

## John McCain Memorial - Grant Woods

I was 28 years old and I'd only been a Public Defender a few years out of law school and, for some reason, John McCain asked me to be his Chief of Staff when he got elected.

So, on my first day, at 7 AM, John McCain picked me up at my house. I went to the car, I said, "Well, do you want me to drive," because now I'm going to drive. I said, "Well, maybe you can sit in the backseat?" I'm no expert on this but I thought the staff drove because- "No, get in the car, boy. Get in the car."

And for the next half hour we just talked about the football games the day before and whatever was in the news, and politics and told a few jokes and it was, at the same time, just really a lot of fun and also quite terrifying because of his ridiculously bad driving. As we'd get excited, he would kind of, you know, he drove like this anyway, and then he would get excited and just start drifting off and I'm like, "Hello, over there."

So, we finally got where we were going and I said, "Oh, hey, by the way, what are we doing?" And he was, "Oh, you know, I hired the whole staff and I want you meet them." I said, "Okay, that's good."

So, we met the staff and then we went back to the car, we got in the car and all the staff came out and they were all waving and things. I said, "Well, they seem to be very nice." He was, "Oh, you're going to have to fire half of them." I said, "What? What are you talking about?" And he just sped off and the staff was waving, and about one minute later we went right back by because he'd gone the wrong way, of course. We waved again. #00:49:23-9#

And I'd just say that two hours kind of epitomized the next 35 years for me with John

McCain. It was at once a little bit harrowing, a little wild, a little crazy but a lot of fun and the greatest honour of my life. I have people ask me all the time, "Did you ever know in those early years, did you have a feeling you had someone so special there?" And my answer is, "Yes, absolutely. No question about it." And I'll tell you the first time.  
#00:49:56-3#

It was a December and it was over in my home town of Mesa, Arizona. We were at a Rotary Club and I think it was all men at that time and, you know, these are tough guys and kind of cynical about things and here's this new guy in town. And one of them asked him, since it was December, he asked him, "What about Christmas in prison?"

And he told them a couple of stories. He told them about one night when he was being interrogated for quite a long time and it didn't go too well for his captors. They were upset with him and so they tied him up and they tied the ropes tight and it's very painful and they left him there for the night. And some guard came in who he did not know and had never spoken to. At 10 PM the guard walked in and unloosened the ropes, and at about 4 AM the guard came back and tightened them up again so that he wouldn't get in trouble.

John didn't know why that happened but he found out a little clue a couple of weeks later right before Christmas when he was standing in the dirt yard. That guard just walked up next to him and the guard didn't say a word but with his sandal he drew a cross in the dirt, and they looked at it for a minute and then the guard rubbed it out and went on his way.

And it was quiet in that room when John told that.

Then he said, "You know, on Christmas Eve, we celebrated and we got together under this bare light bulb and we sang Christmas carols and we quoted bible verses that we

could remember and we told the gospel story to each other.” #00:51:58-6#

And, I guess, just that image of this band of brothers together in this godforsaken place singing to each other, and there at the front, our guy, John McCain, beaten up but not down, singing his favourite carol, Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright, Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child, Holy infant so tender and mild.

The words seem so far away from that place but they leaned on the faith of their fathers and their faith in each other, and their faith in their country, and their faith in God. #00:52:52-6#

I looked out into that audience there in my hometown and those were some of my peers and the peers of my parents. Those were top, independent guys. They're ranchers and farmers, there were some cowboys, businessmen, entrepreneurs and they were crying because they saw in John McCain a little bit of what they hoped to see in themselves; they saw in John McCain the embodiment of values that they hoped to see for their country. #00:53:30-3#

Over the next few months and years, John got to know this place and he fell in love with Arizona; he loved the people, our diversity, our Native American community, our Hispanic culture and he loved the place, in particular, the Grand Canyon, the Colorado River. We floated down that twice together and then he kept going back and back. He loved it. He hiked the canyon with Jack not that long ago, rim to rim. He loved Sedona, he loved this place. And if John McCain fell in love with Arizona, Arizona fell in love with John McCain. #00:54:17-7#

We ran a lot of races here, a lot of elections. He never lost, never really very close - Arizona loved him. We had one little blip one time when he ran for the Senate the first time. He called me on the phone.

He goes, "Well, boy, I think I might've screwed up." I go, "Why?" He said, "Well, you know, I was talking to these students at U of A, and they said, "How come you're the only politician that comes down here, they only go to the retirement places?" He said, "Well, it's because you guys don't vote, those dudes vote like a 100 percent so if you want people to come down here, you need to vote like they vote out in Seizure World." I said, "You didn't say that, did you?" -because there's this big retirement community called Leisure World in the East Valley and they weren't real happy with their new nickname out there. #00:55:25-1#

So John said, like he always does, he said, "Well, okay, I screwed up. Let's go. We got to go out there." "We." So, we went out and I remember we drove in and there was about a 90-year-old guy in a golf-cart right there and he was giving us the finger. Little did he know we both said, "That's great," we loved it. And John was like, "Hey, good to see you, good to see you, pal. Thank you, thank you." So we went in, he said, "I'm sorry about that," and went to work. And guess what, I think he won that by about 85:15 in that election in that precinct. #00:56:07-5#

We're going to miss so many things about him here in our state. His leadership here on these important issues. I'm going to miss his sense of humour. We're going to miss his love of sports; he loved the teams, all of our teams. By "love them," I mean love them like non-stop. And he loved you guys, Fitz and Gonzo and Shane, he really did. Not a coincidence. He didn't become friends just with the best players but with the best people, and he loved you guys. #00:56:43-8#

We also worry here in Arizona about a bigger picture, and I hope that what he stood for will maybe give a renewed look in our country. That's what he would want, he would want us to. #00:57:06-5#

Yes, okay, we recognise him now, but now let's get to work - and I'm sure the Vice President will talk about John and bipartisanship - but he believed so much that, in the

end when it's all said and done, this Republican/Democrat thing's not that important, is it? We're all Americans and we've got to get to the point where we can work together as Americans. His support of the military, I hope you Members of Congress will keep that strong, it was so important that he had their backs. #00:57:34-4#

And one other thing: John McCain believed in our Constitution and he stood up for it. He fought for it every step of the way so he would not stand by his people try to trample the Constitution or the Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment. And do you know what?

He believed in the Declaration of Independence. When we proclaim to the world that every single human being is important, every single human being is precious, every single person in this world has the right to live free, not because the government says so but because God gave us that right.

John McCain, his entire life, stood by the freedom-fighters across the world, he was there. He was there figuratively and literally by their side wherever they were, acknowledging their right to live free. #00:58:30-7#

It's a long and winding road that took him from that dirt yard in Hanoi to the dirt back roads of Hidden Valley, but through it all he was resolute. He was courageous every step of the way. And, in Arizona, he was our hero. I think you can see from this outpouring of support and love for John McCain that he was America's hero. #00:59:10-8#

Senator John McCain from Arizona, he served his country with honour. He fought the good fight. He finished the race. He kept the faith. Now, my friend, we can finish the song, Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace. Amen. #01:00:00-7#

[Applause] #01:00:00-7#

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