes on.

Harry Smith: [00:35:50](#) On the other hand, he's out there in Iowa and these Iowa voters are, they're serious consumers. They go and they kick tires. They go to the church basement, they go to the local gym. They go to hear these guys and they'll say, "Yeah, should we go back and see Pete again? What do you think?" They're sitting over the kitchen table saying, "What do you want to do tonight? Ah, let's go see Joe Biden." Because they're there, they're right in the neighborhood. All of these guys are very accessible in that regard.

Harry Smith: [00:36:28](#) You can see how Biden is comfortable out there. He's got his No Malarkey bus and there's a degree of comfort that he's really trying to work on. But some of the TV images are hard to shake. Think of his performances in the debates, I think even his people would agree less than sterling. So yeah.

Harry Smith: [00:36:55](#) And does it even matter with the super Tuesday that's so different from what we've known in the past? Because this stuff just is going to ... Once Iowa and New Hampshire happens, man, vada boom, boom, South Carolina, it's going to come flying at us like crazy.

Paul: [00:37:11](#) And maybe that's what Deval Patrick and Mike Bloomberg want to be. If experience is important and Biden has maybe too much and Buttegieg doesn't have enough, who's the Goldilocks in the middle that might be just right? Right?

Harry Smith: [00:37:23](#) Who-

Paul: [00:37:24](#) Maybe it's Bloomberg, maybe it's Deval Patrick, maybe ... Again, I think people are overestimating the country's appetite for the far left of Warren and Sanders. The party may make a choice in these early primaries to go in that direction, but generally comes back to the middle, and I am not so arrogant that I will predict, but I think what's happening is the shaking out, right? You've got Biden, you've got Buttegieg, Warren will be around, Sanders may be around, he probably will be-

Harry Smith: [00:37:52](#) Listen, he's stronger than ever. I mean, in terms of his vitality.

Paul: [00:37:58](#) He always hits the firewall in the South, and that's the question of if he can endure that. And can they all come together? At the end of this, can it be game of Thrones? Can they be John Snow against the White Walkers-

Harry Smith: [00:38:09](#) (singing)

Harry Smith: [00:38:16](#) Oh totally.

Paul: [00:38:16](#) It's like on Game of Thrones. I'm curious, what do you think?

Harry Smith: [00:38:25](#) (singing) Oh my God. Oh.

Paul: [00:38:28](#) [crosstalk 00:38:28] favorite shows of all time. Like how do you rank, because you are a man of experience now [crosstalk 00:38:34] how good is Game of Thrones relative to-

Harry Smith: [00:38:38](#) I had to be talked into it, because our son was, our younger son was in college at the time, and he would come home on summer and repair to a back room in the apartment and watch Thrones. And I said, "You know I'm not a fantasy guy. I'm not a fantasy guy," and finally, after a while he just said, "You don't get it. I know you'll love it. You don't get it. I know you'll love it. You just have to do it." So, I was getting on an airplane. I had downloaded like season one or whatever it was and I just went, "What?" Fun. Really fun. Extraordinary piece of TV. So yeah, I had a blast with that.

Harry Smith: [00:39:19](#) I'm not a big binger. I see an episode, I'll be halfway through a second episode and I'll say, "How many of these?" And they'll say, "15." I said, "I got it. I don't, I don't need to see this, the same episode do the same thing over and over and over again. I just don't get attracted enough to the characters."

Paul: [00:39:41](#) As that kind of content evolves, the media is a mob too, so I really want to get your thoughts on the state of the media. I mean, that's a broad thing to say, right? But you are talking to people that are now consuming media in so many different ways. There was a time where you were in, I don't know what percentage of living rooms-

Harry Smith: [00:40:00](#) Yeah, I know,

Paul: [00:40:02](#) ... double digit percentages, right? Every morning and every evening, you were like family and now it's splintered into so many different things.

Harry Smith: [00:40:10](#) Agreed.

