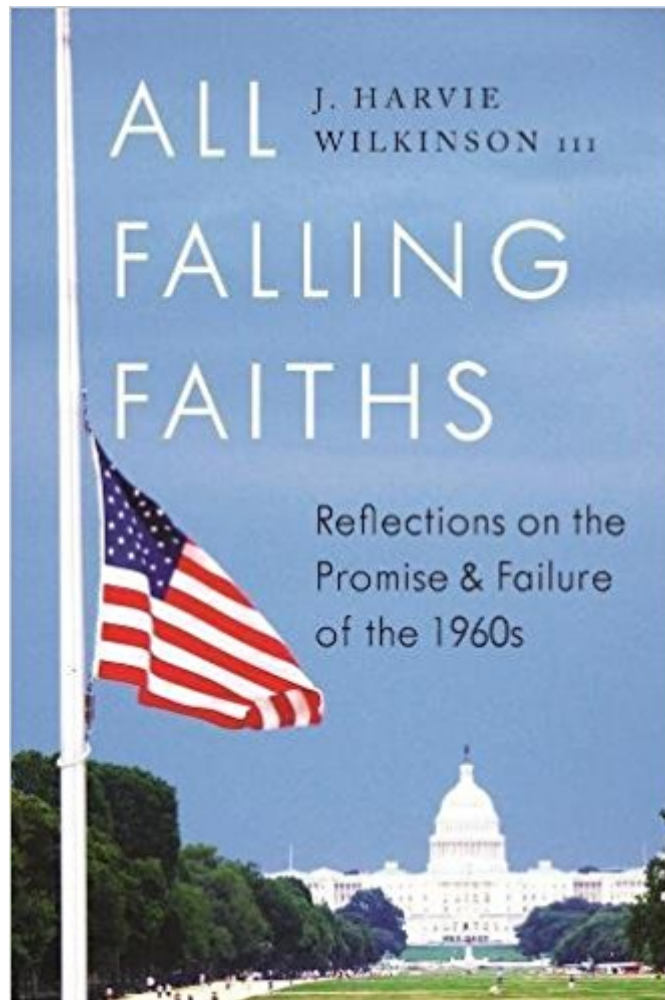


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All Falling Faiths: Reflections On The Promise And Failure Of The 1960s



Synopsis

In this warm and intimate memoir Judge Wilkinson delivers a chilling message. The 1960s inflicted enormous damage on our country; even at this very hour we see the decade's imprint in so much of what we say and do. The chapters reveal the harm done to the true meaning of education, to our capacity for lasting personal commitments, to our respect for the rule of law, to our sense of rootedness and home, to our desire for service, to our capacity for national unity, to our need for the sustenance of faith. Judge Wilkinson does not seek to lecture but to share in the most personal sense what life was like in the 1960s, and to describe the influence of those frighteningly eventful years upon the present day. Judge Wilkinson acknowledges the good things accomplished by the Sixties and nourishes the belief that we can learn from that decade ways to build a better future. But he asks his own generation to recognize its youthful mistakes and pleads with future generations not to repeat them. The author's voice is one of love and hope for America. But our national prospects depend on facing honestly the full magnitude of all we lost during one momentous decade and of all we must now recover.

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Customer Reviews

J. Harvie Wilkinson III is a federal judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Judge Wilkinson graduated from Yale University in 1967 and received his law degree from the University of Virginia in 1972. In 1982, he became Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. President Reagan appointed him to the United States

Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in August of 1984, and he was the Fourth Circuit's chief judge from 1996-2003. His most recent book is *Cosmic Constitutional Theory: Why Americans Are Losing Their Inalienable Right to Self-Governance* (2012). Judge Wilkinson lives in Charlottesville, Virginia. He and his wife Lossie have two children, Nelson and Porter.

