



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 26, 2024

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The Patriot's Patriot: A Tribute to John F. McManus (1935-2024)

If we can judge a man by his enemies, John F. McManus deserves the highest respect and most fervent praise. Throughout his more than half-century career with The John Birch Society (JBS), he braved every epithet of the leftist lexicon: racist, antisemitic, right-wing extremist, and many others. His enemies had to use fraudulent slurs. The man himself was above reproach.

How else could the stone-throwing never have deterred him from tireless efforts to expose the powerful elites who seek to undermine American sovereignty and establish one-world government? A lesser man would have failed. On the contrary, the diabolical ad hominem only encouraged him; they meant he was over the target.

Still, none can imagine the resistance he faced and trials he endured — both overt and occult — as chief JBS spokesman, especially through the long, dry years before the internet and social media opened the floodgates of supportive alternative news sources, and Covid diminished the stigma of the CIA-coined gaslighting term “conspiracy theory.”

Indeed, McManus helped lead the Society as it alone carried the torch handed down from early-20th-century Communist Party defectors such as Manning Johnson, Bella Dodd, and Louis Budenz, who had repeatedly tried to warn the American people of the international plot against our culture and our country. Senator Joseph McCarthy is still maligned today for his attempts to convey their messages.

One year after that American hero's death in 1957 and undaunted by the prospect of a similar fate, Robert Welch launched the JBS. McManus, who joined in 1964 and soon became one of Welch's closest personal confidants, ensured that the founder's vision remained alive after the elder passed away in 1985. Even today, JBS remains the lone voice calling out America's most nefarious enemies, despite the smears and insults that the organization sustains in return. Every member, from current leadership to chapter activist, has McManus to thank, second only to Robert Welch, for keeping the ship on course amid the storms throughout most of its 65-year history.

What likely suited McManus best for the crusader role was that he was once, ironically, numbered among the Society's detractors. Jack (as he was known by family and friends) enjoyed telling the story of his conversion, which began in 1962, when “The John Birch Society was in the headlines almost on a daily basis, being called a secret, fascist, un-American organization, like the Klan, like the Communists, like the Nazis,” he recalled to one audience. “Any nasty thing that could be said *was* being said about The John Birch Society.”



John F. McManus



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“I thought it a shame that something like this existed in my country” the Marine veteran said, and he wondered why the leading conservative publication at the time, *National Review*, had not commented on it. As a subscriber, Jack waited patiently for the publisher, William F. Buckley, Jr., to advise his readers on the situation. Finally, the reputed godfather of American conservatives penned a six-page editorial. Jack remembered the gist of the message: “There are a lot of good people in The John Birch Society, but what they ought to do is get rid of that screwball, Robert Welch, who’s running it.”

Jack wrote in, praising Buckley’s op-ed, and *National Review* printed his letter, identifying his name and hometown. A local Birch member responded to Jack, writing, “Are you basing your attitude about Robert Welch on what Robert Welch has said, or on what others have said of him?”

In the honesty and humility that formed the bedrock of his character, Jack thought, “That’s a good question!” He had to admit he had never read a JBS publication, and he answered the challenge by agreeing to study anything recommended by this “good” person, who was unfortunately hoodwinked by that “screwball” Welch. “My intention was to show him how wrong he was,” Jack grinned. “It didn’t work that way.”

He started reading books published by the Society, “books they had brought back into circulation — books of the past that had been smothered and gone out of print.” He read *I Saw Poland Betrayed*, written by Arthur Bliss Lane, the American ambassador to that country during World War II who witnessed firsthand its betrayal to the Soviet Union by Western “allies.”



In *Major Jordan’s Diaries* by U.S. Army officer George Racey Jordan, Jack also learned of the transfer by the U.S. government of materials and atomic technology to the Soviets during the Second World War, setting the stage for its sequel, the decades-long Cold War.