Paul: [00:40:11](#) But, what are you hinting at? What does Harry Smith see in this evolution in wild West that is the media landscape?

Harry Smith: [00:40:18](#) Yeah. We don't know bupkis, because of streaming. And as Disney Plus, as NBC's got a streaming, everybody's going to have a streaming ... We're in a kind of streaming wars and boy the ... I'm really going to sound like such an old grumpy guy. I carry two phones and an iPad, right? For a Luddite, I'm pretty hooked up, but phones, in the end of the day, are really harming us and what comes across our screens. We have people in this country who spend 12 hours a day in front of a screen.

Harry Smith: [00:41:01](#) One of the things that I've been really interested in, in the last six months or so is especially, I'm married to a glass ceiling breaker. My wife was in the Dallas Cowboys locker room, Tom Landry opens the door to the locker room for a preseason game in 1987 and says, "Men, she's coming in." In 1987. So, she's busted down a lot of doors.

Paul: [00:41:29](#) [inaudible 00:41:29] her career at this point.

Harry Smith: [00:41:30](#) So, Andrea Joyce. Anyway, yeah, she does a lot of Olympic stuff then, but back in the day she did the NBA, she did NFL, she did all this stuff.

Paul: [00:41:40](#) [inaudible 00:41:41].

Harry Smith: [00:41:42](#) But what I read about is people, especially young people, spend so much time on these screens and they're afraid to be themselves, because the crowd is judging everyone's every single motion and moment. And so you have young women, for instance, teenage girls, staying home on the weekend instead of going out with their pals because they don't want to be shamed by whatever group is in the high school, right? So, here are these women of a prior generation plus who have said, "We're knocking down walls out here and we're growing opportunities, and we have a whole generation below them that are saying, 'We don't want to take the risk.'" There are days that I feel there's more harm, maybe even much more harm on screen, than there is good, and in the end of the day, look at this world where we're in. Don't you want to jump in, not today maybe, but don't you want to kayak up the Hudson River someday?

Paul: [00:42:51](#) Yes.

Harry Smith: [00:42:51](#) Yeah, you sure do.

Paul: [00:42:52](#) I have kayaked the Hudson River.

Harry Smith: [00:42:54](#) Exactly right. Exactly right. Right. Sail the boat, kayak the river, climb a mountain, right? Jump from rock to rock, all that stuff that's out there. I was high in the Colorado Rockies this summer and they had such an extraordinary and unusual crazy snowfall last year, even though the state has been ravaged by drought over the last decade. There were still columbines blooming at about 11,000 feet, in August. Extraordinary. Never happens, right? And you're just climbing around in this stuff and saying, "This is real. This is the real stuff. The stuff on the screens. It's ... We allow ourselves to climb in there and it becomes to the exclusion of everything else. Sorry.

Paul: [00:43:41](#) No, that's, this, everything-

Harry Smith: [00:43:45](#) You go down, I'm going, I'm a wormhole, I'm ...

Paul: [00:43:46](#) That's why I love [crosstalk 00:43:48] love podcasting because you can go deep on subjects and we can see where they go. And every conversation I have with you, Harry, starts in one place but ends up being about kind of America and the world. That's your insight, that's your wisdom, and the guy who was on every screen in America is now warning us about the dangers of screens. I think that's profound and it's important and it cuts to the core of what it is to parent, or what it is to be alive in this time.

Paul: [00:44:15](#) Last week I was in the mountains and my kids, my baby is nine months old, and he saw his first snowfall. He saw his first snowfall. It was extraordinary to see that through his eyes, and my four year old, "It was my best sledding day." [inaudible 00:44:29] edge, but it was only a hole, but it was that time when we were thing reconnecting with the earth and the land and also recognizing that he was not only seeing his first snowfall, but we were high up in the mountains and it was cold and it was dark and he really saw the stars.

Harry Smith: [00:44:44](#) Oh my gosh.

