

The West Wing Weekly

4.10: "Arctic Radar"

Guests: Richard Schiff, John David Coles, and Former Cabinet Secretary Chris Lu

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

JOSH: Let's list our ten favorite episodes. Let's list our least favorite episodes. Let's list our favorite galaxies. Let's make a chart to see how often our favorite galaxies appear in our favorite episodes. What Romulan would you most like to see coupled with a Cardassian and why? Let's spend a weekend talking about Romulans falling in love with Cardassians. And then let's do it again. That's not being a fan. That's having a fetish.

[end excerpt]

[Intro Music]

HRISHI: Hello fellow *West Wing* fetishists. You're listening to The West Wing Weekly. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: Today, we're talking about "Arctic Radar." It's episode 10 from season 4.

JOSH: The teleplay is by Aaron Sorkin, the story by Gene Sperling, and direction by John David Coles. It first aired on November 27th, 2002.

HRISHI: It's actually a Thanksgiving episode.

JOSH: Yeah, they say Thanksgiving a lot.

HRISHI: But there isn't much Thanksgiving in it, in some ways, the Thanksgiving part of it kind of flies under the Arctic radar.

JOSH: Well, there you go. Actually, I'm sure you'll have a theory, but it's a little tough to puzzle out why the title.

HRISHI: Here's a synopsis of the episode: Sam packs up his office, leaving Toby alone to write the president's speech for the inauguration. So, Sam sets up Will as a possible replacement. The president and the staff debate a contentious military decision to arrest a female officer for failing to follow an order to stop sleeping with an inferior. C.J. has a mini skirmish with a reporter over seat assignments in the press briefing room. And finally, the origin story of our West Wing Weekly lapel pin -- Josh gets into it with a temp over a little piece of television fandom that she proudly wears in the *West Wing*.

JOSH: Yeah, this was exciting for me, because when you wrote the description for the West Wing Weekly lapel pin, I know you made this reference and I knew it was vaguely coming in the future, and I didn't exactly remember the scene. So when I watched it, I was like "Oh! The lapel pin!"

HRISHI: That's right.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

JANICE: I'm not obsessed, I'm just a fan and I care.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Also, it's actually funny the whole -- I'm sure we'll get into it, we'll dig in deep shortly -- with Josh's, I think, attack on the poor new person working in the bullpen, and his problem with top ten lists, and all that. Because I remember, in an early interview for this podcast that we did, they asked us our favorite episodes, I had nothing to say [laughs] I had very little to say. But I remember you saying you were looking forward to discussing "Arctic Radar."

HRISHI: That's right, this is one of my favorite episodes.

JOSH: It's on your list.

HRISHI: It is. And really because of the scenes with Will. The Will and Toby scenes in this episode are just, mwah!

JOSH: I very much enjoyed re-watching them. I always knew in the back of my mind, that this was that episode. I particularly remember the second scene that I had with Richard, and we'll get to that. I have very, very clear memories of shooting that in particular, but I really hadn't gone back to watch it. And it was great stuff that Aaron gave us.

HRISHI: Really, yeah, it's tremendous.

JOSH: And great fun working with Richard, and I believe we're going to talk to Richard a little bit later.

HRISHI: Janice, who was the temp who is wearing the *Star Trek* pin, I do love everything that she says about *Star Trek* and about her pin, because I really feel like you could replace her with any *West Wing* fan wearing a *West Wing Weekly* lapel pin and the text doesn't have to be changed at all, just replace *West Wing* for *Star Trek*.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

JANICE: Star Trek and the entire Star Fleet series is about honor and loyalty and civic duty and the fact that you don't think that those are characteristics that should be displayed inside the White House is sad.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Actually, I also felt like that scene could've very nicely finished on her rebuttal. I mean, he really has to go the extra step, Josh does, and be a bit of a dick, as he is throughout this episode. And often, that's part of who Josh is, and sometimes it's more endearing than other times. And I can feel in Aaron and in his writing, he's kind of flip flopping on, you know, where

he comes down, though we probably have a guess. He couldn't quite give Janice the last word, although I felt she had earned it.

HRISHI: Yeah, I like her very much, just replace Starfleet and *Star Trek* and you've got how we feel about *The West Wing*.

JOSH: Absolutely. And I know Aaron is tickled by and appreciates the people who love this podcast because of their deep love for this show. So it's an interesting and I think uncomfortable area for him. My take is that he has an ambivalence, clearly, and has a little bit of the artist's desire to dictate how you process, enjoy, and interact with his art, but also part of him maybe knows better. It's a very interesting area.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And I think this episode got him into trouble again, with the online community.

HRISHI: With Television Without Pity.

JOSH: Yeah, the TWOPers.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And rightfully so.

HRISHI: Luckily for us, he's down with our podcast.

JOSH: Indeed, he's been very good to us. And with his fandom, and I wonder whether that's something he's grown more comfortable with or grown to be more comfortable with, because you know he has said to us on several occasions how much he's enjoying how the podcast has brought him back into contact with fans of the show, and with new fans of the show. And he's sort of, I think, enjoying it, which makes me happy to see, in a way that he maybe previously wouldn't have allowed himself, in the same manner.

HRISHI: And I think it makes a big difference, hearing those kind of comments and commentary years after the show has ended, versus when you're in the middle of making it.

JOSH: Indeed, certainly.

HRISHI: Ok, let's go to the beginning of the episode. The president says something to C.J., two words together I've never heard before in a phrase.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

C.J.: Good morning, sir.

PRESIDENT BARTLET: What's doin'.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: What's doing.

HRISHI: Is that a thing that people say?

JOSH: Absolutely

HRISHI: What's doing?

JOSH: I don't know, maybe it's a, I'm trying to think, what distinction I can make where Martin and I are on one side, and you're on the other side. It's not an East Coast thing, you're from the East Coast. It's not a Jewish thing, Martin's not Jewish. I don't know, but I say what's doing.

HRISHI: [laughs] you do?

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] I've never heard you say that.

JOSH: [crosstalk] I mean I'm going to start. [Laughs] No, I mean that is something that I don't bump on.

HRISHI: Mmmhmm.

JOSH: I like that our "Weeklings" or "Weeks-ling" are starting to pick up on "bump on." "Bump on," by the way, I'm getting credit for, or blame, just because I say it a lot, it's certainly not my creation. It's something I picked up -- I've been in various writers' rooms at times, and I think it's something that people say in writers' rooms a lot, so I'm not sure exactly from whom I stole it.

HRISHI: "Let's do" is another phrase that recently, I like that one. There was a time that I heard "let's do" and I thought, what a strange thing, but then, now I've come around on it. Maybe I'll come around on "what's doing."

JOSH: Do let's.

HRISHI: I don't know that I will, though. "What's doing," it's just so awkward.

JOSH: Eh, if you say anything enough.

HRISHI: Sure.

JOSH: Now you're ruining it for me [laughs]

HRISHI: Excellent. I prefer the more traditional "what doings".

JOSH: Yeah, that's better.

HRISHI: So, then, the cold open continues.

JOSH: Remind me what the cold open was.

HRISHI: We begin with the president arriving at the White House, stepping out of the motorcade, and he says to C.J., "What doings." And then she tells him about the Vicky Hilton case, and then he meets up with Leo, he asks Leo to clarify a little bit about the Uniform Code and the Vicky Hilton decision, before arriving at the last Cabinet meeting of the first term of his administration.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: And later, C.J. explains, helpfully, for those who don't know:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

C.J.: In a two-term presidency, as a matter of courtesy, the president's Cabinet resigns without being asked, giving the president the option of hiring them or not, rather than firing them or not.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I've always taken this as gospel, because, sure, why not? It seems perfectly reasonable.

JOSH: In other words, you assumed that this was based in fact.

HRISHI: Yes

JOSH: It is not?

HRISHI: Well, it is, but the last time someone did this was Richard Nixon. I want to jump into a quick conversation that I had in the first term of the Obama administration, Chris Lu was the Cabinet Secretary. What does that mean exactly?

CHRIS: It means that you're in charge of managing the relations between the president and his Cabinet.

HRISHI: And you served in that role for the first term? And then in the second term you went on to be Deputy Labor Secretary?

CHRIS: That's right.

HRISHI: So you have a funny story about this episode.

CHRIS: [laughs] I do. So as we were getting ready for the 2012 election, we were starting to plan for the second term. And the question came up, what's the protocol with the Cabinet serving past Inauguration Day? And those of us who were thinking about this question had a feeling that the Cabinet was supposed to submit their resignations, and we did some research and we couldn't find anything.

HRISHI: You thought it was going to go how we see in this episode, where Leo sits everyone down and says, "Ok you have to resign and then we'll either rehire you or not."

CHRIS: Right, and the best we could find is that President Nixon had asked for resignation letters from all of his political appointees, including his Cabinet, after he won re-election, but that historical fact didn't seem to jive with our recollection. And then at that moment, we realized we all must've been thinking about this episode of *The West Wing*, when Leo asks for the Cabinet resignation. The only precedent was Richard Nixon and President Bartlet were the two we were thinking of. So, in the end, obviously, that wasn't enough of a precedent for us to follow through on, and President Obama was happy with the work of his Cabinet, so he never asked for resignations, not only of the Cabinet, but of all of his political appointees, after Election Day. And, you know, in the end, he sat down with each of his Cabinet members and had discussions about their plans. We obviously wanted a mix of stability and change in the second term Cabinet, but these are very hard jobs and for many of the Cabinet members, they were ready to move on after the first term. And so, in the end, I think about two-thirds of them left in the couple months after Inauguration Day and about another third of the Cabinet stayed on for part of the second term.

HRISHI: In the cold open for this episode, for this last Cabinet meeting, the president's there for approximately 45 seconds. He walks in, sits down, says "thanks everybody, here's what you did", and leaves. Is that ever how it went, would the president ever really just make a quick cameo like that?