While You Slept: Our Tragedy in Asia and Who Made It was another eye-opening title. Jack read with horror this account, written by the prominent mid-20th century journalist John T. Flynn. It told how U.S. leaders double-crossed the Chinese Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek and handed the vast, unfortunate land over to the murderous communist leader Mao Tse-tung.

These and other works, many by Welch himself, convinced Jack of the legitimacy and urgency of the JBS



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mission, and he added his name to the Society roster. So effective was he in education and recruitment efforts that a mere two years later, in 1966, Welch offered him a full-time field coordinator position.

What to do? He was the young father of a growing family, having married the former Mary Helen O'Reilly of Boston in 1957, the same year he graduated from The College of the Holy Cross with a bachelor of science in physics and a commission in the U.S. Marine Corps. After three years' active duty, an award from the U.S. Air Force for his design of a component used in fighter planes, and an honorable discharge, he had begun a lucrative career in the field of electronics engineering. Would it be wise to pivot so drastically from his planned path and launch into Welch's nascent undertaking, vastly outnumbered in both manpower and resources, in its daunting quest to save America's constitutional republic from her enemies?

For Jack, there was no question. He realized that if this battle were lost, there would be no future for his family or country. He eagerly accepted the post. For seven years his territory encompassed five New England states, where he so greatly expanded Society numbers and reach that in 1973, Welch promoted him to director of public affairs.

During the next 18 years, Jack was the voice of JBS. And what a voice! He had only to begin speaking, and audiences were captivated. His dialect was a unique medley of a gritty, animated brogue from his native Brooklyn, tempered by the round-toned Bostonian Brahmin of his adopted home. His delivery was both commanding and inspiring, and it, combined with his encyclopedic knowledge, allowed him to educate and entertain while transforming listeners into fellow crusaders.

As chief Society spokesman, Jack tirelessly traveled his beloved country in efforts to preserve her constitutional government and unmask the international conspiracy that threatens both Western culture and national sovereignty. Along with attending innumerable Birch events and JBS Youth Camps for which he served as speaker, he appeared on countless radio and television programs, including more than a dozen C-SPAN airings and an interview on CNN's longest-running talk show, *Larry King Live*.



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During his years as public-affairs director, he also began adding to the Society's compendium of research with books of his own. Borrowing then-president-elect Jimmy Carter's term for Deep State operatives, he wrote *The Insiders*, a 1976 exposé of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission. Popular demand for the slim volume would generate four more editions, each an update of the previous version, the last appearing in 2004.

Jack's influence only grew after he was appointed president of the Society in June of 1991. He filled that role until 2004, but when JBS hit a turbulent year in 2005, the die-hard patriot emerged from semi-retirement to take the helm once again, for 11 more years. During that time, he concurrently served as publisher of the organization's flagship magazine, *The New American*.

Despite his expanded duties and hectic travel schedule, he still found time to write. The year 1993 saw publication of *Financial Terrorism: Hijacking America Under the Threat of Bankruptcy*, which reveals how international banking interests and the Federal Reserve System work to undermine the nation's economic stability. Two years later, [Changing Commands: The Betrayal of America's Military](#) told the story of threats to U.S. national security through subjection of our armed forces to the UN.

Jack produced "A New World Order" Means World Government in 2000, and in 2002 he would unmask the man he once considered a paragon of conservatism in [William F. Buckley, Jr.: Pied Piper for the Establishment](#). He rounded out the first decade of the 21st century with two booklets: [Restoring the Rights of the States and the People Through Respectful Adherence to the U.S. Constitution](#), and *Dollars & Sense: Solutions to the Economic Meltdown*.

Semi-retirement in 2016 only translated into "more time to educate," and he remained a popular speaker as well as a regular contributor to Society publications. In 2018, to the delight of both seasoned



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Birchers and newcomers to the cause, he published an invaluable chronicle called [The John Birch Society: Its History Recounted by Someone Who Was There](#).