Paul: [00:44:45](#) I could see what he saw, he was processing. At some point you went, "Ah," and he doesn't-

Harry Smith: [00:44:54](#) Yeah. Yeah, understood.

Paul: [00:44:54](#) ... in his body and in his being [crosstalk 00:44:56] and the reconnecting with the earth was so important. It's also a through line for all that you're doing. It's a through line of your work. It's like you're out there, you're out of the building, you're in the streets and in the mountains and in the hills, and there's a connection to the greatness of this country that I think is a really important part of your work. I am grateful for it.

Harry Smith: [00:45:16](#) Well, thanks, dude. I'll tell you what else though, is you can't read enough, you can't experience enough, you can't listen enough. I mean, honestly, some of the people we met, just in the last year I met Joy Harjo, who is the new Poet Laureate of the United States. First Native American to become Poet Laureate. This woman writes tears to your eyes, tears to your eyes. One of her latest books is about the mass forced migration of Native Americans out of the South in the 1800s, a couple of decades before the war between the states. Insane. Just, here are these people ... There are things that I, that I understand better, I would say ...

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:46:04]

Harry Smith: [00:46:01](#) There are things that I understand better, I would say, at 68 years old than I ever understood at 20 or 25, or 35, or whatever. And I'm reading these words about ... This was home. There was a great piece in The Times just the other week about the real Thanksgiving. And we talk about our American exceptionalism, and all of this other stuff. Man, do we have blood on our hands. What we did to get what we got, and now ... So, Joy Harjo is one. The woman who is one of the first two Native American women elected to Congress from ... Deb Haaland.

Paul: [00:46:45](#) I saw your piece on that.

Harry Smith: [00:46:47](#) From New Hampshire. And I said, "So, talk to me a little bit about your lineage." "Well, my father's family, they're Norwegians, and they've been in the country about a hundred years or so." And she said, "And my mother's family, well, they're Pueblo Indians, and well, they've been here for 1200 years." That whole kind of ... If your eyes and your ears and your heart isn't open, you'll never learn about stuff like that.

Paul: [00:47:24](#) Would you ever run for political office here?

Harry Smith: [00:47:24](#) No. I don't know how.

Paul: [00:47:27](#) [crosstalk 00:47:27] is to find the right spot for you as ambassador for America.

Harry Smith: [00:47:38](#) Come on, dude.

Paul: [00:47:38](#) [crosstalk 00:47:36].

Harry Smith: [00:47:38](#) How much-

Paul: [00:47:38](#) If there was a national poet laureate for appreciation of America, you've talked to more people and been to more places than frankly I think any human that I know, any person that I know, and it's extraordinary to see the world through your eyes. But I have to ask you because we are in the Classic Car Club, it's a question I ask of all people.

Harry Smith: [00:47:58](#) Yeah, yeah.

Paul: [00:47:58](#) You grew up in the Midwest, right?

Harry Smith: [00:48:01](#) Right. Yeah.

Paul: [00:48:01](#) In Indiana?

Harry Smith: [00:48:05](#) Well, I was born in Saint Margaret's hospital in Hammond, Indiana. We lived right across the state line in Lansing, Illinois. It's about six plus miles straight South of the city limits of Chicago.

Paul: [00:48:14](#) And when you were growing up, Harry Smith, what was your first car?

Harry Smith: [00:48:18](#) Well, my first car was actually my mother's car. My mother had a 1964 Buick Wildcat coupe. Nice. Really nice. And my senior year, I was allowed to take it to college, and that was the car that I then rode away with after I graduated from college. But the first car-

Paul: [00:48:48](#) What color was that car?

Harry Smith: [00:48:51](#) It was a kind of a rose and cream.

Paul: [00:48:53](#) Rose and cream.

Harry Smith: [00:48:54](#) Yeah. White cream top. You know that cream? Not a white, it was kind of a cream and a Rose color. Two door coupe. Nice.