CHRIS: No, the president enjoyed his Cabinet meetings, and we didn't do a lot of them, but this was his meeting, his chance to hear from the people running his government. Also the chance for him to share his thoughts and we did actually have a Cabinet meeting after he won re-election. We did it about three weeks after Election Day. I recall this Cabinet meeting, in particular, being a really joyous celebration. We had gone through a very tough re-election campaign, obviously the previous four years had been difficult ones, with the recovery from the recession, so this was really, I think, a celebration and vindication of the approaches that we had taken in the first four years. And the president really shared his thoughts for the second

term, and his belief that, hopefully now that we were past Election Day, we could move past gridlock with Congress and actually start to solve some problems on behalf of the American people.

HRISHI: So in some ways it wasn't entirely different from your experience in that meeting because President Bartlet goes through and says here are all the accomplishments that you managed to pull off.

CHRIS: Right, there really was a review, a rehashing of what we had accomplished in the previous four years and, I think, looking ahead, but President Obama never would have just stayed for 45 seconds and walked out. This meeting, I recall, probably went an hour and a half or so, and he led the meeting as he always did, he was engaged in the conversation, and it was a chance, I think, to celebrate what we had accomplished and look forward to the future.

HRISHI: Thank you so much, once again, for being a guest on the West Wing Weekly.

CHRIS: My pleasure.

[interlude music]

JOSH: That's fantastic. Life imitating art imitating life. I like the cold open, I like that it's an instance of going out on a moment where the show is ahead of the viewer. Obviously, you've seen it a million times, I didn't quite remember what it was, like "What is going on? Why did he just ask for their..." I like that, I thought it was a good button.

HRISHI: Right. We've got Sam Seaborn in two different locations in this one episode, two different coasts in this one episode.

JOSH: That's right.

HRISHI: Which is a rare thing, that there's enough time for a character to be in two different states, outside of, you know, the District and Virginia or something like that. It reminds me of the last season of *Game of Thrones*, where that show had up until this last season, moved often at a glacial pace, where characters would be on the road traveling from one kingdom to another over the course of three or four episodes, and now suddenly, characters will go from one place to another place on the other side of the continent and back in the same episode.

JOSH: Ah, it's the quickening. It's a bummer, I would like them to slow down.

HRISHI: Yeah, I would too.

JOSH: I don't want it to be over.

HRISHI: And here, too, I felt, “Oh ok well, Sam’s there, we’re really wrapping up this whole Sam thing.”

JOSH: Let’s get moving. Yeah, I liked the scene between Toby and Sam, when Toby kind of wanders in, and it was sort of a sweet scene about friendship, and it plays more on what’s *not* said than what *is* said.

HRISHI: Yes.

JOSH: I liked very much, I like the writing, it’s very good writing, spare, and I like the way Rob and Richard acted it, it’s just sweet. This is a significant ... I mean we also know that Toby is losing Sam, he’s losing his pen as well as his companionship. But in that first scene, you can feel, on a personal level, the sadness about it.

HRISHI: Sam says to him, “You want a hug?” [crosstalk] And Toby doesn’t say anything.

JOSH: [crosstalk] No response.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Put the banner back. And I thought, really the unwritten story of Toby throughout the entire series is, yes, Toby does want a hug.

JOSH: Of course he does.

HRISHI: He’ll never say it, but he wants a hug, maybe more badly than any other character.

JOSH: I think “I want a hug” is maybe his middle name.

HRISHI: That’s what Zachary means in Hebrew, I think, right?

JOSH: Is it Zachary? Wow, oh dear, you fetishist.

HRISHI: His middle name is Zachary, sorry. [Both laugh] I know that one. I also like the scene between Sam and Will.

JOSH: Ugh, that shirt though. Ooof.

HRISHI: The Hawaiian shirt? [Laughs/crosstalk] It’s fine, you know, we’re discovering Will has interesting fashion sense.

JOSH: [crosstalk] A shirt. I guess so, thanks Lynn.

HRISHI: “This campaign had fatalities”.

JOSH: Ah.

HRISHI: Cracked me up a lot.

JOSH: Good line.

HRISHI: What I love in the scene between Sam and Will is how much resistance Will is putting up, you know, how insistent that he is that he's going to go take a vacation.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

SAM: Yeah, listen, I wouldn't ask you to postpone your vacation if it wasn't important.

WILL: When did you ask me to postpone my vacation?

SAM: Well I'm obviously about to right now.

WILL: Ok, well then your shoelaces are untied and I'm hauling ass.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: So now he's getting ready to go on vacation and he has purchased his tickets, he already knows the castle where he's staying. All these things. But then as soon as Sam tells him that it's the inauguration, he doesn't put up much more of a fight. He just says "I'll change my flight." He turns on a dime.

JOSH: That's "He's one of us" behavior.

HRISHI: Exactly. And then I thought, later, in that first scene between Toby and Will, when they first meet, jumping now to the end of it, after Will responds to Toby's criticism with his own criticism of Toby's writing.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

WILL: Well, maybe he thought that your speeches were obscurantist policy tracks lost in a cul-de-sac of their own internal self-righteousness and groaning from the weight of statistics.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Toby, who had just sort of out-of-hand dismissed him, you know, and said you're not right for the job. Toby turns on a dime. And I thought, see, this is evidence that he's one of them. So let's get into that first scene between Will and Toby.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: It feels monumental, these two grumps meeting for the first time.

JOSH: It feels significant, for sure. And it feels like Will passes a test of sorts, even before he's given a literal test, on the way out the door.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: There's a certain push and pushback that I think Toby respects, and it kind of sets the tone of their relationship as I remember it for the coming days together.

HRISHI: There is incredible work in this scene by Richard's face. Especially from both before...

JOSH: ... after the exit.

HRISHI: After the exit, for sure, but the first moment I laughed at was when he just says:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

TOBY: Will Bailey.

WILL: Yes.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He does this kind of head nod and smile like he's loopy. It's really funny, it's the kind of loopiness we rarely see from that character.

JOSH: That's true.

HRISHI: But then, yeah, absolutely, after Will calls him out and he gives him the assignment.

JOSH: You can see him experiencing the critique again, in his own head and feeling a variety of emotions as it lands with him. It's really just brilliant acting.

HRISHI: It really is.

JOSH: Were I directing Richard, I would always wait to call "cut" just to see what else he had cooking.

HRISHI: [Laughs] Yeah, he talks to himself a little bit, then he sits down, he looks at his notes and his eyes bug out a little bit at what he's written. And the little eyes widening cracked me up as well.

JOSH: Yeah, Richard's one of those terrific actors who, just *existing* in a character is riveting to watch.

HRISHI: Yeah, I could've kept watching just him alone in the office.

JOSH: Sure, right.

HRISHI: So Toby burns his drafts. You know, Sam, as we've seen in many colds open, is content to just crumple them up and pound the table with his fist. Toby is at a moment of such catastrophe, he actually has to light them on fire.

JOSH: Right, as if their existence in physical form would continue to infect anything he would write further.

HRISHI: Right, that's great.

JOSH: It just has to be utterly destroyed. I do also like the casual way that he extinguishes the fire in his garbage can mid-conversation.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

TOBY: It takes a certain amount of experience and, uh [extinguishes fire] and uh, a certain something.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Yeah, that felt very screwball comedy, like 50's screwball comedy in a great way. Another part that made me laugh was Josh, to Donna, on the walk-and-talk. There's a little bit of self-parody, again, about the walk-and-talk, which I feel like we've gotten to a few times in season 4. Josh asks Donna her opinion on Vicky Hilton, and just as she starts to tell him, he says:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

DONNA: I've been thinking about it and I –

JOSH: You gotta go faster next time, I'm here already.

DONNA: Yeah.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: I love that moment.

HRISHI: And then we go into the meeting, which is Josh with Fitz, and this is another great line from this episode, where Josh says, “Well at this point I don’t have to give you her resume,” and Fitz says:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

FITZWALLACE: No, but could you tell me more about Jackie Robinson and breaking barriers?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah

HRISHI: Which is a great move and it reminded me of *Sports Night*.

JOSH: Yeah I had the same thought.

[Sports Night excerpt]

ISAAC: And because I love you, I can say this: No rich young white guy has ever gotten anywhere with me comparing himself to Rosa Parks.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Back to the Toby/Will scene, I just realized I have a couple things on that. When Toby’s busting Will, or critiquing Will, rather, for sharing his underwhelmed response at the Gabe Tillman speech, he rattles off three instances of what he says are alliteration. I’ve always remembered this line, you know, “I needed an avalanche of Advil.” He says it almost as if that’s one of the

HRISHI: [crosstalk] That was one of the lines from the speech.

JOSH: One of the lines from the speech.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It’s almost, it’s weird, I don’t know if it’s actual misread by Richard, or just a classic Richard, but you know, he does say things in weird meter and with weird delivery. I had to go back and listen to it again.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

TOBY: You’re alliteration-happy – “guardians of gridlock, protectors of privilege.” I needed an avalanche of Advil.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Because it sounded to me, when I listen, he said it as if it's one of the instances of Will's writing in the speech, and I double-checked, I looked at the transcript to make sure it's not in quotes, it's supposed to be Toby's take on having to hear so much alliteration, but I thought that was a weird, interesting moment.

HRISHI: I remember a tweet from a couple years ago where there was discussion about looking for some kind of name or term to describe how people say bulleted items within a list. There's an upward lift that happens at the end of each item.

JOSH: Suggesting that there's going to be another item, you mean?

HRISHI: Right, and sometimes they'll list just two and there's sort of an unsaid ellipsis -- I guess all ellipses are unsaid -- but you know, that implies that there are many more items on the list as well. So, "We talked about a lot of things: jobs, the environment..."

JOSH: Are you saying there's a term for that delivery?

HRISHI: I don't think that, in that Twitter thread, a term ever came out, so I'm curious if there is. I guess this is a linguistics question? But I think this is an example, if we had that term, we could employ it here, this is what Toby's doing. It's not quite the upward lift at the end, but he is listing

JOSH: Right, but he is laying it in as if it's the third instance of alliteration.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Let me ask you this, while we're on linguistics. Would that be alliteration? Or is that be assonance? When it's vowel sounds rather than words starting with the same consonant?

