

= Cindy McCain =

Cindy Lou Hensley McCain ( born May 20 , 1954 ) is an American businesswoman , philanthropist , and humanitarian , and the wife of United States Senator and 2008 Republican presidential nominee John McCain of Arizona .

She was born and raised in Phoenix , Arizona , as the daughter of wealthy beer distributor Jim Hensley . After receiving bachelor 's and master 's degrees from the University of Southern California , she became a special education teacher . She married John McCain in 1980 and they had three children together , in addition to adopting another . From 1988 to 1995 , she founded and operated a nonprofit organization , the American Voluntary Medical Team , which organized trips by medical personnel to disaster @-@ stricken or war @-@ torn third @-@ world areas . During this time , she became addicted to painkillers for several years and resorted to having a physician write illegal prescriptions on her behalf . She reached an agreement with the government in which no charges were filed against her .

Upon her father 's death in 2000 , she inherited majority control and became chair of Hensley & Co . , one of the largest Anheuser @-@ Busch beer distributors in the United States . She participated in both of her husband 's presidential campaigns and , in 2008 , drew both positive and negative scrutiny for her appearance , demeanor , wealth , spending habits , and financial obligations . She continues to be an active philanthropist and serves on the boards of Operation Smile , Eastern Congo Initiative , CARE and HALO Trust , frequently making overseas trips in conjunction with their activities . During the 2010s she has become prominent in the fight against human trafficking .

= = Early life and education = =

Cindy Lou Hensley was born in Phoenix , Arizona , to James Hensley , who founded Hensley & Co . , and Marguerite " Smitty " Hensley ( née Johnson ) . She was raised as the only child of her parents ' second marriages and grew up on Phoenix 's North Central Avenue in affluent circumstances . ( Dixie L. Burd , who is the daughter of Marguerite Smith through a prior relationship , is her half @-@ sister , as is Kathleen Hensley Portalski , daughter of Jim Hensley and his first wife , Mary Jeanne Parks . ) Cindy Hensley was named Junior Rodeo Queen of Arizona in 1968 . She went to Central High School in Phoenix , where she was named Best Dressed as a senior and graduated in 1972 .

Hensley enrolled at the University of Southern California . She joined the socially conservative Kappa Alpha Theta sorority as a freshman , and had many leadership roles in the house during her four years there . Hensley graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in education in 1976 . She continued on at USC , and received a Master of Arts in special education in 1978 . There she participated in a movement therapy pilot program that laid the way for a standard treatment for children with severe disabilities ; she published the work Movement Therapy : A Possible Approach in 1978 . Declining a role in the family business , she worked for a year as a special education teacher dealing with children with Down syndrome and other disabilities at Agua Fria High School in Avondale , Arizona .

= = Marriage and family = =

Hensley met John McCain in April 1979 at a military reception in Hawaii . He was the U.S. Navy liaison officer to the United States Senate and almost eighteen years her senior . McCain and Hensley quickly began a relationship , traveling between Arizona and Washington to see each other . John McCain then pushed to end his marriage of fourteen years ; Carol McCain and John McCain stopped cohabiting in January 1980 , and Carol accepted a divorce in February 1980 , effective in April 1980 . John and Cindy were married on May 17 , 1980 at the Arizona Biltmore Hotel in Phoenix . They signed a prenuptial agreement that kept most of her family 's assets under her name ; they have since kept their finances apart and file separate income tax returns .

Her father 's business and political contacts helped John McCain to gain a foothold in Arizona politics . She campaigned with her husband door to door during his successful first bid for U.S.

Congress in 1982 , and was heavily involved in campaign strategy . Her wealth from an expired trust from her parents provided significant loans to the campaign and helped it survive a period of early debt .

Once John McCain was elected , the couple moved to Alexandria , Virginia . She spent two months in late 1983 writing handwritten notes on over 4 @, @ 000 Christmas cards to be sent to constituents and others . She was considered an outsider who was snubbed by the Washington congressional social scene , in part because Carol McCain was a popular figure in town , and she grew homesick for Arizona . She had several miscarriages .

She moved back to Arizona in early 1984 and gave birth to the couple 's daughter , Meghan , later that year . She subsequently gave birth to sons John Sidney IV ( known as " Jack " ) in 1986 and James ( known as " Jimmy " ) in 1988 . Their fourth child , Bridget , was adopted in 1991 . Cindy McCain 's parents lived across the street and helped her raise the children ; her husband was frequently in Washington and she typically only saw him on weekends . In his absence , she organized elaborate fund @-@ raisers for him and expanded their home .

In April 1986 , Cindy and her father invested \$ 359 @, @ 100 in a shopping center project with Phoenix banker Charles Keating . This , combined with her role as a bookkeeper who later had difficulty finding receipts for family trips on Keating 's jet , caused complications for her husband during the Keating Five scandal , when he was being examined for his role regarding oversight of Keating 's bank .