They call us baby boomers. We have been misnamed. We are the Sixties Generation, who now with unaccustomed humility must beseech future generations to build back the nation we did much to tear down. They have every right to tell us no. The world is very much a mess. Instantaneous information, immediate connectivity, often good and necessary in themselves, cloud our ability to make sense of it all. Ferguson, Baltimore; ISIS, 9/11; Aurora and Newtown; Ebola fears and rising seas cascade upon us. Our present worries foretell danger from which every human instinct is to hide; we await many an unpleasant surprise. There may be a rush to private havens, a willingness to abandon America to inevitability, a tendency to see hope and opportunity as bygone relics of a naïve age. Two thousand sixteen became the new century's Year of Anger. Anger at whoever is different. Anger at whatever has changed. "Anger," write the *Washington Post's* David Maraniss and Robert Samuels, "at Wall Street. Anger at Muslims. Anger at trade deals. Anger at Washington. Anger at police shootings of young black men. Anger at President Obama. Anger at Republican obstructionists. . . . Specific anger and undefined anger and even anger about anger." It has been building for a long time. New York Times columnist Frank Bruni notes that "for a solid decade the percentage of Americans who said that the United States was on the wrong track had exceeded the percentage who said it was on the right track," often by astounding and increasing numbers. He "wondered about a change in the very psychology and identity of a country once famous for its sunniness about tomorrows." The mindset of eternal negativity is something the 1960s helped to load upon us. It is not a burden we should ever accept. The values the Sixties scorned; the chaos they engendered; the divisions they spawned—these are not our fates! Great enduring constants exist in this world that may yet guide us. From that burnt and ravaged forest of a decade may still spring the shoots of America anew. But to overcome the Sixties, we must first understand them. One must sometimes first go back in time in order to move forward. As a federal judge for more than thirty years and counting, I feel some days I've earned the right to reminisce. Maybe all my generation has. But reminiscence is a mellow flight over a time, even a lifetime, amiably spent. No one should ever "reminisce" about the 1960s. Those years are memory's scorched earth. I too am almost afraid to go back. That decade spared me none of itself: its lack of humor, its self-absorption, its fear of age, its resentment of authority, its rush to

confrontation, its grim, bleating fret with the Establishment. So why not leave those years behind? Because it was thereâ€”in the Sixtiesâ€”that feelings toward home, work, school, church, and flag forever changed. The 1960s did not end in 1970. They haunt us even now. Many Americans sense the world unraveling around them and wonder why. They want to know why they feel anxious about all that awaits their children and grandchildren. There are many reasons why, but one of the big reasons is the 1960s. It is too easy to blame all that happened in the 1960s on student radicals. Certainly the mindless nihilism of the radicals was destructive, but the radicals alone could not have maimed our country. Those who were supposed to lead and guide our nationâ€”the generation that so inspired America in the Depression and World War IIâ€”also abdicated their duty and let us down in the 1960s. Together, those who challenged authority and those who exercised authority made the Sixties an experience in lethal blindness. No one could see. The angry left saw no good in America. The Establishment saw almost nothing bad. No one foresaw the lasting damage the Sixties would inflict. No one sensed the Sixties would shake our foundations even today. I know many Americans believe the 1960s was one of the greatest decades ever. They believe that the decade made our country more equal and more just: that African Americans and eventually all minorities benefited more from the 1960s than from any time since the Civil War; that women became freer to make choices about home, children, husband, and career than ever before; that Americans learned from the debacle of Vietnam that the greatest power in the world could overreach. Many good people think the 1960s accomplished many good things, and I wholeheartedly agree with them. Few decades did so much good for America as the 1960s. But no decade inflicted so much continuing harm. The Sixties gave us some wonderful things, but this very gift has caused us to downplay the decadeâ€™s darker side. Righting terrible social wrongs should never have come at such a horrible cost: so much lasting loss of faith in this great land. In the 1960s, we lost much of the true meaning of education, much of our capacity for lasting personal commitments, much of our appreciation for the rule of law, and much of our sense of rootedness and home. We started to lose also the sense of those things that are larger than ourselves: the desire for service, the feeling for country, the need for God. Many of those arguing about the 1960s today never lived through them. To live in the Sixties was exhilarating at best, but disturbing and harrowing most of the time. You enjoy a ride on the roller coaster at the fair because you know the ride will end. With the Sixties, we never knew. And the ride goes on.