HRISHI: On this website I'm looking at, it says that assonance is the same or similar vowel sound repeated in the stressed syllable of a word. So "hate" and "sail," "drive" and "hire." These are the examples that they give, not the starting syllable. And consonance is the same consonant sound repeated in the stressed syllable, preceded by uncommon vowel sounds. For example, "earn" and "shorn," or "irk" and "tork." That's consonance. And then alliteration is the repetition of sounds through more than one word or syllable. So this is a little bit different from how I define it, I want to look at another source here. Because I was thinking of it the way I think you're thinking of it. So "avalanche of Advil" is both alliteration and assonance. "Guardians of gridlock" and "protectors of privilege" are alliteration and consonance.

JOSH: Yeah, that makes sense. I think.

HRISHI: We'll probably get some tweets about how I'm wrong.

JOSH: Based on two random websites that we've decided are credible authorities.

HRISHI: Yeah. And it's also confirmation bias, because I think that's what I thought it was anyway, so I might be guilty of confirmation bias.

JOSH: No I suspect you're just right. But we learned. Also watching myself in this first scene, I wrote down two things: my voice, ugh. And why don't I have non-reflective lenses in my glasses. There's a lot of reflection going on.

HRISHI: I think it's because eyes are the windows to the soul, and this is Aaron's way of subtly telling us that Will Bailey maybe doesn't have a soul.

JOSH: Ohhh. I think ultimately, many viewers would agree. But that's for down the line.

HRISHI: What's your issue with your voice?

JOSH: Uhhhh, I don't like the way it sounds.

HRISHI: Is that true in general?

JOSH: I don't know, I think, you know, maybe I'm just doing that thing where people's voices sound strange to them.

HRISHI: You know this is being recorded, right?

JOSH: [laughs] Yes, and actually, when I listen to the podcast I don't mind the sound of my own voice. So I don't know, I think maybe my testicles hadn't descended yet.

HRISHI: [laughs] I was going to ask, do you think you sound younger?

JOSH: Yes, younger and more high-pitched, and just kind of annoying.

HRISHI: [laughs]

JOSH: I don't know, there you have it.

HRISHI: I do like the deepening of Will's character in this episode.

JOSH: Oh as do I, yeah.

HRISHI: We've gotten certainly little tastes of his prickliness and stubbornness and cantankerousness, but we get more here. Just the response to Sam's suggestion about what sounds like a very fancy hotel. I mean the fact that Sam has a preferred hotel in Nice, is, ooof, okay.

JOSH: Yeah, how about that.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

SAM: I like to stay at the Hotel Beau Rivage. I think that's going to be a little pricey for you.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Sounds like a fancy place, right?

JOSH: Or a place that's trying to be fancy.

HRISHI: Oh it's a real place. You can book a room at the Hotel Beau Rivage right now, for \$87.

JOSH: Hmmm [laughs]

HRISHI: So it can't be *that* fancy.

JOSH: Certainly not.

HRISHI: So it just *sounded* fancy. And then Will says "I'm going to be staying at the blah blah blah blah blah." "Rothschild" was in there, so you know, pretty fancy. And it's not a hotel so much as, well, a castle. And then, even, "all of Europe's a family connection for you, isn't it?" [Will's response] "And parts of Asia." You know, he's just a ...

JOSH: Yeah, he's got some edge to him.

HRISHI: He's a little cocky.

JOSH: Yes.

HRISHI: But then that cockiness, they demonstrate it there, and then it serves him well in this first confrontation with Toby, he has no problem...even in this, in terms of the Democratic Party or something like that, Sam is at such a crazy different level than he is, he has *no* problem speaking truth to power, or at least speaking his opinion, whether it's truth or not. It seems like he has set it up where he will go toe-to-toe with whomever and he doesn't really care.

JOSH: Right, yeah, I like that, exactly, he's not necessarily looking for a fight, but, if pushed, he's going to push back.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

WILL: Just out of curiosity, how do you know I don't have the something?

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Right

HRISHI: I relate to that a lot. I find I'm really happy to see that kind of character depicted on screen.

JOSH: I remember, I think I recall, at the time, but certainly in re-watching it, it's a further distinction from Jeremy Goodwin as well.

HRISHI: Oh, who was a little more obsequious?

JOSH: Yeah, well, I don't know if I would say obsequious so much as, so much less sure of himself.

HRISHI: Ok yeah. Maybe obsequious is too far, [crosstalk] but maybe more deferential.

JOSH: [crosstalk] More likely to fall apart when poked, than get his [expletive deleted] together and poke back.

HRISHI: Ok, and for a second, let's talk about the title, "Arctic Radar."

JOSH: Do let's. The only mention we get of the Arctic itself is with Jack Reese and Josh Lyman

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

JACK: Small town feel, nicest people you'll ever meet, and a terrific symphony if you like classical music with a pops orchestra on Sunday nights.

JOSH: Really?...No, there's no symphony...or people...

JACK: Right. On the other hand, Sunday night does last six months.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Actually, I was kind of enjoying this episode. Christian Slater's take on Sorkin dialogue, he makes it his own. He's got his own way of speaking, and I kind of like that he brought that to the role, I was getting a kick out of it for some reason.

HRISHI: I loved his delivery of:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

JACK: Wendell's not "cute" cute but he's so funny.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Exactly. That was the other line that I thought was fantastic and very much his own. Good delivery.

HRISHI: Jack is working on a memo for the commanding officer at a radar station in the Arctic Circle.

JOSH: Yeah, I mean there's something about the remoteness of it, speaks to me of Toby in this episode, Toby's kind of in his own lonely wasteland in his own head of trying to write and not being able to get it going. It kind of spoke to me on that level, I'm sure you have something better than that.

HRISHI: I don't. On this one, I feel like I would have to be digging and stretching to try to get something, which is, you know, I'm certainly used to doing that. That was like my entire high school career.

JOSH: Your academic high school career, you mean?

HRISHI: Exactly. I don't know if other places had this term, but we used to talk about "DHM" in high school. When we would be discussing books, we'd have to dig for the DHM, and it was kind of used pejoratively and kind of tongue-in-cheek, sometimes it was real. But it stood for "deep hidden meaning". And so it was like "oh what are you working on?" [crosstalk] "I gotta find the DHM in the piece".

JOSH: [crosstalk] "Mining for DHM"

HRISHI: Yeah, so as I was trying to think about this title, I felt instantly transported to being 15 years old and being just, 'Do I have anything, can I come up with anything, ahhh I got nothing'.

JOSH: Fair enough.

HRISHI: One thing I did think about was the name of Jack's aide, Chief Petty Officer Harold Wendell. Made me think of *A Few Good Men* and Lance Corporal Harold W. Dawson.

JOSH: There's talk of the Judge Advocate General in this episode, there's talk of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, there's just a lot of *A Few Good Men*-ish mentionings.

HRISHI: Absolutely.

JOSH: Although that's a sub-plot, kind of a maybe C-level plot, not in quality, but in terms of prominence, in the episode, that's almost more a runner, now that we have that term from Kevin

and Eli. It doesn't really pay off, this discussion. It's given a fair amount of real estate given that it doesn't particularly pay off, it's just one of the things being discussed throughout, and almost more to me, of interest, is how an issue can filter through the staff, and up and down, who asks whom for their opinion. They're asking Charlie, Josh is mentioning it to Donna, it was just sort of interesting to see this issue that I guess they're trying to keep from, I guess, blossoming into something major, but is on everyone's mind.

HRISHI: Right, I mean I thought that the payoff came not in any kind of resolution about the issue itself, but the purpose it serves in this episode is really what the president says to Leo, where he says:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: I don't think I ever want to hear, "It's too sticky for the Oval Office."

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Throughout the whole episode, they're trying to keep it out, keep it out, and then he has this whole speech about winners want the ball. So I think that is really supposed to be the ultimately culmination.

JOSH: Yeah, it's sort of a mini "Let Bartlet Be Bartlet" and "stop handling me", it's kind of a companion piece to the whole diplomatic mini- mini-subplot, which is played more for laughs than anything else. But that also where I think he's pushing back against this idea of "don't keep this from me, let's discuss it, don't shunt this aside."

HRISHI: Right, yeah, it's a victory for open-mindedness in the end.

JOSH: Sure, we can say that.

HRISHI: Can we agree on that? Are we together on this? Do we have resolve? I love how the momentum of the Vicky Hilton issue gets the president worked up. As he walks into Leo's office and he just interrupts what meeting Leo's having, yells a thing, goes back to his desk, then thinks of another thing, and goes to yell. So he's already cooking by the time he finds out the news about the parking tickets and the UN, so he *really* loses his temper.

JOSH: Yeah, it's fantastic. And then Dulé, as Charlie, has a fantastically funny line.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

CHARLIE: Well that was probably his secretary.

BARTLET: Damnit!

CHARLIE: *You bet she'll be parking in the garage, though.*

[end excerpt]

JOSH: [laughs] That was great, great timing on that delivery.

HRISHI: Yeah. In that exchange, I appreciate everything that the president says in there about how unfair the double standard of this military decision, and that no one ordered Eisenhower to stop sleeping with his subordinate. There's one little bit, though, that goes by that's not right. There's a continuity error here. They make a brief sort of glancing mention of Ken Cochrane when Leo says, "Wasn't there an ambassador to somewhere in South America that you fired for you know..." and he says "Oh that was a political problem, and it was the ambassador to Brazil that was sleeping with the president's daughter." That's not true, it was Bulgaria, and it was the daughter of the prime minister.

JOSH: How about that. Wow, that went right over my head. Good catch. I wonder how a mistake like that gets made.

HRISHI: Mmm hmm.

JOSH: Who's keeping the bible, as they say. Every show has what they call the bible, which is essentially keeping track of "factual" matters of the show, things that have been discussed before, things that have been established so that mistakes like these don't get made.

