

# KUNHARDT **FILM** / FOUNDATION

CAROL MCCAIN INTERVIEW  
*JOHN MCCAIN: FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*  
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

**CAROL MCCAIN**  
**Ex-Wife of John McCain**  
**November 16, 2017**  
Interviewed by Teddy Kunhardt  
**Total Running Time: 1 Hour 38 Minutes**

**START TC:**  
**QT: 01;00;00;00**

**QT: 01;00;06;11**

**TITLE**  
Meeting John

**QT: 01;00;10;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I was dating somebody else at the Naval Academy and he was always kind of a legend so I knew who he was. And then years later I got divorced. I was in Pensacola. He was there and I met him again. He would tell you that the crowd had thinned out by then, so when he asked me out, I went. When he would ask me out at the Naval Academy, I always said, "No." It was awful. You know, when you're about 19 years old, you think you're just the best and everybody else doesn't share that feeling.

**QT: 01;00;44;01**

**TITLE**  
The initial attraction

**QT: 01;00;47;03**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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'Cause he's very lively. He's always got something going on. He's very smart and he has a very, very, very good sense of humor.

**QT: 01;00;55;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And the fact that he wore cowboy boots or boots. They weren't cowboy boots but they were like desert boots but they were black leather with his uniform. That was sort of a thing you didn't do. So he—the title of maverick has always fit him.

**QT: 01;01;09;08**

**TITLE**

Their wedding

**QT: 01;01;13;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

My friend, Connie Bookbinder was a college friend of mine. She lived in an old house in downtown Philadelphia. We were married in her living room. It was just family and friends and you know, everything was there. The ceremony, the reception. And it was really very, very nice.

**QT: 01;01;30;15**

**TITLE**

Life before Vietnam

**QT: 01;01;35;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We lived in Meridian, Mississippi and that was a fun place to live because there was nothing to do in the town exactly and we lived on the base. So we had dinner parties constantly or party parties. And so we all entertained a lot and it was fun. And that part gave me a lot of practice in how to have dinner for six or dinner for twenty and it was just a great time. It was a happy time and it was an easy time. When everybody lives on the base, it's sort of a great equalizer and it was fun.

**QT: 01;02;07;10**

**TITLE**

John adopted Carol's sons from her prior marriage

**QT: 01;02;11;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We had to get permission from their father for that to take place and he signed the papers and then, we had to go before the judge. And the judge okayed everything and the boys were really excited, especially Andy. Andy was always—needed a little more reassuring. Doug was always kind of in charge and Andy was always his helper. So Andy was very excited to be adopted. We made kind of a big deal out of it.

**QT: 01;02;40;00**

**TITLE**

John's relationship with his brother Joe

**QT: 01;02;43;16**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

John and his brother Joe were not close particularly. It's not that they weren't close but Joe was younger and Joe was everything that John wasn't. And Joe was kind of a—more of a wild man. And ya know, Joe never really had a real job, so to speak. He's had jobs but he's never had a career, I guess I should say. And John always, even though he didn't do particularly well at the Navy Academy or whatever, he's always focused on doing something whereas it wasn't that way with Joe.

**QT: 01;03;15;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We didn't spend a lot of time with him. We never lived close by them.

**QT: 01;03;18;18**

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## **TITLE**

John's relationship with his sister Sandy

**QT: 01;03;23;03**

## **CAROL McCAIN:**

Sandy and—was married to Henry and they live fairly close to me when they lived in Alexandria but we didn't really every do anything together to speak of. And Sandy's nice. Don't get me wrong. She's a very nice lady but John wasn't close to Sandy. All three of those children sort of did their own thing and none of them were really close to the others.

**QT: 01;03;43;10**

## **TITLE**

John's father Jack McCain

**QT: 01;03;48;08**

## **CAROL McCAIN:**

I do know that John adored his father and a lot of people always said that the reason he was fairly successful in the Navy was because of his father. And I can assure you that after he was in a prison camp in North Vietnam, his father had nothing to do with it. It was his guts that saved him at that point. And I think that that's a tribute to things that have been instilled in him through his life and that's probably due to his father. But I was crazy about his father. Before I had this car accident, I was tall. I was almost as tall as John. His dad would always say, "Carol's the greatest thing, the tallest thing that's ever happened to our family." He said it with such sweetness, you just couldn't help but love him. He was a nice man.

**QT: 01;04;31;03**

## **TITLE**

John's parents, Jack and Roberta McCain

**QT: 01;04;34;17**

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**CAROL McCAIN:**

Jack McCain was you know, a little guy that smoked cigars that were about as big as he was. He always talked about sea power. I know a lot about sea power because I've heard his talks but I—he had good jokes. Oh, and he would sing in the shower. And he would be in the shower. My boys would be sitting on the floor outside the bathroom door and you could hear him singing. "Oh, you can bring Sue and you can bring Faith but don't bring Lulu." And they would giggle and laugh because here was this admiral in their bathroom singing in the shower. And I always remember when he come out later, they would be in the kitchen saying, "We heard you singing. We heard you singing." Of course, he got a big kick out of that. He thought that was funny.

**QT: 01;05;20;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

John's mother was drop-dead gorgeous. Really, really, really beautiful. She was smart as a whip. She didn't miss a trick on anything. She taught me a lot of things. She taught me how to entertain. She taught me how to be a good Navy wife. And it was fun to go with her to any kind of museum because she knew it all. You could look at a painting. She'd tell you about the artist and she'd tell you when it was painted. There's nobody like her. She was a one of a kind. And she always had fabulous jewelry. I would look at her and think, "She's gorgeous. She's smart and look at that jewelry," but she was a trip. I really liked her.

**QT: 01;05;57;22**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And she loved playing cards. And we would—I would often play cards with her. The family game was Spite and Malice. We would play Spite and Malice endlessly and it was fun because she was very competitive. I think it took me years till I finally beat her but I finally did and so I felt redeemed, but she was very good to me. I have no complaints about Roberta. She's a nice lady.

**QT: 01;06;21;03**

**TITLE**

On being a "good" Navy wife

**QT: 01;06;25;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well you know, you really have to know the rank of things. I didn't know one thing from another. The admiral from the—you know, the lowest enlisted person. I've never been around anything military. My mother maintains that the reason I liked it so much was because they had those uniforms and a lot of brass buttons. There's probably some truth to that but she taught me how things worked with the Navy. How to shop at the commissary properly and what you could buy in the exchange that was worth it and what wasn't and how to—you know, she had a cookbook that she recommended to me many years ago called *The Cook is in the Parlor*. It was how to make a casserole, put it in the oven so you could sit and talk to your guests when they came over for dinner. She just taught me a lot of things and I was really grateful for that.

**QT: 01;07;09;08**

**TITLE**

The genesis of the McCain military tradition

**QT: 01;07;14;18**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Goes back to his relative that was on General Washington's staff, which is why his father and John is eligible. I don't know if he's a member or not to be in the thing called *The Order of the Cincinnati* but their family was military. They had always been army. And then, his grandfather went to the post office in Mississippi to take the exam for West Point and being a little bit of a rogue himself, decided to take the exam for the Naval Academy and he got accepted and so he went. And that's what switched them from being army to being Navy and they were that way ever after.

**QT: 01;07;56;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And his grandfather, John's grandfather, who was known as Slew or Sidney, he was a gambler. He went through pilot training when he was a Navy captain. Flying was relatively new so he got wings that—he was in the first

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dozen people that got wings down in Pensacola but he saw the future of aviation with the Navy. Now, his father was a submariner. And as a result, he spent a lot of time living in Hawaii, the submarines going towards WESTPAC and that sort of thing. And when John came along, I think he thought, "I think I'd rather fly than go to submarines." So he decided that he would try for flight training.

**QT: 01;08;37;18**

**TITLE**

On superstition

**QT: 01;08;41;15**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Think he sort of felt you provided your own destiny as best you could but there were always going to be things that happened that you couldn't do anything about. They—life happens.

**QT: 01;08;51;08**

**TITLE**

On John requesting combat duty on the Gulf of Tonkin

**QT: 01;08;55;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

But he knew he was going to be getting it at some point, anyway. I think he was very worried that the war was going to end before he could get there.

**QT: 01;09;03;15**

**TITLE**

On Vietnam

**QT: 01;09;07;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well yeah, I was dumb and happy. I didn't really understand what it was all about and so it was okay by me. It never occurred to me that anything would happen to him. He was always kind of invincible in my mind. Later on, the only thing that bothered me is I wished the Navy had told me more about the code of conduct and things like that because I had no—I didn't know what that was about. I didn't know what it meant. I didn't know anything about the Geneva Convention.

**QT: 01;09;32;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

There are all kinds of things. I wrote him a letter once and said I wish he'd been one of the people released but—and I would have never done that if I had known for him to be released would have been all wrong, if that he should only come out when it was his turn but you see, nobody ever explained it to me. And I told that to the people that I was dealing with in Navy and they agreed that that was a bit of a flaw and that for future generations, they would try to remedy that situation.

**QT: 01;09;58;11**

**TITLE**

On being a mother and John's capture in Vietnam

**QT: 01;10;02;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well, you know what? It was fun. Children are the greatest little gifts that god gives you because they're new and different. They do something every day that makes you laugh or whatever. You're always within an inch of saying, "Go to your room," but by the same token, they're really fun. And I have to say that Doug, being the oldest, he has been taking care of me since he was eight years old. He was eight when John got shot down. He was just joining the Cub Scouts when we found out and I sent him off to Cub Scouts. I don't even think I told him what had happened until later.

**QT: 01;10;38;03**

**CAROL McCAIN:**



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And when I first found out, I didn't understand it all myself, and his parents lived in London then. And I remember they called me on the phone. They said, "This is going to be okay. He can make it. He can do it." because when they first captured John after he landed in a lake in Hanoi, they—in a ways, his dad said, "That could keep him alive, because they've let us know that they have him and because of me, that's probably somewhat of a prize so they will do their best not to let him die," whereas if he hadn't had his dad and he was banged up terribly, they might not have been so good to him. Good's a strange word there but the big thing was, he was convinced and I agree with him that they would not let him die.

**QT: 01;11;25;12**

**TITLE**  
The kids

**QT: 01;11;29;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

(Cross talk) They were like everybody else's kids. There were good days and bad days. I can remember one time, Sidney got hit in the eye with a baseball with kids playing out in front of our house. And she had to get a little stitch in the corner of her eye. Andy climbed a fence and fell of it when somebody said, "Hey, you. Get down," and scratched the back of his back on the chain link fence. So that was my second trip to the emergency room that day. And the Navy doctor on duty said, "Mrs. McCain, I think we'll just keep your records out today." He was expecting I could have a third trip. Who knew, Doug hadn't done anything yet.

