



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 26, 2018

McCain Was No Maverick on POWs

The predictable hosannas to Senator John  McCain, who died Saturday of brain cancer, came surging in like a category 5 hurricane. The *Washington Post* published 14 items on its front webpage today; the *New York Times* a mere six.

The Republican from Arizona was a “maverick” and a “hero” and, as the *Post* put it, “a force of nature in Washington with an unrivaled global stature.”

True perhaps, and McCain’s tenure in school, the Navy, and in Congress, stories about which are legion, are legendary. But not always in the best way.

McCain On POWs

One would think that McCain’s nearly six years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam would have made him a natural to lead the effort to recover the POWs the Nixon Administration left behind. But alas, the “maverick” toed the government line: It had “no evidence” we left men there.

McCain fought tooth and nail against anyone who attempted to disclose the truth. And as *The New American* reported in its most recent print edition, quoting the late Vietnam war correspondent [Sydney Schanberg](#), McCain was quite vicious about it when he served on the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs (see our article “[Evidence of POWs in Vietnam](#)”).

The evidence the committee gathered showed without doubt that at least 700 men were left behind in Vietnam. But McCain didn’t want to hear the truth.

[Wrote Schanberg:](#)

McCain has insisted again and again that all the evidence — documents, witnesses, satellite photos, two Pentagon chiefs’ sworn testimony, aborted rescue missions, ransom offers apparently scorned — has been woven together by unscrupulous deceivers to create an insidious and unpatriotic myth. He calls it the “bizarre rantings of the MIA hobbyists.” He has regularly vilified those who keep trying to pry out classified documents as “hoaxers,” “charlatans,” “conspiracy theorists,” and “dime-store Rambos.

As well, *TNA* reported, McCain “browbeat expert witnesses,” while family members who “pressed him to end the secrecy also have been treated to his legendary temper. He has screamed at them, insulted them, brought women to tears.”

When POW activist Dolores Alfond, of the [National Alliance of Families](#), appeared before the committee, and cited iron-clad electronic intelligence that showed Americans alive in Vietnam in 1974, McCain, the “maverick,” showed up to pound her into the ground. Alfond’s brother, [Victor Apodaca](#), was a Air Force pilot shot down over North Vietnam.

“McCain attended that committee hearing,” [Schanberg wrote](#), “specifically to confront Alfond because of her criticism of the panel’s work.”

He bellowed and berated her for quite a while. His face turning anger-pink, he accused her of “denigrating” his “patriotism.” The bullying had its effect — she began to cry.



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After a pause Alfond recovered and tried to respond to his scorching tirade, but McCain simply turned away and stormed out of the room.

And that wasn't the only time McCain erupted in a furious rage. [McClatchy Newspapers reported](#) McCain's angry outburst four years after he went after Alfond.

[At the Alliance's] Washington conference, about 25 members went to a Senate office building, hoping to meet with McCain. As they stood in the hall, McCain and an aide walked by.

Six people present have written statements describing what they saw. According to the accounts, McCain waved his hand to shoo away Jeannette Jenkins, whose cousin was last seen in South Vietnam in 1970, causing her to hit a wall.

As McCain continued walking, Jane Duke Gaylor, the mother of another missing serviceman, approached the senator. Gaylor, in a wheelchair equipped with portable oxygen, stretched her arms toward McCain.

"McCain stopped, glared at her, raised his left arm ready to strike her, composed himself and pushed the wheelchair away from him," according to Eleanor Apodaca, the sister of an Air Force captain missing since 1967.

Other Issues

Aside from the POW issue, McCain switched positions on issues frequently, telling audiences what they wanted to hear. Immigration was one of them. After sponsoring [an amnesty bill in 2005](#) with the late Sen. Ted Kennedy, [who died of the same cancer](#) as McCain, five years later [he supported](#) a bill that would have deported many of the people he wanted to legalize.

Here's how [Vanity Fair described McCain in 2007](#)

He began this mid-October day in Sioux City, appearing at a fund-raising Siouxland Breakfast for Representative Steve King, an immigration hard-liner. Recently he had called McCain an "amnesty mercenary" for daring to work with Senator Ted Kennedy on a compromise bill that would provide an eventual path to citizenship for the millions of immigrant workers already in the United States illegally. A day earlier, in Milwaukee, in front of an audience of more sympathetic businessmen, McCain had been asked how debate over the immigration bill was playing politically. "In the short term, it probably galvanizes our base," he said. "In the long term, if you alienate the Hispanics, you'll pay a heavy price." Then he added, unable to help himself, "By the way, I think the fence is least effective. But I'll build the goddamned fence if they want it."

"I'm willing to negotiate anything," McCain tells the breakfast crowd in Sioux City, explaining that there is no way the millions of illegal aliens now here can be sent back to their countries of origin.

So Senator John McCain was willing to negotiate anything. Even, apparently, his fellows POWs and country's sovereignty.

Photo of Senator John McCain: Gage Skidmore



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