HRISHI: Right, my only thought was that this was something, you know, pages came in at the very last minute and there might not have been the chance to do the research to go back to where was that mentioned, what was actually said.

JOSH: Yeah, no, it would not surprise me that Aaron hadn't kept track of a fact like that. So you're right, the fact that it probably didn't go through whatever channels usually vet that kind of stuff for him, that makes sense, you're probably right.

What do you think of some of the Vicky Hilton discussion, I was swinging in my estimation of the people discussing it, back and forth, between feeling like they had a proper amount of concern for her and the situation, then sometimes feeling like the men were being sort of patronizing in a way, that she should be considered somehow differently than how anyone else would be *because* she's a woman. I think Leo is sort of bottom line, "She didn't follow an order". I mean that's kind of the end of the discussion.

HRISHI: Yeah we don't hear Fitz saying that's the reason why, but I think that's probably grounding his decision as well, [crosstalk] to discharge her dishonorably.

JOSH: [crosstalk] I think so. But then some of the conversation seems to be...obviously there's a little bit of a discussion of creating a political problem, a thorny issue with female constituents,

that's one thing, a political calculus to be considered. But also, just on the facts of it, there's almost this sort of a chivalrous take that Bartlet is pondering, which is, I think "disturbing" is too strong, but it seemed like he was sort of a patronizing take on it.

HRISHI: I found the whole discussion of "oh, you know, there's a women problem, are you getting it from Abbey and the kids," I found that was so annoying, it was a significantly annoying part in an episode that I generally consider one of my favorites. It did take me out of it, it kept happening.

JOSH: Several characters go to the women in their lives, as if they're unaware that a large portion of the populace is female as well. They have to go to the personal, like "oh yeah, I haven't stopped hearing it from so-and-so."

HRISHI: Yeah, it also goes back to the point that we talked about a little bit in "Women of Kumar." Which is the idea that the only people who are allowed to object to a particular issue are the people who resemble those affected by the issue. That's it's only an issue with women because it's about a woman, or that Nancy McNally should've been the person who was calling out apartheid. That phenomenon bugs me so much, not just on the *West Wing* but in the *West Wing* I expect more, or something.

JOSH: Right, well it has Amy coming in, she's threatening to use the leverage of her group and to kind of wield that cudgel which almost, maybe, doesn't reflect that well on her, right, it's not a women's issue, in particular, it seems, at its base, unless there's something I'm missing.

HRISHI: Yeah, there was a funny thing, too, when Amy says, "This is a special girl", I thought that was a bit patronizing too. The only good thing that came out of this repeated motif of "Are you hearing it from the women?" is that we find out that Leo and Jordan are still seeing each other.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

LEO: Jordie hasn't shut up about Vicky Hilton.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: And he calls her Jordie!

JOSH: He's got a pet name for her.

HRISHI: I thought it was maybe Leo's subtle reference to *Star Trek*, too.

JOSH: Ahhh, very nice

HRISHI: He's dating Jordie "La Forge" Kendall. [Laughs] Actually, we already know, by the way, that Jordan's middle name is Elaine.

JOSH: Oh that's right, we've already learned that.

HRISHI: Please, someone. Please do this. Just a shot of Jordan Kendall, Joanna Gleason as Jordan Kendall, with the Geordi La Forge glasses on.

JOSH: Love it. I'll be very surprised if we haven't just crowdsourced that image. Back to the *Star Trek* scene for a minute. I was googling back to see how people took it at the time, because I do remember some people were offended by it, I'm sure Aaron knew he was stirring the pot a little bit with this scene between Josh and Janice.

HRISHI: The *Star Trek* scene, yes.

JOSH: And one discussion of it just delighted me because it devolved into obsessive fan analysis. One poster gives their take on it, and then finishes by saying, "Any list of ten best *Star Trek* episodes, by the way, that doesn't include "In the Pale Moonlight" is bullsh--t." So then later down the line, someone else says, "It's impossible to include 'In the Pale Moonlight' in any list of ten best *Star Trek* episodes for the simple reason that it's a DS9 -- Deep Space 9, right? -- episode." Then someone else responds, "You're clearly wrong, because Josh is using *Star Trek* to represent the entire *Trek* universe, since he mentions Cardassians." And then someone else says, "Well Cardassians don't just show up in Deep Space 9." So it's just the most fitting and fantastic sum-up to the discussion of that scene as it just turns into a greater melee among *Star Trek* fans.

HRISHI: Right, it becomes the very thing that Josh is describing.

JOSH: Indeed, and then someone below just writes, "Nerds!!!"

HRISHI: Was that you?

JOSH: Not !! No. Well that's the thing, I don't think I actually...I almost have a slight envy for people who can dig in that deep, I don't have that kind of penchant for fandom that these people do. But I think I would like to, I'd like to find something that lit my fire so much that I want to dive into to this extent.

HRISHI: I've only been half listening because I've been trying to figure out a way...

JOSH: [crosstalk] Because we're recording the podcast.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] ...trying to figure out a way to make a joke about the way you were describing the discussion, and turn it into a discussion about the singer Janice Josh-plin.

JOSH: Wow

HRISHI: It didn't happen

JOSH: Well call me tomorrow if you want to re-record.

HRISHI: We have some background info on the pin, and how this got introduced, courtesy of our ...

JOSH: FoP

HRISHI: Right, Font of Pod knowledge.

JOSH: I was saying "friend of podcast" but font is good.

HRISHI: I know what you were saying.

JOSH: I know.

HRISHI: So according to Eli, he remembers that the documentary *Trekkies* had come out and he had seen it, and in it, there's a discussion of a *Star Trek* fan who was on the grand jury for Whitewater in the 90s, and that juror wore a *Star Trek* uniform to jury proceedings.

JOSH: Full uniform

HRISHI: A uniform!

JOSH: That's quite an image

HRISHI: Here's an article from 1996 from CNN: "An Arkansas woman who wore a *Star Trek* uniform while serving as an alternate juror in the Whitewater trial was dismissed for talking to the press." She was interviewed by a TV program, American Journal, about the uniform and she said that "she believes in the ideals expressed in *Star Trek* and she found *Star Trek* an alternative to mindless television because it promotes inclusion, tolerance, peace, and faith in humankind. But, because she spoke to the press, she was dismissed from the jury."

JOSH: Huh, so that was the spark for this storyline.

HRISHI: I think, but really, that story being told in the *Trekkies* documentary

JOSH: [crosstalk] Oh I see, gotcha.

HRISHI: And then Eli saw that, and then he wrote a memo to Aaron about it, and Aaron used it. I also thought about lighting in this episode.

JOSH: Ah, there's some dimly lit scenes.

HRISHI: Yeah, I was like, nobody in the *West Wing* likes to turn on their office lights, as we know, and therefore Jack Reese fits right in. Yet again, he's one of us.

JOSH: Indeed, yeah. It's dark in there so give that guy a glow stick.

HRISHI: Speaking of, "he's one of us," it's perfect that this episode is the Thanksgiving episode. Somehow I had forgotten that it was a Thanksgiving episode, but every time I think about this episode, I think, "He gave him the note!"

JOSH: Ohh, "He gave him the note!" It is a classic...should we jump to that scene?

HRISHI: Yes, let's.

JOSH: I love that scene.

HRISHI: Let's do.

JOSH: Let's do. I loved that scene on paper, and I love that scene in the final episode, in its final form. I think it was actually very nicely directed. I can't even really articulate what it is. He does these sort of odd, sweeping shots--the director does--it seems to take place in a sort of strangely hallowed, sort of sacred ground. Toby's in his sort of dark, solitary space, and then I don't know, the way John David Coles chose to shoot the scene, puts us a little bit in the mental state of Toby, and it's very effective but I have a hard time pinning down why.

HRISHI: To find out why, let's go straight to the source. Here's John David Coles, talking to us about his work on "Arctic Radar".

JOHN: When I was working on that, because that was the very first one that I did, and remember, the issue that seemed to be in play was whether or not this woman was going to be kicked out of the Navy, she was a Navy flyer, because she had an affair with another officer and so on and so forth. And as always was the case with Aaron, it was like, you know, I came to LA from New York and went out to the set the first day to prep, and they said, "go to the movies, there's no pages". And I went the second day, and they were like, "go to the movies, there's no pages". And it went on for I think four more days, there was like no script. And then the fifth day, the AD called me up and said, you know, "get over here, we have some pages, we have to start prepping." And so anyway, then we started prepping the show, but he didn't actually finish the script before I started shooting. And I was convinced that the story would go towards some sort of resolution of the issue of what happened to that Navy flyer. Because you know I hadn't done *West Wing* before and I had seen them and whatever, but I wasn't as keyed into, like, the way Aaron told stories. And I remember going to some of the other writers and saying, "can you give me a clue to where this is going, because I have to direct some scenes and I should kind of

know where this is all headed before I make some of the choices I'm going to make." And of course, the irony of all that was that they said you just have to wait and see. And it was so beautiful when I got the script because it took that sort of unexpected left turn into like, it's not about that issue, it's about where the buck stops in the White House. And that was the bigger idea of that storyline, not what, you know, most writers would have done, which would be to find a way to resolve a particular issue. Anyway, I just remember that being a very unexpected experience and a positive one.

HRISHI: Yeah, we loved that.

JOSH: What is it like, as a director, not having the lead time you would normally have on a project?