**QT: 01;12;03**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It's hard to explain but we had a lot of children where we were, a lot of military families. You know, school continues, camp continues, sports continues. I put him in every little league thing I can think of to try to keep 'em busy. I really felt very strongly that busy kids were happy kids and I did my best to keep them busy.

**QT: 01;12;24;16**

**TITLE**

Her sons, Doug and Andy

**QT: 01;12;23;22**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well they are—as I said, Doug was in charge and Andy was his loyal follower. When Andy was really little, we couldn't understand his talking very well. Doug would look at me and say, "He wants more milk. He just asked you for milk." I wouldn't have a clue what he was saying because it's all mumbo jumbo but he—Doug always knew and he kind of kept an eye on him. As they get older they're very, very different and each one will say about the other one, "Well, you know, he knows everything." That's their comment about each other. And they're very competitive but they thrive on that. So yes, good friends? Very. Close? Yes. I don't know how to explain it. They're brothers and They treat each other like brothers and they have fun doing it.

**QT: 01;13;12;16**

**TITLE**

The fire on the US Forrestal

**QT: 01;13;16;20**

**TEDDY KUNHARDT:**

And tell me what happened.

**QT: 01;13;17;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I had taken my children to Europe. I'd flown to Germany and bought a Volkswagen. And the whole point of that was I was going to put them in the American School in Garmisch and spent a year in Europe because I had never been out of the country and some friends of mine had done that and they said, "It's really easy to do because there's a base there and there's a good school and it'll be a good thing for you to do, keep your mind off what's happening, you know, with John away at sea." When the fire came, I called his

parents in London and they said, "We've heard from John. He's okay. Get to London as soon as you can." So I drove to London.

**QT: 01;13;57;14**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I think I, at the time, I might have been in Denmark. I can't remember exactly but I drove back through the northern part of Germany and down and got on the ferry and went to England. And when I got off the ferry, I was like, "Oh, lordy. This trip has been easy and now I have to drive on the wrong side of the road." And I have these three little monkeys in the car and I'm driving a shift Volkswagen. You know, Britain is hilly so when you go up and down a hill, when you'd be going up a hill, I'd be felling like we all had to lean forward. It was just a funny thing. But I got there and they said, "He's on his way but he won't be here for a couple of days." And John's aunt was visiting. His mother is a twin sister, so Roberta and Rowena and I took a little trip.

**QT: 01;14;43;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And we left the children at home with a couple of the stewards that we hired to take care of the kids. And they didn't mind doing it. They liked the kids. And it was fun for the boys because they got to play in the kitchen and all that sort of thing. We went on a trip. We went to, up through Wales. I had a great time with these ladies and going through the northern part of England and into Wales because, as I said, they knew everything and so when you'd stop someplace, they'd say, "Now, this place is famous for its life-size topiaries." I didn't even know what a topiary was but they would explain it to me. They were always wanting me to learn things. And I was like a big sponge. I loved it so it was really good.

**QT: 01;15;26;21**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

'Cause I went bawwck to London with the two ladies. By then, he'd gotten there. The exact moment when we got there, he was down the street at a hotel having dinner with somebody who'd come to visit Roberta and Rowena and Jack. I raced down to the hotel and met him there. It was really fun. He said, "I've got good news." I said, "What is that?" He said, "A hotel in Cannes, France has offered us a free stay if we can get there." And he said, "I got to tell you, I don't think anybody'll be able to get there but us," because everybody

else was in the US and we happened to be in Europe. We took the boys. His mother kept the baby. We got in the car and we drove down to Cannes and spent about a week there and had a wonderful time.

**QT: 01;16;18;21**

**TITLE**

John and the fire on the US Forrestal cont'd

**QT: 01;16;22;17**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I mean, he went in great detail to tell me what had happened, how everybody around him, everything was on fire. He climbed out on the fuel probe at the end of his plane to get out of there, and he could see around him nothing but carnage but he was able to roll through it and then run off and he was okay. John has a great ability to be able to say, "I got through it.

**QT: 01;16;44;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I saw people who were really suffering but thank god people were helping each other and helping to get people saved from the bad spots that they were in." And he told me some awful stories of a couple of people who we knew who had worked on his plane who came to see him afterwards and who were in terrible condition. And he said to me, "I knew they weren't going to live. They had been burned so badly," but they were on their way, when he saw them, they were on their way to get medical attention. It was a nightmare. It was a horrible—

**QT: 01;17;16;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And this guy was somebody he saw every time he flew and then he realized when he saw him again later that the guy wasn't going to live, that he was hurt so badly when all of this happened that he was going to die. And he knew at some point and time, he was going to have to talk to that young man's mother. That's a tough thing to face. And he wouldn't be any different than I would be or you would be in trying to have somebody know how much

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the person meant to them. Ya know, John is—it's tough for him to say, "I loved your son."

**QT: 01;17;48;13**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He wouldn't say that but he would say, "I cannot tell you how he is missed, because every day, he did small things for me and they were important." He always feels that people were important. He spent a lot of time, when he would be writing fitness reports, trying to find words for saying that they were good or they were smart or they were funny or they were kind, because—I never heard him write something bad. I mean he—that just wasn't how he was.

**QT: 01;18;15;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He would just want that mother to know what a fine son she had and that he was proud of his son and he was very, very sorry for what had happened.

**QT: 01;18;24;20**

**TITLE**

After the US Forrestal fire

**QT: 01;18;28;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We go back up to London. And then, we get out—go with his parents and we hop on a Navy flight out of Milton Hall in England. And we fly back to—in New Jersey, McGuire Air Force Base. And we have to go from there back to my parent's house in Philadelphia where our car was. And we go there, we get the car and we drive to Washington because he wants to go to the Bureau of Naval Personnel and find out what's next for him because he doesn't know. So he goes there and they tell him that he's been assigned to the USS Oriskany. So we go from Washington. We drive back to Jacksonville and we get all settled in there. And that would have been in late August, maybe the beginning of September. He left a month later and went to the USS Oriskany, which was already in the Tonkin Gulf.

**QT: 01;19;30;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We went back to Jacksonville and a month later, he left to go to Tonkin—to go to—aboard the Oriskany, which at that time was in the Gulf of Tonkin. I can tell you how little Sidney was. I was taking him to the airport. We were inside and he was checking in. And she's a little muffin. And she's sitting on his foot and she's like a little muffin. She's sitting on his foot in the airport because I'm helping him do some, "Where's your ticket? Where's your this? Where's your that?" And he left but that's how small she was at the time.

**QT: 01;20;02;09**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I mean, it was horrible. The night before he left, we stayed up half the night playing double solitaire because we knew the next day meant he was leaving and I just could barely stand it, I was so upset. I didn't want him to go obviously and I know that he has to go but it just isn't a fun time for anybody.

**QT: 01;20;20;07**

**TITLE**

Finding out John had been shot down

**QT: 01;20;25;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I get a knock on my door and it's the navy—I guess they call him—I've forgotten what it is but like a CAG officer that comes in. He's the one that tells you when something bad happens. And he says, "John has been shot down. We don't have any information on it." People saw the plane explode. They didn't say that but that was the inference but they saw a parachute so they felt that he had gotten out. And that he—this was over North Vietnam. So we didn't really know what the status was at the time. I remember the chaplain, who I'd got to dislike intensely, came to visit me and said, "You can call me anytime. I'll be happy to help you. I'm in my office between eight and four." Do you know anybody who knows when the hours are that they're going to have problems? It's probably not going to be between eight and four.

**QT: 01;21;18;14**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Anyway, Doug had gone off to join. He would—just turned eight. This was in October. And he had just turned out—eight and he was joining the Cub Scouts and he went off and he came back. And then, the next day, I sort of sat him down and said, "Daddy's plane got shot down and he's going to be in North Vietnam. We don't know very much but as soon as we do, I'll tell you what. I find out." And Doug was like, "This isn't good." I said, "No, it's not good but they saw a parachute so they know he got out of the plane." And of course, Andy's first question is, "When will he be home?" That's all Andy was concerned about was when would he be home. So that's when I figured out the holiday system. I had to give them little increments that he could understand to help him get through it.

**QT: 01;22;04;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

If he—if I told him he was going to be home by Valentine's Day and it was getting close to Valentine's Day and wasn't any sign of anything happen, I'd say, "I don't think he's going to make Valentine's Day. It might be Easter." I would just push it ahead. And then it would be Memorial Day, and then it would be Labor Day. Just give him blocks that could move the time along in places that he could understand but I'd give him a time when it might be possible that he would be home at—by a certain time because that made it easier, particularly for Andy to deal with. The fact that you could say, "I have no idea when it's going to be," he couldn't deal with that. That was a little bit too much for him.

**QT: 01;22;43;21**

**TITLE**

Jack and Roberta McCain and news of John during his capture

**QT: 01;22;48;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

They called me and they said, "Johnny's been shot down. It isn't good but they've seen a parachute." Everything they ever knew, they always called me

right away. And they—you know, they were anxious to try and help me and the kids. They were wonderful to me. And Roberta wrote me a letter once. And I remember, she said, "It doesn't matter what I do or what I try to do or what I'm thinking. All I ever think about is Johnny," because, she said, "It's like that old Navy joke, the sailor that says, 'I can't keep my mind on anything. I just think about girls.'" She said, "I felt like that. I just thought about him morning, noon, and night."

**QT: 01;23;25;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well, we all did. It was a horrible time. And I hadn't—I didn't know anything about Vietnam. I didn't even know the time difference. I didn't know what the people like—later, I read more books about it and that sort of thing, trying to understand what was happening. It was really difficult because I didn't know what I was up against. It's probably a protection, if I had known, it would have been a nightmare but the fact that I didn't know was probably a good thing.

**QT: 01;23;52;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Yeah, they usually get on the phone together so they'd—you know, be on two different extensions if I had questions for either one of them. They were very good about that. And they often came to Washington, even though they lived in London. And they would pop down to see me. I mean, I can't emphasize enough that they would come and see me because they were worried about me, too. And then, I don't know exact—I don't remember the date on this but I got a letter from a Frenchman who said he'd been in North Vietnam and he'd seen John. And he had taken—he made a film about him. And he said that he would be—if I would come to Paris, he would give me a copy of the film if I promise not to sell it to a commercial entity in the United States. And I said I was only too happy to agree to that. I said, "Absolutely. You have my word. I will not sell it," because he was trying to sell it to somebody here in the United States.