Paul: [00:49:02](#) Very cool.

Harry Smith: [00:49:02](#) Yeah. No post.

Paul: [00:49:06](#) Rose is not a color you see on cars very often anymore.

Harry Smith: [00:49:09](#) That's the color I would describe it as. But then the first car I bought then after that was a super beetle, VW super beetle, which was a ... Volkswagen made the same car for many, many years, and then they made a super beetle, which is a little heavier, little bit bigger engine. You bought a beetle, then you bought the book. It was this book that everybody kept under the front seat of their Volkswagen, and it taught you how ... Because there was a lot about a Volkswagen you could fix.

Harry Smith: [00:49:45](#) So, you could change your own plugs and change the oil and do different kinds of stuff like that. So, you had that. Listen, I wasn't the guy, that classic guy that was driving around in the Volkswagen where you could see the ground underneath the floorboards because they were rusted out.

Paul: [00:50:00](#) You're a tall guy. Do you fit in a Volkswagen?

Harry Smith: [00:50:03](#) I do. I did, I did, but there are a lot of cars ... There's a ... Oh my God. I had wanted to buy an Elantra once back in the day, I didn't fit. There were so many cars I don't fit in.

Paul: [00:50:14](#) How tall are you?

Harry Smith: [00:50:14](#) Well, I used to be a little over 6'2", but I'm not anymore.

Paul: [00:50:20](#) And what color was the Volkswagen?

Harry Smith: [00:50:21](#) Orange.

Paul: [00:50:21](#) Orange?

Harry Smith: [00:50:21](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:50:21](#) I'm so glad I asked. I would not have expected you to say orange.

Harry Smith: [00:50:27](#) So, Arab oil embargo is going on and they lower the speed limits. They lower the speed limits to 55 miles an hour. So, I'm driving on the interstate way, way out in Eastern Colorado and I'm doing 75 easy in the super beetle. It's a super beetle. It's got

a little bit bigger motor. And I get pulled over. So, I have to go to traffic court in Greeley, Colorado, which then, it was like a speck of a town. And so, I go in front of the judge and I said, I don't think the law applies equally to everyone, this 55 mile an hour speed limit, because this is aimed at gas guzzlers. I have a car that averages more than 28 miles to the gallon. So, I don't know why I have to abide by the same rules that everyone else does because I'm not violating the spirit of that law in the first place because I get such good gas mileage, and the judge looks at the assistant, whoever is doing the thing, is just like, tell the guy to shut up and plead no contest. Get him out of here.

- Paul: [00:51:41](#) Have you gotten a lot of speeding tickets across America?
- Harry Smith: [00:51:44](#) I have not. I've been really circumspect. I've really toned it down over the years.
- Paul: [00:51:51](#) Is that a way of saying yes, you have gotten a lot of speeding tickets?
- Harry Smith: [00:51:54](#) I really got nailed once again in Eastern Colorado.
- Paul: [00:51:57](#) You say you've been to 50 states. How many states have you gotten speeding tickets in?
- Harry Smith: [00:52:00](#) No, no. I wasn't David Letterman. I've been really, really good. I have a very good driving record and good insurance record, but we're in a two lane blacktop in Eastern Colorado about four years ago. There's nothing out there. I mean, there's absolutely nothing out there. It's part of the D population of America, which is its own other subject, which I could go on and on and on and on about rural America, but it was probably in the 90s. It's an unmarked car coming from the other direction, and as soon as I went by, I said, ah. Rental car, Eastern Colorado.
- Paul: [00:52:44](#) Oh, yeah. Out of state plates.
- Harry Smith: [00:52:46](#) All the above. Do you have registration for this? I like, it's a rental car. I don't know what gives here, but I'm nice. I'm like, whatever you-
- Paul: [00:52:56](#) Did he know it was you? [crosstalk 00:52:59]?
- Harry Smith: [00:52:56](#) I don't think so. I don't think so.
- Paul: [00:52:56](#) No?