JOHN: Well *West Wing* was very unusual in the sense that you usually would get a scene that was very extended to do in a day, like sometimes you would get scenes that are seven or eight pages, and so the whole day would be that one scene. And, you know, so the way it worked was, oftentimes there would be a little get-together with the actors, maybe Tommy and Aaron and the director, and we'd sit down and we would discuss the scene, kind of talk about the values and what the event of the scene was first, and then basically, Aaron and Tommy having kind of gotten their ideas out there, would then leave it up to the director and the actors. And then you would have an extended period of time to then stage those eight pages. And so it might feel like, "Oh you got stuff at the last minute," but in some ways it was very liberating because then you were there with a half a dozen actors, easily, and all these pages and you would all work on it together and kind of stage it and rehearse it and maybe get to lunch and then after lunch you would start shooting it. And I remember the first time I did that, which was on that episode, I remember getting to take like 20 or 23 or something like that and thinking, "wow that's a lot of takes," and then I turned to the AD and he was like, "no, typical print is like 24 or 25," so I was like ok I'm in the zone here. So it's a very different rhythm than what you typically get when you're directing episodic television where you might have six or seven scenes to do in a day and therefore you're trying to look at, ok if I don't have the script in advance, how do I know where to put my efforts and how much do I spend in one particular scene in one particular day and so-on and so-forth. But *West Wing* had a different kind of dynamic. And in some ways, like I say, it was very refreshing and liberating to be able to say, this is what we're going to work on today and we're all going to focus on it and we have the whole day to do it. And so even though you were exploring it and discovering it in the kind of improvisational way in the moment because we hadn't thought it all through necessarily, you know, it was very freeing, and I think that's why you got a lot of the energy that you get from the show.

HRISHI: Can we move from the general to the very specific -- can you tell us all about that final scene, between Richard Schiff and Josh?

JOHN: The things that I remember very specifically were, wanting to really underscore the import of the second inaugural and writing that, for the Richard Schiff character, for the Toby character, and how to sort of make the weightiness of that sort of manifest through the

visualization. If you remember, it sort of opens on a series of traveling shots where you know it goes through the seal of the president and pulls focus and then we're actually ... there's two or three shots where the camera is going two or three different directions and then sort of stitched them together so there was this moment where you felt like here's a man, in a room, alone, kind of small, and sort of the seal of the presidency, and the weight of what he's gotta do is all out there. And I think that was, for the beginning of the scene, that was really important, establish those stakes right up front. And I remember doing it and I remember Richard actually being kind of irritated with me because what he said was like, "you haven't even done one line of dialogue and you've done like seven shots". And I was like, "just bear with me," and Richard was like one was like, "I don't get it. I'm going to have a conversation with Josh, you need one camera here, one camera there, and we'll talk to each other." And I was like, "no, I have something else that's going on." And so there was like this moment in which I remember having to get across the idea that both of you are going to read each other's speeches, which if you think about it from a visual, cinematic point of view, is kind of boring. But I also wanted that moment to be a transformative moment where, there was Toby, and then you were coming in, and the weight of balance shifted. And if you remember, there's a shot where it starts on the paper, it goes up to you, Josh, and the camera slid over to Richard, and then focused on Richard and then went past Richard and then ended up back on you again, and then it cut back to him and he said, "stop reading". And this little camera movement there, first off, it created the sense of time passing, and it also created the sense of now the world is kind of spinning. And all of a sudden, in some ways we're inside Toby's head, so now we're in a different world. And then the scene that followed, which is really the heart of the scene was thing in which, "I think you've got it". Right away, as soon as he said, you know, don't read mine, this is good, then it becomes a negotiation. And the rest of the scene is a negotiation between the two of you in which I tried to keep that style going, but it was I think important for me to kind of get out of the way as a director and let them do their thing. And then there was that last moment, which is when you walk out, and he opens the card that he's got and it says "he's one of us". And trying to make that a little bit of a moment, so again, there's another point of view that happens and you're with him there, and to let him sit with that moment for a moment, before you come back in again and say "Or we can start now," which is sort of a wonderful Aaron tag to the whole scene and to that particular episode. So the scene had all these little different parts, and that one I actually had time to prep and had thought about in some depth how each one of those moments needed to be articulated with the camera and with the staging and with the movements and so on and for forth. And it's funny, because after that, when he saw that, Richard and I sort of became friends for life, because he really liked the scene.

JOSH: Oh, that's a good story.

HRISHI: Those opening moves, with the cameras moving in different directions, and the way you stitched it together, how much input did you then get to have in the editing process to make sure all those different camera moves actually came out in the final product the way that you had intended?

JOHN: Great question, because believe it or not, that part was as anticipated, I mean they loved it and they didn't really mess with that at all. The middle section where I was saying you do that little spin-around, reading each other's, that was left alone. But then in the part with the conversation, basically what I was calling the negotiation between the two of you, in my cut of it, it was a little bit more fussy, it was a little bit more complicated. And think that whoever it was, whether it was Tommy or the group that had the final say on the editing, they simplified that part a little bit and that was really the only changes that they made. And when I saw that cut of it I totally agreed with it, I thought it made a lot of sense. So you know I did go into the editing room, all the directors had a chance in the editing room for their time, so I was able to put it together the way I wanted and it was not liked a controversial thing, I think they liked it and they were happy with the way it played out.

HRISHI: So you get a director's cut before Tommy goes in and does the final pass?

JOHN: Absolutely, yeah

JOSH: How did the *West Wing* team find you? Had you worked with John Wells before, or what brought you to *West Wing*?

JOHN: I think they found me through Tommy, I had known Tommy back when he was in New York, and I had known Tommy for years. I don't know what season that was, was it like season four maybe?

HRISHI: Yes

JOHN: Season four, so I don't know why I didn't get involved with them prior to season four, whether I was doing other things, or being in New York and it was a California-based show, or whatever it was, but Tommy and I were always sort of in touch and then this one came up and so-on and so-forth. It was an interesting story in that episode, too, which is that there's a scene in the Oval Office where Bartlet talks about carrying the ball, he talks about when I was a basketball player, I always wanted to play, but I never would shoot because I didn't think I was really good, and his coach said to him, you know, "Jed, winners want the ball," and he was like, I didn't really want the ball because I didn't think I was the best, and ultimately, he said, my coach was right, "winners want the ball," and the buck stops here in the Oval Office. And I remember the scene on the page was actually kind of funny, and the first instinct on the part of Martin was to play it as a funny story that he was recounting. And I knew that was not the way that scene should play, it wasn't him goofing around, it was serious. But he did a few takes like that and then we slowly moved into the direction of where it ended up. The editor liked the funny takes, and he actually cut it so that this was sort of an ironically funny scene. Ultimately I think Tommy saw that scene in its funny incarnation before I had a chance to put it as I wanted it, and there was actually talk about reshooting the scene because the whole point was it shouldn't be funny. I was like, "no, no, give me half a day in the cutting room, I think it's all there" and of course, it was all there and it was fine.

JOSH: And would you have, on *West Wing*, tone meetings to discuss scenes beforehand, before being shot? Or was there not enough time?

JOHN: I was thinking about that...you know, tone meetings, I don't think were typical, it was more like if there was a big scene, that Aaron and/or Tommy would come down and have a conversation that morning with you. There was a kind of tone meeting in the sense we all sat down if it was an important scene and did discuss it beforehand.

HRISHI: When Josh and I were talking about the beginning of that final scene, and the way the cameras were spinning around, I tried and mostly failed to talk about the axis, 180 degree rule, and I was wondering if maybe you could tell us more about how that actually works. I thought it seemed like you were making a conscious decision to break what's normally considered a rule, right? That you don't come around on a character from the other side?

JOHN: Right, so in terms of screen direction, if the character is looking from left to right, and then you go from one shot to another shot, the character should still be looking from left to right. I mean think of it in terms of, like, if you were doing a driving scene, if you're seeing where the car is going down the street, if it's going from left to right, then all of sudden if you cut to a closer shot and the car was going from right to left, it would be very disconcerting. Right? The same happens when you're doing a dialogue scene, you don't cross two characters where a character is looking right and the other character would be looking left. So yes, there was a very conscious decision, in those opening moments, to actually ... the first shot comes down and Richard is looking right, and then that dissolves to another... so it wasn't the screen direction that was confusing and the hardest part, it was the camera direction. So if you're dolleying left to right, and he's looking right, and then I flip the axis, now he's going to be looking left, but the camera shouldn't be dolleying left to right or right to left? To make this flow? And this is why it worked, because the camera is going right to left, when you flip the axis and came on the other side, it's still going right to left. And so all those shots, the camera is going in the same direction, even though the character was facing in a different direction because you're flipping to the other side. And that's what gave it its sort of fluidity. Does that answer your question?

HRISHI: Yes it does, that's great.

JOHN: And if you did that with a couple of sizes, you could then develop that. Even if you just did one left to right with him looking in one direction, wide and close, and then did the same thing from the other side, wide and close, you then had a lot of material to work with. But then in the scene with Josh and Richard, you know, once they got into the dialogue, if you look at that scene, we flip the axis a number of times, and that was one of the things I introduced with that little shot that kind of comes around them, which is that both of these axes are fair game. Usually what we try to do, and I think in my cut it happened more, was we would cut to something wider before we flip the axis, so it wouldn't be like you'd be looking left, he'd be looking left. It would be you'd be looking left, you'd cut wide, and then you could get to the other side of him. And then the other thing I did on that, which I don't usually do, and it was a way to increase the feeling of tension that was happening between the two of you, was that I did a lot of

panning, from one to the other. So not everything was cuts. Sometimes it would be cuts and sometimes it would be panning from one to the other, and that gave it a kind of rhythm or allowed you a different kind of rhythm. And that's where the reworking they did afterwards, they kind of changed those rhythms a little bit by using less of the panning shots and more of the cutting back and forth. Simplifying it a little bit.

HRISHI: The director of photography is Thomas Del Ruth, and you know he's worked on the whole series, and we've talked about this sometimes with guest stars about stepping into a, you know, well-oiled machine, with potentially new ideas. Did you find there was any resistance to trying moves like this for someone who was directing *The West Wing* for the first time?

JOHN: Well first I'll answer your question, it was extremely intimidating coming to direct a *West Wing*, I remember the first day that I went there, because there was no script, the AD said, this is a true story, the AD said, "why don't I just give you a tour of the set?" Which was enormous, right. So I was getting a tour of the set and I was very impressed. But then he got a call. So he went off to take his call on his cell I guess, and I got lost and I couldn't find my way out of the set. It was that big, and it was that real, that I was wandering around on this huge set.