Agree in Part, Dissent in Part All Falling Faiths is Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson Jr.'s protracted lament over what might be called his loss of innocence. Our current social divisions, probably as

pronounced as they have ever been (barring the Civil War), he attributes to the overly enthusiastic social criticism that gained currency in the 1960s. By undermining respect for our major social institutions—academics, law, national service, home, marriage church and the nation as a whole—we are left with a bitter legacy of normlessness, indirection, and endless recrimination. Or at least that seems to be the thrust of his argument. In criticizing the criticisms of the 1960s, there is much with which I must agree. Indeed, in many instances, I would go even further than he does in finding fault with the vacuous, solipsistic intellectualism that came to play a major role in academic life. Not to be overlooked is the suffocating (and insufferable) orthodoxy that continues to bedizen the conversation of those who call themselves progressives. Moreover, Judge Wilkinson's intimate memoir does great honor to the Southern Literary Tradition, with prose that resonates as much with Thomas Wolfe as Tom Wolfe (though not quite so witty as the latter). That said, by drawing a straight line from the divisiveness of the 1960s to the divisiveness of today, Judge Wilkinson makes, in my view, a monumental error. He places Ronald Reagan on the same pinnacle as Franklin Roosevelt—because of Reagan's personal optimism—but overlooks the darkness that the Reagan Revolution unleashed. Reagan's personal charisma may have stemmed from his marvelous ability to convey to a wary (and weary) public his own sense of well-being, but the powers behind his communications throne were men like Lee Atwater and Roger Ailes, two of the nastiest and most cynical men who have ever participated in public life. Indeed, among the most significant contributions of the Reagan Administration to American public discourse (not widely appreciated at the time, but a shift that totally changed our world) was the repeal of the fairness doctrine. Under that rule, broadcasters expecting to hold on to their FCC licenses were required to give equal time to contrary points of view. The idea was that news was a public service that broadcasters provided in return for their protected and exclusive access to public bandwidth. The public is well served, this thinking went, only if the news is balanced. The doctrine was revoked by Reagan appointees to the FCC in 1987, and thus began the journey into news fakery that bedizens us today. Almost immediately there was a rise in a vast network of right wing sensationalist radio. In the 1990s, unregulated cable broadcasting was coming into its own, and starting in 1996, the FOX channel was born. Its modus operandi as a right-wing propaganda organ was the brain child of the redoubtable Roger Ailes, late of the Reagan Administration's communications shop. To be sure, sensationalist fact-free journalism is not a new phenomenon in America. Just Google "Yellow Press" for a glimpse back at the journalistic standards circa 1900: Emphasize scandal, use fake interviews with so-called experts, rely on plenty of unnamed sources to give an air of authenticity to fiction, promote

pseudo-science, and evince a commitment to the down-trodden common man. By the 1920s, though, "yellow journalism" was being supplanted by a professionalized cadre of reporters expected to be factual if not fair, standards were rising, schools of journalism were founded, and codes of conduct implemented. It was not until the immediate post-Reagan period that fifty years of rising standards were thrown sharply off a cliff. Yet this massive redirection (and misdirection) of American public opinion--a dark, grossly distorted view of government as the common enemy, Whites endlessly threatened by Blacks, illegal aliens living high on the hog on welfare--all of it completely eludes Judge Wilkinson's analysis of why we are a divided society today. Although (to his credit) Judge Wilkinson points a critical finger at both the over-critical progressives of the 1960s and the excesses of contemporary conservative reaction, he seems unable to reach a point where the conservatives who took control during the "Reagan Revolution" actually own the political and social consequences of their policies and outlook. He always harkens back to the 1960s college radicals, as though the arch conservatives who subsequently took and wielded power had no social impact at all. To be clear, Judge Wilkinson is not pushing an overtly conservative agenda, and except for Ronald Reagan, he names no contemporary politicians. As a college student at Yale in the 1960s (although an avowed conservative even then), he embraced the anti-Vietnam movement as enthusiastically as anyone. Over and over he voices support for the Civil Rights movement. In short, he was not and is not a racist, a militarist or a blind follower of rules. However, I do believe that he suffers from an acute astigmatism when it comes to discerning the true causes of today's divided society as reflected in our divisive politics. Given that I agree with so much of what Judge Wilkinson observes and recalls, it seems almost churlish to call him out. My perspective is a bit different in that I am seven years his junior, but other than that our formative years were remarkably similar. We went to the same sort of demanding boarding schools, attended Ivy League colleges and went on to law school. Our fathers both went to Princeton, almost certainly at about the same time. While he is a Virginia Gentleman and I a Connecticut Yankee, I see that as a distinction without a significant difference. Our values growing up were much the same, and I imagine that our parents, had they met, would have been friends. So where's the problem? If I may over-generalize, the problem is over-generalizing. For example, the first chapter is called the Decline of Education, a rather sweeping conclusion when what he is referring to is the phenomenon of his fellow Yale students, in the late 1960s, regarding much of what was being taught as "irrelevant." True, it wasn't just Yale. Many elite universities, such as Columbia and (perhaps especially) Berkeley (not to say perennial protest hotbeds such as Antioch) saw mass movements of students