**QT: 01;24;51;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

So I flew back one morning. It was folk's trips to Washington. They came down to Jacksonville and got me in. I parceled out my children and Sidney



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was staying with a good friend of mine. And this was horrible because her husband was killed while I was gone. And so another neighbor popped over and got Sidney from Julie so that Julie had her hands full with her own problems. And I flew to London with them. And then, I went to Paris and I met this man in a restaurant. And I tried to talk him into talking me into Vietnam with him if he went back again, saying, "I could be a photographer.

**QT: 01;25;28;15**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I could pretend I'm a French photographer. Who would know?" And he said, "It would be a good idea but I'm probably not going to be allowed back in. I've already used up my one chance I had to do it but I do have this film." And he gave me a copy of it and I brought it back to the United States. I took it to London. John's folks watched it. I watched it. Went back to Washington. Everybody, I'm sure they all made copies. I never thought about it but I had a copy of it that I took with me back to Jacksonville.

**QT: 01;25;28;00**

**TITLE**

Watching the footage of John as a POW and realizing he may be gone for years

**QT: 01;26;02;14**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I was with his parents in London.

**QT: 01;26;05;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It was horrible because he was obviously so beaten up and he was in bad shape and there's—his father kept saying, "I don't know. Look at his eyes. It's look like he's been drugged," which he did but it probably was a good thing because it would help him with the pain that he was having to endure. Then, we got to laughing because the part where he's lying in bed at one point, you see a big roach go across the top of the bed and you're like, "Oh, boy."

**QT: 01;26;32;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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This is their wonderful conditions in this hospital in North Vietnam but by the same token, they were taking good care of him or as best they could. I really can't complain. So that film was—we knew he was okay. And once we knew that he was okay, we knew that it could be a long, long time. And his dad kept telling me, "Carol, this could be years." I didn't believe that but he kept telling me, "It could be years before he gets home."

**QT: 01;26;59;19**

**TITLE**

Pumpkin soup in prison

**QT: 01;27;03;17**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well you know, they gave him this soup that John said was like pumpkin soup but it was made with something that looked to him like a kohlrabi, which I didn't know what a kohlrabi was but one time we were invited to a dinner party after he got back and the lady said, "I wanted to have pumpkin soup." I said, "That's probably not a good idea. I'm not sure that John could handle that because that's what they fed him in Vietnam." And she was horrified and of course, we did not have pumpkin soup.

**QT: 01;27;28;18**

**TITLE**

How you get through the pain of waiting

**QT: 01;27;33;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

You know what? You're kind of protected. You don't really know but in your heart, you're like, "Of course, he's going to come back. He told me he's coming back." That's how you get through it. If you ever thought he wasn't coming back, you would—they would take you away. You'd be in a straight jacket some place. You want to believe so you do believe. You have no reason not to believe.

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**QT: 01;27;51;16**

**TITLE**

She did not show the children the video of their father as a captive in Vietnam

**QT: 01;27;56;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Eventually, it was on television in the United States and they saw that. First of all, it required a movie projector that I didn't have. I wouldn't know how to do it if I did have one. So I would have had to get somebody, say, on the base to set it up. It was just going to open doors for my children that I didn't think needed to be opened for them at that time.

**QT: 01;28;18;03**

**TITLE**

John's guilt over signing the confession in captivity

**QT: 01;28;22;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He feels guilty. It's not what you do. You just don't do it. You probably talk to other POWs like Orson Swindle, who've they just practically destroyed his arms when they hung him on a hook and had his arms tied behind his back. You just don't do it. It's almost like you accept death before you make a confession, but he had reached the end of his rope. It was all that he could do.

**QT: 01;28;47;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He let his dad down. He let the Navy down. He let himself down. He could give you 30 reasons why it wasn't the right thing to do but he'll never forgive himself for that. And I understand it. I'm like you. I don't agree with it but I do understand how he feels. It's like you should never, ever, ever have done that.

**QT: 01;29;07;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

(Cross talk) It's a code of conduct. The code of conduct says that you don't.

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**QT: 01;29;11;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

you're just not supposed to do that. He took that very seriously. That's why he still feels badly about it to this day.

**QT: 01;29;18;20**

**TITLE**

Talking to Jack and Roberta about John and pressure from peace groups

**QT: 01;29;22;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We talked about it, the three of us but it would be just like if I talked to my neighbor. We hoped he was okay. We hoped they were feeding him. We didn't know what they were doing. We didn't know about the torture. We did know some of the things we did know we didn't like. There were always peace groups who wanted me to make a little film for them so they could use it for propaganda. And at least I knew that wasn't a good idea. So it was just a situation where it was better to say or do nothing than to say or do something you might regret.

**QT: 01;29;55;11**

**TITLE**

On John giving fake names to interrogators

**QT: 01;30;00;03**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I do know that at one point, John was really sick.

**QT: 01;30;02;16**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He was really, really sick and one of the people that was trying to interrogate him said, "Your father is the biggest general of them all." He said, "Yes, he is. He is General Motors. He is—" He started naming off all of these things because he thought if this'll do something where they'll give me medicine or take care of me, it's worth it, so he made it up. And he might have told you

that when they wanted to know who some of the other people were, whatever, that were—I forgot how it came up but they wanted to know some names of people. He gave them the starting lineup of the Green Bay Packers because he could remember all those names. They believed him and they accepted that.

**QT: 01;30;44;09**

**TITLE**

Writing and receiving letters from John

**QT: 01;30;48;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I wrote him all the time. And that's one of the things I regret was when they left the first three prisoners out of North Vietnam, I wrote John a letter because they got released around the Fourth of July and our anniversary was on the third. And I said, "I wished that it had been you that would come home in this group," because I didn't know that that would be disgraceful, that he should never come home ahead of the time when it would be his time to come home. So I of course, if—I maintain if the Navy had explained the code of conduct to me, I would have known not to ever say something like that.

**QT: 01;31;24;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

About six or eight of them while he was there. And they—they were on a little form paper that had six lines and little tiny writing. So sometimes it was a little hard to decipher. And he was trying to get out some other names of prisoners in the letters. And one of the things was funny because he said, "Don't buy a car from Orson. He will swindle you." And of course, that was—his name, was Orson Swindle but he went to great lengths trying to get some names out of people who were—they didn't know if people knew they were there or not.

**QT: 01;32;00;07**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well I would go up to—I would go to Washington and see Uncle Bob, the Navy Intelligence guy that helped all of us ladies. And I would go up there and

meet with him. And they would make copies and then we would talk about what was in there. And then, I would ask them, "Is there anything I should put in the letter?" And I wish I could remember what he told me because there were a couple things I did put in the letter but they were just innocuous sounding but evidently, they said John would know what that was about.

**QT: 01;32;27;23**

**TITLE**

It was helpful to be in Orange Park, Florida during John's captivity

**QT: 01;32;32;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

A military community. There were plenty of people who were aware of my situation and they wanted to do everything they could to help me. And then an Air Force wife moved in across the street from me whose husband was a POW. So that was helpful. Jane Crumpler was her name and her husband Carl came home from Vietnam, too. And then, people—like at holidays, people would invite us over for Christmas Eve or Christmas dinner, whatever.

**QT: 01;33;00;17**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

So that was really good because we had plenty of people who were trying very hard to make sure that we had people who cared about us and looked after us. I mean, God love her, Sidney was in a half a dozen weddings because these young couples would—they knew us or they'd been babysitters or whatever. And they wanted to take Sidney places. They would take her to Disney World or whatever. They—no, it was a really wonderful place to be as a single Navy wife with three little children.

**QT: 01;33;32;06**

**TITLE**

The holidays during John's captivity

**QT: 01;33;36;11**

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**CAROL McCAIN:**

Absolutely. That was really important to me to keep it to be—we were not gonna—I was never going to let him know that I was unhappy in any way to my children. We would, if we were doing Thanksgiving dinner and having people at our house, they would be helping me in the kitchen and we would be making pies and stuffing a turkey and that sort of thing. It was important to me that they know what the holidays stood for. We decorated our house. The only thing I quit doing during that time was I gave up sending Christmas cards. I could not say, "It's been another wonderful year." because it had not been another wonderful year. It has been another very long, painful year. There was no point in even trying to do it. I just stopped doing it. And even after he came home from Vietnam, I've never sent another Christmas card since.

**QT: 01;34;29;17**

**TITLE**

Carol's car accident on Christmas Eve 1969

**QT: 01;34;35;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I was in Philadelphia. I was visiting my parents with my children. I was out delivering presents. I've delivered some presents. My last stop was at Connie Bookbinder's house. She has now moved from downtown out to the country out near Valley Forge. So I went to her house to have dinner. And driving back from that, it's snow, ice, poor visibility, and I have a car accident. And I'm thrown out of the car and the car is basically almost cut in half. I'm taken to the closest hospital, which is Bryn Mawr Hospital on Christmas Eve. And I became friends with all the doctors that took care of me but they basically had to put me back together. And as tough as it was, they were wonderful people. They did a good job. I cannot thank them enough for how great they were.

**QT: 01;35;27;16**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

The anesthesiologist, David Stewart, the doctor Bud Stewart, the other doctor was named—his last name was Snedden, Doctor Snedden. Many years later,

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Doug goes to visit his friend Bobby at Washington and Lee when Doug was in Virginia. And he comes home the following weekend and he says, "You know I met a guy this past weekend and he said his dad saved your life." And I said, "Well, what's his name?" He said, "His name is Johnson." I said, "Yes, he did. His father did save my life." And Doug was like, "Wow!" Ya know, he couldn't believe—it was a small world syndrome but the people in Bryn Mawr Hospital did everything they could to help me. It was truly wonderful, wonderful.

**QT: 01;36;07;07**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And I was there from Christmas Eve until June. When I went home in June, I flew to Jacksonville. Then, I was in the Navy hospital there and I was there an hour and I said to the doctor, "Can't I go home? I don't want to be in a hospital anymore." He said, "You know, I don't really see why not? Your house is five minutes from here. You'll be able to come to the hospital." because I had to do physical therapy. He said, "You'll be able to come here every day without any trouble." So I did. I got to go home and that was really, really, really, really wonderful. I did not have Sidney. She was still with my mother. This was in June and my mother brought Sidney back in like September because by then, I was getting around well enough that I could take care of her, too.