These and other writings, too numerous to mention here, preserve his wit and wisdom for future generations, as does his extensive filmography, which spans nearly half a century. Many consider his magnum opus to be the influential [Overview of America](#), which remains one of the organization's primary educational tools. Many have said that owing to his eloquence and lucidity, this 30-minute presentation is worth more than four years of study at a modern university for a political science degree.

Despite such compliments throughout his career, Jack remained remarkably humble, a virtue which can be attributed to his deeply held spiritual beliefs, instilled from childhood. Born in 1935, the second of three sons and a daughter, to Venerando Paul McManus and Dorothea Frances (nee Devenport), his was a happy Irish Catholic upbringing. Their father sent the boys to his alma mater, the Brooklyn Preparatory School, which operated from 1908 until 1972 when modernist tendencies would no longer brook the academy's high standards. Later, Jack would bemoan its closure, but when he attended Brooklyn Prep, it was a milieu of traditional values, classical scholarship, and strict dress codes. The eager student earned good grades and played varsity basketball.

In 1953 he set off for Worcester, Massachusetts, and The College of the Holy Cross, which his Uncle Edwin had attended nearly 30 years prior. Jack was prodigiously proud of Father Edwin McManus, who donned the black robes of the Society of Jesus in 1928, served as a U.S. Army chaplain during World War II, and spent most of his postwar life as a foreign missionary in the Palau Islands of the South Pacific. It was a land so desolate that the native tongue had no written form. Father McManus remedied that, not only mastering the language itself but also composing a first-of-its-kind Palauan-English dictionary, published by Georgetown University Press shortly after his untimely death in 1969. So important was Father McManus' work — both priestly and linguistic — that in 1991, the country issued two postage stamps commemorating him, and his memory is still revered in the Islands to the present day.



Though Jack did not follow his uncle into Holy Orders, instead raising four children in imitation of his own father, he would nevertheless adopt the spiritual practices of the sacred congregation known as



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Militia Immaculatae Cordis Mariae (Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary). In the 1970s he became a lay-member, or “tertiary,” and took the religious name of Brother John Berchmans. Years later, an acquaintance mocked the moniker, attributing his decision to a feeble attempt to tie in to the John Birch label. Jack laughed heartily; the thought had never occurred to him. He had fostered a devotion to Saint John Berchmans, the patron of altar boys, since his days serving Mass as a youngster back in New York. Moreover, Saint John was known by companions as “the cheerful brother,” so the name was even a good match for Jack’s humorous disposition.

Nevertheless, it is true that both his Birch work and his religious life were inextricably interwoven, for he considered the Society as more than an employer — it was a moral responsibility. Nowhere is this more evident than in yet another title to his credit, *The Deep Church Revealed: An Enemy Within*, released by Loreto Publications in 2020. Its publisher’s description calls it “the product of almost seventy years of close observation and deep study in a turbulent world of rapid change and degradation of church and society.” Beginning with the founding of the Illuminati in 1776, it traces how the hierarchy of Jack’s beloved Catholic Church has since been infiltrated by her most pernicious enemies and how that decay has adversely affected the entire world.

That would be Jack’s last completed book, for God called the tried and chosen to his eternal reward on March 4, 2024, a little more than one month after his 89th birthday and 10 months after his dear wife of 65 years preceded him. They had lived to enjoy seven beautiful grandchildren, who, because of his brave endeavors, now have a chance to live free.

So do we, but the outcome depends on our taking up the standard that Jack carried so nobly through life and, indeed, up to his last moments. He died “with his boots on,” amid writing yet another book, which bore the working title *A Conspiracy So Monstrous*, a line borrowed from former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who also tried to warn America of its rot from within. In Jack’s own words from his draft: “Our goal will be reached through raising awareness of the existence of this monstrous plot and shining the light of truth on its evil plans to destroy freedom and rule mankind.” May the memory of John F. McManus inspire us to continue working toward his godly aim.