purporting to tell the faculty that their hard-won expertise was useless unless it bore directly on the issues of the day. Yale professors such as C. Vann Woodward and John Morton Blum, laments Judge Wilkinson, "should have been icons, so much wisdom was gathered up within them." But the 1960s had no time for Village Elders. He goes on to say, p. 18, there is "a difference between being taught to question and being trained to hate." Well, that may have been true there and then, but did it become an enduring fact of American life? I submit that it did not. For example, when I was at the University of Pennsylvania just a few years later, studying American Civilization, C. Vann Woodward was most assuredly regarded as iconic and studied closely. So too the equally venerable V. O. Key from Harvard (author of the 1949 classic *Southern Politics*) "we didn't disrespect them for being over 30. We treasured them for telling the unvarnished truth about seriously deficient institutions, and doing so with scrupulously disciplined research methodologies. To be sure, campus radicalism was still a force to be reckoned with in the early 1970s when I started college. The Vietnam War was still in progress, its outlook uncertain, and a change in the draft law had stripped most of us of our student deferments. In a last paroxysm of political outrage (I cannot for the life of me recall the precipitating cause), students stormed and took over College Hall (the admin building) in 1973. But it was clear by then that radicalism "and the political self-seriousness that went with it" was winding down along with the Vietnam war. The college administration basically stood back for three days and waited for us to get bored before obtaining a court order to have us evicted. A genial, easy-going city sheriff entered the building and read the order to vacate or risk arrest. No batons, shields or gas canisters for us! After a brief discussion in which the consensus emerged that "we had proved our point," we peacefully dispersed. As far as I was concerned, "The Sixties" ended right then and there. Here's another small tell: When I began my studies in 1971, few of us (at least in the liberal arts) took studying very seriously until the last three weeks of term as finals approached. The "study pit" (a gym-sized windowless basement hall filled with study carols and no distractions) would sit nearly empty for months. By the Fall of 1974, when I was taking grades seriously to get into law school, I went down to the pit at the end of the first week of the term and was floored to find it nearly full. With freshmen at that! Times had changed indeed. What was "irrelevant" for the younger classes was political consciousness. What was becoming "in" was preparing for top grad schools or corporate careers. Consequently, when Judge Wilkinson talks about "the decline of education" as though the 1960s radicals had damaged The Academy such that college went out of style, I really don't know what he is talking about. As idealism and altruism were supplanted by materialism, the schools most

committed to social idealism (Antioch comes to mind) fell by the wayside. But the Ivies and Ivy-like schools just got stronger and stronger and richer and richer. Scores if not hundreds of new colleges and campuses were added to the national roster. So what is this decline that he bemoans? An area where I think he draws a line too long and straight is between the failure to honor the ideals of the First Amendment on college campuses in the 1960s and again in the last couple of years. Specifically, he is referring to students shouting down conservatives trying to give presentations or speeches on campuses in 1960s and again in some very recent instances at places like Berkeley instead of posing thoughtful counter-arguments. I agree: Such behavior is deplorable and I thoroughly deplore it. Where I disagree with Judge Wilkinson is his suggestion that such behavior has been a feature of college life from the 1960s all the way through to the present. It most certainly has not been, and Judge Wilkinson completely skips over the developments of the last 40 years to try to tie the two together. What Judge Wilkinson either forgets or chooses not to discern is that there was a conservative counter-reaction to The Sixties that began before The Sixties was even over, with the election of Richard Nixon. When construction workers in New York City attacked antiwar protesters with their fists, Nixon welcomed them to the White House and received an honorary hardhat in return. The gesture was wildly popular, and perhaps crystalized the shift of blue collar Whites to the Republican Party. Yet no clearer symbol of might making right could be found and so much for the supposed conservative commitment to The Law. I'm sorry, Your Honor, but you just can't put that one off on the peaceniks. To be fair, Judge Wilkinson tries harder than most to be even-handed. In the chapter "The Demise of the Law," for example, he writes, (p. 94), "Birmingham, Chicago, Stonewall, Kent State" events that at the time seemed spaced apart "become compressed and even combustible in memory. To believe that the police function is central to civilized order is not to deny that the law was damaged in the 1960s by both those obliged to obey and those sworn to uphold it. We have been living with both sad legacies ever since. Yet I believe he makes a false equivalence between protesters breaking windows (as happened at Kent State the night before the day of protests that ended tragically) and National Guardsmen firing into a crowd of students the following day, killing four and wounding nine. Vandalism is simply not the same as homicide. A closer look at the milieu of the Kent State killings, however, points up the darker phenomenon of what might be termed "populist conservatism" as opposed to the well-understood (and eminently defensible) intellectual conservatism of Judge Wilkinson. A recent television documentary ("The Sixties," on CNN) touched on Kent State and contained a revealing snippet, a contemporary (1970) interview

