

# What's On

The scenery is what is remembered from 'The Hush'

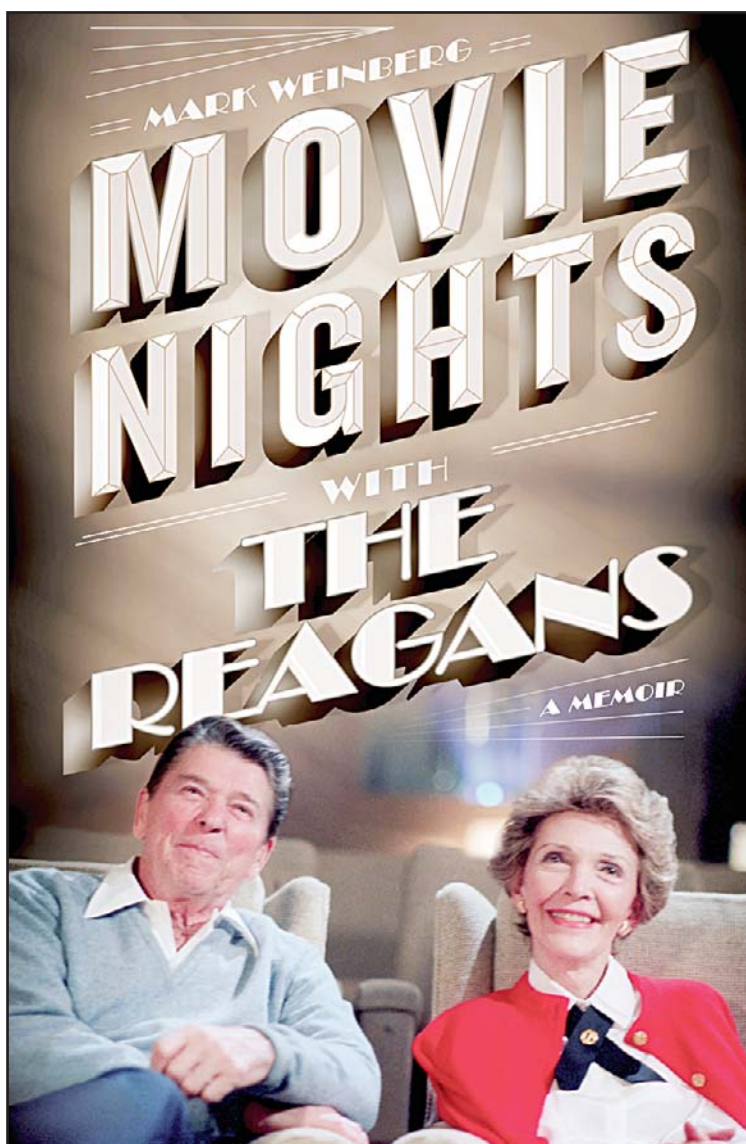
## 'Movie Nights' memoir connects Reagans to '80s films

By Douglass K. Daniel

**M**ovie Nights with the Reagans: A Memoir (Simon & Schuster), by Mark Weinberg  
The Aspen Movie Club may well have been the most exclusive gathering of its kind. Most weekend nights in the 1980s, its members appeared at 8 o'clock at Aspen Lodge, the presidential residence at Camp David, Maryland, to watch a film. The hosts were Ronald and Nancy Reagan, the guests were their staff and others on hand.

The screenings offered the Reagans an opportunity to stay in touch with what had been the family business. Reagan began his film career in the late 1930s and was more successful than his political critics would give him credit. Nancy Davis first appeared on-screen in 1949 but may have found her true calling supporting her husband's ambitions. Most of all, however, movies at Camp David offered the former actors the same kind of escape most people seek in a dark theater.