**QT: 01;36;51;15**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And I had a good friend named Joyce Block. And she had a little boy named Ricky. Joyce said, "You know, Carol, I will come and stay at your house." So that nights, she worked but she said, "At night, somebody will be there in case you need help." So she did. She moved into my house with her son, Rick and it was a great thing. And during the day, I had found a lady that would come every day to help me because I couldn't do a lot of the things but I would go to therapy every day. And that ma—I'm a big believer in physical therapy because I might walk funny but at least I walk. And I did great for many, many, many years. It's only about two years ago that my walking's gotten worse because the bones are sort of saying, "We've had enough."

**QT: 01;37;37;13**

**CAROL McCAIN:**



I'm five inches shorter than I used to be. My legs were shattered and so my knees don't match. They're kind of like that. It's a mess but you can imagine. From here up, I'm fine but from here down, I'm just a mess.

**QT: 01;37;53;09**

**TITLE**

The kids while Carol was in the hospital

**QT: 01;37;57;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

But they had Joyce there at the house with them while I was in the hospital. And we talked on the phone all the time. And this was a very interesting thing. I had bought them as a Christmas present a pinball machine. I found a place in Jacksonville where I could buy a second-hand pinball machine. Can you imagine for two little boys what it was like to have your own pinball machine? Why I did that or how I did that, I'll never know but it was the thing that saved them because they were so into that pinball machine that they were kept busy by it and happy to do it and kept 'em from worrying as much as they might have. Doug was good about it; Andy was much—he was more the worrier.

**QT: 01;38;41;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

So the pinball machine was something that was important to him. He had this beautiful teacher when he was in maybe third grade and her name was Mrs. Valentine and she was a really nice lady and she was always trying to get Andy to stay after school so she could talk to him and make sure that he was doing okay. And finally, she said, "Andy, why won't you ever stay after school and help me?" He said, "If I don't go right away, I'd lose my time on the pinball machine. Doug will get home and then it's his turn," which was hilarious from the standpoint of she was just trying to help but he wasn't buying it, if it was going to cut into his pinball machine time.

**QT: 01;39;19;01**

**TITLE**

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CBS ran a special on the family while John was a POW

**QT: 01;39;23;16**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

CBS had purchased the film that had been made of John in the camp in North Vietnam. I can't remember the man's first name, his first name was Francois but I can't remember his given name.

**QT: 01;39;34;17**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

So after that is when John Lawrence contacted me and asked me if he could come down and film us to see what was happening since then. And I said, "Sure, that'll be fine." I had no problem with that at all. And also, I did check with the Navy intelligence people and they said, "No, absolutely. There's nothing wrong with that." I was very careful. I didn't want to do anything that John's parents or the Navy wouldn't be happy about. I didn't want anybody saying, "You shouldn't have done that." So I always let them know if an offer had come forward that somebody wanted to do that.

**QT: 01;40;08;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

(Cross talk) They came to my house and they followed us to a football game and would—they—they were there for a weekend and we did all kinds of things. He was a very nice guy and they were nice people, so I felt good about it. I felt it would be something that would show that it wasn't easy but we were doing good. If by some quirk somebody saw it and could tell John about it, it would be a good thing.

**QT: 01;40;31;09**

**TITLE**

On church and faith

**QT: 01;40;36;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I'm a big church goer anyway. I love church. It's very important to me. In fact, this is funny. When we first lived in Meridian, Mississippi, it was just the base chapel. And Doug said—and we had gone to church before we had moved to Meridian. And Doug said when we were moving to Jacksonville, he said, "When we move, can we go to church that has a real bureau?" I said, "What?" He said, "You know, a church with a real bureau, up in the front where it has a cross and people kneel." And I realize he meant alter but he didn't know the word for alter. I said, "Yes, I will find us a church with a real alter."

**QT: 01;41;14;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

So when we moved, Grace Episcopal Church was in Orange Park, Florida. It was an old, old church. And John and I—the first Sunday we went, John said, "I think we got here just in time for the building fund." Well, it turned out, that was true. They were in the process of raising money to build a new church, which they did but I took my children all the time. I felt very strongly that they needed to have something bigger than they were to give them foundations to be good citizens. The big—that was always a big joke in my house, that I was trying very hard to make these little children be good citizens and that church would help them with that. And I had to try out different places for them to sit. And it finally turned out to sit like two rows from the front was the best because they had to sit still and keep face forward.

**QT: 01;42;05;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And they didn't mind that, where if I had them in the back, they were all squirmy and making noise and stuff. So when I moved them up front, it was a good thing. They got to like it. We went faithfully. Of course, I always believed in bribery. I'd say, "Now, if you're really good today, I might take you to brunch after church." And of course, they liked that, shat was a good thing, too.

**QT: 01;42;26;04**

**TITLE**

The McCain prayer

**QT: 01;42;31;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It is the fourth verse of the Navy Hymn. And it's sort of sad because in my church here, Christ Church, they don't know that one. Of course, I will want it at my funeral. So Doug will have to have the minister, who is wonderful, we love Andy Buchanan, have the minister print it in the program or something but it basically says, "Guard and guide the men who fly / Through the great spaces in the sky. / Be with them always in the air, / In darkening storms or sunlight fair; / Oh, hear us as we lift our prayer, / For those in peril in the air!" It's the best line if you're married to a pilot. That's what you're always asking for, protect him and save him while he's flying. So it's a good one.

**QT: 01;43;14;03**

**TITLE**

Life on the military base wasn't lonely

**QT: 01;43;18;16**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

There were always plenty of military wives whose husbands were deployed. They weren't POWs but they weren't there because they were deployed at their squadrons or their ships or whatever so there were always plenty of people to keep you company.

**QT: 01;43;31;11**

**TITLE**

On finding people to help the boys with sports

**QT: 01;43;35;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

But I found people that could help them because I'm—you know; my idea of sports was for me to watch the football game or—ya know, I was a cheerleader. I could do that but I couldn't—I didn't know one thing from

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another but I found enough nice people in the coaching categories and I said, "You have to help him because I don't know how. And I need to keep them playing these sports. It's important that they stay busy." And people—ya know, this is a small town in the South. They are only too happy to help. It was good.

**QT: 01;44;07;01**

**TITLE**  
On Sidney

**QT: 01;44;11;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

First of all, Sidney was very cute. She was very friendly and she was very outgoing. She never met a stranger ever. So Sidney was so—she was like a little magnet. People always wanted to be friends with Sidney. So she had no troubles because she didn't know she was any different than anyone else. It didn't register with her. She knew he wasn't home but to him, she didn't remember him. You know, he was—he was her daddy but she didn't know what that was except she knew other people had daddies and that she had one and that he was away but she didn't remember anything about him particularly. So she was a happy, little child.

**QT: 01;44;49;10**

**TITLE**  
Jack McCain's promotion

**QT: 01;44;53;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I flew out with them when he was going to be getting his new position. I flew out to Hawaii with them. Again, the kids stayed home with my friends and neighbors and I was out there for probably about 10 days. And then, Admiral Moore, who was at that time was the Chief of Naval Operations, he was out there for the—It's a change of command ceremony is what it's called in the Navy. And he was out there for the change of command.

**QT: 01;45;17;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And he flew back with me. He brought me back on his plane to Washington. Then, I just had to fly from Washington to Jacksonville. We played a lot of Gin Rummy on the airplane and I beat him. And he wanted to pay me. I said, "Oh, no. I'm telling everybody I know you owe me \$8.40." For years, whenever I'd see him, he'd say, "I'll pay you today." "Nope. I'm not having it. I'd much rather have you owe me." He thought that was funny, so it was good.

**QT: 01;45;47;00**

**TITLE**

Jack McCain's promotion ceremony

**QT: 01;45;50;13**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well you know, the military goes in for a lot of pomp and pageantry, if you've ever even seen an Army-Navy game, you know that. And because this is the commander in chief of the Pacific, it is not just the Navy. It's got Marines, Air Force. It's got all the services fully represented. And they're all there in full military dress and they're saluting one of their own who's risen to one of the four or five top positions in the Navy. And it's very, very, very moving situation to be in. And the military always has plenty of bands playing and it's a very festive kind of occasion.

**QT: 01;46;32;08**

**TITLE**

Jack McCain, the Christmas bombing and realizing the POWs would be coming home

**QT: 01;46;37;03**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I can't say it was a hard decision because he knew it had to be done and everybody in the world knew where that prison camp was. They—if they got

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bombed in the prison camp, it's because somebody hit a plane and inadvertently landed there. I can remember Roberta telling the story of a dinner party where Mendel Rivers was one of the dinner guests. And he said, banging on the table, "We're going to bomb Vietnam. We're going to get those people back."

**QT: 01;47;04;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And Roberta said I just stood up and I said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Before we bomb Vietnam, I'd like to talk to you about that." And that was—always became a family joke because she was not going to have him just randomly bomb North Vietnam. She wanted a little bit more targeting bombing on that one but we all knew when those planes went over North Vietnam, that—this will make me cry, but we knew it was going to end.

**QT: 01;47;33;17**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I knew that it was only a matter of time. It might be one month, two months, three months, six months but they were going to be coming home. When they finally bombed North Vietnam, it was a good thing. When Lyndon Johnson stopped the bombing, I went into depression like you wouldn't believe. How could he? We'll never get him out of there if you don't keep up the pressure.

**QT: 01;47;55;04**

**TITLE**

On writing to President Lyndon Johnson

**QT: 01;48;00;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I know. I didn't do that. What would be the point? He wouldn't care. He was the big cheese and I was a little peon. And that's okay. I'm not belittling that but it's just anybody fool could know you got to deal from strength and we had relinquished the strength. And even me know knows nothing about the military was learning on the job, couldn't—couldn't fathom that that would be a good thing to do to quit the bombing.

**QT: 01;48;25;07**

**TITLE**

The Christmas bombing

**QT: 01;48;29;15**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

(Cross talk) We were cheering. We were overjoyed. It was exciting. It meant the war was going to end. It was everything we'd ever wanted. Years later, Ronald Reagan used words in his speech that said, "When the government decides a war is not worth winning," meaning don't doing the bombing, "then the people who are in the war decide it's not worth fighting," about deserters and things like that. And I thought, "Never can anybody understand it more perfectly than Ronald Reagan." You cannot do that. You have to keep up the pressure.

**QT: 01;49;04;21**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It makes sense that you keep up the pressure, not that you say, "Oh, well. We'll be nice if you'll be nice and now send them home." They would just laugh at us when we behave like that. It was wrong on a myriad of fronts. It just was wrong. When they stopped the bombing, I was like, "I may never see him again."