with a local Kent, Ohio, housewife. As far as she was concerned, the National Guardsmen should have killed them all. Even at the remove of almost 50 years, I found that shocking. How could a bedrock, salt-of-the-earth midwestern mom utter a view so stone-cold cruel and inhuman? Well, let's consider the near-hysterical press conference by (Republican) Governor Jim Rhodes the day before the shootings. Said Rhodes (pounding the desk while he spoke), "We've seen here at the city of Kent especially, probably the most vicious form of campus-oriented violence yet perpetrated by dissident groups. They make definite plans of burning, destroying, and throwing rocks at police and at the National Guard and the Highway Patrol. This is when we're going to use every part of the law enforcement agency of Ohio to drive them out of Kent. We are going to eradicate the problem. We're not going to treat the symptoms. And these people just move from one campus to the other and terrorize the community. They're worse than the brown shirts and the communist element and also the night riders and the vigilantes. They're the worst type of people that we harbor in America. Now I want to say this. They are not going to take over [the] campus. I think that we're up against the strongest, well-trained, militant, revolutionary group that has ever assembled in America." [See Wikipedia entry for Kent State shootings.] Ohio officialdom at the time actually believed that there were plans to dig tunnels under the town of Kent and blow up the general store and comparable nonsense springing from a very fertile and dark imagination. What is remarkable is not so much that some nut could dream up this stuff, but that so many were (and are) so willing to believe it and act accordingly. Thus it came to pass that notwithstanding the fact that none of the students were armed, and the average distance between the shooters and those shot was on the order of 100 yards, local juries had no problem seeing the shootings as a clear case of self-defense. So here's the point: Since before the 1960s was over, there has been a counter-reaction, a cultural narrative animated by myths, fallacies and deliberate distortions, that has been far more significant in creating the toxic political culture of today than anything that transpired in the "Liberal Spring" of 1965-1968. Indeed, one can go back to the 1950s, and sociologist Richard Hofstadter's influential essay on "pseudo-conservatives" (angry, self-contradicting, irrational, conspiracy-spouting haters), for the mental ancestors of today's populist conservatives. Here's just one example—the POW/MIA myth. The wheeze is that when American forces left Vietnam, our government deliberately abandoned hundreds or thousands of captive American service men. Why our government would do such a thing is never clearly explained: Just a dark allegation that they abandoned us. The myth actually began as a bit of Nixon era propaganda that sought to maximize the rationale for

continuing the war by exaggerating the numbers of men held prisoner by North Vietnam. When our prisoners were repatriated in 1973, they numbered less than 600. So what happened to the "rest"? Since the Nixonites had been pushing a number of around 1,600, that left around 1,000 unaccounted for. Well, the "rest" never existed. It was a made-up number, consisting largely of lumping in those killed, but bodies not recovered, with those known to be POWs. The general location of about half is well known: They were pilots of wounded aircraft who crashed in the South China Sea. Most of the rest were infantry whose bodies were obliterated by artillery. Yet the original lie took on a life of its own, complete with a banner featuring a black and white image of a bound prisoner behind a string of barbed wire. That banner flies today at VFW posts around the country, a testament to the durability of malicious fiction. To his great credit, Senator John McCain, a former POW, has done his level best to dispel this myth, fully aware that it enables the basest sort of charlatan to prey on the hopes of the bereaved to find missing loved ones. But all to no avail: The lie still flutters from flag poles across our nation today. It is Judge Wilkinson's failure to look squarely at post-1960s right wing demagoguery, and its dependence on counter-factual myth-making, that undercuts his central thesis that everything we don't like has its origin in the protest movements of the 1960s. As a deservedly esteemed Federal judge, Judge Wilkinson can show a remarkable failure of discernment. He writes, for example, "we saw the infamous Cincinnati branch of the Internal Revenue Service turn even the law of taxation to political ends." That charge was a huge deal to partisan Republicans in Congress, but in reality it was never proven. A partisan assertion is not proof of anything, as his honor knows perfectly well. Worse (at least to me), are statements like "only a tiny minority of New Orleans residents shot at the rescue helicopters in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina." (p, 93). His larger point is that tiny minorities, with media amplification, can have an influence far beyond their number, and far more than they deserve. Fair enough. But the allegation of New Orleans residents shooting at rescue helicopters is a complete and total falsehood. It simply never happened and is an evergreen racist meme that is remarkably easy to disprove. So why does the judge believe it without questioning? Why does he repeat it, amplifying the false narrative with his considerable megaphone? I submit that this is another example of someone (a very decent someone) misinformed by Fox, unaware that even highly intelligent people can be deceived by well-turned propaganda. Moreover, it is exemplary of how even a well-trained conservative mind, devoted to integrity, can be degraded by repeated contact with a "populist conservative" mindset that has none. Moving on, Judge Wilkinson makes some telling points in his chapter The Destruction of Commitment. The rejection of the taboo against sex before