= = American Voluntary Medical Team = =

= = = Founding and mission = = =

In 1988 , inspired by a vacation that she took four years earlier to substandard medical facilities on Truk Lagoon , Cindy McCain founded the American Voluntary Medical Team ( AVMT ) . It was a non @-@ profit organization that organized trips for doctors , nurses and other medical personnel to provide MASH @-@ like emergency medical care to disaster @-@ struck or war @-@ torn third @-@ world areas such as Micronesia , Vietnam ( before relations were normalized between them and the U.S. ) , Kuwait ( arriving five days after the conclusion of the Gulf War ) , Zaire ( to help refugees from the Rwandan genocide ) , Iraq , Nicaragua , India , Bangladesh , and El Salvador . She led 55 of these missions over the next seven years , each of which were at least two weeks in duration . AVMT also supplied treatment to poor sick children around the world . In 1993 , Cindy McCain and the AVMT were honored with an award from Food for the Hungry .

= = = Adoption = = =

In 1991 , the AVMT went to Dhaka , Bangladesh , to provide assistance following the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone . While at Mother Teresa 's Dhaka orphanage , the Sisters of Charity of Mother Teresa Children 's Home , McCain met two infant girls she felt needed to be brought to the United States for medical treatment . She decided to adopt one of the girls , later named Bridget , with her husband readily agreeing ; the adoption became final in 1993 . She helped coordinate the adoption of the other little girl for family friend Wes Gullett .

= = = Prescription drug addiction = = =

In 1989 , Cindy McCain developed an addiction to Percocet and Vicodin , opioid painkillers , which she initially took to alleviate pain following two spinal surgeries for ruptured discs and to ease emotional stress during the Keating Five affair . The addiction progressed to where she was taking upwards of twenty pills a day , and she resorted to having an AVMT physician write illegal prescriptions in the names of three AVMT employees without their knowledge . In 1992 , her parents staged an intervention to force her to get help ; she told her husband about her problem , attended a

drug treatment facility , began outpatient sessions and ended her three years of addiction . Surgery in 1993 resolved her back pain .

In January 1993 , Tom Gosinski , an AVMT employee who had discovered her illegal drug use , was terminated on budgetary grounds . Subsequently , he tipped off the Drug Enforcement Administration about her prior actions and a federal investigation ensued . McCain 's defense team , led by John McCain 's Keating Five lawyer John Dowd , secured an agreement with the U.S. Attorney 's office for McCain , a first @-@ time offender , which avoided charges while requiring her to pay financial restitution , enroll in a diversion program and do community service . Meanwhile , in early 1994 , Gosinski filed a wrongful termination lawsuit against McCain , in which he alleged she ordered him to conceal " improper acts " and " misrepresent facts in a judicial proceeding " ; he told her he would settle for \$ 250 @,@ 000 . In response , Dowd characterized this request as blackmail , and requested Maricopa County attorney Rick Romley to investigate Gosinski for extortion . In the end , Gosinski 's credibility was undermined by testimony in Romley 's report from other charity staffers who asserted Gosinski privately vowed to blackmail McCain were he ever fired , and both Gosinski 's lawsuit and the extortion investigation against him were dropped .

Knowing that prosecutors were about to publicly disclose her past addiction , McCain preemptively revealed the story to reporters , saying that she was doing so willingly : " Although my conduct did not result in compromising any missions of AVMT , my actions were wrong , and I regret them ... if what I say can help just one person to face the problem , it 's worthwhile . "

= = = Aftermath = = =

AVMT concluded its activities in 1995 in the wake of the McCain prescription narcotics controversy . That year , McCain founded a new organization , the Hensley Family Foundation , which donates monies towards children 's programs in Arizona and nationally . She was largely a stay @-@ at @-@ home mom during the balance of the 1990s . She also held positions as vice president , director , and vice chair of Hensley & Co . In the mid @-@ 1990s , she began suffering from severe migraine headaches , for a while keeping them secret from her husband and minimizing their effect to the rest of her family . Her attacks often resulted in trips to the emergency room , were caused by many different triggers , and she tried many different treatments .

= = Role in 2000 presidential campaign = =

Although wary of the media and still having no love for the political world , McCain was active in her husband 's eventually unsuccessful campaign for President of the United States in 2000 . She mostly provided good cheer , without discussing her opinions about national policy . She impressed Republican voters with her elegance at coffee shops and other small campaign settings , where she frequently referred to her children , carpooling and charity work .