**QT: 01;49;24;19**

**TITLE**

Anticipating John coming home as POWs start being released

**QT: 01;49;29;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well, first of all, some—some people who came out ahead of John, two of them sent me roses on my birthday. I don't think there was anybody in the prison camp who didn't know the date of my birthday, which is February



19th. So that was very exciting. It was thrilling because it was like, "See? They're home and that means John's coming." And Andy, who lived holiday to holiday, said, "Mom, if granddaddy—" And this was true. He had called us and said, "It looks like it's going to be in the middle of March." I said to Andy, "This means he'll be home by St. Patrick's day," which he was. So Andy felt everything I'd always told him was absolutely true. He would be home by a holiday.

**QT: 01;50;14;18**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

So that was a good thing. And John's favorite drink is Irish coffee. Well, he likes a lot of things but he loves Irish coffee. He always would say, "It's the only time that you can be dead drunk and wide awake." And there's some truth to that but we always had it as a signature at all our dinner parties. But anyway, we knew he was coming home. And I had a good friend named Ruth Lynch who was the babysitter for a little nursery school that Sidney would often go to after she went to kindergarten and nursery school. And she and another friend of mine named Richard Loving came over. And they cleaned my yard and planted it with flowers. It looked like a magazine. It was just gorgeous because they wanted it to be perfect for when John came home. They were just adamant that everything had to be spotless and it was and it was great.

**QT: 01;51;04;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

So then, when we got the actual date that he would be coming, it was—it was on a Saturday, I believe, that he got there. And we were all dressed in the nines and went over there. And Doug had broken his leg playing soccer. I'm using crutches, Doug's using crutches. The local newspaper had a big picture of all of us. And the headline said, "McCain family limps to togetherness." I don't know. It was really true because there we were. We looked like you know, derelicts from [inaudible] army or something. It was very funny that the three of us were on crutches.

**QT: 01;51;45;01**

**TITLE**

How Carol learned the date of John's release and speaking to him for the first time

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**QT: 01;51;50;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Somebody from the Navy contacted me. They probably contacted him at the same time. And you know, God bless his parents. They did not come for the day that he came home. I thought that was really sweet of him. They came in just a week or two later. That was fine but they refused. I told them they were more than welcome but they refused. They did not want to barge into that. And I will tell you that when John got to the Philippines and he called me and I have to tell him about my car accident. I started to on the telephone. He called me from the Philippines and I was in my kitchen. I knew it was going to come at some point but I didn't know when or whatever.

**QT: 01;52;30;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And I started to tell him. He said, "I already know about your car accident." I said, "How do you know?" He said, "Well, Admiral Gayler said, "Carol's really doing great since her accident." and Mrs. Gayler kicked him, so I knew it had to be fairly serious." I said, "Yeah, it is fairly serious but I'm okay. It's all right." That sort of thing. I was stewing for how I was going to tell him I'd been in this bad car accident and it was fine. He just said, "I'm just glad you're okay. You know, it's all right." He wasn't worried about that. And the other thing was, I said, "And Doug has long hair."

**QT: 01;53;03;22**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He said, "It's okay. I've seen pictures of all these hockey [players and they all have long hair, too. It's okay." because you know, I didn't want him to have to rush him out and get them all military haircuts because John's not like that. And he—so the boys had Beatle hair, you know, longer hair. And so that was fine with him. And of course, Sidney thought it was really fun because she had a new dress and she was all ready to go to meet daddy. And it was wonderful. We had a grand time.

**QT: 01;53;33;18**

**TITLE**

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John's release

**QT: 01;53;38;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Yeah. This was right at NAS-JAX. We're all lined up and the plane lands and he gets off. And there were two other people with him, one of which was Pete Schoeffel. And I don't remember who the third person was but anyway, it was fabulous. It was really terrific. It was just like you'd expect. It was like right out of the movies. We're all there waiting and he gets off the plane and we all are hugging him and it was just perfect.

**QT: 01;54;02;21**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

The plane landed and we're outdoors and they came—came off the plane. The place was packed with people wanting to see them get off the plane. Now, on his way home, he left the Philippines and he landed in Hawaii in the middle of the night because his parents had been stationed there. Thousands of people went out to the airfield in Hawaii to see him so we had to get off the plane just to say hello to the people who'd made the effort to see him at that point and time, which I thought was just amazing but America had rallied behind these men who'd been incarcerated for this long period of time and that was really nice.

**QT: 01;54;41;18**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I just remember he was really skinny. And he—he was just all bones in his face because—now, he's getting that way again but other than that, his face used to be fuller and he was limping quite noticeably so. And he couldn't—one of his arms he couldn't lift any higher than about this but I just remember the smile was the same, the humor was the same. There was still a twinkle in his eye. It was good.

**QT: 01;55;09;06**

**TITLE**

John lost a bunch of teeth in captivity

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**QT: 01;55;13;13**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He'd had them repaired while he was at Clark. There had been teeth knocked out and all kind of things but they had gone to great strides so that when he got to Jacksonville, he would look good. And then they probably completed it later but when he got off the plane, his teeth looked just fine. There was nothing missing like there was when he got to the Philippines.

**QT: 01;55;33;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Yeah. They're a mess. And he's got spaces and everything else but no, they didn't want him to come back and meet us, say, "Ew!" There's another story like that. When he was put in a room with some other people and they were told they had to take care of him in the Hanoi Hilton, they were scrubbing his hair because he was filthy. And he said, "Now, because careful because I'm losing my hair, and her old high school boyfriend, he's bald now and she's not crazy about that and if I can lose all my hair, she won't love me."

**QT: 01;56;03;00**

**TITLE**

The POWs kept their sense of humor while incarcerated

**QT: 01;56;07;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

They're merciless when they come to teasing each other so it's not a surprise.

**QT: 01;56;11;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

You have to have that or you couldn't—you couldn't get through the day if they didn't have good senses of humor.

**QT: 01;56;17;09**

**TITLE**

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Jack and Roberta McCain's visit upon John's release

**QT: 01;56;22;01**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

They came shortly thereafter and they stayed with us. And they didn't stay a very long time. I mean, they probably stayed four or five days but they were like, "We just want to make sure he's okay. He is okay. We're going back to Washington. We're doing fine. We're glad he's doing fine. It's all good." And then Joe came and Joe stayed and stayed and stayed and stayed and stayed. And U.S. News & World Report came to interview John.

**QT: 01;56;46;21**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And they were interviewing him and Joe would say, "What he means to say—" "I thought John was going to choke Joe right there in person. Joe doesn't understand that this was not about him. He was trying to be helpful. He wasn't being mean. He really thought he was being helpful but it tested John very much for this brother there for that length of time.

**QT: 01;57;10;12**

**TITLE**

John's brother Joe and Ross Perot

**QT: 01;57;15;01**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I stayed away from that group because Joe was in it so heavily, I thought they don't need two of us. Joe was always stirring the pot so it was okay for me to stay out of it. The one person who I felt did some good things and who I love to this day is Ross Perot. When he took all the Christmas things over there and stuff, he's the world's nicest man. And I absolutely love Ross Perot. And he was the one that I had faith in and if anybody could get things through to North Vietnam, it was Ross Perot.

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**QT: 01;57;44;16**

**TITLE**

On the medical bills

**QT: 01;57;48;15**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

The Navy paid for my medical bills. Ross Perot didn't pay for them but he had told me if I needed anything in the way of help with that or whatever, that he would pay for them but, fortunately, I didn't. Now, at one point and time someone from the insurance company that covers what the Navy couldn't do or whatever, like when I was in Bryn Mawr for so long, this very nice gentleman came. And don't ask me what possessed me to do this but I did. He said, "You have exceeded the amount of money that CHAMPUS allows people to cover. That total is \$150,000 and you've exceeded it so you will be responsible to reimburse the Navy," and he gave me some astronomical number. And I said, "Okay. Well, I'll try my best to do that. I'm not sure how I do."

**QT: 01;58;34;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I said, "But first I think I'll have the Jacksonville Journal do a little story on our family and how the Navy's asking me to repay \$75,000." He said, "Never mind." I mean, he basically left and I never heard from him again but can you imagine? He wanted me to repay him for what I've done to exceed the limits of CHAMPUS? No. I don't think so.

**QT: 01;58;55;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I don't know how it happened. Every once in a while, I have to say, "Thank you, God," because that's not like me to just blurt that out but I did.

**QT: 01;59;02;22**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It was just when I thought about, later I thought, "I don't know where that came from," but I was glad I'd had the guts to do it.

**QT: 01;59;08;19**

**TITLE**

Reacclimating with John after his release and their house on the beach

**QT: 01;59;13;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I had rented a house at the beach at Jacksonville. It was 30, 40 minutes from our house-house but I thought it would be a good place to be alone. I mean, with kids and stuff but it's a desolate beach in the wintertime. And it would prevent our neighbors stopping in non-stop and that sort of thing and it was—turned out to be a really good thing because we would sit out there and just chat and chat and chat. He told me every single thing that he could remember. And I wanted him to. I wanted him to just talk and talk and talk, to not keep that stuff locked up that it could be really debilitating for him later, and he did.

**QT: 01;59;51;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We had funny things happen. The man that I rented the house from came to visit and he was a little short, little Spanish man and he was very cute but he sat down on a bean bag chair and all we could see was his face and the bottoms of his shoes. You know, beanbag chair you just enveloped in it. And we were trying so hard not to laugh because he looked pretty funny sitting in the beanbag chair. But anyway, while he was out there—while we were out there, he said, "What did you not get while I was in Vietnam?" And I said, "A house at the beach." He went out a couple days later and he bought one and said, "Here. It's yours." And that was the greatest thing ever. And we had a wonderful time with that house. A little cement—cinder block shack in South Ponte Vedra, just north between Jacksonville and St. Augustine. And it's just—there's nothing out there. Now, it's probably changed a lot.

**QT: 02;00;46;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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I haven't been back in a long time but it was wonderful. It was a great place for our kids. And you know, when you take kids to beaches that have no lifeguards and nothing to help you, you teach them. "You must be in the water with a friend. If you see a lot of little fish around you, get out because a bigger fish has pushed a bigger fish into where the little fish—Get out." And they finally did understand that when you see schools of fish and they're in water up to your knees, somethings not right so get out of the water. It was good for them because they all learned how to take care of themselves in the water without anybody there to help them.

