

John McCain - Republican

John McCain was born August 29, 1936, in Panama at the Coco Solo Air Base during the American control of the Panama Canal Zone. However, he is an American citizen, by virtue of being the son of an enlisted serviceman serving the United States and being on American-controlled soil at the time of his parent's active duty. He comes from a long line of ancestors with United States military careers. He attended naval base schools wherever his father was deployed, at various Pacific Ocean stations including New London, Connecticut, Pearl Harbor, and Hawaii. After the conclusion of World War 2, he attended St. Stephen's School in Alexandria, Virginia, and then Episcopal High School in Alexandria, where he graduated in 1954.

He followed in the footsteps of his family's military history by joining the United States Naval Academy, and went on to graduate from Annapolis in 1958. He was commissioned as an ensign naval aviator in training at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida and Naval Air Station Corpus Christi in Texas for over two years. Despite a couple of mishaps in flight crashes from which he escaped injury, he graduated from flight school in 1960 and became a naval pilot of attack fighter aircraft.

John McCain's first assignment was a station on the aircraft carriers USS Intrepid and USS Enterprise, in the Caribbean Sea during 1962, which put him square in the middle of the Cuban Missile Crisis, one of the major confrontations of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. He then served as a flight instructor at Naval Air Station Meridian in Mississippi, which had a piece of real estate, McCain Field, that just happened to be named after his grandfather in recognition of his grandfather's service. In December 1966, he was stationed on the aircraft carrier USS Forrestal, where he began missions flying A-4 Skyhawks.

By 1967, the USS Forrestal was deployed as part of Operation Rolling Thunder during the Vietnam War. He flew several attack missions over North Vietnam without serious incident, and he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander. On July 29, 1967, however, he was almost killed in action when a rocket struck his jet as he was launching from the deck. McCain managed to escape the burning jet seconds before the jet's bombs detonated from the flames, and the detonation sprayed McCain's legs and chest with shrapnel. He was lucky to survive, as the ensuing fire killed 132 sailors, and injured 62 others, with the incident, recorded by flight-deck video, still used today in U.S. Navy Recruit Training damage control classes. McCain volunteered for further duty, and by late October 1967, had flown a total of 22 bombing missions.

He then became a prisoner of war when a Soviet missile shot down his Skyhawk

during an attack run, forcing him to parachute down behind enemy lines in Truc Bach Lake in Hanoi. With heavy injuries, he was surrounded by the enemy, who beat him viciously and transported him to Hanoi's main prison. They refused him treatment, and beat and interrogated him, but the famous name of his family saved him. When the North Vietnamese discovered that he was the son of a famous top admiral, they hospitalized him and alerted the media to his capture and imprisonment, whereupon the New York Times ran his status as POW on the front page. Altogether, he was to be held as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for five and a half years.

Upon his release and return to the United States, he was a celebrity, with his meeting with President Nixon while McCain was still on crutches making a stirring photograph. In 1977, McCain became the Navy's liaison to the U.S. Senate, in a move which he would later describe as the beginning of his second career as a politician. He retired from the Navy in 1981, having been promoted to Captain and having received a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, the Purple Heart, and a Distinguished Flying Cross.

He ran for the seat in Congress as a Republican in 1982. He was elected the president of the 1983 Republican freshman class of representatives, following a stirring speech which deeply impressed the media and the government. His assignment were to the Committee on Interior Affairs, the Select Committee on Aging, and the Republican Task Force on Indian Affairs. He then sought and won as the United States Senator from Arizona in 1987. He remains in this position today.

John McCain ran for President in 2000, but lost to G.W. Bush. He praised and endorsed Bush in the 2004 campaign. He has now announced his second run for President in 2008. He is a hard-right Republican in terms of policy, and has gathered much support for what can only be described as a heroic record of service to the United States. He is popular with the kind of voter known as a "Reagan Democrat", and it is even said that, had it not been for George Bush, he would have won in 2000.

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