Harry Smith: [00:52:56](#) No, I don't think so.

Paul: [00:52:57](#) The younger generation of cops don't know you from their living room like the older generation.

Harry Smith: [00:53:03](#) No, that stopped a while ago.

Paul: [00:53:10](#) Harry, you're a guy that has, I think, tremendous joy and an appreciation for life. I ask this of all of our guests, Harry Smith, what makes you happy?

Harry Smith: [00:53:21](#) You know, honestly, it's really small things. It's really, really small things. Tiny little microscopic acts of kindness are ... Just as an example. So, my typical MO in the morning is, I still get a physical New York Times, a physical paper, and I have a big old leather chair, which I have my books stacked up on and various periodicals and all that stuff and crossword puzzles and yeah, it's just this cranky old, stinky old man. And I'll go to-

Paul: [00:54:01](#) [crosstalk 00:54:03].

Harry Smith: [00:54:04](#) And I'll go to that chair in the morning and if I haven't made the coffee and if my wife comes around the corner with a cup of coffee, I'm just like, that makes me so happy, because it's just a tiny, teeny, teeny tiny thing. But somebody is like, I'm looking out for you. I got your coffee. It doesn't take much for me, honestly. It's little tiny things like that that just absolutely just knock me out, knocked me out.

Paul: [00:54:36](#) And Harry, when you look at this country in the state it's in right now, what do you think?

Harry Smith: [00:54:39](#) Yeah. It's not as bad as ... So, I was in Oklahoma a couple of years ago and back to opioids again, and it's this well known attorney in the state whose son played for OU. Kid has this amazing senior year. He had a couple injuries over time and the parents were up to speed. They knew what was what, and they knew that he was prescribed opioids through some of these injuries, but they would see the bottle and he never got to the bottom. It was like, they were up to speed. They felt like they were up to speed, and he and his father make their annual trip to St. Louis to see the Cardinals play for a couple of games. They were staying in the same room. They go back to Oklahoma, two days later the kid ODs. Now, the parents have made it part of their mission to tell as many people who will listen-

Paul: [00:55:39](#) He died?

Harry Smith: [00:55:40](#) Yeah. About their son, and the mom says, this is the hardest thing I've ever done in my life, but I'll talk to anybody and it's excruciating for me, but I'll talk to anybody because if I can help one person understand what might be happening in their own home, that means everything to me. And I think quite honestly, I mean, I'll just say it. That's what we're actually about. We can get so caught up in, well, I'm watching this channel, oh, I'm watching this channel. This is my truth. That's your truth. Day to day to day, that isn't what people live with every day. Day to day to day are the guys in Portsmouth, Ohio who are building saying, screw it. We're going to rebuild this town.

Harry Smith: [00:56:27](#) Day to day, they're the folks in Oklahoma who said, we lost something more important to us than any amount of money, but we'll tell our story to anybody who will listen to it. That's who we actually are. The other stuff, it's real. It's real on a level, but it's not the fabric of our daily lives. It's not really what the currency of our lives on this planet are about. It's about people chipping in to do X or chipping in to do Y or going to the PTA meeting or shoveling the neighbor's sidewalk. That's who we actually are.

Paul: [00:57:09](#) Any [inaudible 00:57:10] related to that? Because you have such a distinct understanding, I think that gives people hope and maybe some comfort, but most of all perspective, and that's been a through line in your career and in all your work. Just now that you're at this point in your life where you are mentoring so many people, every time you talk you're teaching.

Harry Smith: [00:57:31](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:57:32](#) Thoughts on, you and your wife seem to have an extraordinary marriage. You've both been so accomplished. You have kids, you're such a dedicated family person. Any perspective on all of that? Especially as we go into the holidays, any lessons learned or to the young man or woman who's earlier in their career or earlier in starting a family [crosstalk 00:57:53].