McCain was upset by the notorious smear tactics against her husband in the South Carolina primary that year . These included allegations involving her adopted daughter Bridget that she found " despicable " , as well as insinuations that McCain herself was currently a drug addict . Though deeply wounded by the attacks for a long time , Cindy McCain eventually forgave those responsible . She was chosen as the chair of the Arizona delegation to the 2000 Republican National Convention .

= = Between presidential campaigns = =

In 2000 , she became chair of the now \$ 300 million @-@ a @-@ year Hensley & Co. following her father 's death . It is one of the largest Anheuser @-@ Busch beer distributors in the United States . Cindy , her children , and one of John McCain 's children from his first marriage , together own 68 percent of the company . As chair , her role takes the form of consultations with the company CEO on major initiatives such as new products , new plants or employee welfare , rather than that of an active physical presence . She does not have operational control of Hensley , and Anheuser @-@

Busch considers her to be an absentee owner . By 2007 , she had an annual income of over \$ 400 @, @ 000 from Hensley and an estimated net worth of \$ 100 million . She also owned at least \$ 2 @. @ 7 million worth of shares of Anheuser @-@ Busch stock . With her children , she owns a minority stake in the Arizona Diamondbacks baseball team .

McCain became actively involved with Operation Smile in 2001 , taking parts in its medical missions to Morocco , Vietnam and India . She was honored by the organization in 2005 and sits on its board of directors . McCain joined the board of directors of CARE in 2005 . She is on the board of the HALO Trust , and has visited operations to remove landmines in Cambodia , Sri Lanka , Mozambique , and Angola . She makes financial contributions to these organizations via her family trust and views her role as watching them in the field to ensure they are frugal and their money is being spent effectively . On occasion she has criticized foreign regimes on human rights grounds , such as Myanmar 's military junta .

In April 2004 , McCain suffered a near @-@ fatal stroke caused by high blood pressure , although she was still able to attend some events . After several months of physical therapy to overcome leg and arm limitations , she made a mostly full recovery , although she still suffered from some short @-@ term memory loss and difficulties in writing . She owns a home in Coronado , California , next to the Hotel del Coronado ; her family had vacationed in Coronado growing up , and she has gone there for recuperation and family get @-@ together . She or her family own other residential and commercial real estate in California , Arizona and Virginia and , including rental properties , McCain herself owns ten homes and part of three office complexes . She is an amateur pilot and race car driver .

= = Role in 2008 presidential campaign = =

She was active and visible in her husband 's second presidential campaign during 2007 and 2008 , despite not wanting her husband to run initially due to bad memories of their 2000 experience and worries the effect on her children , especially son Jimmy who was headed to serve in the Iraq War . She eventually supported her husband in his goals , but defined her own campaign roles ; she frequently returned to Arizona to attend to domestic duties or interrupted campaigning for her overseas charitable work . She preferred to travel with her husband and introduce him rather than act as a campaign surrogate with a separate schedule . She wore her hair in a fashionable but severe style and was sometimes seen with an unsmiling countenance in her appearances . In August 2008 , a member of the public shook her hand very vigorously , aggravating her existing carpal tunnel syndrome condition and causing her to slightly sprain her wrist . The campaign exacerbated her migraine headaches and she sometimes had to wear dark glasses to shield herself from bright lights . The pressures of the campaign also brought out a range of behaviors between her and her husband , varying from moments of great tenderness and concern to raging arguments that dismayed their staffs .

McCain stated that the American public wanted a First Lady of the United States who would tend toward a traditional role in that position . She would not attend Cabinet meetings , but would continue her involvement in overseas non @-@ profit organizations and would urge Americans to do the same globally or locally . She envisioned herself as a possible figurehead for humanitarian work , along the lines of Diana , Princess of Wales . She continued to expand her roles in such organizations , joining in April 2008 the board of Grateful Nation Montana , which provides scholarships and services to the children of Montana service personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan .

She made statements critical of the Bush administration for not deploying enough troops during the Iraq War . Her close examination of the financial books of the McCain campaign during the first part of 2007 convinced the candidate that its profligate spending could not go on and led to the drastic mid @-@ year reduction of the campaign 's staff and scope . In February 2008 , McCain made news by being critical of Michelle Obama , the wife of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama , who had said , " And let me tell you something : For the first time in my adult lifetime I am really proud of my country . " McCain , who was genuinely offended by the remark , replied : " I am proud

of my country . I don 't know about you ? if you heard those words earlier ? I am very proud of my country . " Also in February 2008 , she publicly appeared beside her husband during a press conference in response to a newspaper report regarding his connection to a lobbyist .