marriage certainly became more overt during the 1960s, but it was hardly something new under the sun. If unwed pregnancies are any indicator, the 1920s may have been America's great age of the libertine. As an elderly aunt once told me, "Of course we did it, we just didn't talk about it." Yet I must agree with Judge Wilkinson that for many, in the sixties we set sail for ourselves. It is hard to recover a capacity for love once a society cultivates a vagrant appetite for sex. What may have started as a romantic desire for loving sex without restrictions kind of degraded for many into just casual sex without much caring, and ultimately into something more like permanent emptiness than joyous fulfillment. Yet both individuals and institutions under stress have a way of adapting and soldiering on. It is true, as he says, that the divorce rate doubled between 1965 and 1975. But does that mean that the institution of marriage was disparaged out of existence? The reality is more complicated, with the hidden hand of economics playing a significant role. For one thing, the divorce rate started rising in the mid-1960s and peaked in the early 1980s, but the marriage rate rose at the same time. If marriage was seen as so terrible, why did its rate continue to increase? Note too that the marriage rate plunged in the 1930s, clearly the result of extreme pressure on career prospects in that difficult decade. Since the early 1980s, both the divorce rate and the marriage rate have been falling. See here for some nifty charts:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/06/23/144-years-of-marriage-and-divorce-in-the-united-states-in-one-chart/?utm_term=.2745182810dc Interestingly, remarriage seems to be on the rise.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2014/11/14/remarriage-on-the-rise-in-the-us-pew-report-says> Yet the percentage of adults living with a spouse has fallen from 70% in 1967 to 51% in 2015. Cohabitation without marriage registered 1% in 1975 and 8% in 2015.

http://www.salon.com/2016/06/03/marriage_may_be_obsolete_fewer_couples_are_getting_hitched_than_ever_before_partner/ Yet the vast bulk of that increase occurred after 1985, so it's hard to justify the assertion that this trend is somehow tied to the 1960s. The 1980s was a formative time as well, and not all the trends starting then were positive for social stability. So why is the marriage rate in the US the lowest in more than a century? As the statistics from the 1930s show, dim career prospects clearly play a role. Flat incomes for large swaths of the workforce for the last 35 years are probably not unrelated. Another factor almost surely is rising job prospects and incomes for women, which reduces pressure on them to find a man to take care of them. But is this trend, as Judge Wilkinson suggests, the sequela of 1960s selfishness? Unless you subscribe to the notion that men are entitled to look out for themselves but women have to subordinate their interests