In Loving Memory: John F. McManus, January 24, 1935 - March 4, 2024

*Many of us who work for The John Birch Society chose it because we want to work with our heroes. For me, Jack was one of those heroes. I’m going to miss calling him and hearing his voice. He was one of America’s greatest warriors, whose focus was not only on his country but on the eternal life ahead. John F. McManus has finished the race. May his memory be eternal. — **Evan Mulch**, field resources creator for The John Birch Society*

*When I was with him, I would think to myself, “I am in the presence of greatness.” In The John Birch Society, I was rubbing shoulders with a man that had been fighting the battle long before I even knew it existed. The torch has been passed, and I have absolute clarity that the mission for which he sacrificed so much of his life now falls on the rest of us who survive him. Jack, you will be sorely missed. Thank you for making me feel that I am capable of all that is necessary to further our cause. — **Tom Munds**, JBS field coordinator in Idaho*



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*Jack had a profound impact on my life. America and the JBS have lost a titan. — **Tom Rice**, JBS home chapter coordinator*

*Jack was a master at persuasive communications. He really built enduring loyalty in the membership. — **Marty Ohlson**, president of The John Birch Society*

*He had the heart of a teacher, a mind of a storyteller, and always worked to protect what he loved: God, family, and country. — **Bill Hahn**, CEO of The John Birch Society*

*He always started speeches with some corny joke and within two minutes had the crowd in the palm of his hand. He ended every speech with an appeal to join The John Birch Society. Jack was always so supportive and encouraging to the field coordinators as well. More than once I would be opening the mail in Oklahoma and receive a newspaper clipping he'd mailed from Massachusetts! He knew how difficult and often thankless our jobs are, and always sought to encourage and show appreciation. Oh, he will be sorely missed. John McManus was somehow cut from a different cloth than most. — **Michael Sawyer**, JBS field coordinator in Oklahoma*

*Jack just had that uncanny ability to take things that were seemingly complicated, whether they had to do with moral issues, political issues, or social issues, and express them in a way that could be very easily understood, simply and succinctly. — **Gary Benoit**, editor-in-chief of The New American*

*I was a senior in college, and I was in the midst of my socialist detox of the indoctrination through school and media. I was thunderstruck by [Overview of Our World], because Jack, in a very succinct manner, had distilled and crystallized and articulated these fundamental principles that had evaded me during all my years of schooling. — **William F. Jasper**, senior editor of The New American*

*Jack was a close friend of my father, Dr. Philip Binzel, and I was privileged to enjoy his friendship as well. I truly mourn the loss of my friend and mentor, a devout traditional Catholic, and a great patriot. — **Mary Black**, curriculum creator at FreedomProject Academy*

*Jack always knew his battle was with the forces of darkness, with demons and hell itself. He knew that if America fell, millions of souls would go to hell. Jack knew he had a sword. It was his pen, and he used that sword to send the hounds of hell scurrying back to their pit of despair. — **Matt Rhodes**, JBS field coordinator in Maine*



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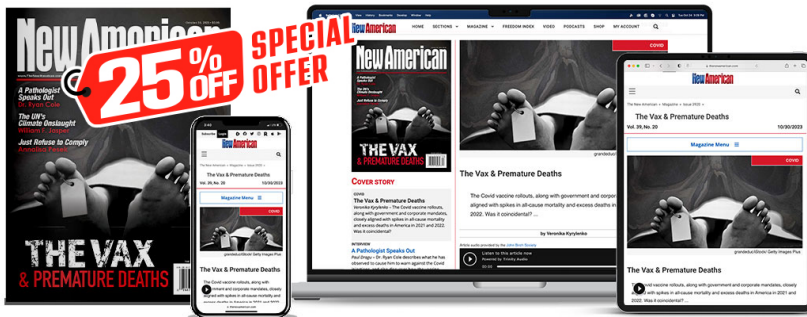
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