McCain faced media scrutiny about her wealth , spending habits , and financial obligations . At first declining to release her separate income tax returns , saying it was a privacy issue and that she would not do so even if she became First Lady , she later released the first two pages of her 2006 return , which showed \$ 6 million in income for that year ( including nearly \$ 570 @,@ 000 in itemized deductions and more than \$ 1 @.@ 7 million paid in federal income taxes ) . The campaign said that any decisions about how to handle her role in Hensley & Co. if she became First Lady would not be made until that time . While she stood to gain a considerable profit from the agreed @-@ upon acquisition of Anheuser @-@ Busch by the Belgian company InBev , she was initially under some political pressure to help oppose the deal and keep Anheuser @-@ Busch under American ownership .

In June 2008 , a Rasmussen Reports poll found that 49 percent of voters viewed Cindy McCain favorably and 29 percent unfavorably , while an ABC News / Washington Post poll found figures of 39 percent and 25 percent respectively . Her style and fashion sense was the subject of much media scrutiny . McCain was compared to former first lady Nancy Reagan , due to both her style and wardrobe as well as her demeanor . Early in the campaign , some recipes attributed to Cindy McCain turned out to be copied from other sources ; the campaign attributed the problem to an error by an intern .

Cindy McCain spoke on both the opening and final nights of the early September 2008 Republican National Convention . On the first night , truncated due to national attention regarding Hurricane Gustav , she appeared with First Lady Laura Bush to deliver short remarks encouraging support for hurricane relief efforts along the Gulf Coast , and on the last night , she introduced the seven McCain children and spoke about how her husband 's love for his country had been passed on to them . In October 2008 , she increased the intensity of her public remarks against Obama 's candidacy , speaking with surprising vitriol in accusing the Obama campaign of being the dirtiest in history and saying of his position against a war @-@ funding bill , " The day that Senator Obama cast a vote not to fund my son when he was serving sent a cold chill through my body . " The stresses of the campaign caused the 5 @-@ foot @-@ 7 @-@ inch ( 1 @.@ 70 m ) McCain 's weight to fall under 100 pounds ( 45 kg ) . On November 4 , 2008 , she fought back tears in an appearance as the McCain campaign reached its final day and subsequent loss to Obama .

= = Subsequent activities = =

After the election , Cindy McCain was approached about appearing on Dancing With the Stars . She seriously considered participating , but according to John McCain , was concerned that her surgically replaced knee would not be able to withstand the rigors of the competition .

Continuing her humanitarian aid work with a January 2009 trip to Dubai , India , and Cambodia , she said that she was relieved that the campaign was over and that , while it had been " wild and nuts " at times , it had also been " a remarkable experience to be a contender for the highest office in the land . " She said the ongoing global economic crisis was adversely affecting humanitarian organizations , and she expressed hope that President Obama would be successful in dealing with it .

She expressed support for LGBT rights by appearing alongside her daughter Meghan at an April 2009 convention of the Log Cabin Republicans , and posing for the NOH8 Campaign , a gay rights project opposed to California Proposition 8 , a ballot measure banning same @-@ sex marriage . The following year she appeared in another NOH8 public service announcement against bullying , and in it appeared to break with her husband 's position and express support for repeal of the " Don 't ask , don 't tell " policy prohibiting gays from serving openly in the U.S. military . But she subsequently tweeted that " I fully support the NOH8 campaign and all it stands for and am proud to be a part of it . But I stand by my husband 's stance on DADT . "

In September 2009 , she spoke about her migraines publicly for the first time and decided to speak

at the International Headache Congress about raising awareness for sufferers . During her husband 's eventually successful 2010 senatorial re @-@ election campaign , she rarely made public appearances .

McCain appeared in March 2011 alongside Eastern Congo Initiative founder Ben Affleck to testify before a panel of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on behalf of continued monetary assistance to the Democratic Republic of Congo , in an environment where the Republican @-@ controlled House was looking to make significant cuts to foreign aid . She has noted the difficulty of getting attention to some of the topics she feels most strongly about ; at a Futures Without Violence summit in 2012 , she said , " When I talk about rape in Congo , people turn their backs and run , especially the men . "

In late 2013 and early 2014 , McCain used the occasion of Super Bowl XLVIII to highlight her concerns about sex trafficking in the United States , an issue that she had begun working on in conjunction with The McCain Institute . She campaigned for legislation to address the problem at both the federal and state levels . She also served as co @-@ chair of the Arizona Governor Jan Brewer 's Task Force on Human Trafficking .

In April 2015 , during the Sedona Forum , Cindy McCain and actress Demi Moore discussed ways to end sex trafficking . Later in that year she staged appearances with Heidi Heitkamp , Democratic Senator from North Dakota , to discuss human trafficking in that state and elsewhere . She said of trafficking , " Everybody has seen it ; they just didn 't know what they were looking at . " She praised Obama and Congress for passage of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 and , together with Malika Saada Saar , executive director of the Human Rights Project for Girls , started the No Such Thing Campaign to end the use of the term " child prostitute " , saying " there are only victims and survivors of child rape . "