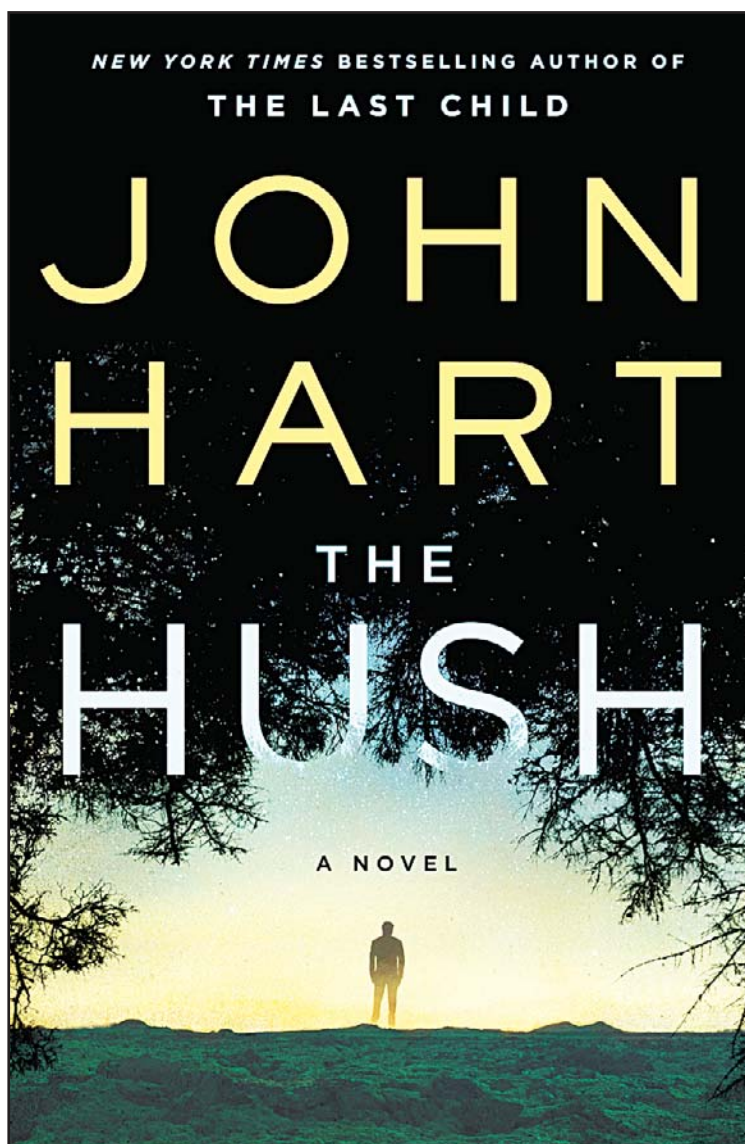
"He didn't screen movies based on their ideology. That's not what our movie nights were about," Mark Weinberg observes in a modest memoir about his years as an aide to the president. "Movie nights were a diversion from the business of governing — or the business of campaigning — and a chance for the Reagans to relax and enjoy the art form that brought them together in the first place."  
"Movie Nights with the Reagans" adds valuable touches to the warm personal images of the Reagans already established elsewhere. The president wasn't too busy to call Weinberg into the Oval Office to return a pen he had borrowed a few days earlier. He wasn't too big to tell the movie group that he was sorry for a crack he'd made the night before about Weinberg sounding like a communist while discussing the Soviet invasion film "Red Dawn" (1984). And the president never appeared unhappy to meet a member of his staff's family. Such personal moments are more telling and compelling than many of the public ones Weinberg revisits as he tries — sometimes too hard — to connect the films the



This cover image released by Simon & Schuster shows 'Movie Nights with the Reagans', a memoir by Mark Weinberg. (AP)

Reagans watched to the Reagans themselves. "The Untouchables" (1987) becomes a platform to discuss the president's distaste for organized crime. "On Golden Pond" (1981) prompts Weinberg to speculate about whether it might have led Reagan to think about his difficult relationship with his daughter Patti. Reagan

found inspiration in "Chariots of Fire" (1981), and Weinberg uses the film to discuss Reagan's affection for British culture as well as his relationship with British prime minister Margaret Thatcher and the royal family.  
There are too few instances in which Weinberg can offer meaningful memories of the Reagans commenting



This cover image released by St Martin's Press shows 'The Hush', a novel by John Hart. (AP)

on a film, a disappointment given the book's title. One worth noting: Both were unhappy with the pot smoking in the comedy "9 to 5" (1980) and Mrs Reagan even referenced it in her "just say no" campaign against drug use. On the other hand, Weinberg provides enough anecdotes away from the screenings to give his book

an insider's vibe and to add to our understanding of Reagan the man if not Reagan the fan.

"The Hush: a Novel" (St. Martin's Press), by John Hart  
Series, or sequels to a novel, work because the stories have a continuity

that invests the reader in the characters' next adventures. Interest can be maintained a few years between stories, but the more that years pass, the less the momentum survives.

That's one of the drawbacks of "The Hush," which picks up the story of Johnny Merrimon, who was introduced in John Hart's Edgar-winning 2009 novel, "The Last Child." In the previous novel, 13-year-old Johnny was obsessed with finding the man who killed his twin sister, Alyssa. The quest took Johnny into hearts of darkness no child should ever know about. In "The Last Child," Johnny's vivid character was comparable to Scout Finch in "To Kill a Mockingbird."