**QT: 02;01;27;19**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Now, adults were always out there, mind you, but you know what I'm saying. It's important to teach them how to do that. We had a black Labrador retriever named Moses. Moses was out there constantly and Moses learned to body surf. He could put those paws out in front of him and ride in with the setup. It was wonderful. It was great fun and we had a wonderful time with this little shacky beach house.

**QT: 02;01;50;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He loved that big dog. He was a good dog.

**QT: 02;01;53;21**

**TITLE**

John was the same man when he returned

**QT: 02;01;57;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He was to me. I didn't notice anything different. He still had a good sense of humor. He still liked—he still liked Mexican food. And he still liked crabbing out on the ocean. There were all kinds—nothing had changed. He really hadn't changed. I'm not saying some people may change but he didn't. Maybe that was God's way of protecting him. I don't know, but if anything, he was glad to be home, happy to be with me, and happy to be with his children, and we had a wonderful time. It was truly wonderful. And I have no regrets about



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any of that period. It was just really lovely, lovely, lovely. So we spent a big portion of that until he—the following fall, he went to the Army War College in Washington.

**QT: 02;02;48;21**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

At—so, that was at Fort McNair so we rented an apartment in Washington and rented out our house for the time that we would be gone. We left Jacksonville and went to Washington DC. Then, he was still fine but it was like back to business at that point. He was going to the War College. He was working hard. Kids were going to school. It was much more the routine that it used to be before he left whereas up until that point, from the time he came home till we left in September, it had been sort of one long, wonderful vacation.

**QT: 02;03;24;08**

**TITLE**

John underwent intense physical therapy after his release

**QT: 02;03;28;04**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

During that time when he was home in the summer there—and we lived in this apartment building and the office of the physical therapy happened to be on the first floor of the building. So he went to one lady partner and I went to the other. His partn—the partner he went to was named Diane Rauss. She eventually married a POW that John introduced her to named Bill Lawrence. And they lived in Annapolis later but I went to her partner and—whose name was Pat Divine.

**QT: 02;04;01;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And she always said, she could give me divine healing but Diane's claim to fame when she was working on his arm was that she had taken care of Sonny Juergensen so she could certainly take care of John. And she was married to a naval officer—had been married, she was divorced, and had been married to

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a naval officer, so she knew all about the military and she was good for John because of that.

**QT: 02;04;22;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He didn't complain. He was working hard at it because he—he wanted to be able to get to fly again. So he knew that he had to meet certain criteria to be able to fly again. And finally, we went to Bethesda one day and the Navy flight surgeon named Dr. Slemmins, Bart Slemmins said, "We're going to have to go about this in a different way if I'm going to qualify you to fly again. We're not going to go by what you can't do. We're going to focus on what you can do." That's what he did. That's how he got him qualified so he could fly again. That—that made John's life. He was thrilled.

**QT: 02;05;01;01**

**TITLE**

John did fly again

**QT: 02;05;04;16**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He was the exec and then the skipper of a replacement pilot squadron in Jacksonville. He was the CAG of the rag so that—he liked doing that. He was in charge of the replacement air group pilots and it's a big deal so he loved it.

**QT: 02;05;20;21**

**TITLE**

Celebrating the POWs and meeting the Reagans

**QT: 02;05;25;09**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well, they had a little parade in Orange Park, Florida that John describes as the town was so small, they had to go around twice for the parade. Sidney thought that was the most exciting thing that had ever happened, was that she got to be in a parade. So that was a big deal for her, that we were all in

this convertible while John was in the parade. And I—Pete Schoeffel was in it and I don't remember who else but it was really fun. And then we went to a big party in San Francisco that Ross Perot gave at the St. Francis Hotel and that was wonderful because we got to meet a lot of people like John Wayne. You know, that was very exciting. That's where I met Nancy Reynolds, who represented the Reagans while we were out there. And she invited us to— John always tells; he was testifying at the Ellsworth trial about the Pentagon Papers in Los Angeles.

**QT: 02;06;18;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I'm sorry I told you—It's Daniel Ellsberg. Anyway, he was testifying in that trial. So we were locked up in a hotel in San Francisco for a few days. And that was sort of interesting because Al Haig was there and Ambassador Habib was there. I mean it was just a very assorted group of characters but during that time was when Nancy Reynolds took us to meet Ronald and Nancy Reagan. And that was very, very exciting because they were so nice and so friendly. And Ronald Reagan had 1,000 questions for John and we went to their home and it was really fun.

**QT: 02;06;53;02**

**TITLE**

On the Ellsberg trial

**QT: 02;06;57;09**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I don't know exactly what it was but Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers to news media explaining how the targets were chosen for the bombing in North Vietnam because according to him, the whole war was illegal and the people should be punished and all that sort of thing, and— because John knew firsthand about it. And as John would explain to me is, it was worthless because they bombed the same things over and over and over and over so it didn't take the Vietnamese long to figure out that they could just stay right where they were. It was like shooting fish in a barrel. So that's why they were able to shoot down so many of the POWs.

**QT: 02;07;40;18**

**TITLE**

Nixon's party for the POWs

**QT: 02;07;44;19**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Nixon threw a big party. There was a big tent on the White House lawn. And I mean, when you get that invitation that says you've been invited to dinner at the White House, it's really exciting. So all the POWs pull up to the White House. And John's mother—their family had a cousin named Helen McCain-Smith, who was the press secretary for Mrs. Nixon and she kind of arranged that we could come in a different entrance so a car would bring us and we didn't have to worry about getting on and off a bus, which was hard for both of us to do.

**QT: 02;08;17;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Anyway, we go into the cross hall in the White House. And we were told that we could go anywhere. We could go in any room that was there. People went in the Lincoln Bedroom, and they went in—they—'cause they—he had said, "It's open. It's the people's house. Go look." Well, we were walking down the hall and there was this lady who had a necklace on that had emeralds like eggs. And she looked like she was lost. And John and I looked at each other, said, "We got to help her. She doesn't know where to go." And so we walked over and said, "You know, excuse me.

**QT: 02;08;53;03**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We're just wondering if we could show you the way or could we help you?" And she said, "Well, Irving is with the show and I don't know where I'm supposed to be." And of course, it was Mrs. Irving Berlin. And she was so grateful. She was so sweet. I just wanted to hug her. And of course, she wrote me several letters thanking me and thanking John for how good we were to her. And of course, we loved her. We were thrilled to be able to do that.

**QT: 02;09;20;07**

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**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well, you go out onto the lawn into this tent and there are tables. And there's one or two sort of luminaries at every table mixed in with the POWs. You know, Henry Kissinger. I was seated at the Vice President's table. And they had a show afterwards and it was very funny because one of the people in the show was Joey Heatherton. The POWs had no idea who Joey Heatherton was. And they looked at each other like, "Who's this?"

**QT: 02;09;53;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

But when they had Roy Acuff and the Smoky Mountain Boys, they went crazy because they knew Roy Acuff. It was just funny because whoever put that show together didn't think, "They missed six years. Get people that are before then. You know, don't get somebody that—" Anyway, that was funny but it was an elegant, wonderful, marvelous time and nobody will ever forget it. Here we are, black tied, having dinner on the lawn of the White House. It was fabulous.

**QT: 02;10;20;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

But when John Wayne said, do you remember what he said?

**QT: 02;10;23;18**

**TEDDY KUNHARDT:**

No.

**QT: 02;10;24;14**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well he's up there and he's talking to him. Of course, they're glued to their chairs with John Wayne and he says, "I just want you to know I would ride off into the sunset with each and every one of you." And they went, "Yay!" I was crying, just crying, crying, crying when he did that because they were thrilled by their greetings from John Wayne.

**QT: 02;10;45;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It was wonderful. It was wonderful. What was interesting was and it was sort of sad but it's funny. It had rained very hard for about three days before this

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dinner. So the White House was sloshy. You know, there was nothing you could do about it. It was sloshy. So everybody in their good shoes and their long dresses around the bottom of them was about this much was wet and of course, your shoes, you just dropped them in the trashcan when you got home but we could have cared less. It could have been up to our knees and we would have been just fine.

**QT: 02;11;16;03**

**TITLE**  
Meeting Nixon

**QT: 02;11;20;09**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Oh, I certainly did. We all did. I met Nixon. Met Mrs. Nixon. Then, we had a party at the State Department on the day before. Mrs. Nixon hosted for all the wives. John's father took him—me too, but he took us all over the Hill to meet various people that were members of Congress. And—no, it's sort of in a fog because so much is coming to you at one time.

**QT: 02;11;46;09**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He was familiar with the McCain family for a lot of reasons but he knew John McCain's dad from the fact that he'd been CINCPAC and he'd been CINCUSNAVEUR. Richard Nixon didn't miss much. He was a very, very, very smart man. And so the fact that Johnny, as everybody called him, was the part of the group was very big for the Nixon's. And they made a big fuss about him and that was really very, very nice.

**QT: 02;12;14;04**

**TITLE**  
John's parents called him Johnny

**QT: 02;12;17;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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(Cross talk) His parents called him Johnny, called him Johnny McCain. And most of his friends at that point did, too, I guess from the Naval Academy and that sort of thing, so they called him Johnny. Like Frank Gamboa would have called him Johnny. I don't know how to explain it. It just was what it was. I always called him John but others did not. They called him Johnny.

**QT: 02;12;38;02**

**TITLE**

Frank Gamboa

**QT: 02;12;41;16**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I knew he and Linda both of them very, very well. He's a very nice man.

**QT: 02;12;45;07**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

They weren't stationed anywhere near me. Came and visited us one time but no. We were never—I was in Jacksonville. And he was—I don't know where he was, to be honest with you, but he was in Washington or in California or someplace but not in Jacksonville. So I didn't really know. I didn't see him during that time.

**QT: 02;13;07;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

But there's nothing wrong with that. I didn't see a lot of people because I wasn't in the vicinity of where they were.

**QT: 02;13;13;06**

**TITLE**

The stories John told about being a POW

**QT: 02;13;16;15**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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Mostly it was how people were tortured and what they were tortured about and what happened to them when they were tortured. About John Dmitri because he'd escaped and then he come back and he been in manacles for months and months and months. And you know, he told me the people and what had been happened to him but I've conveniently tried not to remember a lot of that.