JOSH: [crosstalk] How do I get out of here?

JOHN: And you're dealing with that cast, and you're dealing with all of those wonderful directors, you know, Chris and Alex and Tommy and so on, so yeah, it's very intimidating to sort of step into that situation but it makes you bring your A-game, if you will, and in the case of *West Wing*, bringing your A-game meant, because of the late scripts, not over-preparing because you weren't really able to because you didn't have the material. Bring your A-game meant understanding what made the show tick, and then being relaxed enough in the moment to actually understand what was going on. And as far as the way it was shot, you had Tommy and you had Alex and you had Chris, and they were such different directors, it's almost astonishing. And the kind of input you would get from them was very, very different. From Chris, it was very much like, ok, how can you do this with two axes, with four shots. With Tommy, it was always like find the center of the scene, like, what is the heart of the scene.

JOSH: That sounds frustrating, actually.

JOHN: Yeah sometimes it was hard because you would go like, actually I have a plan that I like ...

HRISHI: Right, I am also a director.

JOHN: Exactly, but in the end, I think that you sort of understand what they were after. So you understood look, this is a well-regarded show, but we still have eight days to do it in, so essentially what Chris was saying was keep it simple if you possibly can, and what Tommy was saying was keep your eye on the ball in terms of where the story really is with these scenes

because that's the way you approach Aaron's writing, it's not about coverage, it's about finding the key story moment and then staying with it and staying focused on that.

JOSH: I wanted to ask you about two things I noticed on your IMDB page: early work with Mary Louise Parker, one of the first things you directed?

JOHN: Actually, it was early work for Mary Louise Parker, in fact, it was her first movie. It was my first feature as well, it was called *Signs of Life*, and it took place in an old boatyard in Maine that's going out of business, and the course of this last day there's like a birth and a marriage and a death, and that was the conceit of the movie. And the great Doug Abel, who's a wonderful casting director, was casting the film. We auditioned a lot of people, and then Mary Louise came in and she was from North Carolina and I think she had had a small part in a TV movie, and otherwise she'd never done anything. And she was extraordinary. She just auditioned live for me and we called the studio and we were like "We found her, we found the lead." And they were like, never heard of her, forget about it. And there was a long battle that ensued in which essentially, I don't know if she auditioned for them or we did a tape or whatever, but they were won over as well and she got that part. And that was really her first part in a movie.

JOSH: I like stories where the good guys win.

JOHN: [laughs] Sometimes.

JOSH: And tell me about *Trump Unauthorized*.

JOHN: [laughs] I was in Los Angeles and I was directing something else and I ran into a producer in the parking lot of like a 7-11. And she said, "I have a script, I can't tell you anything about it, but are you available to shoot something this spring?" And I was like, "I don't know!" You know what I mean, I can't tell you anything unless I read the script. So I got in the car and about two minutes later she called and said "okay. I'm gonna send you the script." And she sent me the script, which was not called *Trump Unauthorized*, it was called *Ambition* at the time. And it was really an interesting piece about ambition and sort of the price one pays for that sort of unbridled ambition. It was kind of a *Citizen Kane*-type story, which is a story of a man who, because of his dynamics with his father, is so determined to succeed that the cost of his success is going to be kind of his humanity, you know, his human relations. And I thought that was something really really interesting. And I called my agent and said, "yeah but are we pretty screwed here?" because everybody has an opinion on Trump, and I wish I could've changed the name Trump to tell the story I was just describing from a thematic point of view. And my agent said "No, no, no, it'll be fine," and of course we made the film, which I think is actually an interesting little film, but of course the response was ... it had nothing to do with the film and only had to do with what people felt about Trump. They could not see the film, they could only see through the film and be like "you weren't hard enough on him, you weren't critical enough, you were too hard," you know everybody had an opinion on Trump and that's sort of what became true. So it was an interesting experience in that regard. But I did a lot of research on Trump and so when it came up for the election this year, it was particularly disturbing for me

because there were a lot of stories I had read and knew about, people I had interviewed in terms of making that movie and obviously it's played out very much in a way we would expect.

JOSH: Indeed. Well it was good to see you, thanks for doing this.

JOHN: Absolutely.

JOSH: I have very fond memories of shooting this episode, so it's nice to talk to you again.

JOHN: Absolutely, and good luck with the podcast.

HRISHI: Thanks very much.

JOSH: Thank you.

[interlude music]

JOSH: I remember very well filming this scene, one I was just excited -- I don't remember whether I had shot the other Toby scene with Richard already. Part of me feels like perhaps I hadn't because I just remember being this significant like, big fan of Richard's and was then and I was excited to work with him. And I also just remember, he stayed there at the table and he was there for a while before we even started filming, and I was just getting a sense of how Richard works. You know I can be talking about whatever it is, that day's crossword puzzle, and then it's time to work, and I just step into it and do it. Richard kind of lives it more, so I could sort of see him keeping to himself, he was in the kind of headspace of Toby so I was respecting that, I wasn't shooting the breeze with Richard. These guys don't know each other too well, so is there any benefit necessarily to getting to know him before I shoot it? Not really. So respect that and keep that and use that. And it was also one of these ... I love when a scene gives you exactly what you need to play the scene, which is that I wanted Richard and everyone on the show to like me, and everyone for warm and I felt welcomed, so there was no need, but, you know, going into the scene I wanted to earn Richard's respect the same way Will wants to earn Toby's, but not in an obsequious way. He's not going to beg for it, he's not going to give up who he is, and I just remember that all informed the scene in a very positive way. Like, I'd go in there, kind of do this little duel with him, and get out. Time would pass, it's time for another take, in and out, and I just really enjoyed working with Richard. It's fun sometimes, particularly, to work with somebody who's got a different approach.

HRISHI: Right. I had to do a list of my top five scenes from *The West Wing* for *Entertainment Tonight's* website.

JOSH: This was the other thing that made me laugh about the Janice-Josh scene, is that we're constantly asked for this kind of thing, top ten list, favorite scenes.

HRISHI: It was a hard thing to narrow it down to five scenes, but you know I had some in mind right away, but really I thought of six right away, and this was one of them. I didn't include it, if I had had six slots this would've been on the list.

JOSH: I think this is certainly one of my favorites, as I approach the hellish maw of unemployment in March, I'm working on my reel, a marketing tool for an actor with various scenes that you've done, I've gotta see if I can find a way to put this on, or at least a piece of this.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's in my version of your reel.

JOSH: I was proud watching it, I really like the scene, I'm happy with my work in it, and it also just reminded me what incredibly great writing Aaron gave me to do. He's telling the audience "he's one of us". This isn't just a Toby thing, this is Aaron saying this guy is gonna stick around, he hasn't earned it on his own, let me just tell you. I'm literally going to write it down for you, he's a classic Sorkin character. And it also made me really mad — *how* do I not have that prop framed and on my wall. Why didn't I?

HRISHI: Oh my gosh!

JOSH: It was my, whatever, fourth episode of the show, I guess, so I didn't have the presence of mind to steal anything, that would come much later. And boy, I regret that, I wish I had it.

HRISHI: I wonder if it's still out there somewhere. [crosstalk] I hope someone has it.

JOSH: [crosstalk] It's probably been recycled.

HRISHI: And I love, in one episode, seeing Toby really coming around to someone, you know, we don't really see Toby change his mind too often. Sometimes, he's certainly open to having his mind changed, but it's usually about things, not necessarily people, and here, the way he opens up, it endears me to Toby so much and the line that he has about:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

TOBY: I'm sorry we don't know each other, but there aren't that many people I can talk to about it.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Oh I love that line, to me that's the moment where he's really let Will in and then he shares, you know, fairly intimate stuff for Toby with this guy he doesn't know too well.

HRISHI: Yeah

JOSH: I also remember really wanting to smoke a cigar, because I do enjoy cigars and I was jealous that Richard got to smoke one onscreen.

HRISHI: And then the ultimate “he’s one of us,” comes in the very last exchange. It was like, ok we’re going to have a happy Thanksgiving, Toby says “Happy Thanksgiving,” and then he comes back in:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

WILL: Unless you want to start now.

TOBY: Yeah.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: It’s fantastic.

JOSH: Great button.

HRISHI: There was one thing I wanted to nit-pick in this scene though, again, one that I’m surprised made it to the screen.

JOSH: Ah, something else I missed.

HRISHI: When Toby talks about the incredible history of second inaugurals, he says, “Fear itself, Lincoln” ... “Fear itself” is from the first inaugural address of FDR, not his second inaugural.

JOSH: Right, it would not have been difficult to fact-check that.

HRISHI: Right

JOSH: That’s funny, as I re-watched I was going to google it and then I thought, well it’s gotta be, why am I gonna waste my time googling it, he just said it’s the second inaugural, it must have been.

HRISHI: Have you spent much time in Atlantic City? I know you’re a guy who loves casinos.

JOSH: Well you know I love poker, so even though I grew up on the East Coast, I was always more of a poker player than a gambler, and I think that there’s an important distinction between poker players and gamblers. So...

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: I would enjoy an occasional trip to Atlantic City, but I'd rather play poker than blackjack.

HRISHI: Is there not great poker playing at...

JOSH: No, there is now. I think when I was young and living on the East Coast, it was pre-hold 'em boom. To my memory, I don't even remember poker rooms at the casinos.

HRISHI: My God, I'm so naive. I always thought poker was a thing you played at casinos as well.

JOSH: Well maybe I'm wrong, but it definitely became a huge thing with televised poker and many more people wanting to play, but maybe there were small card rooms at casinos, but I don't even remember that being an option when I was younger.

HRISHI: My misinformation here is your fault. Because my real familiarity with poker, I mean I knew the rules of the game and things like that, but I really got to know poker because of Celebrity Poker Showdown.

JOSH: Ah, I appreciate that.