"The Hush" picks up Johnny's life 10 years later. While Johnny's backstory isn't too difficult to catch up with, "The Hush" is so disconnected to "The Last Child" that it barely works as a sequel.  
The decade has been difficult for Johnny, who became a minor celebrity whose exploits with a killer were detailed in a true-crime book. But the 23-year-old now is a near hermit, whose infrequent visits to the small North Carolina town for supplies bring stares and speculation about "the darker currents that ran beneath" Johnny's persona.

Johnny is nearly penniless but land-rich, living on 6,000 acres called Hush Arbor that had he inherited from a complicated deed. Hush Arbor once belonged to Isaac Freemantle, the first freed slave in Raven County. Many of Freemantle's descendants are buried there, as are some of Johnny's ancestors. Johnny's ownership of Hush Arbor is being challenged by a relative of Freemantle, and mega-wealthy businessman William Boyd wants to buy the land to use for hunting.

"The Hush" is strongest when Hart concentrates on the evocative setting, heightened by a strong sense of place with Hush Arbor. But the magical realism aspects do not resonate and become increasingly far-fetched. The beautiful North Carolina scenery is what is remembered from "The Hush," not the characters. Johnny, so well-sculpted in "The Last Child," is a mere shadow of himself and Hart doesn't delve deeply enough into his psyche. (AP)

Luxury travel meets murder

## Inside Agatha Christie's world: Postcard from the Orient Express

PARIS, Feb 27, (AP) — Luxury travel meets murder.

Aboard the original Orient Express for the first time, Agatha Christie's great-grandson James Prichard reminisced on how the Queen of Crime became enchanted with the fabled locomotive, and how its legendary route to the exotic east not only inspired one of her most famous novels, "Murder on the Orient Express," but it defined her.

"The Orient Express changed her life," Prichard told The Associated Press.

Christie first traveled on the iconic Orient Express in 1928 during the most painful moment in her life, after Prichard's great-grandfather, Archie Christie, walked out on her.

"She wanted a holiday and someone suggested she went on an archaeological dig in Syria," Prichard said. For a woman traveling solo in that era, the trip was "extraordinarily brave and adventurous," he added. She met an archaeologist on the trip, Max Mallowan, who became her second husband, and they traveled via the Orient Express for years to digs

in the Middle East. "That was their commute, that's how they got there," Prichard said.

Prichard spoke about the family matriarch while traveling from Paris to France's Champagne region on a train chartered by 20th Century Fox to mark the home entertainment release this month of director Kenneth Branagh's movie "Murder on the Orient Express." The train's star-studded cast includes Judi Dench, Penelope Cruz and Johnny Depp.

Looking around a restored 1920s rail car called Etoile du Nord, Prichard said he could see the appeal in "the beauty of the train." The art deco-style car with birch burl panels and exotic woodwork by famed French decorator Rene Prou was refurbished last year by France's national rail network, the SNCF. Prichard and other guests were duly pampered onboard with Maison Laduree pastries and luxury Puiforcat tableware.

The Orient Express launched in 1883 with its run from Paris to Constantinople that quickly saw it emerge as the symbol of travel's golden age; a byword for luxury. That route ended

in 1977 with the growth of high-speed trains and affordable flights, but it served a shorter route until 2009, when it disappeared from official timetables altogether. The train is

now France's premier museum-on-wheels, classified as a French Historic Monument, and owned, along with its famous name, by the French state. These days, it only travels out "except-



Actors wait for guests on the platform by the Orient Express at the Gare de l'Est train station in Paris on Feb 13. (AP)

tionnement," as the French say.

But the 1934 publication of Christie's novel saw the Orient Express become a symbol of something sinister: murder. A 1974 film won an Oscar for Ingrid Bergman, and the story's enduring popularity in stage, television and cinema has forever bound the train to the murder mystery.

Why did Christie use the Orient Express as a setting for something so dark? Prichard says the train's unique mix of foreigners, luxury and exoticism in an opulent but confined setting made it "perfect" for a whodunit with the mustached Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. "One of the first things you need for an Agatha Christie mystery is an enclosed space," Prichard said. The train compartments offered "12 people who couldn't go anywhere," all of them presenting a facade over their true selves.

Riding the train provided days of study for the author. "She observed — and that's where some of this writing came from, was her ability to observe people and situations and then make the leap — bizarrely — to murder," Prichard said. She'd have seen "glam-

orous strangers dressed to the nines for breakfast, for lunch, for tea, for dinner — but who were they behind that theater?"

And while the carriages are beautiful, they are tight, forcing glamorous strangers to brush against one another by Cuban mahogany paneling and pressed glass window reliefs if they pass in a corridor.