**QT: 02;13;38;12**

**TITLE**  
POW stories

**QT: 02;13;42;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He was—he was the one that also at Christmas time would sing out, "Have a blue Christmas without you." And I think he's one of the people that came back a little bit changed. I don't mean that meanly but I think his reentry was harder than it was for some of the other POWs. As I said, John wasn't changed in particular but we went through a point where he was angry and he didn't want any of his medals and he wanted to give them all back to the government. And all he—

**QT: 02;14;11;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He just was angry and I don't know how to explain it, where John was not angry. He was just happy to be home. But he told me good things and bad things. The house we lived in in Jacksonville, I rented from Billy Lawrence's in-laws. Mack and Molly Williams lived in this house and they rented it to me because they wanted to live in California to be closer to their daughter. So I rented it and eventually, I bought it. And their daughter, she divorced her husband while he was in POW camp. And of course, they were horrified. Here's a Navy family with these lovely parents. And that was like I couldn't believe that. How could you? How could you? That is just so disloyal and dishonest that it was hard to believe.

**QT: 02;15;03;00**



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**CAROL McCAIN:**

So he told me all kind of things about various POWs that a lot of which, as I've said, I've made a point of not remembering. Orson's a really good friend of his and Orson was tortured unbelievably difficult periods of time and had terrible things done to him and he's another one that is in great shape today and I'm happy about that. And then John had funny stories, like Ned Shuman who since has died but Ned Shuman was one of John's favorite people and Ned used to tell stories about when he came home from school, he had to bartend for his mother and her bridge club.

**QT: 02;15;38;19**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And so then, then he would sit down and play bridge with them. And I was like, "You know, eyes big as saucers." His mother drank during the day? That—in my house, that would have never happened but when Ned was 10 years old, they could make martinis. Now, that was impressive. So he told me funny stories about these people that they'd shared when they were all in the big room together in Hanoi but he would talk about anything. It's just the hard stuff about the bad things that had happened to people I conveniently didn't want to remember.

**QT: 02;16;10;18**

**TITLE**

Stories John told the Vietnamese

**QT: 02;16;15;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Did he tell you about when he was being interrogated by the North Vietnamese and they asked him about Easter?

**QT: 02;16;21;01**

**TEDDY KUNHARDT:**

Yeah.

**QT: 02;16;21;18**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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And John said, you know, he said, "I made that to be so fantastic and this guy is about to fall out of his chair. "So, he's dead. And he rise from the dead?" And John said, "Oh, yes. He rose from the dead." And he said it was the most fun he'd had in years to try to explain Easter to a non-believer. And I thought, "Yeah and I'll bet you made it sound like he wished he were there." And John said, "Oh, I did."

**QT: 02;16;47;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I mean, it was based on truth but he made it sound like and while they were sitting there, he just rose up from the dead. And it wasn't quite like it happened, you know what I mean but still—no, no. He loved it because that was mental exercise for John and that was good for him.

**QT: 02;17;03;00**

**TITLE**

Movie night

**QT: 02;17;06;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

They had movie night. They kept track of movie deaths, did he tell you that?

**QT: 02;17;09;15**

**TEDDY KUNHARDT:**

No.

**QT: 02;17;10;03**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well, because when he had been on the ship, they decided to keep track of movie deaths. You know, in the great shoot them out scenes, one, two, three, four kind of thing. They would shout out the numbers so when he would recite the movies, he'd say, "Now, in this movie, there are 109 dead and numerous people injured." They'd say, "What are you talking about?" He'd explain, "Well, when you see where they have the shootout, you'll notice how

many Indians just fall off the top of the cliff with their arrows through them." It was wonderful.

**QT: 02;17;37;17**

**TITLE**

John loves movies

**QT: 02;17;42;05**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Loves movies. Always has loved movies.

**QT: 02;17;44;17**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He—oh he—like *The Bridge on the River Kwai* was a favorite but he would watch any of them. It's like football. He watches—he always said he would watch any football game even if it was the bad wetters against the thumb suckers. He was that much of a football person. When John likes something, he tends to OD on it a bit.

**QT: 02;18;06;00**

**TITLE**

The McCain's relationship with the Reagans

**QT: 02;18;11;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

When Ronald Reagan was running for President, he came to Jacksonville, Florida. The only people he knew in Jacksonville were John and myself, so when he was going to give a speech, John would be up on the dais to introduce him. Of course, I would be up there, too. And I always remember one that it was at this—the Thunderbird Motel, which is just what it sounds like. It was a divey place but it had a big barroom for hosting this dinner. We all walk out along the side and then to go up onto this thing there are steps. And I'm the last person behind Ronald Reagan. And he takes one look at those steps because there's no railing or anything. I'm like, "I don't know how I'm going to be able to do this."

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**QT: 02;18;56;09**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And he just lifted me up. Never said a word. He just lifted me up and held my hand so I can get up on the steps. Now, that's kind. It was really, really sweet. So they knew us. And so these things were happening where we needed to be in different places because he would be passing through town or whatever. And that's how it came to be. We saw quite a bit of them. And then, when we were in Washington at one point, the—the Iranian ambassador was hav—his name as Ardeshir Zahedi and he was having a dinner for the Reagan at the Iranian embassy. And you know that means a lot of caviar and a lot of vodka. So I'm seated at the table next to Mike Deever. And the Marriott's were at my table and they're Mormons so they don't drink.

**QT: 02;19;48;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And God, I love Mike Deever because he said, "Carol, I want to warn you right now. Do not drink this vodka. It's some ridiculous proof," he said. "and you have two of those and you'll fall over." He said, "Just pretend to sip it but don't have any because they all have really good wine. They always do here but you have to be careful with the vodka." Well, people were. There was a lady at my table who was from Hollywood named Lady "Slim" Keith, right into her plate because she didn't know that was 110 or 120 proof, whatever it would be, vodka, that it was that deadly but it was. John's parents were invited to that dinner. John got to sit next to Claudette Colbert and he liked that, too, because she was—looked fabulous even though at the time she was probably, you know, in her 60s, not 35 but she looked fabulous. And he liked that. And as I said, I got to eat with Mike Deever, so that was good for me, too.

**QT: 02;20;46;13**

**TITLE**

On John's willingness to talk about his torture

**QT: 02;20;50;17**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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He never minded to answer to any of them and I was always grateful because he would talk about anything.

**QT: 02;20;56;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He would try to talk about somebody else's before he would talk about his own. He would not want the focus to be on him. They'd say, "Well, did you get tortured?" "Oh, sure. I had my turn in the barrel," kind of thing, "But let me tell you what happened to—" you know, he would turn it around on somebody else.

**QT: 02;21;12;22**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well it's awful. It's barbaric. And the fact that he feels so badly because he signed a confession, as you said, that shouldn't bother him but it will always bother him. That will not change.

**QT: 02;21;24;04**

**TITLE**

John's relationship with Vietnam after the war

**QT: 02;21;27;19**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And a POW goes over there to be the ambassador. Pete Peterson goes to be the ambassador. That's amazing, too. But I will tell you a cute story about that. He caught me one time when he was with Walter Winchell, waiting to go—no, no, not—Walter Cronkite rather, not Walter Winchell, Walter Cronkite. And they were not in Vietnam. They were waiting to get into Vietnam from Cambodia, someplace. And he said, "I've already told them. I'm willing to wait a day or two but I waited five and a half years to get out of there and I'm not going to wait much longer than a day or two." And I guess the Vietnamese who probably were listening in on the call, they got in the next day.

**QT: 02;22;12;10**

**TITLE**

John began to think about a political career in Vietnam

**QT: 02;22;15;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

No, he wanted to do that when he was in Vietnam. He gave—and Leo Thorsness tried it first and he didn't do it very well and John was determined that he was going to do it better than Leo did and he knew that. He was talking about it from the time he got home. He really wanted to run for Congress. And neither of us knew what to do or how to do, so it was important that he figure it out and he did.

**QT: 02;22;42;13**

**TITLE**

When John came home he wanted to 'escape the boredom of leisure'

**QT: 02;22;46;09**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He can't stand not to have 800 things to do. And even when we had this little beach house, he took up all kinds of things just to keep busy like crabbing at night with a lantern and a net, because he's not one to just sit around. Now, he did a lot of reading. Don't get me wrong. He's always been a vociferous reader but by the same token, he—he can't just do nothing. It would drive him nuts.

**QT: 02;23;11;21**

**TITLE**

Roberta McCain's influence on John

**QT: 02;23;15;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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Her love of travel and learning, all that stems—more so than his dad. His father's very military. Everything he read had to do with the military, whereas Roberta was much more Catholic in her thinking. You know, she learned about the art and the history and the design and the architecture. So she was much more rounded. And I think John's more rounded in that respect, that he responds to his mother's child-like curiosity about everything. She has it and he has it, too. I don't think Sandy has it but John definitely takes after his mother in that respect.

**QT: 02;23;55;17**

**TITLE**

The meaning of patriotism for John

**QT: 02;24;00;15**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Working for your country, serving your country, trying to do good for your country, helping your country, caring about your country and never giving up on believing in what your country is capable of doing.

**QT: 02;24;13;21**

**TITLE**

John decides to leave the Navy

**QT: 02;24;17;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Well, this is about the time our marriage was falling apart. So he did that on his own.

**QT: 02;24;25;02**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I couldn't support it because I was not in good shape at that point and time because we were in a position where I was faced with a divorce that I really

didn't want. So it was more than unpleasant and he got divorced within a year after the time we got divorced—or he left the Navy within the time, about a year after we got divorced.

**QT: 02;24;48;04**

**TITLE**

John's father's death

**QT: 02;24;52;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

His father was on a ship—a ship, on a plane coming back from Europe where he and his mom had been on a vacation. And I got a telephone call from the Navy that John's father died and did I know where he was. I said, yes, I did know where he was. "What's happening?" They said, "Well, his father's died and we got to find a way to tell him and his mother and father are going to be landing at Dover Air Force Base," you know, within a certain period of time. And I said, "Well, I know where he's going to be so I will get a hold of him and tell me where he should call and I'll take care of that." So he was now remarried and he was going to dinner. By a quirk, I happened to know where. Somebody had said that John was coming to their house for dinner so I had the phone number. And I called these people and I said, "Could you please be sure to have John call me. There's something I have to talk to him about and it's kind of a mess."

**QT: 02;25;56;13**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And they said, "What is it?" I said, "Please don't tell him. I need to tell him this myself and it's bad." They said, "No. We promise we will not tell him." His name was Charlie Cromley and I said—Cromwell, and I said, "You have to promise me because this isn't just something you blurt out." They said, "Okay." So he—John gets to their house. And he calls me on the phone. He says, "What?" He's not happy. I said, "John, just take a seat because I need to talk to you." And he knew by my voice that something was wrong. He said, "What is it." I said, "Your father has died." He said, "You're kidding." I said, "No. It's bad." I said, "And it was on an airplane and they're on their way to



land at Dover Air Force Base. They could have landed by now but your father has died."