HRISHI: And that was shot in a casino, and so I thought, oh, this is the setting for poker games.

JOSH: Well at the time, it would have been.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] Because that's when the World Series of Poker

JOSH: [crosstalk] Right, it had actually blown up, and people's interest in it, yeah.

HRISHI: Ok, but yeah, that makes sense. So when he's saying Atlantic City, he's not saying to play poker.

JOSH: No, I think he's talking about blackjack, or craps, or he won't sit down playing craps, I guess he's talking about blackjack.

HRISHI: I love everything about this. It's hard to pick out moments of dialogue from this scene that I love because I love so much of it.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

WILL: The last thing you need to worry about is no blood going there, you've got blood going there about 13 ways, and some of it...isn't good.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: I love that

JOSH: This also made me, because Aaron tends also to be so autobiographical and to write from what he's experiencing, it made me wonder whether this is Aaron talking to himself, and did he feel like he was going through some sort of slump writing the show. I don't know, this could be DHM.

HRISHI: Right. Well certainly, even if it's not necessarily this moment, it, I think, clearly reveals episodes from Aaron's life. Just the idea that we don't know each other, but there aren't too many people who I can talk to about this. This is Aaron's confession, in some ways, letting us in on times when it's hard to write.

JOSH: Right.

HRISHI: Even if he wasn't experiencing, you know, it at the time of this.

JOSH: Yes, well yes, that's what I was thinking. This scene is so well-written, he must be talking about another earlier time because he's on fire in this scene.

HRISHI: I love when Toby tells him to stop reading what he wrote.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

TOBY: Stop reading mine.

WILL: Actually, it's...

TOBY: Stop reading it, please.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Ah, so good.

JOSH: It's over.

HRISHI: Let's take a quick break and when we come back, we're going to speak to Richard Schiff

[interlude music]

HRISHI: For another perspective on that scene with Will and Toby, we spoke to Richard Schiff. Richard, you'd actually suggested that you would want to come specifically to discuss the final scene in this episode, in "Arctic Radar". Can you tell us why?

RICHARD: I did because I noticed you were heading there from the tweets and podcasts and so on, and I always remembered that I loved this particular episode, and I had never seen it. But I had loved it because of the way that John Coles, the director, shot that scene where Will and I are in the cafeteria.

JOSH: Are you saying that you *just* watched it, in the last couple days, for the first time?

RICHARD: Yes.

HRISHI: Huh.

JOSH: Wow.

HRISHI: We spoke to John Coles earlier today and he told us that, at first, you were a little bit leery of his directorial approach.

RICHARD: Well at first I'm a little bit of leery of every directorial approach.

JOSH: And every new person that he meets.

RICHARD: That's my default position, but I was leery because this was a very personal episode. It was clearly very personal and close to the nerve center of Aaron Sorkin because he was writing about writing. And so whenever something is sensitized, I'm a little bit leery of directors kind of blowing over the house of cards that I'm building, do you know what I mean? But I think I trusted John pretty quickly just by looking at where he was putting cameras, and how he was shooting stuff. And looking back at this episode, his camera movement is really beautiful, it's almost choreography.

JOSH: Yup

RICHARD: And not just in that scene but throughout the episode.

HRISHI: Speaking of *House of Cards*, did you know that he's an executive producer and sometimes directs that show?

RICHARD: You know I did eventually know that because I saw him in New York a couple years ago and he told me that he was doing that. I used to love using the words "house of cards" to describe the foundation upon which I do most of my acting. And now whenever I say that, I think of the show as well, so I gotta come up with another, you know, "pile of sticks", or something.

JOSH: Or "designated survivor". No, that wouldn't work...

RICHARD: Or "The Bachelor". Um, but I called you guys because this show was particularly important, that delved into the solitary nature of who Toby was, and how the creative nerve of a

writer, of any artist is such a fragile thing. And the theme of the show, in re-watching it, because now I watched the whole thing, there's kind of a whole thing throughout it of needing to connect. And you know what I noticed in that cafeteria scene, is that he glances over the emblem of the United States, "e pluribus unum" which, Josh, in English means what?

JOSH: "Out of many, one."

RICHARD: "Out of many, one." And that seems to me to be the theme of the episode in many ways.

JOSH: Ahhh, hmm.

RICHARD: In defense of the pilot, the fact that all the women were coming at all the men from every possible angle, I don't know when Josh and Donna kind of become aware that they're falling for each other, but it certainly became very clear in this episode, and the fact that there's this need to connect.

JOSH: Yes, we're certainly seeing it from Josh in this episode, we've seen it earlier, for sure, from Donna.

RICHARD: But there's some new, or I guess it's getting closer to the surface or something. And then Leo and the president. It's kind of a collecting-together of everyone and the fact that Toby was so isolated, and the fact that he was, the fact that Aaron expressed Toby's remorse or sadness that Sam was leaving by making it a very kind of personal and selfish reason I thought was brilliant. You know, he doesn't really care if Sam goes, what he cares about is that he's alone to write the inaugural.

JOSH: He's losing his writer. He's worried that he's losing his partner in crime.

RICHARD: And it also gives him an excuse to kind of hang out in his office and give him last minute advice, which he might have done anyway, but the fact that he was hurting and feeling the oncoming doom of writer's cramp getting out of hand.

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

TOBY: I used to write like this. It was 10 months ago...I don't really understand what's going on, I really don't. I've had slumps before, everybody does, but this is different.

[end excerpt]

RICHARD: I was honored that Aaron kind of gave that to me to write because he must be living with that fear every day.

JOSH: Yeah I think that's true. We were commenting on how, if he was feeling in a slump or a creative low ebb, it's ironic because the writing is so great in this episode and in that final scene in particular.

RICHARD: Yeah, and I love the first line that I heard in the episode, was I think C.J. meeting the president at the motorcade outside the White House, telling him about the female pilot and the president saying:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

PRESIDENT BARTLET: Am I a character in this story?

C.J.: Well I suppose that's ...

[end excerpt]

RICHARD: Whether I will be the hero of my own story, the following pages will tell, it kind of refers back to that.

JOSH: Very nice.

HRISHI: By the way, I just want to point out that connecting all those different threads to the great seal and "E pluribus unum," that's a great example of some DHM-mining.

RICHARD: What's DHM mean?

HRISHI: It's something we were talking about earlier in our discussion, it's a term that came from my high school when we would talk about books and try to find the DHM, or the "deep hidden meaning" buried in the pages.

RICHARD: Ah.

JOSH: What Hrishi is saying is that you would be a better co-host than I for this podcast.

RICHARD: Yeah, but I haven't said anything funny yet, and you say everything that ... you need the funny.

JOSH: I'm the color commentary but that was good mining of greater themes, that was good macro work there, Richard.

RICHARD: Well it's kind of what I did every time I read the script. Every time I read Aaron's script, and why I cursed him, every time at the end, because I'd always end up being emotionally invested in it and fighting off tears and it always used to piss me off, it's like you're not going to get me this time.

HRISHI: This is the first time that you and Josh Malina appeared on screen together, and I was wondering whether you could reach back in your memory and tell us about your first impression of Josh.

JOSH: Oh no.

RICHARD: Well it's still formulating.

JOSH: [laughs]

HRISHI: [laughs] Fair enough.

RICHARD: I could tell you because I listen to your podcast, which I love to do, although it's sometimes painful to hear people talk about my character and I'm not there.

JOSH: Oh interesting.

RICHARD: I heard Brad tell the story of Josh, and others...and I didn't know who the hell Josh Malina was, unlike Brad who had worked with Josh on Broadway. Unlike Aaron, of course. And other people ... Tommy, everybody kind of knew Josh but I didn't watch *Sports Night*.

JOSH: You and the rest of America.

RICHARD: And I didn't have any clue who Josh Malina was. And all I knew was that this new guy was coming, and that I was pretty sure that we all knew that Rob was on his way out at that time. And change is something that I think Toby doesn't do well with. And I think that's a quality I gave him because that's a quality I understand really well. So the fact that new person was coming in who I would have to act with already put me on edge, so to speak, and raised the hackles. And then I realized that this attitude might be really intimidating to Josh the actor. And then I thought to myself, that's a good thing. He should be really intimidated to meet Toby and to ... especially that second scene, so I let it be. I didn't try to mess with the fact that I, by default, I didn't like the fact that there was this new person who was going to be on our show. I don't know if Josh actually felt that or if I'm just delusional in thinking that everything I think is actually effective.

JOSH: Yeah. I talked about this a little bit with HrishI earlier. You know, I didn't take it as anything offensive or aggressive. I told HrishI, I was trying to get a sense, as you're trying to do with any actor you're about to do an important scene with that you haven't worked with before. Will and Toby weren't intimate and didn't know each other well, so there's no reason for us to be deflating what we needed to do by getting to know each other particularly well. So I kind of had the sense, I remember you staying at that table there with your cigar and I was like, ok that's how this guy works. That's Richard. And this guy, it might take a little while to warm up, and the

same as could be said for Toby, and I want this guy's respect but I'm not going to beg for it, I'm not his FedEx guy. And it just worked.

RICHARD: And every one of those moments lived out in both of those scenes. This is, I've gotta say, I watch my own work and either cringe or try to forget it or appreciate it on the day if I was able to achieve something. I really, really liked my work in this episode.

JOSH: As well you should!

RICHARD: As I did Josh Malina's, as I did everyone's in this episode. There was a moment that I had forgotten that I was absolutely thrilled that I did, was when I say, "Oh you're Will Bailey".

HRISHI: And you have the little head wiggle!

RICHARD: And I'm sort of singing the song in my head.

HRISHI: [laughs] I was wondering what was behind that move!

JOSH: [laughs]

RICHARD: And I remembered making the choice back then to sing the song in my head 'cause I thought it was really kind of beautiful that Aaron didn't write the comment on it, so that gave me the freedom to come on it, as an actor, in a very small and very subtle way, that I remember on the day, loving that I came up with. Beginning, and then I did it after you left, the song came back into my head and I think it's one of my favorite little choices that I've ever seen you do.