to males, I have a tough time swallowing that one. To be sure, I fully agree that our culture has seen a rise in selfishness, for better or for worse, but it's less than obvious how this reflects 1960s values. Were white people marching for civil rights in the 1960s acting selfishly? How about women marching against our Vietnam involvement, or men marching for equal rights? The "Me Generation" that dominated the subsequent era traces its philosophical roots to Ayn Rand, not Karl Marx. Yet the Ayn Rand rationalization of materialistic selfishness had its modern rebirth during the Reagan years, the one politician that Judge Wilkinson seems to revere. In his own chapter on The Distaste for Service, Judge Wilkinson writes especially eloquently about how the Vietnam experience served to undermine the pre-existing sense that there is a patriotic duty to fight when asked. The whole military establishment that was widely respected in the 1950s became an ugly monster to be feared and hated (at least by a significant chunk of the youth population) in the 1960s. This is clearly true: I experienced the same shift in attitude, and it was every bit as painful as losing a beloved relative. He writes, "When the destructions of the Sixties are tallied, there will be a temptation to blame them all on the revolutionaries of the left. But it was never so simple. The 'Establishment' which responded admirably in many ways on civil rights, misjudged dreadfully on Vietnam. And the idealism that Civil Rights inspired disintegrated. The moment was squandered. The effect of the Vietnam War on the spirits of our generation was incalculable. A fifty year remove does little to dull our remembrance of our anger and despair. Those who did fight were more admirable, to be sure, but military service was by and large the lost desire of the decade, and that was hardly our sole fault. In his admirably balanced argument, Judge Wilkinson makes the point that the call to service does require a cause worth serving and not mere blind sacrifice for leaders who mislead. That said, I wish the Judge had gone a bit further to trace the attitude toward the military in subsequent years. It has been my observation that the US military has won back much of the respect it lost in Vietnam. The success of the First Gulf War didn't hurt, while widely respected leaders such as Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf proved inspirational even to those long used to disparaging the military. Even the complete fiasco of the Iraq invasion and its subsequent mismanagement has damaged the reputation of the neocon politicians who engineered it more than the military which did its best in an almost impossible situation. The fact is that our service academies aren't exactly scraping the bottom of the barrel when it comes to recruiting students. The academies are as excellent, and selective, as they have ever been, and even anti-military journalists visiting places like West Point with the intent to criticize come away impressed. The character of our cadets "young men and women deeply devoted to something other than money" reminds that there is still an American

vision more meaningful than the ugly, grabby selfishness of Ayn Rand. So cheer up, Your Honor! It's not as bad as you think. Judge Wilkinson's most telling chapter, at least to me, is The Demise of Law (chapter III). This is the only one where one can clearly trace the roots to the 1960s, a rise in criminality that continued to escalate throughout the Reagan years, peaking in the early Clinton period and declining steadily, if gradually, thereafter. Moreover, this rise in criminality is almost certainly related to the weakening of the other institutional influences to which the judge points: family, church, school and so on. True, my peers and I certainly disparaged certain laws we saw as pointlessly repressive, such as flag-burning and possession of marijuana. But armed robbery? Forcible rape? Homicide? Oh come on! Do you think that that's what those miscreant college kids did when there was no longer a war to protest? The suggestion is absurd. But something truly terrible happened, for sure. A large part, but not all, is explained by demographics. Young men entering their "crime prone years" (18-35) soared during the period in question. As Steven Pinker points out in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, every year, a horde of barbarians enters society. They are men turning 18, and they must be civilized by older men (and women). Before WWII, the ratio of barbarians to civilizers was three to one. During the primacy of the Baby Boom, the ratio fell to two to one. The civilizers were simply overwhelmed. A glib explanation, but it surely contains more than a shard of truth. That Judge Wilkinson fails to even mention demographic factors is a glaring omission. He prefers to focus on a diminution of cultural norms, a phenomenon that's extremely hard to measure, however intuitively appealing it may be. While he is surely not entirely wrong, such a view does fail to explain why the crime rate has been dropping for twenty years or more. Moreover, if we go back to the period from 1900 to 1930, we see that crime rates were far, far higher than what we saw in the 1950s. The homicide rate is indicative. <https://www.democraticunderground.com/10021998000> Are we to conclude then that FDR imparted a profundity of moral rectitude that went away when LBJ took office? And that Bill Clinton mysteriously restored it? Simple correlations would point in that direction, but it simply can't be true. The major decline in the crime rate in recent decades is surely every bit as complicated as its rise was from the 1960s to the 1980s. Mass incarceration and long sentences have almost certainly played a role (a possibility that liberals dislike acknowledging), but the propensity to commit crimes by those in their "crime prone year" seems to have dropped as well. Moreover, this drop in criminal propensity has occurred even in jurisdictions where severe punishment and heavy-handed policing is not the norm. This, too, is a fact, and it is one that conservatives are loath to admit. In conclusion, despite his adroit handling of language, even-handedness and sincerity, Judge Wilkinson's analysis consistently fails to support his

conclusions, and for that reason I am compelled (rather regretfully) to award him a single star.

A beautiful elegiac story of lament for the damage done by the 1960s to the fabric of the country - set against the fulfilling and successful life of the author. A must read for anyone trying to understand how we got to our present dysfunctional state. Caveat - I was in the same class of 1967 at Yale but did not know the author - I can vouch for many of his Yale observations though.