**QT: 02;26;43;12**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And he said—and this is typical of John. He bounced right back and he said, well, he would always say to my mom—he said, "My mom would say to my dad, 'Let's go for a cup of coffee' and then it would be in Budapest but she wouldn't tell him that." because she liked to keep traveling and Jack could have cared less but. But so he said, "I guess this time it was just one trip too many." I said, "I don't know but call this number and they'll give you all the details." And he did.

**QT: 02;27;10;03**

**TITLE**

How their marriage fell apart

**QT: 02;27;14;18**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Yes, but I don't want to dwell on this because it's very sad. John, when he had, I'd say his 40th birthday, he didn't take it very well. He still wanted to be 28. And so that part wasn't good. So he basically was looking for a way to be young again and found somebody who wanted to play and that was the end of that. I didn't know anything about it. I had no idea what was going on. I was pretty much blindsided. It broke my heart. It took me a very long time to get over it. And this is a story that Ed Meese told me that John went to see him when Ed was that the White House because he was looking for a job because he was getting out of the Navy. And Ed told him, "No." And he'd always told them there would be something that he could do. And he said, "Well, I don't understand why." Ed said, "Well, I think you do." He said, "Carol is not the first person to get a divorce." And Ed said, "But she's the first person I had to take care of."

**QT: 02;28;14;06**

**TITLE**

How the kids handled the divorce

**QT: 02;28;19;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

They weren't happy but there again, I'm not going to let my children suffer. So I basically said, "Things happen. Nothing we can do about it and you know, he's still your father. He'll always be your father." Sidney was furious. Sidney—I found out later, Sidney went to see a shrink. I didn't know about it or I would have taken her but anyway, she was furious with him but I never said anything except things happen and that's the way it is and I'm sorry. There was nothing I could say or do. I didn't want the divorce. There's no point in me telling that to my children. What would be the point? It would just make them not like him and I didn't want that to happen either.

**QT: 02;28;58;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It's the right thing to do. You do the right thing when you have to. When the chips are down, that's what you've got to do.

**QT: 02;29;04;08**

**TITLE**

John's presidential bids

**QT: 02;29;07;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I didn't participate in it but I did write a check for his campaign. He called me and he said, "This is something that's suitable for framing." He thought it was very funny that I—I said, "Well, I support you and I'm going to vote for you." You know what I mean. He was just laughing and he was happy about that. And a lot of people tried to get me to say bad things about him during that time. I was like, "Are you crazy? I would never do that. You don't know me or you wouldn't ask me." And the worst was and this was incredible. People Magazine offered me a ton of money to do a little tell-all article. And I said, "I

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would love to have the money. I'm always a day late and a dollar short but never. Not on your life. No."

**QT: 02;29;54;22**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

And after about the 10th time, they quite bothering me 'cause—and Doug will tell you that there was a group of people who were hanging around outside my house. And I wasn't here. I was down in Florida for a winter vacation for a couple months and they didn't know that. And they—he said, "What are you doing here?" And he said, "Well, we're waiting for Mrs. McCain." And he said, "Well, you're going to be a while. She's not coming back until March." And this was like the beginning of February. It was funny.

**QT: 02;30;21;10**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I mean, I love the man. I would never do anything to harm him in any way. I'm very sad that he's going to be leaving us in the next year. It's heartbreaking. It's not fair.

**QT: 02;30;30;20**

**TITLE**

The grandkids

**QT: 02;30;34;08**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

Aw, they call me granny, which I love because I think it's funny. I think granny's a funny word.

**QT: 02;30;40;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

When you have a little person come up next to you and tug on you and say, "Granny. I need to ask you." It's just heartwarming but they—John was being called Grandpa, we thought but Ashley was taking Caroline to Bermuda to visit with John and kids. Everybody was going, Andy was going. And there was this suggestion made that it might be good if he was called John. And Ashley was practicing on the airplane with picture. "Who is this?" "Granny!

Granddad!" "No. Who is this? John." Well, they get off the plane and John's running toward her with her arms out like this. She's a little person and she stops dead and starts crying. He picks her up and he said, "She was shaking." It's scaring him because she was shaking so hard. He said, "What's wrong, Caroline?" And she said, "I don't know your name." And he said, "I, Caroline, am the old geezer but you can call me geezer." So they all call him geezer. So we love that. Nobody else has a grandfather known as geezer.

**QT: 02;31;51;20**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

It's a good one. It's fun and they'll—you'll never be mistaken for anybody else if you're at a ball game and they call to you, you'll know it instantly.

**QT: 02;32;01;16**

**TITLE**

On John becoming more reflective

**QT: 02;32;05;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I think it's because he knows his time is limited. He never had any reason to feel that way before. As you can tell by his mom, he has really good genes so he could be—if he didn't have this cancer, he could be going strong for another 20 years but because he does have this cancer, that's not going to be given to him. So I think he's much more open than he would be if he couldn't see that he has a limited amount of time.

**QT: 02;32;31;13**

**TITLE**

Learning John's diagnosis

**QT: 02;32;35;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He talked to Doug and Andy and Doug called me and explained it all to me, the—it's got a funny name, glastobostoma or something. I don't know but anyway, Doug explained it to me and said, "Please not to say anything until the time that John made it public," because they just didn't want people to know. I said, "I wouldn't do that anyway," but of course. That's nobody's business but John's. And then when it came out a lot of people asked me about it and I just said, "It's really bad." Then, Andy, as I said, was here to visit me a few weeks ago and he said, "He's having some trouble with his most recent treatments. His body's rejecting some of the treatments. It's not good." And I said, "So, do we know any time frame?" And Andy said, "No," but he'd say, "I say a year from now he won't be with us."

**QT: 02;33;20;23**

**TITLE**

John over the years

**QT: 02;33;25;06**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

I haven't seen him really change. He's just—if anything, he might be a little more serious but he still has a terrific sense of humor that helps him get through some of the bad times that he's had to go through. I thought with that Keating investigation in Congress was going to do him in but he's able to look at that now and say, "That was a stupid thing to do and I'm so sorry that I did it but it's done and I've atoned for that. There's nothing else that I could say," but he hasn't really changed. I don't think we do change.

**QT: 02;33;55;04**

**TITLE**

What Jack McCain would think of John today

**QT: 02;33;59;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

He'd be so proud. He would make you proud that you knew him. Jack McCain was a fiercely family loyal person. And he would be devoted to the fact that

John was doing so well. And Jack McCain had a very strong following among various people in the Navy and he had a younger person who became an Admiral. And his name was Admiral Isaac Kidd and I can always remember that he was visiting Jack McCain one time when my children were little. The boys went in there and Jack said, "Andy, Doug, I'd like you to meet Captain Kidd." The boys fell on the floor. They were 'tee-heeing' so hard because Captain Kidd to them was a pirate. And so they asked me, he said, "Is it really Captain Kidd? Is it the Captain Kidd in the book?" And I'm like, "Yes, it's the exact one. He's no longer a pirate but it's the exact person." But Jack had a loyal following. And they all knew to a fault how proud he was of Johnny.

**QT: 02;35;01;23**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

You know the stories about him going up on the DMZ on Christmas because he could be closer to his son that way by being there. The man was selfless in that respect. He loved him to the bottom of his heart. I mean, it was encompassing. And he's not—he was not given to wild stories or whatever but it was—he would be thrilled. He would be so proud of him now, it would be wonderful. Now, John's mother, when John was running for office was very busy telling people he was not going to get elected. She was positive of it. And people would say to her, "We don't care what you think. Stop saying that." It was true, mind you, but I didn't know what I thought one way or another. I—who thought Donald Trump would get elected but he did but by the same token, I think it was very hard to run against Barack Obama. People treated him like a messiah. I mean there's no way to argue with that and it has nothing to do with him. It just was the way it was at the time but John was every bit as good a candidate.

**QT: 02;36;02;17**

**TITLE**

On John's choice to be buried in Annapolis

**QT: 02;36;05;22**

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**CAROL McCAIN:**

The people that are close friends of his, there's another one in that group, a guy named Franz Weiderman, who died not that long ago who's also buried there. And it's out on Hospital Point and it's a beautiful area. No one ever even asked me but I knew from day one that John would be buried in Annapolis. That would be what he wanted. And so when he said that's what he did want, I was not surprised. That's a good place for him to be.

**QT: 02;36;39;03**

**TITLE**

The first Christmas John was back

**QT: 02;36;43;11**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

We were in Washington DC and we were living in a little apartment and we had the Christmas tree and all the presents. And we were going to his mother's house for dinner. She lived in a big, fancy his apartment, his mother and father on Connecticut Avenue. And my children in the car were signing, "Over the river, and through the wood, / To Grandmother's house we go" and somehow it didn't fit this fancy apartment on Connecticut Avenue but it was a wonderful Christmas. We got trillions of games and our family are all games players so we played them all during that time. Then we went to—a couple days later, we flew to Jacksonville because Pete Schoeffel was getting married, another POW. And we flew down and spent about five days in Jacksonville. And we had a lot of friends there and that was fun, too. So it was a wonderful vacation, Christmas celebration. It was all good.

**QT: 02;37;35;23**

**TITLE**

Her son Doug and writing her own obituary

**QT: 02;37;40;00**

**CAROL McCAIN:**

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This is not a story for what you're doing but it made me think of it. You know, Doug has been taking care of me since he was eight years old in many, many, many ways. So one of my friends said to me recently, "Have you written your obituary?" We're talking about John dying, made me think of it. And I said, "No. I'm not going to." They said, "Well, you really should because that way, when you die, your kids have it to give to the paper." And I said, "No. I'm not doing that." And they said, "Why?" I said, "Doug's been taking care of me since I was eight. He will finish up with my obituary. It will be fine." And they looked at me like I was crazy but it's true. Why would I ever do that? He'll do it and it'll be just fine.

**QT: 02;38;19;13**

## **TITLE**

On her reluctance to give an interview

**QT: 02;38;23;20**

## **CAROL McCAIN:**

Oh, it's my pleasure. I'm happy to do it. I told you I didn't want to do it. And they—my children said, "You really need to do this. It's okay." I've tried very hard not to put myself in a spot where I would—I would never want to interfere with John and his life and what's going on and how it's set. I don't want that to be the case.

**END TC:**

**QT: 02;38;41;23**



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