JOSH: That's fantastic.

HRISHI: That's great. We talked about how great that part is, all the non-verbal stuff that happens before, during, and after Will comes into the office.

JOSH: As we've also mentioned in other episodes, I think Richard is a master thereof. I said earlier, if I were directing you, I think I'd start before I said action and I'd let it keep rolling after I said cut I'd just keep going, you're very good at filling the moments, filling the space and the time.

RICHARD: Well I always think that the real life comes between the words, and you can ride the words, the words and your body can kind of come into synchronicity at certain times and explode in great fireworks. But most of the time we don't mean what we say, or we mean something else from what we're saying. Or we're thinking something else from what we're talking about, and Toby very much so had 7 to 12 gears going at the same time, which was my impression of the real White House staff when I met them. That they were saying hello and being polite, but they were thinking about Pakistan.

JOSH: Right.

RICHARD: So I tried to create that as much as possible, but thank you, I take that as a compliment.

HRISHI: That's a great way of putting it, Toby has 7 to 12 gears going at once.

RICHARD: I miss that. I miss the 7 to 12 gears. I'm doing storytelling now that has its benefits, but it's one automatic gear, there's no stick shift. It's very linear and it's very predictable and it's very difficult for me. I've missed the 7 to 12 gears and all the various parts of the machine that Aaron and the rest of us built.

JOSH: Thank you so much.

HRISHI: Thanks so much for coming back on the podcast.

RICHARD: Ok man, take care.

[interlude music]

HRISHI: I had a question for you.

JOSH: Sure.

HRISHI: There was one part in one scene that I didn't quite understand fully, or I have theory but I wanted to see what you thought of it and see if we thought the same thing. Throughout this episode there's a little plot between C.J. and the reporter whose seat she has reassigned.

JOSH: That's another odd little subplot.

HRISHI: Yeah, I mean does resolve, but I wanted to ask you about the resolution. She says, "you win, I lose, I don't want this to be a story, so I'm going to put the news magazines back upfront and I apologize". But then she has this, you know, threat that goes along with it:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

C.J.: When you're not here, there will be a sign on your chair with your name and the name of your publication. I've given C-SPAN permission for a second camera position that's on your seat so the broadcast director can go there at his or her discretion.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: She makes this threat and he has a reaction. It almost seems like in that moment, there is this detente. But then the scene ends with C.J. saying:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

C.J.: This should be about other people, don't you think?

MITCH: As a matter of fact, I do.

C.J.: I know. Happy Thanksgiving, Mitch.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: What do you make of that last exchange? "This should be about other people, don't you think?" "As a matter of fact, I do."

JOSH: I thought it was a little odd at the time, too. This whole subplot I found slightly confusing. I guess the resolution, I take to be that she originally had moved him in a punitive way and perhaps...

HRISHI: No, it wasn't punitive. It was purely functional. She's just trying to, you know, cosmetically, not show empty seats in the briefing room. What she says is, "there are cameras in here now, that are framing part of the gallery and not just podium, and the news magazines aren't here every day, so the camera is getting a couple of empty seats." So she moved it to make a better frame for the cameras, and he takes it as an insult. And she's like I really didn't mean it as one, it's just that I'm just trying to solve this problem. And then he says he's going to make a big stink about it, and so she says, "Ok fine, you win, I will move them back, so your seat is in there, I still have this problem of the empty seat, so now it's up to you to solve this for me."

JOSH: So you're asking...

HRISHI: Just the line, "this should be about other people."

JOSH: I just took that to mean that we shouldn't be fighting about, that essentially this sort of strain between the press and the communications office is silly and not where the focus ought to be. Like, let's get past the logistics of it all and it led me into a Trump-ai-yi-yi moment, given the adversarial relationship between press secretary and press coming out of the White House and almost the entire press corps. I just kind of took it to mean, we should be focused on stories that don't include ourselves.

HRISHI: Right, that's how I took it as well. I just was a little bit confused about either the "this" was confusing or who she meant by "other people." I understand what she's saying about it shouldn't be about you the reporter and me the press secretary. It should be about the issues, what the President is doing, what we're doing as an administration. But to use the phrase "other people" to mean that, was a little confusing, I thought.

JOSH: Fair enough.

HRISHI: It's still not other people, it's still her, but it shouldn't be this personal thing. And you know, I bumped on it, you might say.

JOSH: There you go.

HRISHI: You know what we didn't talk about yet:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

WILL: Yeah you know what, not your FedEx guy.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Oh yeah, fantastic line. Oh, how I love that line.

HRISHI: This was one of Will Bailey's classic lines, you're only four episodes in and this is already one of your classic lines.

JOSH: It's Will's "I told many, many people."

HRISHI: I was thinking about this line when Aaron asked you to tweet a response to Sterling K. Brown, I thought, "Not your FedEx guy."

JOSH: That would've been funny.

HRISHI: But I *am* your Twitter guy.

JOSH: That would've been a funny response, I wish I had done it. By the way, I think it's sort of fiendishly clever of Aaron, he's now put off the possibility...I don't really know how much of a possibility there ever was, or even if we'd really want to revisit *The West Wing*, as much as I say "Yes! Let's do it!" because I am excited at the possibility, though part of me also thinks, it was really good, maybe leave it at that. But I think Aaron feels the same way, I don't think Aaron is going back to it, and when he's now officially gone on record saying it would be with *that* guy who's in a monster hit show at the beginning of probably what will be a seven or eight year run, it's like you can't really bring it up again now, he's done a clever thing, you just keep stoking the fire and throw the little raw meat to the fans, but also buy himself years when it just can't possibly be done.

HRISHI: Mmm hnm. I thought specifically this section, from the Josh-Donna-Jack love triangle subplot was great. When Donna finally is on her to go on a date with Jack Reese, Josh says:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

JOSH: Those are good stories about you, though. Those stories would make me like you.

[end excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah.

HRISHI: I loved that whole thing, you know? Her shock and dismay at which stories he's decided to tell Jack. This is some good Josh-Donna stuff.

JOSH: No, this is very good, because while it horrifies her, we're getting in a window into the stuff he loves about her and all her imperfections and weirdness and whatever, it's sweet. It is sweet.

HRISHI: And he just can't stop himself, you know? He's assured Jack Reese that it's not a thing, that he doesn't have feelings for her, and he's done talking about her. And then he's like:

[West Wing Episode 4.10 excerpt]

JOSH: We're done talking about Donna. Whose full name is Donnatella, by the way. Mom's Italian, dad's Irish.

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: He just can't stop.

JOSH: It's good rom-com stuff.

HRISHI: With that, are you rooting for Jack and Donna? Or against? You have to root against. You want Donna to be happy but you can't help but root against it.

JOSH: I guess so, but it feels to me like if anything is to happen with Josh and Donna, it's gonna happen so far down the line that, like, you know, let her have a little relationship in here in the meantime.

HRISHI: Uh huh.

JOSH: No I don't think I do root against them.

HRISHI: Ok.

JOSH: Though they'd have to be a James Carville / Mary Matalin type couple.

HRISHI: Maybe. I mean we know what Jack Reese, why he was voting for Ritchie was specifically on the issue of...

JOSH: Military spending.

HRISHI: Yeah so he might be a one-issue voter.

JOSH: Fair enough, true.

HRISHI: Back to the important stuff, C.J. I think has a new haircut.

JOSH: Does she?

HRISHI: It looks very nice.

JOSH: You pig.

HRISHI: I believe she's, her hair is shorter now, or was that hairstyle there earlier in the season?

JOSH: I don't remember.

HRISHI: I like it.

JOSH: That does it, I guess, for another episode of The West Wing Weekly. Thanks for listening. The West Wing Weekly, it's worth noting, is a proud member of Radiotopia. What's Radiotopia, Hrish?

HRISHI: A curated collection of fiercely independent, extraordinary podcasts.

JOSH: Podcast

HRISHI: You can learn about all of them at radiotopia.fm. Podcast?

JOSH: I just wanted to throw in one more of whatever that is that we do, because it really is ticking somebody off the website.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Did you read that?

HRISHI: Oh really? No.

JOSH: Well I was a little bit out of control last episode, with doing it. So somebody posted, “enough already!” Which of course, because I am perverse, makes me want to do it more. But anyway, this episode was produced by Hrishi and me, and it was created with the very, very important help of Zach McNees and Margaret Miller.

HRISHI: You can find us on all the places on all the things online.

JOSH: [laughs] That’s good!

HRISHI: Chris Lu, our guest, is [@ChrisLu44](#) on Twitter. Richard Schiff is on Twitter [@Richard Schiff](#).

JOSH: By the way, if you’re going to attend our live Big Block of Cheese Day event at San Francisco’s SketchFest on January 13, and if you have provided us with your email address through the venue, then you have no doubt gotten an email from us soliciting your questions and stories. Keep those coming. If you’re attending that event, and you have a ticket, and you have a question or a comment that you’d like to make from stage as you eat cheese with us, just send it to memos@thewestwingweekly.com and I guess a picture of your tickets just so we know you really are going to be there.

HRISHI: We’d love to hear from you.

JOSH: Yeah we would.

HRISHI: We haven’t heard from enough of you.

JOSH: That’s right. What is it, scared to eat cheese with us onstage? It’ll be fun.

HRISHI: Exciting news about that show is that we’re going to be joined by special guest Dulé Hill.

JOSH: Wooooo!

HRISHI: Before we sign off, just wanted to wish you all a Happy New Year from all of us at The West Wing Weekly, we’ll be off for the next few weeks as we celebrate the holidays and as we prepare for our live San Francisco Big Block of Cheese Day event on January 13, hope to see some of you there. We’ll be back with a new episode talking about “Holy Night” on January 18, 2018. Until then, we’ll say. Ok.

JOSH: Ok.

CHRIS, JOHN, RICHARD: What’s next?

[Outro Music]