Harry Smith: [00:57:54](#) Well, I can't ... Listen. All of that remains a work in progress as far as I'm concerned. A old friend of mine who was a clinical psychologist once told me all relationships are at risk always. Don't take anything for granted. In terms of, one of the things that I tell young people who I come in contact with who either come in looking for advice or people I work with at NBC is, you can't do enough homework. There's no such thing as enough homework. If you are an actually curious person that is hungry for information, not curious like, I'm a bit curious, that's a huge

advantage because the more you learn, the better off you are and especially for these in our world because so often we get a tiny amount of time to tell a story, but if you understand as much about it as humanly possible, it's going to help you tell that story better. That's one of the things I say.

Harry Smith: [00:59:01](#) The other thing is, a lot of it has got to be about perseverance. Perseverance is ... I'm lucky to still be around, but I didn't get my first steps without, I kept knocking on doors. I just kept knocking on doors. I was a nuisance. I was a complete nuisance. Now, I'm a legend, but I was nuisance.

Paul: [00:59:27](#) Yes, [crosstalk 00:59:26].

Harry Smith: [00:59:28](#) It's a total grinder.

Paul: [00:59:28](#) You may be the most experienced guest we've had on this show, in technical terms. You may be the oldest, which I think is a badge of honor, wisdom, we respect our elders, and I hate to classify you an elder [crosstalk 00:59:45] most extraordinary way.

Harry Smith: [00:59:45](#) Dude. I'm an elder, dude.

Paul: [00:59:46](#) You're an elder. You're an oracle for this country. You're also the only guest to ever show up with a notepad.

Harry Smith: [00:59:52](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:59:53](#) It's the old school spiral notepad.

Harry Smith: [00:59:55](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:59:55](#) Like a reporter would have.

Harry Smith: [00:59:57](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:59:57](#) Can I ask you what's on it?

Harry Smith: [00:59:58](#) No, no. So, it's just I wrote a couple of names down because the two guys in Portsmouth are Tim Wolf and Dale King, and I neglected to name their names, but I was thinking about other stories that I have no idea where our conversation was going to go, and just two weeks ago we were in Virginia and we're starting a new series where it's kind of a little bit of a pilot, we don't know if it's going to work for sure or not, but I worked

with this wonderful producer named Caroline Gottlieb, and she had this idea of going to the Smithsonian, finding certain items, and then matching the item to an actual human being. And so, this particular story is a set of pajamas that one of the POWs brought back with him from Vietnam because that's what they call them, pajamas. And so, we found out whose pajamas they were. And we spent an afternoon with Commander Al Carpenter, who spent six and a half years in prisons in Vietnam, got shot down out of his fighter plane. Holy crap. Holy crap.

Harry Smith: [01:01:12](#) I mean, in your life ... I mean, so, okay. Put the windshield wipers on here for a second because this, I get very emotional about this stuff. I've had the most extraordinary life in terms of where I've been able to go and what I've been able to see. And there I am, two Tuesdays ago in this guy's house for the better part of the day, and he's talking about what happened to him. And he talked about how through the whole time that he was in prison, he would say, you would tell yourself, you'd make up these ideas for yourself. Well, I'm going to get out by Christmas. I'm going to get out by Valentine's day. I'm going to get out by Memorial day. I'm going to get out. And over time, you realize this is really never going to happen.

Harry Smith: [01:02:03](#) And he said one of the hardest things for him, because as the war is winding down, he said all of a sudden our food is better, we're with a bunch of other prisoners. And some of the guys who were hurt, they weren't the first ones in. They started to let those guys ... And the reality of getting out started to become, he refused to believe it was real. And he said it wasn't until I was on the tarmac and there were these two Air Force cargo planes, motors going, props buzzing around. He says he was completely overwhelmed, completely overwhelmed, and he's telling this story, tears are flowing down his face and I'm just sitting there in silence watching him.