This book is a must read. Wilkinson is a skilled writer with a deep analytical mind who chronicles the complicated sixties through his own life experiences. His thesis is a profound one; i.e. the Vietnam War and social attitudinal changes in the sixties have profoundly affected us to this day.

This may have been the start (Yale in the 60's) but the lack of respect and feeling of duty toward institutions and country seems to continue to progress downward -- even by the office holders. Guess we need this kind of introspection.

Lucid, engrossing story of how the 1960s affected the life of a noted jurist and his fellow citizens.

This reflection on the 60's is very nicely written and deeply felt. The thrust of the argument is that while the 60's did some good (in advancing civil rights and decrying the Vietnam War) it also did significant (hopefully not irreparable) damage to our system of higher education, our need for personal commitment, our respect for the law, for familial and geographic connections (particularly in the south), our need to do military or government service, our sense of cultural unity and our collective sense of faith. The argument is advanced in successive chapters, all turning on personal experience. Thus, e.g., instead of a systematic consideration of the civil rights movement, the author focuses on his personal relationship with the black family cook/maid/nanny. As in Faulkner this woman held the family together in key ways and served as a surrogate mother/big sister to the author. The relationship was as close as Churchill's with Mrs. Elizabeth Everest. The civil rights movement altered his view of race relations and, thus, his relationship with the woman he calls Berta. This is an effective way of proceeding if the author has had interesting experiences and is a skilled writer. Both apply in this case. The book is relatively brief (ca. 186 pp. of text) and is a fast read. It should be read as a memoir rather than as a nonfiction book on the 60's. Its conclusions are indisputable, at least from my point of view, and the examples given are generally not unfamiliar. It is faithful to his experience but it does not go beyond his

experience and offer fresh conclusions, fresh insights or fresh ways of dealing with the results of this devastating decade. For example, it is clear that religious faith suffered deeply as a result of the 60's but we now see a response in the form of large evangelical churches that serve thousands of individuals each Sunday. The members of the military suffered as a result of the Vietnam War and the actions of the protestors who spat upon them, but we now see the abandonment of our veterans as a major campaign issue and major theme on facebook and other sites. For that matter, the growth of cable news and the blogosphere has offered alternative news and information to that of a mainstream media that is generally sympathetic to the attitudes of the 60's. The key theme is spot-on. There is both a bright and dark side to the 60's counterculture. The dark side (drugs, sex without commitment, nihilism, the destruction of our universities, etc.) has been tragic for our culture, but the efforts to advance civil rights and face down the lies and bullying of the Johnson administration were indispensable. How do we now find balance in our society when the negative side has been so effective and so widespread? While the author does not have a systematic policy plan he characterizes the issue very nicely and offers sympathy and understanding to those who share in this dilemma. For some solid scholarship as well as informed punditry on the 60's I would recommend the books of Todd Gitlin (*THE SIXTIES: YEARS OF HOPE, DAYS OF RAGE*, revised, 1993), Seymour Martin Lipset and Gerald M. Schaflander (*PASSION AND POLITICS: STUDENT ACTIVISM IN AMERICA*, 1971), David Brooks (*BOBOS IN PARADISE: THE NEW UPPER CLASS AND HOW THEY GOT THERE*, 2000) and Charles Murray (*COMING APART: THE STATE OF WHITE AMERICA, 1960-2010*, 2012). Gitlin and Lipset/Schaflander talk about key historic issues and events; Brooks talks about the manner in which some (bobos= the bohemian bourgeoisie) survived the 60's by channeling their political commitments into consumer goods and lifestyle choices, thus mitigating their radicalism and leaving the battlements to drink bottled water, live green lives and so on. Murray faces the nub of the issue and basically says that those who have succumbed to the darker practices of the 60's now lead lives of actual desperation, while those who have kept their religious faith, accepted their civic responsibilities, remained married and worked hard are now generally wealthy and safe. Murray imagines two conceptual cities and talks about the lifestyles of each, the one leading to poverty and failure, the other to success. Moreover, these groups are isolated for the long haul because, in general, the successful grow up together, attend school together, marry one another, and so on. (The book is confined to white America, but Murray suggests that following the right principles leads to success regardless of race.)

A telling an insightful recollection of the traumatic changes to America during the Vietnam and Water Gate Era by a great American.

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