“This book is both a primer on practical politics and a meditation on the practicality of idealism. It arrives, serendipitously, at a moment when conservatives are much in need of an inspiring examination of their finest hour.”

Rendezvous with Destiny: Ronald Reagan and the Campaign That Changed America by Craig Shirley, is a new book that was published in October. Shirley is also the author of Reagan’s Revolution, which covered Reagan’s 1976 presidential campaign. Rendezvous with Destiny begins in August of 1976, after the Republican National Convention. Although I haven’t read the book, I was intrigued by a post by Robert Stacy McCain who calls it Best. Reagan. Book. Evah! I want to share some of the reviews and a portion of an interview with Shirley, because it is obvious that Reagan offers encouragement in this, our winter of discontent.
The landslide outcome of the 1980 presidential election now seems a foregone conclusion. With double-digit inflation and interest rates, high taxes, a loss of international prestige, and the indignity of American hostages in Iran, President Jimmy Carter’s loss to former California governor Ronald Reagan seems inevitable. The electoral blowout of 489-49 and the popular victory by almost 9 million votes seems as unsurprising in retrospect as Franklin Roosevelt’s fourth term. But as Craig Shirley shows in his new book, *Rendezvous with Destiny: Ronald Reagan and the Campaign That Changed America*, Reagan’s path to the White House — from the Republican primaries to the general election — was anything but a smooth journey, and nearly ended in failure.

In truth, Reagan’s 1980 victory began with his 1976 sliver-thin loss to then president Gerald R. Ford in the Republican primaries. Reagan’s convention speech that year galvanized the Republican Party — and made many wonder if they had chosen the wrong candidate. Reagan spent the four years from 1976 to 1980 speaking and writing about conservative causes and ideals, and campaigning for GOP candidates across the country. He entered the 1980 Republican primary as the clear front-runner, but by no means the only candidate. It became a race not just for the leading of America, but for the soul of the Republican Party. It was a contest between men of vastly different political ideologies: liberal Republicans such as John Anderson, moderate, country club Republicans like George H. W. Bush, and conservatives such as Ronald Reagan.

*National Review* lists several bullet points under their heading: *Reagan’s road to the White House*; here’s one:

*In these unhappy days of the Obama Era, here is a bracing reminder for conservatives of what one man with patriotic vision can accomplish.*

**Reagan’s road to the White House:**

*How Reagan prevailed even when the liberal media made first George H. W. Bush and then John Anderson their preferred Republican nominee*

James Pinkerton of FOX News in *Reagan Still Points the Way for Republicans*:

*The “hot news” from Shirley’s book is that he settles the issue of where “debategate” came from. That was the tempest-in-a-teapot chain of events, not revealed until 1983, through which the Reagan campaign got its hands on a copy of the briefing books used by President Jimmy Carter as he prepared to meet his Republican challenger. That wayward debate book was never seen by Reagan, but then-Republican Congressman David Stockman, who played Carter during the debate prep, did make use of it. Such things happen all the time in politics, but when a Republican is the beneficiary, well, it’s time for a Congressional investigation. And that’s exactly what happened. No criminality was demonstrated, nobody was convicted or even indicted. But for a while, back in ’83, “debategate” was quite the Beltway kerfluffle. Now, 26 years later, for all practical purposes, Shirley confirms what many had long suspected: The debate-book filcher...*
was one Paul Corbin, a veteran Democratic operative and Kennedy family loyalist, who turned on Carter after the Georgian defeated Teddy Kennedy in the ’80 Democratic presidential primaries.

Emily Goodin interviews Craig Shirley for The Hill in A rendezvous with Reagan:

Q: Was there anything you learned in your research for the book that surprised you? Yes. How much the Republican Party establishment despised Ronald Reagan and really set out to destroy his candidacy....

Q: What can we as readers learn from a pre-Internet campaign in this age of social media? It was a whole different world back then....there are certain things that never change, and that is a commitment to the Constitution, a commitment to individual freedom and personal privacy, and that the individual is more important....

Q: There’s been a lot of talk about infighting in the Republican Party. What’s your take on the 2010 elections? The conservatives will win the fight.

Pinkerton concludes:

Having documented what happened in that watershed year, Shirley reminds us: We did it before—combining conservatives, libertarians, and independents, all inside a big Republican tent—and we can do it again.


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