Harry Smith: [01:02:49](#) And he said, but the hardest part was then coming back was, he said, was hard to let life in because he'd refused ... In order to stay strong, truth was not available to you. The only truth was your captivity. And he said, over time it melts away. But anyway, I got to spend several hours with this guy. Who's got a better job than I do?

Paul: [01:03:23](#) And who does a better job of it than you? No, you've been an incredible ... Carrying stories requires such art and skill and heart and dedication and perseverance, but it's also heavy, and you carry the stories of so many people and you've shared them in such a powerful way that we are exceptionally grateful. All of

us listening and been witness to your work are grateful. And since it is the holidays, Harry, we do have some gifts. We'll be giving him the gifts-

Harry Smith: [01:03:49](#) Oh my.

Paul: [01:03:49](#) As part of the show.

Harry Smith: [01:03:51](#) How cool is that?

Paul: [01:03:52](#) Yes. And so in this bag you have three gifts, and one of them is also a question. But first you have some American made Angry Americans merch.

Harry Smith: [01:04:01](#) Oh, look at this.

Paul: [01:04:01](#) Made by veterans.

Harry Smith: [01:04:04](#) Oh man.

Paul: [01:04:05](#) Outside of Chicago in Illinois.

Harry Smith: [01:04:09](#) All right.

Paul: [01:04:09](#) So, a little bit of a test of a [crosstalk 00:18:10].

Harry Smith: [01:04:12](#) Angry.

Paul: [01:04:13](#) [crosstalk 01:04:13].

Harry Smith: [01:04:13](#) I love it.

Paul: [01:04:15](#) AngryAmericans.us. Made by Oscar Mike.

Harry Smith: [01:04:17](#) I love it.

Paul: [01:04:18](#) We've got blue and I think the other color [crosstalk 01:04:20].

Harry Smith: [01:04:20](#) Oh, that's cool stuff.

Paul: [01:04:22](#) And then before we get to the last, this is the last question I will ask of you.

Harry Smith: [01:04:25](#) Peeps.

Paul: [01:04:26](#) Peeps, there are three colors. Blue, yellow, pink. I've asked every guest what color do you choose and why?

Harry Smith: [01:04:32](#) I'll never eat one.

Paul: [01:04:33](#) But if you had to choose, which color would you choose, Harry?

Harry Smith: [01:04:37](#) Yellow.

Paul: [01:04:38](#) Why?

Harry Smith: [01:04:38](#) Because it's the color of the chick.

Paul: [01:04:41](#) There you go. Excellent.

Harry Smith: [01:04:42](#) Duh.

Paul: [01:04:45](#) And finally-

Harry Smith: [01:04:45](#) A very own lovely parting gift?

Paul: [01:04:47](#) Two American made-

Harry Smith: [01:04:48](#) Oh, 10 years old.

Paul: [01:04:50](#) This is American made whiskey.

Harry Smith: [01:04:52](#) Man.

Paul: [01:04:54](#) It's Henry McKenna.

Harry Smith: [01:04:55](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:04:55](#) Each one is individually numbered and each one is an original. It's an American original, as is Harry Smith. So, we look for an inspiration in each bottle that we give to each gift.

Harry Smith: [01:05:05](#) Right. It's a hundred proof by the way.

Paul: [01:05:07](#) It's also a hundred proof as [crosstalk 00:19:10]. You're a man. At this point in your life, there's no messing around. You can get straight to the point. You can handle the powerful stuff.

Harry Smith: [01:05:16](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:05:16](#) Because every guest we've had is an important, iconic, and/or inspiring American, and that's truly what you are my friend, and I'm very, very grateful for you, and I want you to know how much I appreciate your support for me in this venture, in this next phase of my life, but just how much you do for this country. You really contribute a tremendous amount to the health and development and wisdom of this country, and I am extremely grateful.