Christie frequently crafted her plots by putting disparate characters together in an exotic location, then imagining the fallout from a murder. Not everything was made up, though. In the book, the train gets stuck in a snow drift, giving Poirot time to gather clues and interview each traveler. Prichard notes that in 1929, the real Orient Express train got trapped by a blizzard, and later, an Orient Express train on which Christie was traveling got stuck in flooding, with track sections washed away.

As custodian and CEO of the Agatha Christie estate, Prichard handles artistic rights and must OK productions using Christie's work. He served as executive producer on the Branagh adaptation.

### Conceptis Sudoku

The grid must be so completed that every row, column and 3x3 box has every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive

By Dave Green

	8	5	7		9	4	3	
		2			9			
6	5						8	9
8	2		3				7	5
		7			2			
	3	9	1	7	8	5		

Difficulty Level ★★

Answer to yesterday's puzzle

7	2	1	6	9	4	8	3	5
3	4	8	1	5	2	7	6	9
9	5	6	3	7	8	2	1	4
5	8	9	7	4	1	6	2	3
6	3	4	8	2	9	1	5	7
2	1	7	5	6	3	9	4	8
1	6	5	9	3	7	4	8	2
4	7	3	2	8	6	5	9	1
8	9	2	4	1	5	3	7	6

Difficulty Level ★

### Challenger

DIRECTIONS:

Fill each square with a number, one through nine.  
■ Horizontal squares should add to totals on right.  
■ Vertical squares should add to totals on bottom.  
■ Diagonal squares through center should add to total in upper and lower right.

THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE SOLUTION.

Today's Challenge  
Time 1 Minutes  
16 Seconds  
Your Working Time — Minutes  
— Seconds

By LIP MORA

				10
	5			20
			3	15
		5		20
3				7
30	14	12	6	17

Yesterday's solution

				8
2	1	2	1	6
1	2	1	1	5
2	3	1	2	8
3	2	1	1	7
8	8	5	5	6

### contract bridge

By Steve Becker

It's so easy to self-destruct

South dealer.  
Both sides vulnerable.

**NORTH**  
♠ 7 3  
♥ A Q 8 5 2  
♦ J 9 4  
♣ 6 5 2

**WEST**  
♠ A Q J 9 5  
♥ 6  
♦ K 8 6 3  
♣ J 10 7

**EAST**  
♠ 10 8 4 2  
♥ 9 7  
♦ Q 10 7 2  
♣ Q 9 4

**SOUTH**  
♠ K 6  
♥ K J 10 4 3  
♦ A 5  
♣ A K 8 3

The bidding:  
South 1♥  
West 1♣  
North 2♥  
East Pass

Opening lead jack of clubs.

Assume you get to four hearts on the bidding shown and West leads the jack of clubs. How would you play the hand?  
When the deal occurred, declarer won the club with the ace, drew two rounds of trumps ending in dummy and led a low club. When East produced the nine, South took it with the king (if he hadn't, East's nine would have won the trick). Then, for want of anything better to do, declarer exited with a club to East's queen.  
East's spade return was covered by the king and ace, whereupon West

cached the queen of spades and shifted to a diamond. South still had to lose a diamond trick and so finished down one.

Declarer would have made the contract had he played more carefully. He could see at the outset that he had a club, a diamond and two spades to lose, except in the unlikely event that East had the ace of spades.

His only real hope, therefore, was to find the clubs divided 3-3, in which case a spade loser could eventually be discarded from dummy on South's fourth club. Even this would not succeed, though, if East gained the lead while the long club was being established.

To neutralize this threat, declarer should have allowed West's jack of clubs to hold the first trick! After this, South would have had no difficulty emerging with 10 tricks. His only losers would have been a club, a spade and a diamond.

Note that as the cards lie, no defense can defeat four hearts after the jack of clubs is led. If East plays his queen on the jack, South wins with the ace, draws trumps and leads a club from dummy.

If East follows with the four, declarer plays the eight to achieve the winning position. If East instead plays the nine, South wins and concedes a trick to West's ten to bring the contract home.

Tomorrow: Razzle-dazzle declarer play.

### Word by Word

Hungry (جوعان) Jawaan

A hungry man is an angry man.  
Al rajol al jawaan rajol ghadhdhan.

Numbers الرجل الجوعان رجل غضبان.

7798 Seven thousand seven hundred ninety eight

٧٧٩٨ Sabat alaf wa sabou maaha wa thamaniya wa tesoun



"YES, I'M PLAYIN' WITH MY FOOD... 'CAUSE I SURE DON'T WANT TO EAT IT."