Harry Smith: [01:05:40](#) I appreciate that very, very much, but I come here because I have respect for you. That's the whole ... This is an actual quid pro quo. It's a two way street. No, there's some simpatico here, and we've shared some very strong feelings about things over the years. So, when you said, would I come, I said, I'm there because you answered the bell for us so many times over the years.

Paul: [01:06:10](#) Well, America's a team game and-

Harry Smith: [01:06:14](#) Write that one down.

Paul: [01:06:15](#) And it you were the [crosstalk 01:06:15] here-

Harry Smith: [01:06:16](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:06:17](#) I would feel a lot more optimistic about it.

Harry Smith: [01:06:20](#) That's so tough. That is so tough.

Paul: [01:06:22](#) And even president.

Harry Smith: [01:06:24](#) No, no. Please.

Paul: [01:06:25](#) But you're a statesman for all of us.

Harry Smith: [01:06:27](#) No, I have the job I'm supposed to have. Yeah.

Paul: [01:06:31](#) There's real insight.

Harry Smith: [01:06:32](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:06:33](#) Did you know that all along?

Harry Smith: [01:06:40](#) There was an anniversary of when I first went on morning television, it was 32 years ago or something. It was some time in November, and somebody sent me a note, and I remember

when I first took the job, I'd been a correspondent for a couple of years for CBS, and I didn't have an agent. They said, we want to put you on morning television. I said, I don't want to be on morning television. I said, you're going to cancel the show after six months. Just let me go back and do my job. Guarantee me I can go back and be a reporter, because in the end of the day, that's all I ever really, really wanted to do. Honestly, this morning, I was talking to some people about some stories we're working on. I says, I felt like I'm living my best life. Who gets to say that? Thoreau, I think, said, most men live lives of quiet desperation. Not me, Bob. Not me, not me.

Paul: [01:07:32](#) Not you, my friend.

Harry Smith: [01:07:32](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:07:33](#) Thank you again for joining us.

Harry Smith: [01:07:34](#) My pleasure.

Paul: [01:07:35](#) [crosstalk 00:21:36].

Harry Smith: [01:07:35](#) Absolutely my pleasure.

Paul: [01:07:37](#) Actually in the next couple of years, ladies and gentlemen, the great and powerful Harry Smith, the truly great American, live from the Classic Car Club in New York. Follow Harry every day, every way, and if you're lucky enough to meet him online at some point, consider yourself blessed. He's a great American. Thank you.

Harry Smith: [01:07:52](#) Vroom, vroom.

Paul: [01:07:53](#) Vroom, vroom. Thank you, my friend.

Harry Smith: [01:07:55](#) Thank you, sir.

Paul: [01:07:55](#) Thank you. You guys got some photos over there?

Speaker 2: [01:08:00](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:08:00](#) Did you get the ... So, we do a guess the guest. So, if you don't mind, can you just hold your mic and Mercy is going to take a shot from over your shoulder.

Harry Smith: [01:08:10](#) Yeah, no worries.

Paul: [01:08:11](#) And then we post it on social.

Harry Smith: [01:08:12](#) Oh, okay.

Paul: [01:08:13](#) And we let people try to guess the guest.

Harry Smith: [01:08:14](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:08:15](#) And they almost never get it.

Harry Smith: [01:08:17](#) It'd be pretty hard, although I'm old.

Paul: [01:08:20](#) But they try to figure out by your shoes or your notepad. It's like, did you see when the CIA created an Instagram account? They did these, it was like find a clue inside all this secret stuff in one photo.

Harry Smith: [01:08:34](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:08:34](#) And it was all about the history of the CIA. It was really cool.

Harry Smith: [01:08:36](#) So, here's my intel on Buttigieg.

Paul: [01:08:42](#) Please.

Harry Smith: [01:08:42](#) Guy's crazy smart.

Paul: [01:08:44](#) Do you want to stop?

Harry Smith: [01:08:45](#) No. Yeah, this is just-

